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The Issue of Land in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* (2000)

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this modest work to all the members of my family particularly to my dear parents.

I would like also to dedicate it to all my friends.

Radia

To my beloved parents

Brothers and friends

Without whom none of my success would be possible.

Souad

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Abstract

This piece of research is a comparative study between two African literary works, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*(1958) and Zakes Mda's *The Heart Of Redness*(2000). It studies the issue of land in both novels. First, We have tried to demonstrate that though the two novels are not written in the same period, they can be studied under the same theme of land. Their shared elements can be seen through the themes explored in each work. Second, to demonstrate these similarities, we have conducted our study in the light of Frantz Fanon's theory of revolutionary violence developed in his book *The Wretched Of The Earth*(1963). This theory studies how a colonized nation can gain its independence and liberation from the colonizer by using violence. We have studied the pre-colonial order and tradition in the two novels .Then, we have demonstrated the changes brought by the British colonizer into the Igbo and Xhosa lands. Finally, we had depicted the natives' struggle to gain their liberation. Throughout the anlysis of Achebe's and Mda's texts, we came to the conclusion that the two writers dealt with the same colonial phenomenon and that the works echoed the same issue.

/ -Introduction

The African continent was subject to domination in the 19th century by the western colonizer whose desire is to conquer and obtain more lands. During a long period of time, European powerful countries were in competition in what is known as 'the race for land'. In other words, colonial conquest can be defined as a competition between countries for land, resulting in their arrival to Africa as well as their hostile take-over of the land. Thus, in an attempt to control the African countries, the western colonizer used diverse policies by imposing his own culture on the natives as an effective way to claim their lands which are a source of their lives and social identity. This gave birth later on to the partition of Africa which has been accompanied by the eviction of Africans from their land.

During the nineteenth century, the colonial incorporation of Africa was so intense that it caused the redrawing of the map of the African continent, known for its natural resources. Thus, the appropriation of land meant that colonialism, as Edward Said emphasizes, "an act of geographical violence, a geographical violence employed against indigenous peoples and their land rights."¹ In fact, when the colonizer first settled in Africa, he claimed that African lands were empty and not settled. In other words, they were virgin as a justification for Europeans to penetrate inland in Africa which was known as the Dark Continent then, a land deprived of the light of western civilization. That is why westerners considered the colonization of Africa as their duty which Rudyard Kipling calls 'the white man's burden'². In fact, Europeans were considered as bearers of civilization to the dark and primitive Africa. Thus, by 1900, ninety percent of African land was under British control. In some cases, peasants were left totally without land, the largest scale of land expropriation occurred in South Africa "a unique region with a long history of colonialism"³ where European colonialists owned eighty seven percent of the alienated land. As a matter of fact, the British established colonies and maintained power in South Africa since "Europeans

came to Southern Africa not just to colonize but to settle”⁴. Similarly, land ownership in Nigeria during colonialism was designed in a way that suited the purposes of the British imperialists; almost all the land of Nigeria was under British occupation. Therefore, the colonial authorities passed many acts for the purpose of land ownership. The Treaty of Cession (1861), for example which was signed by the colonialists where the title of the land was passed to the British crown. Furthermore, in 1917, the Public Lands Acquisition Act was passed to empower the colonial governor by acquiring land.⁵

As colonialism increased in scope and in depth, so too, in the colonies themselves the resistance mounted. When Africa was enduring colonialism and was under its oppression, the natives grew aware of the social, political as well as economic changes that occurred with the western colonizer’s arrival. During the nineteenth century, there was the emergence of some African writers who opposed the white man’s process and were interested in showing the effects of colonization on those who saw their lands dominated by new cultures. They began to produce a powerful new literature, a literature of resistance⁶ that tackled the way natives endured the white man’s occupation of their territories and the changing times of African countries. As a consequence, this urged many authors from different parts of Africa to produce literary works as a social protest and a picture which depicts the beginning of colonization. Bill Aschcroft a critic and theorist examines the post colonial writing resistance. In this concern, he states:

Art and literature have the capacity to speak to power by speaking beyond it, they do this first by transformation. Resistance, as we see from the examples of postcolonial literature, is most effective when it is transformative -when it takes the language of power and makes it work in the service of the powerless.⁷

As a matter of fact, literature has the capacity to make a different world without conflicts. Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness* (2000) are among the literary works that dealt with the issue of transformation and resistance. The two

novels are about two different African countries that echo the same issue and experience the same colonial phenomenon.

Chinua Achebe stands as a representative of African literature in the period of Nigerian renaissance. His novel *Things Fall Apart* is a modern African work that emerged in the colonial times. It focuses on the early experience of colonialism and the way it happens in Nigeria, particularly in the Igbo society which witnesses conflicts with the arrival of the white men who penetrate their lands. In the words of Achebe “colonialism put a knife in things that held us together and things fall apart.”⁸ In other words, colonialism tries to divide the natives because one of the maxims of colonialism is “divide in order to reign”.

Similarly, Mda’s *The Heart of Redness* is a post-modern fictional narrative, written as a historical novel and an understanding of South Africa's postcolonial situation. It incorporates memories of the violence and destructiveness in nineteenth-century colonial encounters. In the war between the Amakhosa and the British in South Africa, the Amakhosa is powerfully disturbed by invaders bringing with them modernity. The novel represents one region of Southern Africa before and after the arrival of the British colonizer.

Review of literature:

Chinua Achebe’s and Zakes Mda’s novels had received a great deal of criticism from different perspectives. First, Chinua Achebe’s *Things fall Apart* is one of the most widely read and studied novel that inspires a great amount of criticism. Austin J. Shelton claims that Achebe’s work is too nationalistic. In his essay (The Offended Chi In Achebe’s Novel) (1964) Shelton argues that Achebe is blaming the white men for the downfall of the protagonist Okonkwo who was in the beginning, someone usually of elevated status and comes to a tragic end because of the arrival of the white missionaries who bring evil into the Ibo society by their colonial policies. Moreover, Okonkwo’s end is tragic since the Umuofian culture falls

apart; for this reason, he hangs himself at the end. He prefers to die rather than to submit to the white man's orders.⁹

Shelton had been criticized by Margaret Lawrence who opposes his view. She claims: "in fact, Achebe specifically does not blame all evils which occurred in Ibo society on the white man". That is, the Nigerian writer is just telling the stories as they are without giving a negative view about the British Colonizer.

Moreover, Nahem Yousaf in his 2003 study of Chinua Achebe, suggests that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is 'writing back' to canonic Anglo-Irish literary works, such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* (1939). He claims that Achebe repudiates the colonialist image of Africa that is produced in these novels. He also argues that the European writers use some characteristics when dealing with Africa. He argues that the negative image that Joyce Cary uses to describe the figure of Johnson in his Nigerian novel is compared to Conrad's depiction of Africans in *Heart of Darkness*. Accordingly, Achebe writes back to Conrad's novel for the way it silences and dehumanizes Africans¹¹. In other words, Achebe wants this novel to respond to earlier colonial accounts of Africa and to correct the negative image of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular.

As for Simon Gikandi, he analyses *Things Fall Apart* in his book *Reading Chinua Achebe*. He asserts that the novel is dominated by real and historical events. Gikandi argues that the opening of *Things Fall Apart* can be read as a key to the Igbo identity. Indeed, Achebe provides a description of Okonkwo's power and his link to his Umuofian community that gives him a high status. He evokes this to show that the Umuofians have origins and history¹².

