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Things Fall Apart: A Cultural Reverberation of Pre Colonial African Culture of the Ibo/Igbo

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ABSTRACT

Aim: To establish that the novel *Things Fall Apart*, gives cultural accounts of the Ibo tribe. Important matters of life like birth, death, religion, wedding, etc. are discussed in details.

Our task is to compare it with the historical accounts and factual narratives to conclude that it is more of a historical novel.

The word culture according to a dictionary means 'customs' or 'the way of life of a society or a group'. There may be end number of things that might come under the customs of a particular society; hence we focus on a few important components such as marriage, religion, birth, inheritance, etc. of the Ibo tribe.

Although nowhere specifically indicated in the novel, *Things Fall Apart* takes place in the late 1800s and early 1900s, just prior to and during the early days of the British Empire's expansion in Nigeria. Throughout the book, we learn details about the life in that place and period in an African culture and Tradition much different from our own; the culture of the Ibo people, specifically. We learn this from the first mention of the Ibo people- "Among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten."

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II. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

We will now discuss the general introduction given by the authors of two nonfiction narratives on Ibo people: George Thomas Basden (*Among the Ibos of Nigeria*) and Thomas Northcote

Whitridge (*Anthropological report on the Ibo-speaking people of Nigeria*).

2.1 Territory/ Demography

George Thomas Basden gives a fair account of the Ibo Territory: "The limits of the Ibo country have now been approximately defined and the territory apportioned into districts. A network of government stations has been established, and trading and missionary interests shew evidence of vigorous prosperity. The Ibos are distributed over great part of the Central Province and the Protectorate and number about four millions, i.e., is probably half the total population of Southern Nigeria." We must note that this is a post colonial demarcation of the area. As large part of the novel centers around the pre-colonial times we come to know that villages formed the components of Ibo territory: "Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond." There's no direct reference to the country being divided into districts but it is nevertheless evident from the introduction of the "District Commissioner" in the novel.

The area covered by the tribe is extensive and there's a wide divergence in the physical features of the country. This divergence in the physical features of the country affords variety of environment, variety in flora and fauna and the weather conditions.

There's a great amount of mention of Yam and Palm wine throughout the novel. Let us discuss the facts mentioned by George Thomas Basden on them. He writes that on the western side of the Niger (The Great River in the Novel), a large part of the country is covered with forest. It is on a lower level than the eastern side and much more

fertile. Great quantities of yams and other crops are raised. To provide sites for villages and land for agricultural purposes, clearings are made in the forest, and this has led to ruthless and wholesale destruction of valuable timber. He writes: "The creation of a Forestry Department by the Government will, no doubt, do much to remedy this evil." Thus we can deduce that there's a form of subsistence farming practised. There's a mention of creating new farms in the novel also: "After a Week of Peace every man and his family began to clear the bush to make new farms. The cut bush was left to dry and fire was the set to it..." According to Basden's accounts flowers are scarce in the country. Palms predominate among the trees, the oil palm being of the greatest value. It flourishes in a greater or less degree, according to the situation, throughout the Ibo country. The *Raphia Vinifera* furnish the natives with copious supplies of palm wine. The cocconut also abounds, together with many other species of palm. The uses to which the palm trees and their products are put by natives are unlimited, every part being utilised in one form or other. In the novel there's a lot of mention of palm wine and palm oil signifying their utility and consumption. Then there's a mention of palm frond: "Once in a while two young men carrying palm fronds ran round the circle and kept the crowd back by beating the ground in front of them..." We also learn from the novel that palm branches and leaves were used in dwellings: "A new cover of thick palm branches and palm leaves was set to walls to protect them from the next rainy season." According to Thomas Northcote Whitridge in his book *Anthropological report on the Ibo-speaking people of Nigeria*, on the whole, the country cannot be called productive. One result of the unproductive character of the country is that in rainy season many people are compelled to subsist, at least in parts, upon roots, a diet resulting in some disorder of the digestive organs. The climatic conditions are hinted at the novel and it gives us the idea that agriculture is the main occupation of Ibo people. "The year that Okonkwo took eight hundred seed-yams from Nkwakibie was the worst year in the living memory. Nothing

happened at its proper time,- it was either too early or too late. It seemed as if the world had gone mad. The first rains were late and when they came, lasted only a brief moment."

