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The conflicts of cultures in the African novels of Chinua Achebe, Cheikh Hamidou Kane and Ferdinand Oyono

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The Conflicts of Cultures in the African Novels of Chinua Achebe,

Cheikh Hamidou Kane and Ferdinand Oyono

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The conflicts of cultures are one of the most conspicuous elements that dominate the African novel of 1950 and 1960.

In Chapter I, Chinua Achebe (of Nigeria) is represented by his early three novels only, Things Fall Apart, No Longer at East and Arrow of God. In these three books, the conflicts are basically cultural. For Achebe's main concern is to defend and correct the African cultural image which has been stained and misunderstood as a result of a foreign occupation.

In addition, Achebe has dealt with other minor conflicts, such as religion, politics, education, individual and collective conflicts, war, and tribal conflicts. All these elements are carefully handled through characterizations, themes and language.

Chapter II deals with Cheikh Hamidou Kane's (of Senegal) only novel, L'Aventure Ambiguë. Here the conflicts of cultures are primarily based upon the Islamic teaching that desperately conflicts with the rational and materialistic French system of education. Unlike Achebe, Kane has
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handled the cultural clashes through a philosophical medium.

Chapter III is devoted to the Cameroonian novelist, Ferdinand Oyono. In his novels, *Une Vie de Boy, Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille* and *Chemin d'Europe*, the conflicts of cultures are focused on the hypocrisy of the Christian church and its missionaries, the French officers, and especially the French policy of assimilation.

Unlike both Achebe and Kane, Oyono has chosen laughter and satire as a medium for his writing.

Despite all of their differences, Achebe, Kane and Oyono have written successful novels out of the conflicts of cultures.
THE CONFLICTS OF CULTURES IN
THE AFRICAN NOVELS OF CHINUA ACHEBE,
CHEIKH HAMIDOU KANE AND FERDINAND OYONO

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
AHMED SABER

DEPARTMENT OF AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION

Modern African literature of 1950 and 1960 was born in a hostile milieu of conquest and struggle for freedom and assertion of the African identity, for the aim of colonization "...was not merely to dominate and exploit the African. It was to deny his very existence as a thinking individual, as a member of a community and as a creator of the most essential and cultural human thinking."¹ Moreover, "The colonial system produced the kind of education which nurtured subservience, self-hatred, and mutual suspicion. It produced a people uprooted from the masses."²

In this hostile atmosphere of cultural conflicts recent African literature came into existence. The colonial impact has produced indelible marks on its development and growth.

The African novelist, writing during the colonial period, was familiar with the European system of education; from it he had received his formal academic training. As a result of his command of a foreign language and literature he found himself confronted by certain generic difficulties. One was choosing the language to be used, but any choice deprived him of a vast part of the audience he was most anxious to reach. In addition, in Africa, where reading was a skill possessed by a privileged minority, his public was necessarily limited to an elite who looked


for the "African novel" to precisely resemble that of the West. On the other hand, the European audience also wanted this formal resemblance, but a goodly taste of African exoticism as well.

Nevertheless, the African literature of the colonial period and pre-independent Africa has been labeled as "...a literature of propaganda and commitment." In other words this African literature was, first of all, a call for 'adhesion' and 'return' to African 'sources' and 'roots.' All these different factors show that the African novel first emerged and then developed from two worlds "...which are quite alien to one another at best."2

Hence the conflicts of cultures were irrevocably inherent in the composition of African novels, and almost as inevitably an element of their content. J. P. Makouta Mboukou has stated that "Black literature is first of all, a literature of combat. The writer throws himself into demands for retribution: the rights Black people have been deprived of by foreign domination must be recovered, Black people's place among the other people of the world must be demanded."3

Despite similarity of origin, the African novelists differ from

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2 Ibid., p. 58.

one another in their reactions to the Western culture, their education, their professions, in their styles, in the language they adopted as their 'lingua franca,' and in their geographical location.

For considering these differences and similarities, it is a useful academic convention to split West Africa into two linguistic zones: francophone and anglophone. The French colonizers' policy was "assimilationist" whereas the British policy was not. In other words, the French colonists wanted to elevate to "Frenchmen" the "barbarous African people" by making them absorb and assimilate the French culture, thought and values. On the other hand, the English were less interested in destroying the African culture or producing "African British." Their main concern was to rule their colonized Africans indirectly by manipulating their traditional political systems such as chieftancy or rule of the elders. Each policy, however, had its effects on the literature in its language.

As a matter of fact, both these two policies and the colonial dislocation of the African past have deeply impressed and influenced the African novelist "...who is haunted by a sense of the past. His work is often an attempt to come to terms with the 'thing that has been,' a struggle, as it were, to sensitively register his encounter with history, his people's history." "What the African novelist has attempted to do is to restore the African character to history."¹ We find in the African novel the invocation of the past which contains the implication of a

¹ Ngugi, Homecoming, pp. 39 and 43 respectively.
quest for the restitution of the African pre-colonial sovereignty.

The above emphasis was, however, transient, to some extent, since new attitudes developed just after the independence of certain African countries; new interests and different stands and concerns have become the main subjects of the modern African writer (after 1960), such as the modern social, political, and economic problems, the conditions of his people and the future of his country.

For the examination of works and authors considered in this study it is necessary to have a working definition of 'culture' and 'conflicts of cultures.' "Culture...is what enables men to give shape to their lives."¹ Ahmed Sekou Toure had defined it as "...the sum of all assets, knowledge and modes of actions which enable a human being to condition his own behaviour, his relation with others and his contact with nature; society expresses itself through the culture it has created."² All the above statements emphasize the fact that the significance of social institutions within a culture is endemic to the human community which participates in that culture, that is, the modes and meanings for the individual's life are shaped by his society. The pattern designed by the society is called the "culture." Obviously cultures vary in their values, goals, tastes and the behaviour designed to express them. A culture is a living organism which emerges, grows and develops and may even fade

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¹ African Culture, p. 15.

away with its own people's decadence. Hence a culture is not a dead
static phenomenon. A 'culture' is as complex as the complexities and
diversities of human beings themselves. Therefore we do not have one
definite and distinct 'culture,' but we have 'cultures' as we have 'men'
and not only one 'man;' we have 'societies' and not one 'society' only;
communities and groups.

What then are the "conflicts of cultures" to be addressed in this
essay?

Of course, the African people did not welcome the European domina-
tion which was, in truth, imposed upon them by all perfidious colonial
means, including military actions and interventions, deportations, im-
prisonments and death. In spite of all kinds of deterrent intimidations,
the Africans resisted and strongly opposed the colonial yoke, for "A
partir du moment ou le colonialisme empieta sur le sol africain notre
facon de vivre, s'oppose, dans une lutte a mort, a l'influence Europeenne."

Moreover, the Western intrusion has thrown the African people into a
state of ambivalence and puzzling dilemma. In myriad details of life
they cannot easily choose which way is best, African or European, nor
can they easily devise a pattern reconciling the two. About this state
of 'dualism' Ezekiel Mphalele wrote:

...we are all ambivalent people in Africa—as everyone
else is who has been colonized. All ambivalent characters

Medou R. J. Mvomo, "Il nous faut mener notre culture nationale vers une
"Camerounite" plus realiste," Le Cameroun Litteraire, no. 1, Sept., 1964
(Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint), p. 4.
and looking for an equilibrium between the two ways.

The structure of my thesis will be three major chapters respectively devoted to examining novels of Chinua Achebe, Cheikh Hamidou Kane and Ferdinand Oyono. Their works are deeply permeated with the elements of conflicts of cultures which are greatly enhanced by the sudden historic encounter between Africa and Europe.

Both Kane and Oyono belong to the French West African zone whereas Achebe belongs to the English, but all three have, more or less, used the conflicts of cultures as a subject-matter in their writing, those cultural conflicts that have been engendered by Western colonization of Africa.

All of Kane's and Oyono's novels deal with the African colonial experience. In the case of Achebe, only his first three novels are included in this thesis, for they contain ample material on the conflict of African and European cultures. His fourth novel, A Man of the People, is not, however, relevant in this analysis because its main concern is the subject of the modern situation of independent Nigeria rather than pre-colonial problems.

This study of conflicts of culture will be based upon a descriptive, analytic and comparative approach. Besides, its major focus will not be the 'conflicts of cultures' alone, but how they have been handled by each author, and to what extent they have influenced the different patterns

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of their writing in terms of characterization, themes, styles, plots and 'thoughts.'
CHAPTER I

Chinua Achebe is one of the most versatile African writers in English. He has contributed much to the growth and development of the African novel in English.

Achebe is the product of two different cultures and two conflicting civilizations. As a result he has drunk to the dregs the cups of his uneasy isolation and cultural alienation. This experience has led him back to delve deep down into his Ibo culture for themes and inspirations.\(^1\)

His three novels which are based extensively upon his Ibo cultural background and conflicts of cultures are *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *No Longer at Ease* (1960), and *Arrow of God* (1964).\(^2\) All of these three novels deal with the colonial situation between 1890 and 1960, and its impact on the African society (Ibo society), culture, people and history. They are set in Eastern Nigeria but *No Longer at Ease* moves between the Ibo village, Umuofia, and the city of Lagos.

*Things Fall Apart* is the story of Okonkwo, the hero, and the

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disintegration of traditional values of Umuofia as a result of the white
man's incursion. Like No Longer at Ease and Arrow of God, Things Fall
Apart centers on personal tragedy. The hero, Okonkwo, in spite of all
the weakness and social failures of his father, Unoka, has managed--
thanks to hard work and strength--to secure an honourable social posi-
tion within his community. He even gains fame and 'titles,' that is,
the Ibo's highest symbols of social status. Nevertheless, he remains
haunted and obsessed by the continuous fear that he may inherit the flaws
of his father's cowardice, idleness and consequent low social status. He
also fears that his son, Nwoye, may prove to be unworthy of his inheri-
tance and too much like Unoka.

By decision of the 'elders,' Ikemefuna, a child offered as a sacri-
fice to Okonkwo's village, is slain, and Okonkwo happens to take part in
the killing. Later he inadvertently kills a clansman, after which
according to the customs of Umuofia, Okonkwo has to live in exile for
seven years.

Upon his return to Umuofia, he finds that many changes have taken
place during his absence, of which the European penetration is paramount.
People have begun to proselyte to Christianity. Moreover, the emulation
of European culture has taken place to the detriment of the local tradi-
tions.

Caught between the African traditions and the European incursion,
Okonkwo is confronted by the dilemma of accepting or rejecting the so-
cietal changes. The perplexity, fed by anger and fury, impels him to
behead a white messenger. To his chagrin, Okonkwo realizes that he can
expect no support from his own people. He hangs himself. *Things Fall Apart* finishes not only as a personal tragedy of Okonkwo, but as an exemplification of a social tragedy, for Umuofia succumbs to the white intrusion.

*No Longer at Ease* is, to some degree, a sequel to *Things Fall Apart* for it deals with Obi, the grandson of Okonkwo. However, this time the setting is wider than that of *Things Fall Apart* since the story oscillates between the contrasting modes of village and urban life.

At this point, in *No Longer at Ease*, the British administration has been firmly entrenched. At home, Obi has shown great academic progress; therefore, he has been given a loan by the Umuofia Progressive Union Party to study in England. This loan, however, must be repaid within four years after his return to Nigeria (the opening point of the novel). He had departed for England with the intention of studying law, but he changed to English. During his return voyage home, he meets a certain girl, Clara, who plays an important part in his life. At home, he is appointed as the Secretary to the Scholarship Commission in the Ministry of Education.

Presently, he drifts into the cul-de-sac of his ambivalence. He wants to remain faithful to the traditional values on one hand, yet he wishes to lead a Western life style. The conflicting obligations of both value systems contribute to his tragic downfall: he is caught when he stoops to taking a small bribe of twenty pounds in order to meet the soaring expenses of his new urban life.

*Arrow of God* is the tragedy of Ezeulu, the Chief Priest of the god,
Ulu of the six villages of Umuaro. But the story is both an individual and, implicitly, a collective tragedy. It is personal in that it deals with the power and the fall of Ezeulu, the hero. It is collective in that at the close of the novel all the six villages of Umuaro seem to be succumbing to European blandishments and power.

Arrow of God is set in Iboland during the period of colonial entrenchment in Eastern Nigeria. The novel is concerned mainly with the deadly struggle of Ezeulu, who strives to preserve his authority as a spiritual leader against rival elements within his tribe and against the impending influence of colonial intrusion, both missionaries and political officers.

