

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The researcher presents several components in the background of this study, including the research background which outlines the context of the research, the statement of problems which identifies the issues examined, the research purpose which describes the goals of conducting the study, the research significance which explains the benefits of the research, and the definition of key terms. All of these sub-chapters are clearly explained based on the chosen topic and the researcher's data findings.

1.1 Background

Power intervention is a recurring phenomenon in social reality, both in historical and contemporary contexts. Throughout history, authority, whether in the form of colonial rule, state domination, religious institutions, or hegemonic social structures has often entered the social space of communities and reshaped their systems of belief, law, and cultural practices. Such interventions rarely operate as neutral administrative actions. Instead, they frequently generate tension, conflict, and various forms of violence. The impact of power intervention does not stop at structural transformation, it also penetrates the psychological and cultural dimensions of individuals and communities, producing long-term trauma that may persist across generations.

This phenomenon is particularly evident in colonial and postcolonial histories across Africa and Asia, where external powers imposed political control and ideological systems upon indigenous societies. But are also powerfully represented in literary works, especially in novels. In English and African literature, themes of colonial intrusion and its consequences became central during the twentieth-century postcolonial literary period. Writers from formerly colonized societies frequently depicted the clash between indigenous traditions and colonial systems, highlighting the fragmentation of identity and communal stability. Similarly, in Indonesian literature, particularly in works

emerging after political reform and in narratives addressing marginalized regions such as Papua, the intervention of state power and its social consequences have become significant thematic concerns. As a long narrative form, the novel provides space to explore complex social dynamics through layered characterization, conflict, and historical context.

The phenomenon of power intervention in literature deserves scholarly attention because novels do not merely record social reality, they actively participate in shaping how that reality is understood. In the theory of representation, Hall et al. (2024) argues that representation is not a simple reflection of reality, but a process of meaning production through language and signifying practices. This perspective suggests that literary texts construct and organize meaning rather than passively mirror events. Therefore, representations of violence and trauma in novels offer subjective dimensions that may not be fully captured in official historical narratives.

Based on these considerations, this study focuses on two literary works from different cultural contexts: *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *Tanah Tabu* by Anindita S. Thayf. Both novels portray the intrusion of external authority into established indigenous communities, leading to profound social disruption. Each narrative reveals how structural control and political pressure produce fear, loss, and collective trauma.

The selection of these two novels is grounded in several considerations. First, both works represent postcolonial contexts in which indigenous communities confront external systems of domination. Second, they depict different forms of power intervention: classical colonial rule in Africa and modern state domination in Indonesia, allowing for a comparative analysis of distinct yet parallel mechanisms of control. Third, the novels emerge from different linguistic and cultural traditions, making them suitable objects of comparative literary study. By placing these works side by side, this research

aims to examine how power intervention generates patterns of violence and trauma across different historical and cultural settings.

The concepts of power intervention, violence, and trauma are closely intertwined in literary studies, particularly when examined through a postcolonial lens. Power intervention can be understood as a form of domination through which a powerful group imposes its authority, values, and interests upon a less powerful community. Such domination does not merely transform the social and political structures of the affected community but can also generate various forms of violence and their lasting consequences.

This understanding corresponds with Said's (1977) view of power as a mechanism of domination that shapes the lives and experiences of those subjected to it. In this process, violence becomes one of the consequences through which domination is experienced by the colonized, while prolonged exposure to oppressive conditions may leave psychological and social effects that develop into trauma. (Fanon, 1963) discussion of violence and trauma is therefore relevant to understanding this interconnected process, as his perspective emphasizes the effects of oppressive power not only on the physical conditions of the colonized but also on their psychological and collective lives. Based on this framework, the researcher examines power intervention as a process that generates violence and subsequently shapes the representation of trauma within the narrative worlds of the two novels.

In deepening the discussion of the research topic, as first topic, power intervention concept in postcolonial literary studies can be understood as an action in which an authority, whether colonial; state-based; religious institutions; or a dominant social group enters the social life of a community and takes control over its values, regulations, and cultural structures. Such intervention often produces changes that are not only physical but also influence how a society perceive itself. In postcolonial literary works, these forms of intervention are frequently represented to newly imposed policies,

foreign systems, or cultural dominance that restrict the autonomy of local communities.

Things Fall Apart portrays power intervention through the arrival of British colonial administration and missionary institutions that enforce transformative changes upon the Igbo people (Achebe, 1994). A once-stable social order becomes fragmented as the new authorities introduce legal systems, belief structures, and values that conflict with the community long-standing traditions. Meanwhile, *Tanah Tabu* represents power intervention within the context of Indonesian politics, particularly through the presence of the state and military apparatus in Papua communities. Power operates the everyday movements of the local population (Thayf, 2009).