Basden describes the climatic conditions as follows: The weather conditions of the Ibo country are very similar to those of West Coast generally. They possess the merit of at least, being regular. The dry season begins early in November, the rains concluding with a few heavy showers. Towards the end of December or in early January, some slight rain will fall ushering in the harmattan. This is a period of excessive dryness. During the day it is very hot and this great at night is succeeded by low temperature. The harmattan is succeeded by the hot season proper, and the heat grows more and more oppressive until end of March. The breaking up of dry season is heralded by terrific tornadoes; wind, rain, thunder and lightning all being of extremely violent character. Instance of this is corroborated in the novel: "But the year had gone mad. Rain fell, as it had never fallen before. For days and nights together it poured down in violent torrents, and washed away the yam heaps..." At the beginning of July the wet season starts in earnest. A huge rainfall is registered between the beginning of July and the middle of October, from which date the rains gradually slackens, and the wet season ends as it began with series of tornadoes.

Basden writes that compared with other parts of Africa, game is exceptionally scarce. In bygone days, there was a thriving market for ivory, a fact clearly attested by the arm and leg ornaments, worn by men and women, and the magnificent "horns" carried by chief as part of their insignia of office. He says that nowadays, elephants are almost extinct in the Ibo country and Ivory is very expensive luxury. Throughout the novel there's also but one mention of ivory with Okonkwo: "He searched his bag again and brought out a small, flat, ivory spoon, with which he carried the brown stuff to his nostrils."

In the novel there's an interesting sentence which reads: "Yam, the king of crops, was a man's crop."

According to Basden the cultivation of yams absorbs such a great proportion of time and energy that it deserves appropriate attention when writing about the occupation of the Ibos. To be deprived of yam creates acute distress. Whatever substitute may be offered it cannot satisfy the native's desire for his favourite food. Because of these reasons it may have come to be called as the king of crops.

2.2 Language

According to Thomas Northcote Whitridge, language is fairly homogenous though there are dialectical differences between town and town. For example a native of Agolo is sometimes unintelligible to a native of Awka, six miles away; besides variation in words, variation in pronunciation is also found. According to him the multiplicity of dialects extends all over the Ibo country. This fact is further corroborated by the mention of dialectic difference in the novel: "He spoke through an interpreter who was an Ibo man, though his dialect was different and harsh to the ears of Mbanta. Many people laughed at his dialect and the way he used words strangely."

2.3 People

Basden also gives account of physical appearances of the Ibo people. He writes that in appearance the people exhibit wide divergences due largely to local conditions. In eastern districts they are inclined to be thin and scraggy. This may arise from a combination of causes. In the first place, the cultivation of the land demands labour of a flesh reducing character. Secondly, the yam crop is comparatively poor and meagre, and supplies must be eked out with cassava, beans and maize and other catchcrops. On the western side, the people are shorter and are of a stocky, thick-set build. They are disposed to be lazy yet they are passionate, and of a rash fiery temperament, the result probably of an over-abundant supply of rich food. Colour variations are prevalent from light olive to deepest black, and albinos are common. Albinos are referred to in novel as well: Uchendu says- "We have albinos among us..."

Basden writes that permission is freely given to others to cultivate land, or even to build upon it, but the "Head" and his successors can, always claim its restoration at will. Although there's no mention of this practise in the novel directly, there are some implications: "Share cropping was a very slow way of building up a barn of one's own."

Basden writes that the society is chiefly based on patriarchal lines. Personal property, including the wives and slaves descend on the eldest son as heir or failing a son, to the eldest brother or male relative. A wife ordinarily has no rights, either over herself or her possessions, not excluding her children. She is part and parcel of her husband's property.

