



Discourse, Panopticism, and Heterotopia in *Things Fall Apart*: Archaeology and Genealogy of Colonized Subjectivities

Ali Shenavi¹

Erfan Rajabi²

Abstract:

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has long been examined as a counter-narrative to colonial discourse, yet the intricate mechanisms through which colonial power reconfigures subjectivity remain unexplored. This study investigates the archaeology and genealogy of colonized subjectivities in Achebe's novel through Michel Foucault's theoretical framework, focusing on the interplay of discourse, panopticism, and heterotopia. The research addresses a significant gap in postcolonial literary studies: while previous scholarship has emphasized cultural loss and resistance, few studies have systematically traced the formation of colonized subjectivities as an archeological-genealogical process shaped by discursive, spatial, and institutional transformations. The study applies Foucault's concepts to key narrative moments, including the construction of the church in the Evil Forest, the functioning of colonial courts and prisons, and the psychological trajectories of characters such as Nwoye and Okonkwo. Findings reveal that colonial power operates not merely through coercion but through subtle mechanisms of surveillance, moral discipline, and spatial reordering, producing subjects who internalize the gaze and moral codes of the colonizer. Moreover, Achebe's narrative performs a counter-genealogy by reclaiming indigenous epistemologies and resisting totalizing colonial narratives. The study demonstrates that *Things Fall Apart* is both a literary excavation of historical power relations and a theoretical meditation on the processes by which colonized identities are constructed, contested, and potentially resisted. This research contributes to postcolonial theory and Foucauldian literary analysis by articulating the complex ways discourse, space, and power intersect to shape subjectivity in colonial contexts.

Key words: Colonial Discourse; Panopticism; Heterotopia; Genealogical Subjectivity; Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*.

Studies in literature and Culture:
from Theory to Practice
2026, Vol. 1(2) 1-24

© The Author(s) 2026



Article reuse guidelines:

<https://slc.qom.ac.ir/>

10.22091/SLIC.2025.14405.1015

doi.org/10.22091/SLIC.2025.14405.1015



Article reuse guidelines

¹. PhD Candidate in English Language and Literature, Department of English Language, Literature, and Linguistics, Faculty of Language and Literature, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Kurdistan, Iran. (Corresponding Author). (ali.shenavi@uok.ac.ir)

². Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature, Department of English Language, Literature, and Linguistics, Faculty of Language and Literature, University of Kurdistan, Sanandaj, Iran. (e.rajabi@uok.ac.ir)

How to cite this article:

Ali, Shenavi & Erfan Rajabi. "Discourse, Panopticism, and Heterotopia in *Things Fall Apart*: Archaeology and Genealogy of Colonized Subjectivities". *Studies in Literature and Culture*, vol.1, no.2, 2026, pp 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.22091/SLIC.2025.14405.1015>.

*Received 15/01/2026; Received in revised form 05/03/2026; Accepted 20/05/2026; Published online 30/09/2026.

Introduction

Since its publication in 1958, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has stood as a cornerstone of African literature and postcolonial studies, offering a profound reflection on the cultural, epistemological, and political consequences of European imperialism in Africa. Critics have traditionally read Achebe's novel as a cultural counter-discourse to Eurocentric narratives which reduced African civilization to the margins of history (Al-Shamiri; Casimir). Over the decades, scholars have explored its thematic richness, from the tensions between tradition and modernity to the destabilization of Igbo identity in the face of colonial incursion (Anyadike; Gosling). Yet, as postcolonial criticism evolved, attention shifted from overt cultural conflict to more complicated mechanisms of power and control—those embedded in language, discourse, and spatial organization. In this respect, Michel Foucault's critical theories, particularly his concepts of discourse, panopticism, and heterotopia, offer a sophisticated interpretive framework for understanding how colonial regimes not only dominate through violence or law but produce subjects through knowledge, surveillance, and the reconfiguration of space (*Archaeology; Discipline; "Spaces"*). Situating Achebe's novel within this Foucauldian constellation allows for a deeper exploration of how power operates invisibly yet pervasively to construct colonized subjectivity and communal order.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* intricately depicts the disintegration of a precolonial social order through the arrival of British missionaries and administrators in Umuofia, yet its real power lies in how it dramatizes the internalization of colonial structures within subjectivity. Previous readings have addressed the novel's portrayal of religious and cultural conflicts (Osei-Nyame), the crisis of selfhood (Ogundele), and the emergence of hybrid identities (Obasi). However, few have examined how Achebe's narrative anticipates the subtle, disciplinary mechanisms that Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), the transformation of social behavior through surveillance, normalization, and self-regulation. The novel's spaces, the missionary church in the Evil Forest, the District Commissioner's court, and the colonial school, become what Foucault calls 'heterotopias': real material sites which contest and invert traditional spatial and symbolic orders ("Spaces"). In these restructured environments, power becomes spatialized and embodied; it no longer needs to be imposed from above but is enacted through everyday rituals, moral judgments, and discursive hierarchies. Likewise, the Foucauldian notion of 'archaeology' helps to excavate the layers of discourse embedded within colonial epistemology, while 'genealogy' traces the historical processes through which colonized subjects like Nwoye and Okonkwo are produced, fragmented, and disciplined by these new structures of truth and power. These theoretical intersections reveal that Achebe's narrative, though often read in cultural or nationalist terms, also constitutes a rich site for Foucauldian inquiry into how subjectivity is constructed through discourse and space.

Despite the extensive scholarship surrounding *Things Fall Apart*, the intersection of Foucauldian archaeology and genealogy with Achebe's narrative remains underexplored. Previous studies have often employed Foucault's concepts of discourse or power in isolation but have seldom mapped their interrelation as a continuous process of colonial subject construction, one which moves from discursive construction to spatial reorganization and culminates in genealogical subjectivity. This research seeks to fill this gap by offering an integrated Foucauldian reading which traces how *Things Fall Apart* articulates the archaeology and genealogy of colonized subjectivities through the mechanisms of discourse, panopticism, and heterotopia. By uncovering the novel's implicit philosophical dimensions, this study argues that Achebe's text does not merely depict the fall of a traditional order but stages the historical process by which colonialism reconstructs knowledge, space, and identity to produce compliant and self-regulating subjects. The goal of this research is thus to illuminate the archaeological and genealogical dimensions of colonized subjectivity in *Things Fall Apart*, bridging postcolonial literary studies with Foucauldian theory and contributing a different understanding of how colonial power operates not only as domination but as the very condition of modern subjectivity, a condition in which the subjects are already positioned through existing genealogical forces—forces which are already constructed by a long archaeological backbone.

