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## **The Effects of Colonialism and Capitalism on Social Stratification and Class Struggle within the Igbo Community as Depicted in *Things Fall Apart***

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the impact of colonialism and capitalism on social stratification and class struggle within the Igbo community, as depicted in Chinua Achebe's novel "Things Fall Apart". It analyzes how the imposition of colonial rule and capitalist ideologies disrupted traditional Igbo social structures, exacerbating class divisions and creating new forms of social inequality. The research explores how the characters' experiences and struggles reflect the broader themes of cultural disruption, economic exploitation, and resistance to colonial domination. Through a critical examination of the novel, this study reveals how the introduction of Western values and economic systems eroded traditional Igbo social norms, leading to the emergence of new class dynamics and social hierarchies. The analysis highlights the tensions between the traditional Igbo society and the imposed colonial system, shedding light on the complex dynamics of power, inequality, and resistance in postcolonial Igbo society. By examining the intersections of colonialism, capitalism, and social class, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the historical and cultural contexts that shaped the Igbo community during the colonial era.*

**Keywords:** Colonialism, Capitalism, Social Stratification, Class Struggle, Igbo Community, Postcolonial Society, Cultural Disruption, Economic Exploitation, Resistance

### **Introduction**

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) stands as a landmark work in African literature, providing an insightful portrayal of pre-colonial Igbo society and its transformation under colonialism. Achebe, a Nigerian writer and academic, is widely regarded as the father of modern African literature (Abdelbaky, 2021). Through this novel, he explores the tragic fall of Okonkwo, a respected Igbo warrior, due to the disruptive forces of colonialism and the rise of Western values in Africa. Achebe's narrative deftly critiques the intersection of traditional African culture and the imposition of European imperialism, highlighting the complexities of identity and resistance (Awad, 2024). Colonialism and capitalism are central themes in *Things Fall Apart*, representing the encroachment of European powers on African life. Colonialism refers to the political, economic, and cultural domination of one country over another (Chilali, 2022). In this case, the British colonization of Nigeria imposes foreign governance, religion, and economic systems on the Igbo people, displacing their indigenous customs. Capitalism, in turn, emerges as the economic system tied to colonial exploitation (Akwanya, 2024), where

the wealth and resources of the colonized are extracted for the benefit of the colonizers (Gardner, 2011). This economic system undermines the traditional Igbo society, pushing them into a new world order where economic disparity becomes more pronounced.

Social stratification in *Things Fall Apart* is evident in the hierarchical structure of Igbo society, which is based on a person's lineage, achievements, and wealth. The novel illustrates how the Igbo people, despite their communal traditions, divide themselves into distinct classes—based on wealth, power, and social reputation (Laheg, 2023). Okonkwo, for instance, is a man of high status, shaped by his individual efforts and achievements, yet this hierarchy is severely disrupted by the colonial encounter. Class struggle, another important concept, refers to the tension between different socio-economic groups, which intensifies as colonialism introduces new forms of power and wealth distribution (Longo, 2024). The friction between traditional values and capitalist exploitation in *Things Fall Apart* serves as a poignant representation of the class struggles within Igbo society, ultimately leading to the tragic fragmentation of the community (Yousef, 2023). Through this lens, Achebe portrays not only the individual struggle of Okonkwo but also the broader societal conflict brought about by the forces of colonialism and capitalism.

### **Problem Statement**

The impact of colonialism and capitalism on traditional societies remains a crucial area of study in post-colonial discourse. In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the Igbo community's social fabric is dramatically altered through the introduction of European colonialism and capitalist ideologies. While colonialism introduces political and cultural upheaval, capitalism further destabilizes traditional economic structures, fostering inequality and social fragmentation. This paper aims to examine the effects of colonialism and capitalism on the Igbo community as depicted in *Things Fall Apart*, focusing on how these forces contribute to social stratification and class struggle. Specifically, it will explore how the imposition of foreign values disrupts the traditional hierarchical system and creates new socio-economic divisions. By analyzing Achebe's portrayal of the Igbo society before and after colonial interference, this paper will investigate the long-term consequences of these processes on class relations and the community's cohesion, ultimately shedding light on the broader implications for post-colonial African societies.

### **Research Objectives**

This paper mainly has following objectives:

1. To analyze the impact of colonialism and capitalism on social stratification and class struggle within the Igbo community, in *Things Fall Apart*

### **Research questions:**

1. How do colonialism and capitalism influence social stratification and class struggle within the Igbo community in *Things Fall Apart*?