Similarly to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* has been criticized by many critics since its publication. For instance, Andrew Offenburger in his article

Duplicity and Plagiarism argues that *The Heart of Redness* can be categorized as a derivative work which reveals an abuse of textual borrowings and plagiarism and that Mda abuses the use of history¹³. Indeed, Mda thanks the historian Jeff Peires and defends himself by stating that Peires is the one “whose research [...] informed the historical events in [my] fiction”¹⁴. Moreover, Offenburger claims that Mda’s novel is not original because he borrows almost all his work from Jeff Peires *The Dead Will Arise*. The latter aims to write an academic history of the Cattle-Killing just as *The Heart of Redness*.

In addition, André Brink, a South African critic, in a 2003 op-ed in the Washington Post writes “In *The Heart of Redness*, Zakes Mda revisits (but unfortunately does not fully reimagine) from a black perspective the great cattle-killing of the nineteenth century”¹⁵. Mda himself responds to the above article by stating:

Heart of Redness is a work of fiction and not a history textbook. Historical record is only utilized in the novel to serve my fiction to give it context... It is not an accident that Peires is my sole source of historical record. His book had all the information I needed for the context for my fiction. There was therefore no need for me to replicate his work by going back to his primary sources.¹⁶

Sara Colombana in her examination of intertextuality between *The Heart of Redness* and *The Dead Will Arise* argues that although *The Heart of Redness* has some similarities and shares elements with Peires’ book one should not neglect the fact that Mda mixes between the past and present because the present cannot be written without making reference to the past events¹⁷.

All in all, we notice that Austin J. Shelton, Nahem Yousaf and Simon Gikandi study *Things Fall Apart* in terms of nationalism and resistance. However, Andrew Offenburger, André Brink and Sara Colombana study *The Heart of Redness* in terms of plagiarism, intertextuality and history without exploring the issue of land. Therefore, our research paper will focus on the issue of land in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* and Zakes Mda’s *The Heart of Redness*.

Issue and working hypothesis:

It follows from the previous review of literature devoted to Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Mda's *The Heart of Redness* that the two novels have received a great deal of criticism. However, to our best knowledge, they overlook and neglect an important aspect and issue in both novels which is the land. Our task in the present dissertation is mainly to present and explore the shared aspects in both novels and their use by the two authors.

It is worth to mention that our hypothesis in the dissertation consists of showing the possible similarities existing between Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Mda's *The Heart of Redness*. Despite the fact that the two novels were not written in the same period, strong affinities come to exist since the authors belonged to countries that had been under the same colonial domination. They are both concerned with countering dominant colonialist representations of Africans in general.

With reference to Fanon's "revolutionary violence", a process which mobilize and unifies people behind a common purpose. It serves for the construction of a new community and liberates the native's consciousness¹⁸, this research explores the issue of land. Throughout our discussion, we demonstrate that the two African writers share the same idea and vision. In other words, both authors deal with the struggle against colonialist oppression. We refer to the power of their writings in expressing revolution. Thus, the historical and biographical context of both novels will help us understand how revolutionary violence and resistance emerged in different ways but shared the same objectives. Despite their different geographical areas they share the same goal which is to regain what is theirs whatever the cost. However, each author explores the issue of land by using different tools and materials which come together in a way the two works for a possible comparative study. As a result, our discussion justifies this choice by showing the possible similarities of the two works in terms of land and revolution.

In order to show the relevance of our issue in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, we suggest that Frantz Fanon's theory of revolutionary violence seems appropriate for our analysis and research. In our view, it fits the perspective of this study since it deals with the politics of class revolution. Fanon points to the fact that revolutionary violence looks for ways in which peasants are called to make a revolution in order to get their liberation and independence and therefore get rid of the colonizer. Throughout what follows, we intend to explore the attempt of Chinua Achebe and Zakes Mda to create an activating method of decolonization through their use of writing and the issue of land. Both Achebe and Mda use the same scheme in their novels which is the demonstration of the pre-colonial African societies and their position towards the colonizer. They demonstrate the importance of land and traditions for the natives and the use of violence as the only way to get their independence. This shows that there are possible similarities between the two authors. Therefore, our chapters will focus on the analysis of this issue by analyzing both works.

Methodological outline:

At the methodological level, the dissertation will follow the IMRAD method. We have started with an introduction in which we give a general overview about the topic and introduce the purpose of our study, then we review some works written on Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Mda's *The Heart of Redness*. In the method section we will try to introduce and explain the theory of revolutionary violence according to Frantz Fanon, then we provide brief summaries of the two works in the materials section. Finally, in the results section, we will focus on the findings and give a general conclusion.

The discussion section is divided into three chapters. The first one deals with the pre-colonial order and tradition. We attempt to discuss it by making reference to the importance of myth in the African tradition. In the second chapter, we demonstrate the Western's

destruction of indigenous structure and tradition and their hostile take-over of land. In the last chapter, we refer implicitly to Karl Marx's theory "the struggle between the classes" a theory which urged the classes to make a revolution. He argues at the beginning of "the communist manifesto" 1948 that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the story of class struggles"¹⁹, Marx describes these different classes as being in opposition, the oppressor and the oppressed. We base our analysis on Fanon's "revolutionary violence", and we provide historical events that are related to the setting of the novels. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the different main points reached through the dissertation.

Endnotes

¹ Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism, an Historical Introduction* (UK: Blackwell, 2001), 20.

² Rudyard Kipling, *The White Man's Burden, the United States And The Philippine Islands* (USA: McClure's Magazine, 1899)

³ Emmanuel Ngara, *New Writing From Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1996)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Namnso Bassey, Land Ownership in Nigeria: Historical Development Current Issues and Future Expectations, 2014 .Viewed 15 March 2016 <http://www.baraka.consulting/uploads/Land%20Ownership%20in%20Nigeria.pdf>

⁶ Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen Press, 1987)

⁷ Bill Ashcroft, Revolution, transformation and utopia: The Function of literature. Viewed 17 March 2016 [iafor .org/Bill-Ashcroft-Revolution-Transformation –And-Utopia –The –Function-Of- Literature](http://iafor.org/Bill-Ashcroft-Revolution-Transformation-And-Utopia-The-Function-Of-Literature)

⁸ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Johannesburg: Heinemann, 1958), 37.

⁹ David Whittaker and Mpalive –Hangson Msiska, Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart: Anthropological Approaches (London: Routledge, 2007), 48.

¹⁰ Ibid., 49.

¹¹ Jago Morrison, *The Fiction Of Chinua Achebe, A Reader's Guide To Essential Criticism: Challenging The Canon* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 16-17.

¹²Simon Gikandi, *Reading Chinua Achebe, Language And Ideology In Fiction: Writing Culture And Domination* (Portsmouth: Heinemann,1991),28-29.

¹³ Andrew Offenburger, "Duplicity and Plagiarism in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*".Yale University.Viewed on 12 February 2016
http://www.jstor.org.www.snd11.arn.dz/stable/pdf/20109630.pdf?_=1461751825434

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶Zakes Mda, A Response to Duplicity and Plagiarism in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* by Andrew Offenburger.Ohio University.Viewed February 2016
<http://www.jstor.org.www.snd11.arn.dz/stable/pdf/20109631.pdf>

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Josh Pallas, Fanon defends revolutionary violence. Viewed on 11 November 2016

<http://spectre-online.org/fanon-towards-revolution/>

¹⁹karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.Viewed on 25 September 2016

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/pdf/Manifeso.pdf>

//_Methods and Materials:

1-Method

It has so far been clear that the materials selected to study and analyze the issue of land concern Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*. We compare the two works in the light of Frantz Fanon's theory of revolutionary violence.

According to Fanon, colonialism is an act of complete violence which can only be confronted and countered with revolutionary violence, the violence of emancipation. He adds:

The native who decides to put the program into practice, and to become its moving force, is ready for violence at all times. From birth it is clear to him that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called in question by absolute violence²⁰.

