Igbo Naming Cosmology and Name-Symbolization in Chinua Achebe's Tetralogy

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Abstract: *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God* and *A Man of the People*, the first four novels by Chinua Achebe, the contemporary Nigerian novelist, are among the most outstanding works of African postcolonial literature. As a matter of fact, each of these four novels focuses on a different colonial or postcolonial phase of history in Nigeria and through them Achebe intends to provide an authentic record of the negative and positive impacts of 'hybridity' on different aspects of the life of native subjects. Briefly stated, Achebe is largely successful in taking advantages of variable discursive tools he structures based on the potentials of the hybrid, Igbo-English he adopts. Thus, it might be deduced that reading these four novels in line with each other, and as chains or sequels of *Tetralogy*, might result in providing a more vivid picture of the Nigerian (African) subjects and the identity crises emerging in them as a result of colonization. To provide an account of the matter, the present study seeks to focus on one of the discursive strategies Achebe relies on in those four novels: Igbo Naming Cosmology and Name-symbolization.

Keywords: Achebe, postcolonial discourse, Igbo cosmology, *Tetralogy*, hybridity, Name-symbolization

Introduction

The proper language crafted by Achebe and exposed through his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, is very successful indeed as it can put into practice what he theorized once in an article titled "The African Writer and the English Language". In fact, in this article he tries to discredit what some critics had proposed against using the language of the colonizers in the way of constructing a powerful postcolonial literature (Salami & Hekmatshoar 2018). To that end, through the article, Achebe tries to differentiate between the 'ethnic' and 'national' literature and introduces the use of English as a unifying discursive tool because it can serve as a device to bring together the oral literary potential of Africa and transfer them in a united written language that is not

limited to a province and "has a realized or potential audience throughout [the country's] territory" (56). Proceeding with this discussion, Achebe adds that although the arrival of the British colonizers and their hegemony exercised many negative effects on the lives of various Nigerian tribes, it gave them "a language with which to talk one another"; thus providing the possibility of "mutual communication": if not "a song", at least a "tongue for singing" (58).

Looking at the issue from another prospective based on his own personal experience, Achebe is sure about the undeniable place of English in the future of Africa and how by making positive use of what was the fruit of the hybridization of the African self, African writers could find their true voices in the third space or the liminal position of a postcolonial novel in English, if the matter was read in line with Homi Bhabha's theory of 'third space', 'ambivalence' and his reflections on how "hybrid identities" come into being as a result of complex cultural syntheses or 'translations' (Rutherford 210). Inferably, Achebe's suggestion for adopting English proves him to be a more conscious figure than other critics of the age in comprehending the realities of the colonial history in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. As Rive declares in his attempts to defend the strategy of writing in English used by Achebe, one shall not think of a "a pure African literature that was not affected by social and cultural hybridity the continent (Africa) had undergone through its particular historical formation" because of the fact that the inevitable cultural hybridity blocks the way to any essentialist African literature in an effort to grasp a pure African essence (qtd in Whittaker and Msiska 45). Looking from a new angle, Achebe "indigenizes the English language, [and reproduces] attributes of African oral tradition" (Snyder 162) in writing his novels. As a matter of fact, Achebe, despite his emphasis on using English, is in full opposition with the "ethnographical" quality of the literature produced by the white colonizers about Nigeria and the Nigerian people (154). Thus, he tries to take up the format as a means of deconstruction and the specific version of English language used in a novel like *Things Fall Apart* is a critique of the dehumanizing "narratives of colonialist writers" who were trying to show Africa had no history and was primitive (Osei-Nyame 149). To question the validity of such an account, Achebe mainly relies on the potential of the native oral tradition as mentioned earlier as well as the cosmological specifications which might explain in a proper context the logic beyond the formation of such a tradition. However, he is cautious about the degree to which English must be transformed by the aid of the oral

tools of the African language in order to gain the intended discursive effects as he highlights:

The African writer should aim to use English language in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning an English which is at once universal and able to carry his peculiar experience…. it will have to be a new English, still in communion with its ancestral home, but altered to suit its new African surroundings. (qtd. in Patil 45)

One of the discursive strategies which might be adopted by Achebe in the way of altering the Standard English to his intended ends can be claimed to be making use of the native 'naming tradition' and how it regards 'name symbolization'. The present study seeks to draw on this aspect of Achebe's discourse and how through relying on such a strategy he succeeds in reflecting on key facts about the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial conditions in his country. Actually, the underlying 'hybridity' in his language which comes from what can be called 'speaking English through Igbo tongues and minds, is to be taken by analogy as a sample of how 'a hybrid postcolonial subject' might react ambivalently in facing the colonial 'other' if the issue, on a theoretical level, is read in line with Homi Bhabha's ideas. Furthermore, what Achebe does in crafting his discourse can be interpreted as a good example of the proper dialogic space a postcolonial novel need to acquire: a space or a new discourse and language relying on the 'carnivalesque' quality and the new ruling positions the once silenced voices can take as a result of their natural development or 'hybridization' and coming up with the 'othering' strategies of more powerful voices struggling to grasp linguistic and ideological dominance. In fact, such a viewpoint can be deduced to have a lot in common with Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas and his emphasis on how the novelist must act as "a sensitive observer", taking into account the due "socio-historical context" [in each discourse] by suspending the taken for granted philosophical and cultural questions about human language, psyche and interaction" (Hoy 765). Taking this idea into consideration, the present study shall concentrate on the subject of 'name symbolization, in the first four novels of Achebe to show to what degree he is successful in making use of the so-called 'hybrid' language he crafts. The reason for choosing these four novels, *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God* and *A Man of the People*, can be assumed to be the fact that because of many discursive,

historical and thematic correspondences between these four novels they can be credited as sequels of a *Tetralogy*.