Ezeulu, a man of ripe maturity and experience, dignity, command and pride, and above all, a man of intelligence, accepts and believes strongly in the inevitability of change. Thus, as a matter of strategy, he sends one of his sons, Oduche, to the mission school "to be his eyes and ears," and in particular to learn the secret of the white man's power. Nonetheless, the strategy fails. Oduche becomes a zealous Christian who even goes so far as to defy the village customs by attempting to kill the sacred Royal Python, a sacrilege which endangers the safety of the six villages.

Through a basically intra-cultural conflict, Ezeulu's pride, stubbornness and hostility towards the white administration combined with his refusal to eat the 'sacred yam' end up by a loss of his religious status as a Chief Priest of Umuaro.

Like many African writers Achebe did not escape at all the sweeping
impact of colonization upon his psychology and the formation of his personality. He himself confessed that:

Today things have changed a lot, but it would be foolish to pretend that we have fully recovered from the traumatic effects of our first confrontation with Europe.¹

This circumstance is a fundamental factor deeply influencing Achebe's thought and consequently chanelling the mainstream of his writings. This impetus is very evident in his 'trilogy': Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease and Arrow of God.

Achebe is a committed African writer, because he believes, first and foremost, that the African writer has the urgent duty and the serious social responsibility of guiding, leading, his people, and defending their culture and dignity; above all, he should educate them. Achebe, in person, reaffirmed his stand at the Conference on Commonwealth Literature at Leeds, England. He claimed his fundamental theme to be:

...that African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity. It is this dignity that many African peoples all but lost in the colonial period, and it is this dignity that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity. The writer's duty is to help them regain it by showing them in human terms what happened to them, what they lost. There is a saying in Ibo that a man who can't tell where the rain began to beat him cannot know where he dried his body. The writer can tell the people where the rain began to beat them. After all the novelist's duty is not to beat this morning's headline in topicality, it is to explore in depth the human condition. In Africa he cannot perform this task

unless he has a proper sense of history.¹

He went even farther, when, interviewed at the University of Texas at Austin in November, 1969, he described himself as a protest writer:

I believe it's impossible to write anything in Africa without some kind of message, some kind of protest... In fact I should say all our writers, whether they are aware of it or not, are committed writers. The whole pattern of life demands that you should protest, that you should put in a word for your history, your traditions, your religion, and so on.²

Achebe's commitment included the need to prove to the West that Africa was never devoid of culture or cultural values. Moreover, he pointed out that the African writer should be a "cultural nationalist," aware of his social responsibility to explain the traditions and African history and values of his people to that hostile alien world. He should instill in his people a new energy, a new dynamism and a new consciousness. All in all, he should teach them their dignity as Africans:

Here, then, is an adequate revolution for me to espouse- to help my society regain its belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-denigration. And it is essentially a question of education in the best sense of that word. Here, I think, my aims and the deepest aspirations of my society meet. For no thinking African can escape the pain of the wound in his soul... The writer cannot expect to be excused from the task of re-education and regeneration that must be done... I should be quite satisfied if my novels (especially the ones I set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past-with all its imperfections-was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them.³


²Ibid., p. 47.

³Ibid., pp. 44-45.
Consequently Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God* are primarily based upon the conflicts of cultures which have directly or indirectly shaped their themes, plot, characterization, language and structure. Some of these conflicts of cultures are embodied in the novels' moral, social, religious, tribal, problems, whether collective or personal.

Chinua Achebe's characters are given flesh and life as representatives of cultures and cultural conflicts. This applies to characters of both African and European origins such as Ezeulu, Okonkwo, Nwaka, Obi, Clara, Odiche, Winterbottom, Mr. Green, Smith and Clarke.

The African characters are, however, quite familiar with Achebe's own cultural background and colonial experience. In other words, they are his own people with whom he has shared the colonial occupation and its consequences, a shocking encounter.

For example, in depicting Ezeulu of *Arrow of God*, the writer always keeps one eye on his culture:

This was the third nightfall since he began to look for signs of the new moon. He knew it would come today but he always began to watch three days before its time because he must not take a risk. In this season of the year his task was not too difficult; he did not have to peer and search the sky as he might do in the rainy season... His Obi was built differently from other men's huts. There was the usual, long threshold in front but also a shorter one on the right as you entered.¹

Much of Ezeulu's character is shown by his conflicts within his own

culture. Hence he is also delineated through conflicts with his own sons like Edogo and Oduche. About carving a mask Ezeulu says to Edogo:

I see. You may go, my son. And if you like you may carve all the gods in Umuaro. If you hear me asking you about it again take my name and give it to a dog.

Ezeulu sends his son, Oduche, to the mission school. Paradoxically, he wants him to remain faithful to his traditional duties, beliefs, and customs. Ironically, he develops the very opposite personality. Infuriated Ezeulu reminds him of his responsibilities:

Listen to what I say now. When a handshake goes beyond the elbows we know it has turned to another thing. It was I who sent you to join those people because of my friendship to white man, Winterbottom... I did not send you so that you might leave your own duty in my household. Do you hear me?... Your people should know the custom of this land; if they don't you must tell them. Do you hear me?

Instead of following and deciding their own fate according to their growth, struggle, success or failure, Achebe's characters appear to be a mere re-creation; they are conditioned to follow a certain and definite kind of life (for the Africans it is their author's cultural background) which their culture imposes upon them. In this manner, they appear predestined characters. Therefore, they are not allowed to go beyond the limits created for them. Rather a strict determinism seems to steer their actions, interactions and even their thoughts, language and psychology. So, they are condemned to be a permanent reflection of their cultural environment, and not a projection of a world they have shaped

1 Ibid., p. 5.
2 Ibid., p. 16.
for themselves. They are not free to move save within the extremes of cultures and cultural conflicts: Ezeulu, Okonkwo, Obi, Winterbottom, Mr. Green and Clarke, to name just a few, are but the images of the culture in which they are confined.

Moreover, Achebe's characterization imposes a self-definition, a rediscovery, a search for both identity and adjustment. That is, his characters are designed, above all, to display, to define, to teach the African culture, and convey an appreciation of it. The following quotations exemplify the above ideas:

Before it was dusk Ezeani, who was the priest of the earth goddess, Ani, called on Okonkwo in his Obi. Okonkwo brought out Kola nut and placed it before the priest. "Take away your kola nut. I shall not eat in the house of a man who has no respect for our gods and ancestors..."

"Listen to me," he said when Okonkwo had spoken. "You are not a stranger in Umuofia. You know as well as I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbor...."¹

The old man waited patiently for him to finish and said: "You are not a stranger in Umuofia. You have heard our elders say that thunder cannot kill a son or daughter of Umuofia. Do you know anyone either now or in the past who was killed?... "It is the work of our fathers;" said the old man. "They built a powerful medicine to protect themselves from thunder, and not only themselves, but all their descendants for ever."²

And from Arrow of God Achebe wrote:


Ezeulu's first son, Edogo, had left home early that day to finish the mask he was carving for a new ancestral spirit. It was now only five days to the Festival of the Pumpkin Leaves when this spirit was expected to return from the depths of the earth and appear to men as a mask. No one who had not been initiated into the secret of Masks would dare to approach the hut which faced the forest, away from the market place.1

Another important element of characterization is the female character who only seems to fulfill the function of cultural display and expatriation, such as Ezeulu's and Okonkwo's wives and Obi's mother. The females, however, in their meekness and submission, are sometimes made to cast light on other male characters like Okonkwo's youngest wife, who reflects his brutality and violence:

Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand, his wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper...2

In No Longer at Ease, Clara is fully depicted and individualized. She is a representation of a sub-group of the Ibo culture: an outcast, an Osu. Thus, she becomes a principal source of cultural conflict when Obi intends to marry her. Objecting to this decision, Obi's father chides him and warns against such a cultural taboo:

Osu is like leprosy in the mind of our people. I beg of you, my son, not to bring the mark of shame and of leprosy into your family. If you do, your children and your children's children unto the third and fourth generations will curse your memory.3

1 Achebe, Arrow of God, pp. 61-62.
2 Achebe, Things Fall Apart, p. 16.
3 Achebe, No Longer at Ease, p. 133.
Achebe's women are mostly seen in the market place or their compound among children. Their confrontations with the outside world are few except for Clara.

Moreover, love stories are not developed and probed in their various dimensions, except in *No Longer at Ease*, between Clara and Obi.

However, there is something peculiar to Achebe's characterization; it is his extensive use of proverbs both in dialogue and in authorial commentaries. Proverbs define the people and their world. For example, Ezeulu's deep insight and maturity are revealed in his command of proverbs, a command which he uses to subdue or overshadow other characters.

Achebe's characterization of the Africans is more successful and true than that of the Europeans, who tend to become types or stereotypes. Usually, only one side is seen of the European characters such as Clarke, Winterbottom, Wright, Mr. Green and Smith. Of Winterbottom Achebe wrote:

Fifteen years ago Winterbottom might have been so depressed by the climate and the food as to have doubts about service in Nigeria. But he was now a hardened coaster, and although the climate still made him irritable and limp, he would not exchange the hard life for the comfort of Europe. His strong belief in the value of the British mission in Africa was, strangely enough, strengthened during the Cameroon campaign of 1916 when he fought against the Germans. That was how he had got the title of captain.1

Concerning racial attitudes, usually the whites are presented as having various opinions or prejudices about the blacks and vice-versa.

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1 Achebe, *Arrow of God*, 16.
In dealing with the natives, Winterbottom tells Clarke:

One thing you must remember in dealing with natives is that like children they are great liars. They don't lie simply to get out of trouble. Sometimes they would spoil a good case by a pointless lie.¹

In his turn Nweke Ukpak says to a group of his people about the white man:

I know that many of us want to fight the white man. But only a foolish man can go after a leopard with his bare hands. The white man is like a hot soup and we must take him slowly-slowly from the edges from the bowl.²

The plots of Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease and Arrow of God are developed within the framework of cultural aspects, which are interwoven into scenes, incidents, characters and themes.

The cultural scenes help define the characters and individual identity of men, such as Okonkwo, Obi, and Ezeulu who are partly seen through vivid pictures of culture and of conflicts of cultures. For example, one aspect of Okonkwo's personality is implied in the following way:

But it was really not true that Okonkwo's palm-kernels had been cracked for him by a benevolent spirit. He had cracked them himself... At an early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler in all the land. That was not luck. At the most one could say that his 'Chi' or personal god was good. But the Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his 'Chi' says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly; so his 'Chi' agreed.³

¹ Ibid., p. 45.
² Ibid., p. 105.
³ Achebe, Things Fall Apart, pp. 28-29.
In addition the cultural conflicts bridge the gaps of actions and create varied tones and atmospheres, such as the dramatization of episodes in which Ezeulu and Okonkwo struggle against rivals among their own people, and/or against the white penetration. But "...the events are not related significantly enough to each other to show their compulsion on the individual..."1

In Things Fall Apart the conflicts of culture are primarily centered around Okonkwo's individual conflicts first with 'himself,' then with his own culture and with the Western intrusion. His individual conflicts reside in his own 'personality,' which is fundamentally based upon action, for Okonkwo "...was a man of actions, a man of war. Unlike his father he could stand the look of blood."2 Furthermore, he is very much obsessed by the notions of 'manhood' and 'masculinity.' When looking at his favorite daughter, Ezinma, he desperately says to himself: "She should have been a boy...."3 By the same token he fears that Nwoye, his son, will turn out like his grandfather. In fact, the images of 'manhood' and 'womanhood' are extremely important in Things Fall Apart. For example, 'yam' is often equated with such qualities as masculinity and hard work. In all, Okonkwo's "...whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness," and "It was the fear of himself, lest

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3 Ibid., p. 61.
he should be found to resemble his father.\textsuperscript{1} Like Ezeulu, Okonkwo, is ambitious, proud, rash, but unlike him, he is harsh and reluctantly opposed to change. He is also depicted as having a personality in contrast to his friend, Obierika, who is a man of thought rather than a man of action like Okonkwo.\textsuperscript{2}

In \textit{Things Fall Apart}, the cultural conflicts are also implied through Okonkwo's continuous conflicts with his own Ibo society of Umuofia. Okonkwo, a man of action and strength, fails to understand or recognize his own limits, and to reconcile himself with the norms of his culture which, many a time, he rashly defies or abuses or acts against its moral or religious values: he kills an adopted child, Ikemefuna, he offends the earth goddess, Ani, beats his wife during the "Week of Peace," and lastly he commits the most flagrant abomination against 'Ani' by hanging himself.