To strengthen the discussion of power intervention in both novels, this research also refers to several previous studies that examine how power intervention operates within literary works, followed by a discussion of violence and trauma, as well as the respective previous studies examining forms of violence and trauma in literary works.

First, the study conducted by Sarmudyaningsih et al. (2024) in their journal "*Representasi Hegemoni dalam Novel Gadis Kretek Karya Ratih Kumala*" explains how hegemony functions as a form of power that does not always appear overtly, but often manifests through persuasion and cultural domination. Their analysis shows that the characters and conflicts in *Gadis Kretek* are shaped by force that subtly influence thoughts and decisions of the protagonists. This study demonstrates that power can intervene through deeply rooted social values, traditions, and cultural structures. These findings reinforce the present research by illustrating that power intervention in literature can emerge on multiple levels, not only through physical oppression but also through ideological that shape narrative dynamics.

In relation to *Things Fall Apart*, the journal by Hussein Zaboob (2024) titled "*Reclaiming African Identity: Analyzing Issues of Postcolonialism in*

Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart” offers a comprehensive examination of colonial pressure on the Igbo people. The study shows that colonial authorities exert power by intervening in local legal systems, belief structures, and social arrangements. In his Journal explains that such interventions trigger internal divisions, cultural conflicts, and a collective identity crisis. The relevance to this research is particularly strong because the themes discussed (power) and the literary object itself (*Things Fall Apart*), intersect directly with one of the major focuses of this study. Thus, Zaboon’s journal strengthen the analytical foundation of the present research without overlapping or replicating its specific objectives.

Next up, the topic of violence in postcolonial literary studies is understood not only as physical acts, but also as structural, symbolic, and epistemic forms of harm that operate through institutions, narrative, and power relations. Violence may appear through direct oppression, the restriction of living space, the erasure of identity, and ideological domination that shapes how certain groups are positioned within a social structure. Therefore, readings of violence in literary works often highlight how characters, communities, or cultural experience pressure that damage both their physical and psychological integrity.

In *Things Fall Apart*, violence appears in several interconnected forms, including physical violence seen in acts of punishment, conflict, and communal enforcement of tradition; structural violence manifested through the imposition of colonial laws and administrative control; symbolic violence reflected in the delegitimization of Igbo beliefs and cultural practices (Achebe, 1994). These layered forms of violence illustrate the tension between indigenous structures and the intrusive forces that destabilize Igbo society.

Meanwhile in *Tanah Tabu*, just as in *Things Fall Apart*, violence emerges in multiple layers too that shape the lived experiences of the Papuan community. The novel depicts physical violence through threats and repressive

actions carried out by state authorities, while structural violence appears in the restricted living space and systemic inequality that place the community in a vulnerable position. Symbolic violence is reflected in dominant narratives and perspectives that undermine the dignity of the local people (Thayf, 2009).

In the context of *Tanah Tabu* (Solichin & Sa'adah, 2021) in their journal titled "*Perempuan dan Kekerasan Prakriti: Resistensi Tokoh Mabel dalam Tanah Tabu Terhadap Budaya Patriarki dan Kapitalisme Freeport*" provides an in-depth discussion of the various forms of violence experienced by female characters in the novel. The journal demonstrates that violence does not appear solely as physical acts but also as structural marginalization that positions women as the "Other" within Papua's social and political landscape. Their analysis highlights how violence manifests through the silencing of voices, restricted mobility, and pressure that undermine the psychological integrity of the characters. This study strongly supports the present research, as their analyzes forms of violence within one of the primary texts. However, this study remains distinct because it explores violence in relation to broader mechanisms of power intervention, not only from a gender-based perspective. Thus, avoiding analytical overlap or thematic redundancy.

Meanwhile, Mahaffey (1998), through the journal of "*Ulysses and the End of Gender*," examines James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* by emphasizing how violence emerges in the form of symbolic and structural gender-based violence. The journal demonstrates that social pressures and patriarchal norms can function as mechanisms of power that restrict the characters' identities and agency. The violence discussed is not physical, but rather takes the form of role constraints, the erasure of women's voices, and psychological pressure that arises through dominant social structures. The relevance of this study to the current research lies in Mahaffey's explanation that violence can operate through subtle mechanisms while still significantly affecting character dynamics. This perspective broadens the understanding of the types of violence

that may appear in postcolonial analysis and helps enrich the theoretical foundation of this research.

