

Semiotic Construction of Masculinity in *Things Fall Apart*

Dr. Ujjwala Kakarla

Asst. Prof of English
Department of Humanities and Sciences
VNRVJIET, Hyderabad, India

Abstract:

Chinua Achebe's, the first novel and masterpiece, *Things Fall Apart* emphasizes the importance of pride and masculinity in an antiquated community, where its residents are mainly hunters and farmers. Masculinity has a huge impact on the lives of traditional and pre-colonial Igbo tribe in West Africa. Igbo tribes in Africa highly support male masculinity and dominance. From a young age the individuals are molded to understand the concept of male superiority. If anyone digresses away from this idea, is thought of as weak by the community. The rigid separation of maleness and femaleness in the Igbo society produces a constant duality which is never resolved and that weakens its strength from within. In *Things Fall Apart*, the protagonist, Okonkwo's life is derived from his obsession with masculinity and his fear of failure and being like his father. Okonkwo's entire life revolves around masculinity, and this ends of being his biggest flaw. In the end, Okonkwo's ends up committing suicide after realizing there was nothing else he could do with his life. The more he tried to show he wasn't weak, the more miserable his life became. How much would it take Okonkwo's to realize that his greatest fear would finally lead to his death? The strong sense of masculinity that contributed to Okonkwo's success led him to believe that he was invincible above all else, yet it was also the very sense that's responsible for his downfall. The aim of this research paper is to explore the masculinity of the central character by means of semiotic representation and how it brings about his undoing, despite the fact that he lives in a conservative society where masculinity is revered. One of the reasons why Igbo society was unable to protect its culture, tradition and religion from missionaries and colonialism was its rigid conception of masculinity.

Keywords: Chinua Achebe, Igbo tribe, Okonkwo's, Masculinity, dominance, Antiquated Community, success, downfall, culture, tradition, religion. Semiotic Representation.

Introduction

Things Fall Apart portrays the traditional Igbo life that revolves around structured gender roles. Essentially, all of Igbo life is gendered, from the crops that men and women grow, to characterization of crimes. In Igbo culture, women are the weaker sex, but are also endowed with qualities that make them worthy of worship, like the ability to bear children. The ideal man provides for the family materially and has prowess on the battlefield. The protagonist, Okonkwo is extremely concerned with being hyper-masculine and devalues everything feminine, leaving him rather unbalanced. Okonkwo's prejudice against femininity stems from his late father, Unoka. Unoka is a lazy man who owes many debts to many people and rarely thinks ahead. Growing up with essentially a deadbeat father is incredibly embarrassing for Okonkwo. He hates everything about Unoka, it extends his misogyny far past what his society already teaches him. He grows to hate everything about femininity and weakness and grows an obsession with masculinity and power. In the article "Culture in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*," Diana Akers Rhoads mentions that the novel presents the best men as combining the masculine and feminine. Okonkwo is defective in his rejection of the feminine, but the tribal norms combine the masculine and feminine." (African Studies Review 36, 1993, p.71).

Things Fall Apart digs underneath the structure and tradition of Igbo culture which celebrates the customs centered on male dominance. The protagonist, Okonkwo's turns to be the major focus of study who tries to maintain all the traits of masculinity with strict application. His extreme 'macho man' life rejects any practice which might associate him with his father. The novel offers the motives behind Okonkwo's sheer concern regarding preservation of male dominance. Achebe's narrative of Okonkwo's character associating description of physical power, wealth, authority and violence portrays the masculinity in *Things Fall Apart*. The description of wrestling, battles, yam feasts or Clan meeting upholds the supremacy of males sending all other ideals to the periphery. According to Connell, "Ibo society, very much like Western society in pre-feminist times, organizes its social practice through gendered binaries. Thus, courage, bravery, aggression, activity, is all deemed to be 'masculine' features, whereas, in direct opposition, weakness, gentleness, passivity, and submissiveness are regarded as 'feminine' attributes. By definition then, 'no masculinity arises except in a system of gender relations.'" (Masculinities, 1995, p.71)

Masculinity is the novel's most important theme, as it means a great deal to the novel's protagonist, Okonkwo, and motivates many of his actions. Though not a village elder Okonkwo is no longer a young man, so his ideas of masculinity come from a time which begins to fade. Much of his view of manhood develops in response to his father, who favored chatting and socializing over hard work and died indebted and unable to provide for his family, an embarrassing fate that is considered weak and feminine. Okonkwo, therefore, believes in action and strength. He first came to prominence in the community as an impressive wrestler. When he began a family, he focused on toiling away in the field rather than idling with acquaintances, actions that reflected his attitude that agriculture is masculine and talking is feminine. According to Achebe, "Agbala for instance, is not only a term for a woman, but also the term for a man who is said to be weak and has not taken any titles within his clan. And it is this term precisely which also takes the analysis to the very core of Okonkwo's need to assert his masculinity: his father Unoka. In his eyes, 'Unoka, the grown-up, is a failure.'" (Things Fall Apart, 2001, p.4)

