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UNIVERSITY OF BURUNDI

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AND LITERATURE



THE ROLE OF THE SUPERNATURAL IN ELECHI AMADI'S *THE CONCUBINE*

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Bujumbura, January 2009

DEDICATION

To my late father;

To my beloved mother;

To my dear husband and my cherished children;

To my brothers, sisters and family in-law;

I warmly dedicate this thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work derives from a joint effort of many people to whom I owe much gratitude.

First and foremost, I am particularly grateful to my supervisor, Eric Sipyinyu Njeng, who accepted willingly to supervise this work. His suggestions and criticism helped too much in the completion of this work.

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Last but not least, I express my strong gratitude for the moral support from my classmates and relatives.

Mireille Bizabandi

ABSTRACT

This work aims at showing the role of the supernatural in traditional African societies especially in Nigeria as reflected in Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*. It proceeds to investigate how a human being is manipulated between the invisible and the visible world. This work is based on the hypothetical assumption that a human being is unavoidably a victim of the supernatural forces despite all undertakings and efforts invested to reconcile himself in front of the gods. It also proves that in traditional African societies as depicted in *The Concubine,* people converge spiritual experiences and supernatural experiences throughout the major practices using characters that are both spirits and ordinary people who are endowed with the supernatural power.

In this regard, a human being is powerless and is limited towards gods' act which overpowers him. Written against the background of sociological approach, this work concludes that a human being finds himself in the situation of vulnerability and has no way to escape whether he likes it or not because it is mysterious and difficult to understand the supernatural and there is no way to do otherwise.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In most African societies, traditional experiences and practices are rampant and these customs are enforced by elders who perform civic, social and spiritual duties. The question whether people should be faithful to divinities is one of the persistent issues discussed over and over by the latest breed of mythopoetic African writers.

In fact, the place and role occupied by dibias and their divinations is important in African societies. It is always wise to approach a deity before any important *project* or any important decision such as marriage because the dibia is the one person to know whether a marriage is possible or not depending on the response of the deities. In John Mbiti's *Introduction to African Religion*, we read: "Medicine men are the ones who come to the rescue of the individuals in matters of health and general welfare"(150).

Thus, it is impossible for a person to do otherwise because the strong spirits should agree or disagree about something and consequently some persons are obviously victims of that supernatural force because the confrontation of the visible world and the invisible one has power over human beings or human happiness. In this perspective, one may know that dibias are both medicine men and mediators between people and the spirit world. They have supernatural forces though they are physically human beings like others. With regard to the supernatural forces, Dr.Richard Gehman in *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* affirms the following:

> Mystical powers, those inanimate (non-personal), impersonal forces which pervade the universe, are a never present reality to the traditional African. But, we have seen that even those allegedy impersonal mystical powers are often animated and activated by spiritual beings. (124)

A similar paradigm is seen in Mbiti's *Introduction to African Religion,* when he affirms that there is a mystical power in the universe that comes from god as we read:

> There is a mystical order governing the universe. The belief in this order is shown clearly in the practice of traditional medicine, magic, witchcraft and sorcery. It is held in all African societies that there is power in the universe, and that it comes from 'God'. It is a mystical power, in the sense that it is hidden and mysterious. (41)

Thus, the reader who comes across this state of affairs may be tempted to ask the following questions: Why are gods and spirits venerated in some societies? What are the implications of these practices in the societies where they are greatly respected? What are gods like? Are they evil or good? Does the supernatural contribute to man's happiness or not? Does one's character constitute a danger to the society? These are some of the prominent questions that will preoccupy us in the course of this work. For a better understanding of this work, it is necessary to define the key term which will preoccupy us in the course of this work. The term is supernatural.

- The term supernatural is defined as: (Latin: super- "exceeding" + nature – the term supernatural comes from the term "super" that means exceeding and the term "natural" meaning the normal. It comprises forces and phenomena that cannot be perceived by natural understanding. It may be said to lie with religious, magical, or otherwise mysterious explanation.

  (http://www.psychics.co.uk/define/supernatural.html.)
- The *Free Web Encyclopaedia, Wikipedia*, defines that the term supernatural (Latin: super, supra "above" + natura "nature") pertains to entities, events or powers regarded as beyond nature, in that they cannot be explained by the currently understood laws of natural world.

As far as this work is concerned, the term supernatural is used to show how religious beliefs, miracles, divination are often associated with magical and occult ideas in most African societies especially in Nigeria as it is depicted in *The Concubine.*

Indeed, this work will make an issue as to why Nigerian literature seems to take the lead in this ideological pursuit of the traditional practices and experiences. Nigerian writers continue to deal with one of Achebe's tasks which is that telling readers about the complexity of Nigerian culture. In such a huge nation with many different tribes, the problem of culture is still the preoccupation of newly emergent writers such as Elechi Amadi. He was born in nineteen thirty four (1934) in Aluu near Port Harcourt in Eastern Nigeria. He went to Government College, Umuahia. At University College, Ibadan he took a degree in Physics and Mathematics. After a period of Land surveying and teaching he enlisted in the Nigerian Army. Later he left to continue his teaching but rejoined during the Civil War and served with the former 3rd Marine Commandos. He left the army finally to work for the Rivers State Government. He became Head of the Ministry of Education.

Elechi Amadi started to reveal himself as a promising writer by the publication of his first novel *The Concubine* in 1966. *The Concubine* was followed by *The Great Ponds* and *The Slave.*

In fact, the period after the Second World War was favourable to the revival of African values. For many years, it has been held that culture stirs the development of society. So far, new African writers are using tradition as a means of instruction for their people. Nationalist movements of that time not only preach political independence but also urged for a concurrent necessity to reaffirm Africa's culture, values and the mythic explanations of African ethics. They set themselves to relate to the young generation the way the ancestors lived, viewed the world, and their beliefs. At the same time, they inform the readers to be able to distinguish right from wrong in different cultures for an effective development of their nations.

From his first appearance as a novelist, with *The Concubine* in1966, Elechi Amadi established himself as a unique figure in African fiction. He was not alone in attempting to convey the day -to-day texture of traditional, precolonial life in an African village: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* had already done this, at least to an extent. But he distinguished himself by not offering any explicit contrasts between that traditional world and the one that replaced it. Whereas *Things Fall Apart* and many other African novels are concerned, in part at least, with the coming of the white man and the effect of that event, Amadi's novels have never emphasized alien influences at all. The action of any of his three novels could have taken place either five years or century before the colonial intrusion upon the area. Likewise the dilemmas that confront and finally destroy his heroes or heroines derive entirely from the beliefs, practices, and events of their indigenous culture.

Among the writers who are preoccupied with tradition, we can just mention Elechi Amadi, who tackles the question of the supernatural in his novel *The Concubine*, like his predecessors such as Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* and, *No Longer at Ease,* Cyprian *Ekwensi* in *Burning Grass;* and Grace Ogot in *The Promised Land.* In addition, writers like Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka responded to that period of self-affirmation showing that Africa, too, has a culture. Among African novels, including those of Achebe, Amadi's *The Concubine* conveys most truthfully the quality of life not just in one particular region, but of most African societies. He describes the daily activities in African traditional societies such as farming, hunting, singing and dancing in the evenings, the musical improvisation, the marriage customs, divinations, and fear of the gods.

In fact, the novel deals with man's complex relationship with the gods and the supernatural. *The Concubine* deals with the story of a very attractive and charming young woman destined for unhappiness. Ihuoma, the protagonist, who was the wife of the powerful sea-god, is said to have undergone a reincarnation from the spiritual world despite her husband's advice and sought the company of human beings. To achieve her aim, she is reincarnated as a human being.

Consequently, the sea-god is furious but since he loves Ihuoma a lot, he decides to allow her to live her human life but reserving vengeance for any mortal who dares to fall in love with her. While journeying on Earth, Ihuoma accomplishes the mission of helping the sea-god and she is used to bring out the complexity of Ekwueme, his lover, who, knowing the sea-god's wrath dares to challenge him because Ihuoma's beauty is very seductive. Truly speaking, despite her physical appearance, she is a spirit reincarnated into a human being.

However, Amadi's main concern in this novel is not the presentation of Omokachi societies, but the story of life and lovers of Ihuoma in particular her relationship with Ekwueme; and the terrible fate which the gods have ordained her. He achieves the necessary suspension of disbelief and makes us participate in this existence governed by alien forces and the will of the gods.The struggle between the forces of good and evil ,the difficult relationship between men and gods through their priestly intermediaries, are described in such a perceptive, sympathetic, and sensible way that the actions and beliefs of the characters appear entirely natural and logical.

Furthermore, Elechi Amadi's treatment of the supernatural is remarkable. Nearly all African novelists portray man as existing in mutual cooperation with other men, and in communion with the gods; Oladele writes in *Présence Africaine:*

> This communion and cooperation between the human and the divine is important, and indeed indispensable, for the realization of what Soyinka describes as 'cosmic totality', a relationship compounded by fellow men and supernatural essences, a relationship that is particularly for the African world view. (60)

Here, the gods are mysterious, implacable and ubiquitous but also a presence in every aspect of human relationship. Thus, in *The Concubine*, the sea-king intervenes even before the beginning of the story, and "throughout remains the paramount but unseen force manipulating human life and orchestrating the painful

course of men's tragic drama"(61). In Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*, Ihuoma is endowed with superhuman qualities, a goddess and therefore it is difficult for another man to marry her. The supernatural concept of being a "concubine" to an "unknown" that jealously fights away any other suitor.

Besides, Amadi's portrayal of the universe also presents an important characteristic: the spiritual and the human world in people's psyche which drives one to conclude that gods may be ordinary human beings. The visible community is thus supervised by divinities, people fear to challenge god's action but Ekwueme is in such a situation when he wants to equal the sea-god .This pride of seeking more knowledge and pretending to more perfection is the cause of Ihuoma's suitors successive deaths or misfortunes. To fear the wrath of gods or any other evil spirits, is among the reasons why people perform rituals. In *The Archetypes of Literature,* Northrop Frye affirms the following:

> The reason why they perform ritual which, is something of a voluntary effort to recapture the lost relation with the natural cycle. It is a temporal sequence of acts in which the conscious significance is hidden.(428)

Amadi's main concern is to investigate the role of the supernatural in traditional village life. Amadi identifies completely with the African cosmology, which interprets all such events in terms of human guilt and divine vengeance. However, Amadi's distinctive gift is that his objective manner of telling the story without attempting to surimpose modern rationalizations, gives an air of inevitability, verisimilitude and even matter-of-factness to the characters' uncanny experiences, to the involvement with supernatural forces.

In many African societies, people believe that god is omnipresent and powerful and they have the same social vision about supernatural forces of their gods through superstitions. This experience, however, is never merely intellectual but rather rooted in emotional needs.

This work aims at showing the role of the supernatural in African traditional societies as portrayed in Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine*. It shows the major practices and traditional experiences using both spirits and ordinary people who are endowed with supernatural powers.

This work is based on the hypothetical assumption that a human being is unavoidably a victim of the supernatural forces despite all undertakings and efforts invested to reconcile himself in front of the gods.

The approach that will centre our discussion is the Sociological Approach. In a society, nobody lives a completely isolated existence. Each of us is a product of biological, cultural, social, emotional and spiritual influence. As a society determines our existence, so too, do we affect the society by either adding negatively or positively. As far as the role of the supernatural is concerned, there is an interaction between the two worlds, i.e; the visible and the supernatural world and consequently practices, experiences, customs and values have direct or indirect effects on the society.

