

## Panel 16 : Culture and Language

1. Inculturation of Beliefs as Reflected in Folk Healing Practices  
in Iligan City  
*Efren Jone J. Oledan, MARE* 623
2. English Language Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Student Outcomes  
*Adelfa C. Silor, Ed.D, Ciedelle N. Grageda, Faith Stephanny C. Silor  
Sheenalyn M. Abangan, Esel May M. Lorejo, Shiela Ways* 633
3. Vietnamese Tourists' Demand on Cultural Aspects of Domestic Tours  
*Pham Hong Hoa, Nguyen Hoai Long, Le Pham Khanh Hoa* 634
4. Kipling's *Plain Tales from the Hills*-A Portrayal of Anglo-Indian Life in Simla  
*Mukul Joshi* 642
5. Indonesian Aculturation: Culture and Islam Hands Together  
*Timotius Ari Candra Aprilianto, Dian Febrianti, Girindra Wardhana,  
Devita Riesmayanti* 643
6. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: Gender Bias In Ibo Culture  
*Devvyaa Naagarh* 644

# Inculturation of Beliefs as Reflected in Folk Healing Practices in Iligan City

Efren Jone J. Oledan, MARE

St. Michael's College, Iligan City, Philippines  
E-mail: jongoledanxj@gmail.com

## Abstract

This study then aimed at understanding the way inculturation has taken place between folk healing and Catholic beliefs as reflected in the Tambal Binisaya stalls around St. Michael's Cathedral of Iligan City. This study is qualitative in nature that employed the grounded theory as its research method in the treatment of the data gathered. There were two sources of data, namely, the 6 vendors of the Tambal Binisaya stalls around St. Michael's Cathedral, and the 3 mananambals or folk healers, who conducted their healing sessions in their own residences. All of them were residents of Iligan City, which is located in the southern part of the Philippines. The choice of the key informants was done by purposive sampling. The data were acquired through observations on, immersions with, and interviews of the key informants. Documentations, such as taking pictures of the sites and the key informants were part of the field work.

The data gathered and analyzed in this study refer to the beliefs behind the folk healing practiced in Tambal Binisaya stalls. After the three levels of analyses based on grounded theory described by Strauss and Corbin (2008), it was found that there were three core categories that can be used to classify the beliefs in folk healing. The first category was on the **spirit-driven abilities**, which refers to supernatural capabilities in diagnosing, causing, healing, and preventing illnesses. The second category was on the **nature-driven abilities**, which pertains to capacities of diagnosing, causing, healing, and causing illnesses through the processes of the natural elements in the body, like air, water, and heat. The last category was on the **spiritual abilities**, which points to the mystical signification of the balance in the life force, between health and illness. To borrow the terminologies of Tan (2008), these categories can go with the labels **Personalistic**, **Naturalistic**, and **Mystical Beliefs** respectively. Among these folk beliefs in healing, Catholic beliefs and values were found to be evident. However, there were also indigenous views in Tambal Binisaya that were identified to be contrary to the teachings of the Catholic faith. Therefore, the view of Ramos (2015) on inculturation was even more affirmed as it constantly puts forward the emphasis on cultural exegesis, that is, to "re-root" the Christian teachings in the culture.

After reaching at this conclusion of the inquiry sought out, and examined through, the researcher humbly offers the recommendation that fellow researchers have to intensify efforts to seek out new methods and insights that can shed light in the phenomenon of Tambal Binisaya beliefs and values, so that people may not only be instructed on this matter, but also appreciate the significance that could be discovered behind such practices.

**Keywords:** Inculturation, Personalistic Beliefs, Naturalistic Beliefs, Mystical Beliefs, Cultural Exegesis

## 1.0 Introduction

*Iliganons* most likely see the *Tambal Binisaya* stalls (for folk healing) day in and day out, as they enter and exit, or pass by the St. Michael's Cathedral. Herbal and other folk medicines are available there, side by side to Catholic sacramentals, such as statues and pictures of saints and Jesus Christ, rosaries, scapulars, and the like. First of all, the researcher suspected that it might be possible that the Gospel values have already been weaved into these beliefs in folk healing. The last two statements of mission of the Diocese of Iligan, which says that Catholic *Iliganons* are to "sustain peace through the dialogue of life, faith and culture among the *Lumads*, Muslims and Christians; and to discern and respond to the challenges and signs of time" (CBCP Media Office, n.d.), are fitting thrusts that could address the phenomenon described above. When folk customs come in contact with Catholicism, a dialogue of life, faith, and culture has to be ensured, most especially that the vendors of *Tambal Binisaya* stalls are recognized to be sisters and brothers of the Christian faith. When certain puzzling predicament of mixed-up beliefs happen, response to such a challenge indeed needs the exercise of discernment, not only on the part of the church people, but of everyone involved in the matters of faith and culture.

Secondly, people in general most probably do not know which part of the customs of these stalls is authentic Catholic belief and which is purely indigenous. Therefore, it is the task of Religious Education of every Catholic school to clarify this phenomenon. St. Michael's College, a school of the Religious of the Virgin Mary sisters, for example, is located in front of the Cathedral, just across the street. Inevitably, her students, who have received Christian Formation Programs, namely Religious Studies or Theology classes and other Catholic forms of worship, may have observed practices in the daily operations of these stalls. The National Catechetical Directory of the Philippines (NCDP) 356-367 provides religious educators and catechists a pedagogy of "inculturated catechesis" for the youth of today. To make the lessons integrated into the daily lives of students, like the instance of *Tambal Binisaya*, it has to be dealt with according to the teachings of the Gospel and the Tradition of the Catholic Church.

Lastly, individuals of other Christian denominations may have been suspicious or accused Catholics of idolatrous practices of witchcraft and sorcery for having tolerated and, for some, patronized *Tambal Binisaya* beliefs. Their dealers are even allowed to sell or conduct transactions near the Cathedral no less. *Gaudium et Spes* 53 affirms that every cultural practice or tradition expresses "great spiritual experiences and desires" and "the progress of many, even of the whole human family". Therefore, Religious Education has to explain to both the Catholic faithful and other Christian groups, in the spirit of dialogue, that not all of folk or indigenous beliefs in healing of every culture are automatically or completely against the Gospel values.

Along this line, this study then aimed at understanding the way inculturation has taken place between folk healing and Catholic beliefs as reflected in the *Tambal Binisaya* stalls around St. Michael's Cathedral of Iligan City. The researcher also intended to increase people's sense of rootedness in and appreciation of their native customs or tradition, which comprise a huge part of their identity as *Iliganons* and Filipinos; and inspire them to promote the values of respect, dialogue, and inculturation of cultures, which are basic integral elements of evangelizing peoples and their cultures the Catholic way.

## 2.0 Method

This study is qualitative in nature that employed the grounded theory as its research method in the treatment of the data gathered. Strauss and Corbin, as explained by Kolb (2012), describe this process of analyzing data as coding. Coding involves three levels of analyses: **open coding**, which is the identification of different categories, properties, and dimensions within and among the data; **axial coding**, wherein data are pieced together in new ways after open coding allowing connections between categories; and **selective coding**, which is identifying and choosing the core category. The data gathered and analyzed in this study refer to the beliefs behind the folk healing practiced in *Tambal Binisaya* stalls around St. Michael's Cathedral of Iligan City. After which, examination ensued by determining whether Catholic beliefs might have already been inculturated into these *Tambal Binisaya* practices. This is done in two ways: (1) identification of Catholic beliefs that were evident in these folk healing practices; and (2) recognition of folk healing beliefs that were contrary to the Catholic teachings. Insights on inculturation were then inferred from the process of examination between *Tambal Binisaya* and Catholic beliefs. The study culminated with a discussion on the development of understanding how inculturation has taken place in the matters under investigation.

There were two sources of data, namely, the 6 vendors of the *Tambal Binisaya* stalls around St. Michael's Cathedral, and the 3 *mananambals* or folk healers, who conducted their healing sessions in their own residences. All of them were residents of Iligan City, which is located in the southern part of the Philippines. The stalls had been in existence for more than 30 years already based on the observation of the researcher. The *mananambals*, who were recognized according to the *Tambal Binisaya* vendors' familiarity of and association with them, had to be in practice for 10 years or more so that it was guaranteed that they had sufficient and genuine knowledge in folk healing. The choice of the key informants was done by purposive sampling.