Fanon advocates that the peasants are the most revolutionary class par excellence, they can do everything to defend their nations. So, if an outsider comes to settle in their lands, they will use any means to avoid any intrusion. Fanon says that the native knew that "Violence alone will free them"²¹. Moreover, because of colonialism, a conflict takes place between the natives of Africa. In this concern, Fanon states: "the different tribes fight between themselves since they cannot face the real enemy"²².

In *The Wretched of The Earth* (1963), Fanon discusses the issue of the peasants. According to him, the growth of revolutionary peasants is a product and a result of colonialism. Fanon tackles this issue in his book. He asserts "the native is a colonial product (The colonial regime's action gives rise to an opposing reaction –the native's violent response to it)"²³.

Moreover, In Fanon's theory, there are three kinds of 'politics'. First is politics as domination, where the domination concerns the colonial exploitation and the system of capitalism and therefore their use of violence. Second is the corrupt elites who ignore the revolution and use the same hegemony as the colonizer. Third, there is the category of people who call for a revolution and violence as the only way to get independence²⁴. Thus, from this

quotation, we come to understand that political domination urges in most cases people to use violence in order to liberate themselves. According to Fanon:

For the native, the violence represents the absolute line of action. The militant is also a man who works ... to work means to work for the death of the settler ... violence is thus seen as comparable to a royal pardon. The colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence. This rule of conduct enlightens the agent because it indicated to him the means and the end²⁵

In addition to Fanon's claim, Hannah Arendt, in her article *On Politics and Violence*: Arendt Contra Fanon, argues that:

In the Marxist revolutionary tradition, the violence of the political economic domination and exploitation of the working class by the capitalist state must and will be resisted and eventually overthrown by concerted, and violent action by the revolutionary working class²⁶.

As a matter of fact, conflict exists in various forms but generally it is about power: either a struggle for power or a struggle between the powerful and the powerless.

In *On Violence*, Hannah Arendt adds that "Power and violence, though they are distinct phenomena, usually appear together. Wherever they are combined, power ... is the primary and predominant factor"²⁷.

The appropriation of violence is very justified as a means of man's de-alienation from the western colonizer since violent actions can only be countered by violent reactions. In his book *The Wretched of The Earth*. Fanon writes:

Colonialism is not a thinking machine, nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence²⁸.

Indeed, action was needed in the colonial context in Africa, this is why African writers are interested in the issue of western imperialism in Africa. They call in their works for revolution which is the only way to put an end to colonialism.

2-Materials:

Summary of the novels:

-a- *Things Fall Apart* (1958)

Things Fall Apart is a novel written in English by the Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. Set in the 1890s, it portrays the clash between Nigeria's white colonial government and the traditional culture of the indigenous Igbo people. The three parts of the novel focus on Okonkwo's struggle to attain status in his community, his humbling exile, and his return to a much-changed Umuofia after seven years.

In the first part of the novel, Achebe briefly describes Okonkwo's childhood and his effort to overcome the example of his lazy father, Unoka. Okonkwo is a respected warrior of the Umuofia clan, a Nigerian tribe of nine villages, he is completely unlike his father Unoka. The Umuofians have respect for Okonkwo by naming him guardian of Ikemefuna, a fifteen-year-old boy who has been given to Umuofia by a neighboring village as payment for damages. This honor marks the high point of Okonkwo's status in the community.

The second part of the novel starts when Okonkwo is in exile in Mbanta. Okonkwo flees to his mother's village. While exiled, he maintains his material wealth with the assistance of his kinsmen and Obereika. Okonkwo's growing sense of community and his disturbing encounters with Christianity make him an inflexible defender of Igbo tradition. By the end of his exile, Okonkwo knows that the unity of Igbo culture begins to break down. Several changes take place, among them, the arrival of six white missionaries and governing officials like Mr. Brown who tells the natives that their gods are false. After some violence against the newcomers, there comes a time of peaceful coexistence. Some Umuofians are converted by the missionaries, and among them Okonkwo's eldest son Nwoye. He is attracted by the new

religion. Okonkwo is informed by Obeieka that Nwoye is converted, and he decides to exclude him from the family compound.

In part three, when Okonkwo returns to Umuofia that has been dramatically transformed by the active efforts of the missionaries. The new religion has already divided the community, and Okonkwo knows that these changes constitute a threat. When Enoch, another young boy converts to Christianity, Okonkwo leads the destruction of Enoch's compound and the missionaries' church. He and five other elders are briefly jailed by the District Commissioner as punishment, and Okonkwo is humiliated when Umuofia does not rise in their support. When things become worse, Okonkwo realizes that he alone refuses accommodation and that Umuofia will not go to war against the white man. So, in a final desperate and defiant act, he murders the chief messenger sent by the District Commissioner and then hangs himself.

-b- *The Heart of Redness* (2000)

The Heart of Redness is a postcolonial novel written by the South African writer Zakes Mda, based on the events which took place in the late 1850s. It is based on historical events known as the Xhosa Cattle Killing movement where the AmaXhosa followed the vision of a young prophetess in April 1856 to kill their cattle and not cultivate their fields, promising that once they did so the spirits of their ancestors would rise and drive the occupying English into the ocean. The failed prophecy split the Xhosa into believers and unbelievers, dividing all the natives according to their ancestors' position in relation to Nongqawuse's prophecy. The unbelievers stand for development; the believers by contrast, are opposed to the unbelievers scheme seeing it as a destruction for the indigenous traditional ways of life. Zakes Mda recounts the journey of Camagu, a character who goes to America during apartheid and returns after a thirty-year exile in the United States of America to Johannesburg. Being

disillusioned by the problems of the new democracy, Camagu finds that everything has changed, colonial encroachment, wars, and settler's incursion into their lands. This was a sharp change experienced by those who had lost their land. At the end of the novel, Xhosaland was pacified and the native's lives were ruined by the white man's incursion.

Endnotes

²⁰Frantz Fanon, Preface To *The Wretched Of The Earth*, by Jean Paul Sartre: *Concerning Violence* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 37.

²¹*Ibid.*, 73.

²²*Ibid.*, 18.

²³Nigel Gibson, *Fanon: The Post Colonial Imagination: Violent Concerns* (Cambridge: Polity press, 2003), 103.

²⁴Frazer Elizabeth and Kimberly Hutchings, *On Politics And Violence. Arendt Contra Fanon*: (London: Palgrave, 2008)

²⁵Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched Of The Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 85-86.

²⁶Frazer and Hutchings, *On Politics and Violence*.

²⁷Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (San Diego: A Harvest HBJ Book, 1970).

²⁸Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched Of The Earth*, Trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 19.

///-Results and discussion

Results:

Our analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* has shown that both works are concerned with the issue of land. To do so, we have relied on Frantz Fanon's theory of violence, which is developed in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*. Throughout our comparative discussion, we tried to demonstrate the similarities that exist between the two African novels. Both authors deal with the changes brought by the British colonizer to the African regions.

In the first section of our dissertation, we have analyzed the most important themes of both novels. We have dealt with the pre-colonial order in both Nigeria and South Africa through the two novels. The thematic analysis revealed that both the Igbo and Xhosa people give an importance to their traditions and are so attached to their past.

Then, we have depicted how both writers use the native land to reflect their identity. Achebe and Mda describe how the natives were invaded by the white colonizer who desired to obtain more territories and dispossess them from their mother lands by using all means. In the third part, we have analyzed the notion of peasants' struggle who were conscious that they should struggle to get their independence.

/V-Discussion

Chapter one

1-The pre-colonial order and tradition in Africa

The following section of our discussion will be devoted to the study of the pre-colonial order in Africa with reference to the African tradition in both Nigeria and South Africa.