The Naming Philosophy

In general, words or names might be taken as references to entities or referents in human language whether they are physical manifestations or abstract values. It seems safe to claim that such a system or denotation process is more or less the same in all human languages regardless of their probable numerous differences at various semantic, syntactic as well as paradigmatic aspects. In reality, there are many other issues beyond the linguistic and etymological values – like psycholingual and cosmological factors – that might alter the semantic realm of a word. Such a complexity can be well exemplified by referring to the case of proper names and what they may mean.

The issue of 'proper names' has been one of the most controversial subjects in linguistics and different linguists and critics have approached the matter from various perspectives. For instance, in dealing with 'human proper names', most critics break this category into two sub-categories: first, those proper names whose meanings can be defined through defining the meaning of the predicates from which they are constructed or those who conceptually define the objects, referents they designate (Kutschera, 32). The second ones are those which "do not have a form of definite description, a class term or function term", called "ostensive" proper names (32). To be exact, an "ostensive" proper name can be thus explained: an "identificatory" or any identifying descriptive assertions cannot be provided for the one who is referred to by that name (33). For example, the English family name 'Greenson' belongs to the first category and the name 'Socrates' to the second one.

However, there is another complexity in gaining a clear-cut understanding of the above-mentioned categories as well as finding how the distance between 'meaning' and 'sense' may result in new semantic values. In brief, some linguists like Frege (39) consider 'proper names', plus other semantic units, to stand in a mediatory position between what their constituents linguistically or etymologically signify and their "sense", which is the significance attached to that name – the outcome of the contextual or historical generation of the initial 'meaning' which is never altered although the 'sense' may undergo changes. Going back to the above sample proper names, in the case of the latter it can be deduced that, according to Frege's theory, even though a proper name is made of two meaningful words, 'Green' and 'son' – standing for its sense – it might have a

different meaning which refers to a person: probably Ralph Greenson, i.e., the famous contemporary American psychiatrist. However, attention must be drawn to the fact that in dealing with the second example 'Socrates', and other similar proper names, the lack of an inferable sense by no means shall result in the presupposition of lack of meaning, because it is clear, at least in this sample, that, 'Socrates' refers to the great Greek philosopher.

So, the present study needs to investigate the question of proper names in Igbo language thoroughly in order to get familiar with this linguistic property and how it turns out to be a powerful discursive tool; the very tool which has played an important role in the construction of Achebe's discourse.

Igbo Naming Cosmology

The most dominant feature of Igbo personal names shall be revealed if several Igbo dictionaries or proper-name glossaries are checked: the fact that most personal names in this language have in the first instance some fixed senses – in Freghe's terms – and are not to be classified as ostensive proper names. This is clearly understood when one finds that, "Igbo language is the vehicle through which the worldview of Igbo people is not only preserved and carried forward, but also the instrument for developing this worldview" (Ebuziem, 29). Taking into account this idea, we shall find out why words embody such a language in general – and personal names in specific – and present themselves to be economic linguistic tools by their clausal structures; clauses that can be cut as short as possible, in order to guarantee the conveyance of some important meanings (Obiamalu, 113) historically framed on the basis of a specific worldview or cosmology. As a matter of fact, such a linguistic or discursive property of Igbo language has been highlighted frequently by a large host of critics who have tried to explain the issue by focusing on Igbo proper names as the best representative of that linguistic trait. For example:

The deep significance of Igbo names cannot be neglected if we are to get some insight into their moral heritage. Igbo names are as it were, fonts from which we can get the hopes and aspirations and ambitions and desires and regrets and excuses and self-pitying that the people are capable of. The traditional Igbo people wrote their thoughts and feelings and desires in the names they gave to their children or took in titles. Names are imperishable records of their lives with its struggles, successes and failures. (Edukaihe 224)

It is also suitable to cite another explanation:

African names are not mere labels, they are pregnant with meaning, … they manifest a person's inner   reality and express his character, … names express African cosmology, the social, economic, political   and religious values of the society, the tensions and struggles of man in society,… names are   immediately tied up with the African traditional religion…, To give a person a name is to insert him   into a religious world with its multifarious relationships with both the unseen and seen, realities   of the African world. (Ekwunife, 36)

Accordingly, it is not hard to infer why the question of Igbo personal names and their significance must not be studied in void but rather to be analyzed in light of many meta-linguistic categorizations and theorizations which highlight the invalidity of objectifying the innate features of this African language. In order to grasp a comprehensive view of the philosophy of Igbo personal names, they should be read in line with a bundle of cultural, moral, religious, cosmological and ontological criteria which have engendered a unique anthropological heritage through centuries. Therefore, that aspect of such a philosophy or cosmology on the basis of which Igbo collective identity and life style have been crystalized must be taken into consideration. Factually, Igbo personal names are tokens, manifestations or ideological outputs of a hard-to-touch internal conditioning system of religious – or ritualistic – codes which frame each individual's understanding of the meaning of life and way of conduct. To draw on such a system, referring to the following quotation seems rather useful:

In fact, Igbo value of life does not depend on nor drive from the quality, or on circumstance, or on what one has accumulated, his position of power or position in the society, but on the fact that life is primary and above all, a gift from God-*Chukwu.* This is why everyone tries to live a life in fulfilment of his name. The traditional names are pace-setter for the bearer, a code of conduct for him —*Ihe akporo onye k'qhu*— what one is called, is what he is. (Anuolam 139)

Thus, the idea that Igbo names are of microcosmic value and aim at representing some existential realities about each individual born within Igbo boundaries of existence can be very illuminating. However, it seems necessary to go further in the study in order to investigate on a higher level how such a series of conditioning personal codes of conduct is to be concretized based on the inevitable syntheses, ceaselessly in process, between a subject and the social or communal 'other' – speaking in psychological terms.

