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**FOLKLORE IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL
APART* AND AMADOU HAMPÂTÉ BÂ'S *AMKOULLEL,
L'ENFANT PEUL***

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of a Master's Degree in Bilingual Studies*

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Bob'Oyono Jean-Marie and Joséphine; and my family

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation titled “Folklore in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampâté Bâ’s *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul*” examines the function of folklore in Africa. It concentrates on how folklore is used both as a literary and cultural tool in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul* by Amadou Hampâté Bâ and how folklore shapes the narratives of both texts. The study seeks to reveal how these two writers utilize folklore to mirror not only the social and cultural realities of African societies but also the methods of preserving their heritage.

The research problem centres on understanding how folklore is integrated in these novels, both as a storytelling device and a medium for cultural conservancy. The study addresses the gap in literary analysis concerning the role of folklore in African literature, particularly in showcasing the problematic layers of African cultural identity. This dissertation is concerned in asking how folklore in these two works contributes to the literary and cultural landscapes, preserving the traditions and values of African communities.

The hypothesis argues that African literature is seriously implanted in African folklore, which provides the foundation for its themes, narratives and cultural significance. Folklore, which is represented by oral traditions (myths, proverbs, tales, riddles...) and performative creations (rituals, ceremonies, games, songs, social organizations...) conserves the values and beliefs of African societies while offering a framework to investigate universal experiences from an African viewpoint. In both *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul* by Amadou Hampâté Bâ, folklore is more than a decorative element; it is a narrative backbone mirroring the authors’ dedication to their societies’ cultural heritage. Though both authors celebrate African traditions, their approaches differ. Achebe’s folklore underscores the reclamation of Igbo identity, while Bâ, however, focuses on the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and the role of memory in preserving identity.

The main objectives of the research aim at investigating the role of folklore in the two novels under study, examining how folklore shows the cultural and social realities of African societies. The study aims to contribute to the academic discourse on African literature by

putting forward a comparative analysis of how Achebe and Hampâté Bâ use folklore in their novels.

This research is grounded in a cultural studies theoretical framework which stresses the significance of culture in shaping social realities and the role of folklore in African literature as both a tool for cultural opposition and conservation. It points up how folklore in these novels serves as a means for the authors to defy colonial influences while conserving the cultural identity of African communities.

The literature review furnishes an analysis of scholarly works on African folklore and their role in literature. It examines the studies on both Achebe's and Hampâté Bâ's use of folklore. Furthermore it draws on the writings of scholars such as Diana Akers Rhoads and Polycarp Ikuenobe, providing context and approval for the research's hypotheses.

This dissertation has four chapters. The first chapter presents the theoretical framework and the review of literature. It discusses the approach of cultural studies and providing a critical review of relevant literature. The second chapter explores folklore in Africa in general, its aspects and its role in African literature, showing its historical and cultural significance. The third chapter provides an important exploration of the use of folklore in *Things Fall Apart* and *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, analyzing how these authors use folklore to enrich their narratives. The final chapter presents a comparative analysis of the two novels under study, it investigates both the similarities and differences in the authors' approaches to folklore. It then demonstrates how folklore is portrayed in both literature and arts.

The dissertation concludes that folklore in Africa is an essential cultural bridge that adapts to modern challenges and that preserves African heritage. It shows how folklore in African literature serves as a dynamic and evolving element that reflects the complexities of African societies. This dissertation demonstrates the enduring relevance of folklore in preserving cultural identity and its role in shaping the narratives of African literature. The research offers new insights into African literary traditions and their ongoing significance in both literature and cultural contexts.

RESUME

Ce mémoire intitulé “Folklore in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampâté Bâ’s *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul*”, explore le rôle du folklore dans la littérature africaine. Il s’intéresse à la manière dont le folklore est utilisé comme outil littéraire et culturel dans *Things Fall Apart* de Chinua Achebe et *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul* d’Amadou Hampâté Bâ. La recherche explore la manière dont le folklore façonne les récits des deux textes, offrant ainsi une compréhension plus profonde de la culture, de l’identité et des valeurs morales africaines. L’étude cherche à révéler comment ces deux auteurs utilisent le folklore pour refléter les réalités sociales et culturelles des sociétés africaines et les moyens de préservation de leur patrimoine.

Le problème de recherche se concentre sur la compréhension de l’intégration du folklore dans ces romans, à la fois comme moyen de narration et comme moyen de préservation culturelle. L’étude comble les lacunes de l’analyse littéraire concernant le rôle du folklore dans la littérature africaine, notamment en montrant les couches complexes de l’identité culturelle africaine. La présente recherche soulève la question de savoir comment le folklore de ces deux œuvres contribue au paysage littéraire et culturel, en préservant les traditions et les valeurs des communautés africaines.

L’hypothèse soutenue est que la littérature africaine est profondément enracinée dans le folklore africain, qui constitue le fondement de ses thèmes, de ses récits et de sa signification culturelle. Le folklore, englobant les traditions orales (mythes, proverbes, contes, énigmes...) et les créations performatives (rituels, cérémonies, jeux, chants, organisations sociales...) préserve les valeurs et croyances des sociétés africaines tout en offrant un cadre pour explorer les expériences universelles d’un Africain. Dans *Things Fall Apart* de Chinua Achebe et dans *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul* d’Amadou Hampâté Bâ, le folklore est plus qu’un élément décoratif; c’est une épine dorsale narrative reflétant le dévouement des auteurs au patrimoine culturel de leurs sociétés. Achebe utilise des proverbes et des mythes Igbo pour mettre en valeur la richesse des traditions précoloniales, tandis que Bâ incorpore des contes populaires peuls pour souligner la continuité culturelle. Même si les deux auteurs célèbrent les traditions africaines, leurs approches diffèrent. Le folklore selon Achebe, souligne la revendication de l’identité Igbo, soulignant la force de la société africaine précoloniale. Bâ se concentre cependant sur la

transmission intergénérationnelle des savoirs culturels et le rôle de la mémoire dans la préservation de l'identité.

Les principaux objectifs de la recherche comprennent l'exploration du rôle du folklore dans les deux romans soumis à notre étude, de la manière dont le folklore reflète les réalités culturelles et sociales des sociétés africaines, la comparaison de l'utilisation du folklore dans les deux œuvres et l'analyse des implications du folklore en tant qu'outil littéraire et culturel dans la littérature africaine. L'étude vise à contribuer au discours académique sur la littérature africaine en proposant une analyse comparative de la manière dont Achebe et Hampâté Bâ utilisent le folklore dans leurs romans. La recherche s'appuie sur un cadre théorique d'études culturelles, élaboré par des chercheurs tels que Raymond Williams. Ce cadre souligne l'importance de la culture dans la formation des réalités sociales et le rôle du folklore dans la littérature africaine en tant qu'outil de résistance et de préservation culturelles. Il met en évidence comment le folklore de ces romans sert aux auteurs de résister aux influences coloniales tout en préservant l'identité culturelle des communautés africaines.

La revue de la littérature fournit une analyse complète des travaux scientifiques existants sur le folklore africain et son rôle dans la littérature. La revue examine les études sur l'utilisation du folklore par Achebe et Hampâté Bâ, en se concentrant sur la manière dont leurs œuvres contribuent à la préservation de la culture africaine et reflètent la complexité des sociétés africaines. La revue s'appuie sur les écrits d'universitaires tels que Diana Akers Rhoads et Polycarp Ikuenobe, fournissant un contexte et un soutien aux hypothèses de la recherche. Le présent mémoire est divisé en quatre chapitres. Le premier chapitre présente le cadre théorique et la revue de la littérature, discutant de l'approche des études culturelles et fournissant une revue critique de la littérature pertinente. Le deuxième chapitre examine le folklore en Afrique, ses aspects et son rôle dans la littérature africaine, en soulignant sa signification historique et culturelle. Le troisième chapitre propose une exploration approfondie de l'utilisation du folklore dans *Things Fall Apart* et *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, analysant comment ces auteurs utilisent le folklore pour enrichir leurs récits et critiquer le colonialisme. Le dernier chapitre propose une analyse comparative des deux romans étudiés et identifie à la fois les similitudes et les différences dans les approches des auteurs du folklore et de l'exploration des thèmes culturels universels et uniques exprimés dans leurs œuvres. Il montre également comment le folklore est représenté dans la littérature et les arts.

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fournissant une revue critique de la littérature pertinente. Le deuxième chapitre examine le folklore en Afrique, ses aspects et son rôle dans la littérature africaine, en soulignant sa signification historique et culturelle. Le troisième chapitre propose une exploration approfondie de l'utilisation du folklore dans *Things Fall Apart* et *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, analysant comment ces auteurs utilisent le folklore pour enrichir leurs récits et critiquer le colonialisme. Le dernier chapitre propose une analyse comparative des deux romans étudiés et identifie à la fois les similitudes et les différences dans les approches des auteurs du folklore et de l'exploration des thèmes culturels universels et uniques exprimés dans leurs œuvres. Il montre également comment le folklore est représenté dans la littérature et les arts.

Cette recherche conclut que le folklore dans la littérature africaine constitue un pont culturel vital qui s'adapte aux défis modernes tout en préservant le patrimoine africain. Achebe et Hampâté Bâ utilisent le folklore non seulement pour enrichir leurs récits, mais aussi pour explorer les thèmes de l'identité et de la continuité culturelle. L'étude souligne que le folklore dans la littérature africaine continue de servir d'élément dynamique et évolutif qui reflète la complexité des sociétés africaines. En comparant l'usage du folklore dans les deux textes, la recherche met en évidence les aspects universels et particuliers des traditions culturelles africaines. Cette thèse contribue à une compréhension plus profonde du patrimoine culturel africain à travers son exploration du folklore dans la littérature. Il démontre la pertinence durable du folklore dans la préservation de l'identité culturelle et son rôle dans l'élaboration des récits de la littérature africaine. La recherche offre de nouvelles perspectives sur les traditions littéraires africaines et leur importance actuelle dans la littérature et dans des contextes culturels.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

African folklore is a production that exists in several forms: tales, songs, proverbs, greetings, gestures, material artefacts and other created products and performances. It is even a dynamic process of creativity that arises in performative contexts, that is characterized by face-to-face interactions. In “Exploring Africa’s Rich Folklore for Literary Symbiosis”, Gabriel Oche Ukah says that folklore is the umbrella term that also has oral literature as one of its constituent parts. In fact, according to him, folklore is the father of all the oral traditions handed down from one generation to the other (pp. 1).

In Africa, during the late centuries, several publications of folklore emerged: first of all, the tales of “Anansi the Spider”, popular in Ghana and beyond, feature a clever spider, who outwits others through wisdom. Also, there is the creation myth of “Mbombo” in Congo, which narrates the story of the creator deity, who vomited the sun, the moon and the stars into existence, shaping the world and all living beings. Moreover, we can talk about the famous epic of “Sundiata” in Mali, which celebrates the legendary founder of the Mali Empire, Sundiata Keita. The “Mwindo Epic” (Democratic Republic of Congo) must also be mentioned. It is a tale of a heroic figure named Mwindo, who embarks on a journey filled with supernatural encounters, challenges and divine interventions. Moreover, the tale of “Nyaminyami” (Zimbabwe/Zambia) talks about a serpent-like river god, believed to inhabit the Zambezi River. Overall, we have the famous story of “Shaka Zulu” (South Africa) the renowned Zulu warrior and leader, who is surrounded by myths that portray his military prowess, strategic genius and impact on Zulu history. Then, the legend of “Queen Amina” of Nigeria, is not to be forgotten.

These publications on folklore in Africa during the past centuries highlight the diverse narratives, cultural beliefs and historical figures that have shaped the continent's storytelling traditions. This is why Stephen Paterson Belcher, in *Epic Traditions of Africa*, explores the rich past and poetic force of African epics and places them in historical and social, as well as artistic contexts. According to him, colourful narratives from Central and West African traditions are illuminated along with texts that are more widely available to Western readers. However, writers bring an innovative approach to these assumptions, by embedding folklore in novels, demonstrating its depth and artistic value. Folklore, thus, functions as a bridge between oral and written traditions, preserving collective wisdom while enriching narratives. Folklore in

African literature achieves several key objectives. In terms of cultural preservation, folklore safeguards traditions at risk of extinction, freezing them in literary forms. In terms of moral education, through its themes and characters, folklore teaches ethical behaviour and reinforces societal norms. In terms of entertainment, stories and songs bring communities together, celebrating shared heritage and identity.

Folklore through myths and legends often explain cultural origins, moral codes, or historical events. For example, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* incorporates myths like that of the Earth Goddess, which underscores respect for nature and tradition. Proverbs, known as "*the palm oil with which words are eaten*", shows wisdom, offering insights into community values. Then, songs and rituals express collective memory and social unity, often linked to key events like births, marriages, and funerals.

Folklore can be traced through key historical periods. First, before colonialism, African literature was first known as oral literature. Before colonialism, Africans shared their stories orally through performance, sometimes using music in front of the public. In that era, stories were sung for entertaining, promoting community values, accompanying rituals or imparting wisdom. Secondly, after colonialism, we notice a particular use of external languages (languages from European continents). This is because African writers started to write in languages such as English, Portuguese and French. Then, postcolonial literature concerns any people who had been colonized, and the literature of that era often addresses the problems and consequences of the decolonization of a country. This led African writers into trouble because authors who wrote in European languages were many times accused of trying to cater for a Western audience, which was completely untrue. After all, the true reason behind their intentions was to share their experience in a language that the oppressors could understand.

Folklore in Africa, as explained in "The Place of Folklore in Contemporary African Drama" is usually transmitted by unwritten messages. That is why a physical audience is important; as a result, they are usually handed the oral nature of folklore that plays such a crucial role in shaping individual behaviour and social norms. According to him, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, as well as in Hampâté Ba's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, folklore is essentially what shapes the narratives, putting into emphasis all the different processes used by African writers to appropriate their culture and make it unique.

In *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, folklore reflects Igbo traditions, asserting the

community's worldview and identity. Similarly, Amadou Hampâté Bâ's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* integrates Peul folktales to sustain cultural continuity amid colonial disruptions, highlighting folklore's narrative and cultural significance. Both authors use folklore to celebrate African traditions but with distinct visions. Achebe emphasizes reclaiming Igbo identity and resisting colonialism through proverbs and folktales that showcase cultural richness. Meanwhile, Bâ focuses on intergenerational memory and cultural coherence, underscoring folklore as a bridge between past and present.

Statement of the Research Problem

The research problem of this dissertation lies in the underexplored role and representation of folklore in building African narratives, especially in terms of cultural preservation, social cohesion and moral instruction in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* by Amadou Hampâté Bâ. While folklore is known as the center of African cultural identity and storytelling, its role and artistic value in these two works remain insufficiently explored.

While numerous scholars praise folklore as a powerful tool in literature and cultural preservation, some critics feel that folklore may share narrow or stereotypical views of culture. Scholars like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and others have raised questions about how African cultures are often misrepresented when folklore is stripped of its significance. Others argue that including folklore into literature can distort its original significance. For instance, Walter Ong discusses the impact of transforming oral traditions into written literature. According to him, that impact may alter their communal and performative nature. Also, James Clifford and some other critics argue that emphasizing folklore for cultural preservation may inadvertently freeze cultures in the past, ignoring their dynamic and evolving nature. These perspectives are not strictly against the use of folklore but highlight potential challenges and misuses, encouraging nuanced and integration into literature.

Research Questions

According to the observation made above, the research questions that will guide us in our work are the following:

- How does folklore function within African literature, particularly in *Things Fall Apart* and *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, in terms of cultural preservation, social cohesion and moral instruction?
- What specific elements of folklore are utilized in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall*

Apart and Amadou Hampâté Bâ's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* and what are the similarities and differences in the depiction of folklore?

- In what ways does the portrayal of folklore in both novels reflect the authors' visions of using folklore in their texts as artistic and literary devices to connect oral traditions with written narratives?

Hypothesis

African literature cannot be distached from African folklore because the latter serves as the foundation of the former, as it shapes its themes, narratives and cultural essence. Folklore contains not only the oral traditions (myths, legends, proverbs, tales, stories, sayings...) but also performative creations (rituals, traditions, customs, dances, songs, games...) passed down through generations, capturing the values, beliefs and struggles of African societies.

In both novels, folklore is not only an aesthetic feature, but also an important narrative framework that expresses the authors' commitment to representing their respective societies. Chinua Achebe integrates proverbs, myths, and legends to reflect the Igbo traditions in *Things Fall Apart*, to assert the community's worldview and social organization. Similarly, Amadou Hampâté Bâ weaves Peul folktales into *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* to maintain a sense of cultural continuity amidst colonial disruption.

Secondly, while both Achebe and Bâ use folklore to celebrate African traditions, their authorial visions reveal distinct approaches to the role of folklore in their respective novels. Achebe's use of folklore in *Things Fall Apart* is deeply tied to his goal of reclaiming Igbo identity and asserting the potency of pre-colonial African society. On the other hand, Bâ's portrayal of folklore in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* focuses more on the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and the importance of memory in maintaining cultural coherence. Bâ's emphasis on the continuity between past and present, especially in the context of a rapidly changing world, underscores the role of folklore both as a personal and collective act of remembering.

Then, in both *Things Fall Apart* and *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, folklore is seen both as a means of oral transmission and artistic expression. Achebe, in *Things Fall Apart*, uses folklore as a tool to deepen the thematic complexity of the novel. The use of proverbs and folktales enriches the narrative, offering profound insights into the Igbo worldview, social structures and moral codes. Similarly, Bâ incorporates folklore in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* not just for narrative consistency but also as a critical lens through which he examines the

intersection of individual identity and collective history.

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to examine the historical and cultural meaning of folklore in African literature, especially in the two novels under study which are Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampate Ba's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, with a focus on its cultural, social, literary and artistic aspects. Also, the work seeks to explore the historical development and conceptual understanding of folklore within African literature, particularly how it reflects the cultural and social aspects of African societies.

The second objective is to explore the inclusion of folklore in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampâté Bâ's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*. We seek to analyze how these authors employ folklore to deepen the thematic and cultural dimensions of their narratives. Through this examination, we will reveal how folklore becomes a vital element for preserving cultural.

The third objective is to show the interaction between folklore; literary and artistic elements in both novels, enriching the narrative and contributing to the artistic portrayal of African cultures. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe integrates folklore seamlessly with other literary forms such as symbolism, character development and even narrative structure; thus deepening the thematic impact of the novel. Similarly, in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, Bâ uses folklore as both a narrative tool and a form of artistic expression, blending oral traditions with written storytelling to create a unique literary form.

The final objective is to analyze the use of folklore in the two novels, by identifying the similarities and differences in the portrayal and use of folklore in *Things Fall Apart* and *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, particularly about their impact on African literary tradition and cultural representation.

Significance of the Study

This research situates the use of folklore in literature within the context of African art and culture. The way folklore extends beyond the written word to influence music, dances, theatre and other arts, helps us to highlight the interdisciplinary nature of African cultural expression.

The comparative nature of this study also adds to its significance. The similarities and differences in the use of folklore in Africa, especially in Nigeria and Mali, help this research

to strengthen the diversity and commonalities within African cultures. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Bâ's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* serve as exemplary texts that reflect distinct cultural contexts

Furthermore, this research is significant for its contribution to the role of folklore in shaping cultural narratives and identity. By examining how Chinua Achebe and Amadou Hampâté Bâ incorporate folklore in *Things Fall Apart* and *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, this study highlights the importance of oral traditions as a foundational aspect of African literary expression.

Finally, this research contributes to the postcolonial discourse by exploring how Achebe and Bâ use folklore as a strategy for cultural reclamation. Their works challenge the dominance of Western literary paradigms and affirm the richness of African storytelling traditions. In doing so, this study not only elevates the status of African literature on the global stage, but also serves as a reminder of the power of folklore to inspire cultural pride, resilience and creative expression in the face of historical and contemporary challenges.

Research Motivation

The motivation for this research stems from a personal interest in understanding the role of folklore in African literature as a means of preserving cultural heritage. Folklore, encompassing oral traditions (myths, proverbs, legends, tales, sayings stories...), is a cornerstone of African identity. However, its integration into written literature has not always received the attention it deserves in academic scholarship. Through this study, our goal is to address that gap by exploring how Chinua Achebe, in *Things Fall Apart*, and Amadou Hampâté Bâ, in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, utilize folklore to reflect their cultural environments and create a bridge between oral, artistic and literary traditions.

Another key personal driver of this research is our desire to explore the cultural diversity and unity within African literature. While Achebe's work represents the Igbo culture of Nigeria, and Bâ's work reflects the Peul culture of Mali, both authors address universal themes such as the preservation of identity, and the significance of communal values. The comparative aspect of this study is motivated by the need to understand how African writers from different regions and traditions of Africa, use folklore in similar and divergent ways to respond to shared challenges.

Furthermore, this study is motivated by a personal commitment to highlighting the relevance of African literature in global literary discourse. African oral traditions have

historically been marginalized or undervalued in the academic and literary world. This research seeks to demonstrate the sophistication and cultural depth of these traditions, particularly as they are adapted and preserved in modern African literature. Achebe and Bâ's works serve as prime examples of how folklore can be both a reflection of local culture and a universal tool for storytelling.

Lastly, this research is driven by an interest in exploring how folklore extends beyond literature to influence aspects of African art and culture, such as music, dance, poetry and theater. Folklore is not merely a literary element but a living tradition that shapes and sustains the cultural fabric of African societies. Ultimately, this research is rooted in the belief that folklore is not just a relic of the past but a dynamic and enduring force in the preservation and evolution of African identity.

Scope of the Work

The exploration of folklore is exclusively devoted to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampâté Bâ's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*. Therefore, it does not claim to cover everything written by them. Other works by critics have been used to explain how folklore functions in Africa. If necessary, we shall also draw from authors' autobiographical and biographical sources, to better our study.

Definition of Key Term

For a better comprehension of the issues raised in this work, it is necessary to give a contextualized definition of the key terms used in this research. The major expression to define is "Folklore".

The English Oxford Dictionary defines folklore as the traditional legends, beliefs and culture shared by a group, especially in a rural or a pre-industrial society. The Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines folklore as the traditional stories, customs and habits of a particular community or nation. The Collins English Dictionary defines it as the unwritten (often known as oral) literature of a people as expressed in folktales, proverbs, riddles and songs. According to the same dictionary, folklore is also the body of stories and legends attached to a particular place, group, or activity. According to the Cambridge Dictionary folklore is the traditional stories, beliefs and customs of a group of people. The British Dictionary defines it as the traditional stories and legends transmitted orally from generation to generation.

These dictionaries agree on the fact that folklore incorporates tales, proverbs,

practices, songs, beliefs and customs. These various definitions of folklore presented by different dictionaries converge on a common understanding that positions folklore as the traditional and cultural heritage of a group, often rooted in oral traditions and performative creations. Also, each definition emphasizes that folklore encompasses the collective stories, beliefs, customs and legends shared within a community, whether defined as a rural society, nation, or specific group. A recurring theme shared by these dictionaries is the oral transmission of folklore, which preserves the cultural identity of a people across generations. Some definitions also broaden the concept to include the unwritten literature and the body of knowledge associated with specific places or activities. Overall, the relationship between these definitions lies in their shared focus on folklore as a communal, traditional and orally transmitted expression of a group's cultural identity and values.

Structure of the Work

This dissertation comprises an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The introduction consists of essential elements like the research problem, research questions, the hypothesis, research objectives, motivations, significance of the study, scope of the study and a section on definitions of key terms.

Chapter One entitled: “Theoretical Framework and Literature Review”, contains a theoretical framework that outlines the key theory that guides the analysis of folklore in African literature. It discusses relevant literary and cultural points of view, which help in understanding the role of folklore in shaping narratives and cultural identities within the novels under study in particular, and African societies in general. Also, the chapter contains a literature review that provides a comprehensive review of existing scholarly work on folklore in relationship with the novels under study and African literature. It examines how other researchers have approached the study of folklore in African literary traditions, highlighting gaps in the literature that your research aims to fill.

Chapter Two entitled “Folklore and its Role in African Literature” contains a historical overview of folklore in African literary tradition that traces the historical development of folklore within African literary traditions. It explores how oral traditions have influenced written literature and how folklore has been preserved and adapted over time in African societies. It also contains aspects of folklore in African literature that define and explain key concepts related to folklore in African literature. It will explore the different forms of folklore, such as myths, legends, proverbs and rituals and how they have been incorporated

into African literary works. The chapter also talks about the influence of folklore on the cultural and social fabric of African society and analyzes how folklore serves as a mirror of the cultural and social realities of the societies depicted in the novels under study. It explores how folklore reflects the values, beliefs and traditions of African communities and how it functions as a tool for social cohesion and identity formation.

Chapter Three entitled “Exploring Folklore in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampate Ba’s *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul*” contains the role of folklore in the texts under study. It examines the specific roles that folklore plays in the narratives of *Things Fall Apart* and *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul*. It analyzes how Achebe and Hampâté Bâ utilize folklore to enhance the thematic depth of their novels, to convey cultural values and cultural identity.

Chapter Four entitled “Folklore as Cultural and Artistic Expression: A Comparative Analysis of *Things Fall Apart* and *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul*” provides a comparison of folklore in both texts. It highlights both the similarities and differences in how Achebe and Hampâté Bâ incorporate folklore into their works, reflecting the distinct cultural contexts of Nigeria and Mali. This section will consider how the use of folklore in these two texts contributes to our understanding of the diversity in African cultures as well as the intentions of Achebe and Hampâté Bâ in their use of folklore. The final section of the chapter situates the findings of our research within the context of African art and culture and explores how folklore extends beyond literature to influence various forms of artistic expression in African societies, such as music, dance, poetry and visual arts.

Then, the General Conclusion summarizes the research findings and validates the research hypothesis of the topic.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of two sections. The first one explains the theoretical paradigm which will be used in our analysis. In this view, the section will explain the cultural studies and their importance in the interpretation of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampâté Ba's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*. The second part of this chapter will review works, which have been written on the novels under study chosen for our work.

Theoretical Framework

Our concern in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampâté Ba's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, enables this research to be viewed through the lenses of cultural studies. Raymond Williams (1921–1988) is regarded as the pioneer of cultural studies. He defines it as a discipline that examines the link between culture, society and politics. His key contribution which is cultural materialism, studies culture within its material context, asserting that social, economic and political conditions shape cultural production and expression. He also introduced the concept of the structure of feeling, which refers to the lived experiences, emotions and social relationships that influence cultural beliefs and practices.

Some of Williams' most significant works include *Culture and Society* (1958), where he analyzed the development of the concept of culture in British society, *The Long Revolution* (1961), which examined the transformation of society through industrialization and the rise of modern culture, then, his book *Keywords* (1976), which became a worldwide reference, offering a lexicon of critical terms related to culture and society.

Raymond Williams is considered a pioneer because he transformed the way culture is studied, shifting the focus from isolated cultural artefacts to the social, economic and political forces that shape them. His politically engaged perspective and critical insights into the intersections of culture and power continue to inspire scholars in the field. Through his groundbreaking theories and writings, Williams established cultural studies as a vital area of academic inquiry.

Cultural studies have a diverse range of proponents, each contributing a special way on culture and society. Raymond Williams emphasized the importance of everyday life and popular culture in understanding society. His concept of “culture as a whole way of life”, highlighted the role of culture in shaping social relations and structures. Secondly, Stuart Hall, often regarded as another founding figure of this theory, focused on issues of race, identity and the media. He explored how culture is a site of power and resistance. Next, Richard Hoggard, founder of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, produced works which focused on working-class culture and its transformation in post-war Britain. His book entitled *The Uses of Literacy*, is considered an important text in cultural studies.

Also, Antonio Gramsci, although not directly involved in cultural studies, had ideas about how cultural hegemony influenced many proponents of the theory. He argued that dominant groups maintain power through cultural institutions by securing the consent of the ruled. Moreover, Michel Foucault who worked on discourse, power and knowledge, also significantly influenced cultural studies. His idea that power operates through language and institutions, helped scholars understand how cultural norms and identities are produced and regulated. Angela McRobbie, a famous feminist cultural studies scholar, explored the intersection of gender, culture and media. Her work analyzes how popular culture shapes notions of femininity and social roles. Then, we have Paul Gilroy, who is known for his works on race and African diaspora. He focused on how culture and identity are historical processes like colonialism and slavery. His concept of “the Black Atlantic” reimagines modernity and cultural exchange beyond national boundaries.

Raymond Williams incorporated various key elements into his work that have been instrumental in shaping the field. First of all, culture and society are important key elements used by the theorist. He emphasized the interconnectedness of culture and society, examining how cultural practices, values and institutions reflect and shape social structures and dynamics. This is why Andrew Milner, in his work *Literature, Culture and Society*, explains that, as cultural studies has grown from its origins on the margins of literary studies, it has tended to discard both literature and sociology in favour of the semiotics of popular culture. He continues by saying that literature, culture and society are determined attempts to re-establish the connections between literary studies, cultural studies and sociology. Additionally, he says that the ideology used by Williams delved into shaping cultural meanings and representations,

highlighting how dominant ideologies perpetuate power differentials and also influence social norms (pp. 1). In *Ideology and Culture*, Roger Griffin thinks Raymond Williams observed in their keywords that ‘*Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language*’ (pp.75).

Secondly, everyday life is another key element used by Williams in his theory. He examined the significance of everyday life in cultural studies, emphasizing how ordinary practices, rituals and interactions contribute to the construction of social identities and meanings. David Inglis in the abstract of *Culture and Everyday Life*, says that culture is unquestionably a central topic in the contemporary social sciences. David Inglis shows how the study of culture can be transformed by focusing on how cultural forces shape, influence, structure and, occasionally, disrupt the day-to-day activities of individuals (<https://www.gacbe.ac.in/images/E%20books/Culture%20and%20every%20day%20life%20.pdf>).

This being said, we can define cultural studies as an interdisciplinary field that examines how culture shapes and is shaped by social, political and economic structures. It focuses on how cultural platforms (media, literature, art and everyday life) are involved in the production and negotiation of power, identity and meaning. This is why Toby Miller, in *What It Is and What It Isn't: Introducing Cultural Studies* (2001), explains that cultural studies are magnetic. It accretes various tendencies that are splintering the human sciences: marxism, feminism, queer theory and post-colonialism. He continues by saying that, by looking at how culture is used and transformed by ordinary and marginal social groups, cultural studies see people not simply as consumers, but as potential producers of new social values and cultural languages (pp. 1).

In essence, cultural studies are about understanding how culture interacts with power and shapes human experiences. It seeks to explain how cultural forms are central to maintaining, challenging or transforming societal norms. At its core, the theory explores how meaning is constructed and contested within society. It looks at both high and low (or popular) forms of culture, analyzing how people engage with and make sense of cultural products, institutions and ideologies.

Key ideas of this theory include first of all hegemony. It is borrowed from Antonio Gramsci and it refers to how dominant groups in society maintain their power not only through

force but also by securing the consent of subordinate groups. This is done through cultural means, such as media, education and other institutions, that shape people's beliefs and norms. Secondly, we have representation, as another key idea of the theory. Cultural studies investigate how various groups are represented in cultural texts and media. This includes exploring how race, gender and class are depicted, and how these representations affect social identities and power relations. Next, as another key aspect of the theory, we have power and resistance. These explore how power operates in society, particularly through culture and how individuals or groups resist dominant cultural narratives or ideologies. Then, we have identity and subjectivity as other key elements of the theory, which are all about seeing how identities (national, ethnic, gendered, etc.) are formed through cultural practices and how individuals navigate these identities in different contexts.

One of the foundational tenets of cultural studies is the idea that culture is not neutral; it is a site of power, conflict and negotiation. Culture, in this sense, refers to all shared practices and forms of expression in a society, including language, media, fashion, infrastructures, social organization, culinary arts, rituals and so on. Cultural studies scholars argue that these practices are deeply embedded in the power dynamics of a society. Rather than being a passive reflection of reality, culture actively shapes people's perceptions and behaviours, influencing how they understand social structures, relationships and themselves.

This concept of culture as a site of struggle is rooted in the works of theorists like Stuart Hall, who suggested that cultural texts do not simply reflect reality but also construct it. For example, representations of gender, race and class in media are often shaped by dominant ideologies that serve to normalize power relations. However, because culture is also a space of contestation, it offers opportunities for resistance. Individuals and groups may interpret cultural texts in ways that challenge dominant meanings and promote alternative understandings of society.

Secondly, we have as other foundational tenets of the theory, hegemony and consent, with hegemony as a key concept of the theory borrowed from Italian Marxist: Antonio Gramsci. It refers to how the ruling class or dominant group in society maintains control. This consent is achieved by making the dominant group's worldview appear natural, inevitable and beneficial to all, even though it primarily serves the interests of the ruling class.

Cultural institutions (such as the media, education systems and religious

organizations) play a crucial role in this process by disseminating ideologies that reinforce the status quo. For instance, the promotion of individualism in popular culture may discourage collective action and resistance to economic inequality, even though the latter disproportionately benefits the wealthy. However, hegemony is never complete or uncontested. Subordinate groups may challenge hegemonic ideologies by creating their cultural forms, such as countercultures, which resist and subvert dominant meanings. In this sense, hegemony is a dynamic process that requires constant negotiation. Dominant groups must continually work to maintain their power by adapting to new cultural forms and practices. Cultural studies scholars are particularly interested in examining these moments of resistance, where alternative worldviews emerge and challenge the hegemonic order.

Thirdly, as other tenets in cultural studies, we can talk about representation and the construction of meaning. Representation refers to how people, groups and ideas are portrayed in cultural platforms, such as media, literature and art. Cultural studies scholars argue that representations are not merely reflections of reality but are actively involved in constructing reality. Through representation, some ideas and groups may either be valorized or marginalized. For instance, media portrayals of minority groups often rely on stereotypes, which reduce complex social realities to simplistic, often negative depictions. These stereotypes not only misrepresent the people or groups they depict but also reinforce existing power relations by legitimizing discrimination or inequality. Conversely, positive representations of marginalized groups can challenge dominant narratives and promote social change.

Cultural studies are particularly concerned with how representations serve either to reinforce or challenge dominant ideologies. For example, feminist scholars in the field have analyzed how media representations of women often reflect patriarchal values that limit women's roles to those of caregivers or sexual objects. At the same time, they explore how alternative representations (portrayals of women in positions of power) can disrupt these ideological norms.

Next, cultural studies also focus on the relationship between culture and identity, which, in this context, refers to how individuals or groups define themselves and are defined by others, based on categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and class. These identities are not fixed or essential but are socially constructed through cultural practices and discourses. As such, cultural studies scholars are interested in how identity is formed and how

it is tied to power relations.

The concept of subjectivity is central to this analysis. It refers to how individuals come to see themselves as subjects or agents, within particular social and cultural norms and values that individuals internalize through socialization. These norms and values, however, are not neutral; they reflect the interests of dominant groups and serve to reproduce power relations. For instance, the idea of the “ideal citizen” in many societies is often linked to norms of whiteness and middle-class status. Individuals who do not fit this norm may face marginalization or exclusion.

However, individuals are not passive recipients of cultural norms; they can also resist and reshape their identities. Cultural studies scholars are interested in how marginalized groups create alternative identities that can challenge dominant representations. For instance, movements like Black Lives Matter activism provide spaces for individuals to assert identities that resist the dominant narratives of racism or heteronormativity. In this way, cultural studies explore the complex interplay between identity, subjectivity and power.

Furthermore, one of the most innovative contributions of cultural studies is its focus on popular culture and everyday life as important areas of analysis. Traditionally, scholars in fields like literary studies or art history focused on “high culture” (the elite artistic and intellectual productions of a society). Cultural studies, by contrast, argue that popular culture, such as television shows, movies, music and fashion, is just as important for understanding social life and power relations.

Popular culture is precisely where many of the ideological struggles of a society take place. For example, a soap opera may on the surface seem like mere entertainment, but a cultural studies approach would reveal how it conveys messages about gender roles, family structures and class dynamics. Similarly, the popularity of hip-hop music can be seen as a form of cultural resistance expressing the experiences of marginalized groups and challenging mainstream values.

Also, as another tenet of cultural studies, we have globalization. In recent years the theory has increasingly focused on the impact of globalization on culture. Globalization refers to the increasing interconnectedness of the world through the movements of people, goods, ideas and media across national borders. This process has profound implications for how cultures are produced, circulated and consumed.

Cultural studies scholars are interested in how globalization affects cultural identity and power dynamics. Globalization can lead to the homogenization of a culture, as dominant global powers (especially Western countries) export their media and cultural products around the world. This process can erode cultures and promote a global culture that reflects the values and interests of powerful nations and corporations. On the other hand, globalization also develop opportunities for cultural exchange and hybridity, where different cultural traditions mix and influence each other. For instance, the global popularity of genres like reggae or K-pop demonstrates how local cultural forms can achieve global significance and influence.

Finally, another crucial tenet of cultural studies is its focus on the potential for cultural resistance and social change. While the theory often examines how culture is used to maintain existing power structures, it also highlights how individuals and groups resist these structures through cultural practices.

Cultural resistance can take many forms, from grassroots political movements to the creation of alternative media and arts. For instance, punk rock in the 1970s emerged as a subculture that rejected mainstream values and authorities, creating a space for youth to express dissent and frustration. Similarly, the feminist and civil rights movements have used cultural strategies, such as protest songs or feminist zones, to challenge dominant ideologies and promote social change.

Cultural studies emerged as an intellectual movement in the mid-20th century, rooted in the social, political and intellectual contexts of post-war Britain. Its history reflects an evolving interdisciplinary approach that combines sociology, literary theory, political theory and anthropology, among other fields. The history of cultural studies can be traced through various phases, beginning with its origins in Britain, followed by its global expansion and diversification.

Cultural studies as an academic field was formally established with the founding of the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in 1964 by Richard Hoggart. The CCCS was part of the University of Birmingham and became the birthplace of the theory as we know it today. Hoggart's 1957 book, *The Uses of Literacy*, explored how working-class culture in Britain was being eroded by mass media and consumerism. His concerns about culture being commodified led to the groundwork for future discussions within the field.

Stuart Hall, who became director of CCCS in 1968, further developed these ideas and was instrumental in defining the field. Hall shifted the focus of Cultural Studies from a purely British context to a more global one. His work was concerned with issues of race, identity, media and power; and he played a key role in transforming cultural studies into a field that examines how culture is linked to structures of inequality. His famous essay *Encoding/Decoding* (1973), explored how media texts are not passively consumed by the audience but are instead, actively interpreted in ways that reflect social contexts.

The intellectual origins of cultural studies are deeply rooted in Marxism, but the field diverged from traditional Marxist thought by placing greater emphasis on culture rather than the economy as the primary determinant of social relations. While classical Marxism emphasized economic structures (base) as shaping cultural practices (superstructure), cultural studies scholars were more interested in how culture could shape, resist or even reinforce those economic structures. A critical influence on cultural studies was the work of Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist philosopher who introduced the concept of hegemony. He argued that ruling classes maintain control not only through economic dominance or force but also through cultural leadership or hegemony. Dominant groups secure consent by shaping cultural norms and values, making their power seem natural and inevitable.

This being said, by the 1970s, the theory had expanded, its scope included matters of race, gender and integrity. The civil rights movements in the United States and Britain, as well as the feminist and anti-colonial struggles around the world, deeply influenced the field. Stuart Hall, for instance, began to focus more on questions of race and representation, examining how black and other marginalized communities were depicted in the media. In his essay, *Race, The Floating Signifier*, Hall argued that race is not a fixed biological fact but a socially constructed category that is used to classify and control people (pp. 4). Similarly, Angela McRobbie, another scholar associated with cultural studies, focused on the intersection of gender and popular culture. Her work, particularly on youth cultures, fashion and femininity, highlighted how cultural practices both reinforced and challenged gender norms. During this period, cultural studies also began to engage with feminist theory. Judith Butler later explored how gender is performed, rather than being an innate characteristic. The inclusion of feminist and postcolonial perspectives expands the scope of cultural studies, allowing it to address the intersections of class, race, gender and sexuality in ways that the traditional Marxist approaches could not.

In the 1990s, cultural studies underwent what is often called the cultural turn, influenced by post structuralism and postmodernism. Post structural thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida challenged traditional understandings of power and knowledge. Foucault, in particular, emphasized how power is diffused through various societal institutions and how knowledge is produced through discourses. His ideas about power/knowledge became central to cultural studies, which began to focus more on how individuals and groups are constituted through discursive practices.

Postmodernism, with its emphasis on the fragmentation of identity, scepticism of the grand narratives and focus on the plurality of meanings, also influenced cultural studies. Scholars began to question ideas of a unified subject and instead, explored how identities are fluid, constructed through language and shaped by cultural forces. The study of popular culture during this period became even more critical, as it was seen as a site where these multiple meanings and identities could be negotiated and contested.

As the world became increasingly interconnected in the late 20th century, cultural studies beyond Britain started to become a global intellectual movement. Cultural studies departments and programs were established in universities across North America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. In these different contexts, the field adapted to local concerns, focusing on issues such as indigenous cultures. For instance, in the United States, cultural studies scholars like Lawrence Grossberg and Henry Giroux focused on the intersection of culture and education, exploring how popular culture could both reinforce and challenge educational practices. Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said, drawing on postcolonial theory, examined how Western representations of the “Orient” contributed to colonial domination.

The spread of cultural studies across the globe demonstrated its adaptability and relevance to different socio-political contexts. In postcolonial regions, for example, cultural studies became a tool for examining how colonial histories shaped contemporary cultural forms and identities. The field also expanded its focus on media studies, analyzing how global entertainment, news and digital platforms influenced local culture.

In the 21st century, cultural studies has continued to evolve, responding to the rise of digital culture and new media. The proliferation of the internet, social media and digital platforms has transformed how culture is produced, circulated and consumed. Cultural studies scholars now explore how online spaces serve as a site for identity formation, social

intersection and political activism.

The field has also adapted to the challenges of neoliberalism, examining how economic policies promoting individualism and consumerism have shaped cultural practices. Issues like surveillance, data privacy and the commodification of online identities are increasingly important areas of inquiry. Furthermore, cultural studies continue to be a critical lens through which social justice movements are examined. The global rise of movements such as Black Lives Matter, #MeToo and climate activism, demonstrates the continued relevance of cultural studies in understanding how culture intersects with political and social change.

Cultural studies has come a long way from its origins in post-war Britain, evolving into a global interdisciplinary field that addresses a wide range of issues, from race and gender to globalization and digital culture. Its development reflects the changing social, political and intellectual contexts of the 20th and 21st centuries. As new forms of media and cultural practices emerge, cultural studies will remain essential for understanding how culture shapes and is shaped by social forces in a rapidly changing world.

Cultural studies theory and literature share a dynamic interdependent relationship, each informing and enriching the other in the analysis of cultural and social phenomena. Cultural studies examines how culture (understood in its broadest sense) shapes and is shaped by power structures, identity and ideologies. This field is deeply intertwined with theory, particularly poststructuralist, Marxist, feminist and postcolonial frameworks, which offer critical tools for deconstructing cultural practices and their implications. Literature, as a cultural artefact, serves as a key medium through which these theoretical ideas are explored, questioned and represented.

In the context of cultural studies, literature is not only a form of artistic expression but also a cultural text that reflects, critiques and shapes social realities. Novels, plays, poetry and other literary forms are seen as sites where issues of race, class, gender and national identity are negotiated. Literature becomes a lens through which the dominant ideologies of a particular time and place are challenged or reinforced. For instance, works like Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampate Ba's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, are analyzed not only for their narrative techniques but also for their engagement with African identity and the role of folklore in constructing cultural memory.

Through cultural studies, literature is thus understood as a vehicle for cultural

discourse, where dynamics are negotiated and social hierarchies are contested. The literary text provides a space to reflect on larger societal conflicts making literature an important area of study within cultural studies, that also emphasizes the role of popular center and literature. Unlike traditional literary criticism, which often focuses on “high” literature, cultural studies extends its analysis to popular literary genres such as romance novels, detective fiction and graphic novels. This approach democratizes the study that all forms of written works, regardless of their perceived cultural values, play a role in shaping societal attitudes and values. It allows scholars to explore how popular literature reflects and influences everyday life, consumerism and media culture.

Another significant relationship between cultural studies and literature is the focus on identity formation and cultural narratives. Cultural studies theory looks at literature as a space where identities are negotiated and contested. For example, postcolonial literature often interrogates the legacies of colonialism, as seen in works by writers like Ngugi wa Thiong’o and Salman Rushdie. These authors use literature to deconstruct the cultural assumptions of the empire and give voice to marginalized perspectives. Furthermore, cultural studies theory recognizes literature as a site of resistance. Many literary works offer critiques of hegemonic power structures and dominant ideologies, providing readers with alternative ways of seeing the world. In this sense, literature is not only reflective of social order but also a potential site for subversion and transformation. For example, feminist literature like Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) critiques the patriarchal structures that restrict women’s opportunities and imagines new possibilities for gender equality.

The relationship between cultural studies and literature is also evident in the analysis of power dynamics and discourse. Drawing on poststructuralist ideas from scholars like Michel Foucault, cultural studies looks at how literature contributes to the production of knowledge and power. Literary texts are seen as part of larger discourses that define and regulate social life. In sum, cultural studies offers a rich and complex framework for analyzing literature. It opens up new avenues for understanding how literature engages with issues of power, identity and resistance, making it a valuable tool for literary analysis in a globalized and interconnected world.

One of the shortcomings of cultural studies is their theoretical fragmentation. Because cultural studies draws from multiple disciplines (such as sociology, anthropology and literary theory) it lacks a unified theoretical foundation. This interdisciplinarity can make the field

appear unfocused, with scholars often borrowing loosely from various frameworks without fully engaging with or rigorously applying them. As a result, critics argue that cultural studies can be overly eclectic, making it difficult to develop cohesive or systematic approaches to analyzing culture.

Another limitation is its emphasis on subjectivity and relativism, which can lead to criticism that it avoids definitive conclusions or objective standards. Cultural studies often focus on the multiple interpretations and meanings that cultural texts or practices can generate, emphasizing that meaning is not fixed but fluid. While this perspective is valuable for understanding cultural complexity, critics argue that it can lead to an overemphasis on interpretation at the expense of concrete analysis or practical solutions to real-world problems.

Cultural studies has also been criticized for its political bias. Many scholars in the field are committed to progressive or left-leaning politics, which can sometimes result in analyses that are more ideologically driven than neutral. Critics argue that this political engagement can lead to selective readings of culture, where certain narratives or interpretations are highlighted while others are ignored, leading to a skewed understanding of cultural phenomena.

Furthermore, cultural studies' focus on popular culture has been seen as both a strength and a weakness. While the field is praised for democratizing the study of culture by valuing popular and everyday practices, this focus on media and consumer culture has led some to accuse it of neglecting other important areas, such as economics or more traditional forms of cultural production.

Lastly, some critics point to the lack of practical applications in cultural studies. While the field offers insightful critiques of power, identity and representation, it often stops short of offering clear solutions or strategies for addressing the inequalities or injustice it uncovers. This has led to accusations that cultural studies are more concerned with critique for its own sake rather than contributing to tangible social change.