During most of Africa's precolonial history, Africa had a very long history of state building in addition to a set of political and social formations. Actually, pre-colonial African societies were based on socialism, that is to say they had a collective and democratic ownership of the means of production¹. They were either stateless societies, that is to say they had no government and any centralized authority² or kingdoms which means that they were ruled by a king or a queen, but most were founded on the principles of communalism. In other words, they were autonomous and self-governing. George B.N, Ayittey states:

The organizational structure of indiginous political systems was generally based on kinship and ancestry. Survival of the tribe was the primary objective. Each ethnic group had its own system of government. There were no written constitutions. Custom and tradition established the procedures for government.³

As a matter of fact, Africans lived in small-scale, egalitarian societies where they respected their traditions and norms which were a sort of government.

Long before the arrival of the colonizer, Africans possessed rich and complex oral traditions, myths, legends, and history from generation to generation. In some cultures, professional storytellers called griots preserved the oral tradition. However, in the early 1800s, written accounts of African mythology began to appear.

1.1-The African myth of land

Africa had many cultures and beliefs. Its inhabitants were deeply connected to their traditions. In fact, Africa had a set of myths which played a great role in its history. Among

them, the myth of land. Myth served as a construction of the pre-colonial Africa. It sprung before religion. Indeed, most of the religious stories are retelling of myths which are a foundation of cultures and traditions.⁴

The Africans believed that their land was their God due to its significance in the cultural and traditional practices. Each of the “[R]ituals related to rain-making, thanksgiving and prayer have historically been tied to the land in Africa.”⁵In addition “land is a birthright of every African Indigenous person.”⁶

Land was, for the natives, a sort of heritage which their ancestors had left to them. So, it was their duty to protect it. They say: “Our belief that land is a gift from God and from our ancestors has not left us. We continue to see ourselves as stewards of God’s resources, especially of communally owned land.”⁷ This quotation shows the strong relation between the Africans and their land which had a spiritual importance. Fanon has written that “for a colonized people, the most essential value, because the most concrete is first and foremost, the land.”⁸

Additionally, Africans believed in the idea of promised land. Leaving the land is considered as a crime. The Africans taught children that there should be a strong relation between an individual and land, which is a source of the Africans unity. As far as religion is concerned, Africans were strongly linked to their religion. The major beliefs of the Igbo religion were shared by all Igbo people. The Igbo believe in a supreme god who keeps watch over his creatures from a distance. However, he was seen as the ultimate receiver of sacrifices. As the creator of everything, he was called Chukwu Abiama in addition to other minor gods including Ala, the earth goddess. She is associated with the fertility the land⁹.

In addition to their gods, the Igbo believed in a variety of spirits whose well-being depends on treating them well. Forests and rivers are said to be occupied by these spirits¹⁰. Similarly to the Igbo people, the Xhosa had a strong belief in their god. The latter can be

approached through ancestors' spirits who were honored through ritual sacrifices. Xhosa religious practice was distinguished by rituals, initiations, and feasts¹¹. Furthermore, Africans had their own forms of commerce, science and other measures of civilisation. They used to live peacefully by respecting their traditions and religion. J.KI-Zerbo asserts:

the belief of maintaining harmony and peace is highly uphold by the people in the sacred week, they believe that any violence that occurs during the week will offend the earth goddess, Ani, and those who violate the belief would be asked to offer sacrifices for the goddess to ask for forgiveness¹².

Indeed, African literature is a meeting point with tradition. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Mda's *The Heart of Redness* are two novels which are constructed on Igbo and South African past tradition:

Achebe's aim was to remind his own people of their past and to assert that it was valuable, and so does Mda, reflecting on the importance of tradition of the sense of identity both of the single person and of the community as a whole.¹³

In other words, though the two compared novels were written in the colonizer's language, their content represents and reflects the two authors' respective cultures and histories. Both Achebe and Mda attempt to renew the past of their countries by showing the traditions which united their communities.

1.2-The pre-colonial order and tradition in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* :

As it is the case of many people from different countries, Africans are known for their strong relation with their traditions and culture which unify them and represent their source of identity. Among them, The Igo and Xhosa nations which are depicted in Achebe's and Mda's novels since they have been penetrated by colonial powers. Bassan Tomasso states:

Achebe's novel is set in Nigeria and, like *The Heart of Redness*, deals with the impact of an African culture with the arrival of the European colonizers, with their administrative structure, military power, christening mission and sense of cultural superiority.¹⁴

From this quotation, one can understand that both Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Mda's *The Heart of Redness* gave an insight about the impact of the British colonizer on the natives and the different strategies the white men used in order to settle in the African continent.

Even before the coming of the white men, the Igbo had their own institutions which united them. Stephen Belcher asserts:

The Igbo peoples offer tremendous variety in social and political systems. They were never unified by conquest and alliance; the suggestion of historians is that their cultural unity derived from a respect for shared institutions such as oracles¹⁵.

Thus, the Igbo community was a society of related tribes governed by traditions and customs. As far as land is concerned, it was shared by communities. "The land ownership system in pre-colonial Nigeria was communal. Land was owned by communities and families in trust for all the family members"¹⁶.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe devotes a long part to the pre-colonial era. Indeed, the novel involves several scenes and acts which are related to the different African traditions mainly the Igbo. Aimé Césaire states that "In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe depicts the complex, advanced social institutions and artistic traditions of the Igbo people before the advent of European colonization."¹⁷ This can be seen in the first chapters of the novel where one of the characters, Ezeani says to Okonkwo: "We live in peace with our fellows to honour our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow"¹⁸.

The Ibo background is treated in many details; Achebe shows how some social rituals exist in this society. The first pages of the novel tackle the pre-colonial Umuofian society where Achebe gives a detailed picture of Okonkwo who represents the Ibo traditions and way of life. Achebe says: "[n]ear the barn was a small house, "the medicine house" or shrine where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his personal god and of his ancestral spirits. He worshipped them with sacrifices of kola nut, food and palm-wine, and offered prayers to them

on behalf of himself’’¹⁹.He claims how much the Ibo natives are attached to their beliefs and traditions.

From the novel, we come to know that a man in Umuofia is esteemed and glorified for his achievements and success in life. Achebe states: “his fame rested on solid personal achievements’’²⁰. *Things Fall Apart* describes a communal society, many tribes that constitute Umuofia. In addition, proverbs are among the native culture and life style which Achebe considers “the palm-oil with which words are eaten’’²¹ .Besides folk tales, bargaining wrestling, Achebe praises the Umuofian community.

Moreover, Achebe incarnates the past which reflects the Africans’ oral tradition that shows the strong ethnographic aspect. In the novel, there is reference to god and ancestors, a sign of the strong religious belief of the Igbo people. Achebe writes “when a man is at peace with his gods and his ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arm’’²². So, the Igbo people believed that their ancestors are present and coexist with their beliefs. Furthermore, the Igbo had their own way of commerce through bargaining and especially the harvest of yams which are considered as a symbol of their culture and their trade.

In addition, Achebe demonstrates various aspects of the culture and beliefs that the Igbo people used to practice in their daily lives through his narrative.As an example, he gives an insight on the preparations that are done by the people in celebrating the festivals and in marriage. Moreover, he shows the importance given to wrestling which is considered as a form of sport in the Igbo culture. Cesaire argues that “before the advent of the colonial power the people of Umuofia lived in communal agreement in an organic society of economic, cultural, political, familial and religious stability’’²³.

Furthermore, Achebe shows the Igbo sense of community as manifested in their social festivals such as the New Yam festival. Achebe says: “the new yam festival was thus an occasion for joy throughout Umuofia”²⁴.

From this quote, we understand how the Igbo people are still deeply connected to their traditions to an extent that they celebrate their African norms and customs.