Literature Review

The literature review which follows is the product of a systematic, wide-ranging search across previous scholarship of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* either directly or indirectly in relation to discourse, power, surveillance, space, and subject formation. Over the past six decades, *Things Fall Apart* has generated an extraordinarily rich and heterogeneous body of criticism which reflects shifting paradigms in postcolonial, cultural, and theoretical inquiry. Early critical responses celebrated Achebe's novel as a project of cultural recovery, a narrative which restored dignity to precolonial Igbo life and contested Western misrepresentations of Africa. Subsequent generations of scholars, however, have expanded this reading into broader theoretical terrains, interrogating how the novel dramatizes the interplay of discourse, power, space, and subjectivity within the colonial encounter. These studies have gradually moved from a focus on Achebe's realism and cultural nationalism toward analyses grounded in Foucauldian, Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic, and spatial theories, thereby transforming *Things Fall Apart* from an ethnographic text into a complex site of epistemological contestation. Within this vast corpus, several interrelated currents can be discerned: works examining the politics of discourse and the production of colonial knowledge; analyses of surveillance and institutional discipline as mechanisms of social transformation; spatial readings which engage with heterotopia, geography, and the colonial reorganization of sacred space; and studies of identity formation, hybridity, and resistance under colonial power. Each

of these studies offers significant insight into Achebe's articulation of domination and subjectivity, yet they remain largely fragmented and seldom integrated into a coherent framework which connects discourse, panopticism, and heterotopia as mutually reinforcing operations of colonial power. The following review thus organizes existing scholarship into thematic sections in order to trace how Achebe's narrative has been read across different intellectual moments, and to reveal the conceptual discontinuities which render an archaeological-genealogical re-reading both timely and necessary.

A considerable strand of criticism around *Things Fall Apart* engages colonial discourse and the production of knowledge—how Achebe undermines Western epistemic claims by deploying indigenous idioms, proverb, and voice to contest colonial misrepresentations. For example, Al-Shamiri analyzes how Achebe uses Igbo proverbs, imagery, and character-narration to resist colonial discourse and to expose its rhetorical strategies of othering and hegemonic truth claims. Similarly, Mostafaei deploys a Spivakian/Marxist approach to show how colonial discourse instills 'false consciousness' among subaltern figures, especially considering female voices, revealing how class, gender, and colonial ideology intersect to distort self-knowledge. Another example is the comparative examination by Dankwa of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Things Fall Apart*, where Dankwa frames Achebe as engaging in counter-discourse responding to canonical colonial texts, pushing back against the ideological stereotypes embedded in European colonial literature. More linguistically oriented studies include Betu who studies Achebe's style, use of proverbs, idioms, and what he calls "African English," showing how these linguistic choices disrupt monolithic colonial discourse. Though these works richly document the discursive resistance, they often lack full attention to how these discursive maneuvers are institutionally, spatially, or materially embedded. In addition, few scholars treat discourse as the archaeological foundation over which more embodied power (surveillance) and spatial rearrangements (heterotopia) build; most treat discourse as an endpoint rather than a beginning.

Critical responses to *Things Fall Apart* have long recognized Achebe's portrayal of power, but more recent scholarship has moved beyond depictions of overt domination to explore how colonial authority functions through subtle mechanisms of discipline, observation, and normalization. Early works often foregrounded the violence of physical conquest and religious intrusion, yet scholars such as Mengara have demonstrated that Achebe's representation of colonialism unfolds through identifiable phases of intrusion, appropriation, and institutionalization, each entailing new regimes of control. Mengara's model, though not overtly Foucauldian, prefigures an understanding of how colonial rule reconfigures indigenous life through disciplinary and epistemic shifts that operate beneath overt coercion. Similarly, Sadeghi underscores the internalization of inferiority among colonized individuals, particularly in the younger generation, showing how the colonized come to police their own desires and behaviors in conformity with colonial standards. Aras and Takva expand this idea by examining

the subtle diffusion of colonial ideology in both Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Emecheta's *The Bride Price*, emphasizing how the colonial project operates not only through force but through a moral and affective re-education of native subjects. Such arguments reveal the diffusion of surveillance into the moral and emotional domains of everyday life, a process through which the disciplinary gaze of colonial authority becomes embedded within ordinary social conduct. However, while these studies recognize the presence of disciplinary structures, few have systematically explored the spatial and institutional dimensions through which surveillance is enacted and sustained.

Comparative theoretical work by Rotich reinforces this reading by situating panopticism within African modernities, showing how schooling, religious education, and bureaucratic order function as localized mechanisms of surveillance and subject formation. These frameworks illuminate the colonial mission in Achebe's novel as an early apparatus of visibility, one that compels subjects to internalize foreign moral codes even in the absence of direct coercion. Recent scholarship by Juma and Abel also contributes to this discussion by exploring identity re-imagination and the appropriation of colonial language, demonstrating how linguistic control becomes a site of both resistance and subjection. Nevertheless, these approaches remain fragmented: they isolate language, religion, or law as discrete domains of power rather than articulating their intersection as a coordinated system of surveillance. Moreover, while Okuroğlu and Başkale emphasize the exposure of wrongdoing and the transformation of shame into a public disciplinary force, their analyses do not extend into how spatial arrangements—such as the missionary church in the “evil forest” or the colonial courthouse—create new heterotopic configurations that sustain the colonial gaze. The field thus lacks a sustained study that synthesizes these strands through a Foucauldian archaeology and genealogy of power, tracing how the colonial apparatus in *Things Fall Apart* produces a panoptic social order that precedes overt domination and ultimately conditions the emergence of the colonized subject.

The spatial dimension in *Things Fall Apart* has attracted a substantial and growing critical interest, with scholars analyzing how land, nature, sacred sites, and ritual space participate in the moral, social, and cosmological infrastructures of Igbo society. Victor Muyumba's ecocritical reading emphasizes how land functions not just as a resource but as a “culturescape,” a dynamic site where culture and nature intermingle, where beliefs about ancestral spirits, religion, and custom shape how land is used and valued. Harry Omobokun Olufunwa uses Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope to trace how various spaces, homestead, marketplace, ritual grounds, intersect with temporalities to shape identity and social order. Ainehi Edoro-Glines's study offers one of the clearest spatial readings, arguing that the Evil Forest is not merely a symbol but a structural nexus in the novel: a threshold between sacred and profane, order and disorder; it is legal, cultural, and narrative space through which ritual impurity, taboo, and colonial intervention converge. Similarly, Moslund explores spatial deixis

and how embodied experience of land (bodily relations to place, memory, spiritual anchor) reveals both resistance and alienation under colonial pressure. These works show that space in Achebe is more than backdrop: it is an agent, structured, contested, ethical, sacred. Yet despite this richness, scholarship has not fully deployed Foucauldian heterotopia as a consistent analytic category in analyzing *Things Fall Apart*, especially regarding the ways colonial institutions spatialize control through heterotopic formations. There is thus a gap in tracing how Achebe's narrative spatializes colonial power in heterotopic counter-sites: how space becomes a mechanism of control, inclusion/exclusion, ritual inversion, and how these spatial mechanisms interact with discourse and subject formation over time.