2.4 The Ibo Village

George Basden gives details of an Ibo village. Before we proceed, we will compare his description with that what we learn from the novel. He describes life in an Ibo village to be at once simple and picturesque. Unusually, villages are not located near the source of water. With the exception of those actually situated on the banks of streams, it is usual to find villages at a distance from water. Indeed very often there's no adequate supply, people simply dig catch-pits for storage of the surface water. In the wet season there's no lack, but in the dry season there's scarcity and water in the catch-pits gets stagnant. Thus, bath is also an occasional luxury. For drinking purpose recourse can be had to coconut milk or palm wine. The former is preferable, as the natives dilute the palm wine very freely, and they are not particular whence the water for the purpose is drawn.

He describes the Ibo Village as follows: The huts are planted down just where the builders fancy, in all sorts of places and at every conceivable angle. The terra-cotta coloured walls and the thatched roofs blend most harmoniously with the luxuriant foliage. The women and elder girls are engaged in work, but even they exhibit sign of rush or worry. Some depart to rush water, their large clay pots skilfully balanced on their heads; others are busy

with preparations for the evening meal. The description in the novel corroborates this fact which paints a picture of an Ibo Village: “Women and children returning from the stream with pots of water on their heads wondered what was happening until they saw Okagbue and guessed that it must be something to do with ogbanje.” The houses and compounds are swept diligently. There’s evidence to this in the novel also: “When the heat of the sun began to soften, Obierika’s son, Maduka, took a long broom and swept the ground in front of his father’s obi.” “Ekwefi put a few live coals, into a piece of broken pot and Ezinma carried it across the clean swept compound to Nwoye’s mother.” However, Basden writes that all the rubbish and filth are simply cast down in any available spot in or about the compound and the clumps of bush between the houses. For all their attractive appearance, are little more than open cesspits.

Every man understands the art of building and thatching. The materials he obtains from the surrounding bush. He puddles his own clay as near the site of the proposed building as he conveniently can, often in the compound itself. He and his dependants till the land and produce the main food supply. Meat is not a common article of diet, it is a luxury to the Ibo. From the novel we learn that meat is served at feasts. At one occasion, Okonkwo calls a feast. “...And so three goats were slaughtered and a number of fowls.”

Every village has its own market-place, fetish houses and public meeting ground. The markets are designated by the names of the day on which they are held, viz. “Ekke,” “Afaw,” “Oye,” and “Nkwaw” these corresponding to the four days of the week Ibo week. There are numerous references to market in the novel and depiction that markets form an integral part of Ibo culture: “The market of Umuike is a wonderful place.” “On an Eke market day a little band of fugitives came into our town.” “They have a big market in Abame on every other Afo day and, as you know, the whole clan gathers there.”

According to Basden the public meeting ground called Ilo is a charming spot: a large open space

shaded by one or more Awbu trees. Meetings for many purposes are held in these open spaces: for the adjustment of differences between individuals or households; for the celebration of fixed feasts; the offerings of common town sacrifices and on specially appointed occasions. Frequently the Ilo also serves as the market-place. There’s similar mention of the Ilo in the novel also: “Every village has its own ilo which was as old as the village itself and where all the great ceremonies and dances took place.”

Basden has also described the houses in an Ibo village in details. He writes that the head of the house has his own particular hut. Each wife also has her own which she shares with her children until the sons grow up, when they build themselves bachelor’s quarters. Adjoining the chief’s private apartment is the recess where the household gods are paraded. The family Ikenga occupying the position of honour. In front of the main building are one or more sacred ebwo trees which serve as sacrificial grove. Just inside the compound is a rude shelter for the guardian ju-ju of that particular house. This description corresponds to the description provided in the novel of Okonkwo’s house: Okonkwo’s prosperity was visible in his household. He had a large compound enclosed by thick wall of red earth. His own hut, or obi, stood immediately behind the only gate in red walls. Each of his three wives had her own hut, which together formed a half moon behind the obi. The barn was built against one end of the red walls, and long yam stood prosperously in it. At the opposite end of the compound was a shed for the goats, and each wife built a small attachment to her hut for the hens. Near the barn was a small house, “the medicine house” or shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god and his ancestral spirits...”

