

Review of (things fall apart)

[History](#)



Module History and Political Science: Review of (Things Fall Apart) What was the pattern of conflict between traditional African values, as exemplified by Igbo socio-cultural life, and those of the invading alien Western culture?

The socio cultural life of the Igbo tribe was characterized by obedience to more than ten gods and goddesses. There were numerous laws on what could be done or was viewed to be taboo. There was a strong patriarchal system in place which presumed that men were more important than women and children. The arrival of the Christian missionaries who not only looked down on the Igbo's beliefs but also disdained their numerous gods signaled the beginning of the end of Umuofia. In any tribal society, the unity of the community members and their obedience to the elders, gods and goddesses is of utmost importance. The missionaries affected this unity by drawing away the members of the society who were not perceived as being important by the Umuofia society. These men embraced the religion that taught them that they were as important as any other members of the society. Even though this change benefited the few who accepted the new religion, it also exposed the society to the possibility of being exploited by the missionaries.

What was the nature of relationship between the rich and the poor in the traditional Igbo society as represented by Okonkwo and his father, Unoka? Okonkwo was richer than his father, Unoka, ever was. Okonkwo hated what he perceived to be weakness in his father. He probably felt that his father had not been able to acquire riches and standing in the community because of being weak or 'feminine'. In Igbo society, the rich were feted but the poor were mostly disregarded and looked down upon. The poor had different false accusations put on them and it would appear that they were often the

scapegoats of the community whenever unexplainable things took place. In the book, Okonkwo, who had “ three wives, a barn full of yams, and two titles” was respected (Achebe, 18). However, his poor father was not even accorded a decent burial but carried to the forest to be eaten by wild animals.

Culture is not usually static but dynamic. Do you agree? Where would you place the Igbo culture? In your opinion, do you think that traditional practices such as the killing of twins would have withered away over time without the intervention of Europeans? Analyze this with specific examples from the novel.

Culture is always dynamic. The Igbo culture experienced its most challenging period with the coming of the White man. While the society’s respect of masculinity might give an impression of it being strong, it crumbled without the community members even staging a small war to chase away the missionaries. The Igbo community began a slow collapse because it had false foundations and actively destroyed the lives of all citizens who were not male and ruthless. It is unlikely that practices such as the murder of newborn twins would have ceased if the missionaries had not come. Essentially, the citizens seemed content to live in a most unequal society. The strange beliefs of the Igbo were based in their religious beliefs. For example, the Igbo believed in ‘ chance’ or ‘ luck’- which was defined in the Igbo culture as a ‘ Chi’ or personal god.

The quotation, “ A man could not rise beyond the destiny of his chi” which was not ascribed to anyone, appears to define the thoughts of the ordinary Igbo citizen (Achebe, 131). The reality is that even the Europeans who brought unwelcome change to Umuofia had to commit to working towards a

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seemingly impossible goal before they were successful in reaching Africa, let alone Okonkwo's land. It would appear that the residents of Umuofia merely waited for signs from elsewhere before they could make changes. Also, they believed that other outside factors were the only ones who could successfully effect change.

How unique were certain cultural practices such as arrangements and celebrations of marriages and deaths, punishment for heinous crimes such as murder for which Okonkwo was banished from Umuofia. Comment on Umuofia's sense of justice.

Umuofian society may not have had extremely cruel punishments for male criminals; however, it was extremely cruel to the helpless in society. Women, for example, had no chance of choosing their own spouses. Young children could be killed by their fathers with no retribution, as happened with Ikemefuna, because they were viewed as being the property of their fathers. It could be said that Umuofia had a skewed system of justice- which insisted on serious dedication to gods they could not see, but supported deep cruelty being meted against more than half of the members of society. In an odd twist of fate, the minorities who were looked down on by the society would serve as the vehicle for its final disintegration. The people who were cast aside were the first ones to compromise the society by joining the church. In your own judgment, what specifically fell apart? How did things fall apart in Igbo society? Did things fall apart for the better?

The disintegration of Igbo society began long before the Europeans actually set foot in Umuofia. The disdain with which the poor and the women were treated caused them to turn away from loyalty to the community. Their minds were already set against the society, and all some of them needed to

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move against, was an opportunity. Things did not fall apart for the better of the community as a whole, though. Even though individuals were able to benefit from their acceptance of Christianity, the society would be converted into a machine that benefitted the White man and his economic purposes. The conquering of the society allowed the White man to steal resources, whether manpower or natural resources, that might have been used to benefit the community of Umuofia.

Work Cited

Achebe, Chinua. *Things fall Apart*. New York: Anchor, 1994. Print.