Discourse has been the most intensively studied axis in Achebe criticism, and rightly so: *Things Fall Apart* stages language as both medium and battleground, where naming, narrative authority, and epistemic legitimacy are contested. A rich body of work demonstrates how Achebe recuperates indigenous modes of signification, proverbs, oral narration, and "African English," to displace metropolitan stereotypes and to expose the rhetorical techniques of colonial knowledge production (Betu; Dankwa; Al-Shamiri). Other scholars have used postcolonial and Marxist frames to show how colonial discourse produces false consciousness and gendered epistemic marginalization, thereby reconfiguring who gets to speak and who is made mute (Mostafaei; Ihejirika). Complementing these readings, Chapagae and Sadeghi trace the psychological and social effects of discursive domination—how colonial categories of "civilized" and "primitive" are internalized and become apparatuses of self-judgment among colonized subjects. Yet while these studies richly document counter-discourse and ideological resistance, they mostly treat discourse as an object of representation—a set of linguistic choices or narrative strategies, rather than as the archaeological substrate from which institutions, spatial practices, and disciplinary mechanisms emerge. Mengara's stage-model of colonial intrusion gestures toward this sequencing, but it stops short of a sustained archaeological account that links specific textual practices (e.g., official reports, missionary tracts, the District Commissioner's voice) to later modes of surveillance and spatial discipline. While discourse studies have successfully shown Achebe's counter-rhetorical strategies and the psychological effects of colonial representation (Betu; Mostafaei; Al-Shamiri), a fully articulated archaeological mapping of discourse, as the precondition for genealogical analyses of panopticism and heterotopia, remains an urgent lacuna this research seeks to fill.

Critical discourse on *Things Fall Apart* has long recognized that the colonial encounter not only transforms institutions and beliefs but also reconstitutes the very structure of subjectivity. Scholars such as Ogundele trace how Achebe dramatizes the psychic dislocation of the Igbo subject when confronted with alien epistemes and moral economies, particularly through characters like Nwoye, Obierika, and Okonkwo. Postcolonial theorists often interpret these ruptures through Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity, emphasizing the ambivalent space where imitation and resistance coalesce. Nwoye's conversion, for instance, has been read as a

moment of hybrid subject formation, where colonial discourse offers emotional intelligibility lacking in patriarchal Igbo structures (Osei-Nyame). Yet, as recent work by Obasi shows, hybridity alone cannot account for the violence of disciplinary normalization that underlies such identity shifts; these transformations are not spontaneous negotiations of meaning but are produced through what Foucault calls “the microphysics of power,” the diffuse operations of surveillance, confession, and institutional control that generate docile bodies and compliant selves (*Power/knowledge*). Feminist rereadings, such as those by Anyadike, further extend this critique by examining how colonial and indigenous patriarchies converge to discipline female subjectivity, showing that colonial discourse re-inscribes gender hierarchies even as it claims to civilize or liberate. Despite this vibrant field, few studies have explicitly connected these analyses of subjectivity and hybridity to a archeological-genealogical framework that would situate identity formation within a historical matrix of discourse, spatial organization, and surveillance.

Existing scholarship highlights how colonial administrators and missionaries impose epistemic regimes which reclassify indigenous knowledge, religion, and morality, producing cognitive and social hierarchies. Yet prior studies often treat discourse in isolation, as linguistic, literary, or ideological, without tracing its tangible consequences in institutional practices and spatial arrangements. This research addresses this lacuna by using archaeological analysis to identify the sedimented rules of colonial discourse and to show how these discursive formations become the preconditions for panoptic mechanisms of surveillance, moral discipline, and behavioral normalization. In Achebe’s narrative, such mechanisms are instantiated through schools, missionary compounds, courts, and administrative oversight, where visibility, ritualized correction, and institutional authority operate in tandem to produce compliance and internalized subjection. The framework therefore positions discourse not merely as rhetoric but as a historical and material force which lays the groundwork for subsequent genealogical processes of subject formation. The present research addresses gaps in existing scholarship: the lack of a holistic Foucauldian archaeological-genealogical account, the insufficient integration of discourse, panopticism, and heterotopia, and the underexplored ways in which Achebe’s text historicizes the making of the colonized subject. This conceptual framework provides a rigorous, historically sensitive map for analyzing how power operates through knowledge, space, and social practices to produce new subjectivities in *Things Fall Apart*. But before beginning the journey from archaeology to genealogy, the paradigm of Foucauldian theories and concepts should be delineated.

1. Introduction to the Foucauldian Paradigm

Michel Foucault’s intellectual project stands as one of the most profound reconfigurations of modern thought, marking a decisive departure from the assumptions of both structuralism and humanism. Instead of viewing power as a possession wielded by individuals or institutions,

Foucault reconceived it as a relational, productive, and ubiquitous force that “comes from everywhere” (*History* 93). In *Discipline and Punish*, he argues that modern societies are structured not primarily through coercion but through subtle mechanisms of surveillance and normalization that “produce” rather than merely repress subjects. Power, for Foucault, is inseparable from knowledge, each sustains and legitimizes the other. “Power and knowledge directly imply one another,” he writes; “there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge” (*Discipline* 27). This reconceptualization dissolves traditional binaries between domination and freedom, positioning individuals simultaneously as agents and effects of power. Consequently, literature becomes a fertile ground for tracing how discourses shape, constrain, and create the very conditions of subjectivity.

Foucault’s theories have profoundly reshaped literary and cultural criticism by providing an analytical vocabulary for exploring how texts participate in the production of regimes of truth. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, he develops a method to study the rules governing the emergence of discourses—those historically contingent systems that determine what can be said, thought, or known at a given moment. Later, in *Power/Knowledge*, Foucault expands this into a political epistemology, contending that power’s efficacy lies in its capacity to generate “docile bodies” and “disciplined minds.” For postcolonial theory, this insight proves transformative: it illuminates how colonialism functioned as a discursive system that defined the colonized subject through classification, exclusion, and normalization. Edward Said famously adapted Foucault’s discourse analysis in *Orientalism*, exposing how Western scholarship produced the “Orient” as an object of knowledge—exotic, inferior, and governable. Similarly, Homi Bhabha explored how colonial discourse simultaneously enacts domination and dependency, producing hybrid identities caught between mimicry and resistance.

In this light, Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* can be reread not merely as a story of cultural disintegration but as an allegory of discursive colonization. The novel portrays the intricate process through which colonial power reconfigures traditional African cosmology, spatiality, and selfhood. The arrival of the British missionaries introduces what Foucault might call a “regime of truth,” in which new forms of knowledge—religious, administrative, and moral—redefine the Igbo subject’s relation to self and community. The novel, thus, provides a rich site for what Foucault termed the “micro-physics of power” (*Discipline* 26), where surveillance, discipline, and normalization gradually replace open coercion. To interpret Achebe through a Foucauldian lens is to uncover the mechanisms by which the colonized subject becomes intelligible to power, and how, in turn, subjectivity itself is reconstituted under colonial modernity. Such a reading also opens the space for the genealogical inquiry this research proposes—one that traces the layered emergence of discourse, panopticism, and heterotopia in the colonial encounter, revealing how power inscribes itself not only upon territories but upon consciousness itself.

2. Archaeology: The Formation of Discourse

Foucault's *archaeology* emerges as his earliest and most systematic attempt to analyze the historical conditions that make knowledge possible. Rather than interpreting texts as transparent reflections of reality or as expressions of human consciousness, Foucault sought to uncover the "rules of formation" that determine what can appear as knowledge at a given historical moment (*Archaeology* 38). His approach thus suspends the assumption of continuity in intellectual history, revealing instead a landscape of epistemic ruptures, discontinuities, and transformations. Archaeology, as he defines it, "describes discourses as practices specified in the element of the archive" (146). In other words, it seeks to excavate the underlying systems that govern how objects, concepts, and subjects come into being within discourse. For Foucault, discourse is not merely language or ideology—it is a field of power-knowledge, a set of practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. The task of the archaeologist, then, is to expose the historical *a priori* that silently governs the production of meaning.

