

# Religion as a Tool of Conquest in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart

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## Religion as a Tool of Conquest in Things Fall Apart

In the novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, the white men who come to Umuofia find success in conquering the village by challenging Ibo religion. Because the first white men to appear in Umuofia were missionaries, the slaughter of Ibo society began with the challenging of the highly-regarded religion of the Ibo people. The white men began their religious assault by openly denouncing the many gods worshipped by the Ibo in order to convert them to the new faith. After accomplishing this, the white men set out to prove that the Christian religion was superior to all others by defying the powers of the Ibo gods when they built their church upon the cursed ground of the Evil Forest. With the Ibo religion being proved powerless, the converts began challenging their former religion by killing the sacred python, revered by the people of [Umuofia](#). By attacking the fundamental teachings of the natives' religion, the Christians were able to effectively conquer the Ibo people.

The Christians first step in taking over the people of Umuofia was to preach that the Ibo gods were false. As the white man spoke against the Ibo gods, saying that worshipping

gods of “wood and stone” ([Achebe](#), 125) was fruitless, the natives were confused. They did not understand how this could be so, and they were both amused and shocked that anyone would suggest an idea that they perceived to be so ridiculous. The Ibo questioned the white man, wondering “who will protect us from... our neglected gods and ancestors” and were curious about his teachings. In doing so, it becomes apparent that the white man had succeeded in planting doubt in their minds about their religion. The Ibo were then unsure as ...

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...faith had been tested several times, and had failed on all occasions. The Ibo people, at this point, had given up, and the Christians were victorious over the village and its clan.

By forcing the Umuofians to question their religion, the Christians were able to successfully take over the village. They first challenged the Ibo religion by telling the villagers that their gods were not real. After this, the Christians built their church in the Evil Forest and defied the Umuofian gods who did nothing to stop the church, letting down the Ibo people. At the point of the killing of the python by a clansman, the Umuofian religion had been defeated in the eyes of its believers, and no longer held any real weight. The Christians were therefore able to effectively conquer the Ibo by attacking their religion, which had been uncontested up until that point in history.

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