

LAND AS (IN)SECURITY IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to explore how land can be associated with human (in)security and it contributes in shaping a person's identity in Achebe's Things Fall Apart through ecocritical perspective. Things Fall Apart is set in Umuofia, the precolonial Igbo land of South Eastern Nigeria. The Umofians value their attachment with their land very highly, and even worship their land as the goddess earth. The idea of exploiting land for anthropocentric interest is unimaginable for the Umuofians. Their cultural, physical and mental lives are shaped by their environment. Their agrarian lifestyle, religious beliefs, feasts and festivals, rites and rituals, myths and folk tales, and proverbs and sayings have a profound signature of the flora, fauna and landscapes of their dwelling place. This attachment binds them into an organic community as they internalize their existence in relation to their relationship to that organic. They feel their independent identity in their homeland. After the arrival of Christian missionaries into their community, however, they feel their sacred bonds with their places cut off, perceive themselves as fallen apart, and experience uncertainty, insecurity and danger for their existence in their own homeland. As a result, they feel their homeland under assault and suffer from solastalgia.

KEYWORDS: Place attachment, organic community, Umuofian identity, homeostatic balance, existential insideness/outsideness, solastalgia

INTRODUCTION

This paper tries to analyse and interpret how land is an integral part of human beings' (in)security and its role in forming person's identity in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* by applying ecocritical reading. In doing so, it examines how identities shift from one type of land-human relationship to another and various cultural factors contributing to that shift. Achebe claims that when land and its integrity, stability and unity between human and non-human worlds are respected its dwellers feel secure but the very land when its organicity and intrinsic values are commoditized becomes like an alien place and hence its natural dwellers feel insecurity in their own homeland.

The paper argues that the idea of exploiting land for anthropocentric interest is unimaginable for the Umofians. Their physical and mental lives are shaped by their place attachment. Their agrarian lifestyle and the different factors of their culture do have strong stamp of their biotic and abiotic worlds. The Umuofians feel themselves as a part of their organic community but not as mere consumers. They internalize the place attachment make them feel their identity, dignity and sense of individuality in harmony with other members of the organic community. But when their very place attachment

gets invaded and encroached, they experience of being under assault and suffer from distress and tension in their own homeland.

LAND-HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

Things Fall Apart is set in the pre-colonial Igbo land of Southeastern Nigeria. It gives a picture of nature and environment in their pre-colonial state where the Umofians experience Umuofia as their home. Defining the word 'home', Relph (1976) states:

Home is foundation of our identity as individuals and as members of a community, the dwelling place of being. Home is not just the house you happen to live in, it is not something that can be anywhere, that can be exchanged, but an irreplaceable center of significance. (p. 39)

Thus, home is an overwhelming and inexchangeable ingredient of our life. It orients our way of life towards maintaining symbiotic bonding between nature and culture. It provides a sense of security and surety for safety. At home, one can feel wholeness, connectedness and entire unity.

The Umuofians experience platial attachment with the land, treat land as living organism, worship land as the goddess earth. They approach the land intuitively by putting their faith on it as a member of the land community but not as a conqueror. They use the land only to satisfy their vital needs rather than accumulating property. The Umuofians hold the idea, as in the words of Arne Naess (2015), "Earth does not belong to humans. Humans only inhabit the land, using resources to satisfy vital needs" (p. 54). Their relationship to place is spiritual. They view themselves as collaborating with the land rather than imposing their will upon it. They are fully aware that their destiny and that of the land are inseparable. As deep ecological vision, the Umuofians respect the land as their companion, put strong faith on it, and present themselves as co-participants with the land in the biotic community. They represent basic tenets of deep ecology. Deep ecology proposes new norms of human responsibility to change human exploitation of land into co-participation with the land. Deep ecological thinking, as Fritof Capra (1995) noted, represents "Shift from self-assertion to integration" accompanied by a "shift from rational to intuitive, from analysis to synthesis, from reduction to holism, from linear to non-linear thinking" (p. 24). The Umuofians maintain a close connection with the land through farming. The idea of exploiting land for anthropocentric interest is unimaginable for them. Their physical activities and mental thinking are shaped by their surrounding environment. Their agricultural life, religious beliefs, feasts and festivals, rites and rituals, myth and language have deep and profound attachment with their land and deep respect for "ecological comprehension of land" (Leopold, 2003, p. 46) and "Prehensive unification [...] and interlocked relation of these prehensions" (Whitehead, 1965, p. 401). Every being and thing, if there is no human domination, naturally understands and respects the existence of other beings and things. They do have natural bonding or unity. They never disturb others' presence and territory.

