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EDITORIAL NOTE

The *Ethiopia Journal of English, Literary, and Cultural Studies* (ISSN: 0795-5413) is an interdisciplinary journal that explores topical and generative issues in English linguistics and in literary and cultural studies. We recognise that African humanities research is both problem-based and knowledge oriented, and our aim is to provide a platform for scholars to analyse and theorise Africa in a way that is generative, conversational and decolonial. Specifically, the journal focuses on both the analytical and theoretical approaches to knowledge production in the context of Africa and the Global South. We want to curate papers that are hinged on African indigenous paradigms and approaches or that seek to extend, reimagine, or contextualise current theoretical or analytical approaches in English language studies and in literary and cultural studies.

We invite papers that dwell on all aspects of English language studies, including phonetics/phonology, semantics, syntax, discourse analysis, pragmatics, stylistics, ESL, ESP etc. We also welcome papers that theorise literary and cultural texts, including film, still and moving images, music and dance, photographs, cultural objects, spaces and places, society and social formations, and other relevant corpora. While we accept purely analytical essays, we encourage authors to focus on theorising the texts or data they engage with. In particular, we welcome theoretical conversations that implicate postcolonial subjecthood, ecocritical approaches (especially postcolonial ecocriticism), feminism and gender studies, new trends in linguistics, object-oriented criticism and approaches, and other generative approaches to knowledge production. Authors are encouraged to do original theorisation rather than adopt extant theoretical frameworks. They may also extend the scope of extant theories and approaches based on the material they present and discuss.

Furthermore, papers with interdisciplinary approaches are also welcomed. We recognise that knowledge production is an elastic phenomenon, and that bright ideas might implicate various fields. Interesting multi-modal, eclectic, or collaborative research is encouraged in this journal.

JOURNAL POLICY

The *Ethiopia Journal of English, Literary and Cultural Studies* is published biennially by the Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. All papers submitted to this maiden edition of the journal had undergone double-blind peer review and published papers are well researched, original and data-driven.

Contributors are to submit an e-copy of their manuscript for assessment and publication to ethiopejournal@delsu.edu.ng or ethiopejournal@gmail.com. Such manuscripts should be original and not under consideration for publication elsewhere and should not have been published in any other journal.

Submitted manuscript which should not exceed 7000 words should be typeset in MS Word Times New Roman Font 12, with double line spacing. The first page should include the title of the manuscript, name(s), and institutional affiliation/address, abstract (not more than 250 words and with not more than six keywords). Manuscripts should conform to the current APA or MLA style sheet. Author(s) of published papers will derive the benefits from peer-review of contributions by seasoned scholars, global visibility and receipt of hard copies as well as soft copies of their papers.

The twelve papers in this maiden edition of the journal cut across disciplines in cultural, media studies and sub-disciplines in English and literary studies. The contributors include seasoned and renowned scholars of international repute and young astute scholars with burning desire to excel in academics. The first article titled: "Folklore and African Poetry in the Age of Globalization" by Prof Ojaide is on cultural studies. Prof. Ojaide is a renowned poet and professor of international repute from the University of North Carolina, USA. It is pertinent to note that the contributors are from universities across the globe. We believe that the twelve articles will be of immense interest to researchers and students.

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CONTENTS

Folklore and African Poetry in the Age of Globalization - Tanure Ojaide	1
By Choice or by Force: Yang Mu's Poetry of Home - Charles Terseer Akwen	21
The Challenges of Impact Evaluation in the Theatre for Development Methodology- Olivia Elakeche Idoko	42
Peace as an Eco-Humanistic Value in Achebe's <i>Things Fall Apart</i> - Omorovie Ikeke & Toma Brume	60
Reimagining African Identity and Space: Decolonizing Visual Representations- Victor Onibere	85
Depictions of the Power of Women and Betrayal in Kunle Afolayan's <i>Anikulapo</i> - Olubunmi I. Bukola	103
A Minimalist Investigation of Ambiguity in English and Urhobo Negative Sentences- Macaulay Mowarin & Emmanuel Avwarosuoghon Mede	116
An Error Analysis of <i>Young Moms</i> Discourse on Facebook- Uzezi Joyce Edhere & Richard Oliseyenum Maledo	131
Revolutionary Fervour in Selected Niger Delta Drama - Ogheneovo Priscilla Akalusi	150
Ideological Leaning and Social Meaning in The Selected Poems of Tanure Ojaide: A Critical Stylistic Analysis- Uche Enu	177

Conflict Resolution and Social Re-engineering in Femi Osofisan's <i>Morountodun</i> - Francis Olabisi Jegede & Olusegun Jegede	202
Father-Absenteeism and Displacement in Kaine Agary's <i>Yellow-Yellow</i> and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's <i>Zikora</i> - Egbedi, Martha Omotetobore & Ohwavworhua, Prince Oghenetega	218

PEACE AS AN ECO-HUMANISTIC VALUE IN ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART*