In fact, Africa was not a vacuum before the coming of Europe and has its own culture. Indeed, Achebe celebrates and praises the value of Igbo by recounting the life of the Ibo in the pre-colonial period who were held together by one string, which is basically their very own traditions.

The pre-colonial order in South Africa

In the pre-colonial era, South Africa was inhabited by different tribes. The first one was called the San. Then came the Khoikhoi who moved into the Eastern and southern regions. The Khoikhoi were the first to make their way into what is now South Africa, having originated in the northern and eastern regions of what is now Botswana. It is in this way the Khoikhoi developed their culture through contact with migrating Bantu tribes from further north. The Khoikhoi and San competed for land, Khoikhoi took the upper hand since they had a stable community. Bands of San were occasionally incorporated into the Khoikhoi society – but only as clients who work land. Conflict with those San was mainly because of land²⁵. The third tribe was the Bantu-speaking populations who began moving into southern Africa from the center of the continent. They encountered the San and Khoikhoi. So, fights over land were relatively rare. For example, during the seventeenth-century expansion of the Nguni-speaking Xhosa chiefdoms along the South African coast, many Khoikhoi were peacefully incorporated into Xhosa society, and at least one Khoikhoi elder became a Xhosa chief²⁶. In short, the different tribes were united.

1.3-The pre-colonial order and tradition in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*:

The title “redness” stands for a traditional South African culture which “refers to the red ochre that people traditionally smeared on their skin; a symbol of tradition”²⁷. It signifies respect to their traditional values. Indeed, Mda writes about different traditions of the Qolorha community in his novel. He depicts the South Africans who give importance to every aspect of their traditions. “even a consultant, he discovered, one needed to dance the freedom dance in order to get contracts”²⁸. For instance, Camagu is not able to find a job because he does not know the freedom dance invented when he was in exile. This shows the importance that the Xhosa give to their traditional cultures and customs. Mda introduces the reader into Xhosa's everyday life.

The novel focuses on the pre-colonial past, it presents a world where people believe in their mythical ancestors. Furthermore, Mda's *The Heart of Redness* presents people as agents in their desire to maintain cultural and social stability. Among them, Zim, the leading light of the believers, who wants an African cultural village where traditional dances and life styles are preserved. He states that he “owes his existence and his belief to his great-grandfather”²⁹.

The strong belief in the existence of their ancestors is depicted through the characters who speak regularly about them, Bhonco when speaking with his wife about his daughter Xoliswa Ximiya says:

Has she forgotten that according to the tradition of the amaXhosa, bees are the messengers of the ancestors? when one has been stung, one has to appease the ancestors by slaughtering an ox or a goat and by brewing a lot of sorghum beer³⁰.

From this quote, one can understand the strong belief of these people in their ancestors' existence.

To conclude, both Achebe and Mda sought to convey a complete understanding of African pre-colonial culture through their novels in order to demonstrate that Africa had a history and a set of traditions which united the natives even before the intrusion of colonialism.

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Chapter two

2-The Destruction of Indigenous Structure and Tradition

European thirst for land led to the sterilization of the African continent³¹. In fact, the colonists shattered and broke the natives' way of life by introducing white missionaries, new rules and a new religion. When the British colonizer first intruded into Africa, he used different strategies in order to settle in the African continent. Nyanhoga says:

Colonialism did not take place on a tabula rasa. Africa had its own institutions that included forms of governance. Governance in the pre-colonial setting was generally a process of steering institutions whether of a centralised or decentralised nature by indigenous rulers towards the realisation of the communal goals. Hence, when colonialism came, it was this pre-colonial governance that it had to contend with, distort or destroy it before ultimately setting up its own form of governance³².

Through the quotation stated above, one may understand that when the colonizer first penetrated the African territory, he began to destroy the local forms of governance and the African system in order to replace it by the European rule. Fanon states when speaking about colonialism:

Perhaps we haven't sufficiently demonstrated that colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. This work of devaluing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today³³.

Fanon here is describing colonialism as destructive of the pre-colonial culture by the Westerners who imposed their culture on the natives.

The white men's arrival was gradual, and one of the techniques employed to destroy the African societies was the infiltration of Christian missionaries who introduced new ideas to the natives. Fanon argues that "The effort consciously sought by colonialism was to drive into the natives' heads the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality"³⁴.

The process of colonization was conducted through a hegemonic strategy. That is to say, colonialism was not a direct process, the colonizer did not use by violence, he preferred implicit and strategic ways to dominating of the natives before dominating their territories without their consent. It worked through schools and religion; In other terms, needless to use force. According to Louis Althusser, “school is an ideological state apparatus”³⁵. By education, the colonizer reached the domination of the colonized mind, to ensure that the colonized behaves in the colonizer’s interests.

As far as culture is concerned, the whites claim that the natives are not civilized. So, it was their duty to enlighten them and establish order in Africa. This idea is confirmed by Homi K. Bhabha who argues: “what is visible is the necessity of such rule which is justified by those moralistic and normative ideologies of amelioration recognized as the Civilizing Mission or The White Man’s Burden”³⁶. This means that the colonial rule is justified by its moralistic ideology. In addition to Bhabha, Fanon states that “the total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness”³⁷.

However, while claiming that their mission was to bring light to the dark continent, their acts showed the opposite. In fact, colonialism is totally destructive of the African culture. Neil Lazarus agrees with Fanon’s vision about colonialism as follows:

colonialism as a total and elemental rupture within African history ...[his] thinking about colonial culture is premised upon a preliminary assumption as to the decisiveness of the transformation wrought by colonialism, such that scarcely anything of pre-colonial African culture is seen to survive into the colonial era³⁸.

Therefore, just as Fanon, Neil Lazarus holds that the native traditions and culture were totally transformed by the colonizer.

In addition to Fanon, Suha Sabbagh argues that for him a complete or “near total annihilation of indigenous culture, in what includes indigenous literary traditions, takes place in the first phase”³⁹. Fanon adds:

Native society is not simply described as a society lacking in values. It is not enough for the colonist to affirm that those values have disappeared from, or still better never existed in, the colonial world. The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil⁴⁰.

So, the native's past and traditions which held an important place in the African society were broken by the white colonizer.

2.1-The Fall of Tradition in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

Things Fall Apart is an example of the effect of European colonialism on societies in Africa. In fact, the British had adopted some strategies before claiming the African lands. He began by dominating the native's minds, changing their religion and their economy. Aimé Césaire says when speaking about the effect of colonialism in the Igboland:

Prior to colonialism in Igboland we see that people performed various cultural issues contently. But colonialism comes and imposes restrictions on those performances. The colonizers try to convince the native people that their cultures are illogical and groundless. This colonial mechanism makes the natives psychologically oscillating⁴¹.

In this quotation, Césaire depicts the techniques used by the white men in order to impose his ideas on the natives.

During Okonkwo's exile, a profound change came over the region of Umuofia⁴². The white men began to infiltrate communities with new ideas, a new religion and a new government. As a consequence, the natives were very much influenced by this change "the new religion and government and the trading stores were very much in the people's eyes and minds"⁴³. This shows the strong influence the colonizer had on the natives.

Throughout the novel, Achebe depicts the colonizer's denial of native religion which is very important for the Igbo tribes. In a conversation between an old native and the white man, the native asks: "If we leave our gods and follow your god...who will protect us from the

anger of our neglected gods and ancestors?" To whom the white man replied "your gods are not alive and cannot do any harm...they are pieces of wood and stone"⁴⁴

Then, the missionaries changed and manipulated the religion in order to fit their needs. They broke the Igbo rituals, meanwhile, they tried to spread Christianity through missionaries and teaching in order to make the natives forget about their religion. Among them, Mr Brown with his missionary soft policy⁴⁵. The prospect of change affected many characters among them Okonkwo's son Nwoye who followed the white men's religion and became "one of them"⁴⁶.