Basden also writes that the head of the house dines alone in his private apartment, each wife in turn attending to his needs. He uses his own drinking cup, which he never allows out of his possession. In the novel this fact can be inferred from the flowing lines: “After waiting in vain for

her dish he went to her hut to see what she was doing.” “Okonkwo was sitting on a goatskin already eating his first wife’s meal...”

2.5 Religion

Thomas Northcote Whitridge writes about religion. He writes that the Ibo people have, at the head of the pantheon, a supreme god known as Cuku. There are also a large number of demi-gods, known as Alose. In the novel there’s reference to the supreme god also: “We also believe in Him and call Him Chukwu. He made all the world and other gods.” Whitridge classifies the object of worship into four heads, (a) Cuku, (b) Alose (c) Personal protective deities and (d) ancestors. Properly speaking, there’s no worship of Cuku or Chukwu. In the novel there’s mention of such worshipping: “Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god and his ancestral spirits. He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food palm-wine, and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself and his three wives and eight children.”

There are numerous other religious ceremonies and beliefs which require a great deal of research and explanation.

Whitridge writes about masks: Masked figures called Maun appear at various times, especially in June and run round with a whip, sometimes also throwing down yams for Agu. A Maun is held to be a dead man and his real nature is carefully concealed from the women. He usually has a dress a dress of cloth, with holes for the eyes and the whole of his body is covered. They usually speak in a whistling sort of tone, and this is produced by taking a small piece of wood in the mouth with spider’s web at each end. The novel also gives account of such persons: “And then the Egwugwu appeared. The women and children sent up a great shout and took to their heels. 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.” “Each of the egwugwu represented a

village of the clan. Their leader was called Evil Forest. Smoke poured out of his head.”

Personal Omens: If the lower eyelid twitches it means lamentation and death, when the upper eyelid twitches it means that the person will see something. This is shown in the novel as well: {“Ekweffi”, said Ezinma who had joined in plucking the feathers, “my eyelid is twitching.” “It means you are going to cry,” said mother. “No,” Ezinma said, “it is this eyelid, the top one.” “That means you will see something.”}

Whitridge also writes about various agricultural ceremonies. Various rites are performed in order to encourage the growth of the crops, the majority of them being connected with the growth of yams. He writes that some ceremonies involve sacrificing of a fowl or a chicken. Sacrifices are offered to Iwejioko and Agu (a mischievous spirit supposed to bring ill fortune). There’s corroboration to this fact in the novel also: “Every year,” he said sadly, “before I put any crop in the earth, I sacrifice a cock to Ani, the owner of all land.” “I also kill a cock at the shrine of Ifejioku, the god of yams.”

2.6 Marriage

George Thomas Basden writes in his book, *Among the Ibos of Nigeria*: ‘marriage is a most important event in the Ibo’s life.’ From the time that boys and girls are capable of thinking for themselves, marriage is set before them as the one object to be attained. Celibacy is an impossible prospect. Unmarried persons of either sex, except in special cases, are objects of derision, and to be childless is the greatest calamity that can befall a woman. Hence a very high value is set upon marriage.

It is interesting to note that in the novel also substantial amount of space is given to talk about the marriage and marriage customs to emphasize the importance of marriage in the culture: “She was about sixteen and just ripe for marriage.” “Marriage should be a play and not a fight so we are falling down again.”

Courtship as such does not exist. The word “love” is not even found in the Ibo language. Love, then, usually has no part to play in native courtship. After marriage the woman is ranked with the other property of the husband with a proportionate value attached, but little greater than that of cows and goats. In the novel also having more wives seem to indicate a person’s wealth- “He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife.” “There was a wealthy man in Okonkwo’s village who had three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children.”