Looking from another standpoint, for Igbo people, the name adopted for a newborn child is not just a personal guideline of an existential weight and has another face which is socially significant and can be studied in a new light when it is seen within the context: The act of naming a new born child by his parents is not a private task and is performed in the presence of relatives, friends and other members of the community in the form of a ritual; among the factors which play the role of a social vehicle of various functions, the most significant one might be the highlighting of the importance of unity and the necessity of abstention from individualistic or unwise actions which might lead to social chaos. In fact, quite symbolically, by performing this ritual, the newborn child is exposed to a social life within which in future he or she must progress by the values his or her name reflects; it shall be only announced when other members of the society – including relatives, friends, neighbors and other residents of their village – are congregated to celebrate the occasion. Such a congregation is *per se* a ritual as it is formalized through praying for the new born child and his or her parents' health which symbolically stands for sustaining peace among the members of Igbo community (Nwoye 277). The ritual is meant to reveal its double significance when a researcher considers the fact that a healthy identity for the new born baby can only be crystalized on a social basis and in accordance with Igbo communal values, which define in advance the ontological and cosmological as well as ideological filters validated within this society.

Focusing on the question of the naming rituals in Igbo society and their relation to the consolidation of identity in an Igbo person will shed light on the fact that one is required to learn more about the way identity is defined within Igbo culture. In truth, it is a very hard task to come along with such a definition as Achebe's own speculations reveal that historically "Igbo identity" was not a term commonly used among Igbo people because they would differentiate themselves from the 'other' by distancing themselves from other villages. Thus, despite the existence of such a similarity and its manifestations in their language, different Igbo villages would not make use of it as a uniting force (q.t.d in Appiah 108-109). Therefore, it can be deduced that in order to provide a valid account of how Igbo historical identity is concretized, a critic has to concentrate on each village and what would give shape to the social nets or dialogues within the social discourse of a village members engendering a communal identity. In other words, "Igbo self is a congenitally a communitarian self, incapable of being, existing and really unthinkable – except in the complex of relations of the community" (Okere 160). Such a bundle of social complexities that

seem rather undecipherable at first glance may be digested well when a researcher is informed of the mechanism in accordance with which an individual situates himself or herself within the body of the communal self. Sequentially, what Ndukaihe asserts in a study can be very revealing as it pinpoints the fact that Igbo people believe in three different principles of self, endowed to man; principles or the embodiment of selves in different contexts or facades of social interaction. It is noticeable that each person can operate within one or more of them in his life-long existential attempts without any fear of cancelation of the constitutive ability which is to be interpreted as the catalyzing force for the process of amalgamation formed by the occurring syntheses between the self and the community. These three principles are: *Obi* – heart/ breath –, *Eke/Aug* – Ancestral Guardian – "the ancestral shade incarnate in each newly born baby", (Ndukaihe 185), and *Chi* – Fate, or Spiritual Substance (186).

In light of what was said, one might grasp a better understanding of Igbo names as well as the ceremonies held for naming the newborns and relatedly a total view of why in that society a subject might adopt new names and titles without any formalities. In brief, it can be asserted that an individual in such a cosmological system is not only the container of the ancestral spirits and the inheritor of some of their characteristics but also of an innate self – or breath – that can dynamically evolve though not fully free of the forces of fate or spiritual constraints. Therefore, such a worldview can justify why naming ceremonies are very systematic and are held with a heavily symbolic weight. According to Turner (q.t.d in Nwoye 292), the parents' ideas or those of the religion and community about a person's attributes may be represented by his birth name. Accordingly, it can be inferred that to highlight the power of will and personal achievements or spiritual accomplishments one might adopt new names or titles "often descriptive of him" as he grows (Mbiti, *African Religions* 115).

Due to the above-mentioned facts, it can be concluded that personal names in Igbo tradition can be divided into two main groups: names given to individuals at birth and names adopted later as explanatory titles based on personal achievements of different natures. Nonetheless, it seems necessary to delve into the matter and investigate on what basis personal names are chosen at birth in that culture; names which as in titles have meanings to be taken into account. A good record of the issue is provided by Mbiti as he classifies these personal birth names into the following categories:

- Names Reflecting the Feelings of Parents: Names used to indicate the occasion of birth or parents' feeling about the birth of a child (e. g.

names reflecting the power of God or gods' mercy to bestow a child after years of barren life for parents; or animal names chosen by parents to pretend that the child is of little account when parents have little hope for the survival of their child with regard to some religious beliefs that is a kind of "desperate prayer" to God or ancestral sprits)

- Names Related to the Time of Birth: Names regarding the ecological conditions at child birth (e.g., rain, famine, drought, harvest, hunting etc.) or names related to the events prevailing at the time of birth (e.g., traveling, invasion of locusts, the arrival or Europeans, etc.) (*Introduction* 93)
- Names that Show Religious Feelings: Names showing the parents' religious concerns as well as their child's relation to the native culture or religion
- Names which Describe the Child or its Background: Names describing the habits of the child, the place of birth or the interests of the family and community as well as the kinship bonds or economic relations (94).

Given the attempts made to grasp an overall view of Igbo naming cosmology, it is now possible to study Achebe's *Tetralogy* in order to find the level to which he has been successful in making use of such a property in giving birth to his characters and their names.