The Umofians, in *Things Fall Apart*, maintain profound attachment to their land. They establish their relationship with land as living organism. This relationship with the land develops a sense of insideness with their dwelling place. Elaborating the sense of insideness with the land, Edward Relph (1976) argues, "To be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with place" (p. 49). He further clarifies "Being inside is knowing where you are. It is the difference between safety and danger, cosmos and chaos, enclosure and exposure,

or simply here and there” (p. 49). The feeling of being inside makes people feel attached to the place and participate in each and every activity of the place as a part of it. Peter Berger (1971) distinguishes three levels of assimilation/insideness with the place: “behavioural [. . .] empathetic [. . .] cognitive/existential or going native” (pp. 20-21). Clarifying Berger’s three types of insideness/assimilation with the place, Edward Relph (1976) further elucidates “there is behavior insideness or physical presence in a place; empathetic insideness which involves emotional participation in and involvement with a place; cognitive/existential insideness or complete or unselfconscious commitment to a place” (p. 49). Apart from these types of insideness, he talks about “vicarious insideness” (p. 49) which refers to the experience of places through literary creations and other media. Thus, platial attachment enhances one’s sense of insideness with the place where one lives or works. Each experiences physical, emotional, social and cultural involvement with the place. Such involvement helps develop a sense of here rather than there, safer rather than threatened, and at ease rather than stressed.

One’s personal and communal experience of placeness develops platial attachment. This attachment helps people of being familiarized with the flora, fauna and landscapes of their place. Relph (1976) further clarifies the concept of insideness with place and states:

[F]amiliarity that is part of knowing and being known [. . .] in this particular place. It is this attachment that constitutes our roots in places; and the familiarity that this involves is not just a detailed knowledge, but a sense of deep care and concern for that place. (p. 37).

Platial attachment requires having deep knowledge of setting, landscape, rites and rituals, interaction with other people and physical environment of the place as well as giving care and concern of the geographical and socio-cultural structures of the place. If people do not become familiarized with the geographical setting, flora and fauna, language and culture of the place, they are alien in their own place. The multiple rhythms of the place flow in human capillary, vein and artery.

Every independent human being needs to have subjectivity. This subjectivity is attached with their place. Through this attachment, human beings experience spatial imagination that is a deep sense of belongingness and rootedness. Asserting the needs for having rootedness to a place, Simon Weil (1955) writes in *The Need for Roots*:

To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul [. . .] A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of the community, which preserves in living shape certain particular expectations for the future. This participation is a natural one in the sense that it is automatically brought about by place, condition of birth, profession and social surroundings. (p. 53)

The need for roots is as significant as the significance of having order, liberty, responsibility, equity, equality and security. This is a prerequisite element for an independent individual. Elaborating Weil’s argument, Robert Coles (1970) claims:

It is utterly part of our nature to want roots, to need roots, to struggle for roots, for a sense of belonging, for some place that is recognized as mine, as ours. Nations, regions, states, counties, cities, towns-all of them have to do with politics and geography and history; but they are more than that, for they somehow reflect man’s humanity, his need to stay some place and to get to know [. . .] other people [. . .] particular environment or space or neighborhood or set of circumstances. (pp. 120-121)

The sense of rootedness to the place develops human beings' attitude towards life and the surrounding environment. Everyone's individual, rural, urban, regional, and national identity is determined by one's platial attachment. It helps an individual to have a firm understanding as a part of one's own land community with harmonious order of beings and things. It leads to internalize the spiritual and psychological relationship with their land.