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Abstract

Peace is an important human value necessary for the sustenance and survival of human beings and civilization. Without peace, society is thrown into chaos, violence, warfare, insecurities, and so forth. Without peace, it is difficult for societal development to fully take place. Peace is also necessary for individuals to find fulfilment in life, and for cultural activities to take place. Peace remains one of the greatest longings of the human heart. As important as peace is many factors impede the flourishing of peace. These factors include anti-social human behaviours, lack of tolerance of the viewpoint of others, the prevalence of injustice, etc. This paper theorizes that peace is necessary for the development of society. It hermeneutically examines the issue of peace as presented in the “Week of Peace” (*Izu-Udo*) in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. It analytically shows that peace is an eco-humanistic value. The paper finds that the promotion of peace through traditional festivals such as *Izu-Udo* has suffered some setbacks. The paper concludes that the value of peace as promoted in *Izu-Udo* should inspire efforts to work for peace to build a more peaceful society.

Keywords: Peace, ecology, humanism, eco-humanism, values, ethics, Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*.

Introduction

Pre-colonial African societies were deeply rooted in eco-humanistic values. These values included- fraternity, communalism, hospitality to kinsmen and strangers, respect for elders, treating every child as one's child, communal age-grade labour to keep the environment clean, reverence for ancestors, worship of the supreme being, support for the weak and vulnerable, social security against starvation, abhorrence of wanton destruction of animals and birds, and peace-making. Peace is a highly important value in African societies. These values indeed continue to subsist to certain degrees in different African societies. The reality remains that many of these values are endangered and threatened by the incursion of colonialism, neo-colonialism, modernity, globalization, extreme religious proselytizing, and extreme forms of capitalism. African values were usually transmitted through varied socialization processes and structures such as rites of passage, festivals, dance, arts and aesthetics, designs on landscapes, agricultural practices, storytelling, etc. The devastating effects of colonialism on African cultural values and ethical mores are well noted by Mbiti (2010), Bujo (2003) and Ikeke (2023). Colonialism and other negative aspects of globalization continue to distort African values and viable systems; and through neo-colonial influences make the continent politically and socially unstable. The concern of this paper is with the value of peace which helps in creating politically and socially stable societies. When society is stable it also has implications for ecological wellbeing for social dislocations invariably negatively affect the environment in which people lives. Saka (2021) writes:

In Africa, cultural festivals are an integral part of the cycle of a traditional African man and woman; a momentary occasion for celebration with a purpose attached to different aspects of a communal life. Globalization and Western culture have contributed greatly to the waning and less acceptance of traditional cultural festivals by young people

despite the cultural, social, and moral roles they play in various African communities (p. 59).

The concern of this paper is with a traditional festival, the “Week of Peace” (*Izu-Udo*), hereafter WOP, as espoused in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. That traditional festivals can contribute to environmental management is well documented by Adom (2017), and Olatumile (2019). Festivals can also help in promoting moral values as noted by Abolarin (2021), Dankwa, Asare-Kumi, and Eshun(2019), Asare-Kumi (2020), and Saka et al (2021). Amid the world threatened by rugged individualism, a military-industrial complex, terrorism, environmental problems, global poverty, hunger, human trafficking, drug abuse, urban violence, and many other social evils, the place of values is inestimable. There will always be a place for values in the world. It is one vital value, the value of peace, both in its human and ecological dimensions, as encapsulated in Achebe's novel mentioned above that this paper is concerned. This research propounds that the values inherent in the “Week of Peace” are not only relevant yesteryears but are still relevant today in the contemporary world.

In presenting the argument of this study, a conceptualization of terms is made, followed by a look at the eco-humanistic predicaments of the contemporary world. Thereafter the WOP is discussed, and its implications for the contemporary world. It is imperative to remember here that the intention of this paper is not to examine the entire novel. The focus is the WOP in chapter four of the novel. It is to study its implications, meaning, and contemporary relevance in social and human-environmental relationships. The paper undertakes a hermeneutical and analytic study of the WOP from an African post-colonial mindset. The African post-colonial is understood here as a radical critique of the evils of colonialism from an African perspective.

Conceptualizations

Terms or phrases that are necessary to be explicated here are eco-humanistic, values, peace, and “Week of Peace.” The hyphenated word, “eco-humanistic” is made up of two words, “eco” and

“humanistic.” “Eco” is the short form of ecology. Mayweh (2009) writes that ecology studies “interrelationships between organisms and their surrounding, outer world; the study of animals and plants in relation to each other and their habitat” (p. 147). Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies (2023) enunciates that ecology is “The scientific study of the processes influencing the distribution and abundance of organisms, the interactions among organisms, and the interactions between organisms and the transformation and flux of energy and matter”(par.1). Ikeke (2015) writes that:

Ecology speaks of interactions among the various elements and organisms in the cosmos. These interactions are ones of interdependence, mutuality, networking, and linkages. All aspects of the natural world or ecosystems are important to life in the cosmos. This is why any threat to any form of life aside the ones inbuilt in the food chain of nature endangers nature. This is where the issue of ecological crisis comes in (p. 180).