Names in Achebe's *Tetralogy* and their Significance

It is good to start this part by focusing on Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* and his name as he is undoubtedly a central figure in Achebe's oeuvre and plays an important discursive role in the way of grasping a better understanding of what this novelist generally conceives of tragedy, identity crisis and the psychological impacts of colonization. To do so, in the first instance, it seems necessary to focus on his father Unoka and his character because referring to *Things Fall Apart*, a reader shall find that the novel's initial pages are allocated to his character and Achebe has tried to highlight the difference between him and his son. As the novel reveals, Okonkwo always feels ashamed of his father for his irresolution and his inability to pay his debts as well as taking the titles an honorable Igbo man had always attempted to win. That is why he had always tried to escape what he hated tremendously: to be called an *Agbala* like his father, which is equal to a man with no titles or a woman in Igbo. However, approaching the character of Unoka through the lenses of 'Igbo names' and their significance, a new reading can be provided:

Literally, Unoka is composed of *uno+ ika*, *uno* standing for 'house' in Igbo (Swift, Altaghotu and Ugorji, 131) and *ika* which means 'to be greater' (476). Therefore, it can be assumed that his name means: Household or family is of greater importance. However, the readers soon find that it is in contrast with Unoka's real personality e. g. going on reading. As the novel reveals Unoka was not a firm man to rely on "the strength of his arm" (Achebe, *Trilogy* 15) to support his family and owed a lot of money to many people postponing to pay them back through adopting a kind of cynicism in behavior plus a witty language; a language very common in "trickster" Igbo tales – like that of the turtle in the story of birds' feast in *Things Fall Apart* (Nwosu 16). Hence, with regard to such an irony revolving around the distance between the significance of Unoka's name and his real character Achebe must have intended to portray something important which is a mismatch in appearance since a character like Obierika within the same space is represented as a respected titled man with plenty of wealth and a prosperous *obi* – one whose name might also be taken to mean as similar to that of Unoka, *obi* standing for "the large living quarters of the head of the family" (Achebe, *Trilogy* 147), and '*ika*' to be 'greater' or 'surpass' as mentioned above. Actually, by giving shape to such a discursive strategy or correspondence between the two characters through their names, Achebe tries to justify why Okonkwo hates his father and his character. In reality, by referring to Ebuziem and his assertions in this novel, it is likely to infer that Unoka's failure springs from his inability to keep in line with the same system of ideologies or the cosmology once engendering Igbo naming philosophy: the rules to be obeyed by the newborn's parents in naming as well as the necessity of showing respect to the spirit of the ancestors or the metaphysical forces converged to persuade or develop an ideal character for him fulfilling the demands of his *Chi* or personal god. In other words, Unoka's ignorance or irresolution holds him from tracking this ancestral route as he takes a wrong approach in life and becomes a victim of *chi* or fate: his way of conduct according to Igbo philosophy is to lead to saying no when one's chi or personal god says yes. Indeed, this manner shall be taken as the source of Okonkwo's hatred and his attitude toward those figures like his father. It is therefore clear why keeping on the right path or moving in line with what his name implies is Okonkwo's ideal. In other words, it has been his life-long attempt to say yes as "when a man says yes his *chi* says yes also". (21)

As mentioned above, Okonkwo is reflected to be permanently self-conscious about himself as well as his social status in order to distance

himself from what would identify him with his father. Actually, he is always trying to look in others' eyes as the ideal, the hero or the most perfect man and this is even reflected by the name he chooses for his most-loved daughter Ezinma; or Ezigbo the good girl (32); a name which in a critic's mind functions as a metaphor to designate something more than the mere act of indicating a person (Harrow 131). Additionally, Okonkwo's anxieties in that case are also manifest in his attitude toward his son Nwoye. He is always worried about him and is extremely horrified by the thought of his probable failure in future by moving in the same direction as his grandfather Unoka did. Presumably, it can be asserted that his concerns about his son are not only to be understood from his behavior, but also from the name of his son as well as that of his own. These two names – 'Okonkwo' and 'Nwoye' – have one thing in common and that is belonging to the same category of Igbo names: names that refer to the 'Time of Birth' or an occasion since 'Nkwo' and 'Orie' signify two Igbo Market days (Achebe, *Trilogy* 293). In fact, the name 'Nwoye' – which is composed of Nwa + Orie – stands for the boy or the child born on 'Orie' (Ubahakwe 9), as Igbo equivalent for 'male', 'boy' or 'child' is 'Nwa' (11). Similarly, the name 'Okonkwo' means "the male child of Nkwo" (Basden 174). This category of names has a lot to say about Igbo cosmology and can in sequence aid the development of this study. According to Abanuka, "The market days were originally established by the supernatural beings bearing different names sent by God as messengers to earth" (89) which were in fact given as a reward to Nri, the historical god-like king and the founder of Nri (Igbo land), who was successful in revealing the names of the four market-day spirits without disclosing their names (Ebuziem 31) as such an act could make it possible for mankind to possess them. This shows why these four market days were somehow sacred for Igbo people and justifies in advance the reason for children born on each of these days to be named after them.