LAND FOR THE UMUOFIANS

The Umuofians' individual and community activities are observed in different seasons. As Edward Said (1994) puts it, "Everything about human history is rooted in the earth" (p. 5), the Umuofians maintain strict rules during planting and harvest seasons. They believe that any violation of nature's course would dissatisfy the earth. Maintaining the "Week of Peace" is compulsory before the first plantation of Yam, a sacred food for Umuofians. They maintain equal sanctity before its plantation. They believe that maintaining peace in domestic and social spheres keeps the earth satisfied which would ensure good harvest. Therefore, when Okonkwo breaks the sanctity of the week being violent to his third wife Ojiugo, he has to face heavy penalty to compensate the harm he has committed against nature. Okonkwo's wife's crying was heard by his neighbours. Hearing someone's crying during week of peace was out of their tribal culture. So, Okonkwo was summoned into the large living quarter of Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess, Ani, who reprimands him and announces:

"Listen to me," he said when Okonkwo had spoken. "You are not a stranger in Umuofia. You know as well I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbour. We live in peace with our fellows to honor our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow. You have committed a great evil" [. . .] "Your wife was at fault, but even if you came into your obi and found her lover on top of her, you would still have committed a great evil to beat her" [. . .] "The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish." (Achebe, 1994, p. 30)

During the "Week of Peace," the Umuofians do not do any work on the land. This practice of keeping earth away from any work shows Umuofians' great concern for maintaining, as in the words of Leopold (2003) "the integrity, stability, and the beauty of the biotic community" (p. 46), and "nature as organism" (p. 398) in the words of Whitehead (1965). As other living beings need sound rest prior to long strenuous labour, the land also needs a sound rest prior to letting the farmers work on her. After the observation of the "Week of Peace," both human beings and the land get recharged and refreshed for further farming. It is assumed that Unoka, the father of Okonkwo, could not harvest good yam because he did not follow the laws of season, nor did he observe the "Week of Peace" honestly.

Similarly, the Umuofians celebrate "The Feast of New Yam" annually to honor the earth goddess and their ancestral spirits before the harvest begins. Achebe (1994) in *Things Fall Apart* writes:

The Feast of 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] was ultimate judge of morality and conduct [. . .] she was in

close communication with the departed fathers of the clan whose bodies had been committed to earth. (p. 36)

The Umuofians are honest and laborious farmers. They offer some yams to goddess earth and their departed forefathers for providing them plenty of new foods. The Umuofians believe that the spirits of their departed fathers along with Ani guard their crops, direct them to make good crops and bless them with plenty of new foods. The Umuofians treat land as themselves because they feel themselves as a part of it and will one day return it. They adjust to and live by the rhythms of land as Tadashi Suzuki (1995) argues “the ground and human body are separable [. . .] the latter [. . .] is a part of the former” (p. 158). Consciousness of the body’s communication with the land leads to a great awareness of all the physical junction of the body which stresses as Naess views “a post anthropocentric biospherical egalitarianism to create an awareness of the equal rights to all things to live and blossom” (as cited in Luke, 1999, p. 5). They celebrate this feast with their family members, neighbors, relatives and guests happily to show their gratefulness to these powers.

The Umuofians have strong belief that land is a living thing and in its sphere there is no death rather metamorphosis and rebirth. Explaining the immortality and vitality of the land, Leopold (2003) argues: “Land [. . .] a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals. Food chains are living channels which conduct energy upward; death and decay return it to the soil” (p. 43). The Umuofians believe that land is the mother of all resources and energy. It mothers all creatures. There is a natural harmony and unity among the members of the land community. There is elaborate network of interconnection as Willa Cather (1913), in *O Pioneers!*, writes, “We come and go, but the land is always here. And the people who love it and understand it are the people who own it – for a little while” (p. 169). So, in the land community, human being and all the other creatures come from the soil, get brought up in the lap of the land, work, live and survive on the land, and finally mix with the land. This cycle keeps on continuing without any hindrances. Land is always warm, receptive, fresh, lively and productive organism. In the land, there is no death, but life begets life. There is no such a thing that is ‘waste’ for the Umuofians, the true owners of the land.

The elaborate account of the New Yam Festival justifies the Umuofians’ communal existence. Highlighting the importance of New Yam Festival, F. Abiola Irele (2000) admits, “We are made to understand that the extraordinary coherence that the organic rooting of the tribe guarantees to the social order in its natural environment is an immediate function of an established system of values which regulates collective life” (p. 28). Achebe’s depiction of social gestures and modes of suitable and harmonious behaviours shows credible evidences of their collective existence and their agrarian lifestyle. The Umuofians realize the sacredness of the landscapes. This sacredness of landscapes is evoked with spiritual intensity. Leslie Mormon Silko (1996) justifies that a rock has being or spirit although we may not understand it. The spirit may differ from the spirit we know in animals or plants or in ourselves. In the end we all originate from the depth of the earth (p.265). The physically dead beings become dust, and in this becoming they are once more joined with the land, the mother creator of all the things.