Parents of the richer class often select a wife for a son whilst he is still quite a boy, irrespective of his wishes or inclinations. In majority of the cases a young man makes his own choice. He happens to meet a girl who attracts his attention and he immediately institutes inquiries as to her parents, and whether she is already engaged or not. If she is free, he endeavours to elicit, through her friends, information concerning her capabilities in cooking, other useful and profitable accomplishments, character/personality, etc. Should these investigations prove satisfactory, he lays his case before his parents or his confidential friend, for he cannot the first advances personally. This intermediary proceeds to open up negotiations. A visit is paid to the girl’s home, and a bottle of gin or a pot of palm wine offered as “ojji” (kola). If the present be accepted friendly relations are established, but no mention whatever must be made of the contemplated marriage. Several similar visits will ensue and more presents be offered to all who can claim any sort of kinship to the girl. Finally the real business is broached to the intense surprise of the girl’s relatives! “She is very happy where she is and we should be miserable without her. She is so intelligent and so useful, we cannot spare her!” When at last these preliminaries are over, the girl is called in, and asked if she has any objection, to the proposal and then after a long palaver, the amount to be paid as dowry is fixed. In the old days the price was reckoned in cows, goats and cowries. This dowry money is a specified amount,

any presents given are additional, and are quite irrespective of the dowry. The usual practise is to pay by instalments spread over months and even years. From the moment that the first instalment of the dowry has been paid the girl is reckoned as the man’s wife. There are no such intermediate words as betrothal or engagement. As soon as matters can be arranged the custom of “Uri” must be observed. This consists in the girl being sent to the parents of the affianced husband, when she is introduced to all his relatives. There’s a mention of this in the novel as well: “His daughter Ezinma had broken her twenty-eight day visit to the family of future husband, and returned home when she heard that her father had been imprisoned and was going to be hanged.” “On the following the morning the entire neighbourhood wore a festive air because Okonkwo’s friend, Obierika, was celebrating his daughter’s uri.”

In due course of time once the final instalment is handed over, this constitutes the marriage and the pair are declared man and wife. On this appointed day a feast is prepared –copious amount of palm wine forming an essential feature- at the expense of the bridegroom.

These are the broad outlines in brief as mentioned by Basden. Apart from this, he writes that the village belles are not unversed in the art of coquetry. They take particular pains to attract the attention of young men and do not hesitate to advertise their personal charms. Cleverly drawn freehand designs are traced over the body from head to foot and extra care is exercised in plaiting and adornment of the hair. On gala days every ornament is brought into requisition; strings of beads of a particular kind are worn round the neck and waist, bracelets of ivory or cowrie shells and leg ornaments. He girls revel in dancing and seize every opportunity of displaying their charms.

Basden also writes about a custom called “Nkpu”. It can be assumed that under normal conditions girls are married when about fourteen years old, the first sign of puberty fixing the minimum age. This particular custom, the object of which is to

announce the fact that these girls will be entering the marriage state during the ensuing year. Considerable preparations must be made for the proper observance of this ceremony. Six months prior to the formal entrance into Nkpu state, the girls take up their quarters in separate apartments. They must not venture out into the open daylight, they do not work during this period whatever during this period and are provided with more food than they can possibly eat. The only occupation they have at this time is the preparation of camwood dye wherewith to stain their bodies.

There is another custom to which the bride elect must submit before the actual marriage can be consummated, viz. Cicatrization. This consists of very rough tattooing over the front part of the body, in the form of a cross. The presence of such cicatrices indicate the woman is already married or preparing to enter the state. The novel mentions a few bits of these customs: "Some of it also went to the bride and her attendant maidens, who were putting the last delicate touches of razor to her coiffure and cam wood on her delicate skin."