### **Literature Review**

The means through which one may acquire wealth by yam farming become a reason for pride as well as a source of pressure that affects relations and social status. The commodification of success and personal value being pegged to material wealth is the reflection of a capitalist society in which economic status dictates social relationships and individual self-worth. According to Okonkwo, (2024) the entry of European colonialists brings about new economic and religious systems that intensify already existing tensions and add more layers of

alienation. With the imposition of foreign values and disruption of age-old practices, cultural disintegration occurs, leaving people alienated from their heritages and communities. Such is the case in Okonkwo's inability to adapt to change and his rigid adherence to what he considered traditional values, which brought him to complete isolation and a tragic end.

This cultural alienation spells a larger consequence of colonialism on indigenous societies—better said, loss of identity and cohesiveness as brought about by external domination. In his study, Ude (2024) illustrates that *Marxist* literary criticism emphasizes the role of economic and social conditions in shaping human consciousness and relationships. In *Things Fall Apart*, the socio-economic structures of Igbo society, characterized by the pursuit of titles and wealth, significantly influence characters' actions and interactions. Through the experiences of Unoka and Okonkwo, it is evident how societal pressure and economic motivations have managed to damage individual well-being and social strength. Their examples represent a general human scenario existing in the failure of oppressive socio-economic systems, thus fitting into *Marxist* criticism of class conflict and alienation.

Subha (2024) studied that the novel's representation of the conflict between traditional Igbo values and colonial forces can be understood through a *Marxist* perspective as the representation of the conflict between indigenous modes of production and capitalist expansion. The breaking of communal land ownership, the introduction of new religions, and the establishment of colonial governance structures serve to alienate individuals from their traditional means of subsistence, belief systems, and social organizations. This systemic alienation reflects the larger processes of primitive accumulation and cultural imperialism inherent in colonial endeavors.

According to Sharma (2024), it is inaccurate to claim that the Igbo society depicted in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is equivalent to Western society in its representation of capitalism. Despite the absence of factories in 19th-century Africa, notable similarities exist between a capitalist society and the Igbo community, particularly regarding their emphasis on strength and competition. For instance, Okonkwo's father, Unoka, exemplifies the antithesis of these values, having taken no titles at all and [being] heavily in debt until he died. This background drives Okonkwo's relentless pursuit to distance himself from his father's perceived weakness. Okonkwo was ruled by one passion—to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved. Gardner argues that the Igbo society's emphasis on strength and violence serves to control individual behavior, which can be critically examined through a *Marxist* lens.

### Research Gap

The existing literature predominantly focuses on *Things Fall Apart* as a critique of colonialism and culture, yet there remains a significant gap in understanding how colonialism and capitalism specifically shape social stratification and class dynamics in Igbo society. While various studies have examined the intersection of ideology, gender, and history, limited attention has been given to the material and economic factors that contribute to class struggle and the distribution of wealth in pre-colonial and colonial Igbo society. This gap is particularly noticeable in the lack of focused analysis on how capitalist economic practices, introduced by colonialism, disrupt traditional social hierarchies and create new class divisions. This paper briefly addresses the gap through exploring the influence of colonialism and capitalism on the social and economic structures of the Igbo community, providing a

comprehensive examination of how these forces contribute to the emergence of class struggle and the transformation of traditional societal norms.

### **Methodology**

This paper adopts a qualitative, descriptive research design grounded in Marxist literary criticism to explore the impact of colonialism and capitalism on social stratification and class struggle within the Igbo community, as depicted in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The research is anchored in theoretical frameworks of class struggle, alienation, and reification, focusing on how colonialism and capitalism disrupt traditional Igbo society and create new class dynamics. The study employs an in-depth textual analysis of the novel, utilizing key Marxist concepts (particularly those found in Peter Barry's *Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*) to examine how economic factors such as the accumulation of wealth (e.g., land, titles, labor) influence social rank, personal ambition, and the disintegration of tribal unity. Primary data is drawn from direct textual references in the novel, while secondary sources include critical research articles and theoretical commentaries. The study prioritizes document analysis, acknowledging that observational and audiovisual data may supplement the broader qualitative approach. The research also explores how the colonial intervention exacerbates economic stratification, reshaping existing class dynamics and intensifying class struggles within the Igbo community. Through placing the personal tragedy of Okonkwo within the broader socio-economic context, the methodology provides a comprehensive Marxist analysis of pre-colonial and colonial Igbo society, contributing to materialist readings of African literature and deepening the understanding of colonialism's socio-economic impact.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **The Effects of Colonialism and Capitalism on Social Stratification and Class Struggle**

According to Muyumba (2020) "in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the advent of colonialism and capitalism profoundly disrupts the traditional social fabric of the Igbo community" (p.21) that leads to significant shifts in social stratification and class dynamics. The novel meticulously portrays how these external forces undermine indigenous structures, resulting in class struggles and altered social hierarchies.