The data were acquired through observations on, immersions with, and interviews of the key informants. Documentations, such as taking pictures of the sites and the key informants were part of the field work. Interviews were done with the use of guide questions prepared by the researcher ahead of time. By way of questions and answers, the responses of the key informants were recorded and followed up. The interviews were conducted in the vernacular for convenience and clarity on the part of the key informants. Their responses afterwards were translated to English for the purpose of this study.

## 3.0 Results

### 3.1 On the Beliefs behind the Folk Healing Practiced in the *Tambal Binisaya*

#### 3.1.1 Analysis by Open Coding

The following points are the data collected from the key informants and analyzed in terms of open coding. Here different categories, properties, and dimensions within and among the beliefs in folk healing are identified:

- The *abyan* (spirit guide) helps the *mananambal* (folk healer) in diagnosis of ailment by means of ritual or incantation, and the *abyan* tells the *mananambal* what the patient is suffering from.

- The *mananambal* also does diagnosis of ailment by examination of body parts because it is believed that disruption of the natural balance of the elements gets manifest in the body.
- Illnesses may be caused by the *abyan* of the *mamarangay* (sorcerer). These are the *daot* and *barang* (kinds of sorcery). Others are directly caused by the spirits themselves for various reasons, like *buyag*, *nasudlan* (possession), *giwakwak* (bothered by fiend creature), and *gimalas-malas* (misfortune). Although misfortune could not technically be considered as bodily ailment, it is manifest here that, in the view of folk healing, illness is not limited to the physical aspect. Rather, it is also regarded as a unfavorable situation, such as *kawat* (theft).
- Illnesses may also be caused by disruption of the natural processes of the body, or caused by the imbalance of the natural elements, like air, water, or fire in the body. Those identified are anemia, *hilanat* (fever), *ubo* (cough), *rayuma* (rheumatism), *artraytis* (arthritis), *problema sa buros* (pregnancy problem), *butod* or *panuhot* (bad air in the stomach), *kabuhi* (a stomach condition that causes headache and nausea), *pasmo* (not eating in the regular time).
- The *abyan* can be requested for particular intention called as *hangyo*, using certain items such as *kamangyan* (an item found in the *Tambal Binisaya* stalls), and *nobenahan* (prayer leaflets for novenas). Healing can be obtained from the generosity or kindness of the *abyan* by means of ritual and prayer or incantation.
- Intervention of healing, like *hilot* (massage) or usage of herbal medicines, can be done to bring back the natural balance of the elements in the body.
- Bad spirits can be driven away by the use of *pang-abog* or *panagang* (amulet), such as *pulseras sa bata* (bracelet for children), *habak*, and crucifixes or crosses. By these things, illnesses can be prevented from oneself and the family. Good spirits can be attracted through the use of *pampaswerte* (talisman), such as the “million dollar” and *salindugok*. Through such, health and wellness would be promoted in oneself and in the family.
- Illnesses can prevented and wellness can be promoted also by making sure that the natural balance of the elements of the body is not disrupted, and avoiding abusive bodily practices, such balanced diet and sufficient amount of physical exercise.
- Illnesses are disturbances to the harmony of the natural elements. They generally are part of life, and being human (being made of earth), all people cannot escape it; thus, predestined to it.
- Health or wellness is viewed as the natural balance of the elements around and/or within the body. Any obtrusive or excessive tilt of this balance leads to illness.
- Effective healing for the illnesses can be only assured when there are the values of faith, cooperation, obedience, faithfulness, and prayer to the *abyan*.
- The *abyans* range from God, angels, earth-bound spirits, human souls, to demons or evil entities that are understood to be the elements themselves, or forces that have the power to influence the elements. They are tantamount to the ultimate causes of both wellness and illness.
- *Tambal Binisaya* or folk healing in general is understood as a vocation. *Mananambals* are called by their *abyans* with the mission to serve trough healing. The nature of this calling is either a *kabilin* (inherited), or a direct calling from the spirit.

### 3.1.2 Analysis by Axial Coding

The following points are the data analyzed in terms of axial coding. Here identified beliefs in folk healing are pieced together allowing connections between categories:

- The diagnosis of illness can be done either through the help of the *abyan* (spirit guide) of the *mananambal* (folk healer) or examination of bodily parts by the *mananambal*.
- Illnesses are caused by either by the *abyan* of the *mamarangay* (sorcerer) or disruption of the natural balance of the elements around and/or within the body.
- Healing can be done by either the supernatural help of the *abyan* or the natural means of the *mananambal*.
- Prevention of illness or promotion of wellness can be done either by supernatural or natural means.
- Health or wellness is the natural balance of the elements around and/or within the body. Any disturbance of this harmony leads to illness. Healing can only be assured when there is faith, cooperation, obedience, faithfulness, and prayer to the *abyan*.
- The *abyans* range from God, angels, earth-bound spirits, human souls, to demons or evil entities that are understood to be the elements themselves, or forces that have the power to influence the elements. *Mananambals* are called by their *abyans* with the mission to serve through folk healing.

### 3.1.3 Analysis by Selective Coding

The following points are the data analyzed in terms of selective coding. Here core categories in beliefs in folk healing identified and chosen by borrowing the terminologies of Tan (2008) on illness causation:

- The first category was on the **spirit-driven abilities**, which refers to supernatural capabilities in diagnosing, causing, healing, and preventing illnesses. These are the **personalistic beliefs** in folk healing.
- The second category was on the **nature-driven abilities**, which pertains to capacities of diagnosing, causing, healing, and causing illnesses through the processes of the natural elements in the body, like air, water, and heat. These are the **naturalistic beliefs** in folk healing.
- The last category was on the **spiritual abilities**, which points to the mystical signification of the balance in the life force, between health and illness. These are the **mystical beliefs** in folk healing.

## 3.2 Catholic Beliefs Evident in *Tambal Binisaya* Practices

### 3.2.1 In the Views on Illnesses in *Tambal Binisaya*

The two views of the stall vendors on illness causation, namely personalistic and naturalistic, can be related to the two ways of addressing illnesses in the Catholic sense. Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC) 1822 makes a distinction between “curing” and “healing”. Curing only pertains to removing the bodily sickness; while, healing is holistic in its meaning, that is, bringing wellness to the entire person – body, soul, and spirit. Naturalistic causes of illness can only be related to curing, which mainly involve the natural processes of the

body and elements in the physical world. Personalistic causes, which are both magical and religious, entail things beyond the physical domain, like the immaterial soul and spirit; thus, this is related to healing.

In the Gospels, and even in the other New Testament writings, illnesses are mentioned and discussed. Jesus cured bodily ailments, like blindness (cf. John 9), withered hand (cf. Mark 3:1-6), and leprosy (cf. Matthew 8:1-4). Peter, after the Pentecost, as he was filled with the Holy Spirit, cured the crippled beggar (cf. Acts 23:1-10). Paul, in his conversion to Christ, recovered his sight after Ananias baptized him to the faith (cf. Acts 9:10-19). On the other hand, there were sicknesses that came in the form of spiritual oppression and sinfulness. All this, of course, concerns the soul and the spirit only. Jesus exorcised individuals possessed by evil spirits (cf. Mark 1:21-28), and freed women from the slavery of sin (cf. John 4:4-42; cf. John 8:1-11).

CFC 1830-1835 speaks of this healing ministry of Christ and his apostles as being entrusted to the whole community of followers since then until the present time. This flows to all the faithful in the form of the Sacraments of Healing, which is not exclusively concerned of curing bodily ailments, but the entire being of the individuals. In this sense, Catholics are not to understand the healing ministry of the Church as magical; yet, as the way a person rising up his whole being to Christ.

The views of the *mananambals* on illness, which were identified to be mystical beliefs under the Tan's (2008) category of Fate, somewhat bring another realization of the Church when it comes to the eventuality of life. They believed that illness was part of human existence, that is, everyone was predestined to it; and no matter how hard one tries to maintain health, he or she eventually gets sick and dies. Behind such conviction, one can more or less infer that there is a certain amount of wisdom and humility for accepting the one truth about life – it ends. In relation to this, CFC 996 expresses then, “Life itself is not an absolute value as Christ plainly showed by his teaching on giving up one’s life out of love for one’s friend (cf. John 15:13), as he himself did on the Cross. But it is the necessary condition for actively loving others as well as their receiving our love. To follow Christ as his disciples, then, means concretely doing all in our power to defend, maintain, and promote the dignity and value of human life.” In other words, the ultimate choice of a good Christian is not to do everything in his or her power to assure immortality or avoid death. When one pursues this, it is bound to end in vain. Instead, the true follower of Christ is one who does that which promotes anything that upholds the value of human life even if it means the ends on one’s own life. The word for this is sacrifice.