When applied to colonial discourse, the archaeological method reveals that European domination was not only enacted through material conquest but through the *epistemological colonization* of knowledge itself. As Said argues, colonial power depended on the ability to define, describe, and categorize the non-Western world—to render it knowable and, therefore, governable. This epistemic process mirrors what Foucault calls the "ordering of statements," a process through which authority determines what constitutes truth and what is relegated to the margins of unreason. The colonial archive, from missionary reports to ethnographic writings—functioned as an "apparatus of knowledge" that shaped how Africa and Africans could be imagined. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* intervenes precisely within this archive: it both exposes and subverts the Eurocentric narratives that positioned the African subject as primitive, irrational, and silent. Through its reconstruction of Igbo cosmology and communal ethics, Achebe's novel contests the dominant epistemic structures that sought to erase indigenous modes of knowing. Yet, at the same time, the novel captures the complex entanglement of the local and the colonial, dramatizing the friction between two incompatible discursive systems, one grounded in orality and ritual, the other in textuality and surveillance.

From a Foucauldian archaeological perspective, *Things Fall Apart* stages the moment of epistemic rupture, the shift from precolonial to colonial discourse—when traditional systems of meaning are displaced by a new regime of truth. The Christian missionaries and colonial administrators do not merely introduce foreign beliefs; they inaugurate an *episteme* that redefines what counts as rationality, morality, and civilization. This transition aligns with Foucault's notion that discursive formations determine the very possibility of thought: "It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (*History* 100). Achebe's narrative thereby becomes an archaeological document in itself—an excavation of the moment when

the colonized subject first becomes inscribed within a grid of knowledge and representation. The novel invites us to trace how new forms of discourse—religious, bureaucratic, and moral, gradually overwrite indigenous epistemes, transforming language, identity, and temporality. An archaeological reading of *Things Fall Apart* thus illuminates how the colonial encounter was not merely a political conquest but an epistemological revolution, producing new forms of knowing and being which continue to haunt postcolonial subjectivity.

3. Genealogy: Power, Surveillance, and the Production of the Colonized Subject

If Foucault's *archaeology* excavates the rules that govern what can be said or thought, his *genealogy* exposes the historical processes through which power inscribes itself upon bodies, institutions, and subjectivities. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault shifts his focus from the formation of discourse to the mechanisms of control that sustain it, revealing how "the soul is the prison of the body" (30). Genealogy, unlike archaeology, is not a neutral excavation of ideas but a critical practice that traces the emergence of knowledge-powers in their material and corporeal forms. It is a history of descent rather than origin, seeking not purity but contingency, the ways in which human beings become subjects through disciplinary technologies. Foucault famously declared that "power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (*Power/Knowledge* 194). The colonial encounter, then, can be understood genealogically as the production of new subjectivities: the docile, surveilled, and self-regulating colonial subject who internalizes the gaze of empire.

In the context of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, this genealogical dynamic is dramatized in the subtle yet devastating transformation of Umuofia under the encroachment of colonial authority. The novel's shift from communal cohesion to internal fragmentation mirrors what Foucault describes as the spread of "disciplinary society," a network of institutions that "train" individuals through observation, normalization, and examination (*Discipline* 170). Though the Igbo community is initially autonomous, the arrival of the missionaries and the establishment of colonial courts and schools introduce a panoptic order that reconfigures power from external domination to internalized surveillance. The villagers begin to modify their behavior not merely out of fear but through the internalization of a new moral gaze. When Obierika observes that "the white man is very clever... he has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart" (Achebe 176), he articulates this transformation: power now operates from within, severing communal bonds and producing subjects who self-police according to imported norms. The Christian convert, the court messenger, and even Nwoye, Okonkwo's conflicted son, exemplify the genealogical product of this process: individuals whose sense of self has been reconstructed by the disciplinary apparatus of colonial modernity.

The genealogical method highlights how resistance itself is conditioned by the same power that it opposes. Foucault asserts that “where there is power, there is resistance,” but resistance never stands outside power; it is inscribed within its very logic (*Power/Knowledge* 95). Okonkwo’s tragic suicide, often read as an act of despair or defiance, can thus be interpreted genealogically as a symptom of subjectivity torn between incompatible systems of value, Igbo masculinity and colonial moral order. His death signals not the triumph of freedom but the collapse of the precolonial subject under the weight of disciplinary modernity. The genealogical reading therefore reframes Achebe’s narrative as a study in the historical production of colonial subjectivity, where the technologies of religion, law, and education replace open domination with self-surveillance and normalization. Achebe’s text becomes, in this sense, a Foucauldian document par excellence: a narrative that reveals how bodies and souls are inscribed, disciplined, and transformed by the diffuse and invisible mechanisms of power that define the colonial order.

4. Panopticism and the Internalization of Colonial Power

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault introduces the notion of panopticism as a metaphor for the modern system of surveillance and self-regulation. The concept originates in Jeremy Bentham’s architectural model of the Panopticon, an institutional structure designed to allow constant observation of inmates without their knowing whether they are being watched. For Foucault, the Panopticon exemplifies the logic of modern disciplinary power: visibility becomes a trap, and surveillance becomes internalized. As he famously writes, “He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (*Discipline* 202). The genius of this mechanism lies not in its brutality but in its subtlety, the transformation of external coercion into internalized discipline. In the colonial context, this model offers a compelling framework for understanding how imperial power sustains itself not merely through violence or economic domination but through the reorganization of perception, behavior, and consciousness itself.

Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* embodies this transformation with remarkable psychological and sociological precision. When the missionaries arrive in Umuofia, they do not immediately impose domination through force; rather, they initiate a process of epistemic surveillance, introducing new norms of morality, propriety, and belief. The church, the school, and the court become Foucauldian spaces of observation—each constructing subjects who are both seen and self-seeing. The presence of white authority alters the villagers’ conduct even before direct confrontation. It is mentioned in the novel that “The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion... Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one” (Achebe 176). This quiet infiltration illustrates the panoptic principle at work: power

functions through normalization rather than coercion, transforming visibility into self-discipline. The new Christian converts, for instance, come to police their own behavior according to the moral codes of their colonizers. In aligning themselves with the disciplinary institutions of the colonial regime, they become both subjects and agents of its perpetuation.

The colonial order in *Things Fall Apart* replaces the fluid communal gaze of Igbo society with a hierarchized gaze rooted in surveillance and bureaucracy. The District Commissioner's presence, his meticulous recording of events, judgments, and punishments, represents the textual embodiment of the panoptic eye. His plan to title his ethnographic book *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger* epitomizes how surveillance extends into discourse, transforming living cultures into manageable data. This bureaucratic seeing reconstitutes the colonized as both spectacle and subject, the object of an administrative vision that transforms moral and spatial order alike. Even spaces become instruments of surveillance; the courthouse and the prison materialize Foucault's insight that "power should be visible and unverifiable" (*Discipline* 201). The colonized subject becomes caught within this double bind, seen yet unseen, controlled not only by external eyes but by the internalized awareness of being watched. Achebe's narrative thus anticipates the Foucauldian insight that modern power is diffuse, productive, and psychological; it manufactures its own compliance.