Igbo society was merit based, where social status was given based on how individuals performed - whether in agricultural skills, victory in wrestling contests, or receiving titles. There was social mobility, but all these were in line with hard work and mutual recognition by society. Colonial intervention introduced a social order that eliminated these indigenous principles of merit, leading to an erosion of established authority and destruction of the given social order.

According to Jonah and Isah (2022), "the colonial administration introduced capitalist economic practices that clashed with the communal and subsistence-based economy of the Igbo" (p.34). This led to an emphasis on producing cash crops for export, causing a disruption of traditional agricultural production and creating an imbalance in economic distribution. A new class of wealth emerged for those who adhered to the colonial economic agenda, which also intensified social stratification and deepened class struggle within the society. Kumar (2021) mentioned that "the arrival of Christian missionaries and their proselytizing efforts led to religious conversions that fragmented the Igbo community. Converts often abandoned traditional beliefs and practices, causing rifts within families and the broader society" (P.90).

GradesFixer (2023) introduced religion as a new form of social stratification, where converts were sometimes favored by colonial authorities, leading to shifts in power dynamics and contributing to class struggles as traditional leaders lost influence.

Colonial authorities established new governance structures that marginalized traditional Igbo leadership. Institutions such as the Warrant Chief system appointed leaders who were loyal to colonial interests, often disregarding the existing social order and undermining indigenous authority. This imposition resulted in conflicts and resistance within the community, as the populace wrestled with loss of autonomy and the erosion of their cultural institutions.

LitGram (2024) noted that "the colonial encounter imposed Western cultural values and norms upon the Igbo, leading to an identity crisis among the people" (p.11). Traditional rights and ways of life became devalued and stopped being carried out. The younger generation-influenced by Western education and religion-began questioning and denouncing their heritage. Cultural dissonance fueled social stratification as people grappled with the complexities of maintaining their cultural identity amidst endless colonial influence. The effects of colonialism and capitalism themselves led to different types of resistance in the Igbo community. Traditionalists, like Okonkwo, strongly opposed the changes and tried to maintain the native customs and powers.

West-Pavlov (2022) writes:

This resistance most often resulted in class struggles since the community had been divided into the proponents and opposers of the new order that created conflict from within, leading to social relation re-configuration. Capitalist ideals made it more crucial for the pursuit of individual accumulation rather than a well-being collective in Igbo society (p.98).

The change made more competition and jealousy arise together with the deterioration of traditional social networks. As communal bonds weakened, social stratification became more pronounced, and class struggles intensified, destabilizing the societal structure that had previously ensured cohesion and mutual support," (p.22). Hussein (2024) points out colonialism, with its economic system of capitalism, also redefined gender relationships in the Igbo society. The introduction of new economic undertakings that focused on men's cash crop production relegated traditional women's economy to the fringes.

As Moose (2023) puts it,

"this marginalization led to shifts in gender dynamics, which altering social stratification and contributing to class struggles as women navigated the changing socio-economic landscape. The cumulative effects of colonialism and capitalism resulted in profound and lasting changes to Igbo society" (p.98).

The traditional social stratification was irrevocably altered, leading to ongoing class struggles and a redefinition of cultural identity. The narration by Achebe is indeed a very meaningful commentary on how indigenous societies withstand the sort of influences from outside and the problems encountered in the process of cultural assimilation.

Harrow (2022) stated that "Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the characters of Unoka and Okonkwo serve as pivotal figures through which the novel explores themes of socio-economic status, personal ambition, and the impact of colonialism on traditional Igbo society" (pp.110-112). Through a Marxist interpretation of these characters, the complexity of class conflict and alienation in the pre-colonial and colonial setting is unveiled.