The next word that requires clarification is “humanistic.” What is humanistic? The word, “humanistic” is the adjectival form of the term humanism. Humanism concerns the human being or person. It emphasizes human worth, capacity, creativity and welfare. Whatever promotes human welfare and fosters human promotion is said to be humanistic. Grudin (2023) writes that humanism is a “system of education and mode of inquiry that originated in northern Italy during the 13th and 14th centuries and later spread through continental Europe and England. The term is alternatively applied to a variety of Western beliefs, methods, and philosophies that place central emphasis on the human realm” (p.1). Law (2013) states that:

There are various connotations to the word 'humanism'. In the broadest terms, it means a system of thought in which human values, interests, and dignity are considered especially important. Today, however, the meaning is more focused. The Introduction outlines seven characteristics of humanism: science and reason are invaluable tools;

humanists are either atheist or agnostic; this life is the only life we have; moral values are important; we have individual moral autonomy; our lives have meaning without it being bestowed by God; and humanists favour an open, democratic society with a neutral state (p.1).

It is not true that all humanists are atheists. Some persons affirm humanism but equally assert that there is a place for a Supreme Being. They affirm the abilities, capacities, creativities and rational powers that human beings are to exercise are a gift from the Supreme Being. There are secular humanists and there are theistic humanists. The humanistic theory places emphasis on the human person, worth and wellbeing. It should be noted that any culture that pays attention to human abilities and focuses on how human beings can flourish is humanistic. In this sense, African cultures have been humanistic even before the birth of Renaissance humanism. The term, “eco-humanistic” as used in this paper implies that ecological issues should not be radically separated from human and social issues. Both issues interrelate and interact. It means that the two dimensions are not opposed to each other but are complementary. Human beings live in nature and are part of the ecosystem. What affects the ecosystems affects them also. And what affects humans can invariably impact the ecosystems or ecological order.

Eco-humanistic values mean that human values should support ecological wellbeing. Human beings should perceive values not as antithetical to the natural world. It is human beings who are rational and conscious that perceive and imagine ecological values present in the natural world. By the way, a value is what human beings consider to be worthwhile, and should be cherished and held in high esteem. Most values are anthropogenic. It is human beings who perceive the value in things or realities. Chukwujekwu (2007) writes that the general meaning of value concerns what is axiologically worthy, and good and what stands as useful for life. Mintz (2018) propounds:

Values are basic beliefs that guide or motivate attitudes or actions. They help us to determine what is important to us. Values describe the

personal qualities we choose to embody to guide our actions; the sort of person we want to be; the manner in which we treat ourselves and others, and our interaction with the world around us. They provide the general guidelines for conduct. Values in a narrow sense are that which are good, desirable, or worthwhile. Values are the motive behind purposeful action. They are the ends to which we act and come in many forms. Personal values are personal beliefs about right and wrong and may or may not be considered moral. Cultural values are values accepted by religions or societies and reflect what is important in each context (p.1).

Eco-humanistic values are good and worthwhile actions undertaken by humans to promote human wellbeing and ecological flourishing. These values include protecting biodiversity, biocultural diversity, respect for pluralism, the virtue of tolerance, humaneness, environmental ethical care, promoting environmental sanitation, and peaceful co-existence of all beings in society. Values necessarily imply human actions and duties. For what is held to be valuable and good is to be safeguarded. Peace which is the focus of this paper is an important eco-humanistic value as noted previously. When there is peace, it is not only for the good of human beings. It has implications for environmental relations. When human beings fight wars or engage in eco-terrorism it destroys nature. For instance, human life is a value that should be protected. So also is environmental conservation. This paper argues that some eco-humanistic values can be found in the WOP observed by the people of Umuofia as narrated in the novel, *Things Fall Apart*. These values include friendliness and hospitality to fellow humans and the earth, avoidance of harmful and harsh words (positive communication), etc. The implication is that when human beings live well they indirectly put less pressure on Earth's resources.

Things Fall Apart is the first novel of Chinua Achebe, a

prolific Nigerian writer. It was written in 1956, a few years before Nigeria gained political independence from the British. The novel using life in Igboland before the coming of British colonialism narrates the invasion of the colonialists and the grave damage they did to pre-colonial life. It captures the tension using Okonkwo as the main character of how Africans have to survive and hold their culture together amidst the challenges of colonialism and the European form of Christianity. An editorial review by Wilber (n.d) captures the essence of the novel very well: in an African world that is filled with war, violence, and suffering, Okonkwo a self-made man (the opposite of his father who was a never-do-well), is a great farmer, a mighty wrestler, and head of a large family of three wives and seven children in Umuofia. Though Okonkwo is harsh, and exhibits a violent temper, he at times is sympathetic. As the novel depicts, Okonkwo will lose everything and be sent into exile. Eventually in the novel, he commits suicide. The coming of colonialism and missionary Christianity disrupted the culture and in the ensuing struggle, *Things Fall Apart*.