The protagonist Okonkwo's is spotted to be directed by the fear of failure and pressure of establishment throughout his life. To get rid of weakness, he sheds any kind of sensivity which might lure him to surrender to soft feeling or affection. As showing any

sign of emotion is considered to be feminine, display of sheer strength is the true construction of masculinity. If a male digress from the stereotyped masculine features, he will be labeled as effeminate like Okonkwo's father Unoka. Glover and Kaplan point out, „the differences between men and women had to be sharply emphasized and feminine traits had to be kept firmly in their proper place in men, they were a sign of weakness“ (Genders, 2000, 60-61) Display of male domination is constructed and displayed around Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* which serves as his best defense against any critical situation. To mask his insecurity and fear to be recognized as effeminate he is always on his toe to execute the conventional masculinity. It is his shield in progress and maintenance of clan life where he is always conscious of preserving the prestige which he has achieved. The barren life of his father haunts him restricting him from being gentle and idle. He builds his personality judging against the traits of his father's life and always maintains the check sheet to be a contrast of his effeminate father. According to Olney, “Okonkwo's life depends entirely on its creator [himself] for its configuration.” (Metaphors of Self, 1972, p.4) Judging against the traits of his father's life and always maintains the check sheet to be a contrast of his effeminate father. Okonkwo's life "depends entirely on its creator [himself] for its configuration" (Olney, 4)

The society on which the story of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is based, the fictional Umuofia, can be any society in Igbo land, in the present Southeastern Nigeria. Its uniqueness is reinforced by the strong cultural notion of “otherness.” In other words, the males are different from the females, on one hand; and on the other, some males who have distinct male characteristics (masculine) are different from other men. The obvious considerations of the term, masculinity thus draw upon the perceived differences between the male and female sexes, and equally within the (male) sex. In other words, at the ordinary level, the masculine character is likely to be a man, different from the woman. However, this is not enough, because, the man in question should be distinct in order to be properly masculine. The man of “masculine behavior” is more or less, one who taps into the heroic behavior, and drawing upon it, shapes his own character. He essentially distinguishes himself from “other males,” then far above the other sex. However, all are within human abilities. There is no need for the masculine character to transcend humanity, into the realm of the divine. He is like any other man in the society; makes the mistakes others make; could become a victim of societal prejudices; obeys and keeps the taboos of the society like other people; but must be distinguished in all acts. Kevin Alexander Boon states, “Heroic qualities serve as models for privileged masculine behavior. In the first sense, the hero figure is an unattainable object of desire that occupies the transcendent realm of the divine; in the second sense, the hero figure engenders masculine affiliation through its presumed presence in the masculine other--that is, the man who is labeled "hero" is always other. No hero may label himself a hero without risking his heroic status.” (Heroes, Met narratives and the Paradox of Masculinity in Contemporary Western Culture. 2005, pp: 301+.)

In the lives of Achebe's male characters in *Things Fall Apart*, as well as the general conceptions of the society of Umuofia, the notion of masculinities, is defined by specific traits of maleness, which appear to be collectively approved by the society. There are bound to be varied opinions and responses in consideration of Achebe's characters in *Things Fall Apart*. Okonkwo, for instance, would be more compliant to prescriptive or norm-based masculinity, while he equally struggles, albeit, without good success to meet the “culturally constructed expectations about behavior appropriate for men. According to Levant, “A man is considered masculine when he possesses the characteristics of culturally constructed expectations about behavior appropriate for men.” (The Male Role: An Investigation of Contemporary Norms. 1992, pp. 325- 337.) The research paper focuses on the semiotic representation of masculinity in Igbo tribe by means of the central character, Okonkwo, his obsession and sheer concern regarding preservation of male dominance, his masculinity compared to that of his clan and values and finally his downfall due to the origins of excessive manly behavior. Achebe's narrative of Okonkwo's character associating description of physical power, wealth, authority and violence portrays the masculinity in *Things Fall Apart*.