### 3.2.2 In the Views on Health in Tambal Binisaya

Taking care of the body so that it would not get sick is a concept that was also pervasive in *Tambal Binisaya* beliefs. The Catholic faith also supports this kind of view, as it urges the faithful to treat the body as the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19). It is considered as both a blessing from God, and something sacred. Thus, everyone has to look out for it as its steward. CFC 341 states that this “is exercised in our daily activities which we can rightfully consider as a prolongation of God’s continuing work of creating, and a service to our fellow men and women”.

However, wellness in the Catholic sense is not limited to the human body alone. Again, “the Sacrament’s [such as the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick] healing is the total, personal healing, a saving and raising of the whole person. No amount of sickness, pain, suffering – and death itself – can shake out confident Faith that our ultimate healing is assured in Christ Jesus” (CFC 1835). To simply put, wellbeing or healing implies the entire body, soul, and spirit united

in Christ Jesus. The problem enters when people dichotomize the body from the soul and spirit. It may then be thought that one could have a very healthy body; but has a soul as dark as the night.

### 3.2.3 *In the Vocation and Mission in Tambal Binisaya*

Service, love, unity, and solidarity were convictions and values that were apparent in *Tambal Binisaya* practices. The *mananambals* believed that they were called by their *abyans* for such goals. The stalls vendors saw that their work points to these same directions. Although these are noble aspirations that are also affirmed in the Catholic faith as virtues, the faithful are to be watchful their acts that seem to be propelled by them are not self-serving. All Christians are called to imitate their Lord, who says that he comes “not be served but to serve” (Matthew 20:28). Knowing and loving Christ have to be accompanied with “loving service of others in living faith” (CFC 473), which is called in the early times as *diakonia*. Unity and solidarity, or fellowship (*koinonia*), does not mean uniformity according to CFC 1387. Even if there are many differences among the members of the community, they become united because of the one Lord who brings them all together. Now CFC 742 articulates that *diakonia* and *koinonia* are effects love, which is considered by St. Paul as the greatest of all the theological virtues (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:13). It is believed by the Church to be the basis for moral living.

### 3.2.4 *In the Power behind Tambal Binisaya*

The guidance and influence of the *abyan* or spirit companion was significant in this practice. CFC 1269 affirms this kind of belief is present in Filipino culture. The Catholic Church’s teachings do not discount the belief in spiritual companions. One belief in spiritual companions is on the guardian angels. All throughout the Sacred Scriptures, we see the presence of angels, who act as peoples’ helpers and guides. To mention a few, there are the story of Tobiah and the angel Raphael on the road to Media (Tobit 5:4-7); the mention of angel Michael in the vision of Daniel (Daniel 10:13-21); the angels ministering to Jesus in a number of occasion (Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43-44); and the mention of Jesus of the angels of the little ones interceding before God (Matthew 18:10). CFC 337 says, “God’s absolutely ‘individualized’ and ‘personal’ love for every human being is manifested also in his assigning to each of us an angel to be our guardian and mentor”. Nevertheless, it does not immediately follow that all *abyans* are acknowledged in the same way.

Another is on the belief in the communion of saints. Spiritual companions also include the saints. CFC 1429 proposes the vision of the entire residents of the Kingdom of God grouped into three: the “pilgrims” on earth or the ones who are still alive; the ones who are still “purified” or the dead faithful who are being prepared for heaven; and the ones who already enjoy the glory of God in the heavenly realm. It is then the conviction of the Catholic Church that all these residents, whether separated by death or not, still continue to commune with one another. One manifestation of this communion is the intercession a believer, whether alive or has already passed away, can do for his or her fellow human beings either in the physical or spiritual world. This intercession becomes a powerful means for causing desires to be fulfilled or healing to happen, for instance.

The last one is on God Himself. There are many scriptural narratives that show mere human beings performing some amazing feat due to God's hand on their backs, such as prophets of the Old Testament and Jesus' apostles and disciples. Some examples are the incredible miracles performed by the apostles during and after Jesus' earthly life. In their case, the Spirit of the Risen Christ was their spiritual companion, who made all their miraculous deeds possible. This work of miracles is believed by the Catholic Church to have continued with all of the faithful then and now, by virtue of Baptism, being adopted sons and daughters of God (cf. Romans 8:16-17). Thus, whatever spiritual gifts that the apostles received may also be received by all the other baptized followers. But then again, it does not necessarily true in all cases of *Tambal Binisaya*. Still, it has to be made sure that miraculous events caused by individuals are valid and acceptable according to the mind and heart of the Church. One very common example of this one is the healing that occurred to a multitude of peoples during the Marian apparitions in Lourdes and Fatima.

All this explains the existence of Catholic sacramentals and prayers in the method of healing of *mananambals*, and in the *Tambal Binisaya* stalls. In CFC 1532, sacramentals are "objects, actions, practices, places, and the like, that help us become aware of Christ's grace-filled presence around us or liberate us from the presence of the Evil One". As such, they help is signify and symbolize the invisible presences of God, angels, and saints so that some spiritual effects are facilitated in the lives of the believers.

Although Catholic beliefs in spiritual companions can be seen to exist in *Tambal Binisaya*, the Church continues to caution the faithful about the following:

- CFC 1269 expresses the need for "discernment of the spirits". All believers have to put all these spirits into test, whether they indeed come from God, and not from the adversary. In order to distinguish, Jesus himself provides the guideline, "By their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:16). In other words, if an *abyan* bears good fruits, if it brings one closer to God, if it makes people loving and virtuous, then it must be a good spirit;
- CFC 892 discloses the observation that being Filipino Catholics, who are passionate devotees of the saints, we are attracted to their statues. It has to be clear that veneration of the saints, including of their images, is not immediately an act of idolatry. However, it is the advice of the Church to be prudent in treating the images of saints (or the saints themselves) not as idols, "as endowed with some magical powers"; and
- It has to be made sure that miraculous deeds reportedly caused by God's direct supernatural intervention in the natural world have to make Christ as the ultimate sole goal. The Church in *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) 43 enlightens everyone in pushing for "purification and renewal so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the Church".

#### 4.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The data and analysis above show that there are indeed Catholic elements that become evident in the *Tambal Binisaya* practices. Employing Ramos' (2015) view on inculturation, explanations to signify that process of inculturation exists between *Tambal Binisaya* and Catholic beliefs are articulated in the following points:

- Abiding by Leonardo Mercado's Indigenization, which means that the Gospel message takes root in the local culture, the residue of the past, it can safely be concluded that inculturation has taken place. As suggested, the focus in this theory is the local culture or the "residue of the past". Jamuel N. Abogado's (2006) study confirms that the pre-Hispanic culture of Filipinos was that of animism, which is a position that can be complimented with David Stern's (2015) explanation of shamanism. This is "residue of the past" in the case of the Philippine culture. When evangelization occurred all throughout the archipelago, elements of the Gospel message has been taking root in the animistic tendency of the indigenous Filipino way of life. For instance, this explains the beliefs in the *engkantos* or *abyans* (non-human spirits), which are similar to the idea of fallen angels in the Christian view, and in the vanquishing of them through the Word of God.
- Abiding by Jose De Mesa's Contextualization, which means that culturally defined issues receive theological responses in a given situation, it can safely be concluded that inculturation has taken place. One evidence of this is the provisions in the Catechism for Filipino Catholics that mainly explains that Christian faith in the Philippine context. To cite an example, CFC 1765 comments on the observed superstition and ignorance about beliefs in *panata*, faith healers, miraculous statues, pilgrimages to sites of alleged apparitions. This stipulation urges the faithful to "a truly inculturated catechesis that can draw on the valuable elements of our Filipino Folk Catholicism in bringing the truth and value of Christ's healing to the Filipino Catholic of today". Analyzing these statements, the culturally defined issue at hand is observed beliefs in superstition and ignorance. To give light to the situation, as a theological response, the mandate of the Church in the Philippines is toward a truly inculturated catechesis. Here, a dialogue between the Catholic faith and the present culture is witnessed undoubtedly so that the latter may be from erroneous beliefs, and the message of the Gospel may prevail.
- Ramos (2015) mentions that the three prominent Filipino theologians in his study all agree in Cultural Exegesis when it comes to inculturation. He explains that inculturation by Cultural Exegesis is "to recover those cultural meanings and values which have potential for expressing the gospel so that they can be made to sacramentalize God's active presence in the world" (p. 699). In short, it is to find those cultural meanings and values that can bring out the Gospel message, and in effect, make God sacramentally more visible in people's lives. Abiding by this, it can safely be concluded that inculturation has taken place. For instance, in the findings above, most of the values that are treasured in *Tambal Binisaya* practices are also values that the Catholic faith upholds. However, there are still other serious ideas in *Tambal Binisaya* practices that still needs to the checked and corrected, so that the Catholic faithful may be enlightened of the truth that the Gospel constantly reveals.