It is to decipher the meaning of peace that the paper now turns. The word peace has multiple but interlinked meanings. According to Porter (2017) from a Judeo-Christian viewpoint peace is understood not just as absence from conflict but means a state of wellbeing, whether spiritual or physical; and also includes concord in communities and individuals, and in some sense implies salvation. According to Galtung (1967), "Peace seems to be an 'umbrella concept', a general expression of human desires of that which is good, that which is ultimate to be pursued (p. 6). According to Madu (2015), "...peace is a condition or state of tranquillity, which is devoid of any violence and committed to equity and everyone's wellbeing for harmonious co-existence" (p. 9).

The African understanding of peace is holistic and embraces all that has to do with human welfare and caring for the environment. Mbiti (2010) provides a clear description of peace from the perspective of African religion and spirituality. He shows that for Africans peace is God's gift to human persons and that is why people pray for peace. He asserts that the Africans see God's goodwill

towards creation, humans and nature as peace; and it refers to God's manifold blessings upon the earth and all that sustains and fosters life. He states further that for Africans, peace is tranquillity, good health, good fortune, freedom from harm, community and personal harmony; it is freedom from discrimination, racism, from favouritism. It could be said that all that human beings and Africans seek is peace. Peace is wellbeing, welfare, wholeness of life, serenity and good relationships with the Supreme being, creation, and fellow human beings. Among the Urhobo people of the Niger Delta of Nigeria, peace is called *Ufuoma*. *Ufuoma* is calmness, serenity, gentleness and quietness. It is living in harmony with others, living a life of virtue, and freedom from recklessness and wickedness. Recklessness and wickedness negate *Ufuoma*. Ikeke and Darah (2023) state that a person of peace lives calmly and in equanimity.

From the African viewpoint, the spiritual dimension of peace should not be discountenanced. Peace entails living in harmony with all cosmic beings and forces. The African world is a world of the hierarchy of beings and forces that interact with one another. Tempels (1945) has written extensively on the notion of vital force. No wonder Archibong and Obah (2021) argue that human life is strengthened by other beings and any form of war, violence, or hostility is a conflict that affects interconnectedness and inter-relationship in the cosmos for all things have one common destiny; and as human lives in concordance with other beings, peace manifests and is exhibited. In African cosmology, there is an order built into the cosmos that human beings should not disorganize.

Eco-humanistic Predicaments of the Contemporary World

That the contemporary world is inundated with many eco-humanistic challenges or predicaments should not be in doubt. The many problems that plague the contemporary world include security challenges, the environmental crisis, the migration dilemma, the political leadership problem especially in Africa and Asia, modern-day slavery and so much more. All these problems threaten or endanger the survival of eco-humanistic values. It can be argued that the state of values in the world whether ecological or humanistic

values is threatened. Many people do not care about values. Mercer (2019) rightly notes that many values are not practised in today's world as there is a rise in abuse of power, discrimination, greed, etc.

Take the case of security. This is a very serious challenge that the world is going through at present. Almost the entire world has become insecure. There is a war currently going on in Ukraine. There is war also in Sudan. There are terrorist attacks in Nigeria, Somalia, Niger, Mali, Ethiopia, etc. War, violence and terrorism cause insecurity, make people's lives difficult and lead to the destruction of lives and properties. Though the war in Syria has subsided to a certain degree, the effects and consequences are still there. The havoc caused by the Islamic State of Syria and the Levant is better imagined than experienced. War has been raging in Yemen as both Iran and Saudi Arabia battle for supremacy. There is constant tension and exchange of words between the United States and China over the issue of Taiwan. The terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre 22 years ago on 11th September 2001 claimed almost 3,000 lives. In Nigeria, Boko Haram has attacked the UN offices in Abuja, attacked and killed people in Niger State, Borno State, Adamawa State, etc. There is a lack of respect for the worth, dignity, and value of human lives. In Afghanistan, the Taliban who came to power have stopped women from going to school, banned many Western journalists, etc. Itse (2022) enumerates global security challenges which include: terrorism, human migration, organized crime, the proliferation of light weapons and small arms, drug trafficking, illicit arms trafficking, food insecurity and environmental insecurity. Terrorists do not care about the consequences of the havoc that they cause. Terrorists care less for the value of humanism, and respect for the dignity and worth of other humans apart from themselves. They care less about the golden rule of most religions: "Do unto others what you want them to do to you."

What about environmental crisis? The crisis shows there is a diminution of both humanistic and ecological values. When people wantonly fell trees, pollute water sources, make animals suffer and destroy biodiversity, it shows how humans see nature. Oil exploration and exploitation have damaged people's streams and

farmlands. Oil spillage and gas flaring continue unabated in many places in the world. All these degrade the atmosphere and land. The world is currently experiencing climate change. The world's glaciers are melting at a very high rate leading to rising ocean levels and threatening coastal cities. With rising temperatures, the ozone layer has been damaged. While the crisis is raging some people and corporations care about profits more than the welfare of people. United Nations (2015) writes that 40% of the global population is affected by land degradation, there is an increase in greenhouse gases leading to depletion of the ozone layer which threatens both animals and humans, and up to 300 million people are susceptible to floods, and there is a rapid decline in biodiversity.