As soon as the marriage is completed, and bride has come to her husband's house, custom compels her to confess the misdeeds which she has been guilty since the days of her so called betrothal. She is bound to divulge the name of any and every man with whom she has been on terms of intimacy. This confession is first made to the Umuada, i.e. the female relative of the husband. The confession takes place before the idol Awfaw, an idol which is kept in the house of the head of the whole family. The woman, holding a fowl in her hand, makes her confession before the idol, and then the fowl is killed and its blood poured upon the Awfaw, in expiation of her misdemeanours. This confession ceremony is mentioned in some details in the novel where Njide asks the questions to the bride: "And so it was time for the final ceremony of confession..."

Thomas Northcote Whitridge points it to some more facts about the Ibo marriage in his book. He

writes that the essential part of the ceremony of marriage appears to be in many places sacrifice of goat and fowl to the ancestors of the girl. He also writes that although the Ibo law recognizes adultery as an offence which may be punished by a fine, this is in practise very rarely exacted. This is further corroborated from the events in the novel: "Two years after her marriage to Anene she could bear it no longer and she ran away to Okonkwo."

Whitridge also writes that on the whole, the husband has considerable powers over his wife. He can chastise her, subject to conditions laid down under the Nso Ani, and if he killed her, a payment to her family was the only penalty.

Basden in his book writes: "the ambition of every Ibo man is to become a polygamist, and he adds to the number of his wives as circumstances permit. They are an indication of social standing and to some extent, signs of affluence; in any case they are counted as sound investments."

2.7 Death and Burial

Basden gives accounts of death and burial customs. He writes that a lot of sympathy is offered to a sick man by the Ibos. When a man dies, there is a wild outburst of wailing. In the case of near relative, as wife for her husband, or mother for her child, it speedily develops into a form of frenzy. The bereaved woman rushes forth from the death chamber, beating her breast and runs through the village bewailing her loss at the top of her voice. She salutes none but continues to cry out even when she has left the town. A woman will thus pass the whole night in the bush pouring out her lamentations, and return next morning in an utterly exhausted condition. Meanwhile other women attend to the corpse. It is washed and then stained with "Ufie" (Camwood). The body is clothed in the finest garments from the deceased's wardrobe and in the case of a man the corpse is placed on a stool in a sitting posture, propped against the wall of the chamber. This lasts for few hours and all old friends and relatives available will come and pay their last respect to the dead.

When the due time has elapsed young men wind the corpse in grass mats, and carry it out to the burial ground and bury it in a shallow grave. This is the customary course for normal death and burial, but there are deviations. The exceptions are governed chiefly by considerations of birth, rank, and the cause of death. A slave receives but scant attention and no necessary expense will be incurred in carrying out the last rites. For a free born, best possible arrangements must be made. The bodies of lepers, and of those who die from noxious diseases, and those whose death cannot be accounted for satisfactorily are disposed of hurriedly. Lepers are wound in their sleeping mat. Those who die of smallpox are not buried; they are simply thrown out into Ajaw-Awfiá (bad bush) very often before they are dead. People dying as a result of accident, women dying childbirth, lunatics, suicides, and those who have been murdered, drowned or burned, are considered as having come to their untimely ends by “Awnwu Ekwensu,” i.e. by the instrumentality of the Devil. None of these maybe rubbed with the *ufie* and they must be buried without delay.

It is believed that when men have run their course in this world they return to their master – the supreme being- and live with him in the spirit world. In their spiritual state they are endowed with never ending life, and, until the second burial has been observed, they continue to haunt this world and taking a distinct and unremitting interest in the affairs of the individual and the community with which they were associated in life. There is no belief in transmigration into any but human bodies, but we find strongly grounded belief in the perpetuation of individuals by the medium of repeated births. Reference is made to Ogbanje children in the novel.