The Umuofians’ great respect for their ancestors is another evidence of their deep and profound love for the land. In describing the burial ground of the community, Achebe (1996) writes, “The land of the living was not far removed from the domain of the ancestors. There was coming and going between them [. . .]” (p. 122). The dead members

of the community become a part of the land. Achebe in these lines advocates the land as home for all human, non-human, physical and non-physical beings. All these beings come and go home where one can feel wholeness, connectedness and entire unity. Love of land leads to love of interconnectedness with the diverse elements of biotic community, as Barry Commoner (1972) in his *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man and Technology* writes, “Everything is connected to everything else” (p. 33); “Everything must go somewhere” (p. 39); and “Nature knows best” (p. 41). Acknowledging this unity between biotic and abiotic worlds, DeLoughrey & Handley (2011) argue, “This dynamic model of land extends genealogically from the past to the future” (p. 6). Land is thus appropriated by the Umuofians to include both the living and non-living members of the community. Supporting this unity of the land community, Deborah Bird Rose (2004) views, “Each living thing has its own will to flourish, its own “conatus” in philosophical terms. The will to flourish brings every living thing into relationship with other living and non-living parts of its environment” (p. 6). Each and every biota has individual ontological value in relation to the existence of other beings. The land does not belong to the present generation only, the ancestors and the future generations do have equal share.

The Umuofians regard the land as having a divine power. They hold the opinion that the land serves and satisfies every need of the beings and blesses them with happiness. They believe, as L. White (2015) argues, “Every tree, every stream, every hill had its own *genius loci*, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men the true owners of the land” (p. 43) that trees, rivers, hills, caves and other components of nature do have divine powers. The Umuofians, as Achebe (1994) writes in *Things Fall Apart*, worship “Ani, the owner of all land” (p. 17), goddess of earth and fertility, “Ifejioku, the god of yams” (p. 18), “Imadiora, god of thunder” (p. 18), and “Anyanwu, the sun god” (p. 18). They believe the oracles of Hills and Caves and obey their command with utmost sincerity. They regard “the big and ancient silk-cotton tree” (p. 46) behind the public play ground as sacred. Achebe (1994) writes “spirits of good children lived in that tree waiting to be born. On ordinary days, young women who desire children came to sit under its shade” (p. 46). The Umuofians believe that the cotton tree does have divine power. They seek blessings from such divine trees. This shows that the Umuofians follow land ethics which, as Leopold (2003) asserts, “changes the role of *Homo Sapiens* from the conquerer of the land community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow members, and also respect for the community on such” (p. 39). Therefore, through the help of Achebe’s narration we argue that for the Umuofians land is the mother of all creatures. It is the source of energy that flows through a circuit of soils, plants and animals. Each member of this community has divinity and spirituality.

The Umuofians observe and celebrate different ceremonies which have strong signature of the place attachment. The observation and celebration of different ceremonies together with their family members, relatives and neighbours help in developing faith, mutual cooperation, collectivism, unity and harmonious understanding and relationship. Their place attachment is ceremonious with organic innocence, love, affection, fairness and harmony not only among human beings but also with animals and plants. People can attain such qualities only through the observation of ceremonies. Like the Umuofians faith on ceremonies, W.B. Yeats (2005) in his poem “A Prayer for My Daughter” writes:

How but in custom and in ceremony
Are innocence and beauty born?

Ceremony's name for the rich born
And custom for the spreading laurel tree. (77-80)

Like the nature of the Umuofians, the persona desires for his daughter to be inculcated organic innocence and freedom from hatred which kills innocence, fairness and harmony. Organic innocence and freedom from hatred are inculcated through the celebration of customs and ceremonies which help in instilling virtues like justice, wisdom, beauty and righteousness which are the bases for giving birth to harmonious organic human civilization. The pre-colonial Umuofian society seems to have been really harmonious organic human civilization.

