

# Things fall apart

Sociology



The Power Of Women In Umuofia. The position and image of women in "Things Fall Apart" is an important topic. We could even say that women actually had great power and were revered. One might think that this novel presents women as a sadly oppressed group with no power, but there are several facts, which imply the contrary idea. For instance, women are the primary educators of children. Through story telling and other forms of discourse, they educate and socialize the children, inspiring in them intellectual curiosity about social values, relationships, and the human condition. The stories the women tell also develop the artistic consciousness of the children, in addition to entertaining them. The women bear children, cook and take care of the household in many other ways. Through their labor, they are an important pillar of the society.

Another essential fact is the presence of Chielo, the priestess of the Oracle of the Hills and Caves. She is a spiritual leader, whose authority is unquestioned., she is removed from the pale of normalcy. Clothed in the mystic mantle of the divinity she serves, Chielo transforms from the ordinary; she can reprimand Okonkwo and even scream curses at him: "Beware of exchanging words with Agbala [the name of the Oracle of the Hills and Caves]. Does a man speak when a God speaks Beware!" (Achebe 92) What is important, it is the biological role of women that influenced belief in their power. The idea is that women know the secret of life since they are the source of life.

In spite of the physical violence against women by the men, which is present in the novel; in spite of the exclusion of women from the house of the Egwugwu; in spite of the fact that the men made most of the important family and village decisions themselves, women did have much power.

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Women controlled the marketplace. This was a "separate sphere" apart from male dominance. Women exerted police and judicial power over the marketplace. For example, when a cow got loose, women formed a posse to round it up and return it to its owner, what is more, all women were obligated to join the posse, if any woman failed to join the posse, she could be fined. At last, they would fine the owner for carelessness.

In some other Ibo villages, women employed young men as police officers in the marketplace. These men were under the control of the women who ran the market.

A woman's family continued to protect her after she gets married, it did not allow overly-severe beatings executed by her husband. For example, in the story about the Egwugwu decision about a couple who were separated, the woman's brothers threatened to castrate the husband if he beat her again.

Women also have some choice of husbands: Ekwefi, the market partner and best friend of Chielo, ran away from her first husband to marry Okonkwo. We could say, that Chielo had enormous power over Okonkwo, and she used this power to protect her friend, Ekwefi. Chielo decreed the death of Ikemefuna. Her decision concerning Ikemefuna was motivated by the fact that Okonkwo had shot at Ekwefi. His participation in the sacrificial killing of Ikemefuna could be said to have ruined Okonkwo's life.

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

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fatherland and not to his motherland. And yet we say Nneka - " Mother is Supreme". " Why is that" (Achebe 94)

Uchendu answers the question himself: " A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you. She is buried there. And that is why we say that mother is supreme". (Achebe 94-95)".

#### Works cited

Achebe, Chinua, Things Fall Apart. New York: Ballantine Books, 1959.