Whitridge writes about the custom of infanticide. Not only twins but many other children are, or were exposed because of some circumstance connected with their birth or development. For example a child born with teeth is regarded as a monster who will bring misfortune on his father; a child that doesn't cry for twenty four hours, and a child that cannot walk until its successor arrives,

are alike sacrificed to the fears of the natives. Two children born to different mothers in the same house on the same day are reckoned as twins and they pay the penalty of the coincidence. The power to which all these little victims are offered is Ana, the ground, and it is the popular belief that any violation of the Nso Ani, prohibitions of the ground, brings disease and death upon the community. According to Whitridge, as regards infanticide the most frequent case was probably that of twins, which appear to be extraordinarily numerous in spite of weeding out of twin-bearing stock that has gone on for generations; the mother has to undergo purification for twenty eight days. Triplets are known but, naturally of rare occurrence; they are also forbidden. If a girl conceives before menstruation her child must also be thrown in the bush.

The novel also gives a significant amount of details about burial customs: “If you think you are the greatest sufferer in the world, ask my daughter, Akueni, how many twins she has borne and thrown away.” “Nneka had had four previous pregnancies and child births. But each time she had borne twins, and they had been immediately thrown away.”

2.8 Miscellaneous Customs

George Thomas Basden has given details on Ibo culture and lifestyle. He has written on almost every aspect of their lives. He writes that about Ibo pastimes and sports as well. Shooting, wrestling, dancing and swimming are the sports of men; comparatively few of the women swim but all indulge freely in dancing. In the case of adults it is not always easy to distinguish between recreation and serious occupation; sometimes the two are combined as in shooting. In the case of dancing it is often difficult to differentiate between that which is simply recreative and that which is the physical expression of religious enthusiasm. Wrestling is universal amongst boys and young men and it is a very popular sport. Every youth physically capable practices it and continues to do so up to the time of marriage. There are great yearly contests; it is purely

amateur sport and there are no prizes. Each bout is complete in itself, the successful competitor being fully content merely to receive the plaudits of crowd as an acknowledgment of his skill and strength. Many athletes manifest little sporting instinct. They cannot take defeat with good grace. If a man has but an idea that he is likely to be worsted he refuses wrestle. The Ibo man has a wholesome dread of being taunted and ridiculed by women-folk. Wrestling matches are exhibition of rare skill and endurance and every part of the body is brought into play: hands legs and head. The novel mentions of wrestling matches several times: “The second day of the new year was the day of the great wrestling match between Okonkwo’s village and their neighbours.” “At Nwoye’s age Okonkwo had already become famous throughout Umuofia for his wrestling and his fearlessness.”

Dancing is a great national pastime and it is practised by everybody capable of movement. There are many forms-for boys, for girls, for men, for women, and for mixed companies, the last being more associated with religious observances and festivals. The dances are always held in the open air but not always in public place.

2.9 Hospitality

Whitridge writes about miscellaneous customs. While speaking of hospitality, he writes if a man has a friend and finds him out when he goes to house, he will take yams from the store and eat; he will notify the neighbour of what he has done. Generally speaking people seem to be exceedingly hospitable. He writes of his own experience. {Some repairs were wanted to a folding table; a man to whose house I had been and with whom I had eaten kola, undertook to do the work; it was performed to my entire satisfaction, and I enquired what the price would be: to my intense surprise, the reply was: “you are my friend, you have eaten kola with me, I can’t take money from you”}

From the novel also we learn that kola is widely presented to visitors and friends. It is a custom of

the Ibo people to partake in kola as a sign of amicability: “Thank you. He who brings kola, brings life...” “He presented a kola nut and an alligator pepper, which were passed round for all to see and returned to him.”

III. CONCLUSION

There are numerous other customs and rituals of the Ibo people, which require a thorough research, however, we have found similarities between the information given in the novel on Ibo culture and the information given in the two nonfiction narratives we have selected, with respect to marriage, pastimes, death customs, etc., to be corresponding. This leads us to infer that *Things fall Apart* is a cultural reverberation of Ibo tribe and a historical novel giving accounts of Ibo people and pre colonial Africa.

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