## NOTE

This is an abridged version of my graduate thesis *Faith Healing Practices: Reflecting an Inculturation of Beliefs*. Please refer this thesis for the review of related literature, and its appendices for the sources of the data.

### 5.0 References

- Abogado, Jamuel N. (2006). *Inculturation in the Practice of the Cult of Saints*. Manila: UST Graduate School.
- Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, Retrieved April 22, 2015, from <https://chermercado.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/cfc-cbcp.pdf>.
- Gaudium et Spes. *Catholic Encyclopedia*. Retrieved April 22, 2015, from [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_cons\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).
- Kolb Sharon M. (2012). *Grounded Theory and the Constant Comparative Method: Valid Research Strategies for Educators*. Retrieved April 22, 2015, from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.301.9451&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- National Catechetical Directory of the Philippines* (2007). Metro Manila: Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.
- New American Bible*. Retrieved April 22, 2015, from [www.usccb.org/bible/](http://www.usccb.org/bible/).
- Stern, David. (2012). Shamans: Masters of Ecstasy. *National Geographic*. Retrieved April 20, 2015, from <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/12/shamans/stern-text>.
- Tan, Michael L. (2008). *Revisiting Usog, Pasma, Kulam*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.

# English Language Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Student Outcomes

Adelfa C. Silor, Ed.D<sup>1</sup>, Ciedelle N. Grageda<sup>2</sup>, Faith Stephanny C. Silor<sup>3</sup>  
Sheenalyn M. Abangan<sup>4</sup>, Esel May M. Lorejo<sup>5</sup>, Shiela Wayas<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1-6</sup>MSU-IIT, Philippines

<sup>1</sup>E-mail: adelfa.silor@g.msuiit.edu.ph, <sup>2</sup>E-mail: junciedelle@hotmail.com, <sup>3</sup>E-mail: cyberwesky2@gmail.com,  
<sup>4</sup>E-mail: sheenamew@gmail.com, <sup>5</sup>E-mail: ezelmaye.lorejo@g.msuiit.edu.ph, <sup>6</sup>E-mail: shiela.wayas@g.msuiit.edu.ph

## Abstract

Teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be equipped with the theories and principles of philosophical, psychological, anthropological and sociological as well as psychological foundations of education. Besides, teachers need also literacy skills in teaching the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. One of the most important literacy skills needed across curriculum is the English Language Literacy. Thus, this collaborative research study aimed to analyze the importance of English Language Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century student outcomes. The method used in this study is empirical and theoretical design using literature reviews as the bases of examining the importance of English language literacy in achieving the 21<sup>st</sup> century student outcomes. Among the twenty literature reviews, findings reveal that English language literacy is considered as one of the pedagogical practices that helps students develop the capacity for critical thinking and problem solving, English language literacy contributes much to the communication and collaboration of the learners and the society in general, thus modernize outcomes-based English instruction is needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, English language literacy starts in early childhood education, teaching English to struggling readers and speakers using English language made use of the digitally embedded features in such a way as to promote both learning novel lexical items and effectively applying reading comprehension strategies. Hence, 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers must have fundamental approaches to literacy improvement such as enhanced instruction in particular elements of phonemic awareness, phonics, sight vocabulary, meaning vocabulary, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, writing, and spelling for pedagogical features in English language literacy which is very useful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century student outcomes. In conclusion, English language literacy is very important to the mastery of fundamental subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> century themes essential for students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, schools must move beyond a focus on basic competency to promoting understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving 21<sup>st</sup> century interdisciplinary themes into curriculum using English language literacy.

**Keywords:** 21<sup>st</sup> century student outcomes, English language literacy, interdisciplinary themes, learning environment, Pedagogy

# Vietnamese Tourists' Demand on Cultural Aspects of Domestic Tours

Pham Hong Hoa<sup>1</sup>, Nguyen Hoai Long<sup>2</sup>, Le Pham Khanh Hoa<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Marketing faculty, National economic university, Vietnam

<sup>1</sup>E-mail: phamhonghoa.mkt@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>E-mail: longnguyenhoai@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>E-mail: lephamkhanhhoa@gmail.com

## Abstract

Vietnam witnessed the sharp increase in domestic tourists with 57.000.000 arrivals in 2015. Vietnamese tourists have been increasingly interested in cultural aspects of domestic tours such as: cuisine culture, history culture, commuting culture, daily life culture, etc. It is a highly potential market for Vietnamese tourist agencies. The research interviewed 287 Vietnamese tourists by questionnaire with 21 items scale built up by in-depth interview to figure out the tourists' insights. The results showed that: (1) tourists' demand varied from demographic variables such as age, education level, marriage status; (2) level of interest of cultural aspects varied between kinds of cultural aspects in which cuisine culture was the most favor of domestic tourists. With the similarity in economic and cultural conditions, these findings imply the potential of designing tours for domestic tourists in Asian countries as well as foreign tourists' agencies.

**Keywords:** tourism marketing, cultural aspects, tour design.

## Introduction

According to report by the Vietnam Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, in 2015, Viet Nam received more than 7.94 million international tourists arrivals and served 57 million domestic trippers. Total tourism receipts reached VND 338,000 billion. The tourism sector created 750,000 direct jobs and contributed 6.6% of the GDP. In the first 7 months of 2016, the number of international tourists to Viet Nam was over 5.5 million arrivals, surging by 24% over the same period of 2015. Total tourism receipts reached VND 234,978 billion, up 22.9% over the same period last year. Vietnam targets to receive 14-15 million international tourists and 70-75 million domestic trippers; generate 1.02 million direct jobs and contribute 9-10% of GDP by 2020.

On Strategy on Viet Nam's tourism development until 2020, vision to 2030, Viet Nam's tourism development is 'In 2020: Viet Nam would receive 10-10.5 million international arrivals and 47-48 million domestic tourists; total revenue from tourism would reach US\$18-19 billion, contributing 6.5-7% of the country's GDP; total accommodation suites would be 580,000, 35-40% of which are of three to five-star standards; the sector would create 3 million jobs, including 870,000 employees working directly in tourism'. Viet Nam's solutions for these goals are "(1) To develop a tourist product system that is unique, diverse and uniform, with high quality and high added value, meeting the needs of domestic and international tourists; to develop "green" tourism products, respecting natural elements and local cultures. (2) To plan and invest in tourism product development based on outstanding strengths and attractions of tourism resources; to prioritize the development of marine tourism, cultural tourism and eco-tourism; to step by step form systems of national and local tourism areas, routes, destinations and tourism urban areas. (3) To take advantage of strengths and strengthening the links between regions and localities towards the formation of specific tourism products of each tourism area".

According to UNESCO Viet Nam, Viet Nam has some cultural heritages and wonders: 7 cultural heritages including: Central sector of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long - Hanoi, Citadel of the Ho Dynasty, Complex of Hue Monuments, Hoi An Ancient Town, My Son Sanctuary; 2 natural heritages including Ha Long Bay, Phong Nha - Ke Bang National park; 1 mixed heritage Trang An Landscape Complex. In Viet Nam's tourism strategy, cultural tourism will be one of key drivers for the development of the industry. Cultural tourism is the foundation or the outstanding strengths for investments and plans in tourism product development. Basing on cultural and natural aspects to develop tourism product is one of smart strategy of Viet Nam in attracting more tourists and creating jobs.