As a matter of fact, in \textit{Things Fall Apart}, culture and conflicts of cultures are of paramount significance. Achebe has successfully created an 'antagonist' out of them, so that Okonkwo is pictured mostly on the canvas of culture and cultural conflicts.

Okonkwo does not only conflict with himself and his own culture, but he violently opposes 'Christianity' to which his son was converted. Just after his return from exile, "A sudden fury rose within him and he

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid., pp. 16-17.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., p. 64.
felt a strong desire to take up his machete, go to the church and wipe out the entire vile and miscreant gang, "1 but he soon learns "...that the white man had not only brought a religion but also a government."2

More or less, the conflicts of culture are partly responsible for the destruction of both Okonkwo and the unity of his community about which, "Okonkwo was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart, and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women."3

In *No Longer at Ease*, however, the conflicts of culture take a different trend. They are based on both a moral and social issue with which Obi Okonkwo is immediately confronted after being educated in England. Obi does not want to follow the lifestyle of his father, for he becomes a man of change and innovation. He wants to marry Clara, an outcast, even though his parents are against the match. Hence, we can infer that this kind of conflict has resulted partly from the conflict between generations: Obi reflects the new attitudes adopted by the young generation as a result of the contact with a different culture.

Eventually Obi, the 'educated man,' ironically accepts a bribe; henceforth, he is removed from his social environment. He suffers

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1 Ibid., p. 142.
2 Ibid., pp. 144-5.
3 Ibid., p. 168.
self reproach, shame and imprisonment. Nonetheless, Obi's fall is an individual one and not a downfall of his society.

On the other hand, in *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu, the protagonist, is the center and principal origin of conflicts of culture which surround his individual drama, and that of his social environment. The range of these conflicts is, however, different and wider than that of *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*. Some of them result mainly from the antagonism between the dichotomy of 'Ezeulu the man' and 'Ezeulu the Chief Priest of Ulu'.

Ezeulu the man is proud and haughty. One senses the strong conviction, the integrity and the intolerance of his opinions: "I have my own way and I shall follow it."¹ More than this, "He is a man of ambition; he wants to be king, priest, diviner, all."²

Contrary to the principles of the people of Umuaro, who advocate conservatism and preservation of traditions, Ezeulu ostentatiously accepts the inevitability of change. Hence, they see Ezeulu as a 'betrayal' of their customs and cultural values when he sends his son, Oduche, to the mission school, and testifies to the 'stranger' against his own people. But emotionally Ezeulu opposes innovation; "The world is changing...I do not like it."³ Besides, he fails to grasp the tension

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² Ibid., p. 33.

³ Ibid., p. 55.
between his befriending the white man and his position as a spiritual and political leader of Umuaro.

In addition, Ezeulu's household is another field of sporadic turmoils and conflicts: there are conflicts between Matefi and Ugoye, and between Ezeulu and his sons; Edogo envies his brother; Dkuebue's relation to her husband is uneasy; rivalries exist between Ezeulu and his half brother, Okeke Onenyi, the medicine man.

Another aspect of conflicts is developed in a metaphysical profile concerning Ezeulu's religious leadership.

'Ezeulu the spirit' strives hard to assess the extent of his power and that of his priesthood. When his people do not cooperate with him, especially when he is arrested and incarcerated, he declines to announce the New Yam festival in order to punish them, because they have not appreciated his responsibilities. Thus, he "...finally revealed that he intended to hit Umuaro at its most vulnerable point—the Feast of the New Yam."¹ He wants to make them feel the weight of his power by wreaking retribution on the clan: "I am the Chief Priest of Ulu and what I have told you is his will not mine...the gods sometimes use us as a whip."
² Ezeulu, however, has defied and even falsified the will and decisions of Ulu,³ and "A Priest like Ezeulu leads a god to ruin himself."⁴

¹Ibid., p. 253.
²Ibid., p. 261.
³Ibid., p. 265.
⁴Ibid., p. 266.
Furthermore, there is a deadly struggle for supremacy between the gods of Ulu and Edemili. This "...supernatural" conflict manifests itself on a human level which takes the form of enmity between Ezeulu and Nwaka, who openly challenges Ezeulu's religious and political position.¹

In Arrow of God one witnesses the collapse of traditions following the fall of a native priestly line and its political and religious head, Ezeulu. Ironically, this collapse will strengthen the British colonial administration. In fact, Achebe implies that conflicts and rivalries (interclan disputes between villages of Umuaro and Okperi) within a native society have facilitated the colonial settlement. The colonial presence in turn adds more conflicts: the British have brought a new religion, a new school and a new political system. They have established a 'king,' "His Highness Obi Ikedi the First of Okperi."² Although such a rank does not exist in the Ibo society.

Nevertheless, Achebe's use of conflicts of cultures is not limited to plots alone, but extends to themes and style.

The themes of Thing Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease and Arrow of God are drawn from the African culture (Ibo culture) and its shocking encounter with the Western civilization during the colonial period. If Achebe chooses his themes from an African milieu, it is with a specific object,

¹ Ibid., pp. 47-8.

² Ibid., p. 67.
i.e. to correct the many distortions of the African image, which has been denigrated as a result of the colonial occupation.

One of the major themes of his novels is religion. He shows how Christianity came into conflict with African beliefs, particularly "animism." Christianity was not immediately welcomed; it faced strong opposition.

Achebe imbues some situations with some degree of sarcastic and direct attacks on the white man's religion and its emissaries:

The Church had come and led many astray. Not only the low-born and the outcast but sometimes a worthy man had joined it... The white man had indeed brought a lunatic religion.1

Out of religious conflicts Achebe creates situations and opposes characters. Moreover, "Achebe's religious themes emphasize the relation between conflicting viewpoints and cultural stands..."2 In a discussion between Mr. Brown (white missionary) and Mr. Akuma, his African friend in the clan, one can easily note the irony and the conflict between African beliefs and the teaching of Christianity:

"You say there is one supreme God who made heaven and earth," said Akuma on one of Mr. Brown's visits. 
"We also believe in Him and call Him Chuckwu. He made all the world and the other gods."
"There are no other gods," said Mr. Brown. "Chuckwu is the only God and all others are false. You carve a piece of wood-like that one... and you call it a god. But it is a piece of wood."

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1 Achebe, Things Fall Apart, p. 163.

"Yes," said Akuma. "It is indeed a piece of wood. The tree from which it came was made by Chuckwu, and indeed all minor gods were. But He made them for His messengers so that we could approach Him through them. It is like yourself. You are the head of your Church."

"No," protested Mr. Brown. "The head of my Church is God Himself."

"I know," said Akuma, "but there must be a head in this world among men. Somebody like yourself must be the head here."

In addition, Christianity is depicted as a source of both individual and social trouble and divisions within the African community. Okonkwo's dilemma illustrates this point. His son's conversion to the new faith is, for him, a sign of destruction of the community's cultural integrity. It is even a symbol of weakness. Torn between himself and the new evil he ponders:

Now that he (Okonkwo) had time to think of it, his son's crime stood out in its stark enormity. To abandon the gods of one's father and go about with a lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens was the very depth of abomination. Suppose when he died all his male children decided to follow Nwoye's steps and abandon their ancestors? Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run through him at the terrible prospect, like the prospect of annihilation.

This is also applicable to Ezeulu and his newly Christianized son, Oduche.

In dealing with the religious themes, Achebe creates new moods, new situations and psychological descriptions of characters. Consider the following example concerning the impact of the new religion on Nwoye's soul:

It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated

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1 Achebe, Things Fall Apart, p. 164.

2 Ibid., p. 142.
him. He did not understand it. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow. The hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question of the twins crying in the bush and the question of Ikemefuna who was killed. He felt a relief within as the hymn poured into his parched soul.¹

In this passage one can perceive Nwoye's psychological bewitchment before the spells of the new faith; Christianity provides a focus for his lifelong discomfort with the harsher aspects of the Ibo cultural fabric, such as the 'exposure' of twin infants and the sacrifice of Ikemefuna.

Religious conflicts are also used by Achebe as a device for conveying ambivalence of both situations and characterization. In addition he uses them to introduce immediacy and suspense in the structure of plots, such as Ezeulu's ambivalence in sending his son to join the Christian group while expecting him to remain faithful to his own customs and social order. Similarly, Obi's father, although Christian, strongly objects to his marriage with an 'Osu,' an outcast. Besides, Achebe maintains a kind of parallelism of conflicting situations between characters like those shown by fathers and sons or priests and clans. In a mortifying tone, Edogo tells his father, Ezeulu: "When you were my age your father did not send one of his sons to worship the white man's god."²

In essence, the religious themes of Achebe's novels point out the existing conflicts between the African system of beliefs and Christianity;

¹ Ibid., p. 137.
² Achebe, Arrow of God, p. 64.
they also serve as a vehicle for keeping the plots moving by creating tensions, contrasts, variety and confrontations and interactions among the characters and their world.

Another major theme of conflict of culture is change. The colonial encounter of Africa with Europe engendered tremendous clashes amidst the African society. It created conflicts between the African notion of conservatism and the European spirit of modernism. Achebe, however, did not expatiate upon the phenomenon of change but used it as another device for depicting his characters and adding more variety and insight into his writing.

To some extent, Achebe amply explores and develops the notion of change itself within the limits of conflicts of cultures. For him, change during the colonial period was a sort of alien phenomenon which did not follow a natural evolution, but was imposed and forced upon the African culture which strongly opposed it because it was oriented to destroy the African heritage and the African identity. In all, it was deleterious because it was not primarily based on a mutual agreement and upon understanding the African culture. Therefore conflicts and refusals were inevitable.

In Things Fall Apart, the tragedy of Okonkwo is accentuated by the very fact of cultural conflicts which put him in a quandary.

Achebe delineates attitudes actions and situations in which the Church, the mission school and/or the colonial administration are presented as elements of a conflicting change with the African culture.
Thus, Okonkwo declares after his return from exile:

The new religion and government and the trading store were very much in the people's eyes and minds. There were still many who saw these new institutions as evil.¹

Change has brought not only confusion but also disintegration, differences and disunity within the African people and their community. Consider how Achebe presents such cultural barriers and clashes when Obierika says to Okonkwo:

"Does the white man understand our custom about our land."
"How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one.²

Okonkwo does not accept the fact of change to the detriment of the old order of his forefathers. Hanging himself after slaying a white messenger is a symbol of this refusal and his unyielding attachment to Ibo conservatism and conformism. The destruction and annihilation of Okonkwo is to some extent the destruction of his values and the whole cultural system by which he lived. Okonkwo is the victim of his own cultural beliefs and cultural norms which entangle him as soon as he comes into direct confrontation with the colonial intrusion. Even his ambition was motivated by the values of his culture. Above all, he fails to reconcile himself, first, with the complexities of his own culture,

¹ Achebe, Things Fall Apart, p. 67.
² Ibid., p. 162.
and secondly, with the Western culture. All these elements are manifested in his fear and his obstinate rejection of his father's personality, the beating of his wife during a sacred week, his taking part in the slaying of Ikemefuna, and finally his beheading the white messenger. His failure to compromise destroys him (like Ezeulu), for he believes that compromise is cowardice. He sees that the white man has offended the Ibo society; therefore, he kills him. His own death is, ironically, a triumph of change which his son, Nwoye, has already accepted by being converted to the new religion. Eventually, the white man is held responsible for much of the culture's turmoil and the individual's tragic desperation: "That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog," ¹ says Obierika to the District Commissioner before the dead body of Okonkwo.

In No Longer at Ease, the theme of change is embodied in Obi's and Clara's education. Obi comes back home from England only to defy some of the traditional norms. He has been converted to the new civilization: he has earned a degree in English, and now agrees to marry an 'Osu,' Clara. On the other hand, his friend, Joseph asks him the way he is going to marry: "Are you going to marry the English way or are you going to ask your people to approach her people according to customs?" ² However, Obi replies that he will take the lead, initiating his people

¹ Ibid., p. 191.
² Achebe, No Longer at Ease, p. 75.
into the Western culture. He has bought a ring for Clara about which Joseph objects again:

What is an engagement ring? Our fathers did not marry with rings. It is not too late to change. Remember you are the one and only Umuofia son to be educated overseas. We do not want to be like the unfortunate child who grows his first tooth and grows a decayed one...and if one finger brings oil it soils the others... What you are going to do concerns not only yourself but your whole family and future generations.¹

As for Arrow of God, about Ezeulu's stand towards the factor of change, Achebe wrote:

....as a priest; -he goes to the roots of things, and he is ready to accept change, intellectually. He sees the values of change and therefore his reaction to Europe is different, from Okonkwo's. He is ready to come to terms with the new—...except when his dignity is involved.²

There are other subjects which Achebe dealt with, more or less, such as corruption, oppression, education, marriage, homecoming, death, politics and war, past and present. The theme of corruption, however, includes both Africans and Europeans, for example the corruption of Mr. Clarke, Wright and Obi. In addition, Achebe has used Obi Okonkwo, who represents the subject of homecoming, for exploring the young African elite which is trapped by the conflicting demands of two different worlds.

