

Masculinity vs. Femininity in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart

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Masculinity vs. Femininity in Things Fall Apart

If viewed on the surface the story line of Things Fall Apart is a tragedy, but when viewed in a wider perspective it is a story of deeper conflict. The main issue is that the British have come to establish a mission and receive converts. Less evident is the conflict this [intrusion](#) inserts between the Ibo and British. The underlying issue is masculinity versus femininity. By this I mean to say that the Ibo are an [agrarian](#) people who are a patriarchal and see any sign of weakness as being less than desirable. The protagonist in the story, Okonkwo, is the champion of this thought. As what would happen to him seems to happen to the Ibo. When Okonkwo disagrees he is usually correct and the tribe would suffer the same fate and vice versa.

In the novel the Chi is a powerful spirit that determines a man's lot in life. One such instance is when Okonkwo was disbanded from his home for a Feminine murder; Clearly his personal god or Chi was not made for great things. A man could not rise above the destiny of his Chi.

The saying of his [elders](#) was not true---that a man who said yea his Chi also affirmed. Here was a man whose Chi said nay despite his own affirmations. (p. 131) The Chi then is the most important aspect of Ibo society. The most compelling argument for conflict between the British colonists and the Ibo lies directly within the tribes Chi.

Chi, as stated, is the will of a man. The Ibo are guided by this and believe that they can only rise to the level to which their personal God will allow. (p.131) This being the case the Ibo themselves are destined to rise only as far as their cumulative Chi will allow. If the Chi of the British is strong, eve...

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...ung lazy and reliant on the whites. When Okonkwo's own son joins the church he must have felt a great sadness that his son was weak in mind, and would become softened by the white culture. Feminine versus masculine traits is the controversy in this instance. Okonkwo has built his whole life on the masculinity of the tribe. The masculinity is what helps the tribe survive.

Chi as discussed in this novel is the concept most important to understanding the conflict within. Okonkwo's Chi is strong, and immersed the Umuofia in a battle with the British. Further underlying conflict resides in the lack of written law in African society, which led the British to assume they were not civilized, and in a constant state of anarchy. These characteristics coupled with an effeminate church led to the tragic end to Okonkwo's life, and eventually the Umuofia culture.

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