Hyppolite Taine (1828-1893) was one of the earliest theorists to explore this idea by using the sociological approach. He looked firstly at historical verifiable courses of the text. He said that three major factors determine a text: race, milieu and moment. 'Race' referred to national characteristics that are typically found in works of art produced by the creative artist of a given country (for instance Elechi Amadi). His meaning is close to what is call culture. As we know it, Elechi Amadi explores culture within his novel *The Concubine*. 'Milieu' refers to less personal influence in a writer's life, to current that govern not an individual by an age. Besides, Welleck and Warren note the importance of the hereditary and bibliographical environment of the writer which explains social attitudes and attitude that appear in his book. They go ahead and call attention to the world that is presented in the work itself. They mention what culture and society is depicted or portrayed and how the fictive world reflects the real world the work entered.

Several schools of criticism have been developed from the sociological approach and it has waned in importance over the last decades, the influence of new criticism diminished its role. The reluctance of readers to judge a work from the social relevance, their desire to value it from its aesthetic quality and their aversion in studying society rather than literature cause people to turn away from this perspective to other.

This theory is therefore related to this work because the sociological approach combines what Hyppolite said to be closed to the culture and the social relevance in studying society rather than literature. It also refers to the environment of the artist and this is visualised through *The Concubine* where Amadi depicts the rural life of the village, Omokachi, in Nigeria.

This novel tackles the situation in which Africans used to live in their daily traditional lives. *The Concubine* deals with the theme of the supernatural and spiritual experiences in African traditional societies. Within his trilogy, *The Concubine, The Great Ponds, and The Slave,* one can have a wide view of the conception and contribution of the author through the characters Amadi chooses to use.

My motivation and determination to work on Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* include reasons like the setting of *The Concubine* which is a small, traditional village in Eastern Nigeria. It is easy to see from the novel that the author is deeply involved with the people and institutions of Omokachi village by presenting their daily lives in a rural life. It depicts the people, the rites and ceremonies which are part of their lives. Moreover, Amadi's perception of social forces in a proud but God-fearing society within a single project as it is visualised in *The Concubine.* As an African, the self-affirmation of the traditional African culture is my concern. In addition, as a human being, looking at man's vulnerability and his powerlessness towards god's act, is another reason in this research.

Many critics have paid attention to Amadi's work as far as the theme of the supernatural is concerned. In *Long Drums and Cannons,* Margaret Lawrence examines Amadi's theme of the supernatural as man's struggle with his fate, his perpetual attempt to placate and control his gods. She concludes that gods are neither good nor evil, they are merely powerful.

Steve Clarke, in *The Supernatural and The Miraculous* thinks that both intention-based and causation-based definitions of the miraculous make reference to the term 'supernatural'. He considers three outstanding issues regarding the meaning of the term 'supernatural' and concludes that the 'supernatural' is best understood as a sub category of the non-natural.

With regard to the role of the supernatural, S.Mithen in *Symbolism and The Supernatural* asserts that the belief in supernaturalism is universal among human groups or at least has been until the emergence of atheism in the very recent past. This widespread belief in the supernatural poses major problems to those who believe that many of the critical features or being human can be explained by the recourse to evolutionary theory. The potential to believe in the supernatural appears to be a universal feature of the human mind, in the vast majority of individuals this potential has become realized.

In his thesis, *"Spiritual Experiences in Elechi Amadi's The Concubine"* Adrien Mwidogo views the supernatural as the combination of the real world and the world of illusion that are an itinerary that governs people's cultivation of morals through their cultural bond. He concludes that Elechi Amadi shows the realization of a world in which its inner and outward world coincide to make a unique body by blending the spiritual world and the human one into one continuum made up of both visible and invisible elements.

Eustace Palmer in *Introduction to the African Novel* focuses on the supernatural as it does have a place in literature but that the events cannot be entirely explained by social, or other factors. He concludes that there is no rational

argument to prove the existence of the supernatural because the supernatural is important for the people who try to make their way of life as realistic as possible

The Free Web Encyclopaedia, Wikipedia, defines that the term 'supernatural' (Latin: *super, supra* "above" + *natura* "nature") pertains to entities, events, or powers regarded as beyond nature, in that they cannot be explained by the currently understood laws of the natural world. Religious miracles are typical of such "supernatural" claims as are spells and curses, divination, the belief that there is an afterlife for the dead, and innumerable others. Supernatural themes, it concludes, are often associated with magical and occult ideas.

The above mentioned works differ from the present venture in the sense that they focus generally on love and man's relationship with the gods in Nigerian traditional society, whereas this present venture presents specifically the role of the supernatural in a society whose stability rests on traditional belief.

Including the general introduction, this work is divided into three chapters and a general conclusion.

The general introduction gives the background of the study, the aim of the work, the hypothesis, the methodology, the literature review and the structure of the work. It presents a village whose stability rests on tradition by reflecting the life in traditional African societies in general and in Nigerian society particularly.

The first chapter, entitled, 'The Supernatural and The Spiritual Worlds of *The Concubine'* examines the supernatural world and the spiritual world of *The Concubine* putting an emphasis on traditional practices and experiences. It also brackets on Ihuoma as an archetypal character.

The second chapter, titled 'fatal Suitors of Ihuoma' relates how Ihuoma's suitors die in fatal non-specified circumstances and successively because Ihuoma, the former wife of the sea-god, is jealously protected against any human beings' wooing.

The third chapter captioned 'Effects of the Supernatural on Human Beings' tackles how human beings are fated to fail and by the time they are about to

succeed, the fatal forces overpower them and the attempt of failure is due to the supernatural force attributed to gods. It depicts the vulnerability of human beings in front of the supernatural.

Finally, there is a 'General Conclusion', which summarises the major arguments raised in the work, brings out findings and suggests possible areas for future researches.

CHAPTER ONE
THE SUPERNATURAL WORLD AND THE SPIRITUAL WORLD OF *THE CONCUBINE*

In most African societies, tradition has been characterized by the idea of total submission to the gods, which include the role played by the supernatural forces and spiritual deities. As a matter of fact, traditional experiences and practices have been experienced and these customs were enforced by elders who performed both civic and spiritual duties. The place and role occupied by dibias and their divination is important in the society as far as African tradition is concerned.

In his trilogy, *The Concubine, The Great Ponds* and *The Slave*, Elechi Amadi introduces not only the theme of spirituality but also the supernatural forces which are seen in African traditional societies and always found in African mythologies. Amadi identifies completely with African cosmology, which interprets all such events in terms of human guilt and divine vengeance. Amadi's main concern is to investigate the role of the supernatural in the traditional village life.

In fact, *The Concubine* exposes the unavoidable interaction between the visible and the invisible worlds. Throughout that exposition, Amadi creates a character, a medium, who acts as the mediator between those two worlds. In the same way, in African tradition, the role and place of the dibias make the societies to believe that god is omnipresent. It is through these beliefs that it was always wise to attend to divination before any important decision or project though marriage normally was hardly one of such projects (*The Concubine 194*).

Throughout *The Concubine* Amadi presents Ihuoma, the main character, as an ideal model of human beings. This woman is a spirit even though she is physically formed as a human. Amadi creates this medium (Ihuoma) who acts as

the mediators between the visible world and the invisible world. Moreover, spiritualists believe that "human spirits exist eternally as a part of the universal spirit and thus antedates the creation of the body and the soul"(*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 512).

African societies believe that god is omnipresent and powerful and they have the same social vision about supernatural forces of their gods through superstition. These forces provide a convenient approach which emphasize the omnipresence of gods and unlimited power that they have and even though they die, they are always replaced by the new ones so that they cannot be interruption of their omnipresence.

In traditional African societies, people believe also that gods are omnipotent and even when they want to curse someone wishing him to suffer they call on the presence of gods as its seen in Nuruddin Farah's *From a Crooked Rib* when Ebla is cursed by her grandfather. In addition, in *The Concubine,* we read the following

> In any case, people did not just die without reason. Invariably they died either because they had done something wrong or because they had neglected to minister to the gods or to the spirits of their ancestors. (53)

Therefore, all those beliefs make people to fear gods' wrath and they have to perform sacrifices to their gods and the worship of the god is most intense at the height of an epidemic when several rules were rigidly adhered to (*The Concubine, 15).*

While portraying Ihuoma's experiences, Amadi's exposes this interaction between the visible world and the invisible one. A similar belief occurs in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* when he talks of Ogbanje children (who repeatedly die but return to their mothers to be born again) and thus presents life as an unlimited

cycle and this underscores what spiritualists believe that the human spirits exists eternally as earlier mentioned.

From what we can observe in *The Concubine*, Elechi Amadi believes that every human being is made of three elements namely spirit, body and soul. In this regard, the body incorporates both the soul and the spirit while the soul dwells in the spirit. So, before discovering that Ihuoma is a spirit or a sea-goddess, one has to sympathetically admire her behaviour as an ordinary woman. Thus, she too has to encounter all mortal troubles including death.

> In the same light, spiritualists sustain the point that, at death, the body dies while the soul and the spirit keep on living.

The world of The *Concubine* is presented both as the spiritual world and supernatural world at the same time. This is seen when one cannot say the supernatural without making an emphasis on the spirituality because it seems that they are tied together. For instance, Amadi presents the Omokachi inhabitants in perpetual fear of the deceased, due to the wrath of neglected spirits. In order to see more examples, it is said in the opening lines that Emenike is sure he hears someone has coughed ahead of him. Moreover, he cannot see far ahead. He is aware that a venerable old chief had died somewhere. Then, it is believed in Omokachi village that forests are in other words unsafe because the unburied people's spirits wander there to harm passers-by.

Amadi, by reinforcing this idea, evokes Madume's incident in Ihuma's compound. In fact, when Madume goes to the diviner to search out the cause of such a misfortune, he is told that several spirits have sworn to kill him if he goes on wooing Ihuoma. African societies present the invisible world in terms of spirituality and this is what Amadi tries to exploit throughout his novel *The Concubine.*

While trying to analyse his characters, one may remark that Elechi Amadi uses both spirits and ordinary people who are endowed with the supernatural power. Hence, the depiction of spirits makes a clear difference between Nature spirits and Human spirits. As a matter of fact, we have two groups and among them the first group which is that constituted by divinities while the second is that of people's spirits. According to John Mbiti in *Introduction to African Religion,* the spirit world is composed of two kinds of spirits namely nature spirits and human spirits. On one hand, the nature spirit is composed of the sky spirits and earth spirits. On the other hand, we have the human spirit, which is composed of long dead spirits such as ghosts and recently dead such as the living dead (65).

In the same line, a similar paradigm is seen in Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* because John Mbiti's structure does not differ from what Amadi portrays despite different terminological expressions. In *The Concubine,* nature spirits are composed of a number of divinities related to phenomena and Nature forces. Sky spirits for example, are represented by Amadioha, god of thunder and rain and this is the king of the skies (*The Concubine*, 6). Furthermore, Earth spirits vary according to the earth composition.