Last topic, trauma in postcolonial literary studies is understood as both a psychological and collective consequence that arises from exposure to violence or long-term oppression. At the individual level, trauma refers to disruptions in one's inner experience, such as recurring memories, the loss of a sense of safety, or shifts in identity that occur when an event exceeds a person's ability to process it. At the community level, trauma can take shape as a collective memory preserved through stories, rituals, and social practices: the next generations inherit wounds, broken narratives, or a sense of alienation rooted in historical experiences. This understanding highlights trauma is not only an immediate effect of a single event, but a long-term process that shapes how individuals and communities respond to, remember, and represent their suffering. In postcolonial literary studies, this trauma is also extended into broader dimensions, including cultural and environmental aspects, where colonial and postcolonial conditions may disrupt cultural identity, traditions, and collective values, as well as damage the relationship between communities and their natural environment through exploitation and structural intervention.

In *Things Fall Apart*, trauma appears through experiences of loss and the collapse of the social structure of the Igbo people. Collective trauma is visible in the breakdown of traditions, the division of the community, and the loss of cultural stability due to colonial intervention, which also reflects cultural trauma as the erosion of cultural identity, values, and communal practices. Personal trauma emerges in characters who experience inner pressure, the inability to meet social expectations, and the clash between tradition and imposed change (Achebe, 1994)

Meanwhile, in *Tanah Tabu*, trauma is shown through the loss of family members, military violence, and the fear that continues to shadow the lives of Papuan community. Collective trauma arises from political pressure,

structural violence, the loss of safety and living space, and also reflects environmental trauma through the disruption of the relationship between the community and their natural environment caused by exploitation and external intervention. Personal trauma is reflected in characters who carry emotional wounds from death, forced disappearances, and life under constant tension (Thayf, 2009).

In the context of trauma studies, in Santoso (2021) journal titled “*Narasi Trauma: Kajian Postmemory Novel Tiba Sebelum Berangkat Karya Faisal Oddang*” offers an in-depth understanding of how historical trauma is passed down through the mechanism of postmemory. By examining the novel *Tiba Sebelum Berangkat*, the study shows that trauma is not only preserved in the memories of those who directly experienced violence, but is also inherited by the next generation through family stories, reconstructed narratives, and the community’s collective memory. Trauma in this research takes shape as an intergenerational wound that shapes how the characters understand their identity and history. Its relevance to the present study lies in its emphasis that trauma can operate beyond time and beyond direct victims, where memories of colonial violence and political repression leave lasting psychological effects on entire communities.

In the context of *Things Fall Apart*, in article by Onuoha (2022) titled “*Traumatic Memory and the Abuse of Child Rights in Things Fall Apart*” offers a direct analysis of the forms of trauma experienced by characters, especially children as a consequence of social violence and practices that violate their rights. The study shows that trauma in the novel appears through the violation of child rights, the loss of important figures, and cultural as well as colonial pressures that disrupt the psychological development of the younger generation. By examining these traumatic memories, the article demonstrates that trauma affects not only individuals but also marks the social structure of the Igbo community. Its relevance to the present study is particularly strong because it analyzes the same primary text and engages directly with similar

thematic concerns. Nevertheless, this research maintains its originality by showing how different forms of power intervention produce distinct patterns of trauma.

Based on the mapped findings of power intervention, violence, and trauma in *Things Fall Apart* and *Tanah Tabu*, as well as the support from previous studies on these themes within literary research, it becomes clear that earlier studies focused on separate objects and perspectives. None of them brought these three concepts together within two cross-language works that explore the dynamics of colonial domination and state violence. This research therefore offers a clear novelty and fills a research gap by placing both novels side by side to examine how power intervention produces different patterns of violence and trauma within distinct cultural and environmental contexts. Through this approach, power intervention, violence, and trauma emerge as similarity findings that form a strong foundation for the comparative analysis.

To examine these finding similarities, regarding on Bassnett's (1993) ideas in *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*, where comparative literature enables the study of two texts across languages, cultures, and historical settings by identifying interconnected themes, structures, and narrative patterns. This perspective aligns with concept in Damono (2005) *Pegangan Penelitian Sastra Bandingan* which explains that comparative literature seeks to identify both similarities and differences between texts through comprehensive thematic reading, especially when the works reflect related social realities. Together, these theoretical frameworks support the comparison of *Things Fall Apart* and *Tanah Tabu* by providing the analytical tools needed to connect the shared elements of power intervention, violence, and trauma found in both novels. In addition, given the research topic chosen, this study also falls within the field of postcolonial literary studies.