Actually, the sacredness of market days in Igbo culture and the myth-like story of Nri are good clues to help readers grasp a better understanding of the historical importance of marketplace within an agrarian culture which flourished in a land with few fertile soil and long dry seasons. Indeed, going through ages Igbo people had found that yam cropping and a dynamic economy revolving around this product was the only way to survive – an agricultural product which was to be gained only by hardworking men and not by irresolute men like Unoka who would stay home and offer sacrifices to a reluctant soil instead of going out with axe to cut down virgin forests in search of a more fertile soil to plant new year yams (Achebe, *Trilogy* 15). Thus, Oknokwo's

efforts early in the novel for making a share-cropping contract with Nwakibie (16) and his permanent endeavors to make Nwoye a good yam farmer, unlike his grandfather, can be interpreted as a kind of existential identity search or self-realization matching the demands of what their culturally-defined names imply. Relatedly, it is the loss of the very self-confidence or potential for existential self-fulfillment found in Nwoye that Okonkwo laments for and hopes his son to acquire a day by getting along with Ikemefuna; one who already seems to possess enough talent and ambition to move in that way with resolution. However, the sacrifice of Ikemefuna by the oracle's decree and Okonkwo's act of taking part in it is indeed tantamount to the metaphoric sacrifice of Nwoye since it acts as the final stroke for all traditional Igbo values and the validity of ethics Okonkwo was trying to dictate to his son. It is quite ironic that by accepting such a fate or *chi* determined by the oracle for Ikemefuna, Okonkwo is doing something against his personal *chi* and its demand which is projected through the phrases of Ikemefuna's name: signifying 'May not my power be in vain', *Ike* denoting 'power' in Igbo (Onumajuru, "A Semantic" 312), *m* 'I' (Emenanjo 379), and *funa* or *n'efu,* 'may not be in vain' (Williamson 68) – as the negative primary auxiliary in Igbo is 'na' (Onumajuru 135), connoting 'May not!' when used in prayers.

Although Ikemefuna is sacrificed in the first part of *Things Fall Apart*, the consequences of such an act are to be seen first in Nwoye's conversion to Christianity, later in this novel, and secondly many years later in *No Longer at Ease* when the middle aged Isaac Okonkwo and his world are exposed to the reader albeit in a very implicit, or oblique, manner when Obi is put in center. As a matter of fact, the analysis of the character of Nwoye (Isaac) can be very illuminating, although Achebe himself confesses his inability to provide a good account of how colonization affected the people of that generation because of the many hard-to-digest psychological, ontological and ideological metamorphoses they underwent in such a context. Regarding the matter of the personal Igbo names and their symbolic significance in Achebe's first four novels, it can now be more palpable why the adopted name by Nwoye after conversion is 'Isaac'. This Hebrew-Christian name has indeed a lot to say when its relevance to the due context as well as the story of Abraham and the sacrifice of his son is probed: the fact that there is an ironical reversal in Achebe's version of the Biblical story which is of discursive and thematic significance. Meritt and Sterling take into account such a reversal in their study as they mention while in the Biblical story, "God intervenes and makes his presence known" to release Abraham from committing that sacrifice

(55), in *Things Fall Apart*, not such a deity is present and that is why Nwoye's hatred toward his ancestral religion grows which sequentially paves the grounds for his conversion to Christianity as well as detachment from his father. In other words, Okonkwo's act of sacrificing Ikemefuna – who has been able to establish a balance between the masculine and feminine energies within the boundaries of Igbo cosmology – is not only to lead to self-destruction in him (O'Brien 42), but metaphorically to another sacrifice as Nwoye sacrifices his ancestral religion and the balance which Ikemefuna was to maintain by not letting his strength be spent in vain. Thus, he feels the force to look for an alternative in Christianity, hoping to escape from that vanity and the fear of a self-destructive act like Okonkwo's suicide.

However, the transition could only take place in turn for the upcoming of a bothering sense of self-alienation since embracing Christianity for Nwoye and others like him, e.g., Oduche in *Arrow of God*, was only to be settled based on a taken-for-granted set of dichotomies or as a consequence of the emerging feeling of 'otherness'. To be more specific, in that new psychological state the white 'other' (Chukwumezie, and Odoh 17) or the agent through which Christianity was widespread, would be credited as the referent Igbo self was feeling an irritating sense of distance or difference from; thus, it's hardly surprising why psychological and ontological gaps were witnessed to plague the colonial subjects helplessly looking for a way for bridging them. What Nwoye does in his attempts to come up with such a bothering sense of otherness was to sacrifice whatever was labeled as Igbo or native even his own name or the act of taking part in the burial of his father – as revealed later in *No Longer at Ease* (Achebe*, Trilogy* 260). Furthermore, there are other references in this novel which can testify to the fact. For instance, like Oduche in *Arrow of God*, Isaac is fascinated with the power of writing and any written text. That is why his study is filled with books and papers as he never throws away any pieces of writing, knowing that the written word was [the source of] the white man's power (251); a source of power symbolically depicted in many Anglophone novels in contrast to the normal and mundane life process within an African family (Traoré 98). As a matter of fact, Isaac is so fascinated by the power of Western education and religion that all his Christian life has been allocated to preach them. For instance, he even tries to prove the matter to illiterate native people by reading them "Pontius Pilate's Disclaimer from John's Gospel in the local Onitsha dialect" (Fraser 78). Additionally, the table in Isaac's study can be another proof as it is the very one once made by Carpenter Moses for church (Achebe, *Trilogy*