Another instance which sustains all these beliefs is seen in Amadi's *The Concubine* when the dibia brings out his divination, he says the following:

> Gods of the night, take this
> Gods of the earth, take this;
> Ojukwu the fair, take this;
> Amadioha, king of the skies, this is yours;
> And your ancestors, small and great,
> Guardians of this compound, take this. (6)

There are other gods simply associated with events such as death or birth. Talking about earth spirits, Amadi shows how Igwe is the founder of Omigwe and is forced to leave Omokachi when one of his babies cuts his upper tooth first. This sign is a terrible omen signifying that Igwe has done something very wrong though no one seems to remember exactly the nature of the offence. Human spirits on the other hand, embody the long dead spirits and recently dead. Here J.Mbiti affirms:

> There are countless numbers of these. Most of them are no longer remembered in their human form by anybody. People still believe that such spirits must exist in the invisible world. Some of them may be recollected through myths and legends as tribal, national or clan founders, and in reciting or recounting one's genealogies. (70)

Recently dead are those spirits of people who died recently such as Emenike of *The Concubine.* Mbiti adds

> ... People who died recently are remembered by their families, relatives and friends for up to four or five generations. We call their spirits the living dead to distinguish them from the ghosts of those who died long before that. (72)

In addition, the majority of the spirits cannot be classified as either good or bad. Whether they are felt as good or bad depends on how people experience the forces of nature and how they act towards human beings, they vary accordingly like human beings towards their fellow.

In *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Brill E. J. posits that these beliefs are seen in many African societies as it is the case in Akan culture (Ghana) which, behind physical universe, each part of it, lie the spirits or personalities of each category.

When Madume commits suicide, his corpse is thrown into the forest because people think that burying it would be an offense to the earth god, Ali. As it is known in their tradition, Ali, of course, does not tolerate undignified deaths and therefore such cases must be abandoned in the forest.

Furthermore, this idea does not differ from what Chinua Achebe portrays in *Things Fall Apart,* when he lets us realize that twins are thrown into the forest to avoid the Earth goddess's wrath. Trying to make a close scrutiny on this phenomenon one may think that the result are not worth praising because people appease god's wrath anger on the one hand and create unavoidable disturbance as it is believed in some societies like the Obodoani custom. In this perspective, it is obvious that in their customs, people throw away a large number of men and women without burial and the result is that the clan is full of evil spirits of those unburied dead, hungry to do harm to the living.

The supernatural world of *The Concubine* puts on its part an emphasis on Ihuoma, an incarnated spirit. This woman used to be a sea-goddess when she was in the spirit world before a reincarnation into a human being. Ihuoma can sojourn in the visible world since she has been born by a mother and a father like any other human beings in the world. For example, she enjoys life like others and has the same feelings like other human beings. It is seen for example that when her husband dies, she passes over eight days weeping and begging if there is no way to bring back his beloved husband Emenike. Nevertheless, she is unconscious of her previous state like other cases of reincarnated people. As she has evolved in an ordinary socio economic environment, it is obvious that she is subjected to her village culture in her daily life like other villagers. Thus, a person's reincarnation does not change the normal course of traditional values and customs.

In his novel *The Slave,* Elechi Amadi portrays a character whose name is Enaa and Bekweri's daughter who is said to be her grand mother's reincarnation and thus must be consulted in the case of marriage. This is to show that spirits are venerated because in normal circumstances, they are never consulted. In John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy* the reincarnation is evoked as follows:

> Belief in reincarnation is reported among many African societies. This is, however, partial reincarnation and the sense that only some features or characteristics of the living-dead are said to be 're-born' in some children (...) the living-dead who has been reincarnated continues, however, to have a separate existence and does not cease to be. (164)

Trying to analyse how Ihuoma's previous trouble was and referring to her state, one can realize that she is not a reincarnated spirit but goddess. The process is almost similar even though there may be a slight difference. Her state reveals that Ihuoma's case starts from her mother's conception to her adulthood.

Corroborating Mbiti's view, Ihuoma has some features and characteristics which are god-like like perfection and other good qualities. It is visualised that she is like the living dead through her features. Ihuoma's qualities are not natural and she is admired by everyone in her village. Both men and women admire her behaviour. She is beautiful without being arrogant. She is sympathetic, gentle, and reserved. She never quarrels and has acquired the reputation of a peacemaker. Her marriage to Emenike was a happy one, and her behaviour since his death is perfectly correct. She knows Madume's hand in her husband's immature death, but she does not blame him and when Madume courts her, she would rather throw cold water on his advances avoiding bad tongue instead. It is easy to see why Madume wants her apart from the land she owns; and why Ekwueme falls hopelessly in love with her. Indeed, his love for her is such that he is prepared to risk the anger of the

gods to win her. She is also highly respected by older villagers even when she risks serious reproach because of her open association with Ekwueme.

To know more about her incarnation is the result given by Anyika, the dibia who reveals that Ihuoma is unusual. In fact, his divination reveals that she is the wife of the sea-king, and is therefore one of the goddess of the spirit world. In *The Concubine,* we read that Anyika says the following: "Ihuoma belongs to the sea. When she was in the spirit world, she was a wife of the sea-king, the ruling spirit of the sea (195)".

Then, her husband is intensely jealous of her and, inspite of her desire to live quietly and peacefully, she is a potential danger to anyone who may come in contact with her. Ihuoma is the unwitting cause of all the tragedy in the book. Unaware of her predicament, she tries to live a life of honour and dignity, only to bring destruction to those who wish to possess her. In *Things Fall Apart,* Chinua Achebe observes another kind of reincarnation when Okwonko's household children were dying one after the other until the diviner revealed that those children were Ogbanje, that is, children who die to be reborn.

To stop this mysterious cyclical situation depends upon the divination of the medecineman, Okagbue reveals that the only solution is to dig up a special kind of stone called Iyi-Uwa which forms the link between an Ogbanje and the spirit world.

As far as the dibia is concerned, it is worth noting that the dibia is not only the medicine-man but also a healer. The dibia can placate bad spirits and predict dangers. He has a supernatural force and he is powerful in the society because he warns and cures those who come to ask for his help. In *The Concubine,* Anyika is the dibia who is portrayed as the hope of Omokachi village and its surroundings for his usefulness. He is believed by people and this belief is common for all people in

Omokachi village because Anyika is endowed with supernatural power. In *The Great Ponds,* it is stated that the dibia is believed to have come from very far to stress on this common belief that is shared by people of Omokachi. It is in Eluanyim, a place where a group of very old dibias offer sacrifices. In *The Great Ponds*, Eluantin is reputed for training very powerful dibias as the author explains it in the following words:

> In return, the dibias acquire a deep knowledge of herbs and roots and the ways of spirits. These dibias disseminate their knowledge to their pupils who come from all over the world. Any medicine-man who has not been to Eluanyim is not worth a cowry. (10)

Knowing that the position occupied by the dibias in traditional Nigeria is evident, one can say that dibias are also in other words intermediaries between the world of human beings and that of divinities.

In *The Concubine,* the author gives a series of divinities to show the place of the gods in people's every day life. It shows how they profess and want to be perfect when worshiping in order to hold relations with their gods. Whatever we may think of this as to have a clear understanding about it, we can take a clear instance of Chineke who is believed to be the creator of spirits and men and consequently is the supreme-god (59). In the same light, is Amadioha which is the god of thunder and rain. Following him, is Ojukwu who is said to control small pox (15). Another example to sustain how gods are powerful and endowed of supernatural forces is the sign of the vulture which was the sacred bird of Ojukwu. If one settled on a man's roof, he ran immediately to a medicine man to devine the message from the god. If Ojukwu kills a person no mourning ceremony is performed because of the fear, this disease was so dreaded that villagers dared not

call it by name. So, they called it "The good thing" and Amadi, in *The Concubine,* explains it in the following words;

> He normally appeared in the form of a familiar neighbour or a child to ask for one trifle or the other. He could for instance appear in the form of a woman and ask a neighbour for vegetables to make her soup. The villagers believe that the vulture is the sacred bird of Ojukwu and if one settles on man's roof he runs immediately to a medicine man to divine a message from the god. (15)

In order to sustain this, Amadi adds the following: "... Refusal might mean catching the disease. So, during epidemics, people were kinder and quarrelling women observed a compulsory truce (15)". It is important to note that there are other gods like Ali, who is the Earth-god, Ogbunabali, who is the god who kills at night.

Throughout the spiritual world of *The Concubine*, we can analyse that each god has his own priest. For instance, Amadioha is represented by Nwokekoro and this priest deserves respect and dignity thanks to his sacred function. To show more about their functions, we can give an example of Nwokekoro who brings rain or dispels it according to invocation adressed to Amadioha. In addition, Anyika, the village dibia, recommends Madume to perform heavy sacrifice in order to survive and that he should give up his mission to court Ihuoma. Madume then disobeys Anyika's warning and proceeds with his mission. Once more, he encounters so many misfortunes. Then, Madume is sure of Anyika's charm and advice even though he dies otherwise.

It is quite true that no one among villagers dares challenge Nwokekoro or other dibias because they fear the god's wrath. Nevertheless, Amadi narrates the omnipotence of Amadioha when Ogonda tries to rival Nwokekoro by making rain

because villagers have neglected him and as a result, he is struck down on that very day by a thunderbolt while collecting herbs by the wayside. This story relates man's limitations with regard to gods' enterprise because when man tries to compete or challenge the gods, he finds himself always in an inferior position in terms of power. It is important to mention that each member of the society should behave in accordance with the place he has been given according to the organization and recommendation of his environment.

Since it is well established that man's vulnerability and imperfection are unavoidable, Ogonda could not have challenged Nwokekoro who is thought to be a mediator between people and the gods. An instance of this communication between the spirit world and the human world is seen when Ahurole goes to see Anyika and the latter says: 'I don't blame you, my daughter, for being afraid' Anyika said. Some of my chairs are not really meant for humans. Right now, there are invisible occupants in them" *(The Concubine, 159).* Here, the dibia says this to make the fellow to feel that he is endowed with supernatural forces and so that she could be confident in him because he has the capacity of seeing what is in the spirit world.

Likewise, in *The Great Ponds,* Amadi shows how dibias advise villagers to perform all the necessary sacrifices to protect themselves because gods are not to blame but they protect them in order not to come to any harm. In *The Great Ponds,* Elechi Amadi states the following "(....) the gods are cruel when all they are doing is to keep us from killing ourselves. We often forget that the gods would rather have fun than run after us"(72).

The supernatural world of *The Concubine,* lets us know that a dibia is a special man or person engaged in divination, a medicine-man and in some instances engaged in witchcraft. Amadi goes on explaining that a medicine man usually declines to hurt anyone in his own village. Consequently, wicked villagers

have to seek outside help. Noting that one strong reason for this convention is the knowledge that Ali, the Earth-god, would quickly kill off any dibia who operates against members of his own village.

From what dibias do in their everyday life, dibias are supposed to exploit only their good qualities to be on good terms with their fellows. For example, Anyika refuses Ahurole a love potion to give to Ekwueme, her husband, since in the long run, it would harm Ekwueme by rendering him passive, stupid and dependent. Anyika, the Dibia advises her to settle their problems peacefully instead of bewitching him. He says:

> No, my daughter, I don't do it, he said. Ahurole looked thoroughly worried and simply stared at him. 'I mean I don't administer love potions, 'he further explained. 'But I have not told you what I came for' the young woman said bewildered. 'You don't need to, it is right here on the cowries. Only second rate medicine men do such stuff. Anyika is above that. I can never raise my hand against anyone in this village. True, I am a stranger, but I can claim to be a part of the village. What affects it affects me too. (159)

In the same light, John Mbiti in *Introduction to African Religion* sustains the role that is played by medicine men in the society in the following terms:

> The medicine men symbolize the hopes of the society: hopes of good health, protection and security from evil forces, prosperity and good fortune and ritual cleansing when harm or impurities have been contracted (...). Medicine men are the friends, pastors, psychiatrists and doctors of traditional African villagers and communities. (170-1)

To the villagers, a dibia is an adviser and a mediator between men and their gods. While administering medicines, he can perform sacrifices too. The medicine man uses items from the environment including some rare items to render his sermon more operative. While a dibia is performing his sacrifices, he makes use of certain incantations as it is seen in Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* when he affirms that:

> (...) he decanted a brown powder onto his palm. He faced the sun and blew the powder into the air. He repeated the action three times and mumbled certain incantations and went back into his room. (161)

The above quotation supports the idea of things used by dibias which are not taken at random in order to underscore the African philosophy that view man's life from birth to death as a series of transitional rites which take him nearer to his ancestors. There is no doubt that Amadi's tools cover living things dedicated to sacrifices such as plants, animals, and human beings. As a matter of fact, people must; accordingly appease the spirits' anger in order to avoid human losses. For example, Ihuoma tries to perform Emenike's second burial rites in order to be on good terms with his spirits. Besides, Amadi affirms that in the following words: "There was a dance of passion, a dance of anger, a vehement protest against the god of death an appeal for the recall of their departed comrade (33)".