The new religion brought by the colonizer caused a split between the Umuofian people. After seeing Nwoye with missionaries, Obierika asked him, "How is your father"⁴⁷ Nwoye replied, "I don't know. He is not my father"⁴⁸. In the light of this quotation, we notice how Christianity created hatred between Umuofian community. As the number of converts grew, a great division began to appear, between those siding with the British and those remaining faithful to their own religion. In addition to Nwoye, Akunna negotiated with Mr Brown and even gave his son to be taught the white man's education⁴⁹. However, Okonkwo resisted the new political and religious orders; he did not accept what is brought by the white man. For him, he would not be manly if he consented to join and tolerate the British colonizer.

Things Fall Apart significantly reflects the colonial effects on indigenous society. Before the advent of colonial power, the people of Umuofia lived in community, in an organic society of economic, religious and cultural stability. However, with their arrival, everything falls apart. In this sense, Césaire states:

Before the advent of the colonial power the people of Umuofia lived in communal agreement in an organic society of economic, cultural, political, familial and religious stability. But colonial rule turns the social stability into instability and disintegration. The title of the novel itself signifies this claim- things are no longer in order; colonialism has disordered them⁵⁰.

Through the quotation stated above, we understand that colonialism destroyed Igbo social structure that was organic and well-formed. The British came with the idea of destroying the native's traditions in order to replace them by their own so as to fit their needs.

The new system imposed on the Africans greatly influenced their values, their way of living, their system of production and all this influenced their relationships. Okonkwo says when speaking about the colonizer:

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 apart⁵¹.

This quote refers to what the whites introduced in Africa such as churches, schools; the natives considered these institutions as a source of their community's destruction.

Again, what is worth mentioning is that the confrontation between the British colonizer and the Igbo was at first at the level of religion; Christianity against the Igbo religion. Actually, "Physical force was not the first mode of interaction used when the colonizer arrived in Mbanto or Umuofia. Their first priority was not to kill, but to convert. They came as missionaries"⁵² and "built their church there"⁵³. Achebe states that "The christians had grown in number and were now a small community of men, women and children"⁵⁴. Consequently, all was broken. Césaire states: "I am talking about societies drained of their essence, cultures trampled underfoot, institutions undermined, lands confiscated, religions smashed, magnificent artistic creations destroyed, extraordinary possibilities wiped out"⁵⁵. So, Césaire conveys the idea that the Nigerian tribal-culture was completely destroyed by the colonizer.

In reality, the colonizer manipulated the spirit, his aim was to conquer the mind as well as the land. In other words, he tried to pacify people; to address their mind. This task was made by

religious schools at the beginning (missionaries) but, soon these religious institutions were replaced by schools.

At the end of the novel, one of the elders of the Umuofian community says to the Igbo people:

An abominable religion has settled among you. A man can now leave his father and brothers. He can curse the gods of his fathers and his ancestors, like a hunter's dog that suddenly goes mad and turns on his master. I fear for you; I fear for the clan⁵⁶.

Thus, Igbo religion and traditions were replaced by christianity to an extent that the natives began to forget about their ancestors and take side with the missionaries. At the end of the novel, Achebe states that the British coloniser reached “ the pacification of the primitive tribes of the lower Niger”⁵⁷.In short, many of the Igbo people were so influenced by the white colonizer that they denied their traditions and history.

2.2-Fall of the Traditional System and Impossibility of accommodation in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

Mda's *The Heart of Redness* is a historical novel that depicts the effect of the British colonizer on South African traditions and way of life. In order to colonize the South African land, the British used some strategies. They began to destroy the native traditions which were considered as a source of their identity and therefore dominate their mind. Sir George Grey, *The Man who Named Ten Rivers*; claims that the white men's “only motive for coming to and ruling the land of the amaXhosa was to change the customs of the barbarous natives and introduce them to British civilization”. [The] wonderful gift of civilization⁵⁸. Indeed, the white men claim that they came with “a mission to civilize the natives”⁵⁹ in South Africa. They were saying that the native's customs were barbarous and that they needed the Europeans to enlighten them and bring development.

John Dalton was telling chief Nxito's councillors that all sir George Grey wanted was to spread British civilization. His magnanimous wish was to convert the amaXhosa from their barbarous ways.It was for their own good that they should discard their customs and follow the ways of the English. There was no saving grace in the culture and religion of the natives⁶⁰.

In fact, the British government claimed that his only motive was to bring progress to amaXhosa people by introducing a new order.

However, the colonizer's action shows the contrary. In the novel, Mda depicts the deeds of the British who aimed to dominate and deprive the natives of their traditions by using different strategies. In fact, the natives "have been damaged by white man's education"⁶¹ which imposes a sort of hegemonic knowledge. The British aim at replacing the indigenous system by their own rule is depicted through the novel. Twin twin said "The white man does not know our law"⁶². He added by claiming:

He does not respect our law. He will apply the law of the English people. This is a way of introducing his laws among our people. As for the colonial money, The Man Who Named Ten Rivers is buying our chiefs. When they are paid by him, they will owe their loyalty to him, and not the amaXhosa people, and not to our laws and customs and traditions!⁶³

Therefore, one can say that the encounter of the white and the Xhosa brought into existence disorder and change rather than light and civilization.

In the words of Twin Twin the new judicial system "will gradually undermine and destroy Xhosa laws and customs"⁶⁴. He says:

European laws will, by imperceptible degrees, take the place of their own barbarous customs, and any Xhosa chief of importance will be daily brought into contact with a talented and honorable European gentleman, who will hourly interest himself in the advance and improvement of the entire tribe, and must in process of time gain an influence over the native races⁶⁵

Among the strategies used by the empire to maintain supremacy is the domination of the native's spirits. Among them, the Great White Chief, Grey who claims that he "was interested in the health and education of the amaXhosa- that was why he established schools and the Native Hospital"⁶⁶. Moreover, The British government came with a new administrative system, devised by the governor himself⁶⁷. These are claims that the white men created to convince the natives and make them believe in the white values.

Because of the white men's arrival to the Xhosa land, "Families were being split apart"⁶⁸. Newcomers such as Mr. Smith Mr. Jones caused a change within the Xhosa community, "There were people who had deserted their own god for the god of the white man. People like Ned and Mjuza, who were descendants of amaXhosa heroes but were now followers of white ways"⁶⁹. Among them, Twin's brother who "was in cahoots with dangerous people who were servants of the colonial masters"⁷⁰. In fact, the white man's strategies influenced the natives who claimed that they "want developers to come and build the gambling city that will bring money to this community. That will bring modernity to our lives, and will rid us of our redness"⁷¹. In short, Xhosa people witnessed a change during the white man's incursion. This claim is voiced by the one who named ten rivers, Sir George Grey who declares "finally i have pacified Xhosaland"⁷².

Nigeria and South Africa are two areas that were colonised by the British. From the analysis above, one can see the similarities which exist between Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*. Both the Igbo and Xhosa tribes witnessed changes in different fields like religion and tradition because of the white man's incursion and their institutions like church and school.

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⁶⁰ Ibid., 123.

⁶¹ Ibid., 104.

⁶² Ibid., 134.

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⁶⁴ Ibid., 135.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 85.

⁶⁷Ibid., 125.

⁶⁸Ibid., 126.

⁶⁹Ibid., 85.

⁷⁰Ibid., 86.

⁷¹ Ibid., 92.

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Chapter three: Violence and counter violence

1.1-The White Man's Incursion.

The period of colonization is undoubtedly one of the most painful periods in human history. In fact "the African continent had been dissected by predator nations so that they could expropriate the land, plunder the resources"⁷³. From this quotation, one can understand that Africans endured the white man's colonisation which aimed at the eviction of the natives from their lands.