Things Fall Apart can be read as a genealogy of panoptic subjectivity in colonial Africa—a dramatization of how surveillance infiltrates consciousness, gradually dismantling indigenous autonomy. The tragedy of Okonkwo and his clan is not merely the loss of sovereignty but the internal acceptance of the colonizer's gaze as the measure of truth and morality. By illustrating this transformation, Achebe exposes the invisible violence of colonial discipline, the slow, imperceptible conversion of a people from subjects of tradition to subjects of power. As Foucault notes, "The individual is not the vis-à-vis of power; he is one of its prime effects" (*Power/Knowledge* 98). In Achebe's world, the colonial subject becomes both the product and the perpetuator of surveillance. Panopticism, therefore, serves not only as an abstract theoretical model but as a lived historical reality, revealing how colonialism succeeded not through sheer domination but through the disciplined reconstruction of desire, visibility, and identity.

5. Heterotopia and the Reorganization of Colonial Space

In his essay "Of Other Spaces," Michel Foucault introduces the concept of heterotopia, describing it as "real places, places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society, which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites... are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (24). Unlike utopias, which exist in the realm of the ideal, heterotopias are concrete spaces that juxtapose incompatible worlds, mirroring the tensions of the societies that produce them. For Foucault, every culture constitutes heterotopic sites that both reflect and subvert dominant social

orders—cemeteries, prisons, brothels, schools, and even gardens, all of which contain within them the contradictions of their cultural logic. In the colonial context, heterotopia becomes a crucial tool for examining how imperial power reconfigures native spatiality, transforming indigenous geographies into arenas of control, normalization, and symbolic displacement. Space, in this framework, is not merely a neutral backdrop for power but one of its principal instruments; to colonize land is to colonize meaning itself.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* exemplifies this spatial reordering through its portrayal of how colonial authority reconstructs the physical and symbolic topography of Umuofia. The most striking instance of this transformation occurs when the missionaries build their church in the "evil forest," a space that embodies the intersection of sacred prohibition and social order. What the Igbo regard as a site of abjection and taboo becomes, through colonial intervention, a heterotopia of inversion. The church's very existence in that forbidden site constitutes an act of spatial transgression that challenges the metaphysical coherence of Igbo cosmology. By surviving in a space believed to be deadly, the church simultaneously undermines and redefines indigenous epistemology: the sacred becomes profane, and the profane becomes sacred. This act of inversion reveals what Foucault calls the heterotopia's capacity to "create a space of illusion that exposes every real space" ("Spaces" 27). Achebe's depiction thus dramatizes how colonialism displaces traditional spatial logic, re-inscribing it within an alien symbolic order that privileges Christian cosmology and European rationality.

As the narrative progresses, the proliferation of heterotopic sites intensifies. The mission compound, the courthouse, and the prison function as material embodiments of colonial order, spaces where the disciplinary and the sacred converge. Each operates as what Foucault terms a "cellular" space, designed for observation, classification, and correction (*Discipline* 143). Within these spaces, the Igbo subject is reorganized; traditional rituals give way to administrative routines, collective authority to bureaucratic hierarchy. The prison, for instance, epitomizes the colonial heterotopia of punishment, where the visible spectacle of discipline replaces the communal mechanisms of justice that once defined Igbo society. Similarly, the courthouse transforms the fluid, oral procedures of the clan's judicial practices into codified and surveilled acts of law, inscribing the colonized subject into the textual economy of empire. These sites together produce what Edward Soja calls "thirdspace," the interstitial realm where the material and the symbolic dimensions of spatiality converge under power. Achebe's description of these heterotopias foregrounds how colonialism operates not only through discourse or ideology but through the reorganization of space, by constructing new architectures of truth, morality, and belonging.

6. The Archaeology and Genealogy of Colonized Subjectivities

Foucault's dual methodologies of archaeology and genealogy together provide a profound apparatus for tracing the historical constitution of subjectivity under power. Archaeology

excavates the *conditions of discourse*—the systems of thought and knowledge that define what can be said, thought, or known at a given historical moment—while genealogy investigates the *practices* that inscribe those systems onto bodies, institutions, and behaviors. As Foucault explains, “genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity; it seeks to reestablish the various systems of subjection which produce history as a series of effects” (*Power/Knowledge* 149). Together, these methods illuminate how colonialism functions as both an epistemic and disciplinary project: first, by constructing discursive regimes that define the colonized as inferior, and second, by implementing material technologies, religion, law, surveillance, spatial order, that transform those discursive constructions into lived identities. In this sense, the archaeology of colonial discourse becomes inseparable from the genealogy of colonial power: one produces the knowledge of the colonized subject, the other produces the subject itself.

In Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, these two dimensions intersect vividly in the transformation of Umuofia’s social fabric. Archaeologically, the arrival of the missionaries inaugurates a new *episteme*, a structure of knowledge that redefines the parameters of truth, morality, and civilization. Indigenous cosmology, oral law, and ritual cohesion are recoded through the discursive lens of Christianity and Western rationalism. The District Commissioner’s proposed ethnographic account, *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*, exemplifies this archaeological operation: the act of naming, categorizing, and writing becomes a means of establishing epistemic dominance (Achebe 209). But genealogy reveals how this discursive shift materializes in the lived experiences of individuals. The Igbo subject, once defined through communal and spiritual relations, becomes reconstituted within the disciplinary grids of the colonial order. The convert, the messenger, the prisoner, all embody what Foucault calls the “docile body,” a body “that may be subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (*Discipline* 136). Colonial power thus produces its subjects through a dual operation: it names them as objects of knowledge and trains them as instruments of order.

This process culminates in the emergence of the colonized subject, a fractured identity shaped by both domination and internalization. Achebe’s characters, especially Nwoye and Okonkwo, dramatize this ambivalence. Nwoye’s conversion signifies not mere assimilation but the genealogical production of a new subjectivity: one that seeks recognition within the moral order of the colonizer, even at the cost of estrangement from ancestral identity. Okonkwo’s suicide, conversely, represents the failure of the precolonial subject to survive within the new discursive and disciplinary regime. His body becomes, in Foucauldian terms, a site of resistance and defeat, where two epistemes collide, and neither remains intact. The novel thus performs what Foucault describes as a “genealogy of descent,” exposing how power leaves its marks not only on institutions but on consciousness itself (*Power/Knowledge* 96). In this way, *Things Fall Apart* serves as both archaeological document and genealogical narrative: it records the

historical shift from traditional to colonial systems of knowledge while dramatizing the bodily and psychic consequences of that transformation.

7. The Archaeology of Colonial Discourse in *Things Fall Apart*

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* stages the encounter between two worlds as a collision of discourses, a clash not merely of weapons but of words, meanings, and modes of truth. What Foucault calls an "archaeology of knowledge" becomes, in Achebe's narrative, a dramatization of how one system of thought overwrites another. Before the arrival of the colonizers, Igbo society organizes itself around oral traditions and ritual authority: proverbs, folktales, and ancestral laws form its epistemic foundation. "Proverbs," Achebe writes, "are the palm-oil with which words are eaten" (5). This line, seemingly simple, encapsulates a world where meaning is communal, performative, and deeply rooted in shared speech acts. Yet, when the missionaries arrive "quietly and peaceably with [their] religion" (176), they bring with them a new mode of knowledge, textual, hierarchical, and totalizing. The Bible replaces the proverb; written scripture supersedes oral wisdom. The "word" of God, codified and printed, imposes a new authority that no longer depends on collective participation but on institutional mediation. Through this shift, Achebe reveals how colonialism first conquers the *language* of reality, reclassifying Igbo cosmology within a Western epistemological order.