All those festivities and ceremonies of Emenike's second burial are done in order to symbolize a direct communion with Emenike's spirit which is believed to be watching over his family from the spirit world. It is obvious that Ihuoma performs all these ceremonies for the sake of her children and for her sake, thus to protect her family in general in order to hold this link between her family and her husband because she is afraid of the harm which may be caused by the spirit world.

To conclude, in most African societies, especially in Nigeria, tradition is characterised by a great and important submission to their gods. This includes the role played by supernatural forces and spiritual duties through divination. Dibias are believed to be mediators between the human world and the spirit world. Moreover, the everlasting gods' omnipotence is raised by man's submission to divinities. Therefore, in order to toe the line, people should respect universal harmony by paying gratitude to their gods and thus maintain harmony with their ancestors. All these things are undertaken in order to protect their lives, their families and all the society in which they are, so that they should accordingly enjoy their lives.

CHAPTER TWO

FATAL SUITORS OF IHUOMA

The world around us contains too many things, some visible and others invisible. Looking at those visible things, we can admire them or remain indifferent in front of certain things because they do not really arouse our curiosity. However, others are so beautiful and naturally well shaped that we cannot resist admiring them. Unless one is blind, one cannot be completely indifferent. What differ are the tastes, depending on individuals. Whereas some people endeavour to obtain beautiful things, others see in them a source of distress. In fact, this chapter tackles how Ihuoma's lovers die in fatal non-specified circumstances one after another. Her suitors, looking for personal emotional satisfaction, end in disaster and the result is rather fatalistic than harmonious.

Elechi Amadi presents a character of Ihuoma, in Omokachi village, an incarnated sea-goddess. This woman is an extraordinary woman to be wooed by an ordinary being whereas we know that gods are generally to be venerated and be respected. So, it is very strange to see an ordinary human being getting married to a goddess. Ihuoma, in Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine,* is described as a beautiful woman who fulfils, according to people who see her, all the qualities required of a woman to be good and beautiful. She is adored and admired by the young people and the old as it is stated in *The Concubine*:

> The tired look on her face gave way to a sweet youthful expression, softly alluring, deeply enchanting; we had a bewitching subtlety that only deep sorrow can give. Ihuoma's beauty had returned. Young men and even the old gazed at her again irresistibly. (36)

In addition, she is not arrogant but rather, she is sympathetic, gentle and reserved. As a matter of fact, Ihuoma's beauty is irreproachable, as Amadi further points it out: "Ihuoama's smiles were disarming. Perhaps, the narrow gap in her upper row of her white regular teeth did the trick. At that time, a gap in the teeth was fashionable (11)." Besides, Ihuoma, herself knows that she is beautiful and she has no doubt as we read:

> As Nnenda walked away, Ihuoma watched her unconsciously. Nnenda's behind was not nearly as full as hers even when she had her beads on, she thought. How lucky she was to possess these physical gifts. She wondered what it was like to be ugly. ' Nwonna, get me a mirror and let me see how bad my hair is.' In truth she wanted to gaze at herself. That she was beautiful she had no doubt, but that did not make her arrogant. (11)

Nevertheless, before the revelation of her identity by Anyika, the dibia, Ihuoma's suitors die one after another in non-specified circumstances. It is also stated that, Ihuoma's beauty is the source of various fights among her suitors, visible and invisible ones. These fights are surely won by spirits, the invisible one and visible suitors are killed. Using supernatural forces, the spirits obviously win the struggles. A big problem that Ihuoma has, is that by the time, she recovers from sorrows due to her husband's death, there comes other suitors among whom she has to choose another husband. Here, the example of Ekwueme who comes to court her after the death of Emenike is pointed out. Likewise, everyone wonders about the reasons of those premature deaths of Ihuoma's suitors. The answer comes after the dibia's divination when Anyika reveals that Ihuoma is the sea-goddess. In fact, this chapter deals with three unfortunate suitors of Ihuoma, a spirit. The lovers of Ihuoma are namely Emenike, Madume and Ekwueme. *The Concubine* opens with a fight between two men, Emenike (Ihuoma's husband) and Madume.

Emenike, when he returns to his village through the forest, he is met by Madume with whom he quarrels over the ownership of a piece of land. Madume challenges him to fight, in the course of which Emenike carelessly allows himself to be thrown. He falls on a jagged tree stump and is seriously injured. Madume flees because he is afraid of the consequence of this fight. He manages to stagger home to his wife, Ihuoma. On her turn, she calls for assistance, and soon the whole village is aware that there has been a fight. Madume immediately refuses to answer any question but is secretly relieved that Emenike did not die.

In reality, Madume, an already married man, wants to take Ihuoma as his second wife. To the villagers, it is a shame to see Madume making adventures on such a beautiful creature. But they prefer her marriage with Emenike. Certainly, this marriage aggravates Madume's jealousy after his defeat to get Ihuoma. This is probably the root of hatred, although there are also problems of land between the two men as it is pointed out in *The Concubine* that:

> Madume's hatred for Emenike might not have been so great if only the latter had not snatched Ihuoma from him. Madume had hope of marrying Ihuoma, the the most desirable girl in Omigwe village. Neither Ihuoma nor her parents had been keen on the match, but Madume overlooked this fact when later Emenike married Ihuoma and blamed him wholly for his loss of the girl he wanted. (5)

Likewise, Ihuoma's beauty is another stimulus as the narrator states it, it is said that she has a good behaviour and has never had a serious quarrel with another person. Moreover, she gets total confidence from her husband Emenike. Her features are smoothly rounded and looking at her, no one can doubt that she enjoys her husband's presence. As her husband's sickness lasts, she calls upon Anyika, the

dibia but Emenike is convinced that it is not only his fight with Madume which aggravates his illness. In *The Concubine* we read the following:

> Emenike wanted to explain that his illness was not necessarily the result of the fight, that in any case he threw Madume twice and gave him a worse beating. But, he is left side ached cruelly and what with the pain and the cough he could not talk properly. He decided to keep quite. (8)

As there is no improvement in Emenike's health, he goes with Nwokekoro, the priest, to offer sacrifices to the god Amadioha. Emenike watches the priest fulfil the various rites, and when he looks closely into the priest's eyes, he is aware of the closeness a great calamity. Meanwhile, Nwokekoro, the priest of Amadioha, reassures Ihuoma and Emenike that if Amadioha wants to take a man's life they can do nothing as Elechi Amadi posits it in *The Concubine:* "Nwokekoro's visit reassured the couple. It was a fact that if Amadioha insisted on taking a man's life, no medicine man could do any thing abut it and only a medicine man of a great confidence would dare to try"(9). Finally, Emenike passes away but his wife believes that he dies of lock-chest and villagers believe that the fight with Madume is responsible for this death. But in reality, he is killed by unspecified spirits.

However, her husband's death does not discourage other suitors to come to court her because of her wonderful beauty. It is the case of Madume and Ekwueme who try to gain her love. Firstly, before Ekwueme success with Ihuoma, Madume who is supposed to be the source of Ihuoma's husband's death, tries again to win her love although people blame him and believe in connection between him and Emenike's death. Taking into consideration their relationships, Ihuoma, is certainly unhappy with Madume's presence for it reminds her of her husband's death. Then, Madume adopts many strategies to go on because he cannot see any obstacle which

can prevent him from nurturing his ideas and thoughts on Ihuoma. Madume starts by helping her at any cost even if he is doomed to fail. Unfortunately, he tragically dies before his objective is attained.

Then, the question that comes back again and again is why Ihuoma's suitors end suddenly and dramatically. One may ask himself if there are accidents or not or simply those supernatural forces which are invisible that have caused the sudden drama of the tragedy of Emenike and Madume's death.

Frankly speaking, Ihuoma's suitors are not aware of what happens and they ignore all those forces when one takes into consideration their personal satisfaction. The only thing that they do not know is that the perceptive beauty is most of the time deceptive, because what they consider as beautiful in their eyes may not lead to their satisfactions. According to Ralph Waldo Emerson in *Concise Anthology of American Literature,* beauty may be distributed in a threefold manner as far as its aspects are concerned. He supports that:

> The simple perception of natural forms is a delight. The influence of the forms and actions in nature is so needful to man, that in so lowest functions, it seems to lie on the confines of commodity and beauty. To the body and mind which have been cramped by noxious work or company, nature is medicinal and restores their tones. (450)

Corroborating Emerson's quotation, beauty in this context is what eyes see and appreciate or disapprove. According to Ihuoma's suitor, it is worth appreciating the importance of such a belief. It is then after the dibia's divination that the confusion ceases. The dibia reveals that several spirits have sworn to kill Madume at any moment. Then, Anyika commands him to perform sacrifices. In *African Religion and Philosophy*, John Mbiti supports that "sacrifices and offerings are directed to one or more of the following: god, spirits and living-dead"(58).

As far as Madume is concerned, he is then confident that no spirits will attack him; unfortunately he is spat upon by a cobra that escapes immediately even through he had performed sacrifices.

Trying to analyse how Ihuoma is attractive, one can realize that she causes her suitors misfortune and distress when we mention that beauty may sometimes deceive our eyes. Matuturu Claudine in her thesis "*African Women's Liberation, Emancipation or Alienation*" believes that: "Beauty is what deceives our eyes. It glitters and it is very beautiful, we like it but it just passes by, when we reach at it, its brightness fades before our eyes" (24).

In other words, even natural beauty does not always lead to happy life and the end result is far from being happy. If beauty does not always lead to happiness, when it is natural, how about the supernatural beauty as Anyika posits in *Notes on Elechi Amadi's The Concubine*: "Look at her, have you ever seen anyone quite so right in everything almost perfect" (Qtd Rodney Nesbitt) (20). Anyika's description is almost the perfect one for Ihuoma. Moreover, something hidden in what happens to Ihuoma's suitors may lead to an evident idea of supernatural influence which is linked to such an event.

Indeed, this supernatural power leads Madume to suffer both psychologically and physically despite Anyika's medicine. He becomes blind and uses a walking-stick to move from one place to another and one may wonder whether Madume fails in his experience or it is Emenike's spirit which takes revenge. Corroborating what is earlier mentioned, when people die, they only lose their personal and physical contact with human beings and they become members of the family or community of the spirit, and if they appear to human beings, they are not recognized by name and may cause dread and fear. In *African Religion and Philosophy,* John Mbiti tries to give us more information as follows: " (...) such

spirits are incorporated into the body of intermediaries between god and man, and human beings approach god through them or seek other help from them" (26). It is then obvious that Ihuoma endowed with supernatural power which does not exclude death if we take into account her suitors misfortunes and unhappiness but also their results at the end.