There are also challenges with migration. While environmental changes such as drought, famine and flood are forcing people to move making them environmental refugees. Thousands of African migrants die in the Mediterranean Sea almost every month. Migrants often face poor conditions, are maltreated, and have their human rights violated. It is as if they are not human beings. The migration crisis is not only at the Mediterranean Sea, there are migrants on the border of the US and Mexico, migrants crossing the British Channel, etc. The migration flow is more often to the so-called developed world of Europe and North America. It is painful to write that while the wealthy nations of the global North have enough wealth to take care of many in the world, global poverty continues to ravage the world. Even in the so-called developed world, the wealth is in the hands of a few people. The so-called developed world can spend so much money on space exploration, but very little is devoted to humanitarianism. On global migration, Natarajan, Moslimani, and Lopez (2022) write that:

The number of international migrants grew to 281 million in 2020, meaning that 3.6% of the world's people lived outside their country of birth that year, according to the United Nations' International Organization for Migration (IOM). The increase came despite widespread restrictions on travel and international movement in the early stages of the

coronavirus pandemic (p.1).

Another area where eco-humanistic values are needed is in the whole area of political leadership. Achebe (1983) wrote that the trouble with Nigeria is leadership. This is equally applicable to Africa, with the endemic problem of bad and corrupt leaders. Many countries in the global South especially Africa, Asia, and Latin America are grossly underdeveloped. In many of them, you find poor and dilapidated infrastructure. Niger, Mali, Guinea and Gabon are presently under military rule. Not too long ago there was the Arab Spring which occurred as people rose against poor leadership, poverty, suffering, and economic hardship imposed upon them by bad leaders. Almost everything falls on leadership. Many so-called leaders instead of showing values such as fairness, justice, good governance, etc. show greed, nepotism, favouritism, etc. When it comes to environmental governance, the record of leaders in the global south is very poor. There are many states in the world either on the verge of failing or already failed. Such countries include Sudan, Somalia and Afghanistan.

Slavery is still plaguing the world in the form of modern-day slavery. Human trafficking is on the rise. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Council on Foreign Relations have accused China in the past of human rights abuses. China has been accused of violating labour laws. Countries like Thailand and Cambodia have also been accused of labour law violations. Council on Foreign Relations (2023) states that:

Human trafficking comes in many shapes and sizes, harming adults and children in countries rich and poor alike. In total, this issue—also known as modern slavery—affects an estimated 40.3 million people globally and earns traffickers at least \$150 billion annually, making it one of the world's most profitable crimes. Although slavery has been banned in most countries, many countries are unable to effectively enforce these bans, and contemporary practices of modern slavery persist as a major global challenge today (par 1 and 2).

It is amid these predicaments that the practice of peace in Africa and the entire globe becomes necessary. How this peace is encapsulated in the WOP that this paper is concerned about? Values are important in combating social vices. It is human beings who have to combat these social vices and societal problems. Without a belief in values and the determination to practice them, it becomes difficult to overcome social problems. Many of the predicaments that the world is experiencing border on issues of eco-humanistic values. In a world of plenty many are hungry and food is wasted daily. It is a value issue also. In a world in which human beings are trafficked, it is an issue of value. A world in which people degrade the environment concerns a moral issue.

The “Week of Peace” (*Izu-Udo*) in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

What is the “Week of Peace?” It is the annual week in Umuofia that is observed and celebrated immediately preceding the planting of the yams; it comes between harvest and planting. As presented in the novel during this special and sacred week, peaceful behaviour is expected of all in all things both in words and actions. Violence-prone expressions and harsh words are denounced. The “Week of Peace” is like a Sabbath week, no work is to be done. People gathered in their towns and villages with their neighbours drinking palm wine as they celebrated.

Okonkwo, a courageous man, a wealthy farmer, and the greatest wrestler in all the land waited in vain for his meal to be brought by his youngest wife, Ojiugo. She had gone to plait her hair and did not come early enough to cook the food. The encounter between Okonkwo and Ojiugo that led to a breach on the “Week of Peace” goes thus as narrated by Achebe (2005);

Okonkwo knew she was not speaking the truth, He walked back to his *obi* to wait Ojiugo's return. And when she returned he beat her very heavily. In his anger, he had forgotten that it was the Week of Peace. His first two wives ran out in great alarm pleading with him that it was the sacred week. But Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way

through, not even for fear of a goddess (p. 21)

In the WOP, Okonkwo violates the sacredness of the week and dishonours the earth goddess, *Ani*. He violently beats his wife out of anger. Ezeani counsels Okonkwo thus:

You know as well as I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbour. We live in peace with our fellows to honour our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow....The evil that you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish....You will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries. (p. 22)