This theoretical framework establishes the foundation for understanding the role of folklore in African literature through the lens of cultural studies. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampâté Bâ's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, help the study to explore how these respective authors use folklore as a cultural and artistic tool to navigate colonial influences and preserve African traditions. Through this theoretical context, the literature

review will critically examine existing scholarly works on African folklore and its integration into literature, highlighting gaps in current research and situating this study within the discourse of African literary traditions.

Literature Review

As John Creswell explains in the second chapter of *Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, a literature review serves as an opportunity to convince researchers that a topic merits further exploration. Additionally, a well-crafted review reinforces the researcher's assertions and allows them to establish a clear purpose for their study. Moreover, it demonstrates how the researcher has built upon previous work and positions their research as a foundation for new perspectives (pp. 39).

In modern times, the definition of folklore has certainly faced some changes, because there are new perceptions and new points of view. This is why Obiora Eke and Alay Nnamdi use Iheakaram's point of view in "The Place of Folklore in Contemporary African Drama: J. P. Clark's *Ozidi*", by saying that folklore can be considered as the heritage left to Africans, so that they can know their past and easily share their cultures and knowledge through generations. We can therefore understand them, when they say:

Folklore can be described as the identification, in modern times, of the surviving myths, legends, stories, riddles, proverbs, plant and animal lore, customs and unrecorded traditions of the people. Its function is the study of the ways and sayings of the folk (pp. 45).

According to Obiora Eke and Alay Nnamdi Obika, in "The Place of Folklore in Contemporary African Drama: John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo's *Ozidi*", folklore is represented through many elements of a given culture. We can then talk about: the surviving myths, legends, stories, riddles, proverbs, plant and animal lore, customs and unrecorded traditions of the people. Its function is the study of the ways and sayings of the folk. They explain that folklore depends on orality and is even an aspect of knowledge that is acquired during childhood. This means it cannot be learnt because it is closely associated with language, which is itself, closely associated with culture. This is why they continue by saying:

Folklore is largely dependent on oral transmission and memories rather than on formal instruction and written sources. In other words, one can see folklore from the point of view that it is an all-pervading aspect of knowledge acquired not through formal education. Rather, it is the sum total of knowledge gained by a particular people, knowledge gained basically from the environment in which a particular people find themselves" (pp. 59).

According to them, folklore plays an important role in African culture, in that it reflects peoples' lives. That is why he will show that the play is greatly indebted to the African oral tradition or folklore. As explained above, folklore refers to the collection of myths, legends and beliefs that are associated with a particular culture or religion; it often involves supernatural or divine beings and events. In the context of our research on folklore in the novels under study, these key terms may refer to how African writers draw on and incorporate traditional African storytelling forms and beliefs to create new and unique literary expressions. This is why William Bascom in "The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives", explains:

... This provides a system of classification in which a single category, defined in terms of form alone, is comparable to the classes of proverbs, riddles and other genres of verbal art. Prose narrative, I propose, is an appropriate term for the widespread and the category of verbal art which includes myths, legends and folktales. These forms are related to each other in that they are narratives in prose and this distinguishes them from proverbs, riddles, ballads, poems, tongue-twisters and forms of verbal art on the basis of strictly formal characteristics... I suggest that tale can be used as a synonym; this admittedly more ambiguous, but one can appropriately speak of myths, legend, folktales as tales (pp. 3-20).

Diana Akers Rhoads, in "Culture in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*", explains the importance of culture and multiculturalism, by saying that they generally emphasize the appreciation of difference among cultures. She continues by saying that Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* represents the cultural roots of the Igbos in order to provide self-confidence. In other words, people are stronger when closer to their roots. The critic sets out to explore how Chinua Achebe, in *Things Fall Apart*, represents Igbo culture, showing its depth and value while simultaneously addressing its limitations. The critic examines Achebe's depiction of the cultural roots of the Igbos concerning universal principles, particularly in terms of self-confidence and national identity, while also highlighting the destructive potential of tribal or national pride. Ultimately, the author aims to demonstrate how Achebe uses this portrayal to counteract the negative effects of colonialism and to align Igbo culture with the values of modern liberal democracy (pp. 61).

Rhoads approaches this analysis by comparing Achebe's representation of Igbo culture to modern democratic ideals. The argument begins by contrasting the current advocates of multiculturalism, which emphasizes cultural appreciation, with the realities of cultural differences that can lead to conflict, as seen in Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This comparison introduces the tensions between national pride and the destructive potential of emphasizing cultural differences. The critic then delves into Achebe's intentions, stating that

his representation of Igbo culture was meant to restore dignity lost during colonization. To strengthen this argument, Rhoads refers to Achebe's own words, highlighting that his goal was to show the value, depth and dignity of the Igbo before European colonization.

The critic further supports this by listing specific aspects of Igbo society in *Things Fall Apart* (democratic institutions, tolerance, gender balance, adaptability, morality, wealth distribution, justice, art and poetry) that align with modern liberal democratic values. This detailed analysis shows how Achebe goes beyond merely representing cultural differences and instead presents Igbo society in a way that resonates with contemporary standards of dignity and democracy.

The critic concludes that Achebe's depiction of Igbo culture transcends mere cultural differences. Achebe does not simply portray the Igbos as different for the sake of emphasizing their uniqueness; rather, he depicts them in a way that resonates with the values of modern liberal democracy. By doing so, Achebe illustrates how Igbo society had achieved many of the ideals sought by contemporary societies, such as democracy, tolerance, justice and morality. In this way, Rhoads finds that Achebe restores dignity to the Igbos while simultaneously aligning their cultural values with universal human principles, thus avoiding the destructive potential of excessive cultural pride (pp. 61).

In an article entitled "Myth and History in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*", Rangan Geetha and Dr Pauline Das explain that all African writers, though in their distinctive ways, have been concerned in their writings with African experience, African modes of consciousness, with traditional or historically transformed images, rituals and social structures of their own common and diversified culture. Their article aims to explore the relationship between myth and history in Achebe's novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*. They examine how Achebe uses African myth and history to depict the transformation from traditional African society to a new order influenced by colonialism. The authors analyze how Achebe intertwines myth with historical events to express the challenges faced by African communities during this period of change (pp. 8-67).

The critics explore Achebe's novels through several key analytical points. First of all, they talk about myth and history. They describe how Achebe uses African myths and rituals to represent timeless cultural truth and societal transformations. By contrasting African myths with the linear historical approach of Western societies, they show how Achebe weaves together mythological and historical narratives to reflect the cultural transition. Secondly, they talk about the transformation from old to new order. They trace the cultural shift from the traditional order to colonial influence in both novels. They argue that Achebe portrays this

transformation as a product of cultural adaptation to change, especially concentrating on the characters' reactions to the new colonial order. Next, they talk about ritual and collective identity. The author argues that Achebe uses literature as a form of ritual to preserve collective identity, especially in the face of colonial destruction. They illustrate this with examples like the ritual of Ezeulu in *Arrow of God*, where the ritual reenacts historical events to reinforce the community.

Moreover, they highlight the colonial impact in the two novels. Achebe's description of the colonial encounter is analyzed as destructive on multiple levels, yet the authors also note that this destruction is part of the larger process of cultural change that Achebe analyzes through his characters. Okonkwo's and Ezeulu's struggles represent how African individuals grapple with the breakdown of traditional values. As another key point, they talk about tragic heroes. The authors compare Achebe's protagonists, Okonkwo and Ezeulu, to tragic heroes in classical and Shakespearean literature, highlighting their admirable qualities and tragic flaws. They argue that Achebe's characters embody the tension between individual aspirations and societal expectations. They end with a special key element which is myth and history in balance. Achebe's treatment of myth and history is analyzed as interwoven, where myth is not simply replaced by the history of colonialism. Myth and history are represented as two forces that shape African society's response to external pressures.

Geetha and Das conclude that Chinua Achebe successfully intertwines myth and history in both *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* to explore the transformation of African societies during colonialism. They argue that Achebe portrays this transformation as inevitable but complex, with both myth and history playing significant roles in how individuals and communities respond to cultural change.

The authors find that Achebe's characters, particularly Okonkwo and Ezeulu, represent the archetypal African heroes deeply tied to their community yet tragically flawed. Achebe's work is seen as portraying a "falling apart" of traditional African society, but this disintegration is presented within a perspective of cultural adaptation. The tension between history and myth in his novels reflects the struggle to maintain African identity in the face of colonial pressures. Despite the tragic outcomes of the protagonists, their failures are depicted as majestic, embodying the larger narrative of cultural resilience. The critics conclude that Achebe's novels preserve African culture through the lens of myth while simultaneously addressing the historical reality of colonialism, thereby balancing the sacred and temporal in a meaningful way (pp. 1-5).

Talking about modern African literature in “The Crisis of Cultural Memory in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*”, Fabiola Irele says that if there is any single work that can be considered central to the evolving canon of modern African literature, it is, without question, Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*. Fabiola Irele aims to explore the significance of *Things Fall Apart* within the canon of modern African literature. Specifically, the author seeks to analyze the novel’s dual role: first as a counter-narrative to Western colonial depictions of Africa, and second, as an exploration of the internal tensions within Igbo society. Irele sets out to show how *Things Fall Apart* acts as both an ideological challenge with the use of folklore in the novel.

As key perspectives, Irele talks about the narratives and aesthetic strategy. He focuses on Achebe’s narrative techniques, particularly his use of language and symbolism, to show how the novel reflects both the strengths and flaws of the Igbo society. The analysis highlights the ironies in Achebe’s depiction of Okonkwo, who embodies both the virtues and limitations of traditional Igbo masculinity and how Achebe’s critical distance allows for a reflective engagement with the culture. Then, irony and complexities represent the other key perspectives explored by Irele. The article highlights the thematic ironies within the novel, such as the moral ambiguity surrounding Okonkwo’s character. Irele points out that while *Things Fall Apart* critiques colonialism, it is not an idealized celebration of tribal culture, as Achebe also explores the internal contradictions within Igbo society.

Irele concludes that *Things Fall Apart* is not merely a protest against colonialism but a complex narrative that reflects on the moral and cultural crises within Igbo society during its historical encounter with the West. Ultimately, Irele finds that Achebe’s work is a profound exploration of African society’s internal dynamics, its cultural resilience, and the tensions that arise from the pressures of historical change. Achebe’s narrative approach (blending African oral tradition with Western literary forms) also serves as a means to reclaim African history and culture, while acknowledging the inevitable transformation caused by the colonial encounter (pp. 40).

Deramchia Yamina, in the abstract of “Modern African Literature Revisited: A Study of Literary Affinities in Selected Early Novels by Achebe”, Feraoun, Kateb, Ngugi, Armah and Mimouni, explain that authors like Feraoun, Chinua Achebe, Kateb Yacine, Ngugi Wa Thiong’O, Ayi Kwei Armah and Rachid Mimouni constitute a site for the interplay of orality

and writing, one of the consequences of which is the production of the global discourse. The thesis aims to revisit early Modern African Literature by examining the works of six prominent authors: Mouloud Feraoun, Chinua Achebe, Kateb Yacine, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Ayi Kwei Armah, and Richid Mimouni. The central objective is to analyze how these authors blend oral traditions with Western literary forms, creating a unique "global" discourse (a combination of global and local influences). The thesis seeks to demonstrate how these writers, while influenced by Western education in their novels. Through this lens, the author explores themes of cultural preservation, refinement and revision in the selected authors' work (iv).

The author employs a comparative poetics approach, placing equal emphasis on the oral tradition from which these authors emerged and the Western cultures in which they were educated. Through this methodology, the authors explore: cultural preservation. Focusing on Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, and Feraoun's *La Terre et le Sang*, the analysis shows how both authors maintain a balance between celebrating their African heritage and acting as cultural critics. The novels are presented as examples of hybrid intellectual works, blending ethnographic and historical discourses with a formulaic oral style to preserve their African identity while engaging with modern writing forms. Secondly, they talk about cultural refinement. In fact, in Ngugi's *A Grain of Wheat* and Keteb Yacine's *Ndjima*, the thesis examines how these authors shift from preservation to cultural refinement.

The focus is on how these writers blend African epic narrative forms with modernist writing to address revolutionary themes. Their novels experiment with textual strategies and incorporate elements of African oral traditions in subtle ways, reflecting a refinement of both form and content. Then they talk about cultural revision. The works of Ayi Kwei Armah (*The Beautiful Ones Are not Yet Born*) and Mimouni (*Le Fleuve Detourne*) are used for their use of textual outbreaks and indirect verbal strategies to critique post-colonial societies. The thesis identifies how these authors use satire, the grotesque, and character types akin to African tricker traditions to offer social criticism, portraying the transition from colonialism to neocolonialism. The author uses textual analysis, comparing the novels' format and thematic experimentation with oral traditions, modernist strategies and the dynamics of writing in African literature. Each author's treatment of their cultural roots, combined with Western literary techniques, is examined to highlight how they engage with their own identity and the socio-political contexts of their narratives.

The thesis concludes that these six African writers illustrate varying approaches to blending orality with writing, ranging from cultural preservation to refinement and revision. Achebe and Feraoun seem to celebrate their cultural roots but remain critical, maintaining a

hybrid discourse that respects African identity. Ngugi and Kateb Yacine, through their experimentation with style, bridge African oral narrative forms with modernist techniques, focusing on revolution and change. For Armah and Mimouni, the thesis highlights how their novels move beyond preservation or refinement, engaging in cultural revision through indirect and grotesque modes of expression. Both authors use their works to critique the failures of post-colonial societies, employing verbal indirection and trickster-like narratives as tools for social criticism.

Ultimately, the critic finds that these authors provide a nuanced intersection of oral traditions and written literature, reflecting the complexities of African identity in a post-colonial world. Their ability to engage with both local traditions and global literary forms creates a dynamic, global discourse that enriches Modern African Literature (iv).

In an article entitled “The Fall of National Identity in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*”, Abu Jweid and Abdalhadi Nimer examine Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* within a postcolonial discourse. While many postcolonial critiques focus on indigenous identity, this article emphasizes how national identity deteriorates due to the colonial encounter, particularly through the personal failure of the protagonist, Okonkwo, to comfort colonial forces. The objective is to analyze this downfall using postcolonial theoretical concepts such as aboriginally, hegemony, subaltern and identity.

The critics conduct a textual analysis of *Things Fall Apart* by applying postcolonial theoretical frameworks, particularly those proposed by Bill Ashcroft, Gayatri Spivak and Laura Chrisman. The analysis focuses first of all on postcolonial concepts. The authors use key concepts like aboriginally (the relationship between Indigenous culture and colonialism), hegemony (the dominance of colonial power), subaltern (the oppressed class or marginalized groups) and identity (the construction of national and individual identity under colonial rule) to interpret the novel’s deeper themes. Secondly, the authors, in their analysis, focus on the deterioration of national identity. The analysis interprets the tragic downfall of Okonkwo as symbolic of the collapse of Nigerian national identity under colonial pressure. Okonkwo’s initial strength as a traditional leader and his subsequent spiritual defeat mirrors the disintegration of a cohesive national identity, exacerbated by the external pressures of colonialism and missionary influence. Then, the authors talk about the historical and cultural context. In fact, by situating the novel within the larger context of European colonization and postcolonial realignment, the author explores how Achebe’s portrayal of Igbo society reflects

the tension between maintaining indigenous values and facing the destabilizing effects of colonial domination.

The critics concluded that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* represents not only the personal tragedy of Okonkwo but also the collective downfall of national identity in the face of colonialism. The protagonist's failure to resist colonial forces leads to his eventual suicide, which symbolizes the collapse of traditional Igbo society. The colonial presence, combined with the introduction of Christianity, fractures the unity of the community and undermines its ability to maintain a strong national identity. This article also finds that Achebe presents a complex encounter between colonizers and the indigenous population, with Okonkwo representing the internal conflict between physical resistance and spiritual defeat. The authors conclude that Okonkwo's downfall, while partly due to his flaws, is ultimately a consequence of the colonial system's impact on Igbo society. Through the implication of postcolonial theory, the article demonstrates how the novel reflects the theme of national identity being eroded by hegemonic colonial forces, resulting in a tragic disintegration of cultural cohesion and indigenous self-determination (pp. 529).

Rasib Mehmood, in his PhD dissertation entitled "Colonization, Resistance and Transformation: A Postcolonial Critique of *The Unchosen* and *Things Fall Apart*", explains to us that colonialism is a complex phenomenon which cannot be limited to physical colonization as it would fail to take into account the other facets of this phenomenon. Postcolonial writers have shown how colonization affected their society and challenged the notion of enlightenment and civilization. Moreover, the aspect of culture has also been touched during colonization. That is why, in *From a Colonial to a Postcolonial African Voice: Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, Ralph Austen a researcher in African literature, post-colonialism is defined specially. Ralph Austen states:

In our broad use of the term postcolonial to characterize contemporary African culture, there is an implicit understanding that the colonial experience played a critical role in shaping the identity of societies that emerged from extensive periods of European rule. We can trace such an impact directly through a great variety of written African documents produced under colonialism as well as through various reflections on this experience by African historians and other thinkers after the attainment of independence. However, among the fictional works that have entered into the canon of modern African literature, the topic of colonialism is conspicuous for its relative absence (pp. 1).

Rasib Mehmood sets out to explore how colonialism, resistance and transformation are portrayed in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Hassan's *The Unchosen*. The primary aim is to understand the different facets of colonization (beyond physical colonization) by studying its cultural, religious and social impacts in Africa and the Subcontinent. Additionally, Mehmood evaluates the role of power politics in examining the similarities and differences in the colonization experiences of these two regions. The critic uses textual analysis as the main method to access the selected works utilizing a postcolonial theoretical framework to explore the key concepts of colonization, resistance and transformation. The analysis is conducted at various levels: first, we have colonization and resistance. The researcher scrutinizes colonization and resistance at three levels: physical, cultural and religious. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how colonization affected different aspects of native societies and how resistance was manifested in each area. Next, the researcher talks about transformation. He examines it, as well as the result of colonization and resistance, especially at cultural and religious levels. The transformation is seen not only in how colonized societies adapted or resisted, but how colonization led to lasting changes in their cultural and religious fabric. Then, Mehmood compares the colonization experiences of Africa (as represented in *Things Fall Apart*) and the subcontinent (as portrayed in *The Unchosen*), highlighting the differences in how colonization affected religion in both regions. For example, while religious conservatism to Christianity was a key factor in Africa, in the subcontinent, religious divisions among natives were exploited by colonizers to maintain control.

The researcher concludes that colonization profoundly affected the social fabric of both African and Subcontinental societies by undermining the values, traditions and religions of the natives; colonizers used tools such as ideals of technology, education and progress to enforce transformation. The critic also enforces transformation, he finds that while both Achebe and Hassan criticize colonial powers, they also highlight the internal weaknesses within African and Subcontinental societies that facilitated the process of colonization. Moreover, the research acknowledges that colonization was not entirely negative as it provoked a sense of modernization among the natives, making them aware of the need for education, industrialization and development in science and technology. The critic emphasizes that while colonialism led to significant losses for the native cultures, it also contributed to their transformation by introducing new ideas and systems that spurred development. At the end of his analysis, the author illustrates how colonization was a complex process that involved

resistance and transformation at multiple levels, ultimately leading to a redefinition of the cultural and religious identities of the colonized societies.

In *Contes Initiatiques Peuls*, Mildred Mortimer, talking about Amadou Hampâté Bâ, explains that he is well known for his French translations of Peul myths, tales and legends but he is perhaps best known for his statement, “*In Africa, when an elder dies, an entire library is lost*”. Mortimer sets out to review and discuss the significance of Amadou Hampate Ba’s contributions to the preservation of African oral traditions, particularly through his writings and autobiographies. The critic aims to highlight Ba’s role in bridging African culture and Western audiences, emphasizing how his work serves to document and share the richness of African oral traditions, particularly the Peul myths, tales and legends. The review also touches on Ba’s dedication to preserving this cultural heritage by transforming oral traditions into written works.

Mortimer analyses Ba’s works by focusing first of all on his commitment to oral tradition. Mortimer emphasizes Ba’s lifelong commitment to preserving African oral traditions, noting his famous statement, “*In Africa, when an elder dies, an entire library is lost*”. This quote underscores the importance of oral tradition in African culture and Ba’s mission to ensure that these traditions were not lost by recording them in written forms. Next, Mortimer talks about the overview of Ba’s autobiographical works. He provides an overview of the two volumes of Ba’s autobiography namely *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul* (1991) and *Oui Mon Commandant* (1994), which explores his childhood in Mali and his time as a colonial secretary in Burkina Faso. These works are used to illustrate how Ba combined personal experience with cultural preservation. Mortimer finally highlights Ba’s works on two supernatural tales, “*Njeddo Dewal, mere de la calamite*” and “*Kaidara*”, focusing not their richness in Peul poetry and symbolism. Mortimer notes that Ba’s efforts to make these tales accessible to European readers by adding notes on the linguistic, symbolic and cultural aspects of the texts, thereby facilitating cross-cultural understanding.

Mortimer concludes that Amadou Hampate Ba’s work is invaluable in preserving and introducing African oral traditions to a global audience. By documenting the myths, tales and legends of the Peul people, Ba ensured that these oral traditions would not be lost with the passing of elders. The critic also acknowledges Ba’s skill in making these African stories accessible to western readers through his careful explanations of linguistic and cultural elements. Overall, Mortimer praises Ba for his dual role as a cultural preserver and educator,

ensuring that African oral traditions are recognized and appreciated beyond the continent (pp. 225-226).

In *Ecocritical Analysis of Myth in Achebe's Things Fall Apart*, the authors Obakachi Abraham and Aliyuy Abdulmalik, explain that African literary writings are rich in ecological issues and attempt to use the myths that are in *Things Fall Apart* to explain the relationship between nature and human culture. They set out to perform an eco-critical analysis of the myths present in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Their goal is to examine the eco-critical analysis of the myths present in their Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Their goal is to examine the ecological dimensions embedded in the novel, particularly the relationship between nature and human culture as represented through myth. They aim to demonstrate how African literary writings, especially *Things Fall Apart*, are rich in traditional myths as portrayed in the novel.

The authors conduct their analysis through the lens of ecocriticism, a theoretical approach that focuses on the natural relationship between literature and the natural world. In doing so, they analyze specific myths in *Things Fall Apart* such as the quarrel between the sky and the earth. This myth highlights the connection and harmony between the human and natural worlds. Also, they talk about the locust visitation every seven years. This myth is used to show the cyclic nature of environmental events and their impact on the community. The authors argue that these myths demonstrate the harmony that traditionally existed between man and nature in pre-colonial African societies. They emphasize that Achebe incorporates these ecological narratives to showcase how deeply intertwined African culture is with the environment, thus positioning nature at the centre of daily life.

The critics conclude that the myths in *Things Fall Apart* illustrate that African culture traditionally recognized and respected the natural environment, including its flora and fauna, which were integral to daily life. The novel reflects a harmonious relationship between humans and nature, a balance that was disrupted by colonial invasions. This ecocritical perspective reinforces Achebe's intention in writing the novel: to respond to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and its distorted representation of Africa and its environment. The authors assert that *Things Fall Apart* successfully portrays the true African culture and its connection to nature, emphasizing that the colonizers sought to erase this connection to dominate African societies. They conclude that Achebe's novel serves as a microscopic observation of what was happening across Africa, showing how myth derives its strength from nature and how this connection is a central element in resisting colonial influence. Ultimately, the article suggest that more

research should be conducted on the role of nature in African literature, as the ecological dimensions of work like *Things Fall Apart* are crucial for understanding the crucial for understanding the cultural and environmental heritage of African societies (pp. 46).

In *Epistemological Function of Myth in Restoring Cultural Identity in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart*, Siva Sankar and Ganesan think that Chinua Achebe's works have been a source for the postcolonial generation and writers to understand the glory of pre-colonial status of their nation, harsh realities of colonialism and challenging period of Post-colonialism for restoration of cultural identities and history of Africa. The critics aim to explore Chinua Achebe's Contributions to postcolonial literature by examining how his works reflect the precolonial status of African nations, the impact of colonialism and the challenges of postcolonial identity restoration. Specifically, the paper focuses on the role of Igbo mythology as a reservoir of history and cultural identity, highlighting Achebe's efforts to counter European misconceptions about African cultures.

The critics employ a thematic analysis of Achebe's work, particularly *Things Fall Apart*, to uncover key arguments about the mythology of the Igbo people. This includes first of all an examination of myth. The paper emphasizes the importance of Igbo myths as historical narratives that can aid in reconstructing African identity and cultural history. Secondly, as another thematic aspect, we have a counter-narrative approach used by the author, as he discusses how Achebe challenges European depictions of Africa through an exploration of native myths, thus providing a more nuanced understanding of Igbo culture. Next, the critics talk about the epistemological framework. The analysis frames Igbo mythology within an epistemological context, suggesting that these myths hold critical knowledge about the past and serve as a means to reclaim cultural identity. Then, as another element of that thematic analysis, we have cultural restoration. The paper argues that Achebe's works serve as a blueprint for future African writers to articulate and restore what it means to be authentically African.

The critics conclude that Chinua Achebe's writings illustrate the challenges faced by African writers in articulating their cultural identity. Specifically, the findings indicate that: in terms of intellectual capacity, Achebe showcases the intellectual prowess of the Igbo ancestors, portioning their mythology as vital for cultural restoration. In terms of cultural identity reconstruction, the paper suggests that *Things Fall Apart* serves as an essential example for African nations to reconnect with their pre-colonial narratives and cultural identities. In terms

of collective storytelling, the conclusion emphasizes the necessity for people from every nation to narrate their pre-colonial histories to bridge gaps in cultural identity and contribute to the establishment of a new national consciousness. Overall, the critics articulate that Achebe's works provide both a critical reflection on colonial impact and a foundation for reclaiming and reasserting African cultural identities through the lens of mythology (pp. 124).

Abigail Guthrie, in a thesis entitled "Language and Identity in Postcolonial African Literature: A Case Study of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*", shows that sociolinguists often research the development of language attitudes and the state of language within speech communities. The researcher aims to explore the relationship between the Igbo people and British colonialism as depicted in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The thesis seeks to demonstrate how Achebe's use of the English language in a predominantly African narrative serves both to critique colonial oppression and to affirm African cultural identity (<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/58825051.pdf>).

Abigail Guthrie uses a special method of analysis by starting with an interdisciplinary approach. In fact, she employs a blend of literary and linguistic analysis to dissect Achebe's work. She continues with linguistic stereotypes in her analysis. She defines linguistic stereotypes and explains how they influence cultural beliefs and behaviours. This includes the debate over whether African writers should write in indigenous languages or in English, presenting statements from both sides and how they manifest within Nigerian literature. She proceeds in her analysis with a close textual reading of *Things Fall Apart*, focussing on Achebe's narrative techniques, character development and thematic elements that reflect the Igbo cultural experience. The author analyses specific characters, such as Okonkwo and Nwoye, as embodiments of different responses to colonialism and change. Guthrie also uses cultural contextualization in her analysis. In fact, she situated Achebe's work within the historical and cultural landscape of Nigeria, particularly the complexities of Igbo identity in the face of British colonial rule. This includes a discussion of Igbo autonomy, self-governance and the impact of colonial narratives. Then, Guthrie ends in her analysis by making a lexical analysis in her last chapter, which includes a detailed examination of Achebe's lexical choices and the interplay of multiple languages within the narrative. The author explores how these choices reflect Achebe's language attitudes and contribute to the story's depth.

At the end of her work, Guthrie finds many conclusions at several levels. First, at the level of cultural restoration, she concludes that Achebe's writing, particularly *Things Fall Apart*, highlights the challenges faced by African writers and the necessity of reclaiming and articulating authentic cultural identities. Achebe's work serves as a bridge to pre-colonial narratives that are essential for understanding contemporary African identity. At the level of language use, she concludes that the English language used by the author is positioned not as a betrayal of his heritage but as a pragmatic choice that enhances his storytelling. This choice allows for an audience while still retaining an African perspective and addressing the complexities of cultural identity. In terms of resistance to stereotypes, the analysis reveals that Achebe actively resists linguistic stereotypes by demonstrating the richness of Igbo culture through the very language imposed upon them. The work reflects the dynamic and adaptive nature of language as it intersects with cultural identity. Then, at the level of interdisciplinary insights, Guthrie emphasizes the importance of combining linguistic and literary studies, suggesting that such interdisciplinary approaches can yield new insights into the works of authors like Achebe, whose contributions continue to resonate globally.

Abigail Guthrie concludes by effectively showcasing Achebe's literary genius as a means of cultural expression and critique, asserting that *Things Fall Apart* is a vital work for understanding the complexities of postcolonial identity and the transformative power of language (1 April 2011).

Philip Peek and Kwesi Yankah in *African Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, explains that over 300 entries provide in-depth examinations of individual African countries, ethnic groups, religious practices, artistic genres and numerous other concepts related to folklore. In that book, the authors set out to analyze African folklore, with a particular focus on its oral tradition, emphasizing the role of storytelling, myths, legends and other oral forms. The goal is to explore the significance of African folklore as an integral part of the continent's cultural heritage, particularly its significance on literature, drama and social structures. The study also examines how African folklore continues to evolve and adapt, retaining its relevance in modern times (<https://ia903100.us.archive.org/30/items/africanfolkloreanencyclopedia/African%20Folklore%20-%20An%20Encyclopedia.pdf>).

The authors approach the subject by examining various aspects of African folklore. This first of all includes oral tradition. In fact, the authors highlight the importance of oral literature, as it is primarily transmitted by word of mouth rather than written texts. The author

refers to scholars like Ruth Finnegan and others who contributed to the understanding of the African oral tradition. Secondly, as other aspects examined by Philip Peek and Kwesi Yankah are myths and cultural identity. In fact the actors analyze specific African myths, legends and folktales, showing how they represent a deeper understanding of African cosmology and worldview. These myths often reflect the relationship between humanity and nature, as well as society values. Next, the author also examines how African folklore has influenced African drama and literature, drawing on examples of how modern African playwright and novelists have incorporated traditional tales and legends into their works.

The authors conclude that African folklore plays a crucial role in preserving cultural identity and educating both the young and the old about societal values. It is dynamic and has adapted to modern political and social changes, continuing to influence various forms of art, including drama and literature. The analysis reveals that African folklore, with its strong roots in oral tradition, has a profound impact on the collective memory and cultural identity of African societies. Furthermore, the myths and oral traditions help foster a sense of community and continuity between past and present, even in the face of modern challenges such as colonization and globalization.

In “Culture and Societal Institutions in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: a Critical Reading”, Victor Alumona talking about the society depicted in Achebe's novel, explains that, in short, the argument is that the novel is about Umuofia whose socio-political and economic institutions are so well developed, that they can compare favorably, with those of any other society in the same epoch and level of development, anywhere in the world. Alumona sets out to critically analyze the societal institutions and cultural values in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and to challenge traditional interpretations of the novel. Alumona argues that the novel is not simply a portrait of the ideal Igbo man through the character of Okonkwo, nor is it primarily concerned with an obsession for power and its repercussions. Instead, the author posits that Achebe's novel is a nuanced portrayal of Igbo cultural and societal institutions, highlighting both their strengths and weaknesses, while also engaging in a critical examination of these institutions.

Alumnoa achieves this by Analyzing the irony of the name Umuofia. He contends that Achebe uses irony in the name “Umuofia”, often perceived to have primitive connotations, to make a deeper point. The irony lies in the fact that the people of Umuofia process sophisticated social, political and economic institutions, comparable to those of any other civilization of the

same period. Achebe uses this irony to reassert the dignity of the Igbo people, whose culture and institutions were misunderstood and denigrated during colonial times. He continues by examining key societal institutions. The analysis focuses on various societal structures such as family, government, morality, law, diplomacy and order within the Igbo community. The author suggests that Achebe carefully reconstructs these systems to illustrate their complexity and functionality. Through this, Achebe not only highlights the sophistication of the Igbo society but also critiques certain cultural assumptions of Igbo society but also critiques certain cultural assumptions and practices through his characters. Finally, Alumona points out that Achebe, while deeply engaged with his culture, maintains a critical distance, allowing him to assess and question the fundamental beliefs of the Igbo society. Achebe employs this method to reveal both the strengths and the limitations of the cultural institutions he presents in the novel. Alumona concludes that Achebe's portrayal of Igbo culture in *Things Fall Apart* serves as a critique of colonial distortions. Achebe shows that the societal institutions of Umuofia are not primitive but reflective of a civilized society with its intellectual traditions. Through his characters, Achebe also raises questions about his people's cultural practices and values, allowing for a balanced critique rather than an idealization of pre-colonial Igbo life.

Ultimately, Alumona finds that the name "Umuofia" is a misnomer when understood at face value. The society portrayed in the novel is far from the primitive or uncivilized community that colonial narratives might suggest. Instead, Achebe highlights the sophistication of Igbo culture, but with a critical eye, acknowledges its complexities while resisting a romanticized portrayal (pp. 62).

In "*Things Fall Apart: The Fiction and The Facts, The Poetry and The Prose*", Ali Mazrui explains that there are at least three genres of literature within which *Things Fall Apart* may be located. One school is the literature of postcoloniality. Although the book was published two years before Nigeria's own independence, it is a work which evaluates colonialism by describing what kind of Africa the imperialists encountered on their first arrival. Achebe himself has often spoken of *Things Fall Apart* as a response to the white racism embedded in such works as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Another genre to which the novel might be placed is a school of what has more recently been designated as the genre of clash of civilizations. It overlaps with the literature of imperialism and post-coloniality, but imperialism was only one illustration of civilizations in conflict (pp. 1).

Mazrui sets out to provide a critical examination of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* by exploring the intersections between fiction and fact, poetry and prose, within the novel.

Marui aims to position *Things Fall Apart* within multiple literary genres, such as postcolonial literature and the clash of civilizations and to evaluate Achebe's depiction of Igbo culture in comparison to Western literary traditions. The author also engages with the question of whether the novel is a defense of Igbo culture or an apology for Westernization.

He uses a comparative literary analysis to position *Things Fall Apart* within various genres such as postcolonial literature and Clash of Civilizations. He discusses how the novel fits into the genre of postcolonial literature, as it critiques colonialism and provides insight into pre-colonial Igbo society. He also draws connections between *Things Fall Apart* and the theme of the clash of civilizations, which includes not only the colonial encounter but also the conflict between different cultural worldviews. Mazrui continues in his analysis with a contrast between *Things Fall Apart* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, suggesting that Achebe's work shares certain ambivalence about the clash between white and black civilizations. He also compares Achebe to 18th-century English poets like Oliver Goldsmith and George Crabbe, drawing parallels between their lamentations for the passing of traditional rural societies and Achebe's depiction of the decline of Igbo culture under colonialism. The critic ends with an exploration of Achebe's nuanced critique of Igbo traditions, such as the caste system and ritualistic killings, which Achebe presents with both empathy and candour. Mazrui highlights the dual nature of Achebe's work, which criticizes the flaws of pre-colonial Igbo society while acknowledging the destructive forces of colonialism.

Mazrui concludes that *Things Fall Apart* is a work of cultural integrity and honesty, not a glorification of the idealization of Igbo society, but rather a balanced portrayal of its strengths and flaws. He emphasizes that Achebe, as an insider, offers a critique of Igbo culture that would have been perceived very differently had it been written by a Western author. Mazrui suggests that the novel's enduring relevance stems from Achebe's ability to critique his people from within, without succumbing to Western stereotypes or romanticized depictions of pre-colonial life. The critic also finds that while *Things Fall Apart* is often interpreted as a critique of colonialism, it is more profoundly concerned with the passing of traditional Igbo society. He sees Achebe as engaging with themes similar to those in Western literature about the decline of rural life in the face of modernization, particularly, in the works of Goldsmith and Crabbe. However, Achebe is less sentimental about the past than these poets, offering a more critical and reflective view of the changes brought by colonialism and Christianity.

In "How the Centre is Made to Hold in *Things Fall Apart*", Neil Ten Kortenaar explains Achebe has done his research and that his depiction of the colonization of Igbo land is historically accurate. He aims to analyze how Chinua Achebe, in *Things Fall Apart*, reclaims

historical authority and narrative legitimacy in the portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo society and its encounter with colonialism. The critic examines Achebe's narrative legitimacy in the portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo society and its encounter with colonialism. The critic examines how Achebe's narrative challenges colonial distortions of African history and culture, particularly through the ironic portrayal of the District Commissioner. Kortenaar also investigates how Achebe presents the transitions from pre-colonial to colonial Africa while highlighting the humanity of the African characters.

Kortenaar conducts a textual analysis of *Things Fall Apart* using specific approaches. He starts his analysis by exploring the contrast between the narratives. In fact, Kortenaar contrasted Achebe's authentic narrative of the Igbo people with the distorted, dehumanizing version presented by the District Commissioner at the end of the novel. The commissioner's intention to reduce Okonkwo to a mere footnote in the story, *The Pacification of The Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, serves as a representation of how colonial narratives trivialize African experiences. Achebe's use of irony in this scene is crucial in establishing his own narrative authority as an insider. Secondly, the author continues his analysis by critiquing the District Commissioner's false authority. In fact, Kortenaar shows how Achebe uses the district commissioner as an example of the colonizers' tendency to depict Africans as "other" or "primitive". The commissioner's fascination with Okonkwo's suicide reflects the European desire to frame Africans as foreign, incomprehensible and ultimately lesser. In contrast, Achebe's narrative reconstructs African humanity, showing that Africans live in the same comprehensible world as Europeans. Next, the critic continues by analyzing Achebe's plain style. In fact, he emphasizes Achebe's use of a plain, unadorned style to depict everyday Igbo life. By avoiding heavy symbolism, Achebe stresses the ordinariness and humanity of Igbo culture. This stylistic choice helps bridge the gap between pre-colonial and colonial Africa, presenting the transition as fluid and comprehensible, rather than as a stark rupture. Then, he ends his analysis by focusing on the dialogue between Mr. Brown and Akunna. In fact, Kortenaar highlights the dialogue between them as an important example of mutual respect and understanding. Despite the misunderstanding, the two characters are able to engage in meaningful conversation, which underscores Achebe's theme that Africans and Europeans can coexist and learn from each other.

Kortenaar concludes that *Things Fall Apart* reestablishes the humanity of Africans by countering the false, dehumanizing narrative offered by the District Commissioner and other colonial authorities. Achebe uses irony, particularly in the final scene, to explore the colonialist's distorted view of Africa and to highlight the legitimacy of the African narrative.

Achebe's plain style. With its emphasis on the ordinariness of Igbo life, it serves to make African experiences accessible and relatable, demonstrating that Africans are fundamentally "other" but part of the same human experience as Europeans. Kortenaar also notes that the novel's fluid transition from pre-colonial to colonial Africa reflects Achebe's view that change, while disruptive, is part of a shared human condition. Finally, Kortenaar asserts that Achebe's narrative authority is established by contrasting his historically grounded, human-centered portrayal of Igbo society with the trivial, dismissive portrayal of Igbo society with the trivial, dismissive portrayal offered by colonial figures like the District Commissioner. Achebe's novel becomes a space where African voices are reclaimed and presented with dignity, challenging the dehumanizing narratives of colonial history (pp. 319).

Through the lens of cultural studies, a detailed analysis of this literature review, reveals their importance to our study. The evaluation of books, theses and articles focuses on the perspectives of the other researchers regarding the analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampate Ba's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*. Some insights are also drawn from the social conventions of the past centuries, as discussed in the novels, which are relevant to the topic at hand. This research specifically examines the role of folklore in the novels under study and in societies. While other scholars may have studied these works, this dissertation is unique in its focus on the impact of folklore in African societies, how folklore is represented in both novels and its significance in both African culture and literature. The study also delves into the moral complexities of the stories, analyzing the character's choices, actions and motivations, along with the cultural and folkloric implications of their decisions. Previous critics have primarily concentrated on themes such as colonialism, racism and marginalization, rather than specifically addressing the meaning of folklore. This is why it is important to investigate folklore in African literature in general.

CHAPTER TWO

FOLKLORE IN AFRICAN LITERATURE

This chapter aims to explore the role of folklore in African heritage, tracing its historical development within the African literary tradition. It seeks to provide a conceptual understanding of folklore as represented in African literature and also examines how this folklore influences the cultural and social fabric of African societies. Through these lenses, the chapter highlights the deep connection between folklore and African values, beliefs and social structures, showcasing its importance in shaping both the literary world and cultural identity.

Folklore in the African Literary Heritage

Folklore is a key element of African cultural expression (encompassing oral traditions such as myths, legends, proverbs and folktales) and artistic or performative forms of expression (songs, customs and rituals). These forms of folklore not only serve as entertainment but also function as moral guides, methods of socialization and repositories of collective wisdom. Historically speaking, folklore played a crucial role in preserving African history and culture before the advent of written literature, and oral traditions remained the primary means through which cultural knowledge was transmitted across generations. With the rise of African literature, writers like Chinua Achebe and Amadou Hampâté Bâ have skillfully incorporated these oral traditions into their novels, allowing folklore to serve as a literary tool that enriches narratives, highlights cultural identity, and mirrors the social fabric of African societies.

In *Contexts of African Literature*, Albert Gérard explains that, forty years ago, little was known about African written literature and little was being learnt about them. In Europe, in America, and even in much of colonial Africa, the widespread assumption among scholars and teachers was that: Africa had no written literature worthy of serious study, that it was an alphabetic continent without a traceable literary history, that in terms of material literary production it was virtually a tabula rasa on which nothing of any consequence had been inscribed (vii).

But in “Folklore in Literature: A Tool for Culture Preservation and Entertainment”, Olivia Adaobi Ihueze seems to value the importance of folklore in African literature by saying

that it is traditional art, literature, knowledge and practice that was disseminated largely through oral communication and behavioural examples. She continues by saying that it was initially collected and documented by some writers for the culture preservation sake, only because they felt that these elements of folklore are going into extinction and need to be frozen in print. While some writers incorporate folklore materials in their novels, (poems and drama) for entertainment and culture preservation, according to her, those writers are referred to as active or functional writers but the former are referred to as passive (pp. 57).

According to her, many creative works were analyzed to determine how extensively they use folklore. Her study concludes that folklore serves as a tool for both cultural preservation and entertainment. This is certainly why some writers like Chinua Achebe and Amadou Hampate have used it in their works to enhance cultural understanding and enjoyment, rather than just documenting it, which can be less engaging for readers. In his contribution to African folklore, especially in *The Genesis of African Folkloric Literature*, Joel Adedeji states that the relationship between folklore and literature is a problem that can properly be studied only by a critic trained in folklore as well as in literary studies. Without such training, critics cannot properly identify the folkloristic elements in fiction, poetry and drama. According to him, to write about African folklore literature, one must not be tempted to dabble in the prevalent confusion between what is folklore and what is literature. In his thought, he takes the example of a scholar, Ruth Finnegan, who apparently identifies African folkloric literature as oral literature. In her effort not to attempt an exhaustive analysis of the stylistic or structural characteristics of what she describes as African oral literature, she concentrates the bulk of her work on the properties of the content of the important genres. In her definition, she describes oral literature as that unwritten literature which depends for its actualization on a performer who formulates it in words on a specific occasion (pp. 5).

In African literary heritage, folklore plays a vital role in preserving and transmitting the cultural memory of societies. Culture functions as both a memory and a control mechanism for society, guiding the distinction between correct and incorrect behavior. Folklore, comprising oral traditions, myths, proverbs, songs, and rituals, encapsulates the collective memory of African communities, embedding moral, spiritual, and social lessons within its narratives. It serves as an archive of wisdom passed down through generations, ensuring continuity in cultural values and practices. African folklore not only preserves history but also shapes societal norms, as the stories often reflect the struggles, aspirations, and ideals of the people.

Through storytelling, communities maintain a shared understanding of what is considered right or wrong behaviour, a theme central to Dirk Baecker's exploration of culture as a guiding force. However, the question of who determines the "correctness" of these norms arises, much as Baecker inquires. In African contexts, this responsibility traditionally falls to elders, griots, or spiritual leaders who act as custodians of cultural knowledge. These figures interpret folklore to ensure it aligns with the evolving needs of their society, blending the old with the new to maintain relevance.

Moreover, African writers often draw on folklore to shape their literary works, embedding these cultural elements into modern narratives. Writers like Chinua Achebe and Amadou Hampâté Bâ incorporate oral storytelling techniques to highlight the interconnectedness of folklore with themes of identity, morality, and resistance. In this way, folklore bridges the gap between the past and the present, reinforcing Baecker's notion of culture as a dynamic memory that evolves to meet the demands of time while guiding human behavior. This is why Dirk Baecker in his thesis "The Meaning of Culture", thinks that culture is a memory and a control device of society. It may be considered as providing the distinction of correct versus incorrect behavior. At the end, Baecker wants to know who decides on the correctness or incorrectness of this distinction (pp. 37-51).

Folklore in African literary heritage is deeply embedded in the cultural and symbolic fabric of society. As Dan Ben-Amos highlights in *Folklore in African Society*, the forms of folklore are more than mere expressions of creativity; they carry significant cultural meanings that transcend their literal content. These forms are not just tools for storytelling but are integral to the identity, beliefs, and values of the communities that produce them. Genres of folklore are deeply interwoven with the social fabric, and their meanings emerge from the specific communicative situations in which they are performed. For instance, ritual songs, which often feature repetition and esoteric language, hold significance within the context of their performance. Outside their intended verbal or social environments, these songs may appear meaningless or nonsensical. Their power lies in the interaction between the words, the performer, and the audience, creating a shared cultural experience that reinforces collective memory, spirituality, and social norms.

In African literature, the incorporation of folklore enriches the narrative by infusing it with layers of symbolic meaning. Writers like Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o draw upon oral traditions to convey messages that resonate with their readers on both cultural and universal levels. Folklore thus becomes a bridge between oral and written traditions, preserving

the symbolic essence of African heritage while adapting it for modern literary expression. This dynamic interaction underscores the adaptability and enduring relevance of folklore in capturing the complexities of African societies. This is why, in *Folklore in African Society*, Dan Ben-Amos explains that the forms of folklore, as speakers delineate and recognize them, and have cultural symbolic meanings. Texts, framed into genres and performed in socially defined communicative situations, acquire significance beyond the literal meanings of their constituent words. Ritual songs, for example, which abound with repetitions and obscure terms, are rendered meaningless outside their verbal or social contexts (pp. 165).

In “Littérature de l’Afrique Contemporaine: Approches Théoriques et Pratiques” Louis Marie Ongoum and Isaac-Celestin Tchaho explain that oral literature is really important in the history of the human being and the societies in which they grew up. They present oral literature as a tool of personal development in many domains which are arts, sciences and literature as well. This is why they say:

Rien de ce qui concerne l’homme n’est étranger à la littérature orale, qui est une discipline de la nature humaine, de la société et de la pensée. La littérature orale fonde, en effet, la culture des peuples, tant sur le plan de la littérature en général que sur ceux des arts, de la science et des techniques.

Chez tous les peuples, la littérature orale exprime la culture populaire, c’est-à-dire la totalité des manières de vivre, de travailler, de penser et la totalité de ce qui résultent de ces activités telles qu’elles se sont constituées dans une communauté particulière (pp. 13).

This excerpt means that folklore in African literary heritage serves as the foundation of oral literature, encompassing the essence of human nature, society, and thought. Oral literature is not merely a collection of stories but a discipline that reflects the intricate relationship between culture, art, science, and technology. It provides a framework through which communities transmit their beliefs, values, and practices, establishing a cultural identity that transcends time. This dynamic interplay between oral traditions and daily life highlights the pivotal role of folklore in shaping and preserving African societies.