Semiotic Representation of Masculinity in Okonkwo

In portrayal of macho personality, Okonkwo's strong physical appearance comes first in sight in the novel. Achebe has drawn image of a man with full of appreciation for his muscle power and ability which is associated with his manliness in the clan. He is tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose give him a very severe look. In other words, not only does he look manly with his tall, muscular built, it seems like he lives the values that are perceived as manly by Ibo society. According to Connell, “He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very severe look. He breathed heavily, and it was said that, when he slept, his wives and children in their houses could hear him breathe” (Masculinities, 1995, p. 67) The minute detail of big body, eyebrows and big nose are the standout features of Okonkwo's physic. Because of special attraction of wrestling in Igbo culture, he is celebrated with deep respect and recognition all of which come because of his bodily features. Achebe draws comparison with women to illustrate the significance of such feature which vividly portrays importance of bodily strength in masculinity of Igbo culture. Achebe describes, “He was a very strong man and rarely felt fatigue. But his wives and young children were not as strong, and so they suffered. (Things Fall Apart, 2001, p.3). Okonkwo is characterized as a hard-working, courageous, aggressive man. He is often described in terms of fire and flames- his nick name is even ‘Roaring Flame’- so, to him, fire symbolizes potential, masculinity and life. Okonkwo is like a fire, really. He only ever allows himself to show one emotion: anger. He believes this is the masculine, manly way to communicate. He rages at people a great deal, whether he's threatening and nearly shooting his second wife, yelling at his children, or fighting. Fire has another side. Fire is incredibly powerful, but it's also very destructive. It can destroy lives just as Okonkwo does as he struggles to show his masculinity. Not only is he known for his qualities as a wrestler, he has also taken two titles and has shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. He is the first person in Umuofia who brings a human head from war. In tribal fight he likes to lead from the front and wants everyone to be aggressive in winning. Against white people, he stands like the one man army to initiate assault. Though whole clan stays quiet, he takes it as his sole responsibility to resist the aggression of the white men. According to Graham Dawson, “Military virtues such as aggression, strength, courage and endurance have repeatedly been defined as the natural and inherent qualities of manhood. And his eminence as a warrior is exactly one of the ways in which Okonkwo asserts his manhood”. (Soldier Heroes,

1994, p. 1). In *Things Fall Apart*, Yams are symbols of masculinity, wealth and strength. Yams are like sweet potatoes and in Okonkwo's world; they are an important crop grown exclusively by men. The more yams a man has, the wealthier and more respected he is. In other words, a man's worth is judged by the worth of his yams. Okonkwo can't begin his journey into manhood until he, as a teen, obtains a starter pack of seed yams from a wealthy benefactor. Also, Okonkwo's father leaves him no inheritance and no land on which to plant yams, which demonstrates his lack of strength, both as a provider and as a man, to Okonkwo and the community. Okonkwo grows wealthy and well-respected through his excellent yam yields. Planting and growing yams is hard work, and not everyone succeeds at it. According to Achebe, "He has over time become well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rests on solid personal achievements." (*Things Fall Apart*, 2001, p. 3)

In Okonkwo's view, agriculture is related to masculinity, and it is also of great importance in the village of Umuofia. This is still a very agrarian society, so, naturally, great importance is placed on the growing of food, and those who are not able to do so, like Okonkwo's father, are looked down upon in the community. Additionally, seeds for growing yams, which are the most prominent crop, are a form of currency, as the bestowing of them indicates a respect for and investment in the receiver. For example, Okonkwo does not receive any seeds from his father, who dies with nothing, and as such, he is given several hundred seeds by various members of the community. This is done for practical reasons, so that Okonkwo can grow crops, but also as a symbolic act, to indicate that the people of the village still admire him despite his bad luck and hardships. Therefore, when Okonkwo begins to notice that his son does not have much of an aptitude or interest in farming, he worries that he is not properly masculine. In fact, he begins to admire his adopted son, Ikemefuna, before he ultimately kills him, because he displays an interest in working around the house and in the field to produce crops. According to Thompson, E. H., Pleck, J. H., & Ferrera, "In prescriptive or norm-based masculinity, the central idea is that "males act in the ways they do, not because of their male role identity, or their level of masculine traits, but because of the conception of masculinity they internalize from their culture". (*Men and masculinities*, 1992, pp.573-607)