It is a taboo to break or violate the WOP. Okonkwo is made to make appeasement to the gods. Okonkwo not only violates a sacred taboo he resists the cherished African tradition of mediation. It was unheard of in traditional Africa to see a fight or someone beating another and not intervene to mediate or settle them. This scenario is better explained with the African spirit of communalism. Okonkwo is the kind of person who could have even beaten the other two wives. The wives pleaded with him that it was the sacred week, but he bluntly refused to listen to them. He allowed arrogance and anger to overwhelm him. Achebe writes that "...not even for fear of a goddess" will Okonkwo stop beating someone halfway. Even with neighbours that came from the neighbouring compounds, Okonkwo did not stop beating his wife. Anger destroys and has precipitated many conflicts, violence and wars. Anger is inimical to human society. When not curbed or controlled, the consequences are grievous. Some have killed others out of anger. In anger people have destroyed the properties of others and at times even their own properties.

Central to religious belief in many African societies is the belief in the earth goddess. In Igboland, the earth goddess is called

Ani. She is the giver of fertility and fruitfulness of the land. This week is observed in her honour invoking her to bless the planting of the yams and the forthcoming harvest. Agricultural festivals are common in many cultures and religions. Okonkwo's action offends against *Ani* and thus breaks the peace of the community and the peace between human beings and the goddess, *Ani*. For breaking the peace, Okonkwo is required to offer sacrifices to restore the peace. Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess comes to meet Okonkwo at dusk. Okonkwo attempts to offer him kola nuts as is customary with Africans when a person visits. He says to Okonkwo, "Take away your kola nut. I shall not eat in the house of a man who has no respect for our gods and ancestors." Ezeani calls for sacrifices. The sacrifices are to pacify *Ani*. Ezeani is clear that the action of Okonkwo can ruin the whole clan, destroy the order in the community, and is disrespectful of the earth goddess. Ezeani states clearly the importance of peace when he affirms even if Okonkwo has found a man committing adultery with his wife on his bed, he is not to respond in any harsh and violent manner. Adultery is a grievous crime and abomination in African culture. Thus not allowing you to be provoked by it in the WOP indicates that Peace is a supreme and inviolable value that should not be violated. To beat your wife in the WOP when she committed adultery is a great evil.

The WOP enshrines peace as a sacred and moral value. It is presented in the novel that the WOP is so sacrosanct that it should not be violated. Achebe narrates that: "This year they talked of nothing else but the nso-ani which Okonkwo had committed. It was the first time for many years that a man had broken the sacred peace. Even the oldest men could remember one or two occasions somewhere in the dim past." Achebe quotes Ogbuefi Ezeudu who stated that the punishment for breaking the WOP has become milder in their days. Ezeudu states that in times past a man who broke the WOP is dragged on the ground all-round the village till he died. But this practice had to be stopped as it spoils the week it is supposed to preserve. To even die in this WOP is seen as an abomination. In Obodoani, a person who dies in the WOP is thrown into the Evil Forest. Ezeudu affirms that this is a bad custom as it has led to many people being thrown into the

Evil Forest and the evil spirits of these unburied people are anxious to harm those who are still alive. This for Ezeudu shows a lack of understanding of these people.

Eco-Humanistic Value of Peace and Its Implications for the Contemporary World

Perhaps the first place to see the implication of the novel to the contemporary world is the post-colonial undertones of the *Things Fall Apart*. The truth is that many of the things that colonialists out of racist bias accuse African societies of are not true. African societies were accused of having no knowledge of God or the sacred, having no moral or ethical values, their festivals were simply seen as superstitious and fetish, pagan, etc. Kelbessa (2009) writes that: "African people have their own religions and moral principles for as long as any other peoples. Belief in a God and an afterlife existed among Africans long before the arrival of European Christian missionaries and Muslims"(p. 14). Just like Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and other religions, Africans have festivals and annual celebrations in honour of God. As many Africans take pride today in celebrating and cherishing the festivals and holy days of the religions they have accepted, some other traditional Africans continue to celebrate and cherish their traditional festivals and holy days because of how much positive and healthy values they promote.

The right to freedom of conscience and religious freedom means that Africans who accept and believe in these traditional festivals should be protected. The right to religious practice of African traditional worshippers should not be trampled upon in the name of fundamentalist missionary religions, globalization, etc. It is painful to note that while some countries in Europe and Asia have been able to transform their traditional cultures into viable tourist attractions; Africans are lagging behind in this respect.

The WOP shows the great value that the community attaches to peace. Peace is a cardinal value in all African societies. The message of the WOP is not limited to the week, but it is the behaviour expected of all human beings throughout the year. Only a fool will think that it is only in the week of peace that he is to abstain from

harsh and negative speech, hate speech, violent behaviours, fighting and war, anger, and bitterness. Mbiti (2010) writes that “Peace has always been a major need in society, on personal, family, communal, national, and international levels. Through various means, African Traditional Religion (ATR) has addressed itself to this need, one way of which is through making prayers.”