The oppression he has treated is not like that of South African

¹ Ibid., p. 75.
writers, but a colonial oppression aimed at making people cooperate with the colonial administration. Ezeulu's incarceration, the whipping of Obika and the cause of Okonkwo's death are but forms of colonial oppression.

Nevertheless, in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, the colonial system of education, according to Achebe, has alienated the African by nurturing a sense of subservience, self-hatred and mutual suspicion. In all, it has uprooted some people from the masses such as Enoch, Oduche and Goodcountry.

The style of *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease* and *Arrow of God*, is by no means a minor aspect of the novelist's craftsmanship. In fact, it ranks among the most significant elements of his novels, especially in that the medium of expression Achebe has used is not Ibo, but English acquired as a result of the British occupation. Hence, conflicts of cultures within the linguistic context are inevitable, for

Language is not merely a technique. It is the embodiment of its civilization and therefore represents or dramatizes modes of perception within its cultural grouping,¹ and language after all is a carrier of values fashioned by a people over a period of time.²

In essence, Achebe's use of language partly arises from his sense of cultural conflicts; he

...feels that the African writer while respecting and

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¹ Lloyd W. Brown, "Cultural Norms and Modes...in Achebe's Fiction," pp. 21-35.

adhering to this attribute of language should simultaneously fashion a "new English," still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surrounding.\footnote{Ngugi, \textit{Homecoming}, p. 16.}

From the above quotations, one can see that Achebe is preoccupied with language because not only is it a device of communication, but also it is a means of expression of cultural values and human experience, the paramount medium of carrying and expressing human experiences. Above all, Achebe strove to 'Africanize' the English language, in other words, to make it express the African thought, the African cultural and historical experiences, the 'African image.'


To express his good intentions and manhood, Okonkwo says to Nwakibie: "The lizard that jumped from the iroke tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did."\footnote{Achebe, \textit{Things Fall Apart}, p. 24.} And in turn, Nwakibie, in the form of a proverb, explains to him why he is so careful and stingy about his yam: "Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching."\footnote{Ibid., p. 24.}
In *Arrow of God*, Ezeulu's character and wisdom are partly deduced from his frequent command and manipulation of proverbs either to explain things or to warn his people. Thus, before the villagers wage war on Okperi, he makes it clear that, as an elder and leader, he has to tell them that this war is fraught with danger. He says: "When an adult is in the house the she-goat is not left to suffer the pains of parturition on its tether."¹

Some of the proverbs that Achebe has used in *Arrow of God* are about Ezeulu. Most of them, however, indicate the conflicts which take place within his community and with the new European culture around him:

...a toad does not run in the day unless something is after it. (p. 25)
...when the roof and walls of a house fall in, the ceiling is not left standing. (p. 105)
...whatever tune you play in the compound of a great man there is always someone to dance to it. (p. 124)
...if a man sought for a companion who acted entirely like himself he would live in solitude. (p. 114)
...the lizard who threw confusion into his mother's funeral rite did he expect outsiders to carry the burden of honouring his dead. (p. 155)
...a man who brings ant-ridden faggot into his hut should expect the visit of lizards. (p. 178)

Such proverbs tell us much about Ezeulu's conflicting personality and the conflicts of values which are facing him as the Chief Priest of

Ulu. But not only that, they provide clues to differences and opinions of characters and their outlooks in setting one apart from the other. Above all, "Achebe's proverbs can serve as keys to an understanding of his novels because he uses them not merely to add touches of local colour but to sound and reiterate themes, to sharpen characterization, to clarify conflict, and to focus on the values of the society he is portraying."

Achebe has borrowed from his Ibo vernacular and cultural experiences:

"He grew rapidly like a yam tendril in the raining season." (T.F.A., p. 51)

"She held out her hand to him and he took it—all bone skin like a bat's wing." (N.L.A.E., p. 127)

"...Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water." (T.F.A., p. 7)

"Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire in the harmattan." (Ibid)

In all three books one encounters several Ibo and Yoruba words or expressions such as: 'ndichie,' 'agbada,' 'Obi,' 'Ani,' 'Osu,' 'Aru,' 'Oyim de de de dei!,' 'Umuofia kwenu,' 'Ori oda,' 'ajare, jeje.'

Indeed fables are repeated or summed up in borrowing from the oral traditional literature which runs through Achebe's 'trilogy,' (least of all in No Longer at Ease because of the urban modern life Lagos):

Once there was a great wrestler whose back had never

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known the ground. He wrestled from village to village until he had thrown every man in the world. Then he decided that he must go and wrestle in the land of spirits, and become champion there as well....

In *No Longer at Ease*, Achebe has resorted to the use of 'pidgin English,' frequently in the speech of servant characters. This is due to the urban life and the direct exposure of some 'illiterates' to educated people such as Obi (African) and British officers and administrators. Thus, Obi's driver says to a trader in Lagos:

> Weting I been de eat all afternoon? I no fit understand this kind sleep. Na true say I no sleep last night, but that no be first time I been do um.

And Winterbottom's steward says about his master's illness: "I use to tell am say blackman juju no be something wey man fit take play. But when I tell am na so so laugh im de laugh."

In conclusion, one can safely say that all Achebe's plots, themes, characterization, style and settings were directly or indirectly shaped by the conflicts of cultures which he put as 'a crisis in the soul.' This is true as well of Cheikh Hamidou Kane, and of Ferdinand Oyono. But their manners of expression and focus of their attention differ from Achebe's in very significant and diverse detail.

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2 Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, p. 45.

CHAPTER II

Cheikh Hamidou Kane (1928), a Senegalese Muslim novelist, belongs to the generation of David Diop, Olymp Bhely Quenum and Camara Laye. Like many African writers and intellectuals in French, he experienced the cold hostility of the Western milieu of Paris where he led, for some years, a life of isolation, of being dépayssé. It was also in Paris that the movement of Négritude first arose and flourished. Therefore, he was, more or less, influenced by its teaching. As he has implied:

...This flag of Négritude was something that we had no choice but to raise at a certain given moment in our evolution. I do not reject it; I do not deny its utility. We had, at some point, to make ourselves. ¹

Kane's only novel, L'Aventure Ambiguë (1961), is an allegoric account of Samba Diallo, the hero, who, after a spiritual education in the Senegalese Islamic system, goes to join the new colonial school in order to learn "...de lier le bois au bois...pour faire des édifices de bois." ² At the white school he shows great academic progress which eventually leads him to pursuing his studies of philosophy.

¹ Négritude came into being in the 30's. It was developed in Paris by a group of both African and West Indies students, such as Aime Cesaire and Leopold Sedar Senghor, and Leon Dama.


³ Cheikh Hamidou Kane, L'Aventure Ambiguë (Paris: René Julliard, 1961), p. 163. All quotations throughout this chapter come from this novel unless indicated by a footnote.
In Paris Samba Diallo realizes that he is being alienated from both his African and French cultures. He feels himself living in a state of vacuity and even of loss, since he begins to forget the Koranic verses and can no longer adequately perform his prayers. About his new life in Paris he says:

$Ici, maintenant, le monde est silencieux, et je ne résonne plus. Je suis comme un balafon crevé, comme un instrument de musique mort. J'ai l'impression que plus rien ne me touche.$

(p. 163)

Fearing the impact of the Western education upon his son's faith his father, the Chevalier, writes to Samba Diallo ordering him to return home immediately.

Back home Samba Diallo finds himself unable to adjust to the old strict religious environment in which he received his first training from an enthusiastic master named Thierno, and from whom he is supposed to assume the spiritual leadership of the Diallobes.

The fool (a minor but significant character who had become insane in the war against the French) insistently begs Samba Diallo to go to the mosque and lead the prayer. He cannot fathom Diallo's reply: "Mais non, je ne suis pas le maitre...Et puis, je ne vais pas a la mosquee." (p. 178) The fool stabs Diallo for refusing. Samba Diallo dies of the wounds.

$L'Aventure Ambigue$, set between Africa (Senegal) and France (Paris), is a journey between two different worlds: physical and metaphysical. The explicit theme of this novel is based on the conflicts of cultures of these worlds, a theme which is developed mainly through charaterization
and the philosophical thought of the characters.

As a matter of fact, Samba Diallo is introduced into a metaphysical world from his early age in the country of the Diallobes. Following the tradition, he is sent to the Koranic School where he becomes profoundly moved by the Islamic faith and its mystic teaching. He learns to recite the Koranic words without even understanding their meaning, and whenever he fails to do so, he is harshly tortured for having profaned the sacred Word. Thus, the master reminds him vehemently:

Sois précis en répétant la Parole de ton Seigneur... Il t'a fait la grâce de descendre son Verbe jusqu'à toi... Et toi, miserable moisissure de la terre, quand tu as l'honneur de les répéter après Lui, tu le négliges au point de les profaner. Tu mérites qu'on te coupe mille fois la langue..." (p. 14)

Nevertheless, Samba Diallo's soul has become obsessed by the bewitching power of the Word; and its spells take him far into accepting its occult impact without question:

Cette phrase qu'il ne comprenait pas, pour laquelle il souffrait le martyre, il l'aimait pour son mystère et sa sombre beauté. Cette parole n'était pas comme les autres. C'était une parole venue de Dieu, elle était telle que Dieu Lui-même l'avait prononcée." (p. 14)

From a point of view of mysticism, "la Parole" becomes for him not a mere representation of words, but also the very expression of the universe and its harmony: "Cette parole qu'il enfantait dans la douleur était l'architecture du monde, elle était le monde même." (p. 15) In turn, Samba Diallo is considered by the master as a prodigy and a gift from Allah, "Ce enfant, véritablement, était un don de Dieu." (p. 15) Gradually, Samba Diallo is immersed into a metaphysical world of his own.
He acquires new values about the significance of death around which the spiritual world revolves according to Diallo's preaching: "On meurt facilement, car la mort est violente, négation qui s'impose. Que la mort dés à présent familière à vos esprits." (p. 24)

His attachment to the values of the other life drives him to seek for more inspiration in the world of death, that is, in the cemetery where his friend, the old Rella, is buried. Therefore his scope of mental vision about the metaphysical realm embraces the natural elements too, such as the sunset which is imbued with a meaning of death, so too the twilight, the stars, the moon and the course of day and night. He even begins to probe into the "world of existentialism" and decides that God and life are distinct and separate entities of which God is the constant: "Il y a Dieu et il y a la vie, qui ne sont pas nécessairement confondus." (p. 107)

Once in Paris, Samba Diallo steps into the Western materialism and is thrust into Descartes' Les Méditations Métaphysiques and Pascal's Les Pensees. About the latter, his father, the Chevalier, warns him in advance: "Il avait douté. Lui aussi a connu l'exil." (p. 103)

It is an exile which will beset Samba Diallo in turn. He is overcome by the confusion of Paris which makes him yearn for his early childhood when he was fully himself. With nostalgia permeated by a sense of search for the "moi," he looks into the past in order to locate his newly shaped "self" which the Western education has propelled into a state of ambiguity and negation. Above all, like the African past, Samba Diallo has already undergone dramatic change. He is faced by two ambivalent
and unreconcilable worlds which are driving him into different and conflicting directions; and as Sunday 0. Anozie argues, Sambo Diallo's ambiguity has been produced specifically by the painful shock between the European technological ethic and the African cosmomythic values.