The Umuofians are guided by Igbo metaphysics. Describing Igbo metaphysics, Jude Chudi Okpala (2002) states:

Igbo metaphysics does not discriminate "being" from "knowing", nor does it isolate "knowing," from "being" and "acting." Igbo metaphysics is a "thought system which recognizes the reality and independent existence of non-physical beings and their interaction with physical beings in the material world" (pp. 559-560).

The Igbo practically implements "ecological egalitarianism" in their quotidian life. Humans, non-humans, physical beings, and non-physical beings go hand in hand in order to maintain the intrinsic values of the land community. All species that inhabit the land do have equal share over it. No species is superior or inferior or conqueror or loser in the lap of land. Every being and thing has unique intrinsic value and significance to make the land community run smoothly. There are no hierarchies and boundaries between human and non-human worlds. They meet and exist mutually. Okpala (2002) further argues in Igbo metaphysics "wherever something stands, something will stand beside it" (p. 560). Nothing stands by itself, nothing is meaningful in isolation. In the ontology of the land community, there is interconnection among all things: flora, fauna, humans and abiotic world.

Ecocriticism believes that there is synergy between nature and culture and dispels the conventional notion that they are separate. Robert Kern (2003) asserts, "Ecocriticism is not escape from culture to nature but precisely productive recognition of their entanglement" (p. 260). Supporting Kern, Gary Snyder (2003) views ecocriticism envisions "a civilization that can live fully and creatively together with wilderness" (as cited in Kern, p. 261). These arguments of Kern and Snyder clarify the fact that it is only through culture that human that seems to understand nature. Culture constructs the prism through which we know nature. Culture and nature help us to understand our natural environment. The natural environment includes flora, fauna and the landscape. Nature friendly culture respects and preserves the interconnectedness between and among the biota of the ecosphere.

Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* presents the interplay of nature and culture. The Umuofian culture is naturally environment friendly. Therefore not only their agricultural life, feasts and festivals, rites and rituals but also their myths and folk tales, and language do have a signature of their place. They are the products of land and landscapes. The natural and cultural relationship is expressed in the novel.

LAND AS THE MYTH OF INSECURITY

Myths and environment has something in common; both are set in the primordial times. Myths are supposed to be the incidents or events that happened in the distant past. They reflect the origin of societal set up. Thus, myth helps us to comprehend the society.

African myths are integral parts of human culture and they are inevitably connected to the environment. They are often mysterious and illogical but they shape African existence. Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* incorporates a number of myths and folk tales to establish the Umuofians' close attachment with their flora, fauna and landscape. The Mosquito myth, the Locust myth, and the myth of the cosmic Quarrel between Earth and Sky are the most prominent ones in the novel which substantiate the novel's ecological ethos. Elaborating on these myths, Achebe (1994) narrates:

[O]nce in distant past a Mosquito [. . .] had asked Ear to marry him, whereupon Ear fell on the floor in uncontrollable laughter: "how much longer do you think you will live?" She asked. "You are already a skeleton." Mosquito went away humiliated, and any time he passed her way he told Ear that he was still alive. (p. 75)

In the myth, the Ear, a synecdoche for a human being, portrayed as a beautiful marriageable girl and the Mosquito, a non-human life of our natural habitat, have a sort of relationship between them. Once the Mosquito asked for the hands of the Ear in marriage, his proposal was openly refused by the Ear. Since then when the Mosquito passes near the human Ear, it sings to tell that he is still alive. This myth acknowledges the fact that there is place for a relationship between the human and non-human worlds in African cosmology. It can be argued that the mosquitoes that now spread different diseases so as to revenge human beings because the Ear refused his proposal. Now human beings have to use different defense mechanisms like insecticides, mosquito nets, and all other shields to prevent themselves from mosquitoes' bites.

The Locust myth is narrated in the third year of Ikemefuna's arrival in Okonkwo's household. A Locust swarm descends on the Umuofians. According to the myth, the locusts appear once for a generation, but when they appear they come for consecutive seven years. Locusts, for the Umuofians, stand for celebration and joy. Their arrival is ushered in with gladness and funfair. All the Umuofians stop their daily chores and gather to watch their arrival gleefully. The Locusts, as non-human organism, constitute an integral part of the environment. They are regarded as harbingers of joy, harmony and understanding. They settle on every tree and on every blade of grass, on the roofs and cover the bare grounds. For the Umuofians, they are appetizing meal. The Locusts, therefore, are nature's gifts to human kind.