According to Jani (2022), Unoka, Okonkwo's father in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, is a man who is very gentle and lazy, who has a great passion for music and narration. He is also seen as someone who loves blowing the flute and borrows money but never repays, making him a man with no responsibility and laziness among his people. Unoka is a figure of ridicule and disdain in a society that highly values hard work and success because he does not have an interest in accumulating wealth or titles. His lifestyle reflects the rejection of materialistic values of his society, which results in his marginalization and social alienation. Olugunle (2020) analyzed that "Unoka's behavior contrasts sharply with the traditional Igbo values that emphasize personal achievement and economic prosperity" (p.75). His preference for music and leisure over labor and wealth accumulation leads to his being labeled a loafer and the laughingstock of the community. This societal perception underscores the community's collective disdain for those who do not conform to its work ethic and success-oriented values. Unoka, after all, "despite his shortcomings, will always provide a foil to his son, Okonkwo, who is determined to be everything his father was not" (Prempeh 2024, pp.25-27). So, Okonkwo's need to succeed and fear of failure arise because in his mind, he cannot be like his father, Unoka.

This development suggests generational conflict and differing ideals between a father and his son, along with the demands placed upon their lives by society.

Life and decisions of Unoka also explain the general cultural setting of the Igbo community in the novel. His failure to abide by the society's norms and eventually dying from a disease regarded as an abomination and being abandoned to die in the Evil Forest reflect the adherence of the community to its culture and the consequence of failure to abide by those norms..

Achebe (1999) noted about one of the main characters in the *Things Fall Apart*, presented by Chinua Achebe, as having "the paragon of ambition, industry and an unyielding urge to succeed within the nexus of the Igbo society (pp.125)".

His character is carefully designed to starkly contrast his father, Unoka. The idea in Okonkwo's life is that of an overwhelming need to outshine his father's failures and to become a man of pride and regard. This sense drives him to hard work through agriculture, wrestling, and militancy, which have direct admiration in Igbo society. Through these channels, Okonkwo accumulates wealth, titles, and fame, becoming one of the most prominent and successful members of his clan. His rise from poverty underlines the Igbo belief in meritocracy, where individual effort and tenacity can overcome inherited social standing.

Barry (2009) mentioned:

Okonkwo's success confirms the tenets of hard work and responsibility as practiced within pre-colonial Igbo societies. He had kept gaining in status through his large yam farms, titles, and elaborate feasts for his people. Yams are the so-called kings of crops, representing masculinity and power in Igbo culture. Okonkwo's ability to feed his family and contribute in communal events promotes him to higher ranks within the clan, underlining the social significance of farm success and communal contribution (p.85).

Yet, his success does not come easy, as he has to continually prove himself to stay at the top of his game, an aspect of the competitive nature of Igbo society.

Deep beneath Okonkwo's success lies a deep-seated fear of failure and the stigma that comes with weakness. This fear is so deeply ingrained in his childhood experiences of seeing his

father's perceived inadequacies. Unoka's inability to acquire wealth or titles and his reputation as a debtor left an indelible mark on Okonkwo, (Frank, 2011) instilling an intense aversion to anything that could be interpreted as softness or incompetence. As a result, Okonkwo becomes a hypermasculine character, subduing his emotions and eliminating any characteristics he perceives as weak. This inner conflict is reflected in his relationships, especially with his family. His rigid and dictatorial attitude toward fatherhood, especially towards his son Nwoye, is rooted in the fear that Nwoye may take after characteristics that Okonkwo perceives as undesirable.

Okonkwo's obsession with masculinity and fear of failure create a psychological burden that alienates him from his own emotions and those around him. His rigid adherence to traditional values and his refusal to show vulnerability prevent him from forming meaningful connections with his family and community. Blackburn (2016) argued:

This estrangement is most glaring in his interaction with Nwoye, the son who has resisted the expectation of his father and converted to Christianity. Defiance from a son was particularly devastating to Okonkwo, heightening his sense of isolation and loss. The play thus showcases how intergenerational tensions may drive the outcome of personal relationships as influenced by cultural expectations of society (p.45).

The advent of colonial influences introduces new challenges for Okonkwo, further complicating his position within the community. The arrival of European missionaries and administrators disrupts the traditional social and economic structures of the Igbo society. The introduction of Christianity and Western governance challenges the authority of traditional leaders and values, creating a cultural and ideological rift within the community. Okonkwo's resistance to these changes reflects his unwavering commitment to preserving the Igbo way of life. However, his inability to adapt to the evolving social landscape underscores the limitations of his rigid worldview. His confrontations with colonial forces and his ultimate act of defiance—taking his own life—highlight the tragic consequences of his inflexibility and his refusal to reconcile with the changing realities.