Furthermore, Samba Diallo has been chosen as a spiritual and temporal leader of the Diallobes. Thus, he becomes the main focus of a pertinent controversy between the inevitable confrontation of the African spiritual world on one hand, and the materialism of the West on the other. Besides, he has been sent to the European school only to help secure a physical perpetuation of the Diallobe's tribe. "Il faut aller apprendre chez eux l'art de vaincre sans avoir raison." (p. 47)

In Paris too, Samba Diallo is flung into a tragic and complex situation of "loss-of self" and cultural identity. His sense of alienation deepens into distress. In a conversation with Pierre Louis, a self-exiled African, Samba Diallo expresses his metaphysical concern over the feeling of void (néant) and absence of life in the streets of Paris, which are cluttered with machines instead. Thus, he says to Pierre:

Je ne sais si vous avez ressenti parfois cette impression poignante de vacuité que donnent les rues de cette ville-par ailleurs si bruyante cependant. Il y a une grande absence, on ne sait de quoi." (p. 161)

Under such circumstances, Samba Diallo, who has been taught to live at the core of things, is actually confronted with a type of life which makes him live apart from himself. In all, he is almost severed from

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everything related to the continuity and soul of the spiritual universe, and from death in particular:

Il me semble qu'au pays des Diallobe l'homme est plus proche de la mort... Tandis qu'ici, la mort m'est redevenue une étrangère. Tout le combat, la refoule loin des corps et des esprits. Je l'oublie. Quand je la cherche avec ma pensée, je ne vois qu'un sentiment désseché, une éventualité abstraite... Il me semble encore qu'en venant ici, j'ai perdu un mode de connaissance privilégiée. Jadis le monde m'était comme la demeure de mon père." (pp. 162-3); but now "...je me sens étranger aussi, dans ce pays." (p. 161)

In essence, Samba Diallo has become something else. Both his spiritual vision and thought have undergone tremendous change. He has assimilated a new type of culture which, in turn, has robbed him of his religious convictions and cultural personality. He has become divided between two opposite worlds. All in all, he becomes unknown to himself. A feeling of ambiguity of 'being' overwhelms him:

Je ne suis pas un pays des Diallobe, face a un Occident distinct... Je suis devenu les deux. Il n'y a une tête lucide entre deux termes d'un choix. Il y a une nature étrange, en détresse de n'être pas deux." (p. 164)

When he is heaving the last sigh of life, he declares again: "Je suis deux voix simultanées. L'une s'éloigne et l'autre croit. Je suis seul. Le fleuve monte je déborde... (p. 190)

In every way, through his quest and spiritual exploration, Samba Diallo develops a metaphysical solitude in relation to himself, to other people and lastly to God. However, this solitude has resulted from his adhesion to values different from his own. Samba Diallo is searching for and preoccupied with finding some kind of identity and individuality. It is an internal solitude, an individual ontological insecurity and a fear of losing one's identity. His resistance against the French
assimilation proves futile. By the end, he finds himself resting in an uneasy isolation and saddling two cultures: African and Western. Eventually the tragic loss is attained when he ponders, only to realize that he is done for: "Les ténèbres me gagnent. Je ne brûle plus au coeur des êtres et des choses." (p. 174) Thus he discovers the incompatibility of these two journeys (African and Western) on which he has embarked. He perceives that his existence and equilibrium remain at the edge of them. So where can he find a solution to the burning and puzzling problem of which he is an inseparable part? Lucienne, a French student and a friend of Samba Diallo, has tried to convert him to communist ideology; but he rejects it reluctantly: "Moi, je ne combats pas pour la liberté, mais pour Dieu." (p. 154) In reply she says: "Je sais maintenant que ta Négritude te tient à cœur." (p. 155) Adèle, a daughter of a self-exile African admonishes him to hate the white man, but he objects dismissing this solution. He says simply "Il ne faut les haïr." (p. 173)

After his return to Africa he is accused of having forgotten too much of the essential values of his African heritage. He is struck down by a madman. Therefore, his "homecoming" is a tragic one and his death bears metaphysical and spiritual significance. It is a solution for his "ambiguous adventure" and for his exiled soul:

Salut! Gout retrouvé du lait maternel, mon frère demeure au pays de l'ombre et de la paix, je te reconnais. Annonciateur de fin d'exil, je te salue. (p. 190)

Thus Kane's hero appears to be a victim of cultural "assimilation" and cultural conflicts he experienced both in Africa and Europe. And to some extent, his death is a small symbol of the Western victory over
Africa. Moreover, Kane has produced a "philosophy" of the individual hero within the context of conflicts of culture. Thus, "L'histoire de la vie de Samba Diallo est une histoire sérieuse." (p. 62)

Nevertheless, Samba Diallo is not the only character around whom the conflicts of cultures take place and interact.

The old master, Thierno, is exponent of a strict and rigid philosophy of thought and traditional conservatism. He is the carrier of tradition and strongly believes in the holiness of the Word. For him, man should not be exalted in this life. He must devote himself to the worship of God alone: "Le maître pensait que l'homme n'a aucune raison de s'exalter sauf précisément dans l'adoration de Dieu." (p. 33) Thierno, a marabout (saint), is the spiritual leader of the Diallobes and is the only teacher of their children. Kane describes him as a man physically weak and frail who does not indulge himself in any other activity outside prayer and tilling the field for food:

L'homme était vieux, maigre et émacié, tout desséché par ses macérations. Il ne riait jamais... Le maître était un homme redoutable à beaucoup d'égard. Deux occupations remplissaient sa vie: les travaux de l'esprit et des champs... le reste de son temps, il le consacrait à l'étude, à la méditation, à la prière et à la formation des jeunes confiés à ses soins. (p. 17)

The colonial penetration not only puzzles him but has put him in perplexity and brought him into direct conflict with Western thought and ideology. Since his values are based upon the spiritual domain and principles, he feels horrified by, and then rejects the materialistic teaching of the European institution, because it is not only aimed at doing away with poverty and improving the human condition economically, but also aims at
fighting God's religion: "J'ai appris qu'au pays des blancs, la révolte contre la misère ne se distingue pas de la révolte contre Dieu." (p. 21)

However, he does not escape the psychological dualism imposed on him by the conflicts between the religious beliefs and the "matter" of the West. Thus he says to the Chevalier: "Il faut construire des demeures solides pour les hommes et il faut sauver Dieu à l'intérieur de ces demeures." (p. 21) Like his cherished student, Samba Diallo, the master is eventually caught between the grips of psychological and metaphysical ambiguity of thought. He is thus presented as a defeated character and a victim of the conflicts of cultures between the African and the European crisis of conscience.

The Chevalier, Samba Diallo's father, is a man who "...ne vit pas, il prie..." (p. 106) He is a man of dignity, stability and deep conviction. Yet, in spite of his strong spiritual beliefs, he is trapped in the dilemma between the Muslim African traditional system of education and the new invading Western conquest symbolized by the school:

Si je leur dis d'aller à l'école nouvelle, ils iront en masse. Ils apprendront toutes les façons de lier le bois au bois que ne nous savons pas. Mais apprenant, ils oublieront aussi. Ce qu'ils apprendront vaut-il ce qu'ils oublieront? ...peut-on apprendre ceci sans oublier cela, et ce qu'on apprend vaut-il ce qu'on oublie?
Si je ne dis pas aux Diallobe d'aller à l'école nouvelle, ils n'iront pas. Leurs demeures tomberont en ruine. Leurs enfants mourront ou seront réduits en esclavage. (p. 44)

From the above quotation, one can easily notice how the Western materialism sharply clashes with the African traditionalism, and how the African consciousness is affected by them. Consequently, the African is placed in an ambiguous existence and an ambivalence of choice. The Chevalier,
like his son, Samba Diallo, and the master, Thierno, is assailed by the sweeping invasion of the Western thought. "Je suis une pauvre chose qui tremble et qui sait pas," (p. 42) he tragically says to Thierno. Kane has made him a spokesman for the African ideology and the African culture. He is, to some extent, parallel to Lacroix who stands for the Western materialism and scientific development.

Another outstanding character and a real incarnation of cultural clashes is the Grande Royale (the most royal and respected woman of the Diallobes' family). She is totally opposed to Thierno's ascetic and spiritual teaching. She declares to Samba Diallo: "Le maître cherche à tuer la vie en toi." She is the eldest sister of the Chevalier and is the incarnation of modernism and an emancipated African woman. Contrary to her brother and Thierno, she is the proponent of change and flexibility of thought. Therefore, according to her teaching, the Diallobes must send their children to the European school in order to learn their ways. Moreover, "man" should live according to the demands imposed on him by change and time and not be a slave submissive to the values of an old lost and lethargic past. On the contrary, he should face the realities of his time with an open mind and learn not only how to pray but how to make a good living. Thus, she says about the new school:

...il faut aller apprendre chez eux l'art de vaincre sans avoir raison. Au surplus, le combat n'a pas cessé encore. L'école étrangère est la forme nouvelle de la guerre que nous font ceux qui sont venus, et il faut y envoyer notre élite, en attendant d'y pousser tout le pays. (p. 47)

The Grande Royale may also be a representation of the movement of the Muslim reformism which had been just recently developed among the elite,
educated in the metropole during (and after) the colonial occupation. Thus, in contrast to Thierno's spiritual teaching and the Chevalier's conservatism, she insists that the time has come to teach the new generation the art of life and the technology of the West:

Je crois que le temps est venu d'apprendre à nos enfants à vivre. Je pressens qu'ils auront affaire à un monde de vivants où les valeurs de morts seront bafouées et faillies. (p. 38)

Moreover, in spite of so many hesitations and the spiritual scepticism of the Chevalier and Thierno about sending the Diallobe's children to the white school, the Grande Royale is depicted as a woman who sees that the phenomena of change are inevitable. She argues that is why the Africans should sacrifice a part of themselves and make compromises in order to affront the torrential currents of today's ideas. Besides, traditional Africa has to accept and come to terms with the fact of change imposed on her by historical circumstances, such as the colonial school:

L'école où je pousse nos enfants tuera en eux ce qu'aujourd'hui nous aimons et conservons avec soin, à juste titre...ce que je propose c'est ce que nous acceptions de mourir en nos enfants et que les étrangers qui nous ont défaits prennent en eux toute la place que nous auront laissée libre. (p. 57)

Ironically, Oemba is chosen as Thierno's successor. Unlike his master and Samba Diallo, he is in favour of change and modernism "Mieux que tout autre, il saura accueillir le monde nouveau." (p. 133) He is the advocate of change and reformism. With his election to the rank of a spiritual leader, the European education will be assured and entrenched:

À la fin de la prière, Demba déclara qu'à partir du lendemain, il modifiera les horaires du foyer. Ainsi tous les parents qui le voudraient pourraient envoyer leurs fils à l'école étrangère. (p. 134)
Cheikh Hamidou Kane's characters are, after all, understandable people. However, his characterization tends to be designed for one pedagogical goal. In other words, his characters stand for philosophical ideas and intellectual exploration in the realm of cultural clashes between African and European civilizations. Thus, they become types and symbols rather than incarnate people. Thierno and the Chevalier represent African conservatism and Islamic mysticism; the Grande Royale, Demba and Lucienne are advocates of change and innovation; and above all Samba Diallo is the archetype of a spiritual and metaphysical exploration of both the values of life and death.

As the above review of plot and characters reveals, the subject-matter of L'Aventure Ambigue is the conflict of culture on an intellectual plane. L'Aventure Ambigue is a spiritual journey through a series of psychological and metaphysical oppositions. It is the development of a revolt, of a protest within the "self." Samba Diallo's adventure is not limited to his own experience alone, but it is a clear course imposed upon a whole people. In essence, the "adventure" is a culture's adventure.

In L'Aventure Ambigue, the subject of colonialism is pervasive. In addition, Cheikh Hamidou Kane has presented an analysis of colonialism which is strictly 'cultural' (rather than economic or political). The colonial situation is analyzed essentially as a cultural encounter between Africa and Europe. The traditional system of education conflicts with the modernism of the Western school. While the former emphasizes the spiritual values and the fundamental respect of the old customs, the
latter preaches the values of life governed by materialism. In other words, the materialistic rationalism of the West does not agree with the intuitive spiritualism of Africa. According to the West, 'nature' must be controlled for the benefit of humanity whereas Muslim Africa affirms that man has to obey the natural order and grandeur, that is, to search for profound meaning of the world by means of contemplating the least aspect of 'nature.' However, in Kane's exposition both ways seem to be replete with the tyranny and alienation, of which man is the victim, either the metaphysical tyranny and the vacuity of the absolutism of African spirituality, or the technocratic tyranny of the West. A conversation between the Chevalier and Lacroix illustrates the contrast:

L'univers que la science a révélé à l'Occident est moins immédiatement humain...Votre science vous a révélé un monde rond et parfait, au mouvement infini. Elle l'a reconquis sur le chaos. Mais je crois que, aussi, elle vous a ouvert au désespoir...

"...Notre monde est celui qui croit à la fin du monde."