The myth that explains the quarrel between the Earth and the Sky was told by Nwoye's mother. The myth reads like this:

[T]he 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 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 entrails. (Achebe, 1994, pp. 53-54)

This myth shows that nature in African environment encompasses a close interaction among the flora, fauna, landscape and human beings. If there is any community/culture that disagrees with the communicative ability of the environment, it is their inability to

listen to them. The Vulture is personified, selected as a messenger to communicate with Gods and Goddesses in the sky. He could convince them and come down with rainfall to mitigate a long drought. This myth indicates that the Umofians believe in maintaining harmonious relationship between humans, non-humans, or physical and non-physical beings.

The aforementioned myths incorporated in *Things Fall Apart* are the evidences of how the Umuofian community was set up and how its cultural structures were patterned. They are the products of their deep and profound attachment with the place. Regarding this aspect, DeLoughrey (2011) observes that language develops in a long historical relationship to a particular environment and culture (p. 7). Thus, the land shapes the mental make-up of pre-colonial Umuofians which is reflected in their language.

The Umuofians' conception of their own place as one of the elements in the organic community involving both human and non-humans is reflected in their daily language use. Being an oral society, the Umuofians used numerous rhetorical devices for effective communication such as proverbs, sayings, and riddles that demonstrate such a symbiotic relationship. The frequent references to flora and fauna mentioned in *Things Fall Apart* imply the Umuofians' intimacy with their environment. Proverbs like "Okonkwo's fame had grown like bush-fire in the harmattan" (p. 3); "A toad does not run in the day time for nothing" (p. 20); "The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground [. . .]" (p. 21); "you can tell a ripe corn by its look" (p. 22); "He grew rapidly like a yam tendril in the rainy season [. . .]" (p. 52); "his eyes were red and fierce like the eyes of a rat when it was caught by the tail and dashed against floor" (p. 63); "When mother cow is chewing grass its young ones watch its mouth" (pp. 70-71); "Obieriko's compound was as busy as an anthill" (p. 112); and "the new faith was a mad dog that had come to eat it up" (p. 143). The images of vegetation, growth and animals like "bush-fire", "a toad", "a lizard", "high ivoka tree", "ground", "ripe corn,", "yam tendril", "the eyes of a rat", "mother cow", "chewing grass", and "ant hill" expressed in these proverbs suggest that Umuofia is an organic community with the natural capacity to absorb and assimilate with its flora, fauna and landscape. The disruption of the Umuofians' attachment with their place is symbolized by the incident related to the python. For the Umuofians, the royal python was extremely sacred and won a sign of divinity. They even call rainbow "the python of the sky" (Achebe, 1994, p. 163). The Umuofians regard python as great being having divine qualities. The mistreatment to the python is taken against the culture. Even the accidental killing of python was against the law. The python is given equal status as the great heroes of the community.

The above discussion demonstrates that each and every aspect of the Umuofians' agrarian lifestyle, feasts and festivals, rites and rituals, myths and folktales, proverbs and sayings have strong stamp of their place, flora and fauna. They are found leading a happy, innocent, and harmonious life being attached with their external environment. The Umuofians's consciousness and experiences are structured by their familiarity with their places. Supporting this argument Lawrence Durrell (1969) states, "human beings are expressions of their landscape and that their cultural productions always bear the unmistakable signature of place" (p. 157). Place reflects human values and intentions which are shaped by some inner hidden force or, as Vein Rene Dubos suggests, "a god within" (as cited in Relph, 1976, p. 31). Place has a central role in making human existence harmoniously meaningful. The energy, vitality, and biorhythms of the places where people are born, brought up, and where they live for long time shape their

individual and cultural identity and security. A French philosopher, Gabriel Marcel, has summarized this sentiment in the following words: “An individual is not distinct from his place; he is that place” (as cited in Relph, 1976, p. 43), so, from a person’s language, feasts and festivals, costume and manner, we can identify from where he/she is. The signatures of the platial features are stamped on its dwellers. Therefore, the Umuofians’ attachment to their home land increases because of their length of time they have lived there where they were born in, brought up and trained to live in harmony with nature. In this way, the Umuofians, leading a community life with close attachment with their land, feel security of their existence.

