

# CULTURAL VALUES AND THEIR CLASHES IN THE NOVEL THINGS FALL APART BY CHINUA ACHEBE

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## ABSTRACT

Integrating a number of people into one society and one system is easy for most of the societies around the world, bringing a set of principles, morality and culture with them to that society. Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* serves as the author's exposition of the complex relationship between indigenous and Western societies, arguing that no culture is perfect and that both have their strong and weak elements. This paper focuses primarily on the life of the Igbo and how their traditional way of life was changed by colonialism midway through the book. This paper contributes to the history of the Igbo people from southeastern Nigeria, explaining their cultural preferences and the powerful effect of colonialism on their communities.

**Keywords:** Culture, Society, Disorganization, Custom, Missionaries, Umuofia, Igbo, Nigeria

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### IGBO CULTURE AND ITS VALUES

Igbo Culture And Its Value Towards the final pages of the novel, rays of hope for the Igbo society are shown through the life of Okonkwo, this main character and a clan leader advocates for hard work, ambition and skill, traits of the Igbo people. Unoka, Okonkwo's father – a dreamer with no willpower to follow through, is a huge contrast to his son and so Okonkwo's strength and attitude made it easy for him become one of the finest wrestlers in the village.

Okonkwo thinks of himself as the complete opposite of his father, whom he regards with contempt, and goes to the extent of eliminating traits that are regarded as positive in human beings such as softness and kindness, as well as traits that are perceived as Negative, such as laziness or unreliability.

Moreover, this ambition also makes Okonkwo embody what the Igbo people strive for. As the society has stated, social status is not inherited, but made through the actions of individuals. Self-reliant, hardworking community members who are actively engaged in tribal customs are more likely to gain titles and honors within the community. Okonkwo's rise from obscurity to achiever is in line with this viewpoint as having wealth, strength and reputation puts him in the center of respect within the society of Umuofia where he hails from.

### **Cultural Strengths And Contradictions**

The culture of the Igbo is indeed one of the strongest features of this society, however, this can sometimes be accompanied by extreme and controversial practices. This is best seen through the killing of twins which was believed to be a myth. Twins were believed to be an evil omen and hence, were abandoned in the woods. Polygamy, oppression of women, and elimination of femininity also display the male superiority of the Igbo society. For example, men are always required to be in charge of their families and are expected to be harsh if need be. Weakness of character and failure to enforce discipline is interpreted as a potential threat to the male head of the family.

However, there are also some positive aspects that are tempered on the culture of Igbo.

It promotes living together and accepting the usual for relatives instead of dwelling in isolation. New Yam Festival is one examples that illustrate their appreciation of the earth goddess' fertility and abundance. Every ritual, every ceremony gives them a place and a link between the past and the present and helps to build closer relationship bonds within the society. There is domination of two almost unrelated worlds in the culture of the Igbo: beauty and terrible cruelty of human society in its variety.

Okonkwo traits depict this balance. First of all, he follows the moral fabric of the society, trying to be strong-dominated and disciplined. However, this barbaric masculinity causes them to ignore tenderness and compassion. Some elements of dominion, for example any violent behaviors towards shaking towards the wives when angry shows some negative side of masculinity in relation to gender relations in Igbo society

The Religion Eric S. is one of the Igbo and religion is a major part of his everyday life, which scales people that target and are scattered in the community context. Many Igbos worship other gods and goddesses that oversee various aspects of life. The supreme deity in this religious system is the highest deity, Chukwu, how created the universe. Other gods and goddesses specialize in certain areas like fertility, crop production, and justice.

The belief assures that the rituals practiced are meant to create and maintain equilibrium in the environment, and blessings are required from the spirits. This belief has no confusion better illustrated in the case of the Igbo people. Demonstrating practices and or piety and reinforcing community ties. Religion is inseparable from the indigeous tribe. A case and point is the Week of Peace, during which no one in society is allowed to engage in any conflict out of respect for the earth goddess Ani. This time, focuses on what matters in raising the crops, poiting out to the perpetual importance of Ani's favor. Illegitimacy abuse And when Okonkwo fails to observe such in the week of peace, beating his wife, the weakness of spirit is not only against Igbo ethos but also brings him under the breath of his community. Here is a strong sense shared by all societies when anger arises from love—similarly their rage must also be expressed through love. No wonder, Ifokowos masculinity is defined by the affirmation of purpose or fear that can weaken an already scarred reputation. There, always emerges throwback for Okonkwo—for, Unoka is to be the total opposite of the collaborated Ideal.

His emotional alienation has been seen most poignantly in his treating of Ikemefuna, a 12-year-old boy whom he subsequently kills, as though he were his own son. This was the climax of a culture-centric rage that left him wounded in its backwash.

### **Cultural Conflicts**

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* depicts, among many themes, one that relates to the impact of modern influences on existing cultures. When European missionaries came to the region, a new understanding was brought with them which deeply ambued and challenged the previously held beliefs and practices of the Igbo people.