This process of linguistic and conceptual reorganization functions as the true machinery of colonization in the novel. When Nwoye, Okonkwo's son, listens to the missionaries' stories of love and salvation, he experiences them not only as faith but as a reconfiguration of intelligibility itself: "It was like the sound of a new song in his ears; the hymn about brothers who sat in darkness and in fear seemed to answer a vague and persistent question that haunted his young soul" (147). What Nwoye confronts is not merely a new religion but a new *discourse*—a mode of speaking that provides moral coherence where Igbo customs have begun to appear arbitrary under colonial scrutiny. Foucault reminds us that discourse does not simply represent truth; it *produces* it. Achebe's narrative dramatizes this production through Nwoye's conversion: the colonial word interpellates him as a new kind of subject, one who recognizes himself only within the framework of the missionary's truth. The Igbo world, once self-contained, begins to interpret itself through the categories of the outsider, "evil," "heathen," "primitive." Achebe's archaeological insight is that colonialism does not merely destroy indigenous structures; it *redefines the conditions of their meaning*.

The culmination of this epistemic transformation occurs in the District Commissioner's concluding gesture, his decision to write *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. Achebe's final irony exposes the colonial archive itself as a discursive weapon. The commissioner's narrative reduces the complexity of an entire civilization to a brief anthropological anecdote: "He had already chosen the title of the book... He would write a reasonable paragraph on the tragic incident" (209). This is the last stratum in Achebe's

archaeology, the moment when power becomes history, and discourse crystallizes as official truth. What began as oral knowledge and ritual practice ends as a written record in the colonizer's archive. Achebe's novel, however, turns that archive inside out: *Things Fall Apart* becomes a counter-discursive excavation, reclaiming from the depths of silence the fragments of an indigenous epistemology overwritten by imperial narration. Through the archaeological lens, Achebe thus exposes the subtle violence of knowledge itself, the transformation of language, belief, and history into instruments of domination, and in doing so, he begins to restore to Africa the power to speak its own truth.

8. The Panoptic Vision: Surveillance and the Internalization of Colonial Power

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe portrays colonial power as a gradual process of making the indigenous body and mind visible, measurable, and governable. There is no literal Panopticon in Umuofia, yet the dynamics of visibility and discipline that Foucault describes in *Discipline and Punish* are unmistakably at play. The white man's power operates less through physical domination than through the subtle implantation of an observing gaze that teaches the colonized to monitor themselves. Early in the novel, Achebe writes, "The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one" (176). This passage encapsulates the colonial gaze's insidious logic: it begins as spectacle—something external, almost comical, and ends as surveillance, internalized within the consciousness of the colonized. The laughter of the amused villagers becomes silence; the external observer becomes an inner judge. Achebe's description of the community's fragmentation illustrates the Foucauldian notion that surveillance need not depend on force; it functions by transforming social relations into networks of self-regulation and suspicion.

The missionary church and the colonial administration serve as the twin apparatuses through which this panoptic structure takes form. The church teaches the villagers to confess, to discipline their thoughts, to judge themselves by new moral standards. The court and the prison make these standards visible in architectural form, spaces designed to separate, classify, and normalize. When Okonkwo is humiliated by the District Commissioner's messengers and later imprisoned, the event marks not only the physical subjugation of the clan's most powerful man but also the symbolic inversion of authority. Achebe narrates, "They were not given any water to drink. They were not allowed to go out to urinate or ease themselves. They sat in their own excrement and urine" (194). The degradation of the body here functions as a disciplinary spectacle: power is no longer the collective ritual of ancestral justice but the bureaucratic punishment of individuals under surveillance. The villagers, witnessing Okonkwo's debasement, learn to internalize this new visibility. Foucault notes that "the

perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary" (*Discipline* 201); Achebe's narrative dramatizes this perfection through the clan's increasing submission not to visible violence but to the invisible certainty of being watched.

By the end of the novel, colonial surveillance has been naturalized into the psychic landscape of Umuofia. The transformation is evident in how the Igbo people begin to police one another's behavior according to imported moral codes. Those who convert to Christianity, once ridiculed, become moral exemplars in the new order, while the traditionalists, Okonkwo among them, appear as transgressors against progress. Achebe describes Okonkwo's despair at this reversal: "He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart, and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women" (183). This lament is not only about masculinity but about the collapse of an entire regime of visibility. The gaze that once emanated from the ancestors has been replaced by the colonizer's omnipresent eyes—disciplinary, moralizing, and unrelenting. The people no longer need to be coerced; they behave as though the white man were always watching. Achebe thus anticipates Foucault's insight that the most effective form of domination is not the one that forces the body but the one that captures the soul. *Things Fall Apart* becomes a study of this transformation: the moment when power ceases to be an external force and becomes an internalized condition of self-surveillance, producing subjects who regulate themselves in accordance with the colonial order.

9. Heterotopic Spaces: Colonialism and the Reordering of Space

Colonialism in *Things Fall Apart* operates not only through discourse and surveillance but also through the reconfiguration of physical and symbolic space. Foucault's concept of *heterotopia*, spaces that mirror, invert, or contest the order of ordinary life, provides a compelling framework for reading Achebe's spatial politics. The arrival of the missionaries brings with it a radical spatial reorganization of Umuofia's landscape, one that transforms geography into an instrument of power. Achebe's description of the church being built "in the Evil Forest" is especially revealing: "The villagers were afraid at first. They thought it was madness to build in such a cursed place. But nothing happened to the Christians, and soon people said that the white man's god was very powerful" (149). This reversal of meaning, turning the forbidden into the sacred, enacts a heterotopic logic. The colonial project establishes sites that appear marginal yet derive their power precisely from inverting indigenous spatial hierarchies. The Evil Forest, once the repository of social exclusion, becomes the center of the new moral order; the very space that signified taboo now embodies divine legitimacy. Through this spatial reconfiguration, Achebe dramatizes how colonial power naturalizes itself by transforming space into an argument—its survival in the Evil Forest becomes proof of its truth.

This heterotopic transformation extends beyond religious architecture to encompass the entire topology of colonial governance. The missionary compound, courthouse, and prison represent what Foucault calls “spaces of deviation,” institutions that both isolate and normalize, removing those who defy dominant norms and subjecting them to a new disciplinary environment (“Spaces” 25). Achebe’s account of the prison in Umuofia shows how this imported architecture redefines justice itself: “The court messengers brought them every day to clean the court and to fetch firewood for the white man’s cook. They were beaten from time to time because they refused to work” (195). The prison, like the church, is a heterotopic space where power materializes. It simultaneously separates and connects: it isolates the colonized from their communal networks yet inserts them into the moral economy of labor and obedience. Similarly, the missionary school, where children learn to read and write, is a site of spatial and epistemic displacement. To enter the school is to leave behind the village compound, the marketplace, and the ancestral shrine; it is to step into a microcosm of Western order where space dictates behavior and silence is equated with discipline. In these spaces, Achebe reveals how colonialism replaces the fluid, communal rhythms of Igbo life with rigid, institutional geometries that condition both movement and thought.