In every culture, oral literature embodies popular culture, representing the entirety of how people live, work, think, and interact within a specific community. It captures the collective experiences, struggles, and aspirations of a group, serving as a mirror of their social and intellectual lives. Through myths, legends, proverbs, and songs, African folklore conveys profound truths about the human condition while offering practical lessons on morality,

resilience, and coexistence. This holistic approach ensures that oral literature remains relevant, continuously adapting to the evolving needs of society. African writers and artists often draw inspiration from folklore to enrich their creative works. This fusion not only preserves the cultural legacy of oral traditions but also elevates their significance within global literary discourse. Folklore, therefore, is more than an artistic form—it is the cornerstone of African heritage, embodying the totality of lived experiences and connecting the past to the present.

Louis Marie Ongoum and Isaac-Celestin continue by explaining that it is completely wrong to think that an African is naturally a genius or that he is naturally a dancer, a poet, an artist or even a musician. They say that among the Africans, those who master oral literature and traditional arts have without a doubt been immersed in their cultures and the hard work since childhood, they were surrounded by people who transmitted them values they had to use in any arts (pp. 13).

To show the relationship between folklore and literature, Louis Marie Ongoum and Isaac-Celestin Tchaho explain in their book that there is a strong relationship between the language and the oral tradition because the latter lives as long as the language exists, if it is well transmitted. This is why in their book *Littérature de l'Afrique Contemporaine: Approches Théoriques et Pratiques*, they establish a relationship between Parole, Langue and Language, a concept used by Ferdinand de Saussure in *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, especially when he says “*La langue est... Le langage moins la parole*” (pp. 15).

Secondly, he talks about folklore as a form of oral tradition. In fact, according to him, it serves as a key part of African oral tradition, acting as a repository of knowledge, wisdom, and creative expression. Historically, it has been used to teach moral lessons, entertain, and reinforce community values. African oral literature is not only a reflection of the past but is continually recreated by performers, with each performance adapting stories to suit contemporary contexts while preserving their essential cultural messages (pp. 1). He continues his analysis with Eurocentric misinterpretations. He says that European scholars, particularly anthropologists, often misinterpreted African folklore, focusing on its anthropological or sociological aspects, while ignoring its creativity and literary significance. These scholars viewed folklore as repetitive, ancient practices devoid of innovation or originality, reflecting their prejudiced perception of African societies. In contrast, African writers and scholars have sought to correct these misrepresentations by emphasizing the literary artistry in African oral

traditions and their modern relevance (pp. 2). Next he talks about a significant aspect of African literature is the "literary symbiosis" between traditional folklore and modern written forms. African writers like Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka often incorporate elements of folklore into their novels, plays, and poems. This merging of oral and written traditions enriches African literature, allowing it to maintain its cultural roots while engaging with contemporary global literary forms (pp. 5).

In African literary tradition, folklore not only preserves the cultural heritage and collective memory of communities, but also provides a unique lens through which authors explore themes of identity, morality and social values. In the context of African literature, folklore has played a crucial role in shaping narratives and providing a rich source of inspiration for writers. This overview explores the historical development of folklore in African literary tradition and its significance in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial contexts. The Pre-Colonial Era is particularly known for its great use of oral tradition. During that era, we find first of all storytelling, myths and legends, which are its principal components. Storytelling in pre-colonial Africa, was a primary method for transmitting knowledge, moral lessons and cultural values. Griots, also known as traditional storytellers, played a central role in communities, narrating tales of ancestors, myths and legends that often explained natural phenomena, social customs and historical events. Secondly, songs and poetry are also characteristics of the Pre-Colonial Era. Songs and oral poetry were used in various ceremonies, including births, marriages and funerals. These forms of folklore were not only entertainment but also a means of preserving history and culture. Proverbs and riddles are not to be forgotten when we talk about that era. Wisdom literature shared through proverbs and riddles encapsulated the wisdom of the ancestors, offering insights into human nature, ethics and social relationships. They were used in everyday conversation and as a tool for education. Vansina Jan, in *Oral Tradition as History*, explains in the section Oral History that:

The sources of oral historians are reminiscences, hearsay, or eyewitness accounts about events and situations which are contemporary. This is, which occurred during the lifetime of the dictions are no longer contemporary. They have passed from mouth to mouth, for a period beyond the lifetime of the informants. The two situations typically are very different with regard to the collection of sources as well as with regard to their analysis; oral historians typically interview participants in recent or very recent events, often of a dramatic nature, when historical consciousness in the communities involved is still in flux. Some of them call this "immediate history." (pp. 12-13).

According to this thought of Jan, when it comes to the pre-colonial era, oral historians use sources like reminiscences, hearsay and eyewitness accounts of contemporary events that occurred during the informants' lifetimes. In contrast, older traditions have been passed down orally over generations. These two scenarios differ in how sources are collected and analyzed. Oral historians often interview participants in recent dramatic events, a practice called "immediate history," and compare these interviews with written, printed and broadcast information.

Next, the Colonial Era was also impacted by folklore. The suppression of indigenous cultures by colonial powers, including their folklore, in an attempt to impose their cultural values, was visible to Africans. Moreover, the adaptation and resistance of the folklore of African communities despite colonial suppression, created a strong force against colonial rule and maintained cultural identity. Folklore became a subtle form of resistance and a way to preserve heritage. Also, written literature had been developed in that era because we noticed the emergence of new written forms. The colonial era saw the emergence of written African literature because writers began to document oral traditions, preserving them in written form. Then, themes of identity and resistance used by African writers are associated with folklore, which provided a rich source of material for storytelling.

In *Colonialism and Culture*, Nicholas Dirks examines the impact of colonialism on culture, especially on folklore. He explores the intricate relationship between colonialism and cultural transformations across various regions. The essays in this collection investigate how colonial rule influenced and reshaped cultural practices, traditions and identities. Although the book covers a broad range of cultural phenomena, it provides valuable insights into how folklore and other cultural traditions were affected and often transformed by the colonial encounter. Dirks also seems to be exploring how folklore was used both as a tool of resistance and as a means of asserting colonial authority; he also discusses the appropriation and transformation of local folklore by colonial administrators to legitimize their rule and manipulate local populations (pp. 135).

As for the Post-Colonial Era, the revival and preservation were among its many characteristics. In fact, factors such as cultural renaissance gave a new definition to folklore. Writers and scholars worked to revive and preserve indigenous narratives. Also, the integration of folklore into modern literature by contemporary African writers into their works, created a blending of traditional elements with modern themes and techniques.

This being said, early folklore preservation efforts have also been seen over time. Amadou Hampâté Bâ, for example, a Malian writer and ethnologist, played a crucial role in preserving African oral traditions. His dedication to documenting and safeguarding the rich oral heritage of Africa, has left an indelible mark on the literary and cultural landscape. Bâ's extensive work involved collecting and recording a wide array of African myths and legends, ensuring that these narratives were not lost to time. Bâ's commitment to preservation is perhaps best encapsulated in his famous statement: "*In Africa, when an old man dies, it is a library burning.*" This poignant metaphor highlights the vast reservoir of knowledge, wisdom and cultural heritage embodied in the oral traditions carried by the elders.

Through his writings, especially *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, Bâ not only chronicles the stories of his people but also showcases the profound cultural and social insights embedded within these traditions. His efforts have provided invaluable resources for scholars and have ensured that future generations can access and appreciate the depth of Africa's oral heritage. Bâ's and Achebe's contributions underscore the critical role of preservation in maintaining the cultural identity and continuity of African societies.

In addition to this, the UNESCO-WIPO World Forum on The Protection of Folklore (1967), organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (MIO), gave some information about the preservation and conservation of African folklore. That forum discussed the lack of a universally accepted definition of folklore, highlighting ongoing debates about what should be considered folklore and whose cultural products qualify. Historically, folklore was seen as valuable, particularly in Europe, where there was an effort to document traditional customs, tales and art forms at risk of disappearing due to modernization. Initially tied to marginalized and lower-class subcultures, folklore evolved as an academic discipline, especially in the United States in the 1960s, where scholars redefined its scope. While it initially focused on traditional and oral culture, modern interpretations include workplace jokes, student pranks, and even subcultures like drug addicts. In Africa, however, some conservative Euro-American scholars have questioned the concept of folklore, suggesting that Africa's predominantly rural and traditional society complicates meaningful folklore studies there (pp. 2).

The forum highlighted that despite debates surrounding the definition of folklore, African folklorists are actively collecting, documenting and analyzing folklore. Institutions like Khartoum University in Sudan and the Nigerian Folklore Society (founded in 1980) are leading these efforts. The Nigerian Folklore Society is engaged in a large-scale project to compile a

multi-volume directory of Nigerian folklore in over 374 languages. While early colonial-era scholars and missionaries contributed to folklore studies, modern African folklorists focused on oral traditions and cultural heritage.

Folklore in Africa is understood to encompass a wide array of cultural expressions, from simple forms to complex traditions. The Ghanaian Copyright Law of 1985 defines folklore as literary, artistic, and scientific works created by ethnic communities and preserved as part of the nation's heritage. UNESCO's Expert Committee defines folklore as group-oriented, tradition-based creations that reflect community values and identity, including language, literature, music, dance, mythology, rituals, and more. The text concludes that protecting folklore through legislation is a legitimate and ongoing effort in several African countries (pp. 3).

The forum also discussed the complexities involved in documenting African folklore, particularly regarding the question of national authorship. Earlier definitions of folklore emphasized communal creation, but modern approaches recognize the role of individual creativity. Examples like Vinoko Akpalu and Maame Afua Abasaa highlight the significance of individual contributions to folklore, which are now acknowledged in documents such as the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) "Protection of Expressions of Folklore." While folklore is often communally used and passed down, the influence of individual artists is now considered an essential factor in its development. African folklore transcends national borders, as many African communities share cultural traditions that predate colonial boundaries. The partitioning of Africa in the 19th century, such as the division of Ghana and Togo, did not consider ethnic, linguistic, or cultural unity, leading to artificial borders that divide communities like the Ewe tribe, which stretches across present-day Ghana, Togo, and Benin. This situation illustrates the challenge of defining folklore within modern national frameworks, as cultural expressions often span multiple countries (pp. 4).

The forum provided an overview of various aspects of African folklore, highlighting the tools, social customs, performing arts, and oral literature. In terms of traditional tools and skills, it explores the importance of traditional materials and the technical skills used by communities to address survival needs, such as farming, building, and crafting. It also examines how knowledge is passed through generations and adapts to changing lifestyles and environments. In terms of social folk customs, festivals are highlighted as key expressions of social customs, often blending secular and religious elements. Other social customs include traditional medicine, religion, recreation, and games. In terms of performing arts, African

performing arts, music, dance, and drama, are discussed as interconnected with social customs and oral literature. Terms like "festival drama" and "drum poetry" reflect the integrative nature of these art forms. In terms of oral literature and verbal art, oral traditions, transmitted by word of mouth, include epics, historical narratives, jokes, etiological tales, and personal experience stories. Folklore also encompasses non-verbal forms like horn and drum poetry. Then, folk songs and poetry are categorized into occasional songs (e.g., life cycle, occupational, religious), recreational songs, and incidental songs (e.g., lullabies, work songs). Many are highly specific forms of poetry. Recited forms include proverbs, riddles, praise poetry, incantations, and libation poetry (pp. 6).

The forum also mentioned the challenges faced by African countries in documenting and preserving their folklore, and the issues encountered with international cooperation in these efforts. First of all, many African countries attempting to document and preserve their folklore have faced similar challenges, primarily due to a lack of resources and infrastructure. While documentation efforts have increased in the past decade, national archives in Africa are often focused on government records, not cultural preservation. Secondly, efforts to preserve folklore are mainly undertaken by national museums, traditional rulers and community centres, rather than formal archival institutions, which struggle with funding and technical difficulties. Next, we have the International Centre for Bantu Civilization (CICABA) in Gabon which aims to create a regional information system to collect, store, and disseminate cultural data on Bantu civilization. The project initially received international support, including advanced French technology and equipment. However, challenges arose due to a lack of local expertise in data processing and computerizing, and the incompatibility of sophisticated foreign equipment with Gabon's existing technology. Then, the advanced equipment provided, such as microcomputers and telecommunication tools, often did not meet the needs of the project. Examples include an American microbase that never worked, and terminals for French Minitel technology that could not be installed due to incompatibility with Gabon's infrastructure. Overall, the forum highlights the difficulties African countries face in preserving their cultural heritage due to limited resources and the challenges of international collaboration, which sometimes provides inappropriate technological solutions (pp. 8).

Also about the challenges faced by the CICABA (International Centre for Bantu Civilization), there were issues in implementing and maintaining technological solutions for the documentation and preservation of African folklore, and it critiques the reliance on foreign technology. First, CICABA faced technological issues. It initially used Apple microcomputers,

which proved ineffective due to a lack of maintenance services in Gabon. As the data volume increased, these systems became obsolete, prompting the acquisition of IBM XT personal computers with higher storage capacity. Eventually, after five years, the Centre was able to offer limited online retrieval services. However, the audio-visual unit lacked trained personnel, and plans to catalog Bantu oral traditions were not fully realized. As another challenge, the forum critiques the over-reliance on modern technology from developed countries, arguing that it often fails to work in Africa due to environmental incompatibilities and a lack of maintenance culture. Advanced equipment often remains unused or broken due to minor maintenance issues or the unavailability of replacement parts.

Next, the forum contrasts modern technological preservation with traditional African methods, where folklore, music, and cultural expressions have been passed down through practice and oral teaching. These traditions evolve naturally over time, with new generations adding their own contributions. Preservation, therefore, does not mean stagnation but rather continuous growth and development. While technology may offer opportunities for documentation, it is essential to recognize the limitations of foreign solutions and emphasize traditional methods of cultural preservation, which have successfully kept African traditions alive for generations (pp. 9).

The forum then mentioned the preservation of African music and performing arts, emphasizing both traditional and modern influences. The document highlights that the continuity of oral tradition over centuries has played an essential role in preserving African religious and cultural identity, even as Africa has adopted Christianity and other external influences. Oral tradition, as noted, is a hallmark of African civilization, a tool that has been used to create and maintain a sense of Africanness. By embedding African values, worldviews, and spirituality into Christian practices, oral tradition ensures that African religious identity remains distinct. First, the documentation of music has been proposed. Various methods, such as sound recordings, printed music, and films, have been used to document African music, ensuring its preservation. Written documentation helps prevent the distortion of oral traditions and secures cultural heritage for future generations. Secondly, art music (composed by Western-educated African musicians) coexist. While modern popular music is widely spread through media like radio and television, traditional music remains significant, especially in rural areas. Post-independence nationalism has renewed pride in traditional music, and many modern artists draw inspiration from it. Next, as preservation efforts, to ensure the continuity of both traditional and contemporary music, there are two key measures according to the forum:

music education (Introducing traditional and contemporary African music into the curriculum helps propagate artistic values and create new knowledge) and performance programs (Promoting traditional music and the arts through public performances ensures that they remain a living part of African culture). Then, the document says that education is essential for preserving the performing arts. Including traditional music and dance in school curricula, especially in urban areas, will help sustain these cultural expressions as part of a living tradition (pp. 10).

This being said, African oral traditions have exhibited remarkable continuity over the centuries, serving as a bedrock for the continent's cultural and literary expression. Harold Scheub, a renowned scholar of African oral traditions, has extensively explored this unbroken continuity and its profound influence on modern African literature in *A Review of African Oral Traditions and Literature* (1985). According to him, these oral traditions are not merely relics of the past but living, evolving elements that continue to shape and inform contemporary literary works. He argues that African writers draw upon these rich oral narratives to create literature that resonates with authenticity and cultural depth. He also argues that African oral traditions have maintained their relevance and vitality despite the continent's tumultuous history, including colonialism and globalization. He emphasizes that these traditions are not static but dynamic, evolving with each generation while retaining core elements that link the past with the present.

This adaptability has allowed oral traditions to persist and thrive, serving as a living repository of communal knowledge, values and histories. Scheub's research highlights several key aspects of this continuity. First, in terms of narrative techniques, African oral traditions employ sophisticated narrative techniques, such as repetition, rhythm and symbolism, which create a memorable and engaging storytelling experience. Secondly, he mentions themes and motifs which are also key aspects. Common themes such as morality, heroism and the human connection to nature are prevalent in both traditional and contemporary narratives. These motifs provide a continuous thread linking oral traditions to written literature. Also, he talks about the role of the griot as another key aspect. According to him, the figure of the griot, or traditional storyteller, remains a central symbol in African culture. Griots are seen as custodians of history and culture and their role has been mirrored by modern African writers who continue to draw inspiration from this rich oral heritage.

In *Standpoints on African Orature*, Nol Alembong explains that once a tale has to be introduced, the narrator or the griot summons various linguistic and paralinguistic resources to

encode the message. He continues by saying that although each tale contains a defined setting (sets of episodes, dialogues, characters, expressions, repetitions, allusions...), the narrator usually brings his performance and performance skills to bear on the narration. Hence through improvisation, mimicry, tonal variations, gestures, dramatic pauses, rhetorical questions, the narrator achieves his objectives which are the engagement of the audience in the creative process and the realization of a coherent artistic product. Then the storyteller, according to Alembong, is considered as the one who can skillfully combine the verbal, phonic and mimetic features in his narration to concretize it and give it a sense of immediacy but, above all, to secure audience interest and participation (pp. 32).

According to him, there is an unbroken continuity in African verbal art forms, from interacting oral genres to such literary productions as the novel and poetry. The strength of the oral tradition seems not to have abated; through three literary periods, a reciprocal linkage has worked these media into a unique art form against which potent influences from East and West have proved unequal. Vital to African literature is the relationship between the oral and written word; in seemingly insignificant interstices have flourished such shadowy literary figures as Egyptian scribes, Hausa and Swahili copyists and memorizers and contemporary writers of popular novellas, all playing crucial transitional roles in their respective literatures (volume 28, pp. 2-3).

In “The Significance of African Oral Tradition in the Making of African Christianity”, Valentine Iheanacho explains that oral tradition has played a central role in shaping various aspects of African culture and religion for centuries. This includes its influence on the development of African Christianity, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The document highlights how African oral tradition (comprising proverbs, songs, dances, folktales, and religious utterances) continues to leave an indelible mark on Christianity in Africa.

In the article, Iheanacho explains that Oral tradition has historically served as the primary means of preserving knowledge, history, and cultural values in African societies. Prior to the advent of written records and colonial influences, African communities relied on oral forms to convey everything from ancestral histories to religious beliefs and societal norms. According to the document, even before the introduction of Christianity and Islam, Africans had a well-developed system of oral communication that encompassed myths, legends, civic duties, and spiritual teachings.

According to Iheanacho the adaptation of African oral traditions within the framework of Christianity is a significant feature of African religious life. The document points out that African Christianity is deeply intertwined with African cultural and religious practices, and that oral tradition has facilitated the spread and adaptation of Christian teachings in Africa. African Initiated Churches, Pentecostal, and Charismatic movements have embraced elements of oral tradition, such as sermons, songs, and prophetic utterances, to shape a distinctly African form of Christianity. This incorporation has allowed African Christianity to resonate with local believers by integrating traditional modes of communication and expression. Oral tradition has become a vehicle for blending Christian concepts with indigenous African beliefs, resulting in a syncretic form of Christianity that is pragmatic and performative, reflecting the cultural realities of African life.

Despite its resilience, as explains Iheanacho in his article, oral tradition faces several challenges in maintaining its continuity in the modern era. As noted in the document, globalization, formal education systems that prioritize written forms of communication, and the decline of indigenous languages threaten the sustainability of African oral traditions. However, oral tradition has shown a remarkable ability to adapt, particularly within the context of African Christianity. The document suggests that African Christians have not only retained their oral traditions but have actively re-appropriated them to align with modern spiritual and cultural needs. Nonetheless, efforts must be made to document and preserve oral traditions through recordings, archives, and education programs to ensure that this rich cultural heritage does not fade in the face of modern pressures.

The influence of oral tradition on African literature in Scheub's analysis in *A Review of African Oral Traditions and Literature* is that contemporary African writers frequently draw upon oral narratives, incorporating their structures, themes and stylistic elements into their works. This blending of oral and written forms enriches the literary landscape and ensures the preservation of cultural heritage. He highlights the narrative structure of the novels in Africa. According to him, many African novels and poems reflect the structural elements of oral storytelling, such as episodic narration and the use of proverbs and folktales within the texts. This approach not only pays homage to oral traditions but also enhances the narrative's cultural authenticity. Secondly, he mentions the cultural resonance of the writings of African authors. This means, by integrating oral traditions, African literature resonates deeply with readers familiar with these cultural references. It creates a sense of continuity and belonging,

connecting contemporary audiences with their ancestral past. He finishes with the innovation and the adaptation of African writers, who have innovatively adapted oral traditions to address contemporary issues, such as post-colonial identity, social justice and globalization. This adaptation demonstrates the versatility and enduring relevance of oral traditions. Harold Scheub's work underscores the unbroken continuity of African oral traditions and their significant impact on modern literature.

The influence of folklore on literature and art is not to be denied. In fact, in literature, folklore has inspired numerous Western writers, who have incorporated themes, motifs and storytelling techniques into their works. This cross-cultural exchange has enriched literary traditions, fostering a greater appreciation for diverse narratives. In the domain of visual arts, African artistic expressions, deeply rooted in folklore, have influenced Western art movements, including modernism. Artists such as Pablo Picasso drew inspiration from African masks and sculptures, integrating these elements into their own creations. Music and performance are also aspects to touch. In fact African rhythms, melodies and instruments have profoundly shaped Western music genres, particularly jazz, blues and hip-hop.

In *Littérature Orale de l'Afrique: Approches Théoriques et Pratiques*, Louis-Marie Ongoum and Isaac-Celestin Tchaho explain in music, instruments also have their role to play in terms of culture transmission. This is why they say:

La gamme des instruments sonores, pouvant servir à la transmission et la circulation des œuvres orales est très étendue aussi bien en ce qui concerne leurs formes que les usages qu'on en fait. On retiendra quatre divisions selon la manière dont le son est produit: les aérophones (sifflets en bambou, en bois, en roseau, en os, en ivoire, en trompe ou en corne...); les cordophones (guitare "sese" que l'on rencontre chez les Olombo du Zaïre et à Madagascar. Les sons qui servent à transmettre les messages sont produits par la pression des doigts sur les cordes); les membraphones (différentes sortes de tambours à peau tendue et de tambours à friction. Ces instruments produisent des sons par des vibrations d'une membrane, généralement de la peau, tendue au-dessus d'une caisse de résonance); les idiophones (différentes sortes de tam-tam ou tambours à fente. Ils produisent des sons par les vibrations du corps de l'instrument).

Les instruments à percussion transmettent toutes sortes de messages. Les aérophones et les cordophones permettent d'émettre à une petite distance, tandis que les idiophones et les membraphones peuvent émettre à une distance allant de deux à vingt kilomètres selon la puissance de l'instrument. Mais le message lui-même peut aller au-delà de la portée d'un instrument grâce au système de relais. Seule la limite de l'incompréhension peut arrêter de poursuivre la communication. Dans les messages émis, on peut relever, des proverbes, des devises individuelles

ou claniques et surtout des noms amplifiés, dits parfois, “noms de tambours”. Ils transmettent aussi des textes panégyriques; des chants de guerre, de deuil; des prières; des généalogies. Chez les Bété de Côte d’Ivoire par exemple, le “yebessagnon”, historien artiste, ne relate ses écrits historiques qu’en langage tambourine (pp. 26-27).

Then, social and cultural thought have also been influenced by folklore. We can then easily notice the relationship between folklore and social justice. African folklore, with its emphasis on community, justice and morality, has resonated with social movements in the West. Stories of resistance and resilience have inspired leaders and activists in their pursuit of equality and human rights. Cultural studies have also benefited from the study of African folklore which has broadened the scope of the area, highlighting the importance of diverse perspectives and the interconnectedness of global traditions. Anand Prahlad, a noted scholar in African and African-American folklore, argued in *Africana Folklore: History and Challenges* (2005) on the impact of African folklore. He emphasizes the significant impact of African folklore on Western cultures and argues for its critical academic study and he highlights several ways in which African folklore has influenced Western societies.

In terms of cultural enrichment, African folklore has enriched Western cultural landscapes by introducing new narratives, moral philosophies and artistic forms. This enrichment fosters greater cultural diversity and mutual understanding. In terms of intellectual traditions, the inclusion of African folklore in academic discourse challenges Eurocentric perspectives and encourages a more inclusive approach to intellectual traditions. In terms of psychology and spirituality, African folklore often encompasses deep psychological and spiritual insights, offering alternative ways of understanding human experiences and the world. These perspectives contribute to the field of psychology and spiritual studies in the West (pp. 253).

Prahlad argues that the academic study of African folklore is essential for several reasons. First of all, the preservation and documentation of oral tradition is an important aspect. Systematic academic study helps preserve and document African oral traditions, ensuring that they are not lost to future generations. It also provides a written record that can be analyzed and appreciated worldwide. Secondly, an important cultural recognition and respect of folklore is visible in the academic middle. Recognition of African folklore validates its significance and promotes respect for African cultures. It challenges stereotypes and misconceptions, fostering a more accurate and appreciative understanding of African heritage. Then, conserving the

interdisciplinary insights, the study of African folklore offers valuable insights across multiple disciplines, including literature, anthropology, history and religious studies. It encourages interdisciplinary research and enriches academic inquiry. At the end of his analysis, Anand Prahlad underscores the profound impact of African folklore on Western cultures and advocates for its rigorous academic study.

On the economic plan, economic practices in the late 19th century, societies engaged in various economic activities such as agriculture, trade and craftsmanship. Even, the political systems during this era were well-established and governed decision-making, conflict resolution and leadership roles. Therefore, chiefs, elders, or councils often held authority, maintaining order, justice and stability within their respective communities. Furthermore, spiritual beliefs and religion played a central role in pre-colonial societies, influencing moral codes, rituals and worldviews. In fact, ancestral worship, deities and beliefs shaped cultural practices, ceremonies and the understanding of the universe. Artistic expression in the late 19th century was a period of artistic flourishing, with communities producing intricate crafts, music, dance and oral literature that reflected their cultural values, histories and aspirations. Then, the educational systems, especially the knowledge transmission in the precolonial era, were possible through oral traditions, storytelling, apprenticeships and communal learning. Elders, shamans or specialized individuals were responsible for imparting wisdom, skills and cultural knowledge to younger generations.

As for the colonial era, the late centuries brought about significant transformations in society and culture across various regions. First, cultural assimilation during colonialism led to the imposition of European cultural norms, languages and values on indigenous societies, resulting in the erosion of local traditions, languages and belief systems. This period witnessed the blending of colonial and indigenous cultures, creating hybrid identities and practices. Secondly, social disruption which is also a characteristic of the past centuries, during the colonial era, led to the creation of social structures and hierarchies, often marginalizing indigenous communities and altering power dynamics within societies. In terms of economic exploitation, colonizers exploited the natural resources, labor and markets of colonized territories for economic gain. This economic exploitation resulted in unequal trade relationships, an impoverishment of local populations and the transformation of traditional economic practices. Moreover, political subjugation permitted the establishment of political control over colonized territories, imposing new legal systems, administrative structures and

governance mechanisms. This is why Vumbi Yoka Mudimbe in *The Invention of Africa*, explains that the scramble for Africa and the most active period of colonization, lasted less than a century. Although in African history the colonial experience represents but a brief moment from the perspective of today, this moment is still charged and controversial, since, to say the least, it signified a new historical form and the possibility of radically new types of discourses on African traditions and cultures (pp. 14).

Also, we have social structures and governance as another aspect in common between the two periods. In fact, precolonial African societies had diverse social structures, governance systems and kinship ties that were reshaped by colonial interventions. The imposition of colonial administrations, legal systems and economic policies altered power dynamics, leadership roles and community relationships, impacting societal organization. Moreover, cultural hybridity and identity are another key resemblance. African communities navigated between preserving their cultural heritage and adapting to colonial impositions, fostering new forms of cultural expression, languages and artistic endeavors. Even, the educational systems and knowledge transmission are not to be denied.

As seen in this section, folklore serves as a profound pillar within the African literary heritage. Even though scholars like Albert Gérard and Olivia Adaobi do not share the same opinion, African authors utilize folklore to forge a strong connection between the past and present, this is why programs such as the UNESCO-WIPO World Forum tried their best in 1967 to give some information about the preservation and conservation of African folklore. Therefore, African countries faced some difficulties in preserving their cultural heritage due to limited resources. After this analysis of folklore in the African literary heritage, it is accurate to talk about the different aspects that make it particularly important.

Aspects of Folklore in African Literature

Folklore in African literature encompasses a wide range of oral traditions and cultural expressions that are deeply rooted in African societies. These include proverbs, myths, legends, folktales, songs (etc.), each serving as a vessel for transmitting cultural values, beliefs and historical knowledge. In literature, these forms of folklore are not only used as storytelling devices but also as tools for preserving cultural heritage, imparting moral lessons, and fostering social cohesion. African writers, through their works, have utilized these traditional elements, to create narratives that reflect the complexities of African life, including its social structures, moral codes and communal identity. This section will explore these key concepts,

demonstrating how folklore serves as both a literary and cultural framework in African literature, enriching texts with layers of meaning that connect the past with the present.

The foundational components of folklore include the various elements that form the core of traditional knowledge and oral literature passed down through generations. First of all, we have oral literature, a subset of folklore, for it forms one of its most prominent components. This oral literature includes folk tales, myths, proverbs, riddles, songs and legends that are transmitted orally. Oral literature serves as a medium for educating younger generations about societal norms, customs and values. Oral tradition, a subset of folklore, in Africa, has many foundational components, and myths and legends are part of them. They play crucial roles in shaping the cultural and literary landscape of the continent. Myths serve as cultural narratives that reflect and reinforce the core principles, norms and worldview of a community. In fact, myths convey cultural values and moral codes through allegorical tales and symbolic representations.

Myths also contribute to the continuity of culture by preserving traditions, rituals and collective memories across generations. They serve as a link between past and present, fostering a sense of shared heritage and community cohesion through storytelling and ritual practices. In other words, they serve as vehicles for conveying cultural values, recounting historical events and establishing societal norms, thus ensuring the transmission of collective wisdom and heritage across generations.

Moreover, moral lessons through many African myths and legends feature protagonists who embody virtuous traits or face consequences for their flaws. These stories serve as didactic tools, teaching listeners about the virtues of good conduct and the repercussions of immoral behavior. These characters not only serve as role models but also as cautionary figures, illustrating the consequences of both virtuous and flawed behavior. Through their journeys and challenges, these stories become powerful didactic tools, imparting lessons on the importance of honesty, respect, communal loyalty, and responsibility. By depicting the repercussions of immoral actions (whether through misfortune, loss, or social exclusion) African folklore reinforces social norms and cultural values, guiding individuals, especially younger generations, towards ethical conduct.

In “Myth as a Phenomenon of Culture”, Vasyl Shynkaruk, Halyna Salata, Tetyana Danylova explain the relationship between myth and culture by saying that myths provide meaning and purpose to all elements of culture. According to them, mythology is one of the

ways to comprehend and interpret the world around us. Its basic concepts are the “world” and “human”. In recent decades, representatives of literature and art have intentionally used myths to express their ideas. They have not only rethought ancient myths, but have created new mythological symbols (pp. 17).

Here, Vasyl Shynkaruk, Halyna Salata, and Tetyana Danylova seem to examine how myths are deeply intertwined with culture, providing foundational meaning and structure to cultural elements. They argue that myths are not merely stories but serve as the core or essence of culture, shaping how societies understand and experience the world. Mythology, according to the authors, acts as a framework through which people comprehend and interpret reality, focusing on fundamental concepts like "world" and "human." This means that myths help people make sense of existence, human nature, and the universe, giving depth and purpose to cultural beliefs, values, and practices.

Also, as another characteristic recounting historical events is also an important role of myths and legends that frequently serve as historical records, preserving and commemorating significant events in the life of a community or nation. These stories often blend historical facts with imaginative elements, creating compelling narratives that capture the essence of the past. We have a sense of historical preservation. In the absence of written records myths and legends provide a means of preserving and transmitting historical knowledge. Heroic narratives through many legends feature heroic figures whose deeds are celebrated and remembered through storytelling.

In *Littérature Orale de l'Afrique contemporaine: Approches theoriques et Pratiques* Louis-Marie Ongoum and Issac-Celestin Tchaho explain the ways of transmission and preservation of oral tradition. They explain that Africans have new ways of transmitting literature. These modes of transmission are: parole which is most of the time articulated; gestures, movements and attitudes; traditional instruments; mythography and pictographic representations; then, new methods like recording (pp. 25-26).

Louis-Marie Ongoum and Isaac-Celestin Tchaho discuss how oral tradition in Africa is passed down and preserved in both traditional and modern ways. Traditionally, stories and knowledge are shared through spoken words, gestures, body movements, and traditional musical instruments. Visual methods, like mythography (symbolic representations) and pictographs (drawings or symbols), are also used. In recent times, new technology like audio

recording has become an additional way to preserve and share African oral literature, helping to keep these stories alive for future generations.

Overall, establishing societal norms through myths and legends plays a critical role in establishing and reinforcing societal norms. Through these narratives, communities emphasize the importance of adhering to established norms and rules. Then, we can understand that, through myth and legends, rituals and traditions are better explained. Many myths and legends are closely tied to rituals and traditions, providing explanations for various cultural practices.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a good example of the portrayal of myth in folklore. Through myths such as the one of the Earth Goddess, Achebe incorporates the myth of the Earth Goddess, Ani, who plays a crucial role in the Igbo community's agricultural and moral life. This myth underscores the community's reverence for nature and adherence to ethical conduct. There's also the legend of the great warrior in which the protagonist, Okonkwo, is often compared to legendary warriors of the past, whose heroic deeds set the standard for bravery and masculinity in the Igbo culture. Also, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965) is also a good example. The myth of the sacred river in the novel features the sacred river Honia, which symbolizes life, continuity and the connection between the community and their ancestral land. In the novel, the mask, the earth, the legends and the rituals all have significance in the story as well as in the history of the Igbo culture. According to Gordon Baldwin in "Precolonial and Postcolonial Myths in *Things Fall Apart*".

Religion looms large in the life of primitive man. It is not a one-a-day-a-week affair as it generally is with us. Seven days a week, 365 days a year, primitive people eat and work and play and sleep with religion. Nearly everything in primitive society- hunting, fishing, planting crops, harvesting, head hunting, war, marriage, birth, coming of age, illness, death, building a house, making a canoe or an ax is associated with ritual or magic or ceremony or some other form of religious activity (pp. 2).

In *Natural and Cultural Heritage*, David Lowenthal thinks that heritage denotes everything we suppose has been handed down to us from the past. Although not all heritage is uniformly desirable, it is widely viewed as a precious and irreplaceable resource, essential to personal and collective identity and necessary for self-respect (pp. 79-80).

Also, Helaine Silverman and Dede Fairchild Ruggles in *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*, think that heritage is a concept to which most people would assign a positive value. The preservation of material culture—objects of art and of daily use, architecture, landscape form and intangible culture performances of dance, music, theater and ritual, as well as language and

human memory are generally regarded as a shared common good by which everyone benefits. They continue by saying that personal and community identities are formed through such tangible objects and intangible cultural performances and a formation of a strong identity would seem to be a fundamentally good thing (pp. 79-80).

The common point among these sources is the idea that heritage (whether it's tangible or intangible, such as myths, cultural practices, or material objects) plays a crucial role in shaping individual and collective identity. David Lowenthal highlights that heritage connects us to the past and is essential for personal and collective self-respect. Similarly, Helaine Silverman and Dede Fairchild Ruggles see heritage as a shared common good that benefits everyone by helping to form strong identities through both material objects and cultural performances. This aligns with Rosenberg's view in *The Functions of Living Mythology*, where myths are seen as vital to cultural survival because they embody the values and worldview of a society. All three perspectives recognize that preserving heritage (whether through stories, artifacts, or cultural practices) helps sustain a culture's identity and values over time.

Furthermore, as another part of folklore, we have proverbs. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as a short pithy saying in general use; a concise sentence, often metaphorical or alliterative in form, stating a general truth or piece of advice. Proverbs are like condensed capsules of cultural wisdom, offering insights into the values, beliefs and norms of a society. HOU Rong in *Proverbs Reveal Culture Diversity* published in 2013, explains that proverbs can help one to understand a culture. For example, the use of proverbs in dialogues reflects the community's reliance on oral tradition and the value placed on wisdom and experience. Secondly, in terms of character development, folktales and proverbs often reveal the characters' thoughts, beliefs and values. Okonkwo's disdain for his father's perceived weakness and his obsession with masculinity are underscored by proverbs such as "*The child that does not cry out will die in the earthen pot.*" This means that the way the proverb reveals cultural diversity can be connected with the patterns of value dimension, which conveys information about a culture's deep meaning (pp. 31).

Traditions are also part of folklore. In Africa, it is well known that celibacy is a proof of immaturity and selfishness, as the author explains in the section entitled "Kadidja, ma Mere" (pp. 49). Moreover, dreams in African societies are taken very seriously. This means there are people who can interpret dreams, not everybody can do that, as explained in chapter 2, in the section entitled *Le Reve de Kadidja*. Traditions are fundamental in shaping cultural values as

they embody the customs, rituals and practices that have been passed down through generations. They serve as a bridge between the past and the present, connecting individuals to their heritage and fostering a sense of belonging within a community (pp. 50). By participating in traditions, people reinforce shared beliefs, strengthen social bonds and uphold the values that define their culture. These practices often reflect core principles such as respect, family, spirituality and community, shaping the behavior and worldview of individuals.

Nol Alembong in *Standpoints on African Orature*, talks about secular poetry in Africa. Alembong first of all mentions the children's songs which he defines as those sung either by those who have charge of the children as they grow up or by the children themselves. They are characterized by the simplicity of diction, onomatopoeic words striking tonal and phonological patterns, rhythms and cadence (pp. 91). Alembong, first of all, mentions lullabies as the primary subcategory of children's songs. He explains that the first nurse of a baby is his mother. For every African woman, a child is a source of great pride, joy and satisfaction. These feelings of pride, joy and satisfaction are often expressed in the lullabies which mothers sing to their children as they feed and nurse them (pp. 91).

As the second form of secular poetry, Alembong talks about nuptial songs. It is important to mention the point of view of John Mbiti (1985: 133) who observed that in Africa, "marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator", while G. A Lundberg et al. see it as "a contractual agreement based on rules and regulations governing the rights, duties and privileges of husband and wife with respect to each other, their children, relatives and society at large" (1983: 31-32). As for Margaret Peil, marriage is "a publicity recognized, more or less permanent alliance between a man and a woman (the conjugal unit)" (1977: 138).

Alembong says in *Standpoints on African Orature* that marriage in Africa is one of those events that call for the participation of a cross section of the community, as can be seen from the Nweh nuptial song below in which the lead singer starts by welcoming those in attendance:

<i>Lead Singer:</i>	<i>Oya-ya Oya-ya.</i>
<i>Chorus:</i>	<i>Oya-ya Oya-ya.</i>
<i>Lead Singer:</i>	<i>Mr. Fuandem bids you welcome.</i>
<i>Chorus:</i>	<i>Oya-ya Oya-ya.</i>
<i>Lead Singer:</i>	<i>Our chief extends his greetings.</i>
<i>Chorus:</i>	<i>Oya-ya Oya-ya.</i>
<i>Lead Singer:</i>	<i>Welcome, to the notables of our land.</i>

Chorus: Oya-ya Oya-ya.
Lead Singer: Welcome to the men of this land.
Chorus: Oya-ya Oya-ya.
Lead Singer: I salute the woman of our land
Chorus: Oya-ya Oya-ya.
Lead Singer: I salute the children of our land.
Chorus: Oya-ya Oya-ya.
Lead Singer: I am a bearer of good news.
Chorus: Oya-ya Oya-ya.
Lead Singer: Ayinkeng has found her beloved.
Chorus: Oya-ya Oya-ya.
Lead Singer: Mr Fuandem salutes his in-laws.
Chorus: Oya-ya Oya-ya.
 (Alembong 1987:237).

According to him, although marriage brings joy to all parties concerned, it is not usually easy for the bride who has to leave her parents' home for that of someone as seen in the following song from the Isuka people of Kenya:

It is hard,
Aloo,
It's hard to leave your home
To go to another.
It's hard to call another
Your mother.
 (Akivaga and Odaga 1982: 107).

Next, Alembong talks about the dirges, which are sung on the occasion of a death. They are often sung around the corpse or around the house in which the corpse lies in state. They are often accompanied by wailing and shedding of tears. In many African communities, women are the most frequent singers. Dirges, according to Alembong, often evolve wailing, sobbing and weeping, and women's tears flow more willingly than those of men. Also, on the occasion of a death, the men are often busy with the death rites; women are left to the singing and the wailing. There are cases whereby men do the singing and the wailing. This is when the death has to do with a man of a particular secret society or specialized group. Many of these songs, according to Alembong, are topical and ephemeral. That is, they are often composed at the spur of the moment, depending on the status of the dead person and consequently are not likely to

be used on another occasion exactly as used previously. The same dirge may be used on different occasions but the words and motifs in it will change each time it is used (pp. 102).

Furthermore, Alembong mentions in *Standpoints on African Orature*, the war chants as another subcategory of secular poetry. He used Isidore Okpewho's observation about war and the poetry that goes with it. Isidore Okpewho says:

The experience of war has always been a fierce one in any age community. In many traditional African poems this fierceness takes an interesting turn. In the traditional culture, war was regarded as one solid way for a man to prove his manhood and earn respect among his people: poetry composed in this spirit would naturally reflect a certain eagerness for war... (1985: 136).

Then, in *Standpoints on African Orature*, Alembong talks about work songs. He says that there are three types of work songs in Africa. First, he talks about cooperative songs. Which includes a group of people working together for a shared purpose. They are often involved in such activities as hoeing, weeding, sawing and so on. Secondly, he talks about what is known as gang work. These involve road workers, truck pushers, factory workers, miners, etc. In some cases, one gang may be set up against another. Lastly, he talks about domestic and solitary work songs, performed by one person only. This situation gives scope to the expression of more personal feelings, uttered at greater length than in the group songs (pp. 126).

The structure of the work song, according to Alembong, depends fundamentally on various types of rhythmic repetition. Except for the solidarity work song, the structure of this type of poetry is antiphonal. Rhythm provides a fixed framework within which the song is developed. Alembong also presents the functions of work songs: first, with the songs accompanying collective work, the joint singing coordinates the action and leads the workers to feel and work as part of a cooperating group, not as separate individuals. Secondly, the rhythm of the songs encourages collaboration and control within the group, a pressure on all to take part equally within one given rhythmic framework. Thirdly, work songs lighten the labour. Lastly, they instill courage in hunters of big games such as elephants, leopards and so on (pp. 127).

He says that the song has a direct connection with the occasion and with the action itself. He therefore uses the opinion of Austin Bukenya and Muigai wa Gachanja when they talk about the performance context of work songs. They say:

Every community has its repertoire of work songs, chants or recitations. Luo men paddling a canoe on Lake Gwasssi (now called Victoria) will sing

a rowing song. Girls pounding grain in a mortar or grinding it on a stone also sing. Yoruba hunters recite prayer chants, called ijala, to their protective spirit, Ogun. Herdsmen play a sweet music on the flute and recite long poems in praise of themselves and of their cattle grazing out in the poems in praise of themselves of their cattle grazing out in the open pasture. Mothers and childminders looking after babies also sing lullabies of course. Practically any occupation one may think of has a song or songs to go with it. Work and song go together (1996: 42).

We understated folkloric elements in Africa significantly contribute to the narratives and thematic development. They serve to ground the story in the cultural and social context of the Igbo people, providing authenticity and depth. Furthermore, folklore is pivotal in illustrating the themes of tradition versus change, the clash of cultures and the importance of community and identity. First, on the cultural context, folkloric elements immerse the reader in Igbo culture, offering a rich tapestry of beliefs, values and practices.

Folkloric elements also have thematic contributions. First of all, through themes such as the one of tradition opposed to change, folklore embodies the traditions and customs of the Igbo people, which are challenged by the arrival of colonialism. The conflict between traditional beliefs and new influences is a central theme, illustrated through the clash of folktales and Christian narratives. Secondly, in cultural identities, folklore reinforces the characters' cultural identity and heritage. The preservation of stories, proverbs and rituals emphasizes the community's resilience in maintaining their identity despite external pressures. Then, folktales and proverbs emphasize communal values and the importance of social cohesion. They often carry moral lessons that guide behaviour and decision-making, reinforcing the collective over the individual.

In the second chapter of *Folk-Lore, Origins, Definition and Classification*, Willium Thomas explains that there are many debates about how folklore should be defined. Most definitions concern the "lore" but some concern the "folk". He explains that "Lore" is the materials of folklore rather than the people who use the materials. It has been described in terms of origin, form, transmission and function. However, there has been no widespread agreement among folklorists about what folklore is. He continues with Mac Edward Leech's point of view who sees it as the accumulated knowledge of homogeneous, unsophisticated people. Thomas also used Georges Boswel's definition of folklore when he says it is the unwritten history of ancient societies preserved in the minds of the people and handed down through ages by the

medium of language or practice. In the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, the term folklore has been defined as under:

Folklore means folk learning, it comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and techniques that are learned by imitation or example as well as products of those crafts" (pp. 496-497).

This definition highlights several aspects: first, we have folk learning which refers to the knowledge passed down through generations within a community, typically outside formal education systems. It's a form of learning that happens naturally in daily life. Secondly, the definition highlights the fact that folklore is transmitted by word of mouth. Folklore includes all the knowledge, stories, traditions and beliefs that are shared orally. This transmission method emphasizes the communal and often informal nature of folklore, where information is spread through conversations, storytelling and other verbal interactions. Next, the definition highlights crafts and techniques learned by imitation or example. Folklore also covers practical skills and traditional practices that people learn by watching and mimicking others. This includes everything from how to weave baskets to how to perform a traditional dance or cook a specific dish. Then, in terms of products of those crafts: The tangible outcomes of the skills and techniques passed down through folklore, like handicrafts, traditional foods, or musical instruments, are also considered part of folklore. These objects carry cultural significance and represent the traditions of a community.

But Acher Taylor, an eminent American folklorist (August 1, 1890 – September 30, 1973) has succeeded to a great extent in defining the term folklore. His definition according to Mazharul Islam is the only one which seems more rational than all others, though this also does not cover all points and lacks in many respects. He says:

Folklore is the material that is handed on by tradition, either by word of mouth or by custom and practice. It may be folk songs, folk tales, riddles, proverbs or other materials preserved in words, it may be traditional tools and physical objects like fences or knots, hot cross buns, or Easter eggs; traditional ornamentation like the walls of troy; or traditional symbols like the Swastika. It may be traditional procedures like throwing salt over one's shoulder or knocking on wood. It may be traditional beliefs like the notion that being older is good for the ailments of the eye. All of these are folklore (pp. 21).