Okonkwo's version of manhood is based, therefore, on the fear of being considered weak. It is explicitly exemplified in the way in which he treats his son, Nwoye. Nwoye, for him, is too 'feminine', like his grandfather: he likes music, he adores his mother's moral tales (which he denies, in order to please his father) and he is simply too sensitive and emotional. Okonkwo feels disgraced by his effeminate son, even more so, when he joins the Christian Church. Again, there is the gendered differentiation between weakness and women, and strength and men. Masculinity is, for Okonkwo always asserted by this gendered, binary opposition. 'Men no more than women are chained to the gender patterns they have inherited and Okonkwo seems to be aware of this, as he uses this construct to almost force his other sons into behaving manly. According to Connell, "Masculinity" is not a coherent object about which a generalizing science can be produced. Moreover, it is important to notice at this point, that the different concepts of masculinity are always tightly interweaved with other social constructs and the respective expectations thereof, such as race, gender, class, age, religion, and so forth. (*Masculinities*, 1995, p. 67)

Right from the beginning, Okonkwo dissociates himself from his father Unoka and later his first son Nwoye. It is also for the same reason that he develops a strong attachment to Ezinma and Ikemefuna. Even though both Unoka and Nwoye are males, both of them lack the maleness principles that translate to normative masculinity, which Okonkwo discerns in Ikemefuna; and on the other hand, though Ezinma is female, she seems to possess the traits that conform to masculinity ideology. Hoffman states, "Maleness describes masculinity and femaleness describes femininity; again, this does not mean that there are human qualities that are inherently female or male; maleness/masculinity may mean different things to different men just as women's conceptualizations of their femaleness/femininity will vary." (*Personal Definitions of Masculinity and Femininity as an Aspect of Gender Self-Concept*, 2005)

Okonkwo's extreme obsession with appearing manly is deeply rooted, and he refuses to yield to ideas that go against his beliefs. When he finds himself fond of Ikemefuna, the boy who, by decision of the clan elders, come to live in Okonkwo's household, it is an inward fondness, not to be outwardly shown, because of his emotional restraints. So he treats Ikemefuna like everyone else – using violence. The boy lives in Okonkwo's household for three years, and becomes a part of the family. One day, an oracle decrees that he be killed. The message is brought to Okonkwo by Ezeudu, who is a greatly respected man of old age and a former warrior. Deep within him, he would spare Ikemefuna, and even mentor him closely to become a respected member of the community. But in killing Ikemefuna, Okonkwo suppresses his "male role identity... masculine trait...; what in other words would have made him stand out as a distinct man within the society. He rather works towards conforming to his notions of societal approval of the man. To him, these are qualities and actions that are capable of securing a place for him in the masculine circle. These are part of what it takes to be a real man for a clansman. Ernest A. Champion observes, "Ezeudu's suggestion presents to Okonkwo a dilemma which he is incapable of rationalizing." (*The Story of a Man and His People*, 1974, pp. 272-77.)

As proud as Okonkwo is of his latest show of manliness however, even he is not emotionally unaffected by the killing of Ikemefuna. For two days afterwards, he refuses to eat, and cannot sleep, spends time drinking palm-wine in his hut in an attempt to forget what he has done. Reflecting over his own emotions, he disapproves of them and calls himself a shivering old woman. He tries to reason with his feelings, arguing that a man who has killed five men in the battle should not fall to pieces because he has boy to their number. Patrick C. Nnoromele calls the death of Ikemefuna, "An invocation of contrasting emotional reactions ... which dramatizes what Okonkwo apprehends as a dichotomy between strength and gentleness". (*The plight of a Hero in Achebe's Things Fall Apart*, 2000, pp. 146-57.)

Umofia allows violence to be a part of phallogocentric world where beating anyone is the expression of manly power. Okonkwo performs domestic violence several times in the novel without receiving much of criticism. He beats his wives and son to channel his masculine anger which is excused as the allowed practice of clan. Okonkwo has always believed that being able to keep the household under control is a prime feature of manliness. He thinks, no matter how prosperous a man is, if he is unable to rule his women and his children, he is not really a man. He abuses his wife Ojiugo when she forgets to return home in time to do her duty of preparing his afternoon meals. It was the week of peace and a man should not say a harsh word. Okonkwo has committed a great evil that can ruin the whole clan. Okonkwo is generally not a religiously irreverent person; he is described as worshipping and god-fearing. Yet his adherence to masculine dominance is so tenacious that it drives him to commit sacrilege, fully aware that he will have to suffer the consequences. The only time a crack can be glimpsed in his masculinity is when he spends time with his daughter, Ezinma, to whom he has taken a special liking. Although his fondness for her only shows on rare occasions, the fact that it shows at all means that his stoicism is not absolute. Ellsworth argues, "If Ezinma is a source of comfort for Okonkwo throughout his troubled life, it is because she subdues his manhood, balancing the masculine and the feminine attributes to make him a full person." (**The Ogbanije Child in Achebe's Things Fall Apart, 1992, pp. 170-76**)