By the novel’s end, Achebe portrays a world whose spatial order has been irreversibly altered. The old boundaries between sacred and profane, public and private, communal and individual, no longer hold. Even Okonkwo’s death occurs in a space that defies traditional placement: “It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offense against the Earth” (207). His body, denied burial by his clansmen, becomes a heterotopic site itself—neither inside nor outside the village’s sacred geography. His suicide symbolizes the final collapse of spatial coherence: the land that once sustained identity and meaning has been divided, fenced, and re-inscribed with colonial logic. Achebe’s representation of the changing landscape thus complements Foucault’s insight that heterotopias are not merely places of difference but instruments of control, “capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces that are incompatible” (“Spaces” 25). *Things Fall Apart* reveals that colonial power works by reorganizing the very terrain of being, by mapping, building, and naming until the indigenous world no longer recognizes itself. Through this lens, the colonial encounter is not simply a cultural invasion but a spatial conquest of the imagination.

10. The Genealogy of Colonized Subjectivity

To trace the genealogy of colonized subjectivity in *Things Fall Apart* is to unravel the historical and psychological transformations that render colonial domination possible and intelligible. Genealogy, as Foucault conceptualizes it, is not a linear history of progress but a descent (*Herkunft*), a tracing of dispersed, contingent events that give rise to particular modes of being and knowing (*Discipline* 139). Within Achebe’s narrative, the colonized subject does not emerge fully formed but rather through an accumulation of ruptures, linguistic, spatial,

moral, and emotional, which dislocate the indigenous self from its prior symbolic order. Achebe's characters, particularly Nwoye and Obierika, embody this process of fragmentation. Nwoye's conversion to Christianity is not merely a spiritual decision but a symptom of genealogical transformation: "It was not the mad logic of the Trinity that captivated him. It was the poetry of the new religion, something felt in the marrow" (Achebe 151). What seduces him is not ideology but affect—an emotional surplus that exceeds comprehension yet signifies the displacement of desire. Foucault would recognize in Nwoye's transformation the genealogical moment in which subjectivity is reconstituted through the infiltration of power into the very texture of feeling and imagination.

This genealogical reconstitution operates through the intertwining of discourse and discipline. The Christian catechism, the colonial law, and the missionary school form a triad of discursive apparatuses that reconfigure the native's sense of self. Achebe reveals how these institutions produce subjects who speak, think, and even feel within the grammar of colonial rationality. When the District Commissioner insists on translating local justice into written law, the oral and communal dimension of Igbo epistemology is subordinated to the textual and bureaucratic logic of empire. The narrator observes: "The white man was very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one" (176). The shift from communal voice to fragmented individuality is the crucial genealogical event—the moment when colonial power ceases to be external and begins to dwell within the psyche of the colonized. In this sense, genealogy is inseparable from internalization; it is a history written in the body and the soul, not merely on the surface of institutions.

Okonkwo's tragedy, by contrast, embodies the resistance and eventual collapse of the precolonial subjectivity. His uncompromising adherence to traditional codes of masculinity becomes untenable in a world where power no longer resides in visible force but in invisible discourse. His suicide is not only a personal defeat but a genealogical endpoint, the failure of one mode of subjectivity to adapt to the new epistemic order. Foucault reminds us that genealogy "does not seek origins but the accidents, the minute deviations that give rise to what we are" (*Discipline* 146). Achebe's novel records these minute deviations in gesture, speech, and affect: the fear of the Evil Forest, the fascination with literacy, the silent awe at the white man's immunity to ancestral curses. Each deviation marks a micro-transformation, a point at which the colonized subject begins to internalize the colonial gaze. The genealogy of colonized subjectivity, therefore, is not written in battles or decrees but in the slow mutation of desire, belief, and self-perception. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* ultimately exposes how colonial power becomes most enduring not through coercion but through its subtle inscription within the genealogy of the self, a history of becoming other to oneself.

11. Resistance, Rupture, and the Possibility of Counter-Genealogy

If the genealogy of colonized subjectivity in *Things Fall Apart* reveals the slow infiltration of colonial power into the psychic and social fabric of Igbo life, then resistance represents the fissures through which an alternative genealogy, one not founded upon subjection but upon reappropriation, begins to emerge. Foucault's notion of resistance is not the mere negation of power; rather, it is inherent to the structure of power itself. "Where there is power, there is resistance," he famously asserts, "and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (*History* 95). Achebe dramatizes precisely this paradox in the figure of Okonkwo and, more subtly, in the collective memory of Umuofia. Even as the community succumbs to the disciplinary and discursive systems of the colonizers, remnants of another epistemic order persist—oral narratives, ritual practices, and embodied forms of remembrance that refuse total incorporation into colonial modernity. These fragments constitute what might be called a counter-genealogy: a living archive of resistance inscribed in speech, gesture, and silence.

Okonkwo's revolt, though doomed, signifies the return of what Foucault would call the "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (*Power/Knowledge* 81). His final act of self-destruction, far from being a simple failure, dramatizes a rupture in the chain of colonial genealogy—a moment in which the colonized subject withdraws from both traditional and colonial systems of meaning. The narrator observes, "He was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog" (Achebe 208). This tragic irony lays bare the epistemic violence of colonial rule: it rewrites even death within its own symbolic order. Yet Okonkwo's suicide also resists that order by escaping its codification; it remains an unassimilable gesture, a residue of autonomy that colonial discourse cannot fully appropriate. Foucault's genealogy teaches us to attend to such gestures, to read them not as mere endings but as points of potential reactivation, where history exposes its fractures and reopens the possibility of different futures.

Things Fall Apart enacts a literary counter-genealogy through its very narrative form. Achebe's use of English to convey Igbo consciousness, proverbs, and cosmology transforms the colonizer's language into a site of cultural reclamation. The narrator's polyphonic structure, shifting between anthropological distance and communal intimacy, undermines the singular authority of the colonial gaze. As Spivak suggests, the subaltern cannot simply "speak" within the language of power, but Achebe's text demonstrates how she might reconfigure that language from within, creating spaces of opacity and multiplicity. In this sense, the novel's resistance lies not only in its content but in its discursive strategy, which performs the very heterogeneity that colonial discourse sought to erase. By narrating the disintegration of Umuofia through a lens that refuses colonial intelligibility, Achebe reconstructs a counter-history, a genealogy of loss that doubles as a genealogy of endurance.

The conclusion of *Things Fall Apart* is not merely tragic but dialectical. Achebe does not restore the precolonial past, nor does he embrace the colonial present; instead, he exposes the genealogical tension between them as the condition for future subjectivities. The novel closes with the District Commissioner's intention to reduce Okonkwo's life to "a reasonable paragraph" in his ethnographic book (209), an act that encapsulates the colonial desire to subsume indigenous lives into manageable discourse. Yet Achebe's narrative itself becomes a counter-discourse, one that refuses that reduction by transforming the paragraph into a world, the object into a subject, and the colonized into a speaker of history. This is the counter-genealogical power of Achebe's fiction: it excavates the ruins of colonial subjectivity to imagine new modes of being, remembering, and resisting.