**Table 1: Viet Nam Tourism Statistics**

Year	Domestic trippers (thousand)	International tourism - according to World Bank (thousand)	No. of accommodations	No. of rooms	Total tourism receipts (VND trillion)
2009	25,000	3,747	11,467	216,675	68.00
2010	28,000	5,050	12,352	237,111	96.00
2011	30,000	6,014	13,756	256,739	130.00
2012	32,500	6,848	15,381	277,661	160.00
2013	35,000	7,572	-	-	200.00
2014	38,000	7,874	16,000	332,000	230.00
2015	38,500	-	18,800	355,000	337.83

There is an unbalance between domestic and international trippers in Viet Nam. The number of domestic trippers are five times bigger than international trippers. The number of domestic tourists has been increased steadily from 2009 to 2015. Domestic tourists are drivers for the development of Viet Nam tourism field. Whilst the number of international tourists has increased with higher rate but lower total number. In the context of global economic downturn, attracting domestic trippers will be more feasible. Finding the solutions for acquiring more domestic tourists is the biggest research question of this study. From the perspective of Viet Nam tourism strategy, with the strength of cultural heritage, we found solutions from customers' insights on cultural aspects in tourism product development to answer.

## **Literature**

### **Cultural tourism**

Ruskin could be named as the godfather of cultural tourism. He took early family travels, Grand Tour for an educational but recuperative purpose which was the spirit of his own times. The century from 1814 to 1914 was the golden age of cultural tourism because it was the time when bridges were made between the cultural aesthetes and 'Grand Tourists'. These bridges were the guidebook writers; their independent traveller users were those who crossed over.

Cultural tourism is the subset of tourism which showed a country's culture including the history, art, architecture, religion, lifestyle, way of living... Cultural tourism was defined as the movement of persons to cultural attractions from the normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experience to satisfy their cultural needs. Tourist could involve and experience with a host population and its cultural expressions, they could also experience the uniqueness of culture, heritage and the characters of its place and people.

Cultural tourism is categorized among one of five types of tourism, a form of interest tourism where culture forms the basis of attracting tourists and motivating people to travel. Richards (1997) defined cultural tourism as 'the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs'. In the point of marketing, cultural tourism has also been conceptualized as involving the development and marketing of various sites or attractions for foreign as well as domestic tourist (Goodrich, 1997).

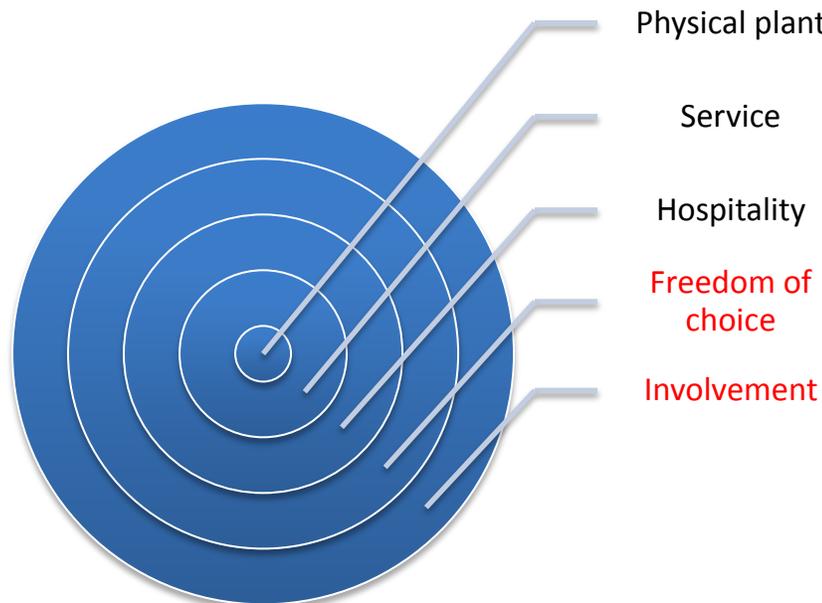
Cultural tourism also includes the experiential element by which means tourists want to get educated by experiencing culture in their journey. Cultural tourism involves experiencing or having contact of differing intensity with the unique social fabric, heritage, and special character of places. Taking the cultural tourism, tourists could have a chance not only to learn more about the significance of the place, heritage, food, lifestyle but understand about the local tradition and culture.

Cultural tourism originated from cultural resource which is the component of environment that attracts the tourists. Cultural resource can be defined as any cultural feature, tangible or intangible available within a country, region or area. Cultural tourism resource has some characteristics: (1) varies by the uniqueness of cultural destination. Different destinations provide different products of cultural features, cultural resources as a cultural base exemplify the sense of a place which is the attribute to distinguish one place from others. (2) created by human being which involves the development of history, lifestyle, arts, living ways, religions, opinions... (3) fluctuate by tourists demands or motivations.

## Tourism product development

Building on the observations of marketing professionals and tourism researchers, Stephan Smith (1995) developed the model of tourism product development which consisted of the elements of tourism product and the process by which those elements are assembled. Smith (1995) figured out 5 elements of the Tourism product illustrated in a series of concentric circles ranging from the core - the physical plant, encapsulating shell of involvement.

**Figure 1: The Generic Tourism Product (Smith, 1995)**



***The physical plant.*** The core of tourism product includes a site, natural resource, or facility such as waterfall, wildlife or resort. It could be fixed property such as hotel, or mobile equipment such as a cruiseship. The physical plant also referred to conditions of the physical environment which provide natural and cultural resources on which any form of tourism is based. Tourists's experience could be formed on physical aspects of tourism product.

***Service.*** Service refers to the performance of specific operations to meet the needs of tourists. The quality of service can be measured by observing the performance of employees against objective criteria that specify the types and level of technical knowledge an employee must have to perform his job. The issue of assessing service quality is addressed in greater detail by Gronroos.

***Hospitality.*** Consumers in virtually every field expected "enhanced service" or "something extra" which has long been a part of tourism: hospitality. Service is the technically-competent performance of a task, hospitality is the attitude or style in which the task is performed. Hospitality is an expression of welcome by local residents to tourists arriving in their community. Hospitality is more difficult to assess and manage than service because it is more subjective. Customer feedback is the clever way to develop the sense of hospitality level. Hospitality sets the stage and facilitates the addition of the next two elements in the model.

***Freedom of choice.*** The necessity that the travelers has some acceptable range of options in order to be satisfied. The degree of freedom of choice will vary vastly depending on whether the travel is for pleasure, business, family matters, or a combination. It varies with the travelers's budget, previous knowledge, experience and reliance on a travel agent or prepacked tours. Satisfaction tourism product must include some elements of choice. The role of freedom of choice is particularly clear in recreational or pleasure travel which was well-established in the field of leisure studies as an integral part of the leisure experience.

***Involvement.*** A character of service products in some degree, in the delivery of services is involvement. The basis for successful participation by consumers in producing tourism products is the combination of an acceptable physical plant, good service, hospitality and freedom of choice. These elements set the stage for physical or emotional involvement in travel services.

***Freedom of choice*** and ***Involvement*** were controversial aspects of the model which presented the inclusion of the tourist but not the nature of the product. But Normann (1985) argued that the consumer can be considered as part of the delivery of other service products. The inclusion of the tourist as part of product production (not just delivery) was essential if we could comprehend and accept the notion that tourism was fundamental sense, an experience. Because of some arguments relating to the personal aspects of tourists in the two largest circle of the model, the study focused on the first three level of tourism product to study.

### **The research**

The study sample was recruited conveniently from 287 respondents who are customers of a tourist agent based in Hanoi. Questionnaire was developed from the result of in-depth interviews with expertises, researchers and managers in the field of tourism. From more than 20 criteria in the first three level of tourism product, there are six big dimensions of a tourism product which tourists were interested in: (1) relaxation and enjoyment, (2) experience the cultural elements, (3) cuisine and food, (4) entertainment, (5) sight seeing, (6) shopping.

From the theory on cultural tourism and tourism product model we developed 21 statements on various cultural aspects. These statement was treated by factor analysis and reduced to 6 big component of cultural aspects which are called: cuisine culture, history culture, commuting culture, daily life culture, accomodation culture.

## Results

Descriptive statistics gave some information about the sample in the following table. The sample depicted the portray of the popular tourist in Viet Nam.