Myths of empty and vacant land were common topics by the middle of the 1840s⁷⁴. In fact, the colonizer claimed that Africa was an empty land and that he had the right to land ownership. These claims were constructed in order to legitimise European settlement in Africa. Fanon states that once in Africa, Europeans were saying: "this land is created by us...If we leave, all is lost, and the country will go back to the Middle Ages"⁷⁵. So, they had the right to do whatever they wanted.

During the nineteenth century, the African continent was dominated by the Europeans particularly Britain which got many colonies. Nigeria and South Africa were among these countries. In order to get profits from these colonies, the colonizer used different forms of occupation so as to settle in the African lands. Fanon asserts: "For a colonized people, the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity"⁷⁶. So, land had a huge importance for the natives.

In fact, When the colonizer came, the first thing he made was to claim the land by giving justification. Patrick Williams says: "direct take-over of indigenous people's land by Europeans was always a possible, even a likely, part of the process of colonisation"⁷⁷. Thus, one basic and major aim of colonisation was to get rid of the African land .

When speaking about Nigeria,

The British occupation of Nigeria began on a very small scale. It first began along the coast and subsequently went from strength to strength until it had spread all over the country. The occupation was progressive rather than sudden. Traders led the way and their motive was purely economic(...). But there is no doubt that while they were trading, they were spreading the influence of their country at the same time, thereby paving way for the subsequent occupation of the country with which they traded⁷⁸.

From the quotation above, one can notice that the British colonisation of Nigeria was not abrupt, it was gradual. Although they did not come directly to settle in the African continent, they occupied the land of the natives at the end.

2.2-Colonial peasantry

Changes that took place with the arrival of the British colonizer to the African continent were severe for many indigenous people. The effects were worse for the Umuofian and Xhosa people because of the special status of their relation to the land given by god to their ancestors. They believed that their land is their god. Both Achebe and Mda insisted on the question of land, and the struggle for procedures in order to control what had been theirs.

Bourdieu says when dealing with land:

The peasant can exist only when rooted to the land, the land where he was born, which he received from his parents and to which he is attached by his habits and his memories. Once he has been uprooted there is a good chance that he will cease to exist as a peasant, that the instinctive and irrational passion which binds him to his peasant existence will die with him⁷⁹.

The importance given to land can even lead the peasant to fight in order to protect his land. Fanon states: "The exploited man sees that his liberation implies the use of all means, and that of force first and foremost"⁸⁰.

Violence has long been a recurring theme in narratives about Africa since the period of colonization⁸¹. One example is Nigeria where

Colonial rule was established in part through violence. Nevertheless, the colonial state did not have a monopoly on violence-if British colonists saw violence as a means to achieve conquest and legitimize domination, Nigerian groups also saw it as one form of resistance. Both sides viewed the use of violence as legitimate⁸².

Indeed, both the colonizer and the colonised saw violence as the appropriate means to reach their aims.

The literature on land disputes and their occupation had burgeoned, particularly it seems in Nigeria and Southern Africa, and comparatively⁸³. In both Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, the west dominates Africa by controlling the lands which are its means of production that urged the classes to make a revolution in order to get their liberation and therefore get rid of the colonizer.

D. Edwards states: "The project of colonialism was, more often than not, carried out through the force of violence⁸⁴. So, it is the right of Africans to respond by any means in order to get their liberation. In this matter, Houari Boumediene states: "It is the duty of African states to respond to total colonisation by a total struggle for liberation"⁸⁵. Indeed, the natives' only way to get liberation was counter-violence.

Over time, resistance to the control of colonialism grew among the natives who were aware that what had been brought by the colonizer did not mean development. In this concern Fanon states : "they realize at last that change does not mean reform, that change does not mean improvement"⁸⁶ so they should use everything in order to reach the decolonisation which is for Fanon " a violent phenomenon"⁸⁷.

In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, British colonialism contributed to a split among the Igbo and therefore caused class division within the natives. In Igbo society, there were those who were for change and others who were against it. Among the natives who wanted to get rid of the white men, Okonkwo who is ready to fight alone, and suggests to fight against the

white men, when speaking with other natives, he says: “We should have killed the white man if you had listened to me”⁸⁸.

When the white missionaries arrived to Umuofia, the natives worried about their country. Achebe says that the natives “were talking among themselves because the white man had said he was going to live among them”⁸⁹.

Okonkwo tried to convince the natives to fight against the British colonizer, he even “encouraged the boys to sit with him in his obi, and he told them stories of the land – masculines stories of violence and bloodshed”⁹⁰. This was a way of spreading the spirit of violence in order to be ready to struggle in any conflict that can occur. Fanon says: “the native's violence unifies the people”⁹¹.

He adds :

The violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the customs of dress and external life, that same violence will be claimed and taken over by the native⁹².

In Achebe’s novel, the British began to make changes which were related to land. Achebe says that “The white man’s court has decided that it [the land] should belong to Nnama’s family, who had given much money to the white man’s messengers and interpreters”⁹³. So, the British were using the Igbo land as they wanted.

In reality, the arrival of the missionaries has caused a considerable stir in the village of Mbanta⁹⁴. From the first days of their arrival, the British were asking for land in order to settle in Umuofia. Achebe claims: “The missionaries persevered, and in the end they were received by the rulers of Mbanta. They asked for a plot of land to build their church”⁹⁵. So, throughout the novel, one can understand that the missionaries’ main aim was to settle in the Igbo lands step by step.

The relation between the colonizer and the colonised had always been questionable. Fanon claims that “Their first encounter was marked by violence and their existence

together—that is to say the exploitation of the native by the settler’’⁹⁶. Instances where the violence appears in *Things Fall Apart* is when the western missionaries destroyed all the sacred customs, religious beliefs and rituals. Achebe depicts the violence of the white missionaries including Mr Brown who imposed his religion and culture on the Igbo people to an extent that it drove Okonkwo to suicide. Moreover, the missionaries violence is seen when the leaders of Umuofia were called to a meeting by the District Commissioner and then a messenger “carried a strong stick, and he hit each man a few blows on the head and back. Okonkwo was shocked with hate’’⁹⁷.

Because of the changes brought by the coloniser and the destruction of the indigenous’ life, the natives decided to resist to the white men. Achebe claims :

The rulers and elders of Mbanta assembled to decide on their action. Many of them spoke at great length and in fury. The spirit of wars was upon them. Okonkwo, who had begun to play a part in the affairs of his motherland, said that until the abominable gang as chased out of the village with whips there would be no peace’’⁹⁸.

Okonkwo added “ if a man comes into my hut and defecates on the floor, what do I do ? Do I shut my eyes ? No ! I take a stick and break his head that is what a man does. These people are daily pouring filth over us’’⁹⁹. He thought: “Such a thing could never happen in his fatherland, Umuofia’’¹⁰⁰.

The Igbo people understood that the white men’s purpose was against them, Fanon argues : “the settler never ceases to be the enemy, the opponent, the foe that must be overthrown’’¹⁰¹. AnAjofa, the leading egwugwu of Umuofia said to the the missionary and interpreter“. He added :

tell him to go back to his house and leave us alone. We liked his brother who was with us before. He was foolish, but we liked him, and for his sake we shall not harm his brother. But this shrine which he built must be destroyed. We shall no longer allow it in our midst. It has bred untold abominations and we have come to put an end to it’’¹⁰².

Instances where the white man's violence appears is when the district commissioner send his interpreter to call the leaders of Umuofia for a meeting. And then he handcuffed these leaders and led them into the quadroom. Okonkwo states "I shall fight alone if I choose"¹⁰³.

In short, the natives did not bear this violation, so they used violence in order to retrieve what is so valuable for them. Fanon states: "Decolonization is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature"¹⁰⁴.