In *Storytelling, Culture and Indigenous Methodology*, Adrienne Chan explains the role of indigenous storytelling with an explicit connection to land-based work, community and a sustained process for healing with indigenous peoples. According to her, storytelling can be a

way of reclaiming identity and reclaiming one's own stories, rather than being defined and storied by hegemonic forces. We then understand that storytelling has been valued in traditional ways of knowing, in indigenous cultures and is seen as a primary means to pass on knowledge over generations in order to keep an identity. In poetry, Kofi Awoonor often incorporates Ewe oral traditions and folklore. In his poem *Songs of Sorrow* (2013), he uses traditional Ewe laments to express personal and collective grief, blending folklore with contemporary poetic forms. In *Modern African Literature and Cultural Identity* (1992), Tanure Ojaide says:

Modern African literature has gained recognition worldwide with such classics as Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Weep Not Child and Wole Soyinka's Death and the King's Horseman. This recognition was reinforced by Soyinka's winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1986. Modern African literature is written in indigenous African languages and in European languages used in Africa. Written African literature is very new compared to the indigenous oral tradition of literature which has been there and is still very much alive. While there are literary works in Yoruba, Hausa, Zulu and Sotho, among others, this literature in African indigenous languages is hardly known outside its specific linguistic frontiers (African Studies Review 35 (3), pp. 43-57).

This helps us to understand the adaptation of folklore in modern African literature, because it has achieved global recognition through classics such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Despite this, literature in indigenous African languages remains largely unknown beyond its linguistic boundaries.

Apart from myths and legends, as other key elements of oral tradition, we have proverbs and sayings. They play an important role in encapsulating wisdom and social norms. Proverbs and sayings are succinct, impactful expressions that encapsulate the collective wisdom, moral values and social norms of African communities. They play a crucial role in the oral tradition, serving as a means of communication, education and cultural preservation. Peter Grzybek opines that “there is no generally accepted definition which covers all specifics of the proverbial genre (1994, 227). However, Nol Alembong in *Standpoint on African Orature*, opines that the following definitions by scholars in the domain are worthy of note:

It is a saying in more or less fixed form marked by shortness, sense, and salt distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it (Finnegan 1970: 393).
Proverbs are the kernels which contain the wisdom of the traditional people. They are philosophical and moral expositions shrunk to a few words and they form a mnemonic device in the society in which everything

worth knowing and relevant to day-to-day life has to be committed to the memory (Obiechina 1975: 156).

A terse, compact pithy statement of popular wisdom accepted as an expression of the truth (Sunkuli and Miruka 1990: 75).

A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation (Mieder 1993: 24).

The definitions of proverbs by Finnegan, Obiechina, Sunkuli Miruka, and Mieder all emphasize certain shared characteristics, while also highlighting unique aspects. A common point across these definitions is that proverbs are short, memorable expressions containing wisdom, truth, or moral lessons widely accepted by society. Each definition underscores the idea that proverbs convey deep cultural knowledge in a concise and impactful form. However, there are also differences in focus. Finnegan (1970) describes proverbs as sayings with "shortness, sense, and salt," emphasizing their brevity and the sharpness of their expression. Obiechina (1975), on the other hand, views proverbs as "kernels" of traditional wisdom that serve as mnemonic devices, highlighting their role in helping societies remember and transmit knowledge. Sunkuli and Miruka (1990) echo the idea of proverbs as compact statements of popular wisdom, but they focus more on their terseness and acceptance as expressions of truth. Finally, Mieder (1993) adds a distinctive aspect by defining proverbs as metaphorical, fixed, and memorizable, while also emphasizing their intergenerational transmission, thereby underscoring their continuity in cultural tradition. Together, these definitions reveal that while proverbs are universally acknowledged for their conciseness and wisdom, each scholar also recognizes a different dimension in their function and form within society.

The people of each culture in Africa have their modes of communicating among themselves. Some of these modes are song, plastic arts, drumming and sign language. But by far the most commonly used is verbal language and the proverb. It is said in *Things Fall Apart* that "*among the Igbo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten*" (pp. 7). This statement, partly suggests both the context and the use of proverbs among the Igbo which applies to other communities in Africa as well. Nol Alembong, explains in his book that proverbs are considered as special aspects of style. Their ability to communicate lies in some factors: first, its structure (its balancing units and a sense between the proposition and the completion). Secondly, the words used in it (their sounds, meanings, suggestions). Next, we have their imagery (the vividness and

appropriateness of the word pictures and allusions in the proverb) (pp. 132). Encapsulation of wisdom is one of their principal importance. They distill complex ideas and life lessons into memorable and easily transmittable phrases. The sense of guidance and advice in proverbs offers an overview of various aspects of life, from personal behaviour to community interactions. For example, the Yoruba proverb “The child who does not travel thinks his mother’s cooking is the best” advises the value of broadening one’s horizons and being open to new experiences.

Then, proverbs often contain deep philosophical insights that reflect the worldview and values of the community. They encourage reflection and contemplation, helping individuals navigate the complexities of life. The reinforcement of social norms is also another aspect to talk about. Proverbs and sayings are instrumental in reinforcing social norms and expectations. Proverbs set standards for acceptable behaviour and highlight the consequences of deviating from these norms. For example, the Swahili proverb “Unity is strength, division is weakness” emphasizes the importance of solidarity and cooperation within the community. Moreover, many proverbs serve as moral teachings, instilling ethical principles such as honesty, humility and respect.

Proverbs and sayings are frequently used in African literature for many reasons. African writers frequently incorporate proverbs and sayings into their works to enrich their narratives with cultural authenticity and depth. These literary elements serve various purposes in storytelling. First, proverbs and sayings help in the development of characters by revealing their wisdom, beliefs and cultural background. Characters who use proverbs in the novels under study, are often depicted as wise and knowledgeable, grounded in their cultural heritage. Secondly, elderly characters often use proverbs to impart wisdom and advice, emphasizing their role as custodians of tradition and knowledge. Moreover, thematic reinforcement is an aspect to touch. Proverbs and sayings reinforce the themes of literary works, highlighting key messages and moral lessons.

In *Standpoints on African Orature*, Nol Alembong explains Emanuel Obiechina’s point of view when he says that proverbs derive from a detailed observation of the behavior of human beings, animals, plant and natural phenomena, from folklore, beliefs, values, attitudes, perceptions, emotions and the entire system of thought and feeling which Durkheim called “*les presentations collectives*” of societies. They derive their effectiveness and force from the collective imagination which apprehends the underlying connection between a literal fact and

its elusive amplification and which vivifies an experience by placing it beside another which bears the stamp of approval (1975: 156) (pp. 129).

He continues by saying that in a succinct manner, African proverbs have three basic sources of origin: etiological or explanatory narratives, actual historical occurrences, and a well-considered observation of various aspects of the natural environment as well as general human affairs and conduct. They express the wisdom of the people and enable one to understand the ways of life of the people of various African communities as lived by those of the past and of the present (pp. 129).

Furthermore, as other major components of oral literature, we have folktales and stories. Folktales are structured specially. They typically follow a narrative structure that includes a clear beginning, middle and end. This structure helps to organize the story in a way that is easy to remember and retell. They contain an introduction. The tale usually begins with a setting that introduces the characters and the initial situation. Traditional phrases like "Once upon a time" or "Long, long ago" often mark the beginning. Secondly, we have the main conflict or challenge faced by the protagonist. This could be a quest, a problem to solve, or an adversary to overcome. Next, we have the climax is the turning point of the story where the protagonist confronts the main challenge. This part is often filled with suspense and action. The resolution of the conflict often through cleverness, bravery, or moral integrity is also to be taken into account. The protagonist typically emerges victorious or wiser. Then we have the conclusion of the story, which is often a return to normalcy, often with a moral lesson or reflection on the events.

In *Four Functions of Folklore*, William Bascom explains that folklore must be analyzed from different points of view. There is the social context of folklore, the relations of folklore to culture, which might be phrased as the cultural context of folklore and the functions of folklore (pp. 333). This being said, folktales cover a wide range of themes that reflect the values, beliefs and experiences of the community. Common themes include first of all good against evil. In fact, many folktales depict the struggle between good and evil, with good ultimately triumphing. These stories reinforce the idea that virtue is rewarded and vice is punished. Secondly, we have cleverness and wisdom, because the protagonists often use their wits and intelligence to overcome challenges. This theme emphasizes the value of cleverness and resourcefulness. Also, folktales frequently deal with themes of justice, where wrongdoers are punished and justice is served. Moreover, justice is a central theme in African folklore,

where stories often revolve around the establishment of fairness and the punishment of wrongdoers. These narratives emphasize the moral order and the importance of ethical behavior. Folktales frequently depict the downfall of villains and the triumph of good over evil, reinforcing the belief that justice will prevail. Furthermore, community is a vital theme in African folklore, reflecting the communal nature of African societies. Stories often emphasize the value of cooperation, unity and mutual support. Many folktales highlight the achievements that can be made through collective effort and collaboration, stressing the importance of working together for the common good. Supernatural is also another important theme in Africa.

In addition to themes, certain motifs recur in African folklore, enriching the narratives and providing deeper layers of meaning. These motifs include, first of all, trickster figures. In fact, there are characters who are common trickster figures who use their wits to navigate challenges and teach moral lessons. As another motif, we have transformation. Many stories feature characters who undergo physical or spiritual transformations, symbolizing personal growth or change. Moreover, animals often play central roles in folktales, embodying human traits and serving as allegories for human behavior.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* incorporates Igbo folktales to enrich his narrative and provide deeper cultural context. For example, the story of the tortoise and the birds, told by Ekwefi to Ezinma, illustrates themes of cleverness and the consequences of greed. Also, Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* draws heavily on Yoruba folktales, blending them with elements of fantasy to create a unique narrative style. The stories within the novel serve to entertain and convey Yoruba cultural values and beliefs. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* too uses Kikuyu folktales to explore themes of tradition and modernity.

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Moreover, other foundational components of folklore often include physical cultural artifacts such as masks, carvings, regalia and other symbolic items that represent the history,

ancestors or gods of a particular community. These artifacts are used during festivals, rituals and ceremonies, serving as a link between the past and the present. They are not merely decorative but hold deep spiritual and cultural meanings, reflecting the beliefs and practices of the community. That is, the physical cultural artifacts that form a key part of folklore, (masks, carvings, regalia), are deeply significant within African communities. These objects go beyond their aesthetic value, holding profound spiritual, historical, and cultural meanings. They serve as vital links between the present and the ancestors or gods, often embodying the community's heritage and beliefs. During festivals, rituals, and ceremonies, these artifacts play a central role, connecting participants to their past and reinforcing cultural identity. Far from being mere decorations, they are living embodiments of a community's spiritual and cultural essence.

In his article "Folklore", Dr. Priyamvada Dinesh Bhat highlights the relationship between cultural artifacts and folklore through the concept of material culture. Elements such as dolls, decorative items used in religious rituals, handmade clothing, and crafted items are considered folk artifacts and are part of material culture. These artifacts, like statues or objects representing characters from folklore, are significant within the community. They are not merely decorative but are integral to the community's customs and traditions, often used in rituals, festivals, and other cultural practices. These artifacts are appreciated and used within the same community that produces them, serving both functional and symbolic roles. For instance, items like masks or statues of characters from folklore are deeply connected to the community's spiritual and cultural life, embodying the values, stories, and beliefs of the people (pp. 3).

Furthermore, rituals are another foundational component of folklore. These include ceremonies related to marriage, birth, death, harvest, and other significant life events. These rituals are a way to pass down cultural traditions, beliefs, and practices. They reinforce a community's sense of identity and continuity, offering a structured way for individuals to engage with their cultural heritage. In "Folklore", Dr. Priyamvada Dinesh Bhat explains that the folklorist William Bascom states that folklore has many cultural aspects, such as allowing for escape from societal consequences. In addition, folklore can also serve to validate a culture as well as transmit a culture's morals and values. Folklore can also be used to assert social pressures, or relieve them, in the case of humor and carnival. In addition, folklorists study medical, supernatural, religious and political belief systems as an essential, often unspoken, part of expressive culture (pp. 3).

Then, we can also talk about performative arts as other components of folklore. In fact, performance, (including storytelling, singing, dancing, and dramatic enactments), is a key component of folklore. These performances are not just artistic expressions but are integral to the transmission of folklore. In the introduction of his article “Folklore”, Dr. Priyamvada Dinesh Bhat explains that is the body of expressive culture, including tales, music, dance, legends, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular beliefs, customs and so forth within a particular population comprising the traditions of the culture, subculture or a group. According to him, it is also the set of practices through which those expressive genres are shared. The academic and usually ethnographic study of folklore is sometimes called folkloristic (pp. 1).

In African literature, folklore serves as a vital element that bridges the past with the present, offering rich, multifaceted narratives that encapsulate the cultural essence of various African communities. In *Oral Literature in Africa* (2012), Ruth Finnegan explains, based on years of fieldwork, the history of storytelling across the continent of Africa. According to her, oral literature in Africa has been accessed by hundreds of readers in over 60 different countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and numerous other African countries. *Oral Literature in Africa* is part of our World Oral Literature Series in conjunction with the World Oral Literature Project (vi).

In *Narrative Proverbs in The African Novel*, Emmanuel Obiechina, a researcher in African literatures, shows that the oral culture does not immediately disappear by the mere fact of its being in contact with writing, nor does the literature of the oral society disappear because of the introduction of written literature. Rather, a synthesis takes place in which characteristics of the oral culture survive and are absorbed, assimilated, extended and even re-organized within a new cultural experience. Also, he shows that vital aspects of the oral literature are absorbed into an emerging written literature of greatly invigorated forms infused with vernacular energy through metaphors, images and symbols, more complex plots and diversified structures of meaning (pp. 123).

We have social cohesion as another role of folklore. In fact, folklore fosters a sense of community and belonging. The shared narratives and common cultural references found in folklore help to strengthen social bonds and reinforce communal identity. Moral and ethical instruction are also to be taken into account when it comes to talk about the role of folklore. In fact, folklore often conveys important moral lessons and ethical principles. Through stories,

proverbs and songs, communities impart wisdom and guide behavior, ensuring that cultural norms and values are upheld.

We can also talk about the sense of entertainment and education in folklore, because it serves both to entertain and educate. Folktales and songs provide enjoyment while simultaneously teaching lessons about life, nature and human relationships. This is why in *The Nature and Scope of Traditional Folk Literature* (1987), Iheanachor Egonu says that the natural habitat of folklore is the people's verbal and performing arts, their oral literature and material culture, their beliefs, customs and institutions. Folk literature, as an important aspect of folklore, forms a vital ingredient in people's cultural heritage. It is the product of countless, anonymous creative minds drawing their inspirations from the transmutations of their lived experiences (pp. 109).

In *Littérature Orale de l'Afrique Contemporaine: Approches Théoriques et Pratiques*, Louis-Marie Ongoum and Isaac-Celeste Tcheho talk about the educational function of oral literature. They say that, for the analysis of the educational function to be possible, we must take into account the educational situation that we know in every society: the institutional education and the non-institutional education. The first one is possible through school and its methods. The second one is possible through the non-directive methods. They continue by saying that the function of the oral text in basic society stems from a well-known mechanism in education, because the storyteller plays exactly the same role as a teacher in a classroom. Therefore, the public plays the role of students. This is why in oral tradition societies, the griot is called teacher (pp. 69).

Traditional attitudes where oral literature was usually associated only with preliterate societies, its chief function being entertainment, was faulty. Here oral literature serves other ends beyond entertainment: first of all, some stories and legends are didactic in content, emphasizing the correct and the acceptable moral conduct of the society. Secondly, in Africa, other stories, riddles and proverbs carry the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of the elders and are told with the intention of introducing the young generation to the history, customs, traditions and even the religion of the tribe. Then, in many parts of Africa, nationalism, patriotism and courage are transmitted through songs (every kind of songs known in traditional Africa) and tales through which the younger people learn to be patriotic and nationalistic quite easily in their lives (*Littérature Orale de l'Afrique contemporaine: Approches Théoriques et Pratiques*, pp. 91).

The influence of folklore in Africa is profound, shaping not only the continent's cultural and social landscapes but also its literary, artistic and political narratives. African folklore, deeply rooted in oral tradition, serves as a vital repository of knowledge, history, and values, passed down through generations. Folklore can have a powerful influence on cultural values, shaping the way that people think and behave within a particular society. For example, in the novels under study, a myth about a wise and just ruler might reinforce values of wisdom, justice and leadership, while a folktale about a trickster might reinforce values of cleverness and humor.

In “Cultural Value in Folktales and its Representation in Real Cultural Complexity: Some Personal Remarks”, Quang-Loc Nguyen notices something important about the behavior and the values of characters:

...I wonder about the messages that the author gives to the pattern of the action in each folktale. In the author's example, a husband violates the Three Moral Bonds. But what if he self-corrects or controls his attitude toward his wife after this behavior? For example, on day 1, the violation of Three Moral Bonds happens, so AVC (Anti-Confucian values) can be equivalent to 1. However, on day 2, no violation of Three Moral Bonds happens, then AVC is equivalent to 0. Thus, I believe that the dataset has not scoped the variation of characters' behaviors (pp. 2).

He goes further by saying that, in the modern world, young generations tend to pay less attention to folktales, since they spend more time on the internet. Besides, the migration of other religions and beliefs during globalization may have certain effects on cultural behaviors. Therefore, the paper is suited for those who are interested in history and certain cultural behaviors in a tech-saturated world.

Not only may the case of creating new folktales by individuals not be relative to social circumstances, but also there is a significant number of outliers in studying social science. For example, he mentions loyalty to the king. In history, many people stand against the government (the king) due to many reasons, such as heavy levy. In *The Influence of Folklore in the Formation of Local Cultural Values: A Phenomenological Approach*, Elisa Pitria Ningsih and Silfia Novita Rizki explain that folklore has a significant role in shaping local cultural values. Respondents revealed that folklore is not only a medium to convey these values, but also an integral part of cultural identity. According to them, the diversity of folklore reflects the diversity of cultural values in the community. In addition, their study highlights the role of the individual in interpreting folklore. Individual subjective experiences play an important role in

how folktales are understood and internalized. Contextual factors such as oral traditions, cultural rituals and social structures also influence the way folktales are conveyed and received by the community

(<https://nawalaeducation.com/index.php/KJ/article/download/277/536/2109#:~:text=Through%20a%20phenomenological%20approach%2C%20it,folklore%20plays%20in%20this%20process.>).

In “Teaching as Performance: Connections between Folklore and Education” (July 1999), Barbara Morgan-Fleming explains that classrooms are oral places because teachers spend most of their workday talking: talking to large and small groups, asking for homework, comforting a child in distress, reading a book aloud, conferring with parents and colleagues. On the other hand, the students' world also is oral because, children talk as they play with one another, ask questions of their teacher, take part in oral classroom performances such as the book report or show and tell, or in playground-centered genre such as jump rope rhymes, taunting, joking, and confiding life's truths learned so far.

She points out that one important function of schooling is the connection of the child's oral world to the literate world of past knowledge and narrative. In making such a connection, thought and written text are certainly important, but a classroom in which print and thought existed without the mediation of the spoken word would appear strange to most educators (pp. 273). According to her, when orality is taken into account, researchers often concentrate on small linguistic units, missing the larger social and aesthetic rules of classroom speech (see Hymes 1972). This imbalance is perhaps due to what Finnegan (1988) calls the "literary paradigm" of European scholars in which oral forms are studied as transcribed text, leaving out key elements of performance. One body of literature that can be helpful in expanding our understanding of orality in classrooms is that of performance-centered folklore. She says:

The relationship that I see between folklore and teaching has a great deal to do with my personal experience. I came to teaching by a rather circuitous route, beginning with study of classical Chinese at universities in Taiwan and Kansas, through graduate study at the Folklore Institute at Indiana University, and after work in adult education and as a bilingual case worker for Indo-Chinese refugees. When I went back for elementary certification, I intended to teach for one or two years and then go into curriculum development (pp. 274).

Having explored the foundational concepts of African folklore, it is essential to examine how these elements extend beyond mere storytelling to shape the very cultural and

social structures of African communities. Folklore serves not only as a repository of collective wisdom but also as a vital tool for the transmission of values, norms, and identities across generations. This profound influence underscores the role of folklore in the formation and preservation of the cultural and social fabric of African society, embedding itself in various aspects of daily life and traditions.

Influence of Folklore on the Cultural and Social Fabric of the African Society

The influence of folklore in Africa is visible on some points as it serves as a vibrant and insightful reflection of the cultural and social landscapes of African societies. By examining how folklore encapsulates and conveys cultural values, social roles, we gain profound insights into the collective consciousness and lived experiences of African communities. African folklore is rich with narratives that embody and transmit cultural values and norms of various communities. These stories serve as repositories of cultural wisdom, offering guidance on ethical conduct, social responsibilities and communal harmony. For instance, the value of communal living is often highlighted in folk tales where characters work together to overcome challenges, such as in the story of “The Tortoise and the Birds,” which underscores the importance of cooperation and mutual support. Cultural values are the shared beliefs and ideals that guide behavior and decision-making within a society. Norms are the specific rules or expectations about how to act in various situations.

First, many African folktales highlight communal values. For instance, the tale of the tortoise in *Things Fall Apart* might portray the tortoise's cleverness and cooperation with others, showcasing how communal effort and resourcefulness are valued traits. These stories often illustrate the benefits of working together and the consequences of selfishness. On the other hand, proverbs such as “*Wisdom is like a baobab tree; no one individual can embrace it*” (Akan and Ewe, Benin, Ghana and Togo) Proverb, 1998) reflect the high regard for elders in African cultures. As another role, we have social cohesion. In fact, those narratives also reinforce social cohesion by promoting a shared understanding of cultural norms and values. The legend of the Rain Queen, for example, unites the community in a common ritual that emphasizes collective responsibility and mutual dependence. Moreover, rituals and traditions encapsulated in folklore often carry moral and ethical lessons that guide behavior and decision-making. The trials and tribulations faced by Sundiata during his initiation teach listeners about the virtues of resilience, bravery and wisdom. Similarly, the Rain Queen legend underscores

the importance of respecting natural forces and fulfilling social roles for the greater good of the community.

Secondly, folktales about communal living reinforces the value of collaboration and mutual support. It often shows how communal actions lead to positive outcomes, thus validating the norm of working together and supporting one another. Such tales become a medium for teaching and reinforcing the value of unity and collective responsibility. On the other hand, proverbs about respecting elders highlight the importance of hierarchical relationships within the community. These proverbs not only reinforce the value of respect but also help maintain the social fabric by acknowledging the role of different generations.

Apart from cultural values, we can also talk about social roles which refer to the expected behaviors and duties associated with a particular position within a society. For example, family roles involve responsibilities within a household, like parenting or caregiving. Gender roles dictate how individuals should behave based on their sex, often influencing tasks and responsibilities. These roles help maintain order and predictability within a community, defining how people interact with each other based on their roles. As for relationships, they involve the connections between individuals or groups, such as kinship ties (family connections) and community bonds (relationships among community members).

Folktales that depict family dynamics often mirror the societal expectations and norms related to family roles. For instance, a story where a child must take on specific responsibilities to gain respect or prove their worth illustrates how family roles and hierarchy are perceived and enforced in society. In the domain of proverbs, an example is “*A woman’s place is in the home*,” which emphasizes traditional gender roles by suggesting that women should focus on domestic duties. This proverb reflects societal expectations about gender and the division of labor. Proverbs highlighting gender roles reveal societal beliefs about gender and labor. For example, “*A woman’s place is in the home*” underscores the traditional expectation that women should prioritize domestic responsibilities.

The preservation of cultural hereditary is another main role of folklore. Through rituals and traditions, these practices are passed down from one generation to the next, ensuring their continuity and relevance. For instance, the story of Sundiata's initiation rite not only entertains but also educates young listeners about the values and expectations of adulthood in their culture. We can also talk about the preservation of cultural identity as another role. Folklore

serves as a repository of cultural identity, encapsulating the beliefs, values and practices that define a community.

Legends involving spirits and deities often contain lessons about right and wrong, justice and the consequences of one's actions. For example, stories about trickster figures like Anansi often highlight the virtues of cleverness and resourcefulness while also warning against deceit and selfishness. Also, these spiritual narratives play a crucial role in preserving cultural identity and continuity. They provide a shared set of beliefs and values that bind communities together. Through the retelling of these myths and legends, cultural knowledge is passed down through generations, ensuring that spiritual traditions remain alive and relevant. Then, the rituals and practices depicted in these stories often mirror actual cultural practices. For instance, creation myths might be recited during specific ceremonies and stories about ancestral spirits might be told during rites of passage or funerals.

Addressing social issues also permits folklore to serve as a powerful medium for social commentary and critique. In fact, folklore often brings attention to social injustices by portraying them vividly in stories and proverbs. The tale of "The Tortoise and the Elephant" exemplifies how storytelling can expose the misuse of power and advocate for justice. By illustrating the consequences of unjust behavior, such stories encourage listeners to recognize and challenge similar injustices in their own communities. Promoting awareness is also a powerful medium for social commentary and critique. Folklore serves as an educational tool, raising awareness about important social issues. The proverb "He who learns, teaches" not only critiques selfishness but also promotes the value of education and communal responsibility.

In Africa particularly, folklore is an incredibly powerful force that shapes cultural values, beliefs and behaviors. Folklore plays a significant role in how people understand their world, interact with one another and make sense of their place within the universe and they also explain why things happen the way they do, helping to answer questions about creation, the afterlife and the relationships between people, nature and the supernatural world. Folklore also provides moral guidance, teaching people how to live harmoniously within their communities and with the natural world. These can also be examples of how African folklore reflects the cultural and social aspects of African society. African folklore is deeply intertwined with the spiritual beliefs and practices of various African cultures. These beliefs often

encompass a holistic view of the universe, where the physical and spiritual worlds are interconnected. Common spiritual elements in African folklore include many aspects.

First, we have animism. In fact, he believes that spirits inhabit natural objects and phenomena, such as trees, rivers and animals. The ancestral worship is the second aspect. The veneration of ancestors, who are believed to influence the living and act as intermediaries between humans and the divine. Also, a pantheon of gods and spirits, each with specific roles and attributes, governing various aspects of life and nature. Then, practices aimed at appeasing or communicating with spiritual entities to seek their favor or intervention.

Rituals and traditions also show the social and cultural side of folklore. They are ceremonial acts and customary practices that are integral to the social and cultural fabric of African societies. These practices are often linked to significant life events, communal activities and spiritual beliefs. They serve to reinforce community bonds, transmit cultural knowledge and ensure the continuity of cultural identity across generations. Rituals can include rites of passage such as birth, initiation, marriage and death, while traditions encompass a range of cultural practices, including festivals, dances and storytelling. In African societies, these rituals and traditions are deeply embedded in the community's way of life, often accompanied by folklore that explains, legitimizes and perpetuates them.

Having established an understanding of folklore's foundational place in African literature and its different aspects in African cultures, we discovered that in African literary heritage, scholars do not always share the same points of view. This is why early folklore preservation efforts have been seen over time. Amadoi Hampâte Bâ played a crucial role in preserving African oral tradition. Aside, we have the UNESCO-WIFI World Forum (1967) which gave some information about the preservation and conservation of African folklore. It has also been found out that African traditions have exhibited remarkable continuity over the centuries, this is why that continuity has been deeply studied by Harold Scheub. In the next chapter, our attention will be centered on specific literary works, the novels under study, that present the role of folklore in both texts. This close examination allows for a deeper understanding of how folklore functions within individual narratives and reflects African experiences.

This chapter provided a comprehensive exploration of the historical and cultural meaning of folklore in African literature. It traced the historical development of folklore, and

emphasized its role in shaping cultural identity and social cohesion within African societies. The chapter discusses various forms of folklore, especially oral aspects (proverbs, myths, legends, folktales), its performative and creative aspects (rituals, songs, ceremonies, games...) and its incorporation into African literary works, highlighting their function as a mirror of societal values, beliefs, and traditions. The chapter examined how folklore not only preserves heritage but also serves as a dynamic cultural force reflecting the realities of African communities. Having established the historical and cultural significance of folklore in African literature, Chapter Three will delve into its specific application in the narratives of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampâté Bâ's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPLORING FOLKLORE IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART* AND AMADOU HAMPÂTÉ BÂ'S *AMKOULLEL, L'ENFANT PEUL*

This chapter aims to explore some specific elements of folklore in each text, to uncover the unique ways both authors use folklore to enrich their narratives. Those folkloric elements are: stories, rituals, traditions, customs, legends and proverbs. Additionally, this chapter seeks to analyze the significance of folklore in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* by Amadou Hampâté Bâ. By examining folklore in these two works, especially at the levels of communication, cultural identity, spirituality, entertainment, social cohesion, cultural values, education and intellectual capacities, this chapter seeks to reveal how both Achebe and Bâ employ folklore in their texts.

Folkloric Elements in Both Texts

Examining the folkloric elements in Amadou Hampâté Bâ's mémoire *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* reveals a rich tapestry of stories, rituals, traditions, myths, legends and proverbs that contribute to the cultural and historical depth of the narrative. The main character, Amkoullel, is described on the sixth page of the novel as a man steeped in love but above all, as a lover of stories, not only in the novel but also in real life, since his novel is an autobiography. According to the preface of the novel, when it comes to African oral tradition, the notion of "memory" must seriously be taken into account (pp. 6).

First, as an element of folklore in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, we have an oral tradition which is the father of some other elements like stories and myths. In fact, the notion of memory in African storytelling holds significant cultural and historical importance. Memory in African storytelling, therefore, acts as a bridge between the past, present and future, connecting individuals to their roots and fostering a sense of belonging. We can have as an example from the novel, the myth of creation, which is an integral part of the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Peul people. This myth reflects their beliefs about the origin of the world and humanity. The creation story begins with a supreme deity known as Gueno (also spelled Geno), who is believed, in the novel, to be the creator of the universe and all living things. The author explains that Gueno created the world from a single drop of milk, which expanded to form the earth, the

sky and all the natural elements. Milk, in this context, symbolizes purity and sustenance, reflecting the pastoral life of the Peul people. Gueno then created the first human beings. This is why the novel explains:

Me trouvant dans un âge où mon cerveau, comme il disait, "était encore une terre glaise façonnable," il me plaçait toujours auprès de lui quand il parlait et m'emmenait même parfois, avec l'autorisation de mes parents, assister à certaines de ses représentations au-dehors. Il s'agissait souvent de séances chantées et dansées retraçant symboliquement les différentes phases de la création du monde par Maa n'gala, le Dieu suprême créateur de toutes choses (pp. 163). Chez les Bambaras, c'est Maa n'gala, "maître de tout", "maître incréé et infini", "celui qui peut tout" "la grande profondeur insondable," "l'unique chose inconnaissable" (pour ne citer que quelques-uns de ses 266 noms...). Chez les Peuls, c'est Guéno, "l'Eternel", sans commencement ni fin; c'est le Amma des Dogons, le Wounnam des Mossis, l'Oloroun des Yoroubas, etc. Mais les hommes considèrent cet Être suprême comme trop éloigné pour lui adresser leurs demandes. Ils préfèrent passer par des intermédiaires: les 408 dieux (qui ne sont que des aspects ou des manifestations spécifiques de la grande force divine primordiale, la Sé des Bambaras) et surtout les ancêtres, considérés comme très efficaces (pp. 432).

In this passage, the notion of memory is intertwined with the transmission of cultural and spiritual knowledge, linking generations through both oral traditions and symbolic practices. The speaker's experience of being closely involved with the elder during storytelling and performances exemplifies the role of memory in preserving and transmitting the community's cosmological beliefs and spiritual practices. As the speaker's "brain, like he said, was still moldable clay," they are in a formative stage where memory is being shaped and deeply influenced by direct exposure to ancestral teachings. The symbolic dance and song performances narrating the creation of the world by Maa n'gala serve as a vehicle for transmitting the memory of the community's origins and divine beliefs. This act of passing down stories of creation and the powerful names of the supreme deity across generations strengthens the communal memory, binding individuals to their cultural heritage. In the same story, we also have the contribution of the ancestors, as they are seen as intermediaries between the living and the divine. They guide and protect their descendants, ensuring the continuity of cultural practices and beliefs. This is why the author explains in his novel:

Toutes les religions africaines que je connaisse réfèrent à un dieu suprême unique, source de l'existence. Chez les Bambaras, c'est Maa n'gala, "maître de tout," "maître incréé et infini," "celui qui peut tout," "la grande profondeur insondable," "l'unique chose inconnaissable"

(pour ne citer que quelques-uns de ses 266 noms...). Chez les Peuls, c'est Guéno, "l'Éternel," sans commencement ni fin ; c'est le Amma des Dogons, le Wounnam des Mossis, l'Oloroun des Yoroubas, etc. Mais les hommes considèrent cet Être suprême comme trop éloigné pour lui adresser leurs demandes. Ils préfèrent passer par des intermédiaires : les 408 dieux (qui ne sont que des aspects ou des manifestations spécifiques de la grande force divine primordiale, la Sé des Bambaras) et surtout les ancêtres, considérés comme très efficaces. (Sur ces sujets, cf. mon article "La Tradition vivante" (Histoire générale de l'Afrique) (pp. 432).

In this passage, the contributions of ancestors in stories are emphasized through their role as intermediaries between humans and the supreme deity. While supreme god (such as Maa n'gala among the Bambaras, Guéno among the Peuls, and others in various African traditions) is seen as too distant or transcendent for direct human communication, ancestors are considered more accessible and effective channels through which people can seek guidance, blessings and protection.

In *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, Amadou Hampâté Bâ, emphasizes the cosmological beliefs of the Peul people, particularly regarding the structure of the universe and the roles of deities and spirits. The proof is that the Peuls believe in a supreme deity named Guéno, who is considered eternal and without beginning or end. This deity is similar to the Maa n'gala of the Bambaras, the Amma of the Dogons, the Wounnam of the Mossis and the Oloroun of the Yoroubas. To show that resemblance, the author says:

Cet homme extraordinaire s'attachait au garçonnet que j'étais. Me trouvant dans un âge où mon cerveau, comme il disait, "était encore une terre glaise façonnable," il me plaçait toujours auprès de lui quand il parlait et m'emmenait même parfois, avec l'autorisation de mes parents, assister à certaines de ses représentations au-dehors. Il s'agissait souvent de séances chantées et dansées retraçant symboliquement les différentes phases de la création du monde par Maa n'gala, le Dieu suprême créateur de toutes choses (pp. 163).

This passage emphasizes the connection between the speaker, as a young boy, and an extraordinary man who played a significant role in shaping his spiritual and cultural understanding. The man recognizes the boy's malleability at a formative age, comparing his mind to "moldable clay," indicating that the boy is in a stage where he can absorb and internalize important lessons. These performances, often involving songs and dances, symbolize the phases of creation according to Maa n'gala, the supreme god. The acts of storytelling these rituals are ways in which the boy is not only learning about the creation of the world but also connecting with his cultural and spiritual roots. The act of being present

during these performances solidifies the boy's sense of belonging to a larger cultural and spiritual narrative.

In *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, we can also talk about the legends as elements of storytelling in folklore. One example is the story of Pâté Poullo, Hampâté Bâ's maternal grandfather. He was a visionary, healer and adept at interpreting the language of nature. Pâté Poullo abandoned his wealth and status to follow El Hadj Omar, a revered leader of the Tidjaniya Islamic brotherhood, demonstrating his deep spiritual commitment and heroic sacrifice. This is why the novel explains in the section "Mon grand-père maternel Pâté Poullo":

Au sein de l'armée toucouleure qui pénétra, victorieuse, dans Hamdallaye, se trouvait un Peul du Fouta Toro qui, jadis, avait tout quitté pour suivre El Hadj Omar. Il s'appelait Pâté Poullo, du clan Diallo, et c'était mon futur grand-père maternel. J'entendrai souvent conter son histoire.

Peul pasteur de haute brousse de la région du Dienguel (Sénégal), Pâté Poullo était un silatigui, c'est-à-dire un grand maître en initiation pastorale, sorte de prêtre du culte et, à ce titre, chef spirituel de toute sa tribu. Comme tous les silatigui, il était doué de facultés hors du commun : voyant, devin, guérisseur, il était habile à jauger les hommes et à saisir le langage muet des signes de la brousse. Bien que jeune, c'était un homme jouissant d'une situation éminente dans son milieu. Mais un jour, lors d'un voyage, il eut l'occasion de voir et d'entendre El Hadj Omar, grand maître de la confrérie islamique Tidjaniya, qui effectuait alors une tournée dans le Fouta Toro (pp. 21-22).

These passages from the novel highlight the extraordinary life of Pâté Poullo and his significant role as a spiritual leader who chose to follow El Hadj Omar, thus becoming a part of the heroic and legendary narratives within the Peul community. Historical figures and events that have been mythologized over time. For instance, the memoir describes how the Peul have maintained their cultural and religious traditions through centuries of migrations and interactions with other groups. This is evident in the passages about the formation of powerful Peul empires, such as the empire of Sokoto founded by Ousman dan Fodio and the empire of Macina founded by Cheikou Amadou. This is why the novel says:

Ils parviendront, après leur Islamisation, à fonder de grands empires: entre autres l'empire du Sokoto (région du Nigeria) fondé au XVIIIe siècle par Ousman dan Fodio, et l'empire peul du Macina (région du Mali), fondé au début du XIXe siècle par Cheikou Amadou, au cœur du fertile delta intérieur du Niger (pp. 18).

The historical figure here is the Peul people, who are significant for their role in West African history. Their migrations and settlements were crucial in shaping the cultural and social

landscape of regions like Macina. The mention of the Fouta Toro and Ferlo regions indicates the origins of these migrations, highlighting the expansive movement and influence of the Peul across West Africa:

Des siècles avant la fondation de ce dernier empire, des vagues successives de Peuls pasteurs, venant surtout du Fouta Toro et du Ferlo sénégalais, attirées par les vastes prairies herbeuses du Macina, étaient venues s'y fixer (pp. 19) .

As other elements of oral tradition, in the novel, we can talk about proverbs that convey the wisdom of the Peul culture. These sayings often encapsulate complex ideas and social norms in concise and memorable phrases. For example, we have “*Si on lave une culotte le soir alors qu'on l'a mise propre sur soi le matin, ce n'est sûrement pas pour rien*” (pp. 316). This proverb simply means there is a reason for everything. It shows how characters have reasons why they do things.

Also, we have another proverb which is “*Un arbre peut-il vivre sans sa sève?*” (pp. 226). The novel explains how Tidjani expresses his despair after returning to Bandiagara, where he confronts his relatives, led by Faman N'Diaye, who had taken responsibility for the repudiation of his wife, Kadidja. Tidjani's relatives, driven by jealousy, had rejected Kadidja. Tidjani likens himself to a tree and Kadidja to the lifeblood (sap) of that tree. He emphasizes that just as a tree cannot live without its sap, he cannot live without Kadidja. This metaphor illustrates the essential and life-giving role that Kadidja plays in his life, highlighting the inseparability and vital connection between them (pp. 226).

Besides, the proverb: “*Ce n'est qu'en l'absence de l'éléphant qu'on peut ramasser ses excréments*” (pp. 146). The novel highlights that Tidjani receives a letter from his mother, which she explains came from the commander of Koulikoro and it has to be communicated to the commander of Bougouni. Tidjani then exclaims, “*O Poullou! Poullou! It is only in the absence of the elephant that one can pick up its excrement!*” This metaphor implies that certain actions can only be taken when the main person concerned is not present. The elephant represents a powerful presence and its absence signifies an opportunity to do something that would be impossible or inappropriate in its presence. Thus, Tidjani is lamenting that some actions, decisions, or truths come to light only when the significant person is not there to influence or control the situation, highlighting the constraints and reverence associated with the presence of a powerful figure (pp. 146).

The following proverb is also a good example: “*Le tam-tam a raison de la guitare* (pp. 106). In the passage, when the horses were brought for auction, King Aguibou noticed that two couriers were missing. He asked the commander about their whereabouts and the commander informed him that they had been sent to Koulikoro for the captain of the spahis. In response, Aguibou quoted the proverb “*le tam-tam a raison de la guitare*,” meaning “the drum has reason over the guitar,” or in other words, “the reason of the stronger always prevails over that of the weaker.” This demonstrates that the stronger party’s decisions or justifications are always accepted as the best or most valid, regardless of fairness or other considerations. The commander’s decision to send the horses to Koulikoro for the captain of the spahis, likely driven by authority or power, overrides any other reasoning or objections, illustrating that the stronger’s reason is indeed considered the best one (pp. 106).

Proverbs in the *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul* frequently impart moral lessons, guiding behavior and decision-making. This kind of proverb is known as wisdom proverb. They reflect the ethical framework of the Peul society. First of all the proverb “*on ne peut ni mourir avant l’heure, ni ne pas mourir quand l’heure sonne*” (pp. 344) reflects the Peul society’s ethical framework and worldview, particularly their beliefs about destiny, morality, and acceptance of life’s inevitable events. This saying underscores the idea that life and death are governed by a divine or natural order that humans cannot alter. In Peul society, such proverbs often guide behavior by encouraging individuals to live virtuously and in harmony with their community, knowing that their time on earth is finite and predetermined. The moral lesson here is to focus on righteous living, fulfilling one’s responsibilities, and maintaining ethical conduct rather than fearing or attempting to control the inevitable. This aligns with the Peul value of *pulaaku* (a code of conduct), which emphasizes patience, restraint, and respect for the natural and spiritual order. Ultimately, the proverb acts as a moral compass, reminding individuals to lead meaningful lives in alignment with their destiny and the greater ethical framework of their society.

In the novel, Fanta Hamma is extremely fearful for their safety, shedding tears because she is convinced they are heading towards death or madness induced by evil spirits (pp. 344). The dangers they faced were real: attacks by wild animals that inhabited the caves of the hill and the risk of being robbed by highwaymen in the forest. However, Tidjani was determined to proceed with his plans, undeterred by these fears. According to his belief, since death will come at its predetermined time, worrying about it is pointless.

As another proverb full of wisdom we have: “*A trop vouloir jeter au loin une grenouille qui vous dégoûte, elle finit par tomber dans une bonne mare*” (pp. 289) which is used in the novel, when Beydari expresses his satisfaction by citing an adage, which means that in trying too hard to harm someone, one might inadvertently create conditions that lead to their happiness. He elaborates further with another metaphor: “*O Koniba Kondala, ajouta-t-il, il t’arrive avec Amkoullé ce qui arrive à un homme mal intentionné qui se couche sur le dos et pisse en l’air pour essayer de salir le ciel. Non seulement son urine n’atteint jamais son but, mais finalement c’est sur son propre ventre qu’elle retombe*” (pp. 289). The metaphor in this passage lies in the vivid comparison of Koniba Kondala’s actions to a man lying on his back and urinating into the air in an attempt to soil the sky. The act of urinating upward symbolizes futile or malicious efforts aimed at something far beyond one’s reach—in this case, the vast and untouchable “sky.” The imagery illustrates the idea that such actions are not only ineffective but ultimately self-damaging, as the urine falls back onto the man himself. This metaphor highlights the consequences of bad intentions and serves as a moral lesson: harmful or spiteful deeds often backfire, causing harm to the perpetrator rather than the intended target.

The following proverb clearly explains the importance of knowledge: “*La connaissance d’une chose, quelle qu’elle soit, est préférable que son ignorance*” (pp. 274). In the novel, Tierno reassures Kadidja by explaining the value of knowledge and addressing her concerns about Amadou’s potential infidelity by attending school. He references the Prophet’s teachings, emphasizing that “*The knowledge of a thing, whatever it may be, is preferable to its ignorance*” and “*Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave, even if it means going to China!*” (pp. 274).

Tierno underscores that knowledge is inherently good, regardless of the situation. He advises Kadidja not to intervene between Amadou and his destiny, reminding her that their creator knows best what is intended for him. Tierno suggests that if it is decreed for Amadou not to be educated at the French school, he will return regardless of circumstances. Conversely, if it is his destined path, he will follow it. Also, the proverb “*Un mensonge qui veut grimper jusqu’au septième ciel finit toujours par dégringoler sur le nez du menteur*” (pp. 192) illustrates the pitfalls of dishonesty and underscores the importance of truth and knowledge. The characters acknowledge that while minor lies might sometimes seem permissible, there are boundaries that should not be crossed. They emphasize that an overly ambitious lie—one that tries to reach great heights—will ultimately collapse and bring disgrace upon the liar.

In the proverb “*Les morceaux de bois pour is du mauvais puits finissent toujours par retomber dans le puits*” (pp. 124), Fambougouri describes how he witnessed Brigadier Toumani Kamara release Gonfin from prison. Gonfin's wife brought a donkey laden with bags and after receiving a large envelope from Toumani, Gonfin and his wife left for Bamako, disappearing into the horizon like leaves blown away by the wind. Fambougouri speculates that the commander either dismissed or relocated Gonfin. This adage illustrates the concept of karma, suggesting that those who engage in wrongdoing will eventually face the consequences of their actions. Gonfin, who is implied to have been involved in some form of misconduct, has been removed from his position, aligning with the idea that his actions have caught up with him.

Secondly, as another element of folklore, we have customs, which are represented in many forms: first, we have rituals that are not considered as oral tradition, instead, they are performative creations. The novel illustrates that people also used to swear by Maa n'gala's name. The novel describes a scene in which a character, during a chant, sometimes replaces the typical exclamation *Ee Kelen* (meaning "O One!") with the divine name *Maa n'gala*. When he does this, he falls into a trance and begins to prophesy. This suggests that invoking the divine name Maa n'gala has a powerful spiritual effect on him, causing him to enter an altered state of consciousness where he performs impressive feats or miracles. This is why the novel says:

Dans ce chant, quand il lui arrivait de remplacer l'interjection Ee Kelen (O Un !) par le nom divin Maa n'gala, il tombait en transe et vaticinait. Il lui arrivait aussi d'accomplir en public toutes sortes de prodiges assez impressionnants, dont le souvenir agitaient parfois mes nuits (pp. 163).

In this passage, the ritualistic aspect is highlighted through the man's transformation during the performance of the chant. When he replaces the interjection "Ee Kelen" with the divine name "Maa n'gala," he enters a trance-like state, a common feature of many spiritual rituals where the practitioner is believed to temporarily channel divine power or be possessed by a spiritual force. This act of chanting, accompanied by the invoking of a divine name, creates a connection to the sacred and facilitates the man's ability to perform miraculous acts. The fact that the memory of these acts haunts the narrator's nights indicates the deep emotional and spiritual impact these ritualistic moments had on him, demonstrating the power of ritual to shape one's worldview and sense of the supernatural.

The novel also portrays various rituals that hold cultural and spiritual significance within the Peul community. Some of the different rituals highlighted in the novel also include

initiation rituals. These mark the transition from childhood to adulthood and are essential for young individuals to be recognized as full members of the community. As another one, we have agricultural and herding practices. Here, we mainly have the circumcision that gives the circumcised, the title of *Kamalenkoro* (adult):

Après une opération en dispensaire, ma guérison aurait dû être acquise en quatre ou cinq jours. Malheureusement, en faisant le bandage, l'infirmier n'avait pas ménagé d'ouverture pour laisser passer l'urine, si bien que la plaie s'infecta. On me soigna correctement, mais je dus rester une quinzaine de jours à Bamako. Cela m'importait peu. L'essentiel, pour moi, était d'avoir été circoncis avant mes camarades qui, eux, devaient encore effectuer une retraite de trois mois comme l'exigeait la coutume Bambara. Je serais le premier à revenir à Kati coiffé du bonnet traditionnel et investi de la qualité de kamalenkoro ("adulte" au sens traditionnel). Je conservais donc la préséance sur mes camarades et pouvais demeurer leur chef (pp. 360).