After presenting the organic picture of the pre-colonial Umuofian life, Achebe moves to show how the Christian missionaries and colonial rulers denigrated the philosophy of native people. In their attempt to spread Christianity, the missionaries as the harbingers of colonial rule tried to strip the Umuofians off their platial and spiritual attachment with nature and environment. The missionaries tried to persuade the local people to embrace Christianity and the Christian concept of great chain of creation. As Lynn White Jr. (2015) notes:

By gradual stages a loving and all powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God had created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man’s benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man’s purposes. And, although man’s body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God’s image. (p. 43)

This shows that Christianity is sharply against biocentrism. It is an anthropocentric religion which is in sharp contrast to paganism followed by the Umuofians. The Umuofians believed that every plant, creek, river, mountain, den had its guardian spirits which were all accessible in their nature and environment. Christianity instructed to follow, as in the words of Val Plumwood (2000), “the assumption that all other species are available for unrestricted human use” (p. 113). They implement the idea that nature is a commodity created by the creator and the god had given permission to human beings to exploit them for their betterment and welfare. Anias Mutekwa & Terrence Musanga (2013), commenting on western thinking, state “nature is conceived as existing to serve human designs and becomes objectified in the process” (p. 240). The Christian missionaries try their best to make the Umuofians follow their thinking. Supporting this argument, Eckersley (1992) asserts “a mechanistic Cartesian metaphysics which sees nature as a dead, inert machine, insensitive to abuse and exploitation by humans” (pp. 45-46). This human-centered or anthropocentric worldview starts dominating the organic community of the Umuofians. In *Things Fall Apart*, Brown, the white missionary tries to convince the Umuofians that nature does not hold any divine power and there is only one god, Christ. Commenting upon their religious faith, Brown (1994) states “You carve as a piece of wood [. . .] and you call it a god. But it is still a piece of wood” (1994, p. 179). Thus, all the deities of nature are dismissed and ridiculed by the missionaries. They attack their faith and their regard for the interplay of culture and nature. It can be argued that construction of church building by cutting down the trees of the Evil Forest not only wound their religious faith, but it also marks the destruction of nature for the extension of colonial enterprise.

The imposition of Christianity in Umuofia, the Christian missionaries establish a

dualism of human and nature, insist it is God's will that humans exploit nature for their proper ends. By destroying the Umuofian pagan animism, Christianity makes it possible to exploit nature in the mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects. Supporting this argument, White (2015) views "the spirits in natural objects, which formerly had protected nature from man, evaporated. Man's effective monopoly on spirit on this world was confirmed, and the old inhibition to the exploitation of nature crumbled (p. 43)." The Umuofians believe in having spirits in natural objects, worship and observe objects and phenomena with profound faith. The Umuofians regard everything material; however small has an element of individual consciousness. This concept helps to maintain the unity between human and non-human worlds, and hence nature was protected. The Christian dogma of great chain of creation evaporates the belief of having spirits in natural objects and confirms human supremacy over nature which accelerates human beings' ruthless exploitation of nature.

The anthropocentric Christian monotheism otherizes nature as an infinitely manipulatable and inexhaustible resource. After establishing their hegemony in Umuofia, the Christian missionaries impose, as Plumwood (2000) views, "the dominant culture that would deny any application of ethics to non-humans, treating humans, only humans as ethically significant in the universe" (p. 115).

The Christian missionaries attack their religious faith, rites and rituals, attachment to nature and environment, harmony and unity among people. This invasion hurt the Umuofians' identity and self-respect. Drawing the title from W.B. Yeats' "The Second Coming", Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* gives a portrayal of the kind of apocalyptic vision of disintegrating of the organic Igbo culture and civilization, devastated under British colonialism. The white men could not understand the Umuofian custom of land. They become successful in cutting off the things that bind the Umuofians together, that has made them fall apart.