Counter violence is shown in the novel, one example is when Okonkwo killed a messenger; the following action is a struggle against the changes introduced by the British inside Umuofia.

Similarly to Chinua Achebe, Mda's *The Heart of Redness* depicts the violence used by the coloniser and the struggle of the natives to gain their liberation. when speaking about South Africa :

The nineteenth century was a period of several events whose socio-political and economic impact profoundly changed South Africa and the African continent. Colonial conquest and rapid land dispossession was accelerated during this period. Conversely, fierce resistance was launched by African people in response to their loss of land, livestock and political power¹⁰⁵.

Under colonialism, the organisation of peasant societies was modified through different changes of the natives' customs. Moreover, the white men did also whatever they liked to the natives' lands, something sacred. Mda argues: "The Great White Chief was running wild all over the lands of amaXhosa, doing whatever he liked in the name of Queen Victoria of England. He even deposed Sandile, the king of the amaXhosa-Ka-Ngqika"¹⁰⁶ here, we notice the changes brought by the missionaries to the Xhosa lands.

From the times when the British arrived among the Xhosa natives, the rules of land changed. This is clearly depicted in the novel when Twin Twin said about Sir George Grey: "he is taking more and more of the land of the amaXhosa"¹⁰⁷, he added when speaking about Governor Sir Harry Smith: 'Don't tell me about The Man Who Named Ten Rivers!' said

Twin-Twin. 'Like all the others he is a thief. Just as he stole the land of the people of countries across the seas, he stole the land of the amaXhosa and gave it to the amaMfengu. He stole more of our land to settle more of his people!' ¹⁰⁸.

Consequently, "the Xhosa people lost all their cattle, their land was expropriated" ¹⁰⁹.

Furthermore, Mda maintains that the British settlers were achieving this goal sooner than they had expected 'thanks to the cattle-killing movement' ¹¹⁰. In other words, the cattle-killing movement helped the British to achieve their aim.

As soon as Twin Twin understood the missionaries' aim in Xhosa land, he began to spread consciousness among the natives. He said:

The white man does not know our law', 'He does not respect our law. He will apply the law of the British people. This is a way of introducing his laws among our people. As for the colonial money, The Man who Named Ten Rivers is buying our chiefs. When they are paid by him, they will owe their loyalty to him, and not to the amaXhosa people, and not to our laws and customs and traditions!' ¹¹¹.

Once some natives became aware of the changes and the effects on their traditions and land, they began to ask for their rights and use violence so as to liberate their country. Fanon says "the native decides to put an end to the history of colonization—the history of pillage—and to bring into existence the history of the nation—the history of decolonization" ¹¹².

He added: "In decolonization, there is therefore the need of a complete calling in question of the colonial situation" ¹¹³. Among the natives who were against the newcomers, Twin-Twin who seemed to have understood the wrong intentions of the coloniser. He was one of the unbelievers who has not given himself over to Westernization. He realized that the gift of "civilization" would bring the loss of their land.

The cattle-killing movement of the nineteenth century 'killed the nation of the amaXhosa' and caused hatred and animosity among the Xhosa people. The cattle-killing coupled with British Colonialism induced suffering and starvation to the amaXhosa nation and completely destroyed their traditional beliefs, and cultural values and norms ¹¹⁴.

In fact, “Twin-Twin heard how thousands of his people had died as a result of the cattle-killing movement and the activities of The Man Who Named Ten Rivers , Sir George Grey. He saw with his own eyes white settlements spreading over the lands of his people. He says : 'We have been cheated', he told Nxito. 'These people through whose ears the sunshines are spreading like a plague in kwaXhosa 'What can we do? We are a defeated people,' said the old chief”¹¹⁵.

'It must be true that The Man Who Named Ten Rivers planned all this cattle-killing business,' said Twin-Twin. 'He is the one who planted these ideas in the mind of Nongqawuse. He wanted the amaXhosa people to defeat themselves. Now he is enjoying the spoils of victory without having lifted a finger. 'What can we do?' repeated Nxito tiredly. 'We are a conquered people'. 'And we helped them to conquer us!’¹¹⁶

Fanon states that between oppressors and oppressed everything can be solved by force¹¹⁷. In Mda’s novel, Nongqawuse was against the colonial system and the British. The scars of history and the suffering of her ancestors under British rule overwhelmed her and 'all of a sudden her ancestor's flagellation has become her flagellation. She rebels against these heathen scars’¹¹⁸.

In the novel, Bhonco like most of the other natives knew that 'beautiful things have become estranged' from his life¹¹⁹. Since many natives became unbelievers, moreover, he decided to fight the white settlers, he says to Dalton: “I am going to fight the white tourists at the Blue Flammingo hotel”¹²⁰.

In *The Heart of Redness*, Mda depicts the effect of colonialism on South Africans who lost their best land, their best cattle and their best young men. They became dependent on the white man. For the sake of domination, the colonizer 'was taking advantage of the defenseless amaXhosa and was grabbing more and more of their land for white settlement’¹²¹. Indeed, the Africans were evicted from their lands.

Twin Twin “saw with his own eyes white settlements spreadind over the land of his people”¹²².Therefore, once the Xhosa began to see that their lands were taken from them by the white men, they decided to act.Twin-Twin suppressed the bitterness in his heart and went with Twin, his father and a group of mounted men to meet the white man who called himself the Great White Chief of the Xhosas, Sir Harry Smith. Twin Twin watched in humiliation as the Great White Chief commanded the elders and even the chiefs to kiss his staff and his boots.

“All men must take up arms”shouted pama, adressing the meeting: “we are being invaded. The Man Who Named Ten Rivers has done what he has been threatening to do all along”¹²³.Because of the changes brought by the British, the Xhosa people knew that they should use everything in order to get their lands back. Fanon says:

The naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and bloodstained knives which emanate from it. For if the last shall be first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists. That affirmed intention to place the last at the head of things, and to make them climb at a pace (too quickly, some say) the well-known steps which characterize an organized society, can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course, that of violence¹²⁴

But, despite the efforts of the natives, the one who once named ten rivers reached his aim, he shouted throughout kwaXhos: “finally i have pacified Xhosaland !”¹²⁵

In short, during the period of colonisation, the relation between the colonizer and the colonised who wanted to get his liberation was so intense.

After an analysis of both novels, we come to notice that despite the efforts done by the natives, the colonizer took the Igbo and Xhosa’s lands and broke away their ancient way of life.

Endnotes

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V-Conclusion

This paper shows the similarities between *Things Fall Apart* and the *Heart of Redness*, which are the depiction of land struggle in two different regions in Africa.

To begin with, we see that many elements of the plot of both fictions are common. First, both works tell a story of an African native who returns from exile, Okonkwo and Camagu who both returned to their native land. The similarity between the two characters is their refusal to the adaptation of the white man's values. They both stand against them. Okonkwo, for instance, was able to fight the white missionaries alone. Similarly, Camagu refuses to adopt the white man's values and to forget about his traditions.

The Heart of Redness has strong affinities with *Things Fall Apart*, published years earlier. Mda like Achebe are concerned with the counter colonialist domination of African lands in general, and his own Gikuyu community in particular.

Second, in both novels we notice that the land is given so much importance. In *Things Fall Apart* Achebe just like Mda shows the significance given to land and tradition and the effect of the British colonialism on these traditions. Mda's *The Heart of Redness* shares also the same characteristics with Achebe's novel. This shows how the issue of land and tradition is recurrent African works.

In addition to that, these two works are to a certain extent similar concerning the resistance to the British colonialism. Both Achebe and Mda praise the African tradition and show the high status of land in their communities, a reason why they should fight in order to get it back.

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