In this passage, circumcision is presented as a rite of transition from childhood to adulthood within the Bambara society. The protagonist's pride in undergoing circumcision before his peers is not just about the physical procedure, but the social and symbolic importance it carries. The circumcision ritual, as described, serves not only as a rite of passage but also as a means of establishing hierarchy and leadership. The protagonist's ability to return to his community first, "coiffed with the traditional bonnet" and carrying the title of *kamalenkoro*, places him above his peers, affirming his leadership role. The practice of circumcision, in this context, is an essential marker of adulthood that carries with it societal privileges and responsibilities, including the right to lead and make decisions within the group.

Thirdly, we also have, in the same novel, ceremonies which are both elements of customs and performed aspect of folklore as they do not need words to take place. One of the most important ceremonies in the novel is the naming ceremony, which is a significant event in Peul culture, symbolizing identity, lineage and destiny. Naming ceremonies are conducted with rituals, blessings and communal participation, signifying the child's integration into the community and invoking blessings for their future. The naming ceremony is first mentioned in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* in the sentence:

“Mon père et Tierno Kounta, libérés, revinrent ensemble le jour même à Kadidiabougou avec tout leur “fourbi,” qui se limitait à bien peu de choses. Le premier acte de mon père fut de fixer une date commune pour la cérémonie d'imposition du nom de mon petit frère et le mariage de Tierno Kounta et Koundi Ali” (pp. 148).

During the naming ceremony, the child's name is carefully chosen to reflect familial lineage, spiritual connections and aspirations for the child's future. Names often carry meanings rooted in nature, history, virtues, or ancestral spirits, imbuing the child with a sense of belonging, purpose and protection within the community. The elders play a vital role in the naming ceremony, offering prayers, blessings and guidance for the child's journey through life. They invoke the wisdom of the ancestors, the spirits of the land and the blessings of the divine to safeguard the child, instill virtues and guide them towards a life of honor, integrity and service to the community. It is a serious ceremony, this is why the author says in the very first lines of his novel:

C'est pourquoi, lorsqu'on veut honorer quelqu'un, on le salue en lançant plusieurs fois non pas son nom personnel (ce que l'on appellerait en Europe le prénom) mais le nom de son clan : "Bâ ! Bâ !" ou "Diallo ! Diallo !" ou "Cissé ! Cissé !" car ce n'est pas un individu isolé que l'on salue, mais, à travers lui, toute la lignée de ses ancêtres (pp. 16).

As another ceremony, we have the one of healing, which is also considered as a ritual. Spiritual healing practices and rituals are depicted in the novels under study, showcasing the belief in the interconnectedness of the physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Healing rituals in *Amkoullel*, *l'Enfant Peul* are deeply rooted in traditional practices, herbal remedies, spiritual beliefs and communal support systems. They aim to restore harmony, balance and vitality to individuals facing physical ailments, emotional distress, or spiritual imbalances by addressing the root causes of illness and disharmony. This is why in the novel, the author, talking about his father, says:

Il exerçait toujours son activité de tailleur-brodeur et réalisait toujours des boubous brodés de toute beauté, mais ce qui attirait surtout les gens autour de lui c'était sa réputation morale et religieuse. Comme à Bougouni, les gens le considéraient un peu comme un marabout et venaient lui demander des conseils, voire des prières. Il avait une spécialité très étrange — innée ou transmise, je ne sais — qui consistait à soigner les fous (pp. 351).

In this passage, healing rituals are subtly implied through the man's unique ability to heal those considered "mad" or mentally disturbed. While he is primarily known for his craftsmanship as a tailor and embroiderer, it is his moral and religious reputation that draws people to him. His role as a healer—likely a spiritual or traditional one—appears to transcend the physical realm of sewing and craftsmanship. People come to him not only for advice and prayers but for his specialized ability to treat mental illness, which he may do through a

combination of spiritual intervention, ritual practices, and prayer. The reference to his work as a "marabout" (a spiritual healer or guide in certain African traditions) suggests that his healing is linked to religious or mystical practices. This type of healing is deeply rooted in African traditions, where mental and physical illnesses are often treated through spiritual means, connecting the healer to the divine or ancestral powers. His ability to heal the "fous" (the mad or mentally unstable) may involve rituals that address spiritual imbalances or communicate with the ancestors for guidance and relief.

Furthermore, as another element of folklore, we have traditions. They are also included on customs and can be considered as folkloric elements because people used to refer to tradition when people of the village wanted to take important decisions, such as repudiate a woman, for instance. The text mentions that if such a decision is made, it is generally validated by the entire community, indicating a strong communal aspect to personal decisions. In terms of cultural values, the emphasis on "true" friends and the significant influence they wield showcases the value placed on genuine friendship and loyalty. The narrative highlights a cultural norm where the community's consensus is vital and decisions are rarely opposed if they align with communal values. This is why the novel says:

... Elle demanda qu'on transporte ses bagages chez ses parents, ce qui fut fait dans la nuit même par les soins des serviteurs de Hampâté. Le lendemain, quand la nouvelle se propagea dans la ville, personne ne donna tort à Balewel et à Hampâté. Voilà qui est sans doute bien difficile à concevoir pour une mentalité moderne. Comment admettre qu'un ami puisse de son propre chef "divorcer" la femme de son ami et que ce dernier accepte la chose sans discuter ? C'est que, jadis, le véritable ami n'était pas "un autre," il était nous-même, et sa parole était notre parole. L'amitié vraie primait la parenté, sauf en matière successorale. C'est pourquoi la tradition recommandait d'avoir beaucoup de camarades, mais pas trop de "vrais" amis. Les parents avaient d'ailleurs le même privilège. Le frère, le père ou la mère pouvaient "divorcer" un homme en son absence, et en général l'intéressé s'inclinait. On ne peut pas dire que c'était une coutume, car le fait n'était pas extrêmement fréquent, mais s'il survenait on l'acceptait car une telle décision n'était généralement pas prise à la légère - dans le cas contraire la communauté, familiale ou villageoise, s'y serait opposée (pp. 49).

Then, as other elements of folklore, we have social organizations. They are integral components of folklore because they represent the lived practices, traditions, and societal structures that shape and reflect a community's identity, values, and beliefs. In fact, customs encompass the rituals, ceremonies, but more important, everyday practices that define how a

community interacts with the world and with one another. They carry oral traditions, myths and symbolism, which are transmitted across generations. For example, a wedding ceremony might involve storytelling, singing, or symbolic actions that reflect the community's collective memory and values. For example, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the customs surrounding marriage negotiations, festivals, and funerals embody the Igbo people's beliefs and social structures, preserving them as part of their folklore. On the other hand, social organizations refer to the structured relationships and hierarchies within a community, such as family systems, leadership roles, and communal responsibilities.

Social organizations are first of all interwoven within folklore as they provide the context in which folklore is performed, transmitted and preserved. Folklore not only documents these practices but also actively shapes and perpetuates them, ensuring cultural continuity. In the social organization of the novels under study, we can talk about the family structure. *Things Fall Apart* details the extended family system, where multiple generations live together and kinship ties are crucial for social organization and support. We can talk about gender roles: the roles of men and women in Peul society are well-defined, with distinct responsibilities and expectations for each gender. Men are typically responsible for herding and protection, while women manage the household and children.

Secondly, in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, Amadou Hampâté Bâ, shows how gender roles are a significant aspect of Peul society as depicted in the memoir. First of all, men's roles in society are particularly described. They are in charge of herding and protecting livestock. For example, men in the novel are primarily responsible for herding cattle and protecting them from thieves and wild animals. This role is highlighted when Amkoullel discusses his father's duties and the importance of cattle in Peul culture. All what concerned animals, alive or dead, were ruled by men. That is why meat was principally sold by men. This is what in the novel, the author explains:

Le vieil Allamodio, voyant que Hampâté traitait Beydari comme un fils, décida de le considérer lui-même comme son petit-fils. Et c'est ainsi que Beydari apprit le métier de boucher, qu'il exerça toute sa vie (pp. 46).

This passage highlights the communal and familial values central to traditional African societies. The decision of the elder Allamodio to consider Beydari as his grandson reflects the fluid and inclusive nature of family structures within the community, where relationships are often built on bonds of mentorship, care, and shared responsibility rather than strict blood ties. By integrating Beydari into the family, Allamodio reinforces the idea that a

sense of belonging and support extends beyond biological connections. Furthermore, this act of symbolic adoption allowed Beydari to inherit a skill essential for his livelihood—learning the trade of a butcher. This transmission of knowledge and craft underscores the intergenerational relationship's importance in preserving cultural practices and ensuring the economic and social survival of individuals. The story also reflects the values of mutual respect, generosity, and the collective responsibility to nurture and guide the younger generation. Such dynamics are foundational in fostering a sense of identity, continuity, and purpose within the community. This simply shows how men are impotent and qualified to take care of cattles. We also have this paragraph that shows that men are the ones who take care of livestock:

A l'approche du soir, les derniers pilons tombaient dans les mortiers et tintaient doucement. De tous côtés on voyait revenir des pâturages bœufs, chèvres et moutons. Bêlements et beuglements se mêlaient aux aboiements des chiens qui pourchassaient des chèvres récalcitrantes. Des ânes nerveux, montés par des garçons ou des hommes couverts de poussière, regagnaient eux aussi le village en balançant doucement la tête de droite à gauche au rythme de leur marche, comme pour alléger leur fardeau. Aucun ne manquait de braire énergiquement en approchant de sa maison, sans doute pour signaler amicalement son retour des champs (pp. 140).

This passage demonstrates that men and boys are the primary caretakers of livestock within the community. The imagery of boys and men covered in dust riding donkeys back to the village highlights their active involvement in herding and managing the animals throughout the day. The narrative emphasizes their responsibility for ensuring the safe return of cattle, goats, sheep, and donkeys from the pastures as evening approaches. The detailed description of their tasks—guiding animals, managing their behavior, and enduring the physical demands of herding—reinforces the idea that livestock care is a labor-intensive role traditionally associated with men. Furthermore, the communal rhythm of the village at dusk, filled with the sounds of animals returning and the visible presence of male herders, underscores the cultural significance of this work. This responsibility not only sustains the household economy but also reflects the gendered division of labor central to the society's daily life and traditions.

Also, livestock was also considered as a wealth for men, sometimes more important than money. Here is a reference from the text:

La surprise de ses parents fut grande, mais finalement tous lui donnèrent leur accord: "Suis ton chemin et va avec la paix, rien que la paix !" Et c'est ainsi que mon grand-père, abandonnant richesses, troupeaux et

pouvoir, muni d'un simple bâton de berger, prit la route pour rejoindre El Hadj Omar (pp. 21-22).

This passage illustrates how livestock was considered a primary form of wealth for men, often surpassing monetary value. The reference to the grandfather abandoning "richesses, troupeaux et pouvoir" (riches, livestock and power) emphasizes the deep cultural and economic importance of livestock in the society. Owning herds signified not only material wealth but also social status, power, and influence within the community. The phrase underscores the magnitude of his decision to leave behind his wealth, including livestock, which represented a stable and prestigious asset. Livestock was more than a financial resource; it was intertwined with identity, legacy, and economic security. The protagonist's grandfather explains the same thing, when he wanted to follow the path of God. He said:

C'est te dire que je ne suis pas venu à toi pour les choses de ce monde. Je te prie de me recevoir dans l'islam et je te suivrai partout où tu iras, mais à une condition : le jour où Dieu fera triompher ta cause et où tu disposeras du pouvoir et de grandes richesses, je te demande de ne jamais me nommer à aucun poste de commandement, ni chef d'armée, ni chef de province, ni chef de village, ni même chef de quartier. Car à un Peul qui a abandonné ses troupeaux, on ne peut rien donner qui vaille davantage... (pp. 22).

The following paragraphs from the novel also demonstrate the remarkable ability of men to govern and rule over animals in society. This relationship reflects not only the dominance of humans over other species but also their capacity to maintain order, control, and a symbiotic balance with the natural world. In the novel, animals are portrayed as both a resource and a symbol of man's ingenuity and authority. The characters' ability to tame, train, and interact with animals reveals their strength, wisdom, and cultural values. This mastery also underscores their responsibility toward the creatures they govern, highlighting the delicate harmony between humanity and nature:

Mon grand-père Pâté Poulo, qui était devenu le gestionnaire des troupeaux de Tidjani, avait reçu pour instruction de mettre chaque jour à la disposition d'Allamodio autant d'animaux qu'il en fallait pour couvrir les besoins des habitants (pp. 30).

Comme il le faisait fréquemment, Pâté Poulo était parti dans la brousse, à l'est de Bandiagara, avec des troupeaux (pp. 57).

Pâté Poulo s'aperçut très vite de ce changement et s'en inquiéta. Il crut d'abord à une crise passagère, mais voyant les semaines passer, il décida de rompre le silence. "Anta, dit-il, depuis quelque temps tu as changé. Tu

n'es plus la même. Tu sembles regretter notre union. Pourtant j'appartiens à une lignée aussi pure que la tienne. Le roi m'honore de son amitié et de sa confiance. Je ne suis pas n'importe qui à Bandiagara. Sur le plan matériel, je suis bien nanti ; tu as mille bovins à ta disposition et je gère vingt mille têtes du cheptel royal (pp. 36).

These paragraphs highlight the role of men in managing livestock, illustrating their expertise and authority in ruling animals within the society. The references to Pâté Pouлло, who oversees vast herds, underscore the significance of men as custodians of livestock and their ability to govern this key aspect of the community's wealth and survival. In the first instance, Pâté Pouлло acts as the manager of Tidjani's herds, tasked with the critical responsibility of allocating animals daily to meet the needs of the inhabitants. This role not only reflects his competence in managing resources but also his position of trust and authority within the societal structure. In the second example, his departure into the wilderness with the herds reveals the active, hands-on role men played in caring for and safeguarding the animals, often venturing into challenging environments to fulfill their duties. Lastly, his conversation with Anta further emphasizes the societal value placed on livestock. Together, these details affirm the cultural and economic centrality of men's roles in ruling and managing animals.

In the novel, the author also emphasized that men hold a significant influence within society. This influence is so deeply rooted in the cultural fabric that it extends to their children, particularly sons. When boys are born, it is almost predetermined that they will follow in their fathers' footsteps and inherit their roles and professions. This expectation is not merely a matter of family tradition but is perceived as a societal norm, almost as if the destiny of the next generation is sealed from birth. Through this practice, the cycle of occupational inheritance ensures the continuation of societal structure and reinforces the dominance of men in shaping the identity and progression of the community (pp. 360).

To further emphasize that cattle are a significant symbol of wealth in the society depicted in his novel, Bâ incorporates vivid descriptions and cultural references that highlight their importance. In the novel, cattle are more than just livestock; they represent a person's social status, economic power and influence within the community. Bâ uses specific imagery and events to illustrate this connection. For instance, he portrays how families with large herds of cattle are highly respected and considered pillars of the community. Owning cattle is not only a mark of affluence but also a reflection of one's ability to provide for their family and contribute to the societal economy. In addition, cattle often play a central role in important

cultural practices, such as dowries, feasts, and rituals, further solidifying their value as a cornerstone of wealth and tradition. Through this lens, Bâ captures the deep-rooted relationship between cattle and prosperity in the lives of his characters saying in his novel:

Tous les biens de Tidjani Thiam (environ trois mille bovins, des moutons et des chèvres, deux cents chevaux parmi lesquels figuraient les deux célèbres coursiers Nimsaali et Kowel-Birgui qui avaient jadis gagné la fameuse course aux dépens du cheval d'Aguibou Tall, soixante serviteurs, plusieurs kilos d'or et d'argent et environ cinq millions de cauris) furent confisqués. Le palais fut évacué et confié à la garde d'un brigadier-chef et d'un groupe de gardes de cercle (pp. 79-80).

In the society depicted in the novel, cattle are portrayed as a central indicator of wealth, power, and status. Tidjani Thiam's assets, including "environ trois mille bovins" (around three thousand cattle), stand out prominently among his other possessions such as sheep, goats, horses, gold, silver, and currency. The sheer scale of his cattle herd reflects not only his immense personal fortune but also the economic and cultural significance of livestock in the society. Cattle are shown to be more than just economic resources—they symbolize prestige and influence. Their mention before other forms of wealth, such as gold and silver, underscores their primacy in the community's value system. Moreover, the confiscation of these animals, along with his palace and other assets, demonstrates how cattle were a critical measure of wealth that could elevate or diminish a person's status and power within the social hierarchy.

Moreover, apart from herding and protecting livestock, as another function of men in the society, we can talk about leadership and decision-making. For example, men often occupy leadership positions within the community and are involved in decision-making processes. Amkoullél describes gatherings of male elders who discuss and resolve community issues. The following excerpt from the novel just shows that, in the society, men are qualified to rule, not only in the cultural domain but also in the political one:

Pendant ma première année, j'eus pour maître Mamadou Konaté, qui sera plus tard le deuxième député du Soudan et l'un des grands leaders du parti avant que des rivalités politiques n'entraînent sa fin tragique, dans des circonstances que je préfère ne pas évoquer ici. (pp. 403).

Also, in a conversation between the protagonist and his wife, she was waiting for her departure because her husband's family refused her when he was not around and she was waiting for him to know if he agrees with his family and therefore, take the final decision.

Hampâté, on l'a vu, n'était ni démonstratif ni loquace. Sans se départir de son calme habituel (ses amis disaient qu'il était calme et limpide comme de l'huile d'arachide), il commença par saluer sa femme, puis il demanda :

“Pourquoi ces paquets ? Que se passe-t-il ?

— Il se passe que ton petit dieu d'ami Balewel Diko m'a divorcé en ton nom et pour ton compte. Aussi j'ai fait mes bagages, et j'attends de ta part que tu me confirmes cette décision.

— Si mon petit dieu d'ami Balewel Diko t'a divorcée, répliqua tranquillement Hampâté, alors tu es bien divorcée.” Et sans un mot de plus, il rentre dans la maison (pp. 49).

Aside, women in the society depicted in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, also have their contribution. In fact, household management is their primary concern. In fact, they are in charge of managing the household, including cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children. In African society, it is unbelievable that a woman lives without or far from her children. This demonstrates the importance of a mother in his children's lives. This is why the author says in his novel:

Il était alors impensable, en Afrique, d'abandonner une femme seule telle une feuille volante, à plus forte raison si elle avait des enfants, ce qui l'aurait condamné e à la misère ou à vivre aux crochets de sa propre famille, généralement de l'un de ses frères (pp. 187).

Also, it explained in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, that mothers in the society were highly respected and loved. As it is explained in the novel, the unconditional respect of the mother as well as the practice of the generosity practices that we cannot do without. Then we understand the author when he says in his novel:

Un enfant peul grandira dans une double fidélité: à un véritable code de l'honneur et à un total respect de la volonté maternelle. Le jeune Peul, nourri du récit des hauts faits de ses ancêtres, devra régler sa conduite d'après un code moral exigeant; il y aura donc des choses qu'un Peul bien né refusera de faire (pp. 8).

The author continues by saying:

Après l'honneur, voici la seconde partie du dyptique: la Mère. Un Peul peut désobéir à son père, jamais à sa mère. La règle est absolue. Amadou Hampâté Bâ en fera l'expérience lorsque Kadidja interdira son départ pour l'École de Gorée, pépinière des meilleurs auxiliaires africains de l'administration coloniale. Cette mère était d'ailleurs d'un calibre

exceptionnel, et cette noble, gracieuse et forte Kadidja réapparaîtra dans cent pages du récit (pp. 8).

This excerpt shows that mother plays a central and deeply influential role in Amadou Hampâté Bâ's narrative. In Peul culture, as depicted in the text, the mother holds an unparalleled position of authority and reverence, even surpassing that of the father. The cultural rule that "a Peul may disobey his father, but never his mother" illustrates the absolute respect and obedience owed to mothers in this society. Kadidja, the mother of the protagonist, embodies this exceptional authority and moral strength. Her influence is evident in a pivotal moment when she forbids her son from attending the prestigious École de Gorée, a school known for grooming the best African auxiliaries for colonial administration. Her decision demonstrates not only her decisive power but also her ability to shape the destiny of her children according to her values and beliefs. Kadidja is portrayed as a woman of remarkable character: noble, graceful, and strong. Her presence looms large in the narrative, and her actions have far-reaching consequences on the protagonist's life.

In the same novel, it is explained that women, more precisely, the mother, even if she is not the biological mother, has the power over his child. That means that the mother can decide whether his son will leave or not. This is why the author explains in his novel:

Ma mère Anta N'Diobdi étant le seul parent qui me reste, elle a sur moi tous les droits, y compris le droit de vie ou de mort, et il n'est pas question que je refuse le sort qu'elle a choisi pour moi. Je lui dois respect et obéissance (pp. 38).

This is why the author continues by saying in his novel, that the women in the society depicted in his novel, are sometimes considered as gods. In fact when a woman, especially a mother, decides on something that must be done, that thing is respected by everyone, especially by her son. It is therefore possible for a mother to refuse her son's wife because she's not good enough. And when the mother has decided to refuse the woman, the son is obliged to accept that decision. This is why the author says in his novel:

Hampâté, on l'a vu, n'était ni démonstratif ni loquace. Sans se départir de son calme habituel (ses amis disaient qu'il était calme et limpide comme de l'huile d'arachide), il commença par saluer sa femme, puis il demanda :

"Pourquoi ces paquets ? Que se passe-t-il ?

- *Il se passe que ton petit dieu d'ami Balewel Diko m'a divorcé en ton nom et pour ton compte. Aussi j'ai fait mes bagages, et j'attends de ta part que tu me confirmes cette décision.*

— *Si mon petit dieu d'ami Balewel Diko t'a divorcée, répliqua tranquillement Hampâté, alors tu es bien divorcée." Et sans un mot de plus, il rentra dans la maison (pp. 49).*

The mother was so deified in the society depicted in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, that the children often thought that she had superpowers that were higher than the ones of the whites who arrived in their village to colonize them. Those children were persuaded that those white succeeded in their colonization by a great use of magical methods and they were also thinking that their mothers have the same respect everywhere in the world no matter if it is in Africa or in Europe:

Il fallait bien que le Blanc-Blanc m'ait jeté un sort puissant pour que m'arrive une pareille disgrâce, et cela dans le giron même de ma mère où j'étais venu me réfugier contre ses sortilèges !

Tout à coup, je vis entrer dans la cour ma mère portant dans ses bras mon petit frère et suivie du Blanc-Blanc et de ses acolytes. Cela ne m'étonna pas. Ma mère, je le savais, n'avait peur de rien, et elle était bien capable de dompter même des diables européens. Pour que le Blanc-Blanc et ses compagnons la suivent ainsi, dociles comme des moutons de case à l'engrais, sûrement elle avait réduit à néant leurs forces maléiques ! (pp. 154).

In *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, the mother is depicted as a figure of immense courage, strength, and authority, capable of commanding respect and obedience even from the European colonizers, referred to here as "Blanc-Blanc" and their companions. Her influence is described almost as a supernatural force, as she is portrayed as someone who can overcome even the "malevolent powers" of these outsiders, reducing their strength to nothing. This characterization elevates her to an almost mythic status within the narrative. The imagery of the Europeans following her "docile as fattened sheep" underscores her dominance and ability to assert control in situations where others might falter. Through this depiction, the mother emerges as a central figure of power and resilience, embodying the qualities of leadership and unyielding strength that define her role in the family and the narrative. She is not merely a caregiver but a force to be reckoned with, capable of challenging and subduing even the most intimidating adversaries. This is why the author says:

Ma mère, je le savais, n'avait peur de rien, et elle était bien capable de dompter même des diables européens. Pour que le Blanc-Blanc et ses

compagnons la suivent ainsi, dociles comme des moutons de case à l'engrais, sûrement elle avait réduit à néant leurs forces maléfiques !
(pp. 154)

In *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, women are portrayed as the primary custodians of heritage and lineage, entrusted with the vital role of passing down these stories to their children. Through their words, memories, and lived experiences, they become the bridge between generations, ensuring that cultural traditions and family histories are preserved. Amadou Hampâté Bâ highlights this responsibility through the character of Niélé, who is particularly suited to share details about the protagonist's father. Niélé's deep connection to the father, having known him since childhood, grants her a unique perspective and authority on his life and character. Her intimate knowledge allows her to paint a vivid and personal picture of the father, enriching the protagonist's understanding of his lineage. Bâ uses this dynamic to underscore the significant role of women in shaping identity and memory. Through Niélé, the novel illustrates how women serve as storytellers and educators within their families, ensuring that the values, lessons, and legacies of the past remain alive for future generations. This is why the authors illustrate:

Un jour, âgé de quatre ou cinq ans, j'étais en train de jouer auprès de Niélé Dembélé, l'excellente femme qui fut ma "servante-mère" depuis ma naissance et qui avait passé toute sa vie auprès de mon père, quand tout à coup je me tournai vers elle :

"Niélé, lui demandai-je, comment était mon père?" Surprise, elle resta un moment sans voix . Puis elle s'écria :

"Ton père ! Mon bon maître !" Et à mon grand étonnement, elle fondit en larmes, m'attira contre elle et me pressa fortement contre sa poitrine.

"Ai-je dit quelque chose de mal ? demandai-je. Ne doit-on pas parler de mon père ?

— Non, non, tu n'as rien dit de mal, répondit Niélé. Tu m'as simplement émue en ravivant dans mon esprit le souvenir de celui qui m'a sauvé la vie, lorsque j'étais enfant, en m'arrachant des mains d'une maîtresse méchante et capricieuse qui me battait constamment et me nourrissait à peine. Hampâté n'a pas seulement été ton père ; par sa bonté, son affection, il était aussi le mien.

"Tu veux savoir comment il était ? Eh bien, il était de taille moyenne, bien proportionné ; ce n'était pas un sac à viande aux joues en forme de pouf. Silencieux comme une caverne de haute brousse, il ne parlait presque jamais, sauf pour dire l'essentiel. Ses lèvres minces de Peul découvraient légèrement ses dents blanches dans un demi-sourire qui illuminait

constamment son visage. Mais attention ! S'il regardait quelqu'un fixement, ses yeux de lion mâle pouvaient le faire pisser de terreur !

“Puisque tu m’as questionnée aujourd’hui sur ton père, c’est que le moment est venu pour toi de connaître son histoire...” (pp. 27).

Songs were considered as women’s domain. This is why they were singing for their children, for others to transmit their knowledge and for themselves as well. This example clearly explains it and shows that the situation does not necessarily have to be good for women to transmit something through songs:

Elle improvisa sur-le-champ, à la manière traditionnelle des femmes peules, un poème chanté où elle exprimait sa douleur, lançant régulièrement le long cri “Mi héli yooyoo ! Mi héli !” (Je suis brisée, ô héli Yooyoo !) que poussent les Peuls lorsqu’ils sont dans la détresse, en souvenir du pays originel de Heli et Yooyo, le paradis perdu où , à l’aube des temps, ils vivaient heureux et préservés de tous les maux de l’existence avant d’être dispersés aux quatre coins de l’Afrique. Voici quelques extraits de ce poème, que je devais entendre souvent encore par la suite car les gens de ma famille l’avaient immédiatement mémorisé :

Mi héli yooyoo, mi héli !

*O Dieu, qu’ai-je fait, qu’ai-je dit contre toi ? O ciel, descends sur la terre
qui vient d’avaler maille,*

arrache-lui ma Fanta,

*mon or, mon espoir, ma raison de vivre ! Hélas, la terre vient de l’avaler.
..*

(...)

Mi héli yooyoo, mi héli !

Pourquoi ne suis-je pas devenue sourde

pour ne pas entendre une si affreuse nouvelle,

*une nouvelle qui comme un couteau tranchant m’arrache les sept viscères
?*

Mi héli yooyoo, mi héli !

O samedi de malheur,

éclairé par un soleil de douleur !

O samedi de répétition !

ta nuit va me couvrir d'une ombre

aussi dense que l'obscurité des entrailles de la terre où est couchée ma Fanta ! (. . .) (pp. 167).

Not only during sad moments, songs were also sung by women to welcome people. This is why the Lenngui, in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, sang a song for the young boys that were present for the circumcision, not only to welcome them, but also to give them courage:

Quand les jeunes gens arrivèrent dans la cour, Lenngui leur lança une harangue chantée destinée à exciter leur courage :

Ô jeunes garçons, soyez braves !

Ne vous conduisez point en étalons ombrageux. Bientôt votre chair connaîtra

La morsure du couteau tranchant.

Le fer fera gicler votre sang vermeil,

Mais qu'il ne fasse pas jaillir vos larmes !

(...)

Quand le forgeron coupera, plaisantez avec lui ! Frappez légèrement sa tempe

Pour le punir d'avoir osé toucher

À un membre qu'il aurait dû respecter

Comme celui de son propre père.

Et pour montrer que vous n'avez pas peur, dites-lui de recommencer !

(...)

Prouvez demain que vous êtes virils,

Et la communauté reconnaîtra votre majorité ! (pp. 232).

Lenngui used to sing songs of praise related to her village. This is why the author explains in the novel:

L'assistance fit un grand cercle autour des griots. Certains commencèrent à jouer et à déclamer des louanges. En fait, c'est Lenngui qui menait la séance. Toute la nuit elle chanta, alternant chants de bergers et chants nuptiaux, chants de guerre ou d'amour, chants épiques ou nostalgiques (pp. 231).

As another instance of sadness through songs, we have the case of Gabdo, who is hurt about Tierno Kounta's death. She sings a song to transmit her pain:

Dès que Gabdo entendit mon père prononcer à haute voix la shahada, elle fit un bond et sauta en l'air, comme propulsée par un ressort. Retombant lourdement sur le sol, elle se roula dans la poussière, criant sa douleur. Après un moment, un peu calmée, elle se lamenta doucement. Puis, comme au jour où elle avait appris le décès de sa fille, sa voix, moitié pleurant, moitié chantant, s'éleva pour une nouvelle plainte peule déchirante :

O samedi de répétition, te voilà exact au rendez-vous ! Fanta n'a pas suffi, il te fallait Tierno Kounta aussi.

Mi héli yooyoo, mi héli !

O Kounta, pourquoi as-tu répondu

A l'appel de celle qui a emporté taille ? (. . .)

Nous, tes veuves, sommes devenues deux récipients sans couvercle.

*Deux corps sans souffle Deux portes sans battant Deux jardins sans eau
Mi héli yooyoo, mi héli ! (pp. 167).*

As another instance of songs, we can talk about the ones Niélé used to sing at a certain time of the night to respect the traditions. Bâ says in his novel:

C'est l'heure où chaque maman doit conjurer le "mauvais œil" du soir. Jamais Niélé ne manquait, juste avant le coucher du soleil, de faire brûler des matières spéciales sur des braises ardentes. Tandis que la fumée déroulait ses volutes, elle chantait en peul une litanie conjuratoire traditionnelle tout en me retenant auprès d'elle. Dès que la fumée s'était dissipée, elle me libérait (pp. 192).

It is important to mention that, in the novels under study, women were not only the griots of the villages but also vital pillars of the community, entrusted with significant responsibilities. As griots, they carried the crucial role of preserving and transmitting oral traditions, recounting the history of their people, and imparting moral lessons through storytelling. Their narratives were essential for educating the younger generations, fostering a sense of identity, and maintaining a collective memory. These women fulfilled their duties by recounting tales of ancestry, cultural values, and significant events, ensuring the continuity of their heritage. Their storytelling was not merely a form of artistic expression but a profound responsibility that shaped the spiritual, social, and intellectual life of the community. This is why it is written in the novel:

La grande griote et chanteuse Aïssata Boubou, inspirée par la berceuse de Diaraw, composa elle-même des élégies en souvenir de Badara Thiam, le héros de Toini (pp. 83).

Beyond storytelling, women also assumed other crucial responsibilities that complemented their role as griots. They were caregivers, educators, and mediators within their families and communities. They played a pivotal role in nurturing relationships, resolving conflicts, and instilling a sense of unity. Their contributions extended to areas such as agriculture, trade, and traditional medicine, where they used their knowledge and skills to sustain the community. Thus, in these novels, women are portrayed as multifaceted figures whose duties went far beyond the expected norms. Their role as griots symbolizes not only their creative and intellectual contributions but also their impact on the cultural and social structure of the villages.

The author also emphasizes that women are inherently more qualified to care for children, showcasing their nurturing abilities and their indispensable role within the family structure. While men are depicted as the primary providers, focusing on activities that ensure the family's sustenance and survival, women are entrusted with the responsibility of raising, educating, and caring for the children. This division of roles highlights the balance and interdependence within the household, where both men and women contribute to the well-being of the family in complementary ways. The author portrays women as the first teachers, imparting moral values, cultural traditions, and life lessons to their children. Their role extends beyond mere physical care, encompassing the emotional and intellectual development of the younger generation. This responsibility requires patience, wisdom, and an intimate understanding of their children's needs, qualities that the author attributes primarily to women. This is why the novel includes the following excerpt:

... Cette dernière, une enfant mianka de la région de San (Mali), deviendra plus tard, pour mon grand-frère Hammadoun et pour moi-même, la plus attentionnée et la plus tendre des "servantes-mères," tandis que Beydari, homme de confiance de mon père, sera désigné par lui sur son lit de mort comme seul héritier et chef de toute la famille ! (pp. 44).

This passage underscores the central role of women in shaping the future of the family and, by extension, the community. Through their tireless dedication, women ensure that the children grow up to become responsible, knowledgeable, and morally grounded individuals. By highlighting this dynamic, the author not only showcases the essential role of women within

the family but also elevates their status as the backbone of societal growth and continuity. Their contributions are depicted as foundational to the development of the next generation and, ultimately, to the preservation of cultural identity and values. This is also why the author explains in this following excerpt, that women in the society depicted in the novel, especially mothers, are in charge of children in the family:

J'étais encore trop petit pour qu'on puisse me porter dans le dos à la manière des femmes africaines. Ma mère se procura une grandealebasse, la bourra de linges et d'étoffes douces et chaudes et m'y coucha comme dans un berceau. Ma "servante-mère" Niélé posa laalebasse sur sa tête et nous prîmes la route. C'est ainsi que, comptant tout juste quarante et un jours de présence en ce monde, je commençai à voyager. Et depuis, je n'ai jamais cessé, tout au moins jusqu'à ce que la fatigue et le grand âge m'obligent enfin, vers 1982, à rester tranquille (pp. 55).

Mothers were also, in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, used to encourage the respect of the traditions by their children. An occurrence in the novel is when Kadidja decides to pay a postnatal visit to her mother. She first makes sure that she spend the required time inside the house without getting out (40 days) before presenting the new born to his grandmother:

Au moment de ma naissance, ma grand-mère Anta N'Diobdi se trouvait à Taykiri (une localité proche de Mopti et distante de Bandiagara d'environ soixante-dix kilomètres) où elle avait suivi ses troupeaux en transhumance. Dès que la période de retraite de quarante jours pendant laquelle la nouvelle accouchée ne doit pas sortir de chez elle fut terminée, Kadidja tint à rejoindre sa mère pour lui présenter son bébé selon la coutume et se reposer un peu auprès d'elle (pp. 55).

After the family structure, we can talk about the initiation rites and gender-specific roles in the social organization. First of all, boys undergo those rites that prepare them for adult responsibilities, including herding and protecting the community. Amkoullel's own initiation is described, highlighting the transition from boyhood to manhood. We can first of all talk about the girl's initiation. Girls also undergo initiation rites that prepare them for their roles as wives and mothers. These rites include teachings on household management and social responsibilities. For example in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, Amadou Hampâté Bâ provides a vivid portrayal of traditional Peul society, including the initiation rites for boys. These rites are a crucial part of the cultural and social fabric, marking the transition from childhood to adulthood. The initiation rites are deeply rooted in the spiritual and cultural traditions of the Peul people. They are designed to prepare boys for the responsibilities and roles they will assume as men within the community.

In *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* by Amadou Hampâté Bâ, the initiation rites are a central theme that provides deep insights into the cultural practices of the Peul people. First of all, the circumcision ceremony is one of the primary elements of the initiation rites. The sentences “*Quelque temps après, notre attention fut requise par un événement important qui balaya toutes nos autres préoccupations: la circoncision d'Hammadoun*” (pp. 228) and “*Après le baptême (cérémonie d'imposition du nom), la circoncision est la deuxième cérémonie publique de la vie d'un homme, la troisième étant le mariage*” (pp. 229), clearly show the importance of that ceremony.

This is a common practice among many African cultures and is seen as a crucial step in a boy's transition to manhood. The ceremony is conducted by a skilled elder or a designated circumciser. *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* explains the practice of circumcision in the context of Islam and among the converted peul people. In Islam, the circumcision of a young boy takes place on the seventh day after his birth, coinciding with the baptism ceremony. However, the Peul people who have converted to Islam have postponed the operation to seven years old and sometimes even later. In the tradition depicted in the novel, circumcision is performed on the seventh day after a boy's birth, usually alongside the baptism ceremony, marking an important religious and cultural milestone. Among the People who have adopted Islam, the practice has been adjusted. Instead of circumcising boys at seven days old, they perform the circumcision at a much older age, typically around seven years old or even later. This is why the author says in his novel:

En islam, la circoncision du petit garçon a lieu le septième jour après sa naissance, en même temps que la cérémonie du baptême. Les Peuls convertis à l'islam ont reporté l'opération à sept ans, parfois même plus tard (pp. 229).

Also, the novel provides insight into the cultural practices and influences on clothing for children in a specific African context. This is why in the following excerpt from the novel, the speaker describes their routine of hanging up their school clothes (a boubou), eating and then undressing completely before going to play with friends. This highlights a typical child's day:

Je suspendais soigneusement le boubou que j'avais enfilé pour me rendre à l'école, puis m'installais et mangeais de bon appétit. Une fois bien restauré, j'enlevais tous mes vêtements et, complètement nu comme tous mes petits camarades, je courais chercher Daouda Maïga pour aller jouer avec lui à l'extérieur de la ville. C'est l'islam qui exigeait de vêtir les

enfants, non la tradition africaine qui n'exigeait l'habillement qu'après la circoncision (pp. 189).

The novel also explains the practice and cultural significance of circumcision among certain African groups, particularly the Bambaras. The age range for circumcision is typically from seven to fourteen. This period is seen as appropriate for the rite of passage into adulthood. Also, for the Bambaras, the ideal age for circumcision is twenty-one, marking the end of the first life cycle (three cycles of seven years). This age signifies a mature transition into manhood. Moreover, despite the ideal age, circumcision often takes place earlier if the child feels ready and requests it. This is driven by social pressures and personal readiness. The term “bilakoro” (uncircumcised) is used mockingly and is considered a severe insult when directed at an adult. It implies that the person is not yet a man. This social pressure encourages boys to undergo circumcision to avoid being mocked and to be recognized as men in their community. The circumcision is not just a physical act but a deeply cultural and social one, marking the transition from childhood to adulthood and affirming one's status as a man in the society:

Généralement, les enfants à circoncire sont âgés de sept à quatorze ans. Pour les Bambaras, l'âge idéal est de vingt et un ans, c'est-à-dire à la fin du premier cycle de trois fois sept ans. Mais en fait elle a souvent lieu beaucoup plus tôt, en particulier quand l'enfant se sent prêt et en fait lui-même la demande, ne voulant plus être traité moqueusement par les autres de bilakoro (incirconcis), terme qui constitue la plus grave des injures quand on l'adresse à un adulte, lui signifiant par là qu'il n'est pas un homme (pp. 229).

During the seclusion period, the boys receive extensive education and training. Elders and mentors teach them about their cultural heritage, traditions and responsibilities. This includes learning about the history of their people, moral and ethical conduct and practical skills necessary for adult life. The novel describes how the Peul tradition, particularly religious and initiatory practices, has been preserved among the Peul pastoralists living in remote areas, away from towns and villages. In these remote areas, the Peul pastoralists maintain their traditional practices, including religious rituals and initiation rites. The continuation of these traditions among the pastoralists living away from urban influences suggests that during initiation, boys likely receive extensive education and training from elders and mentors. This training would encompass learning about their cultural heritage, traditions and responsibilities, as these remote communities strive to preserve their way of life through generations. We can understand this as excerpts: *Quant à la pure tradition peule, notamment religieuse et*

initiatique, elle s'est perpétuée chez les seuls Peuls pasteurs de "haute brousse," c'est-à-dire vivant loin des villes et des villages (pp. 20).

The novel also explains the role of Pâté Pouлло, a leader among the Peul pastoralists of the Dienguel region in Senegal. Pâté Pouлло held the title of silatigui, which indicates he was a master in pastoral initiation. This role involves leading and overseeing the initiation rites for young boys, guiding them through their transition into adulthood. As a master in pastoral initiation, Pâté Pouлло was responsible for imparting essential knowledge and skills related to pastoral life. This includes teaching about livestock management, cultural practices and the social responsibilities of being a member of the Peul community. The title also implies a religious role, similar to a priest. Pâté Pouлло would have led religious ceremonies, rituals and maintained the spiritual well-being of his tribe. In his capacity as the spiritual leader, he provided guidance and support to his tribe, helping to preserve and transmit cultural and spiritual traditions. Then, as the spiritual leader and master of initiation, Pâté Pouлло held significant influence and authority within his tribe. His leadership helped ensure the continuity of Peul traditions and the cohesive functioning of the community. We can understand this excerpt from the novel: *Peul pasteur de haute brousse de la région du Dienguel (Sénégal), Pâté Pouлло était un silatigui, c'est-à-dire un grand maître en initiation pastorale, sorte de prêtre du culte et, à ce titre, chef spirituel de toute sa tribu (pp. 21).*

Even women are also implicated in the initiation. The assertion. The passage highlights key elements of female initiation among the Peul people, focusing on the speaker's role and values. The speaker defines bravery as combat with traditional weapons like lances or sabers, emphasizing direct confrontation. The speaker will only accept a man who has never used a gun, valuing traditional forms of bravery over modern weapons. This preference underscores a rejection of firearms, which may be seen as less honorable or more destructive in their culture. This title likely signifies a high status within the initiation rites, possibly related to nurturing, purity and traditional female roles. The statement "le lait et la poudre ne vont pas ensemble" (milk and gunpowder do not go together) and "La poudre salirait mon lait" (gunpowder would dirty my milk) uses milk as a symbol of purity and nurturing. Gunpowder, representing violence and destruction, is seen as incompatible with these values. The female initiation among the Peul. The speaker's role as "Reine de lait" highlights the importance of these qualities and her rejection of firearms underscores a commitment to traditional forms of bravery and honor.

La bravoure, c'est le combat à la lance ou au sabre, les yeux dans les yeux, poitrine contre poitrine! Je n'accepterai pour époux qu'un homme qui ne s'est jamais servi d'un fusil. D'ailleurs dans l'initiation féminine peule, je suis «Reine de lait», et le lait et la poudre ne vont pas ensemble. La poudre salirait mon lait... » (pp. 33).

Also, *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* provides insight into the role of the ritualist within the context of the Komo society, an ancient Bambara religious group. The Komo, in the novel, is an ancient Bambara religious society reserved for adults. Its deity, represented by a sacred mask, is also called Komo. This society likely engages in various rituals and ceremonies to honor and communicate with their deity. The "maître du couteau" in the novel (master of the knife) serves as the sacrificer and often the master initiator within the Komo society. This title suggests several key responsibilities. The ritualist performs sacrificial ceremonies, which are essential for appeasing the deity and maintaining the spiritual balance within the community. These sacrifices might involve animals or symbolic offerings. As the master initiator, the ritualist guides new members through the initiation process. This involves imparting sacred knowledge, conducting rites of passage and ensuring that initiates adhere to the society's spiritual and ethical standards. The ritualist holds significant spiritual authority, acting as a mediator between the deity and the community. They are responsible for maintaining the sacred traditions and rituals that uphold the society's religious beliefs. We can understand this excerpt from the novel:

Comme je l'apprendrai plus tard, le Komo est une ancienne société religieuse bambara réservée aux adultes et dont le dieu, représenté par un masque sacré, est également appelé Komo. Quant au "maître du couteau," c'est le sacrificateur, et souvent le maître initiateur, de cette société (pp. 139).

We also have the initiation of children into the Bambara society called Tiebleni. The elders impart important moral and ethical teachings to the initiates. These lessons cover aspects of respect, honor, courage and the social values that are expected of a Peul man. The boys learn about the community's expectations and the importance of upholding these values. First, the initiation, under the supervision of elders, occurs during childhood, as indicated by the reference to the speaker being affiliated with the society along with their playmates. It is explained through the novel that Tiebleni is a Bambara initiation society specifically for children. The purposes of the initiation are particular: in terms of cultural education, it introduces children to the cultural traditions, stories and customs of the Bambara people. In terms of moral and ethical training they help in teaching children the moral and ethical values

important to their community. Also, it gradually prepares children for the more complex roles and responsibilities they will assume as adults within the society.

The infantile initiation into the Tiebleni society is an important early step in a child's development, providing cultural education, moral training and social integration within the Bambara community. This process helps ensure that children grow up with a strong understanding of their heritage and their place within the society. *Amkoullél, l'Enfant Peul* explains it well. *C'est à cette époque, je crois, que j'ai été affilié à la société bambara d'initiation enfantine Tiebleni ainsi que mes petits compagnons de jeu* (pp. 156).

Moreover, the Peul society has a hierarchical structure, with nobility, commoners and sometimes slaves. These social classes influence relationships, marriage and social mobility. The Peul society is traditionally organized into a hierarchical structure, consisting of different social classes that significantly influence various aspects of life, including relationships, marriage and social mobility. The nobility, often referred to as the "toorobe" or "sebbe," are at the top of the social hierarchy. They are usually landowners, religious leaders, or chiefs and hold significant power and influence within and that category of people often refuse to mingle with the lower class (slave). Here is what the novel explains:

Douze ethnies vivaient alors à Djenné en bonne intelligence dans les douze quartiers de la ville : les ethnies bozo, bobo, nono, songhai, peule, dîmadjo (caste des captifs peuls), bambara, malinké, maure, arabe, mianka, et samo, ces deux dernières races y étant les plus rares. La ville était administrée par un triumvirat bozo-songhai peul, secondé par deux collèges : un collège d'anciens et un collège de marabouts. La police était assurée par la classe des captifs, celle des artisans étant plus spécialisée dans la surveillance des mœurs. Les métiers traditionnels artisanaux (forgerons, tisserands, cordonniers, etc.) étaient organisés en corporations appelées tende (ateliers) et dirigés par un comité que présidait un doyen d'âge (pp. 299-300).

Also, each artisanal function in each village was related to a specific initiatic path. To preserve secret knowledge in a given lineage and not to mix dark forces from different places, they used to constitute closed hereditary groups in which we had: artists, griots and slaves. These were established sexual immoralities between those groups so that slaves cannot have children with people of the noble class (pp. 124). Moreover, even Peuls used to designate people by their jobs because their vocabulary was not as rich as French. Thus, let us consider this conversation:

— *C'est un grand marabout de l'école où l'on apprend à écrire de gauche à droite, et non de droite à gauche comme dans les écoles coraniques. Il est né loin à l'ouest, au pays où le soleil se couche dans le grand fleuve salé.*

— *Dis au marabout de l'école que je suis très heureux qu'il écrive de gauche à droite et non dans l'autre sens comme les musulmans !*"

M. M'Bodje rend la politesse au chef. Celui-ci reprend :

"Demande au marabout de l'école comment va le grand commandant moustachu.