The "rough beast" (p. 21) referred to might be the almost anthropocentric Christian missionaries, the harbingers of colonial rule in the Igbo Land and in Africa by extension. Malshette Yogesh Trimbakrao & Shete Sonali Shivraj (2012) argue, "The Second Coming of Christ referred to [...] an approaching dark force with a ghastly and dangerous purpose" (p. 2). Due to the arrival of Christian missionaries and their forceful encroachment into the Umuofian organic culture and civilization, the Umuofians feel threatened, tortured and manipulated in the name of civilization. Supporting this claim Sweta Saxena (2013) elaborates "Yeats' poem [The Second Coming] points a grim picture of [Umuofian Society] where "ceremony of innocence is drowned" (p. 18). The chaos and mayhem get created by the Christian cultural and civilizational invasion in Igbo land. The purity, organicity, tribal unity, innocence and biocentric agricultural livelihood of Umuofian society ruthlessly threatened with extinction. The agricultural life, religion, feasts and festivals, rites and rituals, myths, folktales are laughed at even by the converted Umuofian Christians. They no longer reciprocate the calling of their culture and civilization. The foundation of their identity that is place-attachment gets cut off. The hysterical, hedonistic, blasphemous multitudes no longer believe in platial attachment. Picturing this predicament, W.B. Yeats (2005) composes:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, (1-4)

These lines document the then decayed, putrid socio-political milieu of Igbo culture and civilization. The centre of their subjectivity that is profound attachment with their place gets shattered. It makes a prophetic premonition of the eschatological doom of devastating, disintegrating and degenerating Umuofian culture and civilization.

When the Christian missionaries invade their culture, the Umuofians feel being fallen apart from life as they know it. Although they are not displaced and dispossessed from their land, they cannot feel comfort and solace in their own land. They seek solace in their home place but feel their homeland is under violent and sudden attack. The Umuofians, in the word of Glen Albrecht (2006), suffer from “solastalgia” (“sola” = solace and “algia” = pain or sickness). According to Albrecht, “solastalgia refers to the distress caused by a lack of solace or comfort derived from one’s relationship to a home environment” (p. 95). They notice the missionaries’ encroachment and attempts to capitalize off their home land, disrupt their cultural bond with their land. The Umuofians feel that their beloved home place in which they have been residing is under assault. They also realize uncertainty, insecurity and danger for safety of their existence in their own home land. While Obieriko and Okonkwo are talking about the impact of the arrival of the Christian missionaries into Umuofia and their impending gloomy future, Obierika speaks:

[The white man] says our customs are bad, and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart. (Achebe, 1994, p. 176)

The white men are the representatives of Christian missionaries who are the harbingers of colonial enterprise. The harmonious organic community gets disrupted by western thinking. The root cause of ecological destruction is not by other being but by humans, as Murray Bookchin argues, “The very notion of domination of nature by man stems from the very real domination of human by human” (as cited in Desjardins, 1993, p. 240). Because of this degeneration, degradation and decline of their tribal unity, their organic life-world was dismantled. The sacred bond that tied them together thus got cut off and then they feel being fallen apart. In their own place, they experience a strange existential outsidership and alienation, and hence insecurity of their existence.

CONCLUSION

In this way, Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* depicts a pre-colonial vibrant community in which the Umuofian society is not only at one with environment but also densely entangled with it. The novel expresses the true African culture by disseminating morality and humanity through its deep and profound attachment with the land. The Umuofian identity is entirely associated with their honest and eco-friendly farming to maintain the intrinsic values of the land community. They treat land as organism but not as commodity to satisfy their greed for material possession or instant gratification. Their agricultural life, feasts and festivals, religious beliefs, myths and folk tales, proverbs, sayings all do have strong stamp of their flora, fauna and landscapes. Humans, non-humans, physical and non-physical beings live in harmony and tend to communicate to each other. The Umuofians’ way of life embodies remarkable harmony between biotic and abiotic worlds; that harmony holds each and everything of the nature and environment

together. In such harmonious environment, they feel certainty, security and surety for safety of their existence in their homeland. Like any community, they had their share of conflicts, but they also had their own system in place to regulate themselves and to live in harmony with the land by achieving a homeostatic balance.

However, if this harmony gets disrupted, everything falls apart, as the title of the novel also states. The Christian missionaries, who were the harbingers of colonial rule in the Igboland (and Africa by extension), attempt to wipe out the agrarian indigenous communities that subsisted harmoniously with nature. Although they are not displaced and dispossessed from their land, they cannot feel comfort and solace in their own land. They feel their homeland is under assault and suffer from solastalgia. They notice the missionaries' encroachment and attempts to capitalize off their home land, disrupt their cultural bond with their land. They also realize uncertainty, insecurity and danger for safety of their existence in their own home land.

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