254) – the figure who was among the first converts and a pious, knowledgeable Christian who knew the language of the whites; the very person whom the readers finds about first in *Arrow of God*. Actually, the fact that Mr. Isaac Okonkwo bought the old table from church and brought it to his study is very significant and confirms the claim that the new Igbo converts like Isaac were permanently dealing with many conflicts in the way of coming up with that bothering sense of 'otherness' caused by colonizer's practice of 'objectification of the subjects'. Thus, through Isaac's character, Achebe manages to draw on internal conflicts seen in 'hybridized' subjects as a result of the probable recurrent 'differing' positions imposed on a subject within the colonial discourse in existential dilemmas and identity crises. Definitely, that table which may symbolize the stability or firmness of a native Christian's resolution to serve the church of God was taken by Isaac as a token to testify that all those conflicts he had dealt with as Nwoye had been resolved. Thus, the act of placing it in his study which could then be taken as the *obi* of his clan alongside with those valuable papers and writings is quite symbolic. Moreover, carpentry is very significant in Christianity as Jesus Christ was himself a carpenter according to the faith. Hence, by preserving the inheritance of a black convert, Isaac is somehow commemorating the accomplishments of Igbo Christians and their firmness in paying attribute to their new faith. Just like Isaac, Oduche in *Arrow of God* deals with many conflicts. Referring to the matter of 'name symbolization' can shed light on the fact. 'Oduche' can be broken into *odu + uche*; *uche* standing for 'mind' or 'thought' (Onuora 33) and 'odu' for the last (Iroegbu 111) or the youngest when added as a prefix or suffix to another word. Therefore, this name can be translated into 'the young mind' or 'the young though' which can be read as quite significant with regard to the present study. Like Isaac, Oduche faces many conflicts as he is the only member of his family sent to Christian missionary. Actually, he feels a lot of tensions because he feels he is torn between two opposite poles; something which is symbolically represented by the novelist through his introverted character at different points in the novel especially where he is working on his *Azu Ndu* (Achebe, *Trilogy* 475) as well as the part where he decides to act like a true Christian by killing the sacred python which was symbolically equal to discredit the native religion and cosmology. Yet, the latter instance has something more to reveal as Oduche's fear in committing such an act – considered as a sin in Igbo ancestral religion – makes him think well and find an alternative which is sniffling the python in a box. As a matter of fact, such an alternative implicitly draws on Oduche's internal conflicts and how the new

emerging hybridity bothers him as he is caught in between the two religions and their teachings: he shall choose between the ancestral religious and the culture on the basis of which he has been brought up to that age and a new religion which he is fascinated with. It is quite ironic that such a state of fascination is symbolically portrayed by the novelist through another name symbolization this time by relying the Christian theology: Nwoye is charmed by the idea of becoming a Christian Igbo hero who is able to stand against the ancestral paganism; one who is capable of the name 'Peter' in his Baptism as a young rough rock for building a new church (337). According to Laurence, "Achebe's ability to reveal ambiguous human motives is nowhere more apparent than in his treatment of" Oduche, as he decides after much thought to destroy the python without killing it directly (102). Actually, those ambiguous motives in Oduche, which will undoubtedly make him bear many internal conflicts in the way of stabilizing his new identity, are very similar to those Isaac must have felt pondering his father's act of sacrificing Ikemefuna – or other ideological matters like the issue of twin babies and their destiny reflected through *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*.

As discussed above, what Isaac decides to do in order to endure all those critical matters is sacrificing many of the native values. However, in reality, many new conflicts are to plague him as he has to answer numerous new ideological and existential questions that indeed come into being as a result of the emerging sense of self-alienation empowered by the forces of 'hybridization' plaguing his mind. That is why, going through *No Longer at Ease*, the reader finds the fact that Isaac is always trying to come up with the emerging difficulties or the existing gaps by celebrating the power of the whites, their religion and the achievements of the black converts and their loyalty to church. In fact, one of the limitations or sources of anxiety for Isaac, brought about by the new faith can be interpreted to be the prohibition of polygamy. If in Igbo traditional culture polygamy was a sign of social prosperity and self-fulfillment, what only wealthy men of title who were socially and economically successful could aspire, in Christianity it was not only a sin, but also a disrespect or the sign of disloyalty to a woman by her husband. Going on in reading *No Longer at Ease*, the reader is to face one of the implications of the emergence of such an ideological and cultural conflict thanks to the empowering colonial 'other': Isaac's first four children were girls and it seems that he was feeling unrest. He had no son and could not also marry another wife like his father and forefathers as he was bounded by new religious limitations. Therefore, the act of choosing a native Igbo name for his

fifth child who is a boy can be quite Ironic: Obiajulu (Obi): "the mind at last is at rest" (157). In truth, this name plays a key role in the development of the whole novel, as portrayed by its title, and Achebe has relied much on it to construct his discourse since it is a complex narrative framed on the basis of Obi's character and the story of his tragic downfall as the of the grandson of the very Okonkwo committing suicide in *Things Fall Apart* despite his western education and modern values or ideals he has in mind. Actually, in *No Longer at Ease* Achebe intends to provide a pathological reading of colonization and to that end focuses on 'Obi's inwardness, self-directedness and alienation from the outside 'other' which is to be taken as identical to the colonial 'reality' in psychological terms. His 'inaction' and the bafflement of his ideals or, symbolically speaking, the 'unease' or 'unrest' which is come to him, in contrast to what his name denotes, is to foreground the negative side of 'hybridization'. Moreover, such an irony is to be digested better when the readers can see the reason for Obi's mental state of 'unease' in light of how things fell apart once in Okonkwo's world. Relatedly, Ezeulu's story can be taken as analogues to that of Obi Okonkwo since it seems that he is annihilated by a "tragic transformation" from the position of a spiritual leader to a "lonely deranged man"; what, relatedly, can be accounted as a sign of the falling apart of Igbo culture and traditions in confrontation with "the white man's colonial rule" (Kim 99). Getting to know that Ezeulu is a kind of "king-priest", because the prefix *eze* in Igbo language stands for king (Achebe, *Trilogy* 393) and *Ulu* the name of the god he serves, can illuminate the matter much more. To elaborate on the matter, in metaphorical terms, it can be asserted that each person is a king in the realm of his own subjectivity and at the same time the intermediation between self and the other, that is, the agent of his own God, or the divine force in which he believes. Thus, Achebe's act of foregrounding such an existential matter through the projection of the existential downfall of Ezeulu, as the symbol of the whole community, shall be taken to be doubly ironic.