It is troubling to note that many modern-industrial, scientific and technological orientations see no place for taboos in contemporary life. But it ought to be asserted that taboos are in place to keep a society in peace and promote environmental protection. The modern mind should look beyond logical scientific explanation to the rationale or purpose that taboos accomplished. There is a crucial need to move beyond the Atheistic perspective on peace in some Euro-centric quarters. Peace is not simply what exists among human beings; it is impacted by some extra-sensory factors unseen to the human eyes. Many of the East Asian traditions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, etc) are strong on this point.

Today, the United Nations (UN) and other groups have days devoted to various themes calling people's attention to their duties and responsibilities. Among the UN days are World Day of Peace, World Day of Environment, World Human Rights Day, World Day of Tolerance, World Day of Tourism, etc. In the Catholic Church, they have days like World Day of Peace, World Day for the elderly and grandparents, etc. Long before the advent of establishing and recognizing specific days for action for various needs, Africans already had days or weeks devoted to promoting different human needs and purposes. The annual peace week in Umuofia and Igboland should be looked to for values for World Day of Peace, World Day of Environment, World Day of Tolerance, etc. Many positive and healthy dimensions of African traditional festivals need to be recovered and reclaimed. Religious fanaticism and doctrinal fundamentalism should be shunned, and retrieving non-sectarian and positive aspects of African culture should not be seen as idolatry, superstition and paganism. This may likely be the argument of religious fanatics and over-zealous religious adherents of proselytizing faith who see nothing good in African culture and

religion.

The world more than ever before, especially in contemporary times, is filled with terrorism, human trafficking, forced migration, the threat of nuclear bombs, civil wars, etc. The world needs a culture of peace. A culture of peace as understood by the United Nations General Assembly (1998) is:

... values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society (p. 1).

Concerning a culture of peace in Africa, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) states that:

...in Africa, the concept of a culture of peace delineates the integration of values, belief systems and forms of spirituality, endogenous knowledge and technologies, traditions and forms of cultural and artistic expression that contribute to the respect of human rights, cultural diversity, solidarity and the rejection of violence with a view to the construction of democratic societies(p. 1).

Whatever initiative is undertaken while celebrating a week of peace, a conference for peace, a peace seminar, a workshop on peace, prayers for peace, etc all build peace and promote a culture of peace. The WOP should be an inspiration to all others to create more events, festivals, and celebrations to foster peace, harmony, and nature care. A WOP should be institutionalized in societies in which no week is devoted to celebrating peace.

The ecological dimensions of the WOP should not be lost on anyone. The people of Umuofia celebrated peace week in honour of *Ani*, the earth goddess. This present writer belongs to the school of thought in African religion that asserts that Africans worshipped only the Supreme Being but venerated other divinities and ancestors.

Celebrating in honour of *Ani*, the people knew that everything was a gift from the Supreme Being, of whom Ani is a messenger. The earth was to be cultivated with prudence and the produce of the earth received with appreciation. The language of seeing the earth as a goddess is metaphorically akin to perceiving the earth as having intrinsic value and not just instrumental value. There may be no need to dispute over languages used to describe the human relationship with the earth. What should be uppermost is that there is earth care and eco-keeping to create a sustainable and peaceful environment. Mbogu (2021) avers that:

The earth is full of created things. Some people regard it as a living being and some call it “mother”, “the earth goddess” or “the divine earth” and reverence as such. In some places in Igboland, there are “Ala shrines.” It is abominable to desecrate the earth. Sacrifices are made for appeasement when its sanctity has been violated. This violation may include the ...wanton destruction of certain trees considered as sacred by the community, the poisoning of drinking water, etc (p. 251).

There should be a move from a merely human-centric valuation of the earth to an “Eco” or Gaia-centered valuation of the earth. All life on earth matters not just human lives. In African traditional thought, there is no true peace unless there is peace among all cosmic beings and realities. Francis (2015) has taught on the intrinsic valuation of the earth. Philosophers like Rolston (1994) and Naess (1989), have all argued for the intrinsic value of the earth. It is important to note that since some describe African Traditional Religion with abominable names, whatever practice is found in African religion or culture is also called abominable names by these persons. Isizoh (n.d) has argued forthrightly that:

Today, some people still refer to the African Traditional Religion as 'animist religion', polytheism, ancestor worship — ideas long discredited. African Traditional Religion is not animism. The followers of the religion do not hold

that trees, stones and hills have souls. They do not believe in the existence of another being on the par with the Supreme Being. This Supreme Being is known by various names in different languages. In the Igbo language of Nigeria, the Supreme Being is known as Chineke – God the creator. There is no being that can have that title. I know this point to be also true among other ethnic groups (par 4).

Uwineza (2021) opines that an unfortunate reality is that the discourse on the environmental crisis is dominated by the views of Western scholars. This for this current writer is unacceptable. Orobator (2016) argues that “Upon careful scrutiny, the wisdom of African religious tradition, long derided and dismissed as animistic offers resources for cultivating sound ecological virtues and commitment” (p. 1).