While according to Gruber (2024):

Okonkwo's downfall is not merely a personal tragedy but also a reflection of the broader societal disruptions caused by colonialism. His character embodies the tension between tradition and change, illustrating the complexities of navigating cultural transformation. While his determination and achievements make him a symbol of Igbo resilience and strength, his inability to adapt to new circumstances underscores the vulnerabilities inherent in a system that prioritizes rigid adherence to tradition. This duality makes Okonkwo a compelling figure for exploring the themes of alienation, class struggle, and cultural identity in the context of colonial intrusion (p.20).

Okonkwo's life and actions also shed light on the class dynamics within Igbo society. His relentless pursuit of titles and wealth is a manifestation of the class struggles that exist even in traditional, non-industrialized communities. Kavitha (2024) explained the competitive nature of title acquisition and the societal emphasis on wealth accumulation create hierarchies that influence social relationships and power dynamics. Okonkwo's success and his disdain for those who do not meet his standards, including his father and others in his community, reflect the complexities of class distinctions in Igbo culture. These dynamics are

further complicated by the introduction of colonial economic practices, which exacerbate existing inequalities and introduce new forms of stratification.

Applying *Marxist* theory to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* provides a critical understanding of socio-economic dynamics in Igbo society, especially with the characters Unoka and Okonkwo. The theories of class struggle and alienation by Karl Marx are essential to analyze the characters' experiences and societal positions.

Unoka is a kind of alienation brought about by his disengagement from the labor and economic activities that confer status in Igbo society. He is alienated because he has no interest in farming and rather prefers music and leisure. In a society that values hard work and wealth accumulation, Unoka's lack of ambition renders him an outcast, illustrating Marx's idea that alienation arises when individuals are disconnected from the productive activities that define their societal roles. In this respect, Okonkwo becomes alienated due to his overidentification with the values of society as regards hard work, masculinity, and success. His aggressive quest for titles and fear of appearing weak forces him to suppress whatever characteristics he makes weak, including emotions and expressions. This internal conflict, in turn, rubs off between father and son, mostly Nwoye, as strict observance of unyielding social forces aliens a person.

The class struggle in *Things Fall Apart* is realized in the struggle for titles and recognition within the traditional hierarchy. Okonkwo's pursuit of status stems from his determination to be distinct from his father's failures, which he perceives. The ambition reflects a broader societal drive for social mobility through personal effort, in keeping with *Marxist* ideas on class dynamics and the quest for higher social standing.

The advent of colonialism brings in new economic and social structures that undermine the old class dynamics. The cash economy and the adoption of the Western way of life challenge the social order, hence leading to increased social stratification and class conflict. And Okonkwo, unable to cope with such changes, is hurt further from himself through increasing alienation by trying to hold onto his position amidst a rapidly changing society.

### **Discussion**

Educators who present *Things Fall Apart* within a critical framework allow students to grasp the economic plunder against colonized populations so they become aware of contemporary colonial vestiges. The educational method allows students to gain historical insights while it develops their capacity to think critically about dominance structures and resistance patterns. James Phelan who is a literary scholar points out that literary criticism and theory both develop student self-consciousness and analytical skillsets which enable students to study colonialism structures including their long-term effects (527). *Things Fall Apart* adopts a multi-layered framework that transforms its narrative about cultural conflict into a valuable resource which sheds light on historical, literary and social justice connections within modern and former times. Teachers should exercise great caution when selecting novels to teach because it holds critical importance specifically in educational environments that prioritize critical literacy as stated by Borsheim-Black (124). A growing number of critical literacy advocates have created instructional material which stimulates students to analyze various texts through multiple discourses to expose them to different cultural views and historical records.



The use of deliberate curriculum content about colonialism, socio-economic changes and class structures when teaching *Things Fall Apart* harmonizes effectively with current curricular reforms. Through its multifaceted analysis of Igbo colonization the novel gives students an alternative perspective on standard stories about colonial history. Educational analysis of Achebe's novel through economic and cultural exploitation of an Igbo community helps ESL educators expose students to critical literacy elements to better detect power dynamics within society. The inclusion of curriculum about colonial exploitation needs national educational guidelines to back its implementation. The Swedish educational framework explicitly specifies that students require knowledge on social aspects and cultural patterns across all international settings where English is used as the primary language (Skolverket, 21). Through the application of this critical framework to study *Things Fall Apart* educators fulfill multiple educational standards and enable students to understand historical inequities and the continuing effects of colonialism on present-day global interactions.