...Votre science est le triomphe de l'évidence...Elle fait de vous les maîtres de l'extérieur mais elle vous y exile, de plus en plus. (pp. 88-89-90)

In reply to the Chevalier, Lacroix ponders over the African world:

Etrange songeait Lacroix, cette fascination du néant sur ceux qui n'ont rien. Leur néant, ils l'appellent l'absolu. Ils tournent le dos à la lumière, mais ils regardent fixement l'ombre. Est-ce que cet homme n'est pas sensible à sa pauvreté? (p. 90)

Another character, who represents destruction of the Africans by Europe, is the fool who describes the dehumanization of the West by "la matière," telling the master about his experience in Europe:

Maitre, ils n'ont plus de corps, ils n'ont plus de chair. Ils ont été mangés par les objets. Pour se mouvoir, ils chaussent leurs corps de grands objets rapides. Pour se nourrir, ils mettent entre leurs mains et leur bouche des objets en fer... (pp. 182-3)
Thus, Samba Diallo's "ambiguous adventure" is a vivid example of the tyrannies of these two conflicting cultural forces.

Cheikh Hamidou Kane's concerns, however, are not limited to conflicts of culture alone. He has also dealt, more or less, with themes of conflicts within the society, solitude, conflict between generations, the incompatibility of work and God, the relation of the mind to the body and existentialist humanism. Like characterization, the themes of L'Aventure Ambigue are developed within the context of conflicting cultures.

Unlike Achebe, Kane does not make use of oral African literature. Instead, his style derives its power from being typically 'French style,' permeated with sundry philosophical analyses and a metaphysical approach and tone. Very often, L'Aventure Ambigue reads like Plato's The Republic. As a matter of fact, Kane has relied heavily on the dialogue and argumentation which make up the bulk of his book. However, the dialogue is not only employed by characters with one another, but also between a character and his 'self,' particularly in the cases of Samba Diallo, the master and the Chevalier.¹

Kane has been partly influenced by the Koran and Islamic mysticism and thought. As examples of this influence we have Samba Diallo's, Thierno's and the Chevalier's prayers:

a) Seigneur, n'abandonne jamais l'homme qui s'éveille en cet enfant, que la plus petite mesure de ton empire ne le quitte pas... (p. 16)

¹ For examples, see pp. 88-90, 94, 188-9.
b) Je témoigne qu'il n'y a de divinite que Dieu et je témoigne que Mohamed est son prophete. (p. 41)

c) Le Prophete-la bénéédiction soit sur lui a dit: Vous irez chercher la Science, s'il le faut, jusqu'en Chine. (p. 134)

Nevertheless, the conflicts of cultures of L'Aventure Ambiguë are built up through its style. The drama of life and death, destruction and alienation, cultural confrontation and search for identity are all conveyed in graphic and symbolic images dexterously handled by Hamidou Kane. For instance, the idea of Samba Diallo's journey through his 'ambiguous adventure' is introduced by the image of the river with which Kane opens and ends his book:

Deux ans auparavant, le garçonnet revenait avec son père, par la voie du fleuve, d'un long voyage à travers les capitales du Diallobe... (p. 18)

In order to describe the overwhelming religious atmosphere and intensity of the master's and Samba Diallo's spirituality, Kane uses the images of burning fire, such as:

"Foyers ardents" (p. 19); "Je veux aller au Foyer Ardent." (p. 54); "Je ne brûle plus..." (p. 174); "...ce jour-là, rien n'était monté vers le ciel, ni la flamme du foyer..." (p. 94)

In addition, the cultural conflicts and atmospheres are mostly conveyed by depictions of natural landscapes and natural modes. For instance, the touchy conversation between the Chevalier and Lacroix concerning the differences between the African and the Western civilizations opens like this:

À l'horizon, il semblait que la terre aboutissait à un gouffre. Le soleil était suspendu, dangereusement, au-dessus de ce gouffre. L'argent liquide de sa chaleur s'était résorbé, sans que sa lumière eut rien perdu de son éclat. L'air était seulement teinte de rouge et, sous cet éclairage,
la petite ville soudain paraissait appartenir à une planète étrange. (p. 86)

Furthermore, Samba Diallo's death is skillfully implied through the cosmic archetypes of the sunset, its colour of blood, the stillness of trees and the tragic silence of natural life:

A l'horizon, le soleil couchant avait teint le ciel de pourpre sanglante. Pas un souffle n'agitait les arbres immobiles. On n'entendait que la grande voix du fleuve, repurcutee par ses berges vertigineuses. Samba Diallo tourna son regard vers cette voix et vit, au loin, la falaise d'argile. Il se souvint qu'en son enfance, il avait longtemps cru que cette immense crevasse partageait l'univers en deux parties que soudait le fleuve. (p. 184)

Within the context of conflicts of cultures, the style of L'Aventure Ambigué is replete with symbolism and similar stylistic devices. For example, the antagonism of Europe with Africa is seen through Samba Diallo's intellectual, spiritual and metaphysical dilemma. Thus, the conflict of the West with Africa has created not only cultural conflicts but psychological solitude and existentialist schism in the African soul and individuality.

In essence, the style of L'Aventure Ambigué is a lyric poetic prose of which chapter ten contains a good example:

L'instant est le lit du fleuve de ma pensée. Les pulsations des instants ont le rythme des pulsations de la pensée; le souffle de la pensée se coule dans la sarbacane de l'instant. Dans la mer du temps, l'instant porte l'image du profil de l'homme, comme le reflet du kailcedrat sur la surface brillante de la lagune. Dans la forteresse de l'instant, l'homme, en vérité, est roi, car sa pensée est toute-puissante, quand elle est. Ou elle a passé, le pur azur cristallise en formes. Vie de l'instant, vie sans âge de l'instant qui dure, dans l'envoie de ton elan indéfiniment l'homme se crée. Au coeur de l'instant, voici que l'homme est immortel, car l'instant est infini, quand il est. La pureté de l'instant est faite de l'absence du temps. Vie de l'instant, vie sans âge qui règne, dans l'arène lumineuse de ta durée, infiniment l'homme se déploie. La mer! Voici la
Cheikh Hamidou Kane has raised the conflicts of cultures beyond the social, individual, collective and spiritual dilemma to the philosophical level. By introducing the metaphysical elements of two disparate civilizations, Hamidou Kane has indeed written both a tragic and philosophical novel which attempts to come to terms with powerful psychological and metaphysical values of traditional Africa. The illegitimate marriage of Africa with Europe has produced traumatic and deep offspring in the African soul, such as ambiguity and 'dedoublement.' In his own words Kane stated this:

Dechirés d'être doubles, Africains de coeur et de sang, Européens de formation et de pensée. Ils cherchent leur équilibre entre deux mondes. La plus part sont dans ce cas, dans cette angoisse. Puissent-ils résoudre le dilemme: rester eux-mêmes ou se perdre...¹

¹ R. J. Medou, "Il nous faut mener notre culture nationale..." p. 6.
CHAPTER III

Ferdinand Oyono (1929) is a Cameroonian writer. His novels, Une Vie de Boy (1956), Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille (1956) and Chemin d'Europe (1960) deal with the Cameroonian colonial experience. Like Achebe and Kane, Oyono has based his novels upon the conflicts of cultures. The theme is evident in his characterization, actions and style. Moreover, Oyono's approach is quite different from both Achebe's and Kane's. But in all three books, we find that Oyono's world is sharply split into two very opposing camps: African and European. In addition, all other themes revolve around the conflicts between these camps.

Une Vie de Boy is the story of a young boy, Joseph Toundi, who runs away from his African home and his father's rigidity and cruelty in order to seek refuge in the white man's shelter. Thus he happens upon a life of subservience under white 'fathers' and administrators. Fascinated by the white man's world, he totally devoted himself to masters, Father Gilbert and the Commandant. They, in turn, treat him with utter harshness and contempt. Nevertheless, Toundi dies bitterly disappointed and disillusioned. He has come to see reality and the irreparable blunder of believing white men sincere and just in their offer of equality to the African people.

Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille is about a well respected elder, Meka, of the village, Doum. A faithful Christian and illusioned friend of the French colonial government, Meka has given his land to the 'Church' and sacrificed his two sons in the French war. In return, Meka is to be
given a paltry medal by the 'Greatest Chief' as a symbol of the white man's friendship and 'fraternity.' The prospect of this event earns Meka more social status, prestige and respect among his people from near and wide. But on the day of the ceremony, Meka is exposed to the most difficult trial of his life: he has to remain standing still within a small painted circle under the strokes of a burning sun. In addition, he is unbearably pained by his new pinching leather shoes, and by his need to relieve himself.

Just after the ceremony of the 'medal,' Meka, dead drunk with the French whisky, is left alone in the Foyer Africain, the 'African Center,' which almost buries him alive during a stormy night. While staggering home, in the midst of flowing waters and mud, where he has lost his medal, Meka is arrested by the police for loitering in the white neighborhood. Then, he is jailed, humiliated and tortured in spite of his 'medal' of friendship with the white man.

Like Toundi, Meka eventually realizes the folly of believing in the colonial world's friendship and culture. He recovers his awareness; and disillusioned, he goes back to his African, Cameroonian culture.

Chemin d'Europe tells the life of a young Cameroonian student, Aki Barnabas, who has just earned a primary school certificate. Falsely accused of being a homosexual, Barnabas is expelled from the seminar. He embarks on a life of vagrancy and frustrations, a life which takes him through a series of temporary jobs. With Mr. Kriminopoulos he works as a shopman or rather as a rabatteur (beater-up). Disappointed with Kriminopoulos' treatment, he is chosen as preceptor of the white Gruchet's
daughter. New hopes elate his heart with new prospects. He becomes blindly fond of the French culture to the detriment of his African customs. He tries to play the 'Don Juan' with Madame Gruchet—who is totally neglected by her own husband—but he fails.

Nevertheless, Barnabas' expectations grow higher and higher: he wants to go to France "...pour devenir quelqu'un." He applies for a scholarship from the Government but in vain awaits an answer. Meanwhile, he works as 'guide' for tourists in the 'Hotel de France.'

Presently he moves to the capital, Yaounde, where he plans to seek new ways and means to make his pilgrimage to the metropole. Finally, in the South of Yaounde, he happens upon a Christian Mission, 'La Renaissance Spirituelle,' which will open 'le chemin d'Europe' for him!

In Une Vie de Boy, Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille and Chemin d'Europe, Oyono has revealed and denounced the hypocrisy of the Christian Missionaries. He has also shown the social, religious and cultural conflicts the 'Christian Mission' has produced in the African milieu.

Father Gilbert of Une Vie de Boy seduces the Cameroonian children into his 'church' by distributing or throwing cubes of sugar to them. Thus Toundi recalls this seductive experience: "Il nous lançait ses petits cubes sucrés comme on jette du grain aux poulets." Father Gilbert

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has not only converted Toundi, but also made him "...un boy qui sait lire et écrire, servir la messe, dresser le couvert, balayer sa chambre, faire son lit..."¹ and does not spare kicking him too.

Moreover, the Africans are not allowed to distillate or drink the indigenous wine, Arki, but are permitted to buy and drink the French imported wine. Even the 'Church' condemns the drinking of the native liquor. In this respect, Oyono depicts the hypocrisy of the priests, such as the Reverend Pere Vandermayer who "...avait eu vite fait de condamner cette boisson qui, disait-il, noircissait les dents et l'âme de ses paroissiens."² Ironically, Meka, the good example of a devoted Christian, does not hesitate to take some Arki wine at Mama Titi's place, just before meeting the Commandant.

Nevertheless, we notice that the Church (by deception and hypocrisy) is not only used for christianizing the Africans but also used as an effective means of buttressing the colonial administration, and French economic exploitation. It is presented as an institution not only of hypocritical principles but also of torture and cruelty. Instead of helping to save the lives of African prisoners, and to condemn the colonial injustice, the Christian priest just preaches to his converted Cameroonians: "Mes chers enfants priez pour tous ces prisonniers qui meurent sans avoir fait la paix avec Dieu."³ Through his spokesman and

¹ Ibid., p. 24.
² Oyono, Le Vieux Nègre, p. 16.
³ Oyono, Une Vie de Boy, p. 115.
On ne peut avoir ce que j'ai vu sans trembler. C'était terrible. Je pense à tous ces prêtres, ces pasteurs, tous ces Blancs qui veulent sauver nos âmes et qui nous prêchent l'amour du prochain. Le prochain du Blanc n'est-il que son congénère? Je me demande, devant de pareilles atrocités, qui peut être assez sot pour croire encore à tous les boniments qu'on nous débite à l'Eglise et au Temple...