Supporting the application of comparative literature and postcolonial literary studies within a qualitative methodology in this research, there is

previous studies in the journal “*Postcolonial Identity in African and South Asian English Literature: A Comparative Analysis.*” Journal of International English Research Studies (JIERS), 1(1), 41-51 by Okoye (2023). This journal examines postcolonial identity in African and South Asian literature using qualitative comparative methods. By analyzing historical, cultural, and colonial contexts, it highlights how identities are constructed and negotiated. Its relevance lies in applying comparative literary methodology in postcolonial contexts. Nevertheless, this study offers a novel perspective as it addresses a distinct aspect of postcolonial studies, focusing specifically on power intervention, violence, and trauma in the novels *Things Fall Apart* and *Tanah Tabu*.

In conclusion, this background has outlined the interconnection between power intervention, violence, and trauma within postcolonial literary studies; explained how these phenomena occur in social reality drawing on Edward Said’s theory to analyze power interventions, and on Frantz Fanon’s theory to analyze violence and trauma, also how its constructed through literary representation; introduced *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe and *Tanah Tabu* by Anindita S. Thayf as the objects of the study; elaborated on how power intervention generates patterns of violence and trauma in both works; incorporated support from relevant previous studies; and emphasized the novelty of this research through a comparative literature approach based on the ideas of Susan Bassnett and Sapardi Djoko Damono. With this foundation, the study is directed toward contributing to a deeper understanding of how literary narratives construct the mechanisms of power intervention develop into various forms of violence and subsequently produce different forms of trauma according to the historical, cultural, and material contexts of each Indigenous community.

1.2 Statement of Problem

From several explanations regarding the finding of similar topic in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Anindita S. Thayf's *Tanah Tabu*. On this occasion the researcher tries to find information related to the topic of power intervention, violence, and trauma.

1. How is power intervention represented in *Things Fall Apart* and *Tanah Tabu*?
2. How does the forms of violence emerge as a result of the power intervention in the two novels?
3. How is trauma represented as the impact of the emerging power intervention and violence in the two novels?
4. What similarities and differences emerge from the representation of power intervention, violence, and trauma in the two novels?

1.3 Research Objective

Referring to the research problems previously formulated, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To analyze how power intervention is represented in *Things Fall Apart* and *Tanah Tabu*.
2. To identify what forms of violence, emerge as a result of the narrated power intervention in the two novels.
3. To examine how trauma is represented as the impact of the emerging power intervention and violence in the two novels.
4. To analyze the similarities and differences in the representation of power intervention, violence, and trauma in the two novels.

1.4 Research Significances

1.4.1 Theoretical Significance

1. This research contributes to postcolonial literary studies by analyzing the concepts of power intervention, violence, and trauma as interconnected phenomena within literary narratives.
2. It enriches comparative literature studies by demonstrating how similarity findings can be identified across two novels from different languages, cultures, and historical contexts.
3. The study strengthens the application of postcolonial theories in comparative analysis, particularly in examining how systems of domination shape violence and trauma in literary representations.

1.4.2 Practical Significance

1. This research can serve as a reference for students and researchers who study postcolonial literature and comparative literature
2. It offers guidance for future comparative studies that examine similar themes across literary works from different cultural backgrounds
3. This study encourages deeper and more critical reading of literary texts by highlighting the relevance of literature in understanding social and historical experiences of oppression.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Novel : A novel is a long narrative literary work written in prose that presents fictional events, characters, and social realities in a structured and sustained form, allowing in-depth exploration of human experience. (Hawthorn, 2022)

- Comparative Literature : Comparative literature is a field of literary study that examines literary works across different languages, cultures, and historical contexts to identify connections, similarities, and differences in themes and forms. (Bassnett, 1993)
- Postcolonial studies : Postcolonial studies is an interdisciplinary approach that analyzes the cultural, political, and literary effects of colonialism and its continuing impact on formerly colonized societies (Lazarus, 2004).
- Representation : Representation refers to the way literary texts construct, depict, and interpret reality through language, narrative structure, and perspective rather than simply reflecting reality as it is (Davidsen, 2018).
- Power Intervention : Power intervention is the exercise of authority or control by external forces that influences decisions, actions, and social structures, often shaping outcomes beyond the agency of individuals or communities (Korb & Nyberg, 2006).
- Violence : Violence is any form of action or practice that causes physical, psychological, or structural harm to individuals or groups, whether directly or indirectly exercised (Hamby, 2017).
- Trauma : Trauma refers to the psychological and emotional impact of overwhelming experiences that disrupt an individual's or community's sense of safety, identity, and continuity over time (Blehm, 2024).