— Il va bien et je vous remercie pour lui, me fait répondre M. M'Bodje.

— Et le petit commandant imberbe? ... "

Même réponse.

"Et le garde-l'argent ventripotent (le trésorier) ? ... "

Chaque fois M. M'Bodje, dont je sens monter l'énervement, répond la même chose.

"Et Mamadou Sall le répond-bouche (Papa Sall l'interprète) ? ... "

Et le porte-plume (le secrétaire) ? ... Le garde-porte (le planton) ? ... Le guérisseur (le médecin) ? ... Le maître du fil à nouvelles (le postier)?

Les grimpe-poteaux (les monteurs des P.T.T. et surveillants des lignes) ? ... Sans oublier le cuit-repas... Le sert-repas... le lave-linge et le fait-le-lit... Le lave-marmite, le donne-du-vent (le panku) et le ramasse-crottin (le palefrenier) ? ... " (pp. 328).

We notice that people are called, not by the exact name of their social status, but instead by the activity they execute all the time. This is why in that conversation, the treasurer is called "garde-l'argent", the interpreter is the "répond-bouche", the secretary is "porte-plume", the guardian is "garde-porte"...

Even, in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, each job corresponded to a specific class in a society. Each category of people was not allowed to practice a job that did not correspond to the category he was. This was to respect the hierarchy of the society. This is what the novel explains in the following paragraph:

Dans les pays ouest-africains situés au sud du Sahara (ce que l'on appelait jadis le Bafour) les nobles toucouleurs et peuls n'avaient pas le droit de pratiquer les travaux manuels propres aux castes artisanales (forgeronnerie, tissage, cordonnerie, travail du bois, etc.) mais il leur

était permis de broder et de vendre leur travail. Tierno Bokar lui-même était un remarquable brodeur. Plus tard j'apprendrai moi aussi cet art et il m'arrivera de broder à la main de magnifiques boubous qui, aujourd'hui, seraient hors de prix ! (pp. 124).

This is also why in the society depicted in the same novel, there were hereditary corporations of jobs. They were in charge of categorizing each member of the society and attribute him the most suitable job for him. This is why it is written in the notes at the end of the novel:

Castes: corporations héréditaires de métiers, qui ont toujours joué un rôle social, voire religieux, très important dans la société traditionnelle de la savane. On distingue d'un côté les artisans (forgerons, tisserands, cordonniers, etc.) et de l'autre les "animateurs publics" (dièli en bambara, appelés griots en français ; voir note 12). Les membres des "castes" (mot inapproprié en raison du sens qu'on lui donne en Occident) s'appellent nyamakala en bambara, c'est-à-dire "antidotes du nyama," force occulte incluse en toute chose. Considérés comme détenteurs de pouvoirs occultes, ils étaient jadis beaucoup plus redoutés et ménagés que méprisés. Ils ne peuvent en aucun cas être réduits en captivité, et les nobles leur doivent cadeaux, ménagements et subsistance (pp. 431).

On the other hand, *Things Fall Apart*, folklore is represented through various elements. First, in *Things Fall Apart*, we have an element of folklore, stories which are included in oral tradition. As an example of a story, we can talk about the story of Chielo (chapter 11). Chielo was the priestess of Agbala, the oracle of the hills and the caves. In ordinary life Chielo was a widow with two children. She was very friendly with everybody. In the novel she called Ezinma "my daughter". Quite often she bought beancakes and gave them to her. Anyone seeing Chielo in ordinary life would hardly believe she was the same person who prophesied when the spirit of Agbala was upon her. She represents, in the novel, the ancient customs of the Igbo. This is in contrast to the Christian beliefs of the missionaries. She is well respected and is close friends with Ekwefi. This is why the novel says:

The woman with whom she talked was called Chielo. She was the priestess of Agbala, the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves. In ordinary life Chielo was a widow with two children. She was very friendly with Ekwefi and they shared a common shed in the market. She was particularly fond of Ekwefi's only daughter, Ezinma, whom she called "my daughter." Quite often she bought beancakes and gave Ekwefi some to take home to Ezinma. Anyone seeing Chielo in ordinary life would hardly believe she was the same person who prophesied when the spirit of Agbala was upon her (pp. 49).

We have another one which is the locust myth. This one is mentioned first in chapter seven of *Things Fall Apart*. According to the myth "*locusts came once in a generation, reappeared every year for seven years and then disappeared for another lifetime. They went back to their caves in a distant land, where they were guarded by a race of stunted men*" (pp. 54). Although locusts should be normally seen as a threat to the environment, Umuofians receive them with joy and celebrations: this is why the song 'Locusts are Descending' was joyfully chanted everywhere and men, women and children left their work or their play and ran into the open to see the unfamiliar sight (pp. 55). We know later that Umuofians use locusts as an appetizing meal, which explains their inopportune joyfulness. However, the locust myth seems to have much more significance than just that. Consider how Achebe describes the coming of locusts: *At first, a fairly small swarm came. They were the harbingers sent to survey the land. And then appeared on the horizon a slowly-moving mass like a boundless sheet of black cloud drifting towards Umuofia* (pp. 56).

As another story, we have the story about the mosquito and the ear (chapter 9). This myth is about love between mosquito and ear. When Okonkwo was a child, his mother tells the story. It is mentioned in chapter nine of the book. Mosquito wishes to marry Ear but she declines the proposal, insulting his fragile body and short life. Mosquito decides to avenge ear. Mosquito, she had said, had asked Ear to marry him, whereupon Ear fell on the floor in uncontrollable laughter. 'How much more do you think you will live?' She asked, 'You are already a skeleton.' Mosquito went away humiliated and anytime he passed her way he told Ear that he was still alive. When Okonkwo murders Ikemefuna that time he wants to sleep and a mosquito goes near his ear and remembers he is still alive. Okonkwo states "stories are as silly as women stories" (pp.75). Okonkwo never liked the story and for him it is "as silly as all women's stories" (pp. 75).

Roopa Roshan Sahoo and Navaneeta Rath in the abstract of "Interrelations of Myths and Motifs: A Socio-Cultural Viewpoint", explain to us that myths and motifs, according to them, constitute the expressive and symbolic representation of the culture of a society. According to them, folklore is frequent in creative productions and is related to religion, philosophy and society's environment and social forces. Their study ends with the concluding lines that myths and motifs are cultural and social resources that have numerous values. We can clearly understand them when they say:

Motifs and myths are integral parts of the culture of a society. They can be better understood as cultural resources (Brokerhof, 2006; Waller, 2003). While myths represent forms of traditional wisdom, motifs are generated through art, craft techniques and meticulous workmanship. Motifs represent local identities (Chudhavipata, 2012; Nakhasathien et al., 2013) and have a myth associated with them. Myths symbolize the worldview upheld and projected by a culture. Myths express the popular conceptions and assumptions about the elements of nature and the universe and the limits and workings of the natural and spiritual world. Myths are sedimented in popular ideas and knowledge and sustained through the perception and practice of the people of a community (pp. 147).

Additionally, in the same novel, the story of the oracle of the hills and caves (chapter 3) exemplifies the authority held by spiritual beliefs, shaping the community's understanding of the supernatural and their place within the cosmic order. This figure represents the spiritual element of the African clans and the divine hierarchy that maintains their moral and social structures. Through this story, Achebe showcases how traditional stories wield influence and power over individuals, reinforcing cultural values and defining societal structures.

Another example from *Things Fall Apart* that exemplifies the power of folklore is the story of the *Egwugwu*, the masked spirits who represent the ancestors and wield significant influence in the community (chapter 10). The *Egwugwu* embody the traditions and customs of the Igbo people, acting as judges in disputes and upholding justice based on ancestral wisdom. Their presence instills both fear and respect among the villagers, showcasing how deeply ingrained beliefs in spiritual entities shape behaviors and decisions within the society. The reverence and authority attributed to the *Egwugwu* highlight the enduring power of folklore in governing social norms and preserving cultural heritage. The relationship between myth and culture is deeply intertwined, shaping the beliefs, values and identity of societies throughout history. This paragraph explains the importance of the *egwugwu* in the novel. Talking about this story of the story of the mosquito and the ear, Obiechina explains that:

An etiological myth, this story answers Okonkwo's question, "Why do they [mosquitoes] always go for one's ears?" But the myth is important for many reasons. First, the story reveals that Okonkwo has had the same exposure to the humanizing mother's story sessions as any other normal child. But if his father let him down, the context of this myth shows that his mother didn't (Narrative Proverbs 132).

We have another story, which is the one about the Earth and Sky. In fact, the story tells Nwoye's mother to convey that the clan's life depends upon earth and sky. Sky is not ready to

rain because of a dispute between earth and him. As a result, the earth becomes dry, plants die, and even dead people are not buried because of the toughness. The vulture goes and requests forgiveness. Earth forgives and is therefore ready to give rain wrapped in tree leaves. Sky was withholding rain, so Earth sent Vulture to soften Sky's heart and plead for rain, because Man was suffering. The Sky withheld rain for seven years until Vulture begged the Sky for rain and to pity the dying Earth. The Sky gave Vulture rain wrapped in coco-yam leaves, but Vulture's talon pierced the leaves and the rain fell heavily. Vulture flew to a distant land with fire and warmed himself while eating a man making a sacrifice Sky pitied Man and gave in, sending Vulture away with rain. Vulture dropped rain down upon the land and Man was happy (pp. 53). The moral of this folktale is to pity and have mercy on people. Nwoye loves this story because Okonkwo would expect his son to be overly masculine and would always yell at him for not becoming the man that he wanted him to be. Hearing about kindness through stories, while spending time with his mother, helped Nwoye cope with dealing with his strict father.

The story about the snake lizard is also an important one. This story, found in Achebe's novel, is about a snake lizard who gave his mother seven baskets of vegetables to cook and in the end there were only three. He killed his mother and tried to cook another seven baskets of vegetables. He ended up with three too and killed himself as well (pp. 83). The moral of this folktale is not to act before knowing the circumstances of a situation. Ezinma and Ekwefi told this story together when Ezinma comments how there was too much green vegetable when there was actually a good amount because they had to feed the medicine man and the leaves become smaller after cooking them. The snake-lizard is a lighthearted tale about ignorance and cooking vegetables and the significance of a story as a learning tool lies in the fact that it is imprinted onto a child's mind for a long time. So, as soon as Ekwefi hints at the story, Ezinma remembers:

Ekwefi asked, "And you know how leaves become smaller after cooking."

"Yes," said Ezinma, "that was why the snake-lizard killed his mother."

"Very true," said Ekwefi.

"He gave his mother seven baskets of vegetables to cook and in the end there were only three. And so he killed her," said Ezinma.

"That is not the end of the story."

"Oho." said Ezinma. "I remember now. He

brought another seven baskets and cooked

them himself. And there were again only

three. So he killed himself too." (pp. 84; ch.9)

In *Things Fall Apart*, we can also talk about the unforgettable story of the tortoise and birds. This one is about a tortoise that has a sweet tongue. One day, birds received an invitation for a feast in the sky. So the tortoise requests them to lend feathers so that he can fly with them in the sky. Birds make him their spokesman. Tortoise tells as a spokesman he eats first according to custom. He eats all the food so the birds are frustrated and demand their feathers back. Parrot, one of the birds, decides to give a message to his wife. The message is that all hard objects are kept before the door. Tortoise comes and can see the height and break his shell. Medicine man cannot repair his shell. In the novel Ekewfi told this story to her daughter Ezinma (pp. 96-99). This being said, as other elements of folklore, we have rituals. In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe masterfully employs rites and folklore to elucidate the origins of social norms and instructions within the Igbo society.

Another example from *Things Fall Apart* that exemplifies the power of folklore is the story of the *Egwugwu*, the masked spirits who represent the ancestors and wield significant influence in the community (chapter 10). The *Egwugwu* embody the traditions and customs of the Igbo people, acting as judges in disputes and upholding justice based on ancestral wisdom. Their presence instills both fear and respect among the villagers, showcasing how deeply ingrained beliefs in spiritual entities shape behaviors and decisions within the society. The reverence and authority attributed to the *Egwugwu* highlight the enduring power of folklore in governing social norms and preserving cultural heritage. The relationship between myth and culture is deeply intertwined, shaping the beliefs, values and identity of societies throughout history. In the novel, women and children sent up a great shout and took to their heels in front of the *Egwugwu*. It was instinctive. A woman fled as soon as an *egwugwu* came in sight. And when, as on that day, nine of the greatest masked spirits in the clan came out together it was a terrifying spectacle (pp. 87). One notable example is the annual feast of the new yam, a significant ritual that marks the beginning of a new agricultural season. This ceremony not only celebrates the harvest but also reinforces the importance of communal unity, gratitude towards

the earth and respect for tradition. Through the performance of such rites, the community reaffirms its connection to the land, ancestors and shared cultural practices (pp. 26).

Harold Scheub, author of the article “A Review of African Oral Traditions and Literature”, explains that Achebe includes traditional songs in his novel that are scattered throughout and give the novel a much more traditional African feel. According to him, Achebe uses both translated and untranslated songs in the novel which is quite interesting considering that the entire novel was written originally in English. The first song is a children’s song, at the end of chapter 5: “The rain is falling, the sun is shining, Alone Nnadi is cooking and eating” (Achebe 37). The song combines cultural themes and traditions with imagery that helps the reader picture the story. The context of the song is “Gradually the rains became lighter and less frequent and earth and sky once again became separate. The rain fell in thin, slanting showers through sunshine and quiet breeze” (pp. 1-72).

Also, there are other songs which are sung by people in the village when there is an upcoming wrestling match. The song for wrestling is written thus in English:

Who will wrestle for our village?

Okafo will wrestle for our village.

Has he thrown a hundred men?

He has thrown four hundred men.

Has he thrown a hundred Cats?

He has thrown four hundred Cats

They sent him the word to fight for us. (pp. 51)

More in Achebe’s novel, we have as other elements of folklore, customs and ceremonies. In fact, in African societies, they serve as intricate guides that explain social instructions by delineating the expected behaviors, roles and interactions within the community. These customs are deeply rooted in tradition, reflecting the shared values, beliefs and norms that shape social dynamics. By adhering to customs, individuals learn how to navigate various aspects of life, from greetings to ceremonies, in a manner that upholds cultural identity and fosters unity. Through the observance of customs, African societies transmit social instructions that govern conduct, relationships and responsibilities, ensuring continuity of cultural practices and preservation of collective identity.

In *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, various customs and traditions shape the societal norms and cultural fabric of the Igbo community depicted in the novel. Here are some of the different customs highlighted in *Things Fall Apart*: we have first of all the kola nut ritual: the sharing of kola nuts is a customary tradition that symbolizes hospitality, friendship and mutual respect among the Igbo people. It serves as a gesture of welcome and goodwill when hosting guests or engaging in important discussions. Secondly, the masquerade ceremonies: masquerades are integral to Igbo cultural practices, representing ancestral spirits and deities. These ceremonies involve elaborate costumes, dances and performances that connect the living with the spiritual realm and honor the community's heritage. Also, marriage customs: marriage rituals in *Things Fall Apart* involve intricate processes that include negotiations, bride price payments and ceremonies symbolizing the union of families. Another essential custom is the role of the oracle, a revered spiritual figure who acts as a mediator between the people and the divine realm. The oracle's pronouncements guide decision-making, resolve disputes and offer insights into the community's future.

Nevertheless, social organization represents a crucial element in explaining social norms. In the social organization of the society depicted in the novel, we can talk about the family structure. The novel details the extended family system, where multiple generations live together and kinship ties are crucial for social organization and support. For example, three young men helped Obierika to slaughter the two goats with which the soup was made. They were very fat goats, but the fattest of all was tethered to a peg near the wall of the compound. It was as big as a small cow (pp. 105)

In *Things Fall Apart*, we also have a reference where woman are presented as the ones who prepare the food:

Ekwefi still had some cassava left on her farm from the previous year. Neither of the other wives had. It was not that they had been lazy, but that they had many children to feed.

It was therefore understood that Ekwefi would provide cassava for the feast. Nwoye's mother and Ojiugo would provide the other things like smoked fish, palm-oil and pepper for the soup. Okonkwo would take care of meat and yams.

Ekwefi rose early on the following morning and went to her farm with her daughter, Ezinma and Ojiugo's daughter, Obiageli, to harvest cassava tubers. Each of them carried a long cane basket, a machete for cutting

down the soft cassava stem and a little hoe for digging out the tuber (pp. 151).

Also to show that women were good at handling food during ceremonies, Chinua Achebe uses this:

Yam pottage was served first because it was lighter than foo-foo and because yam always came first. Then the foo-foo was served. Some kinsmen ate it with egusi soup and others with bitter-leaf soup. The meat was then shared so that every member of the umunna had a portion. Every man rose in order of years and took a share (pp. 153).

We equally have an excerpt where women are effectively practicing cooking for a ceremony:

Obierika's compound was as busy as an anthill. Temporary cooking tripods were erected on every available space by bringing together three blocks of sun-dried earth and making a fire in their midst. Cooking pots went up and down the tripods and foo-foo was pounded in a hundred wooden mortars. Some of the women cooked the yams and the cassava and others prepared vegetable soup. Young men pounded the foo-foo or split firewood. The children made endless trips to the stream (pp. 105).

By reading this excerpt, we clearly understand that the ones who are bringing food on the table from the kitchen were women. They were doing it, respecting the arrival order of each food. Also, to show that women's role was to take care of children, Achebe explains to us in his novel that the place of the mother is highly important. He says:

Then listen to me," he said and cleared his throat. "It's true that a child belongs to its father. But when a father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in its mother's hut. A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you. She is buried there. And that is why we say that mother is supreme (pp. 124).

Also, in the novel it is explained that Okonkwo did not taste any food for two days after the death of Ikemefuna. He drank palm wine from morning till night and his eyes were red and fierce because of a lack of sleep. He was hungry, so he called his son, Nwoye, to sit with him in his obi. But his daughter, Ezinma, instead of sitting with them, was anxious about that situation and she decided to cook something, because that is her duty:

He did not sleep at night. He tried not to think about Ikemefuna, but the more he tried the more he thought about him. Once he got up from bed

and walked about his compound. But he was so weak that his legs could hardly carry him. He felt like a drunken giant walking with the limbs of a mosquito. Now and then a cold shiver descended on his head and spread down his body.

On the third day he asked his second wife, Ekwefi, to roast plantains for him. She prepared it the way he liked —with slices of oil-bean and fish.

"You have not eaten for two days," said his daughter Ezinma when she brought the food for him (pp. 61).

Apart from household management and taking care of children, women depicted in the novels under study also played a crucial role in cultural education and socialization. For example, women play a crucial role in educating children about cultural norms and values. They tell stories, sing songs and teach children about their heritage. Amkoullel recalls the stories and lessons he learned from his mother and other female relatives. In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe deftly utilizes social organizations to elucidate the origins of social instructions within Igbo society. One prominent example is the role of the *egwugwu*, masked ancestral spirits, who embody the community's traditions and justice system. The *egwugwu* serve as both spiritual figures and judicial authorities, enforcing laws, resolving conflicts and maintaining order based on ancestral wisdom.

Another significant aspect of social organization is the role of the titled men, such as the *egwugwu*, who hold positions of authority and influence within the community. Throughout the book, titles are reference points by which members of Igbo society frequently compare themselves with one another (especially Okonkwo). These titles are not conferred by higher authorities, but they are acquired by the individual who can afford to pay for them. This is why the novel says:

When Unoma died he had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt. Any wonder then that his son Okonkwo was ashamed of him? (...) To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars (pp. 12).

This means, these individuals were recognized for their achievements and contributions. The titled men, comprising respected elders who have achieved various titles through personal accomplishments, wisdom and contributions to the community, form a council of advisors and leaders who guide and uphold the traditional values, customs and laws of the society. These titled men wield power and influence in matters of dispute resolution,

communal affairs and spiritual matters, serving as custodians of cultural norms, arbitrators of conflicts and preservers of the community's heritage. Their wisdom, experience and status command respect and obedience from the rest of the community members. The titled men's social organization is hierarchical, with different levels of titles denoting varying degrees of authority, prestige and responsibilities. Each titled man carries the weight of tradition, history and communal expectations, symbolizing the continuity of ancestral wisdom and the collective memory of the society.

Harold Scheub, author of the article *A Review of African Oral Traditions and Literature* (1985), explains that Achebe uses many folk tales in his novel to illustrate the culture of the characters in the novel. There is one principal instance where folk tales are used to give depth to certain characters' inner workings and psyche. The chapter seven shows us that not only parents were concerned in telling stories, because Okonkwo is caught in the position of telling stories to his sons (pp. 72). In *Things Fall Apart*, we have this excerpt that explains the same thing:

Three young men helped Obierika to slaughter the two goats with which the soup was made. They were very fat goats, but the fattest of all was tethered to a peg near the wall of the compound. It was as big as a small cow (pp. 105)

Then, in *Things Fall Apart*, we have customs and social organization as elements of folklore. We have a reference where women are presented as the ones who prepare the food:

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The Role of Folklore in Both Texts

The concept of memory in African storytelling is deeply rooted in cultural and historical significance. It serves as a link between the past, present, and future, connecting individuals to their origins and cultivating a sense of belonging. In *Things Fall Apart* and *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, Chinua Achebe and Amadou Hampâté Bâ respectively use various folkloric elements to enrich the cultural tapestry of their respective societies on different levels: at the levels of communication (preservation of the language), cultural identity, spirituality, entertainment, social cohesion, cultural values, education and intellectual capacities. The novels under study feature oral tradition, including stories, proverbs and folktales, each playing a crucial role on those specific domains of the cultures depicted in the novels.

Storytelling, according to "African Storytelling and Development" written by Osedebamen David Oamen, is considered as a product of human development, that aims at instructing, informing and educating the people towards a better society. In the same article, Osedebamen David Oamen uses this as an argument in a story entitled *The Wise King*. It unveils the storyteller as a talented developer who uses the influence of the stage, environment and language to relay an important message. He goes further by describing the language of the storyteller. In fact, according to him, language is flexible, constructive and communicative. It is also important to mention that cultural identity refers to a sense of belonging and identification with a specific cultural group. We understand that it encompasses various aspects such as linguistic affiliations. It is therefore crucial in shaping an individual's worldview, values, behaviors and that is why it is important for people to know their origins (pp. 185).

In *Narrative Proverbs in the African Novel*, Emmanuel Obiechina, a researcher in African literature, shows that the oral culture does not immediately disappear by the mere fact of its being in contact with writing, nor does the literature of the oral society disappear because

of the introduction of written literature. Rather, characteristics of the oral culture survive and are absorbed, assimilated, extended and even re-organized within a new cultural experience. Also, he shows that vital aspects of the oral literature are absorbed into an emerging written literature of greatly invigorated forms infused with vernacular energy through metaphors, images and symbols, more complex plots and diversified structures of meaning (pp. 123).

First of all, folklore contributes to the preservation of the language, since stories (that were sometimes transmitted through music) are often passed down orally, contributing to the preservation of languages and dialects specific to the cultures depicted in the novels. However, whenever Okonkwo sings, which is only once, it is left untranslated:

Eze elina, elina!

Sala

Eze ilikwa ya

Ikwaba akwa oligholi

Ebe Danda nechi eze

Ebe Uzuzu nete egwu

Sala. (pp. 59).

This traditional song shows how folklore can play a crucial role in preserving languages. In knowing the rest of the novel and its outcome, there is a possible reason why Achebe translates the villagers' songs into English but leaves Okonkwo's song in its original language. Since a majority of the village later became Christian and colonized, their songs could be written in English to show the "shiftiness" of their hearts and their inevitable surrender to English occupation and rule. Okonkwo is never subdued by the English or Christianity, so his mind and heart are unreservedly African. Perhaps that is why Achebe leaves his thoughts untranslated.

Harold Scheub, author of the article "A Review of African Oral Traditions and Literature", explains that Achebe includes traditional songs in his novel that are scattered throughout and give the novel a much more traditional African feel. According to him, Achebe uses both translated and untranslated songs in the novel which is quite interesting considering that the entire novel was written originally in English. The first song is a children's song, at the end of chapter 5: "*The rain is falling, the sun is shining, Alone Nnadi is cooking and eating*" (pp. 37). The song combines cultural themes and traditions with imagery that helps the reader

picture the story. The context of the song is “*gradually the rains became lighter and less frequent and earth and sky once again became separate. The rain fell in thin, slanting showers through sunshine and quiet breeze*” (pp. 35). This passage uses imagery to depict the transition from the heavy rains to a calmer period, symbolizing renewal, balance, and harmony. The description of the rain becoming “lighter and less frequent” suggests a gradual end to a turbulent or overwhelming phase, allowing a sense of peace to return.

The mention of “earth and sky once again became separate” highlights the restoration of natural order, as the intense rains that blurred the boundary between them now subside. The “thin, slanting showers through sunshine and quiet breeze” creates a serene and picturesque scene, reflecting the beauty and gentleness of nature. This imagery not only captures a literal weather shift but also conveys a metaphorical sense of transition—perhaps from chaos to calm, conflict to resolution, or hardship to ease. It emphasizes the cyclical nature of life and the inevitability of change, where periods of intensity are followed by moments of tranquility.

This is why Blessing Chiparausha and Frederick Mavhunduse in “The Role of Folktales in the Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge Among the Shona: a Review Based on Aaron Hodza’s Ngano Dzatambidzanwa”, explain that Shona folktales as shown by the selected cases from Ngano dzamatambidzanwa, are an ideal way of teaching the language to children. The new words are also preserved together with the folktale as it remains in the memory of both the storyteller and the listener (pp. 716).

In “The Impact of Religious Rituals on Cultural Identity: Review of the Relationship Between Religious Practices and Cultural Belonging”, Juan Santiago, revealed that there exists a contextual and methodological gap relating to the impact of religious rituals on cultural identity. Preliminary empirical review demonstrated that religious rituals play a crucial role in the formation, maintenance and negotiation of cultural identity within diverse religious communities and cultural contexts (pp. 13-22).

In “The Importance of Fairy Tales in Communication, Education, and Cultural Preservation”, Ngô Thi Thanh explains that stories have been employed as something that transcends language and cultural boundaries. According to him, people can establish profound and enduring connections with one another through the art of storytelling. Regardless of the country or age group, people of all ages find storytelling fascinating because these stories convey information, history, and cultural customs from one generation to another. Thus, storytelling not only describes how history was made but also imparts essential moral lessons

and cultural standards. Storytelling continues to be an effective technique for influencing our perception of the world in the modern era. He continues by saying that, in general, stories have long been used by folk authors as a means of communication. The oral tradition, dating back to ancient times, has been employed by society to preserve information and cultural practices. In the modern world, storytelling continues to influence the way we perceive the world and prompts us to take action (pp. 2).

Secondly, in *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, communication is the next element impacted by folklore. The importance of oral tradition in communication, resides in the fact that it remains a crucial element of human communication, serving as an important means for transmitting knowledge and safeguarding cultural heritage. One striking example from *Things Fall Apart* is the presence of stories. The wrestling match (chapter 6) between the villages of Umuofia and Mbaino, is a good example. It does not only serve as entertainment but also embodies, on a communicative perspective, the stories of the Igbo culture. The novel starts as follows:

Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honor to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was a great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights (pp. 8).

In this excerpt, Okonkwo's fame and reputation are rooted in a significant event where he defeated Amalinze the Cat, known as a wrestler undefeated for seven years. This accomplishment, celebrated by the elders as one of the most intense fights since their town's founder's mythic battle with a spirit, intertwines historical and legendary narratives, demonstrating the role of folklore in preserving communal identity and values. More importantly, the communicative aspect of folklore is evident here as it not only immortalizes Okonkwo's achievements but also connects his personal story to the cultural narrative.

As another example from the same novel, we have the story of the oracle of the hills and caves, which showcases the belief in spiritual guidance and the interconnectedness between the living and the spiritual realm. In *Things Fall Apart*, the oracle of the hills and caves, also known as *Agbala*, is a divine figure who provides advice from the gods to people who visit

from afar. Unoka and Ezinma, for example, visit *Agbala* to ask about his poor harvests. This is why the novel explains:

The Oracle was called Agbala, and people came from far and near to consult it. They came when misfortune dogged their steps or when they had a dispute with their neighbors. They came to discover what the future held for them or to consult the spirits of their departed fathers. The way into the shrine was a round hole at the side of a hill, just a little bigger than the round opening into a henhouse. Worshippers and those who came to seek knowledge from the god crawled on their belly through the hole and found themselves in a dark, endless space in the presence of Agbala. No one had ever beheld Agbala, except his priestess. But no one who had ever crawled into his awful shrine had come out without the fear of his power. His priestess stood by the sacred fire which she built in the heart of the cave and proclaimed the will of the god. (pp. 19).

This excerpt simply shows that, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Agbala, the oracle of the hills and caves, serves as a central figure embodying the spiritual and judicial authority of the Igbo community. People seek Agbala's counsel in times of misfortune, disputes or to uncover their destinies, reflecting the people's belief in the connection between the physical and spiritual realms. This vividly illustrates the role of folklore in communicating beliefs, as the oracle's rituals and authority preserve cultural traditions and resolve conflicts, as the communicative aspect of folklore lies in its ability to transmit moral lessons and collective wisdom through symbolic practices, ensuring that the values and worldview of the Igbo people endure across generations.

Apart from stories, the elements of oral tradition that also play an important role in human communication in *Things Fall Apart*, are proverbs. They are not only significant folkloric elements in the novel, but also elements of storytelling, functioning as a vehicle for wisdom. Achebe uses proverbs to convey complex ideas and to highlight the importance of oral tradition in Igbo society. For example, the proverb "*When the moon is shining, the cripple becomes hungry for a walk*" (pp. 10), illustrates how opportunities can inspire wisdom. Proverbs are often used by characters to assert authority, impart knowledge and resolve conflicts. Thus, a proverb like: "*A toad does not run in the daytime for nothing*" (pp. 20) which is used by Okonkwo, suggests that actions have reasons behind them.

Thirdly, folklore also plays an important role in cultural identity and cultural values. We have stories in *Things Fall Apart* that taught children how to behave during nights, because in the Igbo culture, the nights were considered dangerous for children. Those kinds of stories helped Igbo people, especially children, to grow up knowing not only that there are things that

must not be done at night but also that there are animals that they must avoid. For instance, Achebe mentions a story about snakes that taught children not to call them by their names at night, because they might hear it and then show themselves. This is what the novel explains:

The night was very quiet. It was always quiet except on moonlight nights. Darkness held a vague terror for these people, even the bravest among them. Children were warned not to whistle at night for fear of evil spirits. Dangerous animals became even more sinister and uncanny in the dark. A snake was never called by its name at night, because it would hear. It was called a string. And so on this particular night as the crier's voice was gradually swallowed up in the distance, silence returned to the world, a vibrant silence made more intense by the universal trill of a million million forest insects (pp. 14).

This simply shows that in *Things Fall Apart*, the description of the quiet night reveals the deep connection between the Igbo people and their natural and spiritual environments. Darkness in that context, symbolizes mystery and fear, with its dangers amplified by cultural taboos and superstitions, such as avoiding whistling or naming a snake at night. These practices reflect the community's belief in unseen forces, where words and actions are imbued with power. The night, alive with the thrill of forest insects, creates a contrast between the natural world's vitality and the people's cautious silence.

Likewise, stories also play a significant role in shaping cultural values. They provide a context for understanding the world, teaching lessons and passing down wisdom from generation to generation. Different cultures use storytelling as a means to strengthen their values and foster a sense of identity among their members. Eugenia Millender in “Using Stories to Bridge Cultural Disparities, One Culture at a Time”, published in the 42d volume of *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, explains that it can be the basis of the nurse’s culturally sensitive approach to gathering patients’ health information and learn about and experience patients’ cultural values and beliefs (pp. 37).

Next, in *Things Fall Apart*, folklore provides knowledge about spirituality and entertainment for the Igbo people. For instance, we can talk about the legend of the earth goddess, who is also called Ani and who is believed to own all land. It is even mentioned in the novel that sacrifice is a common way of worship towards her: "*You will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries.*" (pp. 22). This excerpt is used to convey both a strong spirituality and entertainment in the community depicted in the novel. People in the village believe that if they give up something to her, she

will bestow her blessings or forgiveness upon them. They even have established a holiday to give thanks to Ani: the feast of the new yam. Not only is she the goddess of the land, she is also believed to be responsible for fertility and death, connected by a chain:

The Feast of the New Yam was approaching and Umuofia was in a festival mood. It was an occasion for giving thanks to Ani, the earth goddess and the source of all fertility. Ani played a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity. She was the ultimate judge of morality and conduct. And what was more, she was in close communion with the departed fathers of the clan whose bodies had been committed to the earth. She is also known as the ultimate judge of morality and conduct (pp. 1).

This simply shows that, in *Things Fall Apart*, the feast of the new yam illustrates the intersection of spirituality and entertainment in Igbo culture. The festival is a time of gratitude and reverence for Ani, the earth goddess who governs fertility, morality, and the connection between the living and the departed ancestors. Ani's central role underscores the spiritual dimension of the feast, as it is both a celebration of abundance and a reaffirmation of communal values and moral conduct. At the same time, the festival brings joy and entertainment, marked by feasting, dancing, and elaborate rituals that unite the community.

Next, folklore acts as a way to strengthen connections within families. In *Things Fall Apart* storytelling primarily takes place between elders and young people, more specifically, between parents and children, allowing the sharing of past events and the village history, while fostering relationships between the parents and their children. Some stories were seen as masculine, as they were typically told by men, and often centered on themes of war, blood or death. This is why Achebe notes in his novel:

He told them stories of the land (known as masculine stories because they were related to violence and bloodshed). Nwoye knew that it was right to be masculine and to be violent, but somehow, he still preferred the stories his mother used to tell and which she no doubt still told to her younger children: stories of the tortoise and his wily ways and the one of the bird eneke-nti-oba who challenged the whole world to a wrestling contest and was finally thrown by the cat (pp. 53).

This excerpt shows that storytelling tradition in *Things Fall Apart*, highlights how stories serve as a vital tool for strengthening family connections and transmitting values. Okonkwo's masculine tales, filled with themes of violence and heroism, reflect his desire to instill traditional notions of masculinity in his son, Nwoye. Through storytelling, parents connect with their children, sharing cultural knowledge and moral values while fostering a sense of belonging and continuity. The communal act of listening to and telling stories becomes

a bonding experience that transcends generational divides, ensuring that traditions and familial relationships remain deeply intertwined.

As opposed to men's stories in *Things Fall Apart*, we also have women's stories, which were less violent than those told by men and were only told for didactic purposes. The story of the tortoise which Ekwefi tells to her daughter Ezinma, is considered as a mother's tale. The tale recounts a traditional Igbo folktale about a cunning tortoise who manipulated others to his advantage. This tale illustrates themes of greed, betrayal and the consequences of selfishness, foreshadowing the challenges and conflicts in the story. The story also shows the behavior of certain animals, especially their way to solve problems even in real life. Also, the story explains certain natural phenomena like the reason why the tortoise's shell is not smooth. Through such folktales, Achebe illustrates the didactic function of storytelling in reinforcing communal ethics and educating the younger generation. Nwoye finds comfort and joy in his mother's stories, which emphasize wit, creativity, and moral lessons.

The tales that deal with animals in the novel, as seen in the image of the bird and cat wrestling— are culturally significant. Achebe uses the traditional tales with stupid large animals and small trickster animals, to describe the cultural values of the village and how even the natural world they see around them, is implanted with their own values and traditions. Such is seen with the image of the bird and cat wrestling. Nwoye prefers stories like the Vulture and the Sky which are much more interesting and less violent. This is why the novel explains:

Nwoye knew that it was right to be masculine and to be violent, but somehow he still preferred the stories that his mother used to tell, and which she no doubt still told to her younger children—stories of the tortoise and his wily ways, and of the bird eneke-nti-oba who challenged the whole world to a wrestling contest and was finally thrown by the cat. He remembered the story she often told of the quarrel between Earth and Sky long ago, and how Sky withheld rain for seven years, until crops withered and the dead could not be buried because the hoes broke on the stony Earth. At last Vulture was sent to plead with Sky, and to soften his heart with a song of the suffering of the sons of men. Whenever Nwoye's mother sang this song he felt carried away to the distant scene in the sky where Vulture, Earth's emissary, sang for mercy. At last Sky was moved to pity, and he gave to Vulture rain wrapped in leaves of coco-yam. But as he flew home his long talon pierced the leaves and the rain fell as it had never fallen before. And so heavily did it rain on Vulture that he did not return to deliver his message but flew to a distant land, from where he had espied a fire. And when he got there he found it was a man making a sacrifice. He warmed himself in the fire and ate the entrails (pp. 53-54).

Furthermore, folklore can also play a role in social cohesion, through ceremonies. In the Igbo culture depicted in *Things Fall Apart*, some events are depicted with rich detail, showcasing the community's adherence to tradition. One significant instance in *Things Fall Apart* is the ritual of the week of peace (chapter 4) where the community honors the ancestors. It is a period dedicated to honoring the earth goddess and maintaining harmony within the community. It involves strict adherence to specific rules, such as avoiding violence, disputes and any form of wrongdoing. During this time, people focus on peaceful activities, prayer and reflection to ensure the well-being of the community. This marks a time of unity, respect and reverence for tradition among the villagers.

Okonkwo knew she was not speaking the truth. He walked back to his obi to await Ojiugo's return. And when she returned he beat her very heavily. In his anger he had forgotten that it was the Week of Peace. His first two wives ran out in great alarm pleading with him that it was the sacred week. But Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a goddess (pp. 32).

In Achebe's novel, we also have title ceremonies. One could have at least three titles in the village to be considered as an important man. As another example of rite, we have the *Uri* (chapter 12), a ceremony in which the suitor presents palm-oil to everyone in the bride's immediate family, her relatives and her extended group of kinsmen. During the negotiation process, the families of the prospective bride and groom engage in a negotiation process to discuss the terms of the marriage, including bride price, gifts and other arrangements. Secondly, gift exchange during the ceremony is also an important step. In fact, the groom's family presents various gifts to the bride's family as a symbol of respect and appreciation. These gifts can include kola nuts, palm wine, yams and other items of significance within Igbo culture. Also, we have feasting and celebration in the *Uri* ceremony, which is the next step, where both families come together to share meals, exchange pleasantries and strengthen familial bonds. Certain rituals are performed during the *Uri* ceremony to bless the union and ensure its success. These may involve prayers, libations, blessings from elders and symbolic gestures to invoke ancestral spirits for guidance and protection. Then, we can talk about symbolic gestures and a decisive step. In fact, symbolism plays a crucial role in the *Uri* ceremony, with each gift and action carrying deep cultural significance. Overall, we can understand that the *Uri* ceremony is a meticulously planned event that showcases the cultural richness, social cohesion and ceremonial traditions of the Igbo people as depicted in *Things Fall Apart*.

In *Standpoints on African Orature*, Nol Alembong talks about the call and response structure, which can be considered as an interaction between the storyteller and the audience. He says that it is used as opening formulae of tale narrations and that it is common to have a song as the introductory formula used by the griot to begin the story (pp. 28).

In “Preserving Narrative Heritage: Art of Storytelling in Pakistani Folklore”, Nida Zahra and Shafia Azam are exploring the tradition of storytelling within Pakistani folklore, focusing on its practices and changing patterns. The findings show that the tradition of storytelling played a significant role in constructing and shaping cultural identities in the past. According to them, through folk narratives, people convey historical events, moral lessons, societal norms and collective wisdom (pp. 1446).

On the other hand, in *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul*, folklore also plays important functions especially in stories. In fact, we have in the novel, a large set of stories, but the novel itself influences the cultural values of the readers. Thus, in the first chapter entitled Racine, especially in the section Mon grand Père Paternel Pâte Poulo, we have the proof that the novel is mainly based on stories that have been passed down: “*ici se termine le récit de Niele. La suite est reconstituée d’après les récits transmis dans leur famille par les principaux acteurs et témoins de cette histoire, particulièrement Balewel Diko*” (pp. 41).

First, folklore, in *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul*, plays an important role in preserving the culture through rituals. As explained in the novel, an efficient way for someone to preserve his cultural honor, is to be circumcised because, in Peul tradition, one is not considered as a man, if he is not yet circumcised. Therefore, he cannot have all the advantages that adults have. That ritual gives to that person the title of *Kamalenkoro*, which means an adult (pp. 360). It is important to say that, in Islamic religion, the circumcision takes place the seventh day after a boy’s birth, at the same time of his baptism ceremony. Secondly, in *Amkoullel, l’Enfant Peul*, folklore has a profound impact on cultural values and cultural identity, as it often encapsulates the wisdom and beliefs of a society. In fact, through sayings, which are concise expressions of wisdom, beliefs and societal norms are passed down through generations. An occurrence appears, in chapter one entitled Racine, precisely in the section entitled Mon Grand Père Paternel Pâte Poulo, where it is explained that in old Africa, people used to say: “*Sois à l’écoute, tout parle, tout cherche à nous communiquer une connaissance*”, which shows the extraordinary power of the universe and the nature. Another saying is “*les morceaux de bois pourris du mauvais puits finissent toujours par retomber dans le puits*” (pp. 24) which means

that the consequences of a bad action always return to the one who did it. In *Proverbs and Sayings From the Perspective of Cultural Identity*, Gayane Yeghiazaryan explains that the contrastive analysis of proverbs and sayings demonstrates the subtle but crucial ways in which socio-cultural relations shape cultural identities (pp. 57). Overall, folklore in the novel also plays a crucial role in cultural identity through rituals. Thus, we also have in the novel, the naming ceremonies (baptism). The naming of a child is a significant event in Peul culture, symbolizing identity, lineage and destiny. Naming ceremonies are conducted with rituals, blessings and communal participation, which signify the child's integration into the community and invoking blessings for their future. The naming ceremony is mentioned in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* in the following excerpt:

Mon père et Tierno Kounta, libérés, revinrent ensemble le jour même à Kadidiabougou avec tout leur "fourbi, qui se limitait à bien peu de choses. Le premier acte de mon père fut de fixer une date commune pour la cérémonie d'imposition du nom de mon petit frère et le mariage de Tierno Kounta et Koundi Ali (pp. 148).

This excerpt from *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* by Amadou Hampâté Bâ highlights cultural identity through its depiction of familial and communal rituals. The dual ceremonies—the naming of the narrator's younger brother and the marriage of Tierno Kounta and Koundi Ali—reflect the integration of personal milestones with collective traditions. Naming ceremonies, significant in many African cultures, symbolize the connection between the individual, family, and community, while also invoking ancestral blessings. Similarly, marriage is not just a union of individuals but a social event that reinforces communal ties and cultural continuity. These practices illustrate the values, customs, and sense of belonging that define the cultural identity of the community, demonstrating how individual lives are interwoven with collective heritage.

That ceremony holds deep cultural significance, symbolizing identity, lineage and blessings for the child within the Peul community. The naming ceremony is a sacred ritual where a newborn child receives their name, marking their entry into the social fabric of the community. It's a moment of celebration and reverence, where family, elders and community members gather to bestow a name upon the child that carries ancestral blessings, aspirations and cultural significance. This is why the author explains in his novel:

Les deux cérémonies furent présidées par Moustapha Dembélé, "moniteur de l'enseignement" avec qui mon père, malgré son âge, apprenait à lire et à écrire le français. Tiemokodian, le grand chef bambara de Bougouni, envoya une délégation composée des notables les

plus en vue de son entourage et une masse de cadeaux...” to show the importance of the ceremony (pp. 148).

This excerpt from *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* underscores the cultural significance of ceremonial traditions within the Peul community, symbolizing identity, lineage, and blessings for the child. The presence of Moustapha Dembélé, a respected educator, and the delegation sent by Tiemokodian, the Bambara chief of Bougouni, demonstrates the collective importance of the event. Such ceremonies are not only personal milestones but also community gatherings that reinforce social bonds and honor the lineage of the family. The array of gifts brought by the delegation symbolizes goodwill and blessings for the child, while the involvement of notable figures highlights the child's place within a larger cultural and historical framework.

As another good example of the importance of folklore in cultural identity in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, we can say that it helps to preserve the stories of a community. The author talks about the way colonizers were taught Africans customs when they arrived in Africa. In fact, as the author of the novel explains in the fifth chapter of the novel, in the part entitled *Première Rencontre Avec Wangrin*, the colonizers, after their installation in Peul communities, needed people who mastered beliefs, stories and tales of the village, to help them having an overview of their lifestyle. In exchange, people were given money, according to the importance and the length of their stories and tales. Without storytellings, the colonizers would have never had the possibility to know the customs of the people of the Peul society (pp. 82).

Thirdly, folklore also serves as an educational tool in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*. As it is explained in the novel, there is an extreme precision of the novel in producing even ancient conversations is impressive. After an analysis, we can understand that the oral repetition of the same stories, the same tales over generations, plays an important role in remembering the past of a given community. This is why the novel says:

On reste confondu de l'extrême précision du récit qui reproduit jusqu'à des conversations anciennes. Il est évident que l'auteur fait appel à la fois à des souvenirs personnels et à des renseignements recueillis auprès d'informateurs. Il existe ici un matériel historique parlé d'une extrême richesse, témoignant d'une véritable civilisation de l'oralité capable de conserver des récits souvent anciens et d'une surprenante précision (pp. 7).

Through this excerpt the novel demonstrates an extraordinary level of precision in recounting even ancient conversations, showcasing how oral traditions preserve the past with remarkable accuracy. The detailed nature of these recollections, down to specific dialogues,

reveals that the author relies not only on personal memories but also on information gathered from various informants. This combination of personal and collective recollections indicates that the narrative draws from a deep reservoir of historical knowledge, passed down through generations. The oral repetition of stories, tales, and conversations over generations plays a crucial role in remembering and preserving the history of a community. In oral cultures, stories are often repeated by elders, griots, or storytellers, who act as the custodians of collective memory. Through constant retelling, each generation reinforces its connection to the past, ensuring that important historical events, family lineages, moral teachings, and cultural practices are not lost to time.

It is important to know that oral storytelling encompasses a variety of techniques that captivate audiences and convey narratives effectively. First, we have the engaging introductions used in the stories. Storytellers often begin with attention-grabbing openings to draw listeners into the tales and captivate them. Secondly, we can talk about vivid and detailed descriptions of characters, settings and events that help paint a vivid picture in the listeners' minds. Moreover, the dialogue between the storyteller and the public using distinct voices and tones for different characters enhances the storytelling experience and brings characters to life. Interactive elements encouraging audience participation, such as asking questions or inviting responses, can make storytelling more engaging and immersive. More importantly, we have the pacing that consists in controlling the speed and rhythm of the narrative, keeps listeners engaged and builds suspense when needed. The motional connection used by storytellers to convey emotions through their tones of voice and expression, to evoke empathy and connection with the audience, is also important in the process. Overall, repetition is not to be forgotten when it comes to oral tradition. Repeating key phrases or motifs can emphasize important themes or create a rhythmic quality that enhances the storytelling. Then, as another technique used by storytellers, we have gestures or movements and facial expressions that can enhance the visual aspect of storytelling.