Ekwueme is another victim to be doomed to suffering as far as Ihuoma's courting is concerned. However, Ekwueme loves and keeps eyes on her and he often stays at Ihuoma's home for a long time staring instantly at her. Despite many tactics and strategies used by Ekwueme to approach her, it is not easy for him to find what to say in front of this incomparable creature. Whereas Ekwueme is determined to marry her, Ihuoma is on the other side thinking not to remarry another man after Emenike's death because she does not want to be disturbed so soon. Ekwueme then is still afraid of saying any word about his love to Ihuoma and thinks that passing a long time with her will help his process but his attempt to talk always ends in a stammer as we read in *The Concubine:*

> Ekwueme thought that perhaps sitting beside her might help him make his point. He made up his mind to cross over to her. As he drew in one leg preparatory to rising, Ihuoama raised her head and looked at him fully in the face. He winced, then tried to smile but failed. His attempt to talk ended in a stammer. Clumsily, he stretched out his hand to hold her but in his confusion, he misjudged the distance and his hand failed to reach her. (47)

Despite his shyness, he is surely determined to gain the battle and has the courage and determination to marry Ihuoma and proposes to pay the bride price on her. As Ihuoma knows that Ekwueme has already a fiancée whose name is Ahurole, she refuses his proposal and advises him to marry her because she is also beautiful,

well-behaved, and serious and she is also young. Ihuoma tries to convince him that she is already engaged. She advances many reasons to justify why she cannot marry Ekwueme as Amadi points it in *The Concubine:*

> "Ekwe, listen", the woman began. "You know very well I like you. How can I deny it? You like me too; otherwise, you would not want to marry me. But need a young maiden who would obey you and give you the first fruit of her womb. Do not cheat yourself. I am too old for you. You would soon grow tired of me. My children would ne a constant burden on you. No, Ekwe; I do not want to spoil your life. Since your childhood, you have been engaged to Ahurole. She is young, well-behaved and beautiful. Go and marry her instead. (91)

In addition, Ihuoma refuses to leave her husband's compound though Ekwueme feels his love grow even stronger for her which Ihuoma considers such as shameful thing. She refuses categorically his undertakings and Ekwueme does not see how on this earth one can surrender in front of such a creature like Ihuoma. Ekwueme swears to bear all things for Ihuoma's sake as Elechi Amadi states it in *The Concubine*

> One thing is clear, I shall marry Ihuoma. She is a human being and if marrying a woman like her is a fatal mistake I am prepared to make it. If I am her husband for a day before my death my soul will go singing happily to the spirit world. There also I shall be prepared to dare the wrath of four hundred sea-kings for her sake. (197)

On her part Ihuoma is determined not to break her promise engaged to her late husband. She sees that it is morally wrong and evil in the eyes of her community. So, to marry Ekwueme will make her to be considered as a bad or evil

person. Furthermore, this idea does not differ from what John Mbiti portrays in *Introduction to African Religion*: "There are so many things held to be morally wrong and evil, such as: robbery, murder, rape, telling lies, being cruel, ... greedy or selfish, breaking promises, and so on" (178).

Soon, Ekwueme's parents realise that their son's behaviour becomes very strange. They remark their close relationship with Ihuoma. Thus, Ekwueme's parents start negotiations with Ahurole's parents about the bride price. Yet, Ekwueme refuses to go with his father to Ahurore's parents because he is not interested in her. Therefore, Ekwueme's parents decide to postpone the negotiations because Ekwueme refuses to marry Ahurole. After, the negotiation starts inspite of Ekwueme's refusal. As soon as Ekwueme's parents realize their son is troubled, they begin to think that Anyika can get an antidote to clear up the stupid ideas in their son's head. It is not easy to understand how Ekwueme can decide to break the tradition and go against it in making such disengagement to Ahurole. As far as Ihuoma is concerned, she tries to avoid this engagement with Ekwueme and swears that she is not going to marry him in order to avoid shame and gossiping in her village. In *The Concubine*, Amadi portrays how Ihuoma is ashamed of Ekwueme's presence in her husband's compound in the following terms:

> (...) but the neighbours don't know that. They judge from what they observe. I don't mind if we chat at home but for you to come here persistently under the observation of passers-by is to invite the worst scandal imaginable. (151)

It is evident that Ekwueme does not give up in spite of his parents' remark because neither his father nor anyone else can prevent him from loving Ihuoma. Her image comes again and again in his mind as it is described in *The Concubine* where we read the following: "Again and again, Ihuoma's picture flashed through his mind-rounded, beautiful, dazzling teeth with a bewitching gap, sorrow-laden eyes (24)".

This situation makes him morally embarrassed because he feels he cannot go against his parents' words though he knows well that he would not behave otherwise on such a matter of marrying Ihuoma.

Likewise, in Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease*, we are told that Obi, who is in relation with a young woman called Clara, a strong-minded lady, but his parents forbid him to marry her because she is an outcast and consequently it is not allowed in their tradition to go against the tradition. So, Obi decides to move progressively away from the nature of his society. He gets ideals of going seriously against his parents as well as the whole community and acts personally and independently as such: "Not even my mother can stop me" (65). In Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease,* Obi believes that an individual has the right to choose his own wife. He even says:

> It was scandalous that in the middle of the twentieth century a man could be barred from marrying a girl simply because her great-great-great-grand father had been dedicated to serve a god, thereby setting himself apart and turning descendants into a forbidden caste to the end of the time. Quite unbelievable. (65)

In Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine,* Ekwueme faces a dilemma and is morally in distress. By the time his parents seem to have convinced him to forget about Ihuoam, he accepts to marry Ahurole as it has been planned. His father goes on to discourage him and explains how it is not good to give up a childhood engagement as Amadi states: "No one has ever turned down a childhood engagement. The whole village would side with his father and pour scorn on him. The high esteem in which the elders held him would be swept away" (117).

The marriage celebration takes place between Ekwueme and Ahurole but Ekwueme continues to pester Ihuoma at her farm and never ceases to visit her in order to have a talk with her. By so doing, Ekwueme activates Ihuoma's love by all means available to him. When Ekwueme is in the bush, doing his traps, Ihuoam pays visits to Ahurole. Amadi puts an emphasis on Ihuoma strange behaviour which hides an idea of supernatural power and he describes Ihuoma's beauty that empresses all persons. The fact of being adored by every one becomes something of phenomenon. Nevertheless, Ihuoma herself knows that she is not totally perfect seeing her internal struggles as it is mentioned in *The Concubine* when Amadi posits: "But she alone knew her internal struggles. She knew she was not better than anyone else" (157).

Yet, Ekwueme still wooes Ihuoma and once while reconstructing an image of an ideal wife (except her mother), he comes again at Ihuoma's. Amadi comments at this occasion that:

> Like rain after a long dry season, her image came into his mind. She came with overwhelming tenderness and understanding in her eyes. The usual smile played on her lips, the gap in the teeth enhancing its innocent effect. The well formed limbs, the rounded buttocks all came in bold relief. With a cry, he clutched the air and grasped 'IHUOMA'. (50)

In spite of Ekwueme's immaturity, Amadi treats this love affair as beautiful and good, and it accounts for some of the most effective and tender passages in the novel. Here, for instance is Ekwueme's first attempt to declare his love:

> 'Greet Nkechi and the new baby when you get back', Ihuoma said a little nervously and turned back into the house. 'Ihuoma!' She turned and faced him. 'I have

> something important to say to you'. 'Say on.' 'Let us go into your sitting-room.' 'Why not here?' 'Too many sand flies.' Ihuoma led the way into her sitting-room. Nwonna came and sat beside her. Ekwueme sat opposite, his arms folded across his breast. For a moment he eyed Nwonna and fidgeted uneasily. 'Nwonna, go and warm the soup in the kitchen' Ihuoama ordered. 'Ihuoma' Ekwueme began, 'I really don't know how to begin.' She kept quite. Looking at her, well-scrubbed floor. Ekwueme's perplexity grew. He began to trace figures on the floor with the point of his knife. (...) 'I like your ways,' Ekwueme began again. She said nothing. 'You understand me, don't you?' Still no answer. 'Ihuoma, are you ignoring me?' 'No I'm listening.' 'But you say nothing'. 'You haven't said much yourself' 'I have more to say.' 'Go on.' Ekwueme studied her for a moment. It appeared her mind was far away. (46)

Marriage changes neither Ekwueme nor Ahurole, two people who are immature and unwilling to make compromises. Ahurole needs a man who is capable of handling difficult women and Ekwueme needs a woman who is capable of looking after men. Amadi argues that:

> Ahurole expected for more gentleness than her husband could give. On the other hand, Ekwueme's ideal wife was a composed stable woman who could get on without to much help from him (...) a woman who could act for him in an emergency if he were aware. A woman.... a woman ... well, something like his mother. (179-80)

In fact, Ihuoma, of course is such a woman who fulfils Ekwueme's wishes and, with his marriage on the brink of failure, Ekwueme turns increasingly to her. In *Introduction to African Novels,* Eustace Palmer explains this situation as follows:

> Men who show such devotion for their mother tend to have difficulty in forming lasting relationships with other women, for they are always comparing their girl friends and wives with their mothers. Ekwueme is never sexually aroused by girls, although there must have been several beautiful ones in the village. The only woman he ever has any sexual feelings for is Ihuoma, who, although she is only about twenty three, behaves like a much older woman. Ihuoama is, in fact rather motherly, and it is obvious that Ekwueme's ideal is a 'mother-figure'. (121)

Inevitably, Ahurole's jealousy is aroused, and on the advice of her mother she gives Ekwueme a love potion which has to make him forget Ihuoama but in vain. In *African Religions and Philosophy,* John Mbiti describes the purpose of such ritual as "nothing harmful happens 'by chance' 'every thing is caused by someone directly or through the use of mystical power" (201). When Anyka refuses to give the love potion arguing that it makes people passive, stupid and dependant, Ahurole hurries to another medicine man and she after administers the love potion to her husband. The effects are a bad because Ekweume's behaviour changes. He changes morphologically and soon becomes passive and looses interest in everything even for his wife Ahurole. Then, Anyika warning as come true. The love portion has had a completely wrong effect on Ekwueme and appears to be driving him mad. Some lines of *The Concubine* let us discover his madness as Amadi points it out while describing his conversation between him and is father

> 'What about your traps, Ekwue?' He asked. 'Doing fine'.
> 'It doesn't look as if you have inspected them for some

> time'. Ekwueme laughed out right. His father was terribly shocked. 'What are you laughing at?' he asked timidly. His son looked at him and laughed still more. 'Ekwueme!' Laughter greeted his call. 'Ekwueme!' His son only laughed more loudly ... He was mumbling to himself but much like someone having an interesting tête-à-tête with someone else (166).

As Ekwueme becomes completely mad, her wife Ahurole decides to desert him because she is afraid that she will receive all the blame for Ekwueme's sickness. Her desertion is, of course the end of the marriage. Even more terrible, Ekwueme gets lost into the forest. When he is caught, he seems to be careless and the situation becomes clearer when people order him to descend from the tree branch on which he is perched like a bird. Ekwueme's condition of descending which surprises everyone is that, he requires the presence of Ihuoma. Truly speaking he has become crazy for her. Ihuoma is sent for to resolve the problem, and, when she arrives, Ekwueme climbs quietly down as it is stated in *The Concubine* when Amadi writes:

> 'If Ihuoma comes, will you come down?' Ekwueme nodded slowly. Ihuoma was sent for. People made a way for her as she came up. Everyone looked at her curiously but no particular importance was attached to Ekwueme's preference for her. (....) 'Ihuoma is here now, come down Ekwue'.To everyone's relief the young man began to descend. (181)

Finally, Ihuoma, in turn is unable to hide the depth of her concern for him. In addition, Ekwueme refuses to take the antidote given by Anyika unless Ihuoma is present at that very occasion we read:

> Drink your medicine, you crazy fellow, I won't. Get me Ihuoma, I say. I want to marry her. If I don't, I shall not listen to anybody, not even Nwokekoro. Medicine? I need no medicine. I am not sick. Ihuoma, Ihuoma, get me Ihuoma.(183)

Ihuoma's presence arranges the whole change of his attitude and he accepts to take Anyika's medicine but the idea of a make-believe marriage is changing to something much more concrete as it has been conditioned by Ekwueme before taking antidote. Psychologically speaking, the antidote given by Anyika has a positive effect because the one who is concerned accepts to administer it believing that what is being performed by the medicine man may be benefit for him. Likewise, Michael Armer in *African Social Psychology* affirms that "Cult rituals have functional, adaptive value both for the cultures in which they appear and for the individual worshipper" (193).