A Man of the People is a far cry from Achebe's three previous novels. A critic might then find that it is necessary to approach this novel from a different angle. Such a necessity may emerge initially because of the fact that the novel deals with a different phase in the history of Nigeria and intends to draw on the political climate of its first post-independent republic and the corrupt politicians of the age in a quite symbolic manner or it may appear as a political allegory or parable. Furthermore, the narrative technique adopted by the novelist can be another reason: the fact that the first person narrative voice is

depicted to be ironically omniscient; something which may foreground the subjectivity intended by the novelist, and in reality acts as a discursive tool, providing the reader with a "sustained satirist" narrator or "the internal voice of [a] critic" in this novel (Ball 105) quite paradoxically. As Okafor opines, "a political bildungsroman format is the very factor which brings about the formation of a discourse" (96). In other words, the first person narrative by Odili, the protagonist of the novel reflects on his political rivalry with Chief Nanga in a very meaningful way, and by analogy can speak about the syntheses in process at Odili's mind to make him a more mature and politically conscious person as a representative of the new educated class in Nigeria. Relatedly, Nanga who can be taken as a kind of character foil to Odili, and one who immorally steals his love is the representative of the corrupt politicians of the age that were in fact according to Achebe "the worst consequence of colonization" (q.t.d in Lynn 16); those who would exploit the whole nation and the country's resources to their own ends.

So, it can be inferred that to study the question of 'personal names' in *A Man of the People* on the basis of the 'Igbo naming cosmology', a new direction shall be taken to make possible a more thorough reading of the way Achebe makes use of such cultural and historical properties to empower the language of this novel. To do so, it seems necessary to put in center Odili and Chief Nanga in order to analyze their names as they play major roles in the narrative of the novel. Actually, such an approach can by implication represent how Achebe has utilized the symbolic significances of the 'proper names' in this novel in order to illuminate in a more vivid manner his intended themes.

It might be a bit misleading to split these two names, Odili and Nanga, into their etymological roots, in the same manner as what was done in dealing with some of the major personal names to be found in the previous three novels since they can signify several different phenomena or refer to referents of different natures at the same time due to the existing variations in different Nigerian (Igbo) dialects. Thus, it seems more valid to focus on their 'meaning', rather than their 'sense', if we see it from the standpoint of Frege. In that light, 'Odili', as a male personal name in Igbo, is so common or popular among the nation that it has found its way to African name glossaries or anthropological studies allocated to different naming systems. Choosing such a typical name for the protagonist of *A Man of the People* then shall not be taken as an accidental issue. In truth, Achebe intends to highlight the fact that his protagonist is of a microcosmic

value, or a representative, standing for the Nigerian people exploited by corrupt politicians. Thus, selecting a more common name, known to the masses can enhance the verisimilitude as well as the allegorical weight of the narration. Additionally, such a name can make for an innovative discursive device intended by the novelist by providing the readers with a question to answer through the novel: who is a man of the people?

However, by going further in the study of the name 'Odili', and trying to figure out much more about its 'meaning', that is the history of the socio- cultural phenomena affecting or conditioning what it denotes or connotes, some interesting proofs might be found that can be read in line with the novelist's purpose. Thus, in an attempt to look for such proofs several anthropological reports were checked and the records in a book were found to be very helpful: Odili is the name of a historical (mythological) figure for Igbo people as he is one of the descendants of the mythical founder of Igbo land, and the father of 'Ačala' and 'Nevisi' (Thomas, 9). However, the interesting point in the story is that before 'Odili' and at the time of his predecessor 'Amarom', for the first time quarrels broke out between kinsmen on who should become the king; thus four out of five of them claimed to have grasped the title of the king or 'eze' (10). As a result, many uproars came into being and the communal solidarity was engendered. Thus, defeat such a chaos, a new title-giving system was established: a system which could efficiently work to preserve social stability by keeping the necessary- to- exist hierarchies as only minorities who were capable enough could grasp a new title after fulfilling various requirements. Referring back to *A Man of the People*, by analogy, it can be said that it is the alluring chance for wining a new title, and consequently a better social status, that in spite of Odili's understanding of Nanga's mischievousness in the world of politics he cannot reject his invitation to capital and a chance for an MA Scholarship abroad. This then can be a good proof to the fact that although the novel draws on the post-independent Nigeria and a society which is moving toward modernization, the traditional socio-cultural mechanisms are yet at work and affect the people, their lives and worldviews. Furthermore, through highlighting the matter of titles and their importance in contemporary Nigeria, Achebe enriches his pathological reading as he depicts how such traditional cosmological issues can be abused by a politician like chief Nanga.