In addition, Father Vandermayer "...a la manie de battre les chrétiennes adultes, les indigènes bien-sur...Il les fait mettre nues dans son bureau."

Besides its being hypocritical and sadistic, the Church is segregationist. In the church the Africans are separated from the whites, usually in an unwholesome corner. Contrary to the African (at least Cameroon) traditional polygamy, the Church has introduced a new marital system of monogamy and celibacy of priests, such as Ignace Obebe, the Cameroonian catechist.

Furthermore, by devices of irony and laughter, Oyono scoffs at the Christian teaching. For example, Toundi deliberately and cleverly uses 'Christianity' as a laissez-passer into the white world and even uses it as a shield of innocence when the Commandant accuses him of theft. An ironic conversation runs between them as follows:

- Pourquoi n'es-tu pas un voleur?
- Parce que je ne veux pas aller en enfer.

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1 Ibid., p. 115.
2 Ibid., p. 25.
3 Une Vie de Boy, pp. 54, 55, 56; Le Vieux Nègre, p. 16, Chemin d'Europe, p. 52.
Le Commandant sembla sidéré par ma réponse...
- Où as-tu appris ça?
- Je suis Chrétien, mon Commandant, réponds-je en exhibant fièrement la médaille de saint Christophe que je porte à mon cou.
- Alors, tu n'es pas un voleur parce que tu ne veux pas aller en enfer?
- Oui, mon, Commandant.
- Comment est-ce, l'enfer?
- Ben, c'est les flammes, les serpents et Satan avec des cornes...
  J'ai une image de l'enfer dans mon livre de prière...Je... je peux vous le montrer.  

But being a Christian Meka's faith does not protect him against the sadistic hands of the guards to whom he shouts in pain: "-Je suis Chrétien, 0 gardes! Et le mensonge est proscrit dans la bouche qui reçoit le Seigneur...0 garde!" 

Hypocrisy, overt racism and oppression are emphasized by Oyono as basic to colonial rule, and hence to the conflicts of cultures which he treats.

The oppression of the colonial administration is introduced from the very beginning: before going to meet the Commandant, Meka's wife admonishes him not to be insolent with the guards: "Ne réponds pas aux gardes, tu sais bien qu'ils n'hésitent pas à brimer un homme mur et respectable comme toi..."

The European police, officers and administrators are delineated as

1 Oyono, Une Vie de Boy, p. 33.
3 Ibid., p. 11.
being sadistic, corrupt and racist people. In fact, they are Oyono's worst 'villains.' With regard to the cultural context, they fail to understand or respect the Cameroonian culture and its people. Instead, they despise, belittle and exploit them, and their presence has created social, religious and, above all, cultural gaps difficult for the Cameroonians to understand and adapt themselves to.

Moreover, the colonizers insulate themselves from the African community by dividing the land area of cities into separate sections. This geographical division parallels the social division between the two communities, such as the 'European quarter' and the 'African section.' Therefore, when Meka, the 'medalist,' is found in the quartier blanc, the 'white quarter,' he is apprehended, brutalized and jailed; when Toundi struggles to assimilate himself in the French society, he is rejected, tortured and finally destroyed. While the European quarter is protected, the African is abused and subjected to frequent police harassment and terrorizing raids. Such raids occur in Une Vie de Boy when Gosier d'Oiseau, a white police officer, invades the native quarter in search of Sophia, a white agricultural engineer's African mistress. The Africans are vividly presented as victims of the colonial occupation.

Similarly, at the Cercle Européen, Meka is bitterly mortified and considered a simple abject of ridicule and derision. In the eyes of Gosier d'Oseau, Meka is not a real man although he is highly respected by his people.

Moreover, the corruption of the colonial group is exposed from various angles. Mr. Fouconi, the chief administrator, "...vivait avec une
femme indigène qu'il cachait dans le magasin aux fournitures, au rez-de chaussée, quand il reçoit ses compatriotes.¹

In Une Vie de Boy, the district engineer has Sophia, a Cameroonian girl, as his mistress, whom he introduces to his friends as his cook. In Chemin d'Europe, Mr. Gruchet sleeps with native women while leaving his wife wriggling in seclusion and loneliness.

In addition, motivated by racial prejudices, the French colonizers do not admit that the blacks possess the same human characteristics as they themselves have. The French teacher, Salvain, is even scathingly rebuked for his siding and mingling with Africans and treating them as human fellows:

Vous êtes un traître, vous êtes un traître, monsieur Salvain...Depuis que vous êtes dans ce pays, vous menez une activité qui n'est pas digne d'un Français de France! Vous dressez les indigènes contre nous...Vous leur racontez qu'ils sont des hommes comme nous...²

In his turn, Gosier d'Oiseau, disapproves of those Africans who go to France; and in a derogatory tone, he states: "Pauvre France! Les Nègres sont maintenant ministres à Paris."³

Furthermore, "Les Blancs ont bouleversé les traditions dans ce pays."⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 55.
² Oyono, Une Vie de Boy, p. 80.
³ Oyono, Le Vieux Nègre, p. 82.
⁴ Ibid., p. 122.
The Church and the colonial administration are the most terrible machinery of such destruction and denigration of the Cameroonian traditional system. To give Meka a medal, they chose the 14th of July, a French national historical event—(which commemorates the taking over of La Bastille in 1789)—this event, however, has nothing to do with any Cameroonian historical event. In addition, they have alienated and assimilated the Cameroonian people, such as Toundi, Meka, Aki Barnabas, Akoma and Baklu.

The French colonizers have been so successful in subverting traditions that often unwittingly Africans themselves participate in the destruction. Thus, just before the presentation of the medal, Meka has ordered himself a suit of the vogue Zazou of Paris, and bought himself new French leather shoes; unfortunately "...les pieds de Meka n'avaient pas été faits pour pénétrer dans les chaussures des Blancs." Even the African names begin losing their importance because of the French influence: Binama's son is now called 'De Gaulle.'

In all, the French colonists' policy has gone so far in the abuse of African social, religious and cultural mores that they have upset the integral order. About this Essomba, a man of the village of Doum, remarks:

Je ne sais où vout les Blancs! ...Rien de ce que nous

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1 For the alienation and assimilation of Akoma and Baklu, see Une Vie de Boy, pp. 55-56, 123.

2 Oyono, Le Vieux Nègre, p. 87.

3 Ibid.
Nevertheless, Oyono's attacks and criticism are not confined to the French alone. He blames the Africans themselves because they have contributed much to the colonial penetration and to the denigration of their cultural heritage and values. Such are the cases with Meka, Toundi, Aki Barnabas and Akoma, to name just a few.

Oyono's criticism of the Africans is, however, tinged with feeling, with a deep sense of identity, and with regret and concern for his people. Because of particular focus on the conflicts of cultures, he does not, like Achebe, devote attention to a description of the integral social fabric existing before the invasion by Europeans.

The structure of the plot of Une Vie de Boy is based upon Toundi's journal, said to be translated from a native language, 'Ewondo.' Nevertheless, in it Toundi is adapted as both hero and narrator. It is entirely written in the first person singular. Toundi describes himself and others around him, whites and blacks, with sheer sincerity and without overt comment. The use of the diary with hero as narrator is, however, of great importance, for it provides a sense of realism. The colonial occupation with its varied consequences for Africa is presented as a real, lived historical experience. The immorality of the colonial society is described with minute details and graphic pictures.

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1 Ibid., pp. 167-8.
Toundi is like a 'pet' adopted by father Gilbert, then by the Commandant. His faithfulness, objectivity and observations are very convincing. As a child he is presented, at the beginning, as naive. But at the end he reaches a state of maturity and lucidity of thought. His second flight is a positive expression of the freedom of the individual, and his final refusal of the colonial world—which refuses to admit him—does not, however, mean his acceptance of the African traditions. Another search remains for him, that is, a search for a new direction of life, that of freedom: "Il faut que je me sauve... Je m'an irai en Guinée espagnole... M. Moreau ne m'aura pas," 1 says Toundi at the brink of his last agony.

Sophie, the black mistress of the white agricultural engineer, is the opposite of Toundi's naivety. Instead, she is frustrated and completely disappointed by the whites and their values. Her reaction and revolt against them are expressed in her flight after robbing the engineer. Nevertheless, her flight is ironic, for her salvation brings destruction upon Toundi whose revolt against the colonial dependence is mostly a psychological one. Thus, like Hamidou Kane's Samba Diallo, Toundi is a victim of the French civilization and cultural systems.

Similar to Things Fall Apart, Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille is both an individual and communal tragedy that happened in Doum. Like Toundi, Meka is naive and attracted to the white (French) world. His faithful collaboration with the colonial machinery is implied by the fact that

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1 Oyono, Une Vie de Boat, p. 185.
he has given his land to the Catholic church and his two sons to die in
a French war:

Tu as beaucoup fait pour faciliter l'œuvre de la France
dans ce pays. Tu as donné tes terres aux missionnaires, tu
avais donné tes deux fils à la guerre où ils ont trouvé une
mort glorieuse...Tu es un ami.1

Unlike his father who fought against the Europeans, Meka accepts and
welcomes their dominance. Like the young Toundi, he undergoes a tragic
experience which eventually brings him back to his senses once he faces
the stark truth of the white world. Finally, he goes back to his 'Afri-
canity' by confessing that he was deceived by the institution of the
French colonialism: "Nous ne pouvons rien sur ce qui est fait, les
Blancs sont toujours les Blancs."2

In Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille, two groups come into direct and
indirect conflict, but not in the realm of ideas and concepts as is the
case with L'Aventure Ambigue. Instead, Oyono presents cultural conflicts
reflected in actions and interactions between the Cameroonian people and
the colonial clique: Meka, Gosier d'Oiseau, Mr. Fouconi, Pere Vander-
mayer and Obebe Ignace.

And like Toundi, Meka is rejected by the very world he wants to make
his own. At the ceremony of the medal, he has placed himself in a
strange and intricate situation:

Il réalisa qu'il était dans une situation étrange. Ni

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Ibid., p. 186.
son grand-père, ni son père, ni aucun membre de son immense famille ne s'étaient trouvés, placés, comme lui, dans un cercle de chaux, entre deux mondes, le sien et celui de ceux qu'on avait d'abord appelés les fantômes quand ils étaient arrivés au pays. Lui, il ne se trouvait ni avec les siens ni avec les autres.

Meka's ambivalent journey and memories of the past give birth to a 'vrai Meka' who regains himself by losing faith in the imported values and the professed fraternity of the white:

....Puisqu'il me demande qui je suis, dis-lui que je suis le dernier des imbéciles qui croyait encore à l'amitié des Blancs.

In addition, in Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille there are patterns of assertion of the 'African identity' and features of Negritude in the way Meka eventually accepts his African values to the detriment of French culture and an assimilationist programmes of the colonial establishment.

On the other hand, Chemin d'Europe's plot is structured around the assimilated Aki Barnabas who is presented as a victim of both his innocent naïvete, and of the French education. He becomes bewitched by France about which he claims:

Je me sentais avec ce pays que je ne connaissais pas, et dont on m'avait appris à chanter le génie et la beauté depuis l'enfance, une affinité telle que je me demandais si je n'avais pas été français dans une existence antérieure...

Also France (ironically not Africa) is for Barnabas, the only possible

1 Ibid., pp. 95-6.

2 Ibid., p. 150.

3 Oyono, Chemin d'Europe, p. 45.
place where he can grow and develop himself fully. No wonder, then, that only in France, and not in Africa, can he "devenir quelqu'un." 

"J'avais décidé de partir pour l'Europe, France le seul pays où je puisse me réaliser."

In the above quotation, Oyono has explicitly revealed and attacked a psychological consequence of the French policy of assimilating the Africans. Worstc, Barnabas' internalization of assimilationist training does not help him fulfill his overwhelming expectation of 'chemin d'Europe.' Consequently, Chemin d'Europe is a plain and grim study of the deleterious effects of French colonization on the minds and souls of assimilated Cameroonians and assimilated Africans in general. Here again, the colonial experience is exposed, examined and attacked at the same time.

Thus, we can safely say that Une Vie de Boy, Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille and Chemin d'Europe are concerned with the single disintegration of individuals, Toundi, Meka, Aki Barnabas, who are confronted with colonial situations beyond their control. In all three books, we find the theme of colonial experience; and in all three, Oyono has skillfully traced the partition between the conflicting African European worlds. Moreover, the cruelty and hypocrisy of the French officers and Christian missionaries are bitterly denounced. All this is made more effective and more powerful by his mastery of a humorous, satiric style.