African cosmology acknowledges a created universe in which all things and beings, plants, animals, rocks, etc are all interrelated. This notion is not only present in Africa, it is found in all indigenous traditions such as that of the Native Americans and the Aborigines of Australia. It is also corroborated by contemporary scientific new universe stories or new cosmology. O'Murchu (2012) categorically states that the new cosmology as championed by Thomas Berry, and Brian Swimme affirms a vibrational relational universe in which all things live in a relationship and this is in line with the findings of Quantum Physics. Humanity will be living at the risk of its survival if it operates as if the earth does not matter. The negative impact of climate change and other environmental predicaments are unquantifiable. Such challenges include destructive flooding, rise in sea levels seriously impacting coastal cities, displacement of people, forced migration, food insecurity, threat to national and human security, and so forth.

That the people of Umuofia and by extension, people in other African societies celebrate in honour of the earth goddess, does not make them animists (the term understood narrowly and negatively) or pagan and demon worshipers. Isizoh (n.d) writes:

In African Traditional Religion, the Mother Earth is important. To her

all human beings return. Since she is everywhere, she watches every human activity. In some cultures, she is invoked to bear witness: a person is asked to swear simply by stamping the bare soles of his or her feet on the ground that is not tarred or cemented. It is believed that calling Mother Earth as witness is enough to establish the veracity of a person's statement. The Earth is, therefore, sacred.

The WOP is a week to reverence Ani, Mother Earth, the “source” of life and sustenance. One may disagree over what should be the human attitude or action towards the earth, and even what name to use to describe this but environmental pragmatism in the light of climate change and other environmental predicaments necessitates that human beings have to find ways to positively and healthily navigate their relationship with the earth for their good and sustenance. If the earth is not respected and human beings foster friendly actions towards the earth, human survival on earth is threatened. The people of Umuofia like other African people believed that insulting, and dishonouring the earth can impede the fruitfulness and fertility of the earth. Is that not what is happening in the environmental crisis? When human beings pollute the streams, oceans, land and the productivity of the earth is hampered.

Human words are powerful. Many wars and violence have been caused by negative human words and communication. In the WOP, no violent, harmful, or harsh words are to be used. This value is not simply for this week but outlines how human beings are to live in good neighbourliness and friendship. Contemporary life is filled with the use of harsh and hurtful words whether in hate speech, political campaigns, economic and business activities or in the public space and cyberworld. The emotional toll and mental suffering, not to talk of violence that this has caused is incalculable.

Other values that the WOP fostered are generosity and sharing, hospitality and kindness. During the WOP, no work was to be done. The earth was allowed to rest and recuperate. Human beings were also to rest and regenerate their health and energies. The earth's fertility and fruitfulness are not unlimited. The nutrients of the earth can diminish and get degraded when the earth is over-used and exploited. As people stayed at home in the WOP, they gathered

together and shared meals and drinks such as palm wine. The opportunity to gather together offers people time to share ideas, discuss community affairs and see how they can jointly tackle problems together. African festivals promote the spirit of communalism. Okonkwo was a leader in his community but he lacked self-restraint. He could not master and control his emotions. Leaders who cannot control themselves under provocation are a danger to the community. African communities valued hard work and diligent labour. It was expected that after the week of peace, people would return to their work and labour. There was no place for laziness.

Conclusion

This paper studied peace as an eco-humanistic value in *Things Fall Apart*. The paper highlighted the importance and significance of peace. It showed that in the novel *Things Fall Apart* as written by Chinua Achebe; a WOP was observed annually in honour of the earth goddess, Ani. In that week, people refrained from farming and agricultural activities. They stayed at home feasting and meeting among themselves. In the week, people refrained from doing any harm to their neighbour such as using hurtful and harmful words. It was a non-violent week. The paper argued that peace as a value had not only humanistic implications but also ecological implications. When people live in peace with one another, they promote friendship, communalism, love, sharing, hospitality, generosity, etc. Good human relationships rooted in peace have an indirect impact on the earth. As human beings learn to share, shun greed, etc less pressure is put on the earth and thus sustainability is enhanced, As they observed the WOP, the earth, farmlands, and forests are allowed to rest from the human agency at least for that week. This helps the earth in those places to enjoy some recuperation. Observance of peace at least in this week is an eco-humanistic value as fosters not only human promotion but also the health of the earth.

By way of conclusion, it should be realized that African festivals like the WOP are useful resources that can be critically evaluated and the creative and positive aspects that foster ecological preservation

and humanistic care should be retrieved. Much needs to be done not just with this festival but many other festivals. Coupled with the challenges of capitalist globalization, neo-colonial forces, negative forms of westernization, fanatical proselytizing faith, etc. To use the words of Uwineza (2021), there is a need for communal, legal, individual, and political will to mine these resources. When this is done, it will also help to decolonize environmental and humanistic ethics. It is important to recognize that the values coming from the WOP are not just for the period. These values are expected to be in the character of the people throughout the year.

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