The failure of possessing Ihuoma causes in Ekwueme a kind of mental disturbance which resembles a hysterical attack. This form of hysteria occurs when one's needs are not fulfilled mentally and this is manifested by a psychological disturbance at a certain period until the patient gets those needs. This is stated by Sigmund Freud in *Introduction à la Psychanalyse.* As a matter of fact, it is said that when Ihuoma arrives, Ekwueme changes completely and he is recovered.

Despite his determination to marry Ihuoma, Anyika advises him that his life may be in danger but he swears to go ahead with the plan with marriage and accepts to bear whatever would happen to him as Amadi supports

> One thing is clear, I shall marry Ihuoma. She is a human being and if marrying her is a fatal mistake I am prepared to

> make it. If I am her husband for a day before my death, my soul will go singing happily to the spirit world. (197)

The marriage celebration takes place after Ekwueme's madness. Yet, people begin to question Ihuoma's absolute attraction and control over Ekweme and this makes them suspect her supernatural embodiment. In *Introduction to African Novels*, Eustace Palmer adds that "the lyrical quality of their relationship after Ekwueme's madness is itself a hint that it cannot last; it is too idyllic and the all-powerful sea-god's vengeance in having Ekwueme accidentally killed by an arrow, is a logical, not an illogical climax". (121)

From what one may think, this situation brings us to a discussion of the role of the supernatural. In fact, Ekwueme knows that he fights for his life but we realize that the waves of despair sweep over him. He is unfortunately killed by Nwonna, Ihuoma's son with his bow and arrow despite all machinations he has performed to prevent that predicted death. The key to the understanding of the world view of Ihuoma is the social sphere but her attractive beauty makes people doubt or believe in the divine status.

It is then after Anyika's divination that reveals that Ihuoma is of non-human birth and mentions how she is jealously protected by a very strong spirit from the sea because she used to be the wife of the powerful sea-god so his vengeance for any man who dares to make advances to her, or marry her. Likewise, the hero of *The Slave* leaves the shrine of Amadioha to which his late father was bound as an Osu (cult-slave), and appears to have right on his side in arguing for his emancipation, since he was not actually conceived there. Nevertheless, his brief career in freedom has an obstinately circular form, curving through initial success to a series of disasters that bring him, friendless and alone, back to the shrine he had so hopefully deserted.

Ihuoma, the heroine of *The Concubine,* is on the other hand powerless to avert her spiritual marriage to the sea-king, a union that prevents her from having any successful human relationships. Her attraction thus becomes a fatal one, resulting in the deaths of all those who seek to free her from her condition and the victims among them are Ihuoma's suitors.

Finally, one may briefly conclude that all those premature deaths of Ihuoma's suitors bring us to the evident idea that Ihuoma is endowed with supernatural force which includes this protection that is not clearly revealed to any human being. The deaths of Emenike, Madume and Ekwueme are a result of her actions, however, innocent they may have seemed to her. She is a tragic figure who wants to associate with human and possesses a godlike perfection of beauty liable to lure any man to destruction and the three men can be described as sacrifices for Ihuoma's offence, even though they are unaware of the tragic possibilities inherent in association with her. It is worth noting that there is nothing that is totally perfect. Anything although good or beautiful carries some imperfections and with some consequences which reduces its perfection or goodness. Looking for personal emotional satisfaction as the case for Ihuoma's suitors may lead sometime to the result that is rather fatalistic than harmonious.

CHAPTER THREE

EFFECTS OF THE SUPERNATURAL ON HUMAN BEINGS

All over the world, people fall sick, they die, they are born, they hurt themselves, they get married to the right people or they get married to the wrong people. Depending on their beliefs, these things are a matter of luck, accidents of nature, fate, or acts of gods or the gods. In Omokachi village, the gods are capricious. If they are wronged, or if they wish to have some fun with human beings, sacrifices must be made to placate and appease them. Amadi's main concern is to investigate the rite of the supernatural in traditional village life. He identifies completely with the African cosmology, which interprets all such events in terms of human guilt and divine vengeance. The struggle between the forces of good and evil, the difficult relationship between man and gods through their priestly intermediaries, are described in such a perceptive, sympathetic or sensible way that the actions and beliefs of the characters appear entirely natural and logical.

Through his novel *The Concubine,* Amadi depicts how human beings are fated to fail even though they perform sacrifices to the gods. By the time, human beings are about to succeed, however, they are doomed to fail. The attempt to attribute the responsibility of all these things to gods is even seen and sustained by John Mbiti in *Introduction to African Religion* when he argues that

> There is a mystical order governing the universe. The belief in this order is shown in the practice of traditional rites. It is held in all African societies that there is power in the universe, and that it comes from 'god'. It is a mystical power, in the sense that it is hidden and mysterious. (41)

In *The Concubine,* the gods control the whole situation, and every misfortune which occurs is stirred up by their will. Ihuoma's beauty and success in business have a fatal attraction for the three men (Emenike, Madume and Ekwueme) who involve themselves, at various times, with her life. She is not aware of her situation and she never intends to kill them. Also, she never attempts to influence or dominate them. She is only surprised at the devotion she spreads around herself. It is nearly at the end of the novel that both the reader and Ihuoma herself foresee something fatal in her attractiveness. Moreover, we are told that men do not attract her but on the contrary, Ihuoma attracts them. At this level, this supernatural forces and attraction of Ihuoma hides something mysterious and unknown to human beings and the effects of these supernatural force foreshadows their distraction.

Indeed, Dr. Richard J. Gehman goes ahead to describe the supernatural in *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective,* by adding that

> Mystical powers, those inanimate (non-personal), impersonal forces which pervade the universe, are a never present reality to the traditional African. But, we have seen that even those allegedy impersonal mystical powers are often animated and activated by spiritual beings. (124)

These mystical powers Gehman talks about are portrayed in the novel *The Concubine.* The heroine is fated not to enjoy the happiness of her marriage to human beings since the sea-god, her husband reserves vengeance for any mortal who falls in love with her. Truly speaking, Ihuoma, on her part, wants to enjoy her life and the happiness of her marriage but she cannot because those mystical powers put barriers on her way. She becomes a victim of those mystical and supernatural powers animated and activated by spiritual beings. It is evident that the effects of the supernatural on human beings are unavoidable because these unknown forces make human beings victim whether they like it or not.

In *The Concubine,* the audience does not know about the existence of the sea-king. It is only when Anyika the village dibia, speaks about his existence, that everything becomes clear as we read it in the following passage

> (...) Ihuoma belongs to the sea. When she was in the spirit world, she was a wife of the sea-king, the ruling spirit of the sea. (....) because of his great love for her, he is terribly jealous and tries to destroy any man who makes loves to her. (196)

Here, Anyika reveals her status but he is not able to avoid the sea-king's vengeance to human beings. He is limited even though he knows about the tragedy which is about to occur to human beings. Thus, the supernatural controls human beings because Ihuoma, a wife of a sea-god, does not know about her status before her reincarnation into human form; she becomes the unconscious tool of a man-killing god.

In reality, she is unconscious of her previous life since she is born of natural means-having ordinary parents. Ihuoma is supposed to enjoy the happiness marriage as she is apparently journeying in this world like others. However, she is fated to fail in marriage because of this supernatural force which is unavoidable. In the same vein, Flora Nwapa's novel *Efuru,* shows the breakdown of a heroine who rebels against tradition. Efuru who is an attractive and intelligent young woman defies local customs when she marries for she simply goes to Azidua's hut and refuses to worry about such matters as bride price and the usual family negotiations involved in marriage arrangements. As for her punishment, she becomes childless and fated not to enjoy the happiness as a married woman, for she divorces all the times.

As one realizes, Efuru does not enjoy the happiness of marriage in spite of herself. It is seen that there is inevitable failure due to the traditional institution. She

is unable to challenge the traditional institution and she has no way to escape from the traditional customs. Human beings find themselves in the situations of vulnerability because the effects of the supernatural still mysterious and difficult to understand.

Likewise, in *The Concubine,* Ahurole is also doomed to failure: she does not succeed to keep her union with Ekwueme. Despite her engagement at an early age (eight days old), she is inevitably fated to fail. Ahurole is beautiful and well-behaved and she is happy to get married with Ekwueme. The author evokes the situation when she was preparing with her parents for the arrival of her husband's parents:

> 'How does she feel about it?' 'Ah, she was very delighted with it'. 'I mean the marriage.' 'It is not easy to tell. But her friend Titi told me in confidence that she is looking forward to it. 'I am very happy to hear that'. (99)

Ahurole is justly proud of her engagement with Ekwueme. She knows finally that she will live in peace. Unfortunately, despite all efforts invested in her search of her self-realization and happiness, she is fated to her downfall after her marriage. Ekwueme, her husband newly marries to her, finds himself more and more drawn towards another woman called Ihuoma. As the time goes on, Ahurole realizes that her husband changes and continues to pester Ihuoma in her farm and people of the village gossip a great deal about his goings-on with her. She decides to go to ask advices from her mother Wonuma and the latter advises her to give him a love potion and not poison. Here, the narrator evokes the conversation between her and her mother:

> 'Don't be alarmed, I am not saying we should poison anyone'. 'Nne, I know you can't say that of course, but ...' 'I am thinking of something that can draw Ekwe towards

> you and make him forge Ihuoma.' 'A love potion'. 'Yes'. 'Will it work?' 'There is nothing medicine men cannot achieve.' ... many a good wife has done it. It is a matter of protecting your interests and his, for that matter'. (157)

Corroborating the above quotation, one may visualise clearly that Ahurole really loves her husband because she does not want to poison anyone but she wants him love charm that will bind her husband securely to her. Unfortunately, after taking the so-called drug, Ekwueme becomes insane and runs away into the forest. The efforts invested in order to gain the love of her husband are futile for Ahurole and unavoidably vain. Ahurole is disappointed as if she is fated to failure. As she realizes the bad effects of the medicine, she judges better to return to her parents and her departure makes end to her marriage. Here, the effects of the supernatural foreshadow on her despite her undertakings to keep jealously her union with Ekwueme.

As earlier mentioned, the gods control human action as Mbiti clarifies: "Nobody would dare to oppose god, since all power, all strength, all might, belong to him"(50). One may mention that Ahurole gradually loves her husband and she invests all efforts to keep jealously her love for Ekwueme but the end is not satisfactory and she is fated to her downfall whether she likes it or not. The effects of the supernatural and the role of the supernatural remain the tragic inevitability of failure to human beings.

The Concubine opens with the fight between two men (Emenike and Madume). Ihuoma, a beautiful woman is first of all, married to Emenike who unavoidably is drawn into a fight with his neighbour, Madume, for a plot of land which normally belongs to Emenike. Madume, an already married man, wants to take Ihuoma as his second wife. During their fight, Emenike badly hurts his side.