12. Conclusion

This study has sought to illuminate the complex intersections between power, discourse, and subject formation in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* through the twin lenses of Michel Foucault's archaeology and genealogy. By tracing the novel's layered representations of knowledge, space, and surveillance, the research has revealed how Achebe's text mirrors the historical processes through which colonialism restructured indigenous existence—not simply through overt domination, but through epistemic realignments and subtle forms of normalization. The archaeological approach helped uncover the sedimented discursive formations that shaped colonial ideology, the missionary discourse of salvation, the juridical discourse of order, and the ethnographic discourse of knowledge. Meanwhile, the genealogical perspective traced the transformation of these discourses into embodied practices that produced the colonized subject: disciplined, fragmented, and caught within the shifting boundaries of power. Through this dual framework, *Things Fall Apart* emerges not merely as a narrative of cultural disintegration but as a profound record of the historical becoming of colonial subjectivity.

The findings of this research suggest that Achebe's novel dramatizes colonialism as an intricate apparatus of visibility, discipline, and spatial reorganization, a machinery that gradually transforms Igbo life into a field of observation and control. The archaeological analysis exposes how discursive structures precede and enable colonial power, embedding the "truths" of civilization and progress into missionary and administrative language. The genealogical reading, on the other hand, reveals the lived consequences of these discourses: how individuals such as Nwoye and Okonkwo embody different responses to the colonial redefinition of selfhood. Nwoye's conversion reflects an internalization of new moral codes, a subtle inscription of colonial discourse within the psyche, while Okonkwo's resistance and eventual self-destruction dramatize the collapse of an older symbolic order. Moreover, the reconfiguration of space, the building of the church in the "evil forest," the establishment of the court and prison, illustrates the colonial production of *heterotopic* spaces that reorganize

indigenous geography into zones of surveillance and discipline. These findings reveal that Achebe's narrative not only represents historical realities but also theorizes them, performing a literary archaeology and genealogy of its own.

The significance of this study lies in its demonstration that *Things Fall Apart* can be read as a philosophical document that anticipates and enacts Foucault's insights into power, discourse, and subjectivity. Achebe's narrative resists the colonial archive by rewriting it from within, transforming the colonizer's language into a vessel for the subaltern voice. In uncovering how power both constrains and produces resistance, the research underscores the enduring relevance of Foucault's framework to postcolonial studies. The novel's final irony, the reduction of Okonkwo's life to "a reasonable paragraph" in a colonial text, stands as a reminder of the ongoing struggle over who speaks, who is seen, and who is remembered. Yet Achebe's own act of narration reclaims that paragraph and expands it into a counter-archive, a living genealogy of memory and defiance. Ultimately, this research affirms that within every colonial order lie the seeds of its undoing: the potential for a counter-genealogy born from the fragments of silenced histories and reimagined spaces of being.

Works Cited

Abel, Joseph. "Colonial Perception and Re-imaging the African Identity in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Ansu Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2017, pp. 155-168.

Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann, 1958.

Al-Shamiri, Mohammed Ahmad Ameen. "Situating Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: *Things Fall Apart* vs. Colonial Discourse." *International Journal of Language and Literature*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2023, pp. 70–76.

Anyadike, Chima. "Duality and Resilience in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Philosophia Africana*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2007, pp. 49-59.

Aras, Goksen, and Sedar Takva. "Tracing colonial ideology in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price*." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 15, no. 84, 2022, pp. 1-9.

Betu, Donat Nkuna. "A Linguistic Analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: Rhetoric and Stylistic Study." *Journal of Digital Learning and Distance Education*, 2(3), 2023, pp. 513-519.

Bhabha, Homi Kharshedji. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

Casimir, Komenan. "Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: A Seminal Novel in African Literature." *Studies in Linguistics and Literature*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2020, pp. 55-69.

Chapagaee, Rajendra Prasad. "Post-Colonial Discourse in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2024, pp. 137-146.

Dankwa, Amma. "Colonial Discourse in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Counter-Discourse of Decolonization in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2021, pp. 1-14.

Edoro-Glines, Ainehi. "Achebe's Evil Forest: Space, Violence, and Order in *Things Fall Apart*." *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2018, pp. 176-192.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Pantheon Books, 1972.

---. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan, Pantheon Books, 1977.

---. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Pantheon Books, 1978.

---. *Power/Knowledge, 1972–1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon, translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshal, John Mephram and Kate Sober, Pantheon Books, 1980.

---. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1986, pp. 22–27.

Gosling, Jonathan. "Will We Know What Counts as Good Leadership if Things Fall Apart? Questions Prompted by Chinua Achebe's Novel." *Leadership*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2017, pp. 35-47.

Ihejirika, Cardinal Chinanu. "An epistemic survey of African (Igbo) notions of knowledge in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Journal of Law and Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2021, pp. 37-49.

Juma, Benson Wabwile. "Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: A Postcolonial Theory Perspective." *Jumuga Journal of Education, Oral Studies, and Human Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2025, pp. 1-7.

Mengara, Daniel M. "Colonial Intrusion and Stages of Colonialism in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *African Studies Review*, vol. 62, no. 4, 2019, pp. 31-56.

Moslund, Sten Pultz. "Nation and Embodied Experiences of the Place World in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958)." *Literature's Sensuous Geographies*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 115–134.

Mostafaei, Jalal. "Investigating the Female Subaltern, Colonial Discourse and False Consciousness: A Spivakian Marxist-Postcolonialist Reading of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease*." *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, vol. 7, no. 5, 2016, pp. 222-226.

Muyumba, Victor. "The Significance of Land in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Journal of Law and Social Sciences*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2020, pp. 43-54.

Obasi, Cecilia Nwadiuto. "Literary Translation into Indigenous Languages in Nigeria and National Development: Some Insights." *Global Journal of Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2006, pp. 11-16.

Ogundele, Wole. "Devices of Evasion: The Mythic Versus the Historical Imagination in the Postcolonial African Novel." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 33, no. 3, 2002, pp. 125-139.

Özün, Şule Okuroğlu, and Nagihan Başkale. "The distortion of cultural identity in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Trakya Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 9, no. 18, 2019, pp. 86-99.

Olufunwa, Harry. "Achebe's Spatial Temporalities: Literary Chronotopes in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*." *Critical Survey*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2005, pp. 49-65.

Osei-Nyame, Kwadwo. "Chinua Achebe Writing Culture: Representations of Gender and Tradition in *Things Fall Apart*." *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1999, pp. 148-164.

Rotich, Willy K. "Catching the Disc: Panopticism, Surveillance and Punishment as a Pedagogical Tool in the Acquisition of Colonial Languages in Post-colonial Schooling." *African Studies*, vol. 80, no. 3-4, 2021, pp. 466-477.

Sadeghi, Zahra. "Role of Colonial Subjects in Making Themselves Inferior in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, vol. 5, no. 6, 2014, pp. 48-54.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.

Soja, Edward W. "Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places." *Capital & Class*, vol. 22, no. 1, 1998, pp. 137-139.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, University of Illinois Press, 1988, pp. 271-313.