Next, in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, folklore also plays a role in the intellectual capacities of people of the community. It was possible to rebuild a story by using other parts of it, which permitted easy access to the history of the Peul community in which the author lived. As it is explained in the novel, stories were observed from different points of view, from different epochs and different opinions (pp. 57). They had different versions of the same story, but it was easier to have a story about someone's lifetime and transmit it to his/her descendants. It is

explained in the novel that, using storytelling, the servant mother of the main character told him everything about his father after the discussion, what she told him was all he could have about his father (pp. 27).

The servant mother knew his father, she grew up with him until he died. That means, if the stories about that father had not been well transmitted, the protagonist would have never had a good idea of how his father was. This is why in the novel, in the part entitled *A l'Ombre des Grands Arbres*, it is explained that anecdotes' main function was to teach about someone's personality, achievements and accomplishments (pp. 177). In the case of the protagonist, he was taught about his genealogy and the past of his family. We can then understand this quote from Pythagoras who says: "*Know yourself and you will know the Universe and Men*".

During the naming ceremony, the child's name is carefully chosen to reflect familial lineage, spiritual connections and aspirations for the child's future. Names often carry meanings rooted in nature, history, virtues, or ancestral spirits, imbuing the child with a sense of belonging, purpose and protection within the community. The elders play a vital role in the naming ceremony, offering prayers, blessings and guidance for the child's journey through life. They invoke the wisdom of the ancestors, the spirits of the land and the blessings of the divine to safeguard the child, instil virtues and guide them towards a life of honour, integrity and service to the community.

C'est pourquoi, lorsqu'on veut honorer quelqu'un, on le salue en lançant plusieurs fois non pas son nom personnel (ce que l'on appellerait en Europe le prénom) mais le nom de son clan : "Bâ ! Bâ !" ou "Diallo ! Diallo !" ou "Cissé ! Cissé !" car ce n'est pas un individu isolé que l'on salue, mais, à travers lui, toute la lignée de ses ancêtres (pp. 16).

This excerpt shows that in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant peul*, the practice of addressing individuals by their clan name during greetings reveals the deep cultural significance of naming within the Peul community. During the naming ceremony, the chosen name is more than an identifier—it symbolizes the child's connection to their familial lineage, honoring the ancestors and embedding the child within the collective memory of the clan. The repeated invocation of the clan name, such as "Bâ," "Diallo," or "Cissé," during greetings underscores the communal and spiritual dimensions of identity, as it pays homage to the ancestral heritage that defines the individual's place in society. Additionally, the name reflects aspirations for the child's future, aligning them with the values and legacy of their forebears. This careful naming process

reinforces the importance of continuity, unity, and respect for ancestral wisdom within Peul culture, while also expressing hope for the child to uphold and enrich the family's legacy.

Also, the healing rituals often involve a combination of prayer, herbal medicine, sacred chants and ritualistic ceremonies conducted by healers, elders, or spiritual guides within the community. These rituals draw on the wisdom of ancestral knowledge, the guidance of spirits and the healing powers of nature to facilitate the restoration of health and well-being. Central to the healing rituals is the belief in the interconnectedness of the individual with the community, nature and the spiritual realm. Illness is seen not only as a physical ailment but also as a manifestation of spiritual disharmony or imbalance that requires holistic healing approaches to address the root causes and restore equilibrium.

Moreover, funerary rites are also important to mention. The book also describes the rituals associated with death and mourning in the Peul culture. These rites include preparing the body, communal prayers and various ceremonies to honour the deceased and provide comfort to the grieving family. For example, the novel narrates the funeral of Tierno Kounta, describing the rituals and emotions of the community as they honour his passing. The women mourn openly, while the men take charge of preparing the burial site and the body according to Islamic traditions. The protagonist, a young boy observing the solemn events, feels excluded but is eventually allowed to participate, guided by his uncle. The burial involves detailed ceremonial acts, such as the positioning of the body toward Mecca, symbolic gestures with soil, and Quranic recitations. The rituals reflect the communal respect for the deceased and adherence to tradition, ending with the widows beginning their period of mourning. The boy's first encounter with death is marked by both curiosity and sadness, leaving a deep impression on him.

Les assistants s'assirent autour de la tombe et récitèrent onze fois la 112e sourate du Coran intitulée Ikhlass (la purification), que l'on a coutume de réciter pour les morts. Puis tout le monde revint dans la cour. Mon père remercia la foule et rendit à chacun sa liberté, après avoir eu soin de demander que les créanciers ou les débiteurs de la succession de Tierno Kounta se fassent connaître dans la journée ou au plus tard dans les sept jours suivant le décès.

Chacun regagna son domicile. Ainsi se terminèrent les funérailles de mon maître Tierno Kounta Cissé, que Dieu lui fasse miséricorde !

Les deux veuves défirent leur coiffure, se dépouillèrent de leurs bijoux et s'enlaidirent autant qu'elles purent. Durant sept jours, elles restèrent

strictement isolées, après quoi elles recommencèrent à vaquer à leurs affaires, mais en gardant leur tenue de veuve. Au total, leur deuil dura cent trente jours.

La première naissance dont j'avais été le témoin était celle de mon petit frère Mohammed el Ghaali, et le premier mariage celui de Koudi Ali. Le décès de mon maître Tierno Kounta fut ma première rencontre avec la mort (pp 174).

This excerpt shows that in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, funerary rites are portrayed as deeply spiritual and socially significant, reflecting the community's values of respect, continuity, and shared responsibility. The recitation of the 112th surah of the Qur'an, Ikhlass, around the grave underscores the spiritual dimension of the rites, invoking God's mercy for the deceased. This practice ties the living to their faith and honours the departed soul. The public acknowledgement of debts and inheritance obligations highlights the importance of justice and transparency, ensuring that the deceased's affairs are resolved in harmony with community ethics. The mourning practices of the widows, including their physical transformation and period of isolation, signify their grief and societal role in preserving the dignity of the deceased's memory. Their actions symbolize the continuity of familial and marital bonds even after death, while the structured mourning period of 130 days provides a clear framework for moving from intense grief to reintegration into daily life.

It is important to mention that in all the rituals, there is always an instrument of work. That is why in this ritual of the sword, the main instrument is, of course, the sword itself. It has been put on each of the shoulders of Fadiala Keïta and then, we assist in the next step of the ritual. As in any other ritual, apart from the instrument, we have the blessing that is being said during the ritual. In the case of Fadiala Keïta, the blessing was "*Puisses-tu, avec ce sabre, faire une carrière encore plus brillante !*" (pp. 378). In traditional Africa, healing ceremonies often use specific instruments to make the ritual more efficient. This is why saliva in Islam, is thought to carry the spiritual power of words. It often accompanies blessings and healing rites. This is why the novel explains:

La salive en Afrique traditionnelle comme en Islam, est considérée comme chargée de la puissance spirituelle des paroles prononcées. Elles accompagnent donc souvent les gestes de bénédiction ou les rites de guérison (pp. 435).

This excerpt shows that in traditional African and Islamic practices, saliva is imbued with spiritual significance, symbolizing the power of spoken words and the transfer of blessings

or healing energy. This connection highlights the integral role of an instrument of work—whether it is the human body, like saliva, or a physical object—in all rituals. Saliva serves as a medium through which spiritual intentions, invoked through words, are made tangible and effective. By combining spoken blessings or prayers with an action involving saliva, rituals become a holistic process where speech and physical gestures work together to manifest spiritual power. This illustrates how in many traditional practices, rituals are grounded in the interplay between the intangible (words, intentions) and the tangible (instruments of work), emphasizing the harmony between the physical and spiritual realms.

As another instance of ritual in the novels under study, we can mention the one of circumcision, which is mentioned in the chapter entitled *Circoncision de Mon Frère Hammadoun* (pp. 176). In the novel, it is explained that the protagonist, Amkoullél, also includes a discussion of initiation, although less in terms of symbolic representation than by descriptions of the circumcision rituals that formally induct boys of the Sudanic region into manhood (pp. 278). However, the subject of the specific ceremony described here at some length (pp. 85, 77) is not Amadou himself, but rather his older brother, Hammadoun and his age mates. In order to respect the hierarchy of age within the family, Amadou was supposed to be circumcised two years later in the local *brousse* (uncultivated countryside), where most of this ritual takes place.

In the same novel, after baptism (also known as the naming ceremony), circumcision is the second public ceremony in a man's life and the third is marriage. Like a baptism, it entails a number of expenses. With the help of friends and relatives, the family begins to prepare for it long in advance. After the harvest, when the granaries are full and cool winds begin to blow, the elders of the village or the neighbourhood confer on the organization of the ceremony. As the author explains, in general, boys are circumcised between the ages of seven and fourteen years. For the Bambaras, the ideal age for this is twenty-one, that is, at the end of the first cycle of three times seven years. But in fact, it often takes place much earlier, in particular when the child feels ready and asks for it himself when he no longer wishes to be mockingly called *we bilakoro* (uncircumcised), a term that constitutes the gravest of insults when it is addressed to an adult, for it signifies that he is not a man (pp. 177). But, in the fourth chapter, five genealogist griot singers were called for circumcision, which could not take place without them (three men and two women) One of them was the famous griot Lenngui, a woman, one of the only ones who could sing with a voice as lute as it was powerful, in both high and low registers. Aside

from his singing, that of the others seemed monotonous. As she knew the family perfectly, her presence at the opening of the ceremony was accurate. During the ceremony, the audience made a large circle around the griots. Some began to play and sing praises. It was Lenngui who led the session (pp. 231).

As another ceremony, we have the healing ceremony. Spiritual healing practices and rituals are depicted in the novels under study, showcasing the belief in the interconnectedness of physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Healing rituals in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* are deeply rooted in traditional practices, herbal remedies, spiritual beliefs and communal support systems. This is why in the novel, the author, talking about his father, says:

Il exerçait toujours son activité de tailleur-brodeur et réalisait toujours des boubous brodés de toute beauté , mais ce qui attirait surtout les gens autour de lui c'était sa réputation morale et religieuse. Comme à Bougouni, les gens le considéraient un peu comme un marabout et venaient lui demander des conseils, voire des prières. Il avait une spécialité très étrange — innée ou transmise, je ne sais — qui consistait à soigner les fous (pp. 351).

This passage highlights the dual role of craftsmanship and spiritual guidance within the community, emphasizing the interconnectedness of professional skill and moral authority. The individual's expertise as a tailor-embroiderer, creating beautifully embroidered "boubous", reflects both artistic mastery and cultural significance, as such garments often symbolize status and tradition. However, his moral and religious reputation elevates his role beyond that of a craftsman, making him a respected figure akin to a marabout. His ability to provide advice, offer prayers, and even treat mental illnesses demonstrates how traditional knowledge and spirituality coexist with practical skills. The mention of his unique talent for healing the mentally ill, whether innate or learned, further underscores his holistic contribution to the community.

Then, folklore plays an essential role in social cohesion. In fact, in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, rituals are an essential means of social cohesion. This explains why in the novel, those rites mentioned above are transmitted through generations. One of the main rituals found in the novel is the one of circumcision which is frequently mentioned. In the fourth chapter "Retour à Bandiagara", rites hold significant influence over cultural values by serving as ceremonial practices that symbolize and reinforce beliefs, norms and traditions within a society (pp. 188). In *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* by Amadou Hampâté Bâ, the Komo, an important initiatic society

of Bambaras, is reserved to the circumcised adults exclusively. The child, before the circumcision, is a member of a children's society called Tiebkeni (pp. 156).

Nol Alembong explains in *Standpoints on African Orature* that storytelling has a particular impact or functions on so many points. First he talks about the social function while he explains that, as an art form, stories serve to entertain, as entertainment is a core function of literature. The pleasure derived from storytelling events is enhanced by social dynamics of the participants. The bard, known as the griot, might recount the history of a dynasty, the heroic deeds and bravery of a ruler or the steadfast determination of a people. Meanwhile the storyteller might narrate tales that explain the marvels of creation, express human anxieties and desires, or reflect the ups and downs of life. These stories resonate with the audience only when they are told in a manner that fully engages them in the creative experience, leading to aesthetic satisfaction. To achieve this, artists often employ “the histrionics of performance, including facial expressions, hand movements and bodily gestures to vividly enact the actions described in the text” (Okpewho 1992: 46) (pp. 36).

This means that the role of storytelling as an art form, emphasizing that its primary purpose is to entertain, aligns with the fundamental function of literature. The enjoyment people get from storytelling is not just about the content of the stories, but also about how these stories are presented. The storyteller’s ability to captivate the audience depends on their skills in making the narrative engaging and aesthetically pleasing. Alembong continues by explaining that storytellers, whether recounting historical events, heroic deeds or experiences, need to deliver their stories in a way that draws the audience into the experience. This is where the performative aspect of storytelling becomes crucial. People are constantly concerned, as far as it is a social activity. This is why he says:

Whether we are dealing with the dramatic presentations of stories, the tradition involving itinerant storytellers, the bardic tradition or hearthside tradition, therefore, the storytelling event is generally perceived by participants as a communal affair. It helps promote a sense of community and belonging, a spirit of solidarity and the idea of a common origin and destiny. The telling of legends and myth plays a role in the formation of collective identity, whether communal, national or religious.

The historical accuracy of legends is less important than the fact that not only do they link the existence of a group to its past and present, they also instill in its members a sense of collective destiny. The bonding power of

myths is far reaching and a community, nation, or religion without them is inconceivable (pp. 37)

Storytelling, according to this excerpt, in its various forms serves as a vital communal activity that fosters unity and shared identity. Regardless of the method, storytelling is perceived as a collective experience that strengthens bonds among participants, creating a sense of belonging and solidarity. These narratives are not valued for their historical accuracy but for their ability to connect the group's past to its present, offering continuity and purpose. Secondly, Alembong mentions the didactic function of storytelling and explains that storytelling provides people with some explanations of their origins, beliefs and the existence of natural phenomena; transmits the history, traditions and codes of conduct of a particular society from one generation to the next; helps in training the mind and in sharpening critical appreciation and in the teaching acquisition of local languages (pp. 38).

In terms of expression of people's history, Alembong explains that many African storytellers, like Mamadou Kouyate in *Sundiata*, share a common purpose: "I teach kings the history of their ancestors so that the lives of the ancients might serve them as an example, for the world is old, but the future springs from the past". Since epics and legends preserve a people's history and culture, narrators of these tales are regarded as custodians of that knowledge. As such, they are also responsible for passing it on. For instance, the reciter of *Akoma Mba* epic is seen as conveying the history of the Pahounoins, just as the narrator of Chaka does for the Zulu, the declaimer of *Silamaka* for the Peule, the teller of *The Wars of Mekemze* for Beti clans of Cameroon, the reciter of *Mpomo, le Prince de la Grande Riviere* for the Nzime of Cameroon, and the declaimer of *The Ozidi Saga* for the Ijaw people of Nigeria's Niger Delta. Similarly, narrators of legends are viewed as transmitters of knowledge about their people's origins, migrations, wars and family genealogies, since these stories are often "regarded by their creators and users as true" (Tala 1999: 106). Ruth Finnegan even describes them as "historical narratives (1970: 367), supporting the notion that legends are "fragments of history" (Taiwo 1967: 13) and that they "depict heroic exploits and daring adventures" while also explaining the reasons behind some of their social and cultural beliefs (Morgan 1988: 4) (pp. 45).

Sylvie Nashu Doh-Nyagang seems to be alright with Alembong when she used Donna Rosenberg's quote in her Phd dissertation:

Every culture has its own heroic legends, which the society regards as historically accurate. Many are among the greatest stories of the world. Their heroes embody their culture's values and function as role models, depicting the attitudes and behaviors that their society considers to be ideal (1977: xxvii).

In terms of the expression of ethical values, Alembong says that African folktales, like other types of African oral literature, are rich with moral or ethical lessons. For instance, the *Luo* tells a story about a woman who conspired with a hyena to eat her beautiful motherless stepdaughter. This latter was more attractive than the woman's daughter and was loved by both her father and stepmother, who were visiting their aunt. The woman would tie a band on the left arm of the stepdaughter and another on the right arm of her daughter the hyena was instructed to catch and eat the girl with the band on the left arm. During their journey, the woman's daughter suggested swapping the bands, claiming it was unusual to have a band on the left arm. She moved her own to her step-sister's right hand to her own left arm. When the hyena emerged, it captured and ate the woman's daughter inside. Upon discovering what had happened, the villagers banished the woman from the village. The story thus conveys that jealousy ultimately leads to punishment, and in this case, the punishment is twofold: the woman loses her daughter and her access to the village (pp. 47).

The acquisition of the language and the communication skills through storytelling is also mentioned by Alembong. Oral literature fundamentally relies on the spoken word. An oral artist's skill is often assessed based on their command of language and communication abilities. Proficiency in the local language, effective speech techniques and the use of paralinguistic elements are highly valued across African societies. These skills are often developed through storytelling. When parents tell stories to children, they contribute to the process of language teaching. Similarly, by listening to and engaging with the said stories, children participate in language acquisition and the development of oratory skills. This is why Kichamu Akivaga and Bole Odaga said:

Children, in their storytelling, tend to imitate and use techniques. They have learnt from adults who are often experienced storytellers [...].

It provides a form of speech training for children so that as they grow up, they become good storytellers and good public speakers, people capable of using language effectively. It also trains children to have a good memory (1982: 9).

This being said, according to Alembong, in Africa the performance of incantations typically occurs at four primary levels. Within individual or group guilds or associations, among family members, within secret societies and across the community. Individuals or groups of individuals belonging to a guild or some form of association have certain kinds of rituals performed: divination, protection, restitution (confessions, curses, appeal). Secondly, at the level of the family, the rituals performed are the following: birth, marriage, fertility/pregnancy, protection, oath-taking, thanksgiving/supplication, death and succession. Next, at the level of secret societies, we have: initiation, cleansing/purification and oath-taking.

This chapter aimed to explore some specific elements of folklore in each text, to uncover the unique ways both Bâ and Achebe use folklore to enrich their narratives. After our investigation, we identified some folkloric elements which are divided into two groups. On one hand, we have oral tradition (stories, stories, myths, sayings, proverbs...); on the other hand, we have customs and traditions (rituals, social organization, games, songs...). Also, it has been found that folklore plays an important role in the societies depicted in the novels under study. We therefore observed roles: on the preservation of the language, on communication, on cultural identity, on spirituality, on family strengthening, on social cohesion and cultural preservation. After this exploration of folklore in the novels under study, Chapter Four will present folklore as a cultural and an artistic expression, by comparing the two novels under study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOLKLORE AS CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART* AND AMADOU HAMPÂTÉ BÂ'S *AMKOULLEL, L'ENFANT PEUL*

This chapter aims to provide a comparative analysis that will uncover both similarities and differences in the use of folklore in the novels under study. Also, it will delve into the authors' visions, exploring Achebe's intent to preserve Igbo culture and Bâ's dedication to safeguarding Peul traditions. By situating folklore within the artistic and cultural contexts of the novels, this chapter will elucidate the enduring impact of folklore on art, community values and the preservation of cultural heritage in the novels under study. Ultimately, this comparative study will underscore the significance of folklore as a vital component of both artistic expression and cultural identity in the works under study.

Differences and Similarities in Folklore between the Two Novels

Amadou Hampâté Bâ and Chinua Achebe are two influential African writers, who have made significant contributions to African literature. On one hand, we have Chinua Achebe with his powerful work *Things Fall Apart* (1958), in which he depicts the clash of cultures, resulting from the appearance of European missionaries in an Igbo community, at the turn of the 20th century. The novel is set during the early days of colonialism in Nigeria. On the other hand, we have Amadou Hampâté Bâ, who was a Malian writer, historian, ethnologist and an influential figure in twentieth-century African literature and cultural heritage, and who was a champion of Africa's oral tradition and traditional knowledge. He is remembered for his saying: "*Whenever an old man dies, it is as though a library were burning down*" ("*un vieillard qui meurt, c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle*").

First, in their writings, both authors show some similarities. In terms of cultural preservation, they seem to try to preserve and promote their respective cultures through their writings. Also, in terms of oral tradition, they both draw heavily from the oral traditions of their cultures. Bâ, in particular, emphasizes the importance of oral history in his works, while Achebe integrates Igbo proverbs, stories and idioms into his narratives. The historical context too, is an aspect they both share. Their writings provide valuable insights into the historical and

social contexts of their respective times. Bâ's works often reflect the pre-colonial and colonial history of West Africa, while Achebe's novels focus on the colonial and post-colonial experiences in Nigeria.

In “Folklore in Literature: A Tool for Culture Preservation and Entertainment”, Adaobi Olivia Ihueze explains that folklore is first of all considered as a traditional art, literature, knowledge and also, a practice that was disseminated largely through oral communication. She explains that these writers are referred to as active or functional writers, but the formers are referred to as passive. She explains that creative works were critically analyzed to discover the extent of their use of folklore and it was established that a proper understanding of Africa and African literature would be achieved by relating folklore to the cultural context of a literary work (pp. 57-61).

Secondly, we have both in *Amkoullel*, *l'Enfant Peul* and *Things Fall Apart*, similarities in the use of folklore. The use of folklore is characterized in the novels, by the presence of common themes. In *Amkoullel*, *l'Enfant Peul*, Amadou Hampâté Bâ richly explores themes related to culture, to portray the essence of Peul's identity and values. One of the primary themes developed by him is oral tradition which is used as a vessel for cultural continuity. From a young age, Amkoullel, the protagonist, is surrounded by elders who share stories, proverbs and wisdom, passing down knowledge not just for educational purposes, but also for spiritual and moral goals. This is the reason why, it is explained in Bâ's novel, someone in their community builds a story about an entire family from the first generation because stories were transmitted orally through generations through (pp. 57). Likewise, we can qualify those stories as being historical, because in the majority, they were principally based on historical events; they were the subjects of storytelling in the author's village (pp. 63). This is why, almost all the poems that were produced in their community were about people with extraordinary achievements (heroes), who fought for the community in the past (pp. 65).

The use of proverbs as an oral tradition in both novels highlights a key similarity, as each work draws on traditional wisdom to convey cultural values. For example, in *Amkoullel*, *l'Enfant Peul*, the proverb “*ce n'est qu'en l'absence de l'éléphant qu'on peut ramasser ses excréments*” (pp. 146) suggests that it is only in the absence of a powerful figure that others may act without fear—a reminder of the influence and respect that authority commands. Similarly, “*les morceaux de bois pourris du mauvais puits finissent toujours par retomber dans le puits*” (pp. 124) warns that bad actions or people inevitably return to their origins, conveying a moral lesson about the consequences of one's choices.

Another theme that arises through folklore in the novels under study is cultural identity. The protagonist of *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, learns early on that he is part of a larger whole, a community bound by shared stories and values. Folktales and proverbs often reinforce the identity within the Peul culture. For instance, proverbs that highlight the virtues of humility, as “*Au pays où les audiences se donnent à l'ombre des grands arbres, le roi qui coupe les branches tiendra ses assises en plein soleil*” (pp. 178) emphasizes that identity is not only individual but collective; each person's behaviour contributes to the community's honour and harmony. Likewise, proverbs about self-respect such as “*il faut apprendre à mourir de faim à côté d'un mets délicieux sans y toucher*” (pp. 223) give interesting virtues to its readers. Thus, in *Things Fall Apart*, we can also find “*a toad does not run in the daytime for nothing*” (pp. 15) and “*a child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts into its palm*” (pp. 64), which share impactful wisdom lessons. Proverbs are manifestations of African narrative civilization. This optimistic attitude is shared by Achebe who uncovers the splendid past of Nigeria through remembering the pre-colonial Igbo culture. Achebe centralizes the Igbo proverbs in his novel to reveal his power. For instance, Okonkwo's father's speech to Okoye “*Among the Igbo, the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm line with which words are eaten*” (pp. 11) explains that oral tradition, especially proverbs are important parts of their traditions.

The theme of ancestral wisdom is also present in the novels under study. Amkoullel's relationship with his elders, particularly his father and other village leaders, reflects the deep reverence the Peul have for age and experience. Through the guidance and teachings of his elders, Amkoullel learns that wisdom is not simply knowledge but an understanding of life shaped by experience and the stories of those who came before. This is why, in the fourth chapter of the *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, to show their attachment to the spiritual world, the circumcision ceremony in the Peul culture was principally introduced by the invocation of God (pp. 233). Again, a sentence such as “*Au nom du chef je t'ordonne d'être aussi muet que les dunes du désert*” (pp. 243) shows the importance of elders in their community. Furthermore, the author's quote “*en Afrique, un ancien qui meurt, c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle*” (pp. 322) is a good example to show the place of elders in the Peul community. It also explains that the author's religion is purely an initiatic community where children were taught by the elders to get knowledge (pp. 17). In *Things Fall Apart*, the Igbo people exhibit deep respect for elders and spiritual authorities, reflecting a culture grounded in reverence for tradition and the divine. This respect is evident in their close relationship with the oracle known as *Agbala* (pp. 20),

whose guidance influences many aspects of their lives. Additionally, the villagers worship a range of deities associated with specific aspects of their world, including Ani, the earth goddess, and Ifejioku, the god of yams, underscoring the importance they place on agriculture and the land. The presence of female deities such as Ani (pp. 21–22) also highlights the recognition of feminine divine figures, revealing a complex and balanced spiritual worldview that values both male and female representations of power.

Additionally, we have the theme of connection to nature in Peul culture, which is also portrayed through folklore. It highlights the theme of harmony with the environment. Folktales that involve animals or nature often convey ethical lessons, demonstrating the Peul view of the natural world as an extension of the cultural world. This is why proverbs such as “*le lézard dévergondé ne retrouve le chemin de son trou que pour se protéger de celui qui a commencé de lui couper la queue*” (pp. 317) or the story of the tutelary animal (that is the proof of the sacred alliance between the ancestors and the first created animal) (pp. 240) are the proofs that animals are taken seriously in the novel, to create a bridge between nature and humanity.

Another element of similarity in the novels, is the use of imagery. In the novels, we have two types of imagery. The first one is animal imagery, which is basically any type of imagery involving animals. In *Things Fall Apart*, it is most often used to enhance human characteristics or help describe aspects of human life. Achebe uses it to create, through his characters, a connection between human personality, and animal characteristics, particularly when it comes to the protagonist, Okonkwo. Animal imagery is also used to maintain a connection to the natural world. One example of animal imagery in *Things Fall Apart* is when Okonkwo asks Nwakibie for yam seeds. Okonkwo hopes to get yam seeds from Nwakibie, who is a rich man in the village. Okonkwo says, “*The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said that he would praise himself if no one else did.*” (pp. 25). This image connects a lizard's characteristics to Okonkwo's attributes. Not only does it depict Okonkwo's strength and willingness to work, it also shows that Okonkwo understands what he is good at. Okonkwo uses this imagery to illustrate that he has had to fend for himself for a long time and can succeed even without someone, specifically his father, there to help or praise him.

For example, we see the story of a tortoise's shell. In summary, “The Tortoise” tale is told by Ekwefi to Ezinma, her daughter and is about a tortoise whose greed gets the best of him, thus making greed his tragic flaw. One day, when the tortoise hears that the birds are having a feast in the sky he asks them to make him wings so that he can join. With reluctance,

the birds do what they are told. The tortoise then goes to the feast and changes his name to "All of them." The changing of names shows that the tortoise is very manipulative or, in the text described as "cunning." By changing his name, the tortoise convinces the birds that the feast is for himself and that he should get the first pick on the food. Tortoise ends up eating all of the food which makes the birds very angry and they each take back the feathers they had lent him. They then betray the tortoise when he asks them to tell his wife to bring all of the soft things out to soften his fall from the sky. Instead, the birds do the opposite and the tortoise lands on a pile of hard objects and breaks its shell (pp. 91).

The story is full of animal imagery describing how a tortoise tricks birds into giving him wings, but when he steals food from them they take away his wings and he falls. The animals present in the story are: the tortoise (a selfish trickster who borrows birds' wings to attend a party, where he tricks the birds to have the best food and drink). The tortoise's greed causes him to break his shell, and he is pieced back together by a medicine man. Some critics interpret the tortoise as a symbol of the white missionaries who came to the land. Others say the tortoise represents the cunning of the white man). We also have the birds in the story (the birds take back their wings from the tortoise after he tricks them. The birds get revenge on the tortoise by causing his shell to break). Then the parrots are also mentioned in the story (the tortoise persuades the parrot to deliver a message to his wife, but the parrot maliciously tells her to bring out the hardest things).

The second kind of imagery found in Achebe's novel is nature imagery in *Things Fall Apart*. In fact, through weather (storms and droughts), he makes the novel's setting into a character itself. Since the characters see the world as alive in a spiritual way, it makes sense that the narrative uses nature imagery to convey how that world changes. The narrative states:

At last, the rain came. It was sudden and tremendous. For two or three moons the sun had been gathering strength till it seemed to breathe a breath of fire on the earth. All the grass had long been scorched down and the sand felt like live coals to feet (pp. 120).

The above passage employs vivid nature imagery to illustrate the dramatic transformation brought by rain after a period of intense drought. The description of the sun "gathering strength" and "breathing a breath of fire on the earth" personifies the sun as a relentless force, emphasizing the oppressive heat and the desperation of the parched land. The imagery evokes a sense of suffering and exhaustion, as "all the grass had long been scorched down," and the sand became so hot it "felt like live coals to feet." This paints a stark picture of

a land stripped of vitality, heightening the contrast when the rain finally arrives. The suddenness and magnitude of the rain—"sudden and tremendous"—signal not just a physical replenishment of the land but also a moment of relief and renewal for the people and environment. The use of such nature imagery underscores the dependence of the community on the forces of nature, reflecting a deep connection to the rhythms of the earth. It also symbolizes hope and transformation, with the rain breaking the cycle of suffering and promising new growth and life.

Imagery is also used in the novel to give the reader a clearer image of an event that is happening. For the most part, this involves storms or other weather phenomena. We can see a good example of this with the terrible harvest year Okonkwo experienced when he was young. The weather that year was described using intense imagery: "*The blazing sun returned, more fierce than it had ever been known and scorched all the green that had appeared with the rains. The earth burned like hot coals and roasted all the yams that had been sown.*" (pp. 17). In this passage, imagery is used to vividly convey the devastating effects of an intense and relentless heatwave, helping readers visualize the event as if they were experiencing it firsthand. The description of the "blazing sun" returning "more fierce than it had ever been known" personifies the sun, transforming it into an almost malevolent force. The fierce heat is depicted as so extreme that it not only scorches the greenery brought by the rain but also burns the earth until it "burns like hot coals." This imagery allows readers to imagine the overwhelming and destructive power of the sun, intensifying the sense of hopelessness. The mention of the "roasted yams" deepens the sense of loss, as it symbolizes the destruction of the community's food supply and their dependence on nature for sustenance.

Then, apart from imagery, widely open to interpretation, symbolism is also an important aspect to mention, as it describes the use of concrete images to convey abstract ideas. This is one of the more slippery elements of literature to both understand and convey to an audience. One of the most important symbols of the novel is the one of yams. For the Igbo, yams are cultivated only by men. Therefore, harvesting yams is an indicator of a man's strength and dedication to his work. This is why the novel says:

Okoye was also a musician. He played on the ogene. But he was not a failure like Unoka. He had a large barn full of yams and he had three wives. And now he was going to take the Idemili title, the third highest in the land. It was a very expensive ceremony and he was gathering all his resources together (pp. 11).

In this passage, the large barn full of yams serves as a direct indicator of Okoye's strength, hard work, and dedication. In Igbo society, yams are more than a food crop; they symbolize wealth, success, and the social status of a man. The fact that Okoye has a "large barn full of yams" demonstrates his industriousness and ability to provide for his household, which is further reinforced by his having "three wives." The connection between yams and masculinity is also emphasized here. The accumulation of yams showcases not just physical strength but also the perseverance and determination required to cultivate and harvest the crop. Okoye's success contrasts sharply with Unoka's failure, underscoring how harvesting yams reflects a man's dedication to his work and his role in society. Furthermore, the wealth and resources from his yam harvest enabled him to take the prestigious Idemili title, solidifying the link between yam cultivation and societal recognition. This highlights the cultural value placed on agricultural labour as a measure of a man's identity and achievement.

Yams are also a symbol of wealth, as a good harvest can give a man power by supplying to others who have not harvested as well. For example, in the novel, Okonkwo is known for his yam farming skills and he can support three wives and multiple children through his success in farming. Yams hold power and are a physical manifestation of the work a man is willing to put into his field. This is why the novel explains:

Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. And so although Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time (pp. 12).

In this passage, yams are portrayed as a powerful symbol of Okonkwo's status, success, and the physical effort he has invested in his work. The description of Okonkwo as a "wealthy farmer" with "two barns full of yams" ties his accomplishments directly to his ability to cultivate and harvest this crop. In the cultural context, yams are not merely a source of sustenance; they represent a man's industriousness, discipline, and ability to contribute to his household and community. The mention of "two barns full of yams" emphasizes Okonkwo's dedication and hard work. Yams serve as a physical manifestation of the labour he has poured into his fields, showcasing his strength and determination. This abundance of yams also underscores his role as a provider and leader, reinforcing his societal stature as someone capable of sustaining multiple wives and families. Moreover, yams signify more than personal wealth—they symbolize power and influence. Okonkwo's possession of substantial yam

harvests, coupled with his titles and military achievements, illustrates his rise to prominence in his community. In this way, yams are not only a measure of agricultural success but also a reflection of a man's worth, ambition, and capacity for greatness in the society depicted.

Also, we have as other symbols the locusts which are a symbol of change and upheaval in *Things Fall Apart*. When they arrive in the village, they are seen as a sign of good fortune and abundance, as they are a source of food for the people. For example, when the locusts arrive in the village, Okonkwo feels a sense of unease and foreboding, as he senses that change is on the horizon. Invasion by locusts symbolizes a grand attack with devastating destruction. The author pointed out the first arrival of whites and others on the way. This link of events was done deliberately. He also illustrates the locusts that invaded the village using allegorical phrases that foreshadow the coming of white men in African land. They intended to exploit all the resources of the Igbo tribe. In the same way, individuals who were simulated to Christianity overlooked negative impacts; the white people's culture would impact their lifestyle.

We can also talk about *egwugwu* as a symbol. The *egwugwu* are masked spirits that represent the ancestors of the Igbo people. They are considered to be powerful and sacred and their presence commands respect and obedience from the villagers. For example, when the *egwugwu* appear in the novel, they preside over important ceremonies and disputes. In the novel comparison between the clan and the mother of spirits is drawn, "...it seemed as if the very soul of the clan wept for the great evil that was coming its own death" (pp. 145). It is imperative that the mother of spirits does not avenge her son's death but rather mourns and weeps.

Furthermore, the fire is also a symbol. The fire is a symbol of destruction and rebirth in the novel, more precisely, the author says: *That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during this time Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire in the harmattan* (pp. 8). In this part, fire is used as a powerful symbol to represent both destruction and rebirth, reflecting the dual nature of Okonkwo's character and his life trajectory. The comparison of Okonkwo's fame to a "bushfire in the harmattan" conveys a vivid image of something fierce, uncontrollable, and rapidly spreading. This simile emphasizes Okonkwo's rise to prominence in his community, showcasing his determination, ambition, and the intensity of his efforts to achieve success. A bushfire during the harmattan season is particularly significant because harmattan winds are dry and strong, causing fires to spread quickly and burn everything in their path. This mirrors how Okonkwo's drive for success is relentless, consuming everything necessary to secure his position as a powerful and respected man. At the same time, fire's

destructive nature foreshadows the potential for downfall. While Okonkwo's fame grows, the intensity of his ambition and his fiery personality leave little room for balance or flexibility. His unyielding nature and temper, akin to fire, ultimately contribute to his tragic end, making the symbol both empowering and ominous. Thus, the quote encapsulates Okonkwo's fierce rise and the inherent danger of his intensity, linking fire to both his achievements and the seeds of his eventual destruction.

It is often associated with Okonkwo's temper and his violent outbursts, which lead to the destruction of his relationships and his eventual downfall. However, fire is also a source of warmth and light and it is used in ceremonies and rituals to purify and renew. For example, when Ekwefi runs away from her husband's compound to be with Okonkwo, they share a fire that represents their love and passion. Moreover, as another symbol, we have the drums which are a symbol of communication and unity in the *Things Fall Apart*. They are used to announce important events and gatherings and they are also used in music and dance.

Then, we have the *chi* which is a personal god or spirit that is believed to guide and protect each individual. This is why the novel notes that: “*Unoka was an ill-fated man. He had a bad chi or personal god, and evil fortune followed him to the grave, or rather to his death, for he had no grave*” (pp. 21). It is often used to explain a person's fate or destiny and it is considered to be a source of personal power and strength “*when a man says yes, his chi says yes also*”, (pp. 29) and:

If ever a man deserved his success, that man was Okonkwo. 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. For example, Okonkwo often blames his chi for his failures and setbacks, as he believes that his destiny is predetermined and beyond his control (pp. 29-39).

When analyzing symbols in *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo should also be mentioned. In fact, he symbolizes masculinity, a character deeply opposed to the Christian belief of love. The spirit of African people is represented collectively by his personality. Just like the Igbo, he is independent and strong as a person. Weinstock and Ramadan in “Themes and Symbolism in *Things Fall Apart*: Symbols & Examples of Imagery”, pointed out the following after regarding the protagonist Okonkwo:

Okonkwo is consistently associated with masculinity and he virtually always mistrusts, opposes and attacks anything feminine or linked with femininity. Christianity embodies and stresses the qualities Okonkwo considers to be womanish, such as love, affection and mercy; and he

characteristically evaluates the missionaries as a "lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens" (pp. 128).

In this statement from Weinstock and Ramadan, the scholars highlight an important aspect of Okonkwo's character in *Things Fall Apart*: his deep association with masculinity and his corresponding rejection of anything deemed feminine. This association is central to Okonkwo's identity, as he views traditional masculine traits such as strength, aggression, and stoicism as defining virtues. Okonkwo's constant emphasis on being "manly" leads him to denounce anything perceived as weak or effeminate. Christianity, as introduced by the missionaries, represents the antithesis of Okonkwo's worldview. The religion is founded on values such as love, compassion, forgiveness, and mercy—traits that Okonkwo associates with femininity and weakness. For him, these qualities are unmanly and, therefore, contemptible. His reaction to the missionaries, calling them "effeminate men clucking like old hens," is an explicit expression of his disdain for what he perceives as their soft, nurturing, and passive nature. He cannot reconcile these traits with the harsh, warrior-like qualities he admires and considers to be integral to his identity as a strong, respected man. This rejection of Christianity and its values can be seen as a reflection of Okonkwo's internalized belief in the superiority of masculine strength and the denigration of anything that is associated with femininity. His inability to see the merit in values that challenge his rigid, gendered view of the world is a key element in his tragic downfall. The contrast between Okonkwo's violent masculinity and the Christian emphasis on love and mercy exemplifies the cultural clash that forms the backdrop of the novel.

Then, the rituals in the novels under study are often tied to key life events such as birth or initiation into adulthood, each marking a transition that is respected and observed collectively. For example, during naming ceremonies or rites of passage, elders often recite blessings and folktales that remind participants of their place within the cultural lineage of the Peuls. This is why in the circumcision ceremony described in the novel (pp. 232), in the Peul culture, a boy who is already circumcised, has a huge influence on his elder, if this later is not circumcised yet (pp. 358). Furthermore, the ritual of fighting against the spirit during the night (pp. 192) is a way of preserving identity in the Peul community. Again, special rituals were organized for those who wanted to have meanings for their dreams (pp. 51) and it was a way of preserving communal identity. Additionally, the text incorporates features of oral literature, such as proverbs, vivid imagery and storytelling rhythms, which create a conversational and engaging tone. By doing so, the author bridges the gap between written and oral traditions,

honouring the cultural practices of his community while presenting them in a literary format. His approach is also marked by a pedagogical intent, seeking to preserve and transmit the values, wisdom and Peul traditions to future generations.

On the other hand, there are also differences between the two novels. In terms of rituals and beliefs, folklore in *Things Fall Apart* often revolves around significant cultural rituals such as the kola nut ceremony, wrestling matches and the Week of Peace, which illustrate societal norms and values. The chosen language is also an aspect of difference. In fact, Achebe incorporates the Igbo language, idioms and expressions to enhance cultural authenticity. This linguistic approach allows the folklore to resonate deeply with the local customs and wisdom. *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* by Amadou Hampâté Bâ is the portrayal of the Peul culture, a completely different society. Bâ's narrative is rich with the customs, legends and oral traditions of the Peul people. His storytelling often highlights the pastoral lifestyle, nomadic heritage and the social structures of the Peul. Also, folklore in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* includes various tales and legends that reflect the moral and ethical values of the Peul culture.

As the first difference between the two writers, we can talk about the geographical focus. In fact, Amadou Hampâté Bâ's writings are primarily set in West Africa, particularly focusing on the Mali Empire and the Peul culture. Chinua Achebe's works are centered on Nigeria, specifically he talks about the Igbo culture. As another element of difference, we have the writing style. Bâ's style is often more reflective and philosophical, influenced by his deep knowledge of oral traditions and history. Achebe's style is more narrative-driven, with a strong emphasis on storytelling and character development. The way both authors use the themes in their novels, can also be considered as elements of difference. Bâ's works often delve into the spiritual and philosophical aspects of African traditions. Achebe, on the other hand, focuses more on the socio-political and cultural consequences of colonialism, as well as the complexities of post-colonial African societies.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe employs a third-person omniscient narrator to provide readers with a broad understanding of the Igbo society, its customs, and the individual motivations of its characters. Through this technique, the narrator can delve into the thoughts and emotions of multiple characters, especially Okonkwo, allowing readers to grasp the complexity of his internal conflicts as well as the values and beliefs that shape the Igbo community. This approach presents events from a wide perspective, capturing how they impact

the entire society, and immerses the reader in the collective experiences of the people of Umuofia.

Contrarily, Bâ's use of the first-person perspective further adds to the intimacy of the narrative, inviting readers into his memories. This autobiographical voice creates a close connection between the author and the reader, as he shares not only the events of his childhood but also the values and beliefs that shaped his understanding of the world. The first-person perspective allows the author to reflect on his experiences with honesty giving the reader an authentic sense of his relationship with his culture. *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, weaving Peul oral traditions into his storytelling. He uses traditional tales, sayings and songs to create an authentic representation of Peul culture and history. Secondly, proverbs play a crucial role in Achebe's narrative, reflecting the wisdom and philosophy of the Igbo people. They are used to convey complex ideas succinctly and add a layer of cultural depth to the story. Bâ employs autobiographical narration in his novel, which combines elements of first-person narrative with rich oral storytelling tradition. The narrative technique is deeply personal, as the author recounts his childhood and cultural heritage through his own perspective.

Moreover, in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, Bâ uses folklore not just as an element of storytelling but as a means of exploring the Peul way of life, their beliefs, and values. Folklore shapes Amkoullel's moral and social compass, instilling in him a deep understanding of his culture. By focusing on themes like oral tradition, communal identity, respect for elders, and harmony with nature, Bâ portrays Peul culture as a rich, holistic system of values that guide and sustain his protagonist in a rapidly changing world. He uses folklore to affirm cultural identity, conveying moral lessons and the community's history. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's proverbs carry comparable cultural messages. "*He who brings kola brings life*" (pp. 10) reflects the Igbo tradition of hospitality and respect, as kola nuts are offered to honor guests and create bonds of goodwill. Meanwhile, "*The sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them*" (pp. 12) conveys the notion that respect and favor go to those who hold their own ground, subtly reinforcing social hierarchies and individual strength.

Aside, Achebe uses folklore to develop his characters, particularly Okonkwo. The protagonist's actions and beliefs are often influenced by the traditional stories and proverbs he has internalized, highlighting the cultural forces shaping his identity. Foreshadowing is a device used by Achebe to prefigure what is going to happen. It draws the reader's attention to the design of the author. Next, Achebe uses as another technique, side-shadowing, which is a

device that conveys the sense that events recounted may not have happened. It casts a shadow of other possibilities of what could have happened. Naturally, while the readers see what did happen, they also imagine what could have happened. As another technique used by Achebe, we have back-shadowing, which is a reversal of foreshadowing. In the novel, viewing and evaluating the present in terms of the entire project, reveals that all along, the past had contained signs of what eventually happened. The present as the future of the past was already immanent in the past.

Okonkwo is the most dominant character of the novel whom Achebe uses to depict the fate of Umuofia. Consequently, he provides the narrative frame of the novel which is the building block of foreshadowing, side-shadowing and back-shadowing. Okonkwo is portrayed in such a way that he combines both mythical and conventional human qualities. As a mythical figure, Okonkwo stands for the life and transformation of his society. Most of the values that Okonkwo exhibits and cherishes are also cherished by his society. Foremost among these values are hard-work and bravery. Although Okonkwo is not the original founder of the nine villages of Umuofia, the new life he brings to wrestling matches constitute the society's sense of pride and self-identity in a manner hitherto unknown. It is like a new beginning. It is a straightforward story with minimal but memorable flashback scenes, digressions and interior monologues. Referring to the match in which Okonkwo throws down Amalinze the Cat, Achebe reported that it was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged in a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights (p. 1).

Basis on this statement, the researchers infer that Okonkwo was elevated to a mythical status after he defeated Amalinze the Cat. At the same time, Okonkwo's success is a springboard that transforms his role into the skeletal frame of the narrative in general. Okonkwo's story is an allegorical expression of the experiences that Umuofians undergo. His character and experiences foreshadow the community's experiences. He is a living point of reference of what it means to be a successful person in his society. The mythical status of Okonkwo is, however, undermined by his wants and emotions as an individual within a particular space and time. As a result, there is a clash between prefiguring the narrative in terms of Okonkwo's mythical frame and what he does in the action of the narrative. We understand that Okonkwo's whole life is dominated by the fear that is deeper and more intimate than the

fear of evil and capricious gods, of magic, the fear of forest, and the forces of nature, malevolent red in tooth and claw (pp. 13).

The cause of Okonkwo's fear is that he has built a reputation and fame that would go to a worthless offspring. He beats his wife during the Week of Peace (pp. 29), he kills Ikemefuna (pp. 61), shoots dead Ogbuefu Ezeudu's son (pp. 124) and finally commits suicide (pp. 207). The violations of these prohibitions, especially the last, turn Okonkwo into an outcast. Okonkwo's personal choices alienate his attribute as a foreshadow and create a potential for side-shadowing. Okonkwo's failings that occur at certain important places in the action of the novel gives rise to Obierika as an alternative role model for the people of Umuofia. Obierika is more rational and contemplative than Okonkwo. Through his moderate character, the researchers see a personality who could easily supplant Okonkwo's mythical status. After Okonkwo is banished from his clan for killing a kinsman, Obierika agonizes over the punishment with a view to seeking more logical ways of exacting justice (p. 125).