But this hurt is more fatal than a mere incident as Margaret Lawrence's *Long Drums and Cannons* states:

> After a time, he appears to recover and goes with other men of the village to the forest shrine of Amadioha, god of thunder. There, in the eyes of the shrine's priest, Emenike reads his own death. When he dies shortly after, the villagers attribute it internal damage done in his fight with Madume. (178)

From the above extract, it is worth noting that Emenike does not doubt about his death (... Emenike reads his own death) but he does not see a way of escaping from it. Moreover, even the dibia, the grand seers with their supernatural capacity cannot prevent Emenike's death as Rodney Nesbitt writes in *Notes on Elechi Amadi's The Concubine*: "we are left with the feeling that Nwokekoro knows of the tragedy which is about to occur"(5).

Likewise, according to David Cook, in *African Literature: A Critical View*, he points out that Obi of *No Longer at Ease,* does not have any great emotional subtlety or depth, and he turns out to be an inadequate lover or protector of the social outcast. He is early clumsiness in dancing is characteristic of his general lack of grace. Then, it is clearly seen that this is far from incidental that the first sequence the novel tells us that "he had recently lost his mother, and Clara, his lover, had gone out his life"(89). There is no relation between the desertion of his lover Clara and the death of his mother in order to argue that this is far from incident but the supernatural force which controls human life.

In *The Concubine,* after his illness, Emenike, goes with Nwokekoro, the priest of Amadioha, to offer sacrifices to the god Amadioha. He watches the priest fulfil the various rites, and when he looks closely into the priest's eyes, he is aware

of the imminent calamity. Despite all sacrifices performed by Emenike, he dies and his wife thinks that the cause of her husband's death is the 'lock-chest' because he used to work hard in the rain whereas the villagers believe that the consequence of the fight with Madume is responsible of his death.

The circumstances of Emenike's death remain doubtful and non-specified for the people of Omokachi village because the cause of his death remains mystical, something which can be qualified as an effect of the supernatural. It would be a simple way out to say that Emenike, Ihuoma's husband dies, not through the malevolence of the gods, but of lock-chest, the consequence of the fight with Madume. But, Elechi Amadi is much more skilful than some of his critics give him credit for. He has deliberately left a question mark hanging over the circumstances over Emenike's death.

In *Introduction to the African Novel,* Eustace Palmer tries to explain the mystery surrounding Emenike's death. Drawing from a conversation between Ihuoma and her mother, which goes:

> 'Kaka, do you think that the fight caused his death?' Ihuoma asked in an undertone. 'What else caused it?' 'I thought it was locked-chest?' 'But what brought about the lock-chest?' 'He worked too hard in the rain' Was that the first time he had worked under the rain?' No my child, we know what happened to him. Amadioha will kill them one by one. (21)

Eustace Palmer goes on to show that it is not a coincidence but a surprising act of god which reveals a supernatural power and remains unbelievable and unknown to human beings as we read: So even inhabitants of Omokachi are puzzled about the causes of Emenike's death (126).

Thus, human beings are controlled by supernatural forces and their knowledge is limited because the effects of the supernatural are unavoidable, mysterious to be understood and they wait in suspense for the happy ending but in vain. It is worth mentioning that to have recourse to the dibias, those who are supposed to have eyes in the spirit world, does not resolve problems of the people or bring a solution to the problems they face.

Similarly, Madume feels responsible for Emenike's death. He threatens Ihuoma who seeks to kill her family together. Amazingly, he makes advances to her. But she rejects him categorically, Madume who cannot cool his anger and bear disappointment, indulges in chopping down her plantains, and in the process he comes across a spitting cobra. Madume apparently meets his fate by being blinded by a spitting cobra. This raises the question as to what force puts the cobra on the plantain plant. And why does the spitting cobra attack no one else? To answer those questions as already mentioned, even before Anyika's explanation about the sea-king's hostility, we already have more than a faint suspicion that Madume's death is connected to his attitude to Ihuoma. With the snake's venom in his eyes, Madume calls for the medicine man, Anyika, who does not accept to treat him because the incident is an act of the gods as Margaret Lawrence states in *Long Drums and Cannons*

> In the divination, Anyika receives some intimation of the presence of th sea-god, but he, like the other villagers, interprets Madume's misfortune as a punishment for violating Ihuoma's land. Madume goes blind, and unable to bear his helplessness, hangs himself. (178)

From the above quotation, one realizes that Anyika, the dibia, knows and receives some intimation of the presence of the sea-god, but he does not interpret it as such, because he also fears the gods' wrath because the incident is an act of the gods. As

a grand seer with his supernatural capacity, Anyika could suggest and prevent the incident from Madume that he explains it as a punishment for violating Ihuoama's land. This is to show that human beings are limited in their capacities towards gods and that the effects of the supernatural are inevitable. Despite his limitation, Anyika suggests very expensive sacrifices to Madume and among the sacrificial items, there is a chameleon. Madume is supposed to get supernatural power from the chameleon because it is highly believed that the latter symbolises the hope for Omokachi people. Thus he could be immortal, something which is impossible for a human being. The symbolism of chameleon is sustained by John Mbiti in *African Religions and Philosophy* who upholds that

> The chameleon, on the other hand is featured as the messenger who should have brought news of immortality or resurrection, but either lingered on the way, or altered the message slightly or stammered in delivering it. (51)

In *The Concubine,* the narrator describes the conversation between Anyika and Madume as follows:

> 'You were lucky' Anyika said slowly, 'to have come out alive from Emenike's compound'. 'Ojukwu forbid!' Madume stammered. 'Several spirits swore to kill you there and then' 'What is to be done, dibia?' 'There will be several sacrifices to appease Emenike's father and his train' 'Let me know the various items involved in the sacrifice'. 'Here they are: seven grains of alligator pepper, seven manilas, an old basket, three cowries, a bunch unripe palm fruit, ... a tortoise (or the shell) and a chameleon' 'Hey, this is a costly sacrifice. Can we not omit a few items?'(74-5)

Armed with Anyika's protection, Madume hopes to overcome all risks which surround him. Here, Elechi Amadi evokes again the procedure of sacrifices done by

Madume as Anyika tells him to repeat the following words: "Amadioha, Ojukwu, Mini Wekwu, Ancestors, gods of the night! No one digs up immature yams; my hair is not grey, my work undone; accept my sacrifice and spare me"(59). Anyika advices him elaborate sacrifices to appease the gods who might well have killed him in Ihuoma's compound. It is worth noting that before Anyika's treatment the latter fears the gods and refuses to come the first time as it is argued by Rodney Nesbitt in *Notes on Elechi Amadi's The Concubine* that: "The gods punished him (Madume) and finally drove him into taking his own life. Even Anyika is wary of becoming involved in this affair" (9).

Likewise, Anyika refuses to treat Madume because the incident was obviously the act of gods, a very large feels that the gods of retribution are responsible for Madume's misfortune thus effected through the supernatural.(http://africanbookscollective.com) All those examples illustrate these effects of the supernatural because we analyse that Emenike and Madume both want to spare their times enjoying their lives with happiness in this world but they are fated to succumb and to fail, the supernatural forces and unknown powers inevitably impose their will in spite what they wish to become.

Ihuoma's lovers all fall under the fatal power of the sea-god. After the tragic ends of Madume and Emenike, Ekwueme is next. The young man who has been pampered and spoilt by his mother, falls in love with Ihuoma, but his parents force him to marry the childish Ahurole, to whom he had been betrothed from an early age. His marriage ends in a disaster and then every one consents to Ekwueme's marriage to Ihuoma, who had played a major role in curing his madness.

However, the dibia, Anyika reveals that this marriage too will end in a disaster, for Ihuoma used to be the wife of the powerful sea-god, and against the wishes of her husband, sought the incarnation, and came to live among human

beings. Although the sea-god is furious, he agrees to allow her to live her human span, reserving his vengeance instead for any man who dares to make advances to her or marry her. As already said in the previous chapters, it is revealed that this may be the cause of Emenike and Madume's deaths.

Determined to go ahead with the marriage, Ekwueme's parents consult another dibia, the strongest one called Agwoturumbe. The latter promises to bind the sea-god and make him powerless. Then, the famous medicine man makes his divination, and there are astonishing similarities between his divination and Anyika's.

Unlike Anyika, Agwoturumbe says that he can prevent him from doing any harm. The sacrifice is complicated and it takes time to gather all the materials needed. Ekwueme performs sacrifices as advised and then Agwoturumbe tells him to continue the wedding arrangements with Ihuoma. Ekwueme, strengthened by Agwoturumbe's reassurence, arranges the things for the sacrifice. But, Agwoturumbe forbids him and his parents to pay the bride-price as long as the sea-king is unbound. Looking at the sacrificial items, one notices similarities with those already performed. In *The Concubine,* we read:

> The requisites for the sacrifice included among other bigger items a piece of white cloth, a white hen, a bright red cock, seven ripe plantains, and a brightly coloured male lizard. The sea-king is a proud spirit and likes very bright colours. (199)

When Ekwueme is asked to collect a bright coloured lizard among sacrificial items, one already predicts his fate. For Omokachi people, colour symbolism is very important as they know the white and the red colours are the sea-king's favourite

colours. Moreover, a bright coloured lizard predicts bad or tragic news for them as far as their beliefs are concerned.

Amadi puts forward an open confrontation between a man and his god. Ekwueme dares to challenge the sea-king because he is assured by Agwoturumbe and garners the courage to challenge the sea-king. Unfortunately, in the process of collecting the items for the sacrifice when he goes outside to check whether Agwoturumbe prepares the sacrifice, he is shot by Ihuoma's son, Nwonna. In *The Concubine,* we read the following: "The arrow flying parallel with the wall just missed a big red lizard. It hit the upper part of Ekweme's belly and he fell back accross the doorway with a cry" (215).

Through Anyika's mouth, Amadi warns Ekwueme about the impossibility of marrying a spirit. Since it is highly believed that no one can really argue with a dibia, Ekwueme should have stopped there. In *The Concubine*, we read:

> Finally, he shook his head and muttered, 'Too bad'. 'What is too bad?' Adaku asked in alarm 'Wait a moment'. Anyika said and studied a few more throws. Then he straightened up and said sadly: 'The marriage will not work out well'. 'Why?' Wigwe asked. 'Spirits, strong spirits' 'They are against the marriage?' 'Yes'... 'You see, Ihuoma is a little unusual' he began. 'Unusual?' The couple exclaimed simultaneously. 'Yes, unusual' Anyika said nodding his head in emphasis. (195)

In the same vein, in *Long Drums and Cannons,* Margaret Lawrence relates how a horrible opposition occurs:

> Anyika announces that his divination has told him something which makes the marriage or any marriage for

> Ihuoma impossible. Ihuoma, beloved of the village, is also beloved of the sea-king, and the god will kill any man who seeks to marry her. She could be a concubine, but never a wife. (180)

In addition, in Amadi's world, the gods are to blame for human beings. We read: "The thunder-god feasts inn his grove then naps 'twixt rainbows up above; but justice suffers here below and we know not which way to go" (http://www.africanbookscollective.com)

As a matter of fact, the death of Ekwueme reverberates Anyika's revelation about Ihuoma and the tragic inevitability originates from her union with human beings. One may ask himself how can a man bind the gods? Anyika's prescription demonstrates that even the great sorcerer cannot tame or bind the sea-king. This instance depicts how god's superiority over humans remains unfailingly predominent. If Ekwueme's scheme had succeeded, he would have made the sea-king powerless whereas we know that a human being cannot bind a god. In the same line, Rodney Nesbitt, in *Notes on Elechi Amadi's The Concubine*, adds the following:

> If Anyika is right, the sea-king has taken revenge. There is nothing that a man can do about the decisions of the gods. We can contrast the great happiness of the last few days with the sudden drama of the tragedy of Ekwueme's death. (18)

Trying to analyse this tragic end of Ekwueme, one may realize the impact of the supernatural on human beings and that no one can challenge the act of the gods. It is clearly seen that even a very strong and famous dibia like Agwoturumbe is limited in his capacity and power and that gods impose their control on human

beings whoever they are whether they like it or not, they are fated to fail. Then, the impact of the supernatural appears as a striking weight which leads to the hero's failure despite all efforts invested in his search of self realization, the human being is fated to his downfall, whether he is guilty or not, the fatal force overpowers him.