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1 Ibid., p. 145.

2 Ibid., p. 87.

3 For examples, see Chemin D'Europe, pp. 13, 23, 31, 45.
Oyono's humor is based upon irony and his unmatched, keen sense of observation. Laughter is achieved mainly through caricature, farce and sarcastic irony which he has used as effective weapons of indirect attack and criticism of the colonial world and the prejudices of its administration. Nevertheless, he does not spare any group: both Africans and Europeans are caricatured. Of his master, Toundi says:

Non maître était trapu. Ses jambes musclées ressemblent à celles d'un marchand ambulant. C'est le genre de personne que nous appelons souche d'acajou ...¹

Of Mrs. Salvain and Mrs. Gosier d'Oiseau he says:

Mme Salvain ressemblait à une lampe à huile qu'on aurait trainée au soleil...la femme du docteur paraît aussi plate qu'une pate violemment lancée contre un mur. Les grosses jambes de Mme Gosier d'Oiseau étaient empaquetées dans son pantalon comme du manioc dans une feuille de bananier.²

Moreover, the use of caricature is very significant in Oyono's novels, for it very successfully depicts characters, situations, ideas and modes of cultural conflicts, and revealing truth and criticism of colonialism. Thus, "La caricature est le procédé le plus courant, chez Oyono, pour démontrer une vérité caractériel ou sociale."³

In all, Oyono is a master of 'ironical twists' of situations and language, a technique in which he surpasses most of his African counterparts. Consider the ironic and sarcastic conversation between Toundi

¹ Oyono, Une Vie de Boy, p. 35.
² Ibid., p. 76.
and the Commandant's wife who asks him why he is not married (besides, this conversation reveals the racial hypocrisy and prejudices of the French colonialists).

-Es-tu marié?
-Non, Madame.
-Pourtant, tu gagnes assez d'argent pour t'acheter une femme...Tu dois fonder une famille...
Elle me sourit.
-Une famille et même une grande famille, hein?
-Peut-être, Madame, mais ni ma femme ni mes enfants ne pourront jamais manger et s'habiller comme Madame ou comme les petits Blancs...
-Mon pauvre ami, tu as la folie des grandeurs! dit-elle en s'esclaffant.
-Soyons sérieux, reprit-elle. Tu sais que la sagesse recommande à chacun de garder sa place...Tu es boy, mon mari est commandant...personne n'y peut rien. Tu es Chrétien, n'est-ce pas?
-Oui, Madame, Chrétien comme ça...
-Comment chrétien comme ça?
-Chrétien pas grand-chose, Madame. Chrétien parce que la preêtre m'a versé l'eau sur la tête en me donnant un nom de Blanc...
-Mais c'est incroyable, ce que tu me racontes là! Le Commandant m'avait pourtant dit que tu étais très croyant?
-Il faut bien croire comme ça aux histoires de Blancs...
-Ca alors!
Madame semblait suffoquée.
-Mais, reprit-elle, tu ne crois plus en Dieu?...Tu es... redevenu fétichiste?

In addition the Western science and technology and the French friendship are also scathingly attacked:

Ces Blancs-là n'ont pas fini de nous créer des ennuis... Après le kanon et la mistyette, la bombe à fumée! and, Bien sur qu'ils avaient construit des routes, des hôpitaux, des villes...Mais personne parmi les indigènes n'avait de voiture. Et puis de ces hôpitaux on sortait souvent les pieds devant. Quant aux maisons, c'est pour eux-mêmes. L'amitié ne pouvait-elle se fonder que sur le vin d'honneur? Et même en buvant ce vin, les Blancs choquaient leurs verres entre eux...Où était donc cette

1 Oyono, Une Vie de Boy, pp. 87-8.
Oyono does not spare that African alienated and foolishly assimilated elite, such is the case with Aki Barnabas:

Venez faire vos adieux à l’enfant du pays que Dieu a choisi pour aller faire ses études au pays des blancs d’où il nous reviendra pour nous sauver, sauver l’Afrique!  

The above quotation is just but a good example of Oyono's frequent subjective irony and slashes of mockery by which he exposes Barnabas and his African types who believe and aspire to the 'enlightenment' and 'knowledge' which are found and are possible only in the West and not in Africa. Ironically, Oyono makes Barnabas look like 'Christ,' who will bring 'light' and salvation not only to Cameroon but also to the entire 'African continent.' The 'chemin d'Europe,' however, is still closed before Barnabas' aspirations for France.

Oyono's figures of speech are varied and, most often, are local in tenor. For example, he uses the imagery of 'animals' and 'birds' to imply either good aspects or bad. Gazelle stands for beauty and grace; tortue for wisdom and cunning; éléphant and hippopotame for grossness...

The white man's baseness, cruelty and corruption are usually conveyed by images of animals, such as the following examples: Toundi says of the Commandant that "...il me pénètra de son regard de panthère." (V.D.B., p. 34); Moreau, the prison superintendent, is described as a 'lion' and

1 Oyono, Le Vieux Nègre, p. 29.

2 Oyono, Chemin d'Europe, p. 161.
is knicknamed "l'Eléphant blanc" by the natives. As for Meka, "...Ces Blancs, pour lui, étaient comme des antilopes: ils avaient tous le même visage." (Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille, p. 95). Describing his new status of subservience as a boy of the white man Toundi states that "Le Chien du roi est le roi des Chiens." (V.D.B., p. 32); and of father Gilbert who adopts him as 'human pet' Toundi reports: "C'est un homme gai, qui lorsque j'étais petit, me considérait comme un animal familier. (V.D.B., p. 24) The animalization of people is, however, more often used by the 'African characters' rather than by the 'French ones.' To describe Madame's, the Commandant's wife, beauty and grace Toundi says: "Elle trottaït devant moi, souple et gracieuse comme une gazelle." (V.D.B., p. 84). The wisdom and alertness of Menguem, a native chief, are implied through the image of tortoise: "Mengueme, lui, est un vieillard aussi ruse'que la tortue des légendes." (V.D.B., p. 56)

In addition Oyono has made use of oral Cameroonian literature in the form of some proverbs. Unlike Achebe, his usage is, however, very limited. In Une Vie de Boy we find:

...La rivière ne remonte pas à sa source....(p. 88)

...La vérité existe au-delà des montagnes, pour la connaître il faut voyager...(p. 90)

...La femme est un épi de mais à la portée de toute bouche pourvu qu'elle ne soit pas édentée...(p. 108)

In Le Vieux Nègre et La Médaille we get:

...Mais la bouche qui a têté n'oublie pas la saveur du lait...(p. 17)

...Si ton coeur se met à battre en arrivant au terme de ton voyage, rebrousse chemin...(p. 176)
Sometimes, Oyono's language becomes poetic prose such as Toundi's admiration of the Commandant's wife:

Mon bonheur n'a pas de jour, mon bonheur n'a pas de nuit.
Je n'en avais pas conscience, il s'est révélé à mon être.
Je le chanterai dans ma flûte, je le chanterai au bord des marigots, mais aucune parole ne saura le traduire, J'ai serre la main de ma reine. J'ai senti que je vivais. Desormais ma main est sacrée, elle ne connaitra plus les basses régions de mon corps. Ma main appartient à ma reine aux cheveux couleur d'ébène, aux yeux d'antilope, à la peau rose et blanche comme l'ivoire... Son sourire est rafraîchissant comme une source. Son regard est tiède comme un rayon de soleil couchant. Il vous inonde de sa lumière qui vous embrasse jusqu'au plus profond du cœur. J'ai peur de moi-même.¹

In all Oyono's three novels, one finds the presence of two conflicting and contrasting worlds: African and European. The colonial Europe is depicted as a negative element, for it has attempted to destroy the Cameroonian culture and its people. This destructive aspect of French colonial policy is symbolically conveyed through Toundi's death, Meka's alienation and loss of both his land and two sons, and through Barnabas' cultural assimilation.

In the final analysis, unlike Achebe, Oyono is not so much concerned about the African past or its 'Renaissance.' For him, the African traditional society is irrevocably condemned to fade away because of the human phenomena of change and evolution.

Unlike Achebe's anthropological descriptions, Kane's philosophical mood, Oyono has chosen different literary devices of satire and humor for his writing, which is strengthened by aloofness, and absence of

¹ Oyono, *Une Vie de Boy*, p. 74.
direct authorial comment. Thus, Oyono has surely enhanced the French African novel.
CONCLUSION

In three chapters we have individually dealt with Chinua Achebe (of Eastern Nigeria), Cheikh Hamidou Kane (of Senegal) and Ferdinand Oyono (of the Cameroon). Of course, these authors do not represent the whole bulk of all characteristics of African literature of South, North, East and West Africa, but their works embody some of its aspects.

In our study we have endeavored to analyze their writing, indicating something of the multiplicity of historical, social, religious, African and Western causes and effects, and many other factors which have influenced or contributed to the shaping of their novels.

In essence, Achebe, Kane and Oyono have deeply felt the traumatic impacts of colonialism and have succeeded in making good literature and exciting novels out of the immediate African experience of colonialism. All three have dealt, more or less, with the passage of the old society to the new society which is imbued with much emphasis upon 'reason' and respect of the individual's liberty. In addition, they have treated the antagonism between colonized and colonizer; but their approach, their motivations and their handling of conflicts of cultures differ.

Achebe's reaction to the Western culture was to defend the African cultural identity (Ibo culture) and to defend the African values in the face of a denigrating and arrogant European culture. He has probed into his own Ibo culture which he profusely illustrated by the use of proverbs, Ibo oral figures of speech and many scenes borrowed from the Ibo social,
religious, and traditional political institutions. This is specially true of *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. In fact, Achebe has a vast knowledge of his Ibo tribal culture with its mystic and linguistic variety of cultural details. Thus, he comes to be, to some extent, more concerned with a particular culture than Kane and Oyono. Moreover, Achebe's writing is largely permeated by a strong and pervasive didacticism, for he primarily sees himself as a spokesman, guide and teacher of his people and the defender of their cultural rights before the outside world.

In contrast, Hamidou Kane is not much concerned about the African past or the revival of its cultural values. His main search is, however, embodied in the intellectual and spiritual conflicts created by a hostile encounter of Africa with Europe. This historical event is fraught with complex consequences for the African conscience, which eventually finds itself in a 'crisis' and is placed in an 'ambiguous adventure.' "The colonial situation engendered cultural duality."¹

Kane's approach to his writing is both philosophical and pessimistic: the impact of Europe on the African 'soul' has been largely destructive. It has divided the African personality into unreconcilable parts. So, for Kane, the colonial contact of Europe did more harm than good to the African people and their cultures. Unlike Achebe and Oyono, Kane does not rely on the African oral traditional literature. Instead, he borrows much from the Islamic thought, and his studies of philosophy of Descartes

and Pascal. Thus, his novel, *L'Aventure Ambiguë* comes to be a preeminent example of the 'philosophical novel' in African literature.

On the other hand, Oyono follows a path different from both Achebe and Kane. His analysis of conflicts of cultures is conveyed through the medium of humor and satire. He directs his attack and laughter against both Africans and Europeans. His scathing criticism and bitter sarcasm are mostly aimed at the French colonial system and its hypocritical machinery, but he also denounces the foolishness of some Africans and African values as well. Nonetheless, Oyono is more progressive and open to change and evolution. According to Oyono, the old African traditional society has to stop 'crying over the spilt milk' of old or dead values of the past, and start accepting and adapting itself to the phenomena of change.

Despite all their discrepancies and dissensions, Achebe, Kane and Oyono have much in common. All three have a sense of preoccupation with the same events of the colonial dominance of Africa by the West, a period during which the traditional African culture began to fall apart. All three have protested against the tyranny and injustice of colonialism. They all have depicted the individual or the collective cultural conflicts and the suffering of their peoples, the modes of life, actions and interactions within their societies, and socio-cultural struggle of the traditional community with an alien and invading European culture.

Above all, Achebe's, Kane's and Oyono's writings have been built upon an exploration of identity and cultural personality which the colonial incursion has largely denied, distorted or misrepresented. This attitude
and this approach of such African writers have been described by Mr. Mphalele who wrote that:

We are looking for ourselves. We are searching for the place that we occupy, vis-à-vis modern techniques, modern civilization, and African traditions. As we write, all the time, we are defining ourselves and redefining ourselves in order to find ourselves. This is how dynamic African literature is. It is a search for an identity. It is a search for one's own individual position.¹

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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