Also, about the locust invasion, within the wider framework of Okonkwo's status as a foreshadow and Obierika's continual but subtle presence as a side shadow, Achebe uses brief events to prefigure what is about to happen in Umuofia. Earlier, in *Things Fall Apart* for example, locusts invade Umuofia (p. 55-56). The invasion adumbrated the coming of Christianity and colonialism. Initially, locusts come in small numbers. Gradually, they descend in a mass and settle uncontrollably on every available twig and branch in the land. Much later in the novel, while telling the story of how missionaries have settled in Abame, Obierika says, "other white men were on their way. They were locusts, it (the oracle) said, and that first man was their harbinger sent to explore the terrain" (pp. 138-139). The locust invasion that takes place in the first part of the novel foreshadows the human events that happen in its third part. Achebe integrates the locust invasion into the very texture of the novel so that change is envisioned both at the cultural level and the natural ecological level.

Furthermore, we can consider the epigraph of William Butler Yeats as a foreshadow and a sideshow of *Things Fall Apart*. In fact, Achebe takes the title *Things Fall Apart* from the first part of *The Second Coming* (1919), a poem by W. Butler Yeats (Norman 1984). That part reads as follows: *Tuning and turning in the widening gyre; The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things Fall Apart; the center cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world* (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43290/the-second-coming>).

Yeats' poem provides the frame for understanding how Achebe constructs his novel at the level of ideas. The strategic placement of the epigraph makes it a necessary adjunct for a critical reading of the novel. The part of the poem that has been quoted foregrounds the contents of the novel. As a result of having the quotation, a sense of anticipation is created as to the inter-textual linkage between the poem and the novel. To appreciate *Things Fall Apart* fully, one is called upon by analytical necessity to understand the controlling idea of the poem. A close reading of "The Second Coming" shows that the poet is concerned with demonstrating that no civilization can remain static and evolve forever towards perfection. A civilization must collapse from within and be destroyed from without. Yeats insists that what replaces a civilization opposes itself. The falcon's loss of contact implies human beings' separation from ideals that have enabled them to control their lives. It involves an estrangement from traditional ties that have kept life workable. The image of 'the blood-dimmed tide', which does not appear in the epigraph but in the later parts of the poem, refers to the terrible destructive forces that are unleashed towards the end of an era. It is likely referring to war.

Achebe appears to operate along similar lines. The first part of *Things Fall Apart* describes village life in which human beings are basically in harmony with themselves and with nature. Their society is held together by cultural values that have evolved over a long time. However, germs of decline and collapse emerge from within and without. Traditions such as human sacrifice and the throwing of twin children in the forest undermine the cohesiveness of the society. Colonial administration and Christianity hasten the process of disintegration that would have otherwise taken a longer time. Because the decay of civilizations is strongly underlined in both the poem and the novel, the epigraph foreshadows what takes place in the novel. In other words, a study of *Things Fall Apart* in terms of 'The Second Coming' is feasible.

Aside, there are also differences between the two novels under study, in terms of literary devices. While the author employs foreshadowing side by side with side-shadowing as the cases cited above illustrate, back-shadowing is not juxtaposed with side-shadowing in a direct and immediate way. A typical instance of back-shadowing is shown in part two of *Things Fall Apart*, when Obierika visits Okonkwo in exile. Obierika tells about the killing of a peaceful explorer by the people of Abame. The impact of the act is a complete annihilation of their village. Commenting on the fact that in killing a man who had said nothing, the people of Abame had been unwise, Uchendu, the oldest man among Obierika's audience says:

Never kill a man who says nothing... Mother Kite once sent her daughter to bring food. She went and brought back a duckling. You have done very well', said the mother to the daughter, 'but tell me, what did the mother of the duckling say when you swooped and carried its child away?' 'It said nothing', replied the young kite. 'It just walked away'. You must return the duckling', said the mother: There is something ominous behind the silence (p. 140).

This anecdote is part of the folk wisdom of Achebe's people. Because it is traditional and therefore already known, the people of Abame should have invoked its authority before deciding to kill the explorer. In killing the explorer, they flout the didactic purpose of the anecdote and subsequently deserve vengeance. The anecdote thus contextualizes the fate of the people of Abame into a well-knit story. It foreshadows after the fact' that the people of Abame are destroyed because they do not pay heed to their own well-known guidelines.

Besides Uchendu's anecdote, the author consciously uses back-shadowing to justify his entire artistic project. This is openly shown in the last part of the book. On discovering that Okonkwo has committed suicide, the District Commissioner changes from a resolute administrator to a student of African anthropology. He instantly proceeds researching the customs of Umuofia using the elders as his informants. The ultimate statement that he makes after a few minutes of cross-examination is revealing:

The story of this man who killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One could almost write a whole chapter on him, perhaps not a whole chapter but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include and one must be firm on cutting out the details. He had already chosen the title of the book after much thought. The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes in the Lower Niger (pp. 208-209).

The District Commissioner's statement casts a strong shadow on the pedagogical motives behind Achebe's undertaking to write *Things Fall Apart*. In this context, the author criticizes the colonial administrator for assuming he knows much about African culture when he in fact knows very little. He satirizes the administrator light-heartedly for intending to summarize the whole novel in just one paragraph. Based on the Commissioner's thoughts, readers can see in retrospect why Achebe describes in detail the various aspects of the culture of Umuofia. These aspects include marriage customs, legal institutions and burial ceremonies. Besides elucidating the values embedded in the cultural practices he defines, the author parades the ugly side some of them embody. Among the figures that Achebe uses to identify and describe both the beautiful and the detestable side of his people's culture, proverbs are most

foregrounded. Proverbs are employed to demonstrate that all the actions that are done in the community have some justification no matter what an outsider might think of them. Okonkwo, for example, justifies his participation in the killing of Ikeme funa by invoking the authority of the proverb "*A child's fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which its mother puts in his mouth*" (pp. 67). Okonkwo applies this proverb to argue his case that by killing Ikemefuna, he is merely carrying out the orders of the Earth Goddess and so, he cannot be punished for being a good messenger. Achebe's excursion into the cultural provinces of Umuofia is, therefore, intended to testify that the District Commissioner himself should have known more about those provinces than he does.

In terms of the narrative focus, *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* is more autobiographical, using folklore to explore personal identity and experiences within the context of Peul culture. In contrast, *Things Fall Apart* has a societal focus, examining the impacts of colonialism on Igbo culture and community as a whole. In terms of characterization of folklore in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, folklore is often portrayed as a source of wisdom and continuity, guiding Amkoullel through his journey. In *Things Fall Apart*, folklore carries a tragic irony; the protagonist's strict adherence to traditional values ultimately leads to his downfall, illustrating the conflict between old customs and new realities.

Both Achebe and Bâ are great authors and not only do they have common aspects but they also have differences in their visions. Chinua Achebe wrote a book entitled *Things Fall Apart*. In this story, he talks about a strong warrior named Okonkwo who lives in a village in Nigeria. The story shows how Okonkwo's life and his village change when people from far away come and bring new ways and rules. Chinua Achebe wanted to show how important the old ways and traditions were and how sad it was when they started to disappear. He focused on how changes from outside affected his village and the struggles to keep their traditions alive. On the other hand, Amadou Hampâté Bâ wrote a book called *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*. This book tells the story of Amadou's own childhood in Mali (it is an autobiographical novel). He talks about growing up with his family, learning about his people's traditions and the adventures he had. Amadou wanted everyone to remember and cherish these traditions so they would not be forgotten.

The backgrounds of Chinua Achebe and Amadou Hampâté Bâ differ significantly, reflecting their distinct cultural, educational, and historical contexts. Achebe was Igbo, from southeastern Nigeria, while Bâ was Peul, a group spread across West Africa. Achebe's works

focus on Igbo traditions and the effects of colonialism and Christianity, whereas Bâ's writing preserves the Peul oral traditions, Islamic heritage, and nomadic cultural values. Achebe's education was largely influenced by British colonial systems, including his time at the University College of Ibadan. This Western education gave him a deep understanding of colonial narratives, which he critiqued in his writing, particularly the tension between traditional African societies and colonial influences. Bâ, on the other hand, grew up in French-occupied Mali and was educated in both traditional Islamic schools and French colonial institutions. His early Quranic studies and immersion in Peul oral storytelling shaped his commitment to preserving Africa's cultural heritage amidst the pressures of colonial assimilation policies.

The historical contexts of British Nigeria and French West Africa also shaped their worldviews. Achebe's Nigeria was heavily impacted by Christian missionary activities that disrupted traditional Igbo society, which he explores in novels like *Things Fall Apart*. Conversely, Bâ's Mali reflected a coexistence of Islamic traditions and French colonial rule. His writings reveal the importance of safeguarding African oral traditions and history against the erasure brought about by colonial modernity.

Religion also played a key role in shaping their perspectives. Achebe, raised in a Christian missionary family, was deeply influenced by Christianity but maintained a strong connection to traditional Igbo spirituality. This duality is evident in his exploration of religion in *Things Fall Apart*. Bâ's upbringing, however, was deeply rooted in Islamic spirituality, which permeates Peul culture and his works. He portrayed Islamic values alongside traditional African customs, reflecting the syncretism within Peul society.

Folklore and Authorial Vision

Folklore refers to the collective cultural traditions, beliefs, customs, and narratives (etc) of a community, often transmitted orally from generation to generation. It encompasses myths, legends, proverbs, songs, dances, and rituals that serve as a reflection of the values, history, and worldview of a society. Folklore preserves the essence of a community's identity by offering insights into its moral code, spiritual beliefs, and collective experiences. In literature, folklore often forms the foundation for storytelling, providing both structure and substance to narratives while creating a bridge between the fictional world and the real-life traditions of the depicted culture.

Authorial vision, on the other hand, refers to the unique perspective and intent of the writer in interpreting and presenting folklore within their work. It is the author's creative lens through which cultural elements are portrayed, often blending traditional materials with personal or modern themes. This vision shapes how folklore is adapted or transformed in literary works to suit the author's narrative purpose, thematic focus, or ideological goals. The interplay between folklore and authorial vision allows writers to simultaneously preserve cultural heritage and innovate within it, creating stories that resonate across generations while addressing numerous issues. In "Proverb and Folklore in the Novels of Chinua Achebe", Jayalakshmi Rao states:

Achebe, who believes that cultures use folklore to pass on great cultural richness, thinks such folklore can provide solutions to a people's questions and problems. Hence folklore, which is an important feature of the Ibo culture, finds ample and appropriate place in the novels of Achebe. By the time we come to Ibo society in Nigeria in No Longer at Ease, most traditional values have disappeared but some of the proverbs that explicate moral and spiritual wisdom remain with the people. Here are three examples: (1) "Wherever something stands, another thing stands beside it" (145); (2) "He who has people is richer than he who has money" (72). (3) The impatience and the foolhardiness of the Obi Okonkwo's are compared to that of "the young antelope who danced herself lame when the main dance was yet to come (10) (pp. 1-9).

This excerpt shows that Chinua Achebe's authorial vision centers on the power of folklore as a vehicle for preserving cultural wisdom and addressing the moral and spiritual dilemmas faced by individuals and communities. Achebe's vision highlights the role of folklore in passing down traditional knowledge, often in the form of proverbs, parables, and anecdotes that guide societal behavior and decision-making. His novels, such as *No Longer at Ease*, reflect his belief that despite the encroachment of modernity, folklore remains an important aspect of cultural identity, offering solutions to personal and collective struggles. Achebe uses folklore not just as a narrative tool, but also as a lens through which he critiques societal changes, particularly in the context of colonialism and its impact on traditional African societies. The proverbs in his novels serve as a reminder of the moral compass that once governed the Ibo culture, even as many of these values begin to fade in the face of modern influences. Through his authorial vision, Achebe demonstrates how folklore transcends time, offering universal wisdom that remains potent even in the face of societal transformation. Proverbs such as "Wherever something stands, another thing stands beside it" suggest the inevitability of change and the coexistence of old and new. "He who has people is richer than

he who has money" reflects the Ibo emphasis on community over material wealth, while the proverb comparing impatience to "the young antelope who danced herself lame" warns against reckless ambition and the importance of patience.

Chinua Achebe uses folklore in *Things Fall Apart* to convey a rich, authentic vision of Igbo society, aiming to preserve and honor the complexities of African culture. His vision is to show readers that Igbo culture—and by extension, African culture—is vibrant, sophisticated, and grounded in a deep sense of community and spirituality. Through folktales, proverbs, and traditional rituals, Achebe reveals how the Igbo people use folklore to transmit wisdom, reinforce social norms, and connect with their ancestral beliefs, creating a cultural tapestry that reflects the values and worldview of the Igbo people. One key aspect of Achebe's vision is his portrayal of folklore as a way to strengthen communal bonds and convey moral teachings. Folktales told by elders, such as the story of the Tortoise, teach lessons about cunning and consequence, showing how storytelling serves both as entertainment and a vehicle for social instruction. These stories impart values and morals that help shape individual behaviour within the community, showing that Igbo society uses folklore as a method of informal education that aligns members with communal expectations. Achebe's emphasis on this role of folklore underlines his vision of Igbo society as one built on shared wisdom, where cultural heritage is preserved through collective storytelling and shared experiences. This is why in "Proverb and Folklore in the Novels of Chinua Achebe", Jayalakshmi Rao states:

Achebe's fourth novel, has a number of proverbs that clearly trace the decay of cultural values in Nigerian society. Selfishness, greed, and desire for power characterize political leaders like chief Nanga. The general motto of the people's leaders is, "Ours is ours but mine is mine." Achebe's characters make use of folklore to make their arguments forcefully and effectively illustrate moral values.

The story of the little bird Nza occurs both in Things Fall Apart and Arrow of God. It brings home the fact that a man should never provoke his fate. He should know where to draw a line of limit in his pursuit of power. The same wisdom is evident in the story of the bird Eneke-nti-Oba (pp, 38) and the story of the wrestler (pp. 3).

Achebe also uses folklore to highlight the Igbo people's connection to their ancestors and the spiritual world. For instance, the worship of deities and ancestral spirits, along with the use of proverbs, reflects a worldview that values the wisdom of forebears and the guidance of the spiritual realm. Through folklore, Achebe reveals a complex spiritual framework that

governs everything from conflict resolution to family structure, emphasizing that Igbo people draw strength, guidance, and identity from their connection to ancestral traditions.

Moreover, some ceremonies include the appearance and proceedings of the *Egwugwu* (pp. 63, 84). Aside, Achebe wants us to have a better understanding of Igbo customs. An example of Achebe's use of customs appears in the description of the treatment given to a guest. Upon entering a friend's *Obi*, a guest is seated either on a goatskin mat or on an earthen stool. Then he is given a piece of chalk with which he draws his emblem on the floor and paints his toe or face. The bond of goodwill is complete with the passing of the kola around, and sharing its contents (pp. 5). The description of Okonkwo's obi and shrine (pp. 10), Ezeulu's shrine tells us of their architecture. Simultaneously there are human sacrifices (pp. 43), the mutilation of a diseased Ogbanje child (pp. 55), the Osu practice (pp. 111), the belief in juju medicine (pp. 79), the spirit possession (pp. 70, 72); the belief in the divinity of a python (pp. 112); cast a shadow on the culture of the society in *Things Fall Apart*.

Again, Achebe wants us to understand the naming system of the Ibos. Its importance is especially evident in Ekwefi's attempts to save the children by the name she gives. Nine die before one daughter Ezinma survives. She names the children in such a way as to break the cycle of *Ogbanje* children. A few were *Onwumbiko*, death, I implore you, "*Ozoemena*, *May it not happen again*," and finally "*Onwumna*, *Death may please himself*" (pp. 70). The naming system is shown to have importance in *No Longer at Ease* also. Name calling such as ant-hill nose, "*long throat*," descriptive phrases such as the tongue with which to tell the story" (pp. 125), in addition to curses, prayers, blessings and traditional taboos as the custom of forbidding titled elders tapping palm wine, all contribute to give the reader a new experience of reading the same language.

Ultimately, Achebe's vision in using folklore is to create an authentic portrayal of Igbo life, for didactical purposes. The didactic animal tale appears in almost all Achebe's novels. In *Things Fall Apart*, the tales of the wily tortoise (pp. 38, pp. 67) expose the wicked nature of human beings, and the story of the mother kite shows the folly of the people of Abame (pp. 98) and in the same novel, the story of the leopardess illustrates the ill effects of greed (pp. 53). Furthermore, men's and women's stories illustrate male and female values. While Okonkwo's stories exemplify warfare and violence to inculcate courage in children (pp. 53, pp. 37), Ekwefi's stories of the mosquito (pp. 53) send a completely different message.

As for Amadou Hampâté Bâ's vision in using folklore in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, folklore is not just entertainment but as the soul of the Peul identity, capturing the beliefs, moral values, and historical consciousness that define the community. Bâ's vision is both a tribute to his own heritage and a call to recognize the significance of oral tradition as a cornerstone of African culture. Amadou Hampâté Bâ's vision for using folklore is rooted in the idea that African individuals are deeply connected to their lineage and heritage. Bâ asserts that, in traditional African societies, a person is inseparable from their lineage, which lives on through them. Rather than seeing this as a restriction on personal freedom or individuality, he views this connection as a grounding force that provides stability, balance and a sense of purpose.

Bâ portrays folklore not as something static or archaic, but as a dynamic source of wisdom and inspiration. By returning to one's roots and cultural traditions, an individual can uncover valuable lessons and resources for personal and communal success. This perspective reinforces the importance of cultural heritage. In Bâ's works, this interconnectedness of lineage, family, Through storytelling, Bâ aims to highlight the richness of African cultural heritage, specifically the cultural and historical identity of sub-Saharan Africa, Mali and the Peul people.

This educational and almost ritualistic approach aligns with his commitment to sharing and preserving African cultural knowledge, making his work a bridge between African traditions and readers worldwide. In essence, Bâ's use of folklore is a testament to his vision of honouring, sharing, and passing on African cultural heritage in a way that is accessible, enlightening, and profoundly rooted in collective identity. This is why Attef Bouzidi and Saddek Aouadi in "Amadou Hampâté Bâ, « Défense et Illustration » de la Tradition Orale" explains:

Amadou Hampâté Bâ précise qu'en « en Afrique traditionnelle, l'individu est inséparable de sa lignée, qui continue de vivre à travers lui et dont il n'est que le prolongement » (Hampâté Bâ, 1992 : 19), une réalité socialement et culturellement vécue non comme un poids qui pourrait entraver l'individualité et l'empêcher de s'émanciper ou de s'épanouir, mais comme un ancrage qui donnera à l'individu cette stabilité et cet équilibre qui lui permettront de se retrouver et d'avancer dans le monde. C'est également un phénomène vécu comme une richesse dans laquelle il est toujours utile de chercher les trésors de la réussite et à laquelle, revenir, n'est jamais sans conséquences inspiratrices.

Cette réalité et ce phénomène qui font de l'individu africain « une continuité » et « un prolongement » de toute sa lignée, de sa famille et de son patrimoine, peuvent également constituer, sur des plans différents, des éléments qui, eux-aussi, et d'une certaine manière, des motivations de la présence de cet aspect collectif dans les textes d'Amadou Hampâté Bâ et de son engagement pour faire

connaître l'Afrique, l'Afrique subsaharienne, le Mali et notamment les Peuls, et tout ce qui fait partie de l'univers africain. Le lecteur de l'œuvre littéraire d'Amadou Hampâté Bâ aura l'occasion de rencontrer pratiquement dans chaque texte' et de manière méthodique et pédagogique, des précisions, des explications, des délimitations et des définitions que l'écrivain a pris soin de parsemer tout au long de ces récits et dont il n'a jamais fait l'économie. Il n'aura donc que suivre, tel un initié, la parole d'un initiateur hors pair (pp. 177).

Another key aspect of Bâ's vision is to use folklore to foster historical identity. The stories, proverbs, and songs that Amkoullel hears from elders are not just tales; they are links to the past, reminding him of his ancestry and the wisdom of those who came before. Folklore, according to him, serves as more than just storytelling; it becomes a vehicle for cultural memory and a means of validating African perspectives on their history. The African storyteller here, under their elevated lineage and understanding of their cultural heritage, uses folklore to document and argue historical points with rigour and rationality, aiming to challenge and enrich the historical canon with African voices and perspectives. This is why Attef Bouzidi and Saddek Aouadi in "Amadou Hampâté Bâ, « Défense et Illustration » de la Tradition Orale" explains:

Il s'agit, en effet, d'un discours historique savamment construit et documenté qui revient sur des moments fondateurs dans l'histoire du Mali, mais vus par un penseur et un connaisseur, africain, au savoir exceptionnellement encyclopédique et profondément scientifique. C'est alors une vision de l'intérieur, par les africains eux-mêmes, sur leurs propres conditions historiques ; une vision qui constituera certainement un autre pôle informatif qui se proposera comme une autre alternative de l'histoire de l'Afrique et notamment celle du Mali. Un pôle informatif et une alternative désormais incontournables, qui ne manquent pas de documentations, de précisions, de preuves, de pertinence et d'argumentations rationnelles. Et comme le précise l'écrivain et historien lui-même, il est issu d'une famille d'une lignée et d'un rang très élevés et dont l'histoire est étroitement liée à celle du Macina (une région du Mali située dans ce qu'on appelle la «Boucle du Niger») et aux guerres qui le déchirèrent, particulièrement celles qui opposèrent les Peuls de l'Empire peul du Macina aux Toucouleurs de l'armée d'El Hadj Omar, le grand conquérant et chef religieux venu de l'ouest et dont l'empire, après avoir vaincu et absorbé l'Empire peul du Macina en 1862, s'étendit depuis l'est de la Guinée jusqu'à Tombouctou » (Hampâté Bâ, 1992 : 19-20) (pp. 178).

Moreover, Amadou Hampâté Bâ's vision in using folklore in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* reflects his commitment to preserving and transmitting African spirituality, wisdom, and social customs in a way that reveals their universal value. Hampâté Bâ, described as a deeply respected religious and spiritual leader, believed in teaching and sharing as essential aspects of

his life's mission. For him, love and charity were inseparable aspects of faith, and his work seeks to transmit these values, offering insights that can make man better in all circumstances of life. Through his memoir, Hampâté Bâ brings readers into the heart of West African society, particularly the world of the Peul people, using his life story as a bridge to introduce them to cultural values and spiritual perspectives.

Hampâté Bâ's vision goes beyond mere preservation; he also seeks to present African folklore as a source of universal wisdom. His work portrays African culture as deeply spiritual and rich in teachings that are relevant to people worldwide. In depicting traditional African spirituality, he invites readers to appreciate its universal principles—love, respect, and community—which he sees as essential for humanity. Through stories, proverbs, and collective memories, he aims to elevate African folklore as a valuable component of world literature and philosophy, countering stereotypes of African societies as "primitive." Instead, he positions folklore as an intellectual and moral heritage with profound significance. By embedding his life story within the cultural and spiritual world of the Peul, Hampâté Bâ's novel becomes a literary and cultural bridge. The memoir invites readers not only to witness African life but also to understand it as an integral part of global human experience, illustrating Hampâté Bâ's belief that the wisdom of Africa has a place in the universal search for meaning and enlightenment. Through folklore, the author shares a vision that respects African traditions while affirming their relevance to all people, preserving them as a testament to human resilience and unity. This is why Attef Bouzidi and Saddek Aouadi in “Amadou Hampâté Bâ, « Défense et Illustration » de la Tradition Orale” explain:

Un maître qui a été lui-même au cœur des défis et des conflits historiques, politiques et notamment religieux qui ont marqué et changé l'histoire du Mali. Cette personnalité historique et religieuse qui « fut une pure et haute figure non seulement de l'Islam en Afrique noire, mais de la spiritualité universelle » Hampâté Bâ, 1980), a marqué de manière très significative la spiritualité africaine, et avait sacrifié sa vie entière à transmettre son savoir et sa sagesse à ses disciples et à tous ceux qu'il rencontrait.

« Enseigner » et « transmettre », seraient donc les mots clés dans la carrière et dans la vie d'un homme pour qui « Amour et Charité étaient les deux faces indissociables de la Foi » et pour qui « l'amour de Dieu ne pouvait s'entendre sans l'amour des hommes » (Hampâté Bâ, 1980 : 10) L'œuvre et la vie d'Amadou Hampâté Bâ sont également animées par cet engagement illimité qui vise à proposer ce qui peut rendre l'homme meilleur dans toutes les circonstances de la vie. Son universalité est

repérable dans chacune de ses publications, et la transmission de ce qui fait l'Afrique est absolument vitale dans son parcours.

Ainsi, dans le premier tome de ses mémoires qui porte le titre : Amkoullel, L'enfant peul, « Amadou Hampâté Bâ nous introduit dans un monde qui sera singulièrement instructif pour le lecteur d'aujourd'hui : celui de la savane ouest-africaine » (Hampâté Bâ, 1992 : 9), comme le précise la préface de son ami (pp. 179).

Hampâté Bâ's portrayal of oral tradition reveals a highly structured and meaningful process that organizes African society. Here, oral tradition is not simply "speaking in place of writing"; it is a dynamic, living cultural system. Speech and storytelling are integral to social order, knowledge transmission, and community identity. Through storytelling, proverbs and everyday discourse, folklore serves as a mechanism for teaching children, passing on values, and ensuring continuity of knowledge across generations. Oral tradition is depicted as a collective consciousness, a space where education, moral values, and social rules are woven into the fabric of daily interactions.

Furthermore, Hampâté Bâ emphasizes the immediacy and vitality of oral tradition as a stabilizing force in African society. Oral folklore is not static; it evolves and adapts within the social and cultural environment, guiding people in their daily lives and providing a framework for decision-making and understanding the world. For the African, as Hampâté Bâ depicts, the spoken word is a "real, immediate, and vivid" force that influences their life journey and shapes their identity. This vision presents oral folklore as an active, living archive that not only preserves the past but also adapts to the present, ensuring the stability and cohesion of African communities.

In Hampâté Bâ's view, the use of folklore in his work serves a dual purpose: it preserves African heritage and educates a audience about the richness and sophistication of African cultural systems. His work portrays oral tradition as more than a storytelling method; it is a lifeline for cultural continuity, an anchor for social cohesion, and a medium of universal values, such as respect, wisdom, and balance. Through this vision, folklore becomes a tool to convey the intrinsic worth of African civilization to a global audience, highlighting the enduring relevance and vitality of oral culture as an expression of African identity and resilience. Attef Bouzidi and Saddek Aouadi in "Amadou Hampâté Bâ, « Défense et Illustration » de la Tradition Orale" illustrate:

Il s'agit, en fait, dans les précisions qui ponctuent de manière très pédagogique l'œuvre d'Amadou Hampâté Bâ, d'une invitation, offerte avec la plus grande hospitalité, le visage illuminé par un sourire généreux, à tout lecteur désireux de goûter aux expériences et aux richesses humaines des plus éducatrices aussi bien sur le plan personnel que collectif.

Une invitation qui ouvrira les portes d'un univers social, culturel et civilisationnel passionnant et merveilleux pour un lecteur étranger aux spécificités des sociétés en Afrique, et notamment en Afrique Noire. Des sociétés dont les mécanismes fonctionnels des divers domaines de la vie baignent dans une « oralité » systématique et caractéristique, qui « en tant que processus culturel, ne consiste pas simplement à utiliser le « parler » en lieu et place de l'écriture » (Derive, 2012:13). Car il est, en effet, question d'une organisation sociale et culturelle bien particulière où la voix et la parole, vives et actuelles, gouvernent et gèrent les discussions et les comportements de tous les jours ; et dans lesquelles se conçoivent les diverses réalités de la vie. Un processus culturel à travers lequel les éléments de la conscience et de l'intelligence collectives se forment et se développent et à travers lequel l'éducation des enfants et la transmission des valeurs, des savoirs et des traditions se réalisent et se concrétisent et dans lequel se font toutes les initiations et tous les enseignements.

L'oralité constitue, de manière très particulière, d'un côté, cet environnement social et culturel dans lequel et à travers lequel s'active, s'anime et se construit la vie de l'Africain, et d'un autre côté, cet ancrage qui garantit la stabilité et l'équilibre sociaux et qui permet la sauvegarde des diverses caractéristiques de la société africaine. Car il est vrai que pour l'Africain, la voix et la parole constituent un réel immédiat, actuel et vif qui l'accompagne dans sa vie de tous les jours et qui l'encadre dans son processus d'éducation (pp. 180).

In African “Heritage in Literature as Depicted by Chinua Achebe”, Ashraf Ahmed Omer Altijani and Mahmoud Ali Ahmed Omer, think that it was Chinua Achebe who established and defined the African tradition in the novel, a tradition that takes its roots from our folk culture and creatively makes use of elements such as proverbs, legends, folktales and local myths, thus giving expression to his national culture, in order to preserve his knowledge (pp. 24-43). Both Chinua and Amadou made a big difference and had a great impact on African literature. They helped people around the world understand and respect African stories and cultures.

Folklore in the Arts Depicted in the Novels under Study

Folklore and Modern Art Forms explains that folklore and folk arts represent many of the values that have been displaced in the modern period. Folklore and the folk arts can also give new stimulus to artistic works. Many painters, musicians and others have been drawn to traditional cultures in the search for inspiration. This can include everything from techniques to subject matter and materials. Nostalgia for a cultural golden age, when life was simpler and seamless, was also a motivation (pp. 134).

In the Igbo society, folklore is expressed in artistic forms, especially physical art forms like masks and carvings used in spiritual and social ceremonies. For instance, Achebe describes the *egwugwu*, ancestral spirits represented by masked men who play a central role in resolving disputes and dispensing justice within the community. The *egwugwu* masks and costumes are powerful visual representations of Igbo folklore and spirituality, symbolizing the ancestors who continue to influence the lives of the living. Achebe describes these masks in vivid detail, highlighting their grandeur and the awe they inspire in the villagers. The masks, "*a huge wooden face painted white except for the round hollow eyes and the charred teeth that were as big as a man's fingers,*" and the "*two powerful horns*" on the head (pp. 85-86), showcase the artistry involved in Igbo ceremonial practices. These masks are not merely artistic creations; they embody the spirits of the clan's ancestors and serve as a bridge between the living and the dead.

Next, music and dance represent the performative art forms in *Things Fall Apart*. Often performed during rituals, music and dance reflect the folklore and beliefs of the Igbo people. Drums, songs, and dances at festivals or funerals are tied to stories and traditions, embodying both joy and reverence. In cultural arts such as music, dance, oratory and wrestling, Igbos of Umuofia are rich. The fine arts of Africa are functional and provide aesthetic pleasure. This is why, in *Things Fall Apart*, we have dances that are performed during the title ceremony (pp. 58). Even songs are sung when people want to know whether they were lost or not. In a yes or no question, if the song finished on the right foot, then the answer is yes, they are lost (pp. 59). In the same novel, we also have songs of praise for the wrestlers (pp. 51) which represents a form of art for the Igbo, in *Things Fall Apart*.

For all occasions, Igbos sing songs accompanied by dance. During the new yam feast, they sing songs. They spend three days having fun. After that the musicians go to the neighboring villages to teach new songs and dances. In a marriage function, there is non-stop

singing. Accompany the singers, musicians playing on different instruments made of clay and metal. The Igbo sing songs not only for joy but also for sorrow and mourning. On the death of a village elder, they sing: *For whom is it well, for whom is it well? There is no one for whom it is well* (pp. 124).

The Igbo continued to sing even after the period of the arrival of the white men. Drum beats and dances are performed in all wrestling matches. Not only Okonkwo but also his wife Ekwefi are filled with excitement when they hear the drums as a mark of beginning the wrestling matches. On hearing the rhythm of the drums her heart beats faster and Okonkwo's feet start stamping. A variety of drums known as the *Ekwe*, *Udu* and *Ogene* are used. During the wrestling match, drums reflect the excitement of the people. That is why Achebe says in his novel: *It was like a pulsation of it throbbed in the air, in the sunshine, and even in the trees, and filled the village with excitement* (pp. 31).

The drum is not only an instrument of entertainment but also used to deliver messages. During ceremonies such as birth, death, marriage, wrestling match, title-taking ceremonies and feasts. In *Things Fall Apart* when Ikemefuna is put to death a distant *ekwe* (drum) is heard accompanied by *Ozo* dance. Thus, drumming is a part and parcel of a man's life in Umuofia. The drums are kept in long baskets. "*As the man danced so the drums beat for him*". About instruments in *Things Fall Apart*, arts are also represented by the flute, which is an important musical instrument. Ikemefuna is talented enough to make flutes with bamboo and elephant grass. Nwoye is very impressed by his skill in making flutes.

Then, as another art in *Things Fall Apart*, the Igbo community gives much importance to games and sports. The spirit of the sport increases the sportive nature of the society. In *Things Fall Apart* there are many instances where wrestling matches are held, and drum beats accompany the wrestling contests. The Igbo sports meet at the New Yam feast every year.

On the other hand, *Amkoullel*, *l'Enfant Peul*, Amadou Hampâté Bâ uses folklore as a central element of his culture, portraying it through artistic expression and deeply rooted cultural practices that shape daily life and community identity. First, folklore in *Amkoullel*, *l'Enfant Peul* is vividly represented in Peul art forms such as storytelling and oral poetry, all of which play a crucial role in expressing the values, history, and spirituality of the Peul people.

Storytelling is a revered art in Peul culture, with griots (traditional storytellers) acting as the custodians of communal memory and wisdom. These griots narrate historical events, myths, and moral tales, using rhythmic speech and musical accompaniment to captivate listeners and instil cultural values. Bâ describes how Amkoullél and his peers would gather around these storytellers, absorbing not only the tales but also the cadence, expressions, and performances that brought Peul's history and legends to life. In this way, storytelling becomes an art form, where folklore is woven into performances that are both educational and entertaining, preserving the Peul heritage in an engaging, memorable way.

The domains of theatre and visual representation were introduced to children from a young age, emphasizing observation, visual engagement, and attentive listening. This approach facilitated the transmission of values, as children naturally remembered what they saw, repeated orally, and experienced through role-playing in costume (pp. 11), some dresses were even used to distinguish people from different villages (pp. 40).

Furthermore, music and dance play an important role in the Peul representation of folklore, especially during communal events like weddings, harvests, and rites of passage. Traditional Peul songs often include proverbs and moral lessons, passed down orally through generations. The songs are filled with references to Peul mythology and history, embodying the community's ideals and beliefs. Through music, folklore is transformed into an auditory art form that communicates the essence of Peul's values and spirituality. These artistic representations of folklore not only entertain but also serve as a powerful means of passing down cultural knowledge, making folklore an integral part of Peul's art and artistic expression. Songs and poems were important for the Peuls, this is why the novel says that griots used to "shout" the upcoming events, always accompanied by his instrument. He was even called "the public shouter" (pp. 104, pp. 199-200). Their songs were nuptial, love, war, and nostalgic songs that were related to the Peul community (pp. 231). This is why the novel explains:

*La cérémonie était un rite traditionnel qui commençait par un poème chanté" (pp. 233).
Chaque soir, après le dîner, des conteurs et des griots animent les soirées.
Leurs interventions comportaient des chroniques historiques amusantes ou glorieuses (pp. 237, 299).*

The importance of songs in this excerpt can be seen in how they serve as key components of cultural rituals and social gatherings. The mention of a traditional rite beginning with a "poème chanté" (sung poem) highlights the central role of song in ceremonial events,

where it is used to set the tone, invoke spiritual presence, or communicate important messages. In many African cultures, songs are not merely entertainment; they are essential vehicles for storytelling, passing down history, and maintaining cultural continuity. Similarly, the mention of griots and storytellers gathering each evening to entertain with historical chronicles further underscores the cultural significance of songs in social life. These performances were more than just for amusement; they were integral to the community's understanding of its history, identity, and values. Songs and spoken words—whether in the form of poetry, history, or praise—help to preserve collective memory, foster a sense of unity, and offer moral lessons. Thus, songs in this setting function as both a mode of entertainment and a powerful tool for cultural transmission, carrying within them the wisdom, values, and collective memory of society.

For instance, tales about legendary ancestors and heroic deeds were common, providing models of virtuous behavior and cultural pride. In his novel, Bâ writes about the importance of these storytelling sessions:

Après le repas, je fus assailli de questions. Chacun voulait savoir ce qui m'était arrivé au cours des années écoulées, on m'interrogeait sur Bandiagara, sur Djenné, sur les pays que j'avais traversés, les gens que j'avais rencontrés, leurs coutumes, etc., comme l'on fait quand arrive un voyageur venu de loin. C'était mon premier auditoire pour mes aventures personnelles. Je ne manquais pas d'anecdotes à raconter, ni de paroles pour les dire... Ce fut une longue et heureuse veillée. Elle se prolongea tard dans la nuit (pp. 347).

In this passage, the tradition of storytelling is evident, as the protagonist shares his adventures with his audience. The questioning and eager curiosity from the listeners reflect a common cultural practice where tales of distant travels and encounters are shared to enrich the community's knowledge and experiences. These stories often go beyond mere recounting of events; they serve to educate and impart lessons, much like the legendary tales about ancestors and heroes. Tales of legendary ancestors and heroic deeds were essential in African cultures, offering models for virtuous behavior and instilling pride in one's heritage. The stories of past heroes—whether ancestors or legendary figures—embody ideals such as courage, wisdom, and honour, which the community would aspire to emulate. In the same way, the protagonist's recounting of his travels and encounters provides the audience with a form of cultural reflection. Through his narrative, he not only shares his experiences but also connects those experiences to the values and customs of the society. This practice of storytelling reinforces cultural pride and identity, reminding the community of its rich history and the virtues upheld

by its forebears. The *veillée* (evening gathering) described here mirrors the role of griots and storytellers who traditionally shared not only history but also heroic tales that inspired listeners to aspire to greatness and adhere to the values of their culture.

There were even ritual dances that were performed by the traditionalists during the ceremonies (pp. 161); during the same ceremonies there were also poems that were presented to talk about specific realities (pp. 167-168). On the musical plan, there were some instruments such as trumpets or drums that were used to announce events such as wars (pp. 34). Music and dance are not only forms of entertainment but also serve as means of cultural expression and transmission of folklore. For example, Bâ describes the vibrant celebrations that include traditional Peul music played on instruments such as the *hoddu* (a stringed instrument) and drums. These celebrations often involved communal dancing, where participants performed traditional dances passed down through generations. The music and dance were deeply intertwined with the oral traditions, with songs often telling stories or conveying proverbs. Bâ recounts a festive occasion:

Musicien virtuose, il faisait ce qu'il voulait de ses mains, mais aussi de sa voix. Il pouvait faire trembler son auditoire en imitant les rugissements d'un lion en furie ou le bercer en imitant, à lui seul, tout un chœur d'oiseaux-trompettes. Il savait coasser comme le crapaud ou barrir comme un éléphant. Je ne connais pas un cri d'animal ni un son d'instrument de musique qu'il ne pouvait imiter. Et quand il dansait, c'était à en rendre jaloux Monsieur Autruche lui-même, roi des danseurs de la brousse quand il fait la cour à sa belle. Souple comme une liane, aucune acrobatie ne lui était impossible.” (pp. 163).

Even the culinary art is mentioned in the novel. There are foods for each circumstance. There are even foods for adults and foods for children. This is why the author notes “*Une fois cet âge de maturité atteint, une gastronomie différente est adoptée (lait de chèvre et boulettes de mil), le reste de fait par un rituel très stricte*” (pp. 159). Likewise, kola nuts were used as a symbol of acceptance when there were visitors in someone's home (pp. 118).

On the cultural plan, *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, elders frequently use proverbs to convey complex ideas and life lessons in a way that is both simple and profound, reinforcing values that each generation is expected to uphold. For Amkoullel, hearing these proverbs from elders reinforces his sense of identity and belonging, linking him to a long line of Peul ancestors who lived by these same principles. This is why the novel explains that the *Doma* was one of the most important elders of the community, he mastered all the traditions including history, human sciences, religion, initiation, science of nature, myths, tales, legends and proverbs (pp. 161).

In *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, People lived and worked within distinct groups—slaves, artists, griots, and fishers—each contributing unique elements to communal life. Artists captured the essence of everyday experiences, expressing the identity of each group through various forms, from intricate carvings and colourful fabrics to lively performances. Griots, as keepers of oral history, through their poetic knowledge, told stories that honoured the society's roots, blending the past with the present. The fishers' lives inspired serene scenes that celebrated nature, while slaves' resilience was often depicted through symbolic motifs, expressing their role in the community's collective memory. This is why the author says that each artisanal function corresponds to a specific initiative path. To protect societal knowledge in a lineage, they were forbidden to mix hereditary groups (fishers, sellers, farmers, griots) (pp. 124).

Moreover, the art of language through oral literature is another significant element of Peul folklore depicted in the text. These concise, often metaphorical expressions encapsulate the wisdom and moral values of the community, guiding behaviour and decision-making. For example, throughout his memoir, Bâ frequently references proverbs taught to him by his elders. These proverbs are used to illustrate points, offer advice, or reflect on situations. For example, the proverb “*Un vieux lion ne perd pas ses griffes*” is used to emphasize the enduring strength and wisdom of the elders. In the memoir, Bâ notes:

Comme je l'appris par la suite, c'était un “homme de connaissance” bambara, un doma, donc un “grand connaisseur” — ce que l'on traduit souvent en français, faute de mieux, par le terme “traditionaliste” au sens de savant en matière de connaissances traditionnelles. Il existe des doma dans chaque branche ou filière de connaissance, mais lui était un doma complet. Il possédait toutes les connaissances de son temps touchant à l'histoire, aux sciences humaines, religieuses, symboliques et initiatiques, aux sciences de la nature (botanique, pharmacopée, minéralogie), sans parler des mythes, contes, légendes, proverbes, etc. C'était aussi un merveilleux conteur.” (pp. 161).

In both *Things Fall Apart* and *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, folklore serves as a crucial link between the past and the present. In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe uses folklore to connect the Igbo community with their ancestral heritage, preserving their history and cultural identity. The stories and proverbs handed down through generations provide a sense of continuity, allowing the community to maintain their traditions and values despite the disruptions caused by colonialism. Similarly, in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, Bâ highlights the role of folklore in bridging the gap between past and present. The oral traditions and stories shared by Amkoullel's

elders connect him with his cultural roots and provide a framework for understanding his place in the world.

To sum up, this chapter aimed to provide an analysis that uncovered both similarities and differences in the use of folklore in the novels under study. Also, the chapter delved into the authors' visions, exploring Achebe's intent to preserve Igbo culture and Bâ's dedication to safeguarding Peul traditions. This chapter elucidated the enduring impact of folklore on art, community values and the preservation of cultural heritage in the novels under study. Ultimately, the comparative study underscored the significance of folklore as a vital component of both artistic expression and cultural identity in the works under study. It has then been found out that dances, songs, poems and wrestles in the novels under study, are all artistic forms of folklore.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has provided an exploration of the role of folklore in the two novels under study which are Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampâté Bâ's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*, revealing its significance as a cultural, literary and social force. Through an approach grounded in cultural studies, the research demonstrates that folklore is used as a narrative framework for preserving African heritage and fostering communal identity. Through proverbs, myths and legends, which are parts of oral traditions, the study shows how Achebe and Bâ use folklore to navigate themes of culture, identity and intergenerational memory.

The findings show that while Achebe emphasizes the reclamation of Igbo cultural identity in the face of colonial disruption, Bâ focuses on the intergenerational transmission of Peul heritage amidst social change. This comparative analysis has illuminated the authors' distinct yet complementary visions, contributing to a deeper understanding of African cultural and artistic representation through dances, songs, poems and wrestles.

This research confirms the hypothesis that African literature is inseparable from African folklore, as the latter forms the foundation for its themes, narratives, and cultural essence. Folklore, encompassing oral traditions, myths, proverbs, and rituals, serves not only as a preservation of African cultural heritage but also as a framework for exploring universal human experiences through an African perspective. Both Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampâté Bâ in *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* employ folklore not merely as an aesthetic element but as an essential narrative structure that reflects their commitment to representing their societies' cultural identities. While both authors celebrate African traditions through folklore, their approaches differ. Achebe emphasizes the reclamation of Igbo identity and resistance against colonial domination, using proverbs and myths to highlight the richness of pre-colonial traditions. Bâ, on the other hand, focuses on the intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge and the role of memory in preserving identity amidst colonial disruption. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that folklore in African literature is both a cultural bridge

and a dynamic tool that adapts to modern challenges while preserving the essence of African heritage.

The first chapter established the foundation for analyzing Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Amadou Hampâté Bâ's *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul* through the lens of cultural studies. Drawing on Raymond Williams and other scholars, it highlights the interplay between culture and society. The literature review critiques previous studies on the novels, identifying gaps that this research seeks to address. It has positioned folklore as a dynamic cultural force shaping narrative structures and societal identities.

The second chapter traced the historical development of folklore in African literary traditions, emphasizing its transition from oral to written forms. It has identified the different forms of folklore—such as myths, legends, and proverbs (etc)—and has explored how they reflect the cultural and social realities of African societies. Folklore is portrayed as a mirror of communal values and a tool for cultural preservation.

The third chapter delved into the specific use of folklore in the two novels. It examines how Achebe and Bâ employ folkloric elements to enhance their narratives. Achebe integrates Igbo proverbs and myths to assert cultural identity, while Bâ uses Peul folktales to emphasize continuity amidst disruption. This chapter showed that both authors demonstrate folklore's capacity to convey communal values and resist cultural erasure.

The last chapter compared the use of folklore in *Things Fall Apart* and *Amkoullel, l'Enfant Peul*. It has identified similarities, such as the authors' shared commitment to cultural preservation, and differences, such as their focus on specific community dynamics (Igbo vs. Peul). The chapter has also explored how folklore interacts with other artistic forms like music and dance, showcasing its interdisciplinary influence on African culture. The authors' distinct visions reflect both universal and localized themes of memory and identity.

The particularity of our work lies in its comparative analysis of how Achebe and Hampâté Bâ incorporate folklore into their narratives to achieve distinct cultural and artistic goals. This work explores the universal and culturally specific aspects of folklore as a dynamic bridge between oral and written traditions. The chapter also extends the discussion to the implications of folklore beyond literature, showing its influence on other artistic forms like music, dance, and visual arts in African societies. It situates these findings within contexts of

cultural identity and artistic innovation. This study contributes to the academic discourse on African literature by providing a comparative analysis of folklore's role in these two seminal works. Furthermore, the research situates folklore within an artistic context, connecting its literary functions to its influence on other forms of African art, such as music, dance, and visual storytelling.

While this research offers significant insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The study's scope was confined to two novels, which, though representative, do not capture the full spectrum of folklore's role in African literature. Additionally, the reliance on secondary sources for certain cultural interpretations may have limited the depth of analysis. Future research could expand on this study by examining a range of African literary works or exploring how folklore intersects with contemporary digital and multimedia storytelling in African societies.

The distinctiveness of this work lies in its comparative approach, which illuminates how Achebe and Hampâté Bâ uniquely deploy folklore as both a cultural reservoir and an artistic tool. This work provides an in-depth exploration of how folklore transitions from its oral roots to written literary forms, enabling the authors to address themes of identity and cultural survival. While Achebe focuses on reclaiming Igbo traditions through an anti-colonial lens, Bâ's narrative underscores the role of folklore in sustaining Peul cultural memory across generations. Ultimately, this dissertation demonstrates that folklore is not a relic of the past but a vibrant, evolving element that continues to shape African literature and art, offering new ways to engage with identity and heritage in a postcolonial world.

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