**Table 2: Desceptive statistics**

		Frequency	Percent
Age	Under 25	32	12.3
	25-40	159	60.9
	40-55	48	18.4
	above 55	22	8.4
Gender	Male	103	44.8
	Female	127	55.2
Married status	Unmarried	94	40.7
	Married	56	24.2
	Married, children under 6	52	22.5
	Married, children above 6	29	12.6
Family expenses	Under 10 million (VND)	61	25.8
	From 10 to 30 million	126	53.4
	From 30 to 50 million	28	11.9
	above 50 million	21	8.9
Occupation	Housewives, unemployed	21	8.2
	Government staves	58	22.7
	Managers	94	36.9
	Trader	44	17.3
	Freelancer	19	7.5
	Retired	6	2.4
	Other	13	5.1

The importance of elements in tourism products was illustrated by *Mean* of respondents' assessment in Likert type scale with the 1 is least important and 5 is the most important: relaxation and enjoyment (mean = 4.09), experience the cultural elements (mean = 3.9), cuisine and food (mean = 4.1), entertainment, sight seeing (mean = 4.08), shopping (mean = 3.03). *Food culture* tended to be the most important element in a tour which customers wanted to experience. The results also showed that there was no difference between age, gender, income, occupation in judging the importance of tourism product's elements (by ANOVA analysis). There was difference in assessing the importance of tourism product's elements in terms of married status, level of education and tourism experience. In particular, 'family with children above 6' was more interested in sightseeing and experiencing the destination's culture but 'family with children under 6' was more interested in 'relax and enjoy'. The more educated, the more highly assessed the importance of 'relax, enjoy, experience culture and traditional food'. People who did not took any tours were interested in experiencing destination's culture whilst people who used to tak a tour were not interested in.

Factor analysis (with  $KMO = .867$ ; Barlett's test of sphericity with  $df 210$ ,  $sig. .000$ ;  $Eigene\ value > 1$ , ) was treated with 21 statements on cultural aspect of tourism proucdt showing 6 component of cultural component called: daily life culture, cuisine culture, accomodation culture, history culture, behavior culture and commuting culture. Food culture are the most important among other aspects of cutlure in customers' mind ( $mean = 4.09/5$ )

**Table 3: Factor analysis of Culture aspects of tourism product**

	Daily life culture	Cuisine culture	Accomodation culture	History culture	Behavior culture	Commuting culture
Play game relating to local culture	0.756					
Presented traditional gift of local culture	0.74					
Buy tradtional food as a sourvenir	0.667					
Taken part in local activities or events	0.607					
Tour guides dress like local people	0.554					
Have chances to gather areas surrouding hotels	0.506					
Introduced traditional food and local specialty		0.779				
Introduced how to cook traditional food and make local specialty		0.698				
Have chances to explore traditonal markets surrounding hotels		0.626				
Brochures introducing local area available in the hotel			0.783			
Local culture's heritage, specialty in hotel			0.782			
Hotel has culture experience activities for customers			0.573			
Hotel has characteristics of local culture			0.509			
Understand culture by visiting museums, historical places				0.807		
Introduced histories and characters or meaning culture of destination				0.772		
Introduced on general culture of nation, region, area				0.693		
Understand other tourists' culture					0.771	
Experience local living way features					0.643	
Introduced local social culture behaviors or norms					0.554	
Introduced about traffic and vehicles of destination						0.744
introduced heirtage, culture life on the road of tours						0.743

Tourists who were different in education level, married status, tour experience had different demands on tourism. Most of tourists wanted to explore culture destinations when taking a tour meanwhile they were not interested in entertainment activities and shopping, particularly in high education group.

### **Management implications**

Culture tourism has been increasingly interested in by customers. Domestic tourists have been the most potential market for tourist agents. They should focus on positioning relating culture elements to have their own strong competitive advantages. In the case of Viet Nam which has many famous wonders and become more attracting with tourists not only global but local.

Cultural aspects should be designed in various kind surrounding the core tourism product (physical plant, service, hospitality) for tourists including: daily life culture, cuisine culture, accommodation culture, history culture, behavior culture and commuting culture. Cuisine or food culture should be considered carefully in tourism product development which could be attracted more tourists and satisfy customers.

Tourist who are different from demographic variables have specific demands on tourist product. Customizing tourism product with group of customers could be possibly have effectiveness on benefit and customers satisfaction. Tourist agents should promote or advertise their own image in specific group of customers.

### **References**

- Erik, C., & Nir, A. (2004). Food in Tourism Attraction and Impediment. *Annal Tourism Research*, 31(4), 755-778. doi:doi:10.1016/j.annals.2004.02.003
- Hongliang, Y., & Bill, B. (2008). Cultural tourism, ceremony and the state in China. *Annal Tourism Research*, 35(4), 969-989. Retrieved October 8, 2016.
- Javier, S., Luis, C., Rosa, R. M., & Miguel, M. A. (2006). Perceived value of the purchase of a tourism product. *Tourism Management*, 394-409.
- Stephen, S. (1994). The Tourism Product. *Annal Tourism Research*, 21(3), 582-595. doi:0160-7383(93)E0032-9
- Ted, S. (1995). Cultural tourism and business opportunities for museums and heritage sites. *Tourism Management*, 16(5), 361-365.
- Yining, Z. (2011). *Cultural Tourism Products: A Case Study in the Xi'an City* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2011). Las Vegas, Nevada.

# Kipling's *Plain Tales from the Hills*-A Portrayal of Anglo-Indian Life in Simla

Mukul Joshi

Pune, India  
E-mail: jomukul27@gmail.com

## Abstract

India occupies a central position in Rudyard Kipling's writings since the land had a special place in his heart. He had spent his impressionable years as a child and formative years of his life as a young man in India. It is no wonder that India serves as a single largest background to his creative writings. Kipling's Indian stories fall into two main groups. Those concerned with the Anglo-Indian and those concerned with the native. The Anglo-Indian community consisted of two groups; the workers, who were actively involved in work for the Empire, including government officials, soldiers, engineers, and doctors; and the social or 'smart' set, which lived, moved and had their being in Simla.

Getting to Simla was the ultimate aim of Anglo-Indian existence. How to get there was the first problem, and after arriving, how to remain there was second. This paper studies Kipling's depiction of innumerable maneuveres, strategies, conflicts, and disappointments that followed in the wake of this struggle for survival in the short stories in *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888). It also studies how men wanted to occupy key positions in the government and how the women wanted to secure them for their favourite men. This resulted in flirtation, casual and otherwise. In fact, flirtation was part of the code of high society in Simla. There is a feeling of recklessness, a keen desire to snatch moments of pleasure where they can be found in the Simla Tales in the *Plain Tales from the Hills*. This research paper closely studies how Dances, social gatherings, the tribulations of obtaining invitations to the viceroy's annual ball, the gossip, the scandals, the rise and fall of women presiding over Jakko Hill according to the bloom and fade of their charm and influence, set the values of Simla Society.

# Indonesian Aculturation: Culture and Islam Hands Together

Timotius Ari Candra Aprilianto<sup>1</sup>, Dian Febrianti<sup>2</sup>, Girindra Wardhana<sup>3</sup>,  
Devita Riesmayanti<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Language Teaching Program, Graduate Faculty  
<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>State University of Malang, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>E-mail: timotius.ari.1502128@students.um.ac.id, <sup>2</sup>E-mail: dian.febri.1502128@students.um.ac.id,

<sup>3</sup>E-mail: girindra.wardhana.1502128@students.um.ac.id, <sup>4</sup>E-mail: devita.riesmayanti.1402128@students.um.ac.id

## Abstract

With its 40.05%, number of Javanese people has dominated Indonesia (Statistics Indonesia Population Census 2010), and certainly the culture of this people group also become the Indonesian representation, not exceptionally the religion. Just like what happened in other parts of the world, Islam with its universal values subleme with the local culture. However, in Indonesia, this sublimation is obvious and attractive since the actors of this culture and religion aculturation is numerous; Indonesia is the biggest moslem country in the world with 205 million moslem population per 2015 (malaysiandigest.com, 2015). Although there are a lot of pros and contrasts regarding this phenomenon; religious Islamic group sees this as a threat of the Islamic thought sanctity, however cultural experts comment it is not more than a cultural fruitfull of human civilization. In addition, this phenomenon is actually quiet complicated. Only little bit potrays the condition of Indonesia, even when we say that Islamic group tends to see this cultural-religion aculturation as a threat, in fact the biggest Islamic organization which is called *Nahdatul Ulama* exactly supports this blend. Not only that, go back to the history of Islamic spread in Java, preaching process through culture was contributed. This paper aims to describe the cultural practice done by the Javanese which much or last combining Islamic values and local Java philosophy. By examining deeper to this practice, actors from different cultural background are expected to get clearer description of Javanese so there will be a mutual understanding and mutual respect.