#### **The Arrival of Missionaries**

Christianity, along with the missionaries, offers a new moral order to the people. The missionaries disavow Igbo ways as backward and uncivilized and offer their religion as something more advanced. This message resonates with some Igbos who are disenfranchised from traditional settings. Such was the case for Nwoye, Okonkwo's son who converts to Christianity, a religion that offers him what his father's deterministic outlook failed to do. His conversion is a reflection of the break between the old and new ways of life.

The missionaries' tactic of isolating the weak works over time and breaks the social bond amongst the Igbo people. They set up schools, churches, and commerce that over time, diffusion into the people. This kind of cultural interaction is problematic for the villagers as they struggle between maintaining their cultural identity or adopting new ways brought about by colonization.

### **The Impact on Community Dynamics**

The presence of the missionaries breeds divisions in families and villages. For instance, Okonkwo's relationship with Nwoye deteriorates as they hold divergent views. While Ibo Biography, the Ibo themselves consider Christianity as an assault on Igbo culture, for Nwoye it is a welcoming escape. Such divergence shows dependency generated by colonization.

Achebe employs these interpersonal conflicts to demonstrate the ongoing environmental disintegration of the culture and social cohesion within Igbo society. From a previously natural position of closing ranks, the community fractures up different faiths and dogma thus drifting further and closer to outside factors is inevitable. Then we notice with the Igbo people originated phenomena to the upland regional centre which in this case with Achebe Christians bloomed at the volcano and smōka the owa.

### **Okonkwo 's Tragedy**

OKONKWO'S RESISTANCE TOWARDS CHANGE (& EMPIRICAL ADHERENCE TO CULTURE) MAKES HIM A TRAGIC CHARACTER IN ACHES NARRATIVE: THE ONE WHO represents independence in the context of mutual overdrive expansion. Nnede, like other villagers who reconciled with dolorous reality, from the village maintains the course on centrist and does not move an inch.

The Murder of the Messenger In order to show defiance under the unprecedented insurity that prevails, Okonkwo violently decouples himself from monotony. Kure Isi son of Mandalay colonial messenger is an act narrates disintegration from the host society. The important thing is, why it indicates defeatism as another message from the struggle without one is impossible to have the support of all.

Consider for a moment the actions of Okonkwo, who believes he is protecting the Igbo way of life, and actions of fellow villagers who find the same counterproductive.

The narrator points out how such disconnect existed between the villagers and the narrator by mentioning how villagers looked perplexed and scared instead of standing united. It provides a glimpse into how society has started to disintegrate, with everyone putting themselves first instead of standing up as a group.

### **The Final Act Achievement**

In a wave of desperation, Okonkwo takes the step of committing suicide and this marks the end of his downfall. He held dearly his thoughts and ideas but they do not bear any fruits so what he does is take the ultimate sacrifice. Such a deed is very important culturally based on the symbolism that emanates from such deed. The act of committing suicide is one considered to be an abomination and in most cases leads to the deceased being denied burial. The cruel facts in the life of Okonkwo that lead to his death are due to his fear and the inability to remain loyal to tradition at the same time.

The tragedy of Okonkwo's life has socio-political implications as well, and Chinua Achebe wants readers of his novel to see things from this perspective. The tragedy of Okonkwo is the tragedy of the great Igbo society in its turn, which fails to brave the invasions brought to it by the British colonizers.

### **Feelings and Symbols**

Achebe artfully intertwines such popular subjects as life in a patriarchal community and the meaning of masculinity into Things Fall Apart so as to create an interplay of intricacies into it at the same time.

### **Masculinity and Changes**

In restating this conflict in Achebe's novel one can say that it is usually focused around two basic concepts: traditions and the changes within the Igbo society.

Okonkwo stands for the past mantra, while Nwoye and Obierika undertake the burden of doing something different and making the best of it. Achebe does not glorify either view, though, rather seeking to show how the culture changes in a complex way.

Okonkwo's aim as well as that of his tribe is masculine in nature driven by untamed forces. He is afraid of getting weak and so tries to button his emotions and always emotes strength. His masculinity is uncompromising and has enemies from outside and within him, and this ensures that he becomes a failure.

### **Colonization and Cultural Erosion**

The theme of colonization and its effects on culture is also addressed in the novel. Achebe laments over the brutalities carried out in the name of colonialism as well as the rendered societies. In giving voice to both the colonizers and the colonized, he draws attention to the perception altering factors in contemporary Africa.

### **CONCLUSION**

Every culture is bound to undergo a transformation, and this is part and parcel of the history of mankind. Periodic changes are essential for the continuity as highlighted by Arnold Toynbee in *A Study of History*. The Igbo people have to confront this in *Things Fall Apart* where the colonizers intervene and occupy them. Some, such as Obierika, develop a new admiration for the change and others like Okonkwo spurn these changes.

This perspective therefore adds value to Achebe's novel. It exposes the weakness of cultural systems, and the strength of the systems in undergoing change.

Achebe demonstrate to the audience through the narration the struggle of the Igbo people and the forces which intend to change the society.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

None.

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