Elechi Amadi, in his writing, lets the audience know about the view of the gods as it appears in *The Concubine.* The view of the gods has been held deliberately within the framework of the society about which Amadi is writing. Although his characters are presented in depth, with motivations which are always seek to provide psychological alternatives to the interpretation of the central conflict, which is between men and their fate as controlled by their deities.

As we view them, the gods are gods only, they are merely powerful and then not only control human beings and their actions, but they also direct the plot and the events mediated through it. According to Eustace Palmer, Amadi is not conducting a rational argument to prove the existence of supernatural forces. He merely presents to us a group of people for whom the supernatural is important and he tries to make their way of life as realistic as possible.

A similar instance is found in *The Slave* when Amadi relates how Olumati, the hero of the novel who is born at shrine of the god Amadioha in exile for whom he works as a servant because his father takes refuge from his enemies with the god, Amadioha. He returns home and attempts to establish his lineage which has been tarnished by his father's flight. Because the people suspect that he has inherited the status of Osu (traditional slave), the untouchable, through his father's actions, his efforts to establish is lineage fail.

Olumati thinks of getting married with his lover Ena. He is, if he lives long enough, to be get children who will continue the life of the clan. Even though

people of the village accept him as a member of their society, they still suspect him. But, Olumati is unaware of this traditional institution which keeps apart freeborn persons from Osu. At this point, when the dibia announces that Olumati is not an Osu, people continue to suspect him. At first, villagers can hardly believe the dibia and Olumati himself does not know whether the revelation about him is true or not. In the meantime, he collects and saves money he will pay for the bride price. By the time he takes the dowry to Ena's parents, Ena has already accepted to marry another man who is richer than Olumati.

The death of his grand mother Nyege, that of his sister and the marriage of his lover Ena to another man finally drive him insane and he returns to Amadioha as the god's slave. Disappointed, Olumati concludes that he has no friend; all the villagers are his enemies. Thus, one might go on to examine whether Olumati wills or succumbs to his fate or are there effects of the supernatural power which impose his will. The truth is that we are given a multiplication of determinants that leaves the question of inevitability mystically open: on one hand, his status of Osu is a traditional institution that Olumati himself does not know. On the other hand, the unfortunate happenings such as disappointment of his lover Ena, his grand mother's death, his sister's death. His whole problem has been the role of gods and gods' action imposes the inevitability of repeated mysterious convergence of character and circumstances.

In the same vein, Aderemi Bamikulu describes what follows in *Ba Shiru*:

> Amadi leaves the reader to make up his own mind about the significance of events, especially the question whether Olumati's punishment for an act of sacrilege perpetrated by another member of Olumati's lineage or simply the result of many personal misfortunes that have come his way. (10)

Here, what is evident is that Olumati, the hero, is not guilty of any evil action and he is not even responsible of his traditional status. Even though an individual often seems to cooperate with the gods, or perhaps unconsciously, the effects of the supernatural overpower him and misfortunes and disappointments are unavoidable.

At this point, H. W. Piper adds in *Nature and Supernatural in 'The Ancient Mariner'* that:

> The physical is moved by spiritual forces and supernatural forces simply as a miraculous example of the supernatural in which we suspend our disbelief in order to enter a world of fantasy where spirits and miraculous interventions are seen. (5)

In short, referring to Piper's quote above, the effects of the supernatural on human beings are observed because spiritual forces and supernatural forces are a miraculous example of the supernatural.

To sum up, by performing sacrifices and worshiping to their gods, human beings search to reconcile themselves in front of them, and appease god's wrath in order to cooperate with them to live in harmony with the universe. But despite all efforts and undertakings, human beings are fated to fail because the fatal force non-specified foreshadow them and the tragic force impose to human beings a supernatural power which cannot be bound even by the famous dibias, the grand seers. So, human beings succumb whether they like it or not independently to their wishes, being guilty or not of any evil action or being aware or unaware of the situation, they do not have the way to escape from the effects of the supernatural because spiritual forces and supernatural forces are simply a miraculous example of the supernatural.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This work set out to prove the hypothesis that a human being is unavoidably a victim of the supernatural forces despite all undertakings and efforts invested to reconcile themselves in front of the gods. This work equally portrays the complex aspects relating to some visible characters and invisible characters that converge spiritual experiences and supernatural experiences in *The Concubine.* The real world and the world of illusion are an itinerary that governs people's cultivation of morals through their cultural bond. Amadi's novel shows the role of the supernatural forces throughout the major practices and traditional experiences by using characters that are both spirits and ordinary people who are endowed with supernatural force.

Along this study, we have tried to examine the dilemmas that people confront and finally destroy the characters which derive from the beliefs, practices and events of their indigenous culture. These things leave a human being as a tool under the force of the supernatural and stress on the fatalistic vulnerability of man.

Chapter one entitled 'The Supernatural and The Spiritual World of *The Concubine'*, tackles traditional practices and experiences and puts an emphasis on Ihuoma, an archetypal character. Here, Elechi Amadi creates a model of human race. Ihuoma, the heroine of *The Concubine* becomes the central power to whom all rituals are directed. Ihuoma, the former wife of the sea-god, behaves as any human being but under the protection of the sea-god. She is otherwise a semi-god, a goddess, who has human attributes. The complexity of her character is proved by her spiritual embodiment, thus she is an identification of an archetypal character found in many African myths and folk tales.

We have discovered that the story of Ihuoma is like a myth and that it is difficult to understand how she is a concubine of an 'unknown' as it is stated that

> *The Concubine* is a story only truly understood by an African who has lived in Africa or has had the stories of Africa told to them. The supernatural concept of being a 'Concubine' to an 'unknown' that jealously fights away any other suitor is scary yet so true". (www.questia.com/literary_criticism)

We have also seen that Ihuoam's importance in Omokachi village lies in the fact that she is treated like any human being and gradually becomes a perfect and an exemplary mother within her womenfolk. Ihuoma and the sea-god is the typical specimen of the human world and the invisible world as a unique community. Therefore, they are an ideal who represent the wish fulfilment of that religion-rooted society.

In addition, we have equally discovered in this chapter that, in African tradition, the place and role occupied or played by dibias and their divinations were important in the society. This, indeed, brackets on how people need to be reconcile to their respective places in the universe because of the fear of gods and evil spirits. Moreover, people believe that god is powerful and omnipresent and consequently they have the same social vision about supernatural forces of their gods through superstitions. As far as this religious consciousness portrays some genuine experience giving true insight of social concern, this experience, however, is never merely intellectual but rather rooted in emotional needs.

In chapter two titled 'Fatal Suitors of Ihuoma' focuses on how Ihuoma's lovers die and succumb in fatal and unknown circumstances successively. We have also discovered that the supernatural victimize people through the visible character

as it is the case for Ihuoma's suitors. Her lovers, looking for their personal satisfactions, end in disaster and the resolution tends to be rather fatalistic than harmonious. Emenike, Madume and Ekwueme die dramatically and in non-specified circumstances because the sea-king has taken his revenge and there is nothing that men can do about the decisions of the gods.

Ihuoma, an incarnated sea-goddess, beautiful, adored, and admired by the villagers is destined for unhappiness. Despite her qualities, she is the source of the various fights among her suitors, visible and invisible ones. By using their supernatural forces, the invisible suitors gain the struggle. It is after the divination of Anyika, the dibia, who reveals that Ihuoma is an incarnated spirit with a human attribute. We equally have discovered in this chapter that her supernatural embodiment finally leads to the premature deaths of three unfortunate lovers of Ihuoma in a tragic and sudden circumstances. Ihuoma, who is admired by all in the village, loses her 1st husband, the popular and exemplary Emerike, a few years after their marriage. Then, Madune, the blustering village bully, presses his unwelcome attentions on her, is blinded by a spitting cobra when he tries to steal plantains from her farm and commits suicide. Ekwueme, who has been pampered and spoilt by his mother, falls in love with Ihuoma and his marriage with her ends in disaster while he collects the items for the sacrifice we would bind the sea-god and make him powerless, he is killed by an arrow shot by Ihuoma's little son, Nwonna.

Chapter three labelled 'Effects of the Supernatural on Human Being' tackles the victimization of human beings due to the supernatural forces and though people perform rituals, they cannot challenge god's plan, the supernatural force overpowers human being and the latter is fated to his downfall and even the famous dibias are limited and less power to transcend god's act. In this chapter, we have also discovered that Madume, Ekwueme and Agwoturumbe are viewed in tragic vision. They represent the human world as a tyranny where an individual

turns his back to his fellow to illustrate this point, Agwoturumbe (the famous dibia), betrays Ihuoma by assuming and reassuring her that he can break her wed-lock tie with the sea-god. He erects himself in a bullying giant and uses trick to convince Ekwueme about the binding of a god. Thus, the dibia's quest is no less than the sea-god's attempt to make Ekwueme explore the boundaries between life and death. This is the binding of the sea-god is the sole condition to make the marriage possible. Agwoturumbe, for example wants to bind the sea-god who, according to divination, kills any mortal who wants to marry Ihuoma. But, this is impossible task since one never hears of the union between a man and a goddess.

By the way of contribution to literature, this study is a continuation of Amadi's *The Concubine's* issue on the traditional and cultural background in Nigeria by putting an emphasis on the theme of supernatural. While analysing *The Concubine,* this work cannot be considered as a Literary Art as such. It is only with Frye's understanding of Art that we apprehend the world of artistic works. He believes that Art deals not with real but with the conceivable criticism. In *The Concubine,* there is no doubt that the visible world and the invisible world are a mere juxtaposition of people's psychological impasses motivated by their adaptations in the socio-cultural environment in which they are.

Elechi Amadi, tries to show how Art deals not with real but with the conceivable and criticism by blending spiritual world and, the human one into one continuum and the two worlds make up both visible and invisible elements playing the role in his novel *The Concubine.* Though some critics view *The Concubine* as a powerful love story, written with effortless ease, in lucid and beautiful prose, other critics view that it examines the problems of man's relationship with the gods, and presents a society whose stability rests on tradition and the worship of the gods.

Future researchers on Elechi Amadi's *The Concubine* should investigate much more deeply on this novel to show the conscious realization in literary terms of an individual feeling for and identification with the values of the African cultural background with a powerful picture of a society in its traditional way of life.

Finally, the question of knowing why people should be faithful to their divinities' desires depends upon the society which is concerned. Indeed, an individual is less important when he is compared to his community. In a society governed by superstitions and taboos like Omokachi village, it is difficult to study thoroughly the organic human life as a whole. The lives of the villagers are related to their beliefs in the various gods. At times of any illness or misfortune, the worship of the gods is intense and the sacrifices are imperative in order to toe the line with the universe.

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