**Keywords:** Indonesia, Aculturation, Culture, Islam

# Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*: Gender Bias In Ibo Culture

Devvyaa Naagarh

Principal, Bombay Cambridge School, Pune, India  
E-mail: nagardivya@rediffmail.com

## Abstract

**Things Fall Apart** is a post-colonial novel written by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe in 1958. It is seen as the archetypal modern African novel in English, one of the first to receive global critical acclaim. It is a staple book in schools throughout Africa and is widely read and studied in English-speaking countries around the world.

The novel follows the life of Okonkwo, an Igbo ("Ibo" in the novel) leader and local wrestling champion in the fictional Nigerian village of Umuofia. The work is split into three parts, the first describing his family and personal history, the customs and society of the Igbo, and the second and third sections introduce the influence of British colonialism and Christian missionaries on the Igbo community.

**Keywords:** Gender bias, Ibo Culture, Post colonialism

## 1. Introduction

The novel *'Things Fall Apart'* was written in 1958 by Nigerian author Chinua Achebe. He has explained the role of women in pre-colonial African society in this novel. Throughout the novel women are downgraded to an inferior position. Gender division is a misconception in the patriarchal society. However, Okonkwo (the main protagonist of this novel), has faith in the traditional gender divisions and wishes that his beloved child, Enzima, should be a boy. Okonkwo shouts at her, "Sit like a woman." (Achebe 40). When she brings a chair for him he replies, "No, that is a boy's job." (Achebe 41). On the other hand, his son Nwoye was displeased to him because he has taken after his grandfather Unoka and has feelings of love and affection in him. For the same reason Okonkwo had always bore a grudge for Unoka. Unoka was careless and a failure, in the eyes of Okonkwo.

Marginalization is the main fringe of the society. This paper is an effort to discover the Ibo culture and to discuss about women being a marginalized group, by Chinua. *'Things Fall Apart'* is a milestone in African literature.

## 2. Method

Library method has been adopted by the researcher and has thoroughly studied the novel thoroughly. The researcher has, like wise studied and has highlighted the Gender Bias in Ibo culture, which is explicitly discussed as this is the main concern of the researcher.

In this study, the research methodology used is descriptive, analytical and interpretative study. The main concentration is on Chinua Achebe's novel *'Things Fall Apart'* in which the main subject is to analyse Gender Bias in Ibo Culture.

The research is mainly based on library, internet and website resources. It also takes into account analysis and interpretation of the collected data using secondary research methodology.

### Struggle for gender identity

There is constant struggle for gender, identity, commodification, and class. Among the men and women in many African tribes that still exist today. There are divergences, which will always remain intact because of the culture and the way in which they are taught to treat each other. Chinua Achebe wrote the novel, *'Things Fall Apart'*, which is a great piece of African literature that deals with the Igbo culture, history, and the taking over of African lands by British colonization. The on-going gender conflict is a prominent theme in *'Things Fall Apart'* presenting the clash between men and women of the African Igbo society. Throughout history, from the beginning of time till date, women have frequently been viewed as inferior, men's possessions whose sole purpose was to satisfy the men's needs. Maybe it's because men are physically stronger than women and have always had the ability to control them that way. In *'Things Fall Apart'*, the Igbo women were perceived as being weak. They received little or no respect in the Igbo society and were harshly abused. The recurring theme of gender conflicts helps drive the novel *'Things Fall Apart'* by showing how important women are to the men, yet they do not receive the treatment they deserve.

Women have many responsibilities in the Igbo society such as having children, cooking, cleaning, and farming. These are important function for women, yet they are not given much credit or meaning for their existence in the roles they fill. As Rose Ure Mezu points out “The world in ‘Things Fall Apart’ is one in which patriarchy intrudes oppressively into every sphere of existence. It is an andocentric world where the man is everything and the woman nothing.” In some way Mezu is correct in saying that the man is everything and the woman nothing. The man holds the highest importance of the family and it is he who holds the titles.

In ‘Things Fall Apart’, the reader follows the troubles of the main character Okonkwo, a tragic hero whose flaw includes the fact that "his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness". For Okonkwo, his father Unoka was the essence of failure and weakness. Okonkwo was taunted as a child by other children when they called his father Unoka ‘Agbala’. Agbala could either mean a man who had taken no title or "woman." Okonkwo hated anything weak or frail, and his descriptions of his tribe and the members of his family show that in Igbo society anything strong was likened to man and anything weak to woman. In the story, Okonkwo had three wives, which was seen as a great accomplishment for a man in African culture.

The position and image of women in ‘Things Fall Apart’ is an important topic. Unfortunately, people have not paid much attention to it beyond going along with the assumption that this novel presents women as a sadly oppressed group with no power.

This assumption may appear to be right, but there is much more to think about. Women in ‘Things Fall Apart’ are the primary educators of children. Through storytelling and other forms of discourse, they educate and socialize the children, inspiring in them intellectual curiosity about social values, relationships, and the human condition. The stories the women tell also develop the artistic consciousness of the children, in addition to entertaining them.

The women bear children, cook and take care of the household in many other ways. Through their labour, they are an important pillar of the society.

The presence of Chielo, the priestess in ‘Things Fall Apart’ is instructive. She is a spiritual leader, whose authority is unquestioned. Grace Okafor comments on the Igbo view of women's ritualistic power: *The ritualistic function of women emanated from belief in the ritual essence of women as progenitors of the society. The idea is that women know the secret of life since they are the source of life. Because of their biological function in the life-giving process, the society looks on them to safeguard life. Thus, it is the biological role of women that influenced belief in their power. (Okafor, 9-10)*

There is a memorable question that old Uchendu asks, which emphasizes the position of women in ‘Things Fall Apart’ in a dramatic way: *Can you tell me, Okonkwo, why it is that one of the commonest names we give to our children is Nneka, or "Mother is Supreme"? We all know that a man is the head of the family and his wives do his bidding. A child belongs to its father and his family and not to its mother and her family. A man belongs to his fatherland and not to his motherland. And yet we say Nneka--"Mother is Supreme." Why is that?"*

Uchendu answers the question himself: *A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you. She is buried there. And that is why we say that mother is supreme.*

### The role of women in the Ibo society

Achebe shows how the patriarchal structure has been entrenched in the Ibo culture and only represents how it exists; people must evaluate the woman's status themselves. Women have little to no power-cannot stand against the husband's mistreatment "And when [Ojiugo] returned he beat her very heavily. In his anger he had forgotten that it was the Week of Peace...It was unheard of to beat somebody during the sacred week" (Okonkwo severely beats his wife due to a conflict of minor significance - not being at home during dinner). The only reason he is punished is because it is the week of peace.

Without looking at the man Okonkwo had said: "This meeting is for men." The man who had contradicted him had no titles. That is why he called him a woman" (26). Women are not allowed to do beyond what they are told. (Social repression) Patriarchy: "The world is large...I have even heard that in some tribes a man's children belong to his wife and her family" (74). This statement clarifies the fact that the patriarchal system of Ibo society is ingrained in the lives and culture of the people so, being a "daily reality", they don't even question its existence or wonder if there is an alternative way of living. Rather, they take it as self-evident fact. ("These women never saw the inside of the hut. No women ever did...No woman ever asked questions about the most powerful and the most secret cult in the clan" (88).

### Ibo Culture

In the novel, Okonkwo is characterised as a well-known warrior and a skilled farmer, who has grown from modest ancestries to become an affluent and esteemed leader of his fraternity. He struggles throughout his life to achieve status, and he has almost achieved a position of supremacy when he by chance kills a kinsman. For this crime he is penalised seven years of exile. He goes to his motherland where his uncle Uchendu lives. One day Uchendu asks Okonkwo, "We all know that a child belongs to its father and his family and not to its mother and her family. A man belongs to his fatherland and not to his motherland. And yet we say Nneka- 'Mother is Supreme. 'Why is that?'" (Achebe 121). Okonkwo was unable to answer him and then Uchendu elucidates, It's true that a child belongs to its father, Nevertheless when a father beats his child, it tries to find kindness in his mother's shed. A man belongs to his father when things are good and life is sweet. But then when there is grief and resentment, he finds protection in his motherland. Mother is there to protect us. And that is why we say that mother is supreme. (Achebe122). Okonkwo did not give any response.