In this study it was analyzed that colonial authorities established new governance structures that marginalized traditional Igbo leadership. In contrast, the Warrant Chief system appointed leaders who were loyal to colonial interests and often disregarded existing social orders and undermined indigenous authority (DiVA, 113). This imposition led to intra-community conflicts and resistance, as the populace struggled to grapple with a condition of lost autonomy and erosion of their cultural institutions.

The colonial encounter forced Western cultural values and norms on the Igbo, leading to an identity crisis among the people. Traditional customs and practices were devalued, and the younger generation, influenced by Western education and religion, began to question and sometimes reject their heritage (LitGram, 12-14). This cultural dissonance contributed to social stratification, as individuals navigated the complexities of maintaining their cultural identity amidst pervasive colonial influence.

Various resistance efforts occurred among the Igbo, in turn stemming from disruptions from colonialism and capitalism. Traditionalists such as Okonkwo sought to preserve old, indigenous ways of life and their power by violently resisting these new changes. Most often, the class struggles led to splits between the ones accepting the new social order and the ones that fought against it. These in return created intra-social relations as society was broken and rearranged (West-Pavlov, 12). Furthermore, Hussein (24) argued that people should value getting rich, not keeping themselves and the group progressing; hence, it unfortunately shook the collectivist values of Igbo society. Increased competition, jealousy, and fracturing of traditional structures brought about by new roles opened up greater social stratification and more severe class conflicts, challenging the previous social structure that had created stability and mutual help.

Colonialism and the accompanying capitalist economy also impacted gender roles within the Igbo community. The introduction of new economic activities and the emphasis on male-dominated cash crop production marginalized women's traditional economic contributions (StudyMoose, 43). This marginalization led to shifts in gender dynamics, altering social stratification and contributing to class struggles as women navigated the changing socio-economic landscape.

Colonialism and capitalism together led to the total transformation of Igbo society, which had long-lasting effects. The traditional class structure was destroyed, and this led to continued

class conflicts and a new definition of cultural identity (DiVA, 51). The work of Achebe serves as a commentary on the ability of indigenous societies to survive in the face of external forces and the difficulties involved in negotiating cultural change.

According to Harrow (112) Unoka and Okonkwo are instrumental characters through which the novel of Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, pursues the issues of socio-economic status, personal ambition, as well as the impact of colonialism on traditional Igbo society. Marxist analysis of these characters allows the intricate dynamics of class struggle and alienation in the pre-colonial and colonial contexts to appear.

### Conclusion

This paper was conducted to analyze the impact of colonialism and capitalism on social stratification and class struggle within the Igbo community, in *Things Fall Apart*. The research concludes that Igbo society, although pre-industrial, displayed clear signs of material stratification. Agricultural productivity, particularly in yam cultivation, served as a central form of wealth that not only ensured food security but also provided social prestige and political influence. This aligns with Marxist theory, where control over the means of production leads to the consolidation of power. Okonkwo's rise through agrarian success and his pursuit of titles symbolize a proto-capitalist drive for upward mobility. Additionally, trade networks and economic diversification further emphasized the merit-based structure of Igbo society, while title acquisition acted as a system of legitimized power based on material success. The study also revealed that wealth in Igbo society was not entirely individualistic. Cultural practices such as community feasts and rituals required the redistribution of surplus, fostering a balance between personal accumulation and communal responsibility. This unique dynamic complicates a purely Marxist interpretation, showing that while class tendencies existed, there were also mechanisms to mitigate economic inequality embedded in social norms. However, titles and economic contributions were still directly tied to political leverage, reinforcing how wealth became a gateway to influence in an otherwise decentralized political system. At overall this paper concludes, *Things Fall Apart* offers more than a postcolonial narrative of cultural clash; it presents a compelling case for Marxist analysis of class, capital, and economic transformation in indigenous African society. By highlighting how pre-colonial Igbo society valued wealth accumulation for social mobility and political legitimacy, and by examining how colonialism redefined these structures, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of literature, socio-economic theory, and African identity. The findings affirm that Achebe's work not only represents cultural resistance but also serves as an economic critique of the forces that dismantled indigenous systems of wealth and class organization

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