As mentioned above, Nanga is an experienced politician. He can do anything to stabilize his power and increase his wealth. He even abuses the people and their attitudes towards 'men of title' by always

trying to project his name and titles in a propagandist manner. This is the very matter the novelist highlights in an ironic tone at the beginning of the novel through Odili referring to Nanga in his full name: Chief the Honorable M.A. Nanga M.P., (Achebe, *A Man* 1). Besides, the matter is to be much clearer when the reader finds that Nanga, as the minister of culture, is to be granted a doctoral degree from an American university because of his concern for African culture (63). As a matter of fact, the underlying irony shows itself more when unlike the mass of the people, absorbed by such a prestigious title, Odili knows well that for Nanga the native culture and tradition are just strategic tools in driving forth his political plots. There are several instances within the novel that can testify to such a fact. For example, at the book exhibition to Odili's surprise Chief Nanga has never heard the name of author of *The Song of the Black Bird* (62). Another one can be the irony underlying the fact that the children fathered by the very minister of culture, who represents the next generation of the country nurtured by the post-independence politicians, tends to use English in answering to their mother's addresses uttered in their native language as they find using it rudimentary or undignified. Actually, it can be inferred that they consider the masses, brought up as the interlocutors of that language and those involved in currents of the due socio-cultural discourse to be uncultured: their own grandmother is not an exception. That is why they mockingly call their grandmother "a dirty bush woman" (38).

Chief Nanga's abuse of the cultural potentials as represented through the matter of 'title', are not limited to Igbo context. He can even go further and make use of any other available options. The best proof to the matter can be his relation with the American couple in order to fulfill his political interests. Achebe is successful in pinpointing such a fact by relying again on the matter of personal names as symbolic discursive tools, but this time by a kind of substitution or reversal. Briefly stated, the novelist shows how perfectly Nanga can establish a friendly relationship with the American couple by putting aside the native mannerism and embracing the American manner of relation which is ironically projected when the young American couple arrive at the Chief's home and greet them in their first name "Micah" and "Margaret" (43). The ironic effect is enhanced even more when the reader finds that to Odili's surprise Nanga does not get angry when he is addressed that way in his "forgotten Christian name" (44). Indeed, as an experienced politician Nanga knows well how to be an opportunist and Achebe artistically draws on the matter by depicting Nanga's ability to exploit cultural potentials in line with his own ends:

seeking new titles to stabilize his stature among the native people and putting them aside when in dealing with non-native people new political and economic benefits might be achieved.

Conclusion

What has made Chinua Achebe an outstanding figure in the African contemporary postcolonial literature can be ascribed to his powerful discourse. The source of such a power might be interpreted to be the specific version of English he is successful to acquire by relying on the 'hybridity' inherent of Igbo postcolonial subjects. In fact, he is largely successful in making use of the authentic record of the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial conditions through a version of English marked by 'hybridity' symbolically: a language which comes into being as a result of 'speaking English through Igbo tongues and minds; and on a metaphoric level a discursive tool to draw on how 'a hybrid postcolonial subject' might react ambivalently in facing with the colonial 'other' as well. The present study attempts to draw on such a property of Achebe's discourse. To provide a reliable account of the matter, his first four novels *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, *Arrow of God* and *A Man of the People*, were selected as the subject of the study – since they correspond to each other at various discursive and thematic levels; thus they can be credited as a *Tetralogy*. Subsequently, one of the less investigated discursive features, common among these four novels, which might be taken to be exploited by Achebe in the way of grasping a 'hybrid' language, is put into study: the native 'naming cosmology' and 'name symbolization'.

As the study shows, significant correspondences can be traced to exist between the names or titles Achebe adopts for his main characters if they are considered to be of symbolic values or analogously decipherable. In truth, the 'hybrid' language the novelist adopts acts as an alternative to the Standard English interpolated by the colonizer, or the 'other' to the 'native' tongue, and is able to create a 'third space' in which the once repressed 'voice' of the native, is to be heard through the native personal names and their cosmological significances. Thus, what Achebe tries to do through relying on this discursive device can be likened to an existential fight or war not only aimed at reviving the lost Igbo pre-colonial identity or spirit but also projecting its dynamism, vitality, and adaptability to the present-day Nigerian context – to the colonial 'other' whose language has become the means for that act of revitalization. In this sense, what Achebe achieves is indeed a victory at a war led by "his other identity in spiritland" according to Igbo Cosmology as Chinụalụmọgụ, Chinua unabbreviated, means: "May A Chi Fight for Me" (Achebe, *Conversations* 84).

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KOSMOLOGIJA IMENOVANJA NARODA IGBO I SIMBOLIKA IMENA U *TETRALOGIJI* ČINUA AČEBE

Svijet se raspada, *Više nije lako*, *Božija strijela* i *Čovjek naroda*, prva četiri romana Činua Ačebe, savremenog nigerijskog romanopisca doista se moraju uvrstiti među najveličanstvenija djela afričke postkolonijalne književnosti. Zapravo, svaki od ova četiri romana usredsređen je na različitu kolonijalnu ili postkolonijalnu fazu istorije Nigerije, posredstvom njih Ačebe teži da pruži autentični prikaz negativnih i pozitivnih efekata 'hibridnosti' na različite aspekte života starosjedelaca. Ukratko, Ačebe u najvećoj mjeri uspješno koristi prednosti raznolikih diskurzivnih alata koje strukturira na osnovu potencijala hibrida, igbo-engleskog koji usvaja. Stoga se može izvesti zaključak da bi sukcesivno čitanje ova četiri romana, kao karika u lancu *Tetralogije*, za rezultat imalo pružanje životnije slike nigerijskih (afričkih) pojedinaca i krize identiteta koja u njima narasta kao plod kolonizacije. Sa ciljem da to pokaže ova studija se fokusira na jednu od diskurzivnih strategija na koju se oslanja Ačebe u svoje četiri romana: kosmologija imenovanja naroda Igbo i simbolika imena.

Ključne riječi: Ačebe, postkolonijalni diskurs, kosmologija naroda Igbo, tetralogija, hibridnost, simbolika imena