When he returns after seven years he discovers things have changed radically. White men have launched themselves well and few people of his village have been converted into their religion. Okonkwo tries to provoke his tribe to take action against these white men and their institutions. He was prepared to fight against white men for his community but they did not feel as strongly as Okonkwo felt about them.

“Okonkwo was deeply grieved. And it was not just a personal grief. He mourned for the clan, which he saw breaking up and falling apart and he mourned for the hostile men of Umuofia, who had so unaccountably become soft like women.” (Achebe 165). In a wrath he slays one of the white missionaries and at that time to avoid the dishonour of being trapped at the hands of white men he commits suicide. There is a distinction in the way he persisted his life and in the way he faces death. His demise marks the theory that unrestricted machismo complex may result in a disaster.

When his brethren find his departed body they refuse to touch it and in its place asks the white men to entomb him. On being asked the reason one of them explains, “It is against our custom. It is an abomination for a man to take his own life. It is an offence against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it.” (Achebe 186).

In the novel, Okonkwo is projected as a man whose life is governed by an overruling desire to become prosperous, influential and rich. To become one of the aristocrats of the clan of Umuofia. Okonkwo suffers from a disastrous error of failure to adjust with prevalent culture. He has misguided pride and obsession to prove and preserve his manhood which dominates his entire life. For instance he drinks in heads. Okonkwo has no intellect. He only has muscle power. “Okonkwo ruled his household with a heavy hand. His wife, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper, and so did his little children.” (Achebe 12).

No other episode exaggerates Okonkwo’s passion with masculinity more clearly than the killing of Ikemefuna who was like a son to him. He does so as “he was afraid of being thought weak” (Achebe 55). He takes it as his valour but on the contrary it is an action of feebleness because only cowardice involves in killing and not machismo. Subsequently when he feels sad about the whole incident he questions himself, “When did you become a shivering old woman... you, who are known in all the nine villages for your valour in war? Okonkwo, you have become a woman indeed.” (Achebe 59). He talks as if a man cannot regret for his wrong moves and has no right to feel miserable about anything which goes wrong in life. He resorts to violence in order to assert his manliness. He is unsuccessful to understand that greatness is not the so called masculine qualities where as in the amalgamation of the both the qualities masculine and the feminine. For him, it is a disgrace for a man to have such a combination of qualities. He was scared to show love and warmth towards anybody. Since he thinks his culture would bring disgrace to him, he thinks that anger is the only emotion to express the manhood.

His friend Obierika also tries to explain him that masculinity does not mean domination and ruthlessness. However his male ego does not allow him to admit any novel idea.

1. Okonkwo mocks at an elder man named Ogbuefi who was very much close to his wife. Okonkwo’s disrespectful behaviour could not think of such a harmony between husband and wife. When Obierika tells him that this old man does nothing without informing his wife, Okonkwo replies, “I thought he was a strong man.” (Achebe 62). His strictness permits no room for revolution and as result ‘Things Fall Apart’.

2. Achebe elucidates the role of women in pre-colonial Africa. Africans are marginalized but women are subjected not only as marginal but also as feeble women. Women are demoted to a sub-standard position throughout the novel. They are regarded as mere an add-on to a man .They are treated as an object of beauty. Gender division is a misconception of the patriarchy. But Okonkwo believes in traditional gender discrimination. In ‘Things Fall Apart’ the number of wives you have affects social status. “It’s a boy’s job” (Achebe 41). For the same reason Okonkwo had always bears a grudge against his father Unoka who was careless and a failure. Okonkwo encourages Nwoye to sit with him and tells him “masculine stories of violence and bloodshed.” (Achebe 48). “Okonkwo sees things and judge the same from a purely masculine point of view. He cannot imagine a man endowed with the finer qualities of gentleness and softness. For him these are nothing but feminine traits.”(Reddy 31).

### **3. Results**

The society portrayed in ‘Things Fall Apart’ is a male dominating society, where the man is the supreme power and the woman a slave. “The greatness of a man in this society is measured in terms of his muscle power, wealth, titles and number of wives. It is a polygamous society.”(Reddy30). Men of titles occupy a place of importance in the society and are treated with honour and respect. In ‘Things Fall Apart’ no matter how prosperous a man is, if he is unable to rule his women and his children he was not considered to be a powerful man. All the authorities lie with the men. Women do not have a say in any important matter. Political, economic and judicial matters of the community kept away from these feeble women. They are confined to the four walls of domestic sphere. Once, Okonkwo’s wife murmurs something about his gun and hunting. Unfortunately her husband hears it and runs madly into his room with the loaded gun, and aims at her as she jumped over the dwarf wall of the outhouse. He presses the trigger and a loud voice is reported accompanied by the wail of his family. He throws the gun and jumps into the barn, and there lay the woman, very much shaken and frightened but quite unhurt. He heaved a heavy sigh and went away with the gun. (Achebe 35).

### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

Thus, we can see that interrogation is immediately criticised and unaccepted. Okonkwo was fanatical in love with his manliness to the extent of madness. This madness is suffered by his family, especially his wives suffered greatly. Throughout the novel, Okonkwo performs many things to demonstrate his masculine quality and one of such things he repeatedly did was to beat his wives. The only quality which has significance in his life is masculinity. He put down everything that is considered to be feminine. In fact Ibo life is so much gender based that even in case of gods they place a male god at the apex and next in the hierarchy is a female goddess. Moreover they classify crime in the terms of male and female. When Okonkwo kills someone by accident it was called a female crime. Not even the crops are exempted from such discrimination. Yams were an important crop for these people. “Yam stood for manliness and he who could feed his family on yams from one harvest to another was a very great man indeed. Okonkwo wanted his son to be a great farmer and a great man. He would stamp out the alarming signs of laziness which he thought he already saw in him.” (Achebe 30). Okonkwo says, “I will not have a son who cannot hold up his head in the gathering of the clan. I would sooner strangle him with my own hands.” (Achebe 30). This clearly shows the prevailing inequality between the genders in the Ibo community.

It is well thought-out to be Achebe's magnum opus. 'Things Fall Apart' is Achebe's sincere attempt to guide people in their struggle to make their freedom meaningful, functional and relevant. He is a committed writer who believes it is his duty to serve his society. 'Things Fall Apart' is an attempt to convert the dignity of Africa. Achebe shows, "Africa was not a historic, null and void but have a history, a religion and a civilization."

Past is depicted enthusiastically and vividly. It is not a past to cry over. Achebe has maintained despair and philosophy of original language. He attempts to preserve the artistic world of the African past. He has influenced his readers "African people did not hear of culture for the first time from the Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth, value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity." He portrays the emotional problems of a peers of Africans rapidly plunged into a modern world. Whatever was written earlier about Africa was to represent it as a dark continent. It signifies people who are aboriginal, unreasonable and credulous without any reason and logic. In fact white men have categorized them as savage.

And it was considered White liability to educate such ignorant people. Achebe prompts that even Africa had a rich historical legacy and only the whites do not have a right to have a rich past. The title itself suggests that the culture is weak and cannot hold. Culture and civilization crumble and the values fall apart

This novel actually portrays the Ibo society of Africa before the arrival of the white man. The novel represents the Ibo ethos and faith while Achebe interlaces the Ibo language, tradition and philosophies and transferred into the English world and approach. It makes known the reader with the Ibo society as it also explains the role of women in pre-colonial Africa.

## 5. References

- Achebe, Chinua  
— Things Fall Apart, William Heinemann Ltd, 1958
- MLA Citation  
— Conflicts of genders in '*THINGS FALL APART*'  
— Essay on women in '*THINGS FALL APART*'  
—
- [www.the-criterion.com](http://www.the-criterion.com) : The Criterion : An international Journal in English ISSN 0976-8165 Volume 4. Issue – VI December 2014
- IGNOU Resource book : Reading the novel : Things fall apart
- Research Paper by Sumbul, Aligadh Muslim University