In another ironical twist in Okonkwo's attempts to make sure his son grows up to be a man, his manly obligation to kill Ikemefuna turns Nwoye away from the conservative, masculine path that his father urgently wants for him. Eventually, Nwoye disowns his father and joins the Christian missionaries, whose teachings seem to satisfyingly confirm and explain the doubts he has had about the cruel customs of his clan's religion. According to Kimmel, "Nurturing is integral to rearing and stands the risk of being feminized if it is not claimed as part of trait masculinity. This may explain why it does not occur to Okonkwo, initially, to conceive nurturing Nwoye, his son, and even Ikemefuna, his foster child as part of an assessment of how successful he is as a man. However, towards the end of the story, he feels a sense of failure and inadequacy when Nwoye leaves the ways of the clan to embrace Christianity. (**Epilogue: A Degendered Society? In M. S. Kimmel (Ed.), 2000b, pp. 264-268**)

With the arrival of the Europeans, the village's agricultural tradition comes into conflict with the newcomers' industrial technology, such as the "iron-horse" (i.e., bicycle), which the villagers tie to a tree. The Europeans are able to change the landscape of the community through their industrial advantage, so the colonization of Africa represents the power of industry over agriculture. The arrival of the Europeans marks the beginning of the end of African agricultural society as Okonkwo understood it, and was personified by him. While many of the clansmen are willing to accept the good things brought by the Christian missionaries, even if they do not succumb to the new religion, Okonkwo's pride and strict adherence to the customs of his clan prevents him from admitting anything favorable about them. According to Achebe, "The Christian messages of love obviously do not appeal to the unemotional Okonkwo, and he knows that he could never achieve his great passion—to become one of the lords of the clan." (**Things Fall Apart, 1986, p.92**)

Change is one of the most important overarching ideas of the novel. As we have seen in the span of Okonkwo's life, much of what he understood about his society and his ideas on gender and labor in particular, undergo substantial change. Okonkwo changes his fortune from that of impoverished son to titled father—only to be punished into exile. The Europeans arrival stirs about a whole host of changes as well, most notably because they initiate a sort of metaphorical feminization of the society as a whole. This change is so great that Okonkwo, perhaps the toughest of all the men in the village, cannot abide by it, and chooses death by his own hand over life under the colonizer's thumb, an act that is, of course, seen as the most feminine of all. When he realizes that his clan is not behind him, he returns home and hangs himself in a tree behind his compound, completing the fourth death. According to Achebe, "Even though suicide is an offence against earth according to his beliefs, his pride drives him to kill himself, knowing his body will be considered evil, when the only alternative is succumbing to the people that he considers his enemies." (**Things Fall Apart, 1986, p.147**)

In Okonkwo's world and culture, masculinity is to a large extent shaped by the unseen forces around the man. Examples abound in his case for instance, he has worked so hard and made a tremendous progress in all fields of life and also gained wide recognition and acceptance in Umuofia, yet tragedy has continued to befall him. At the domestic level, he is unable to attain satisfaction in his son Nwoye. He conceives that as tragic because if Nwoye does not walk in line with cultural expectations, then his entire life will be a failure. More so, even the child that seems to be capable of holding forth for his idea of masculine greatness, Ezinma, is biologically female and does not in reality belong to him. At the larger social level, he offends the land and the people when he inadvertently shoots and kills a clansman. This singular act, conditioned by forces beyond human control sets him back to the beginning of life. The most tragic incident would be when he has, towards the end of the story, concluded to demonstrate his understanding of masculinity by contending with all external forces for the retention of clan purity. He has wished that the entire clan will think and decide along with him, but he also has prepared himself to go alone if others refuse to follow. As a result, therefore, he single-handedly, challenges and kills the Whiteman's messenger. On discovering his lone action, he commits suicide. This final act appears to have ruined all he labored for in his entire life. Perhaps, he is destined to end up in dishonor, like his father. Yet, Okonkwo is not directly responsible for all these. Therefore, trait masculinity is somehow moderated by spiritual forces. According to Okoro, Physical expressions of contraries to the 'culturally constructed expectations' of the society in the analysis of Okonkwo's character appear obvious. Some of such expressions, though physical, are actually beyond the physical; in fact they are spiritual. Their consideration is informed still by the nature of the society under examination, where, there is a "plenum of forces." It invariably means that one cannot separate "being from forces or forces from being... spirit

or force has primacy over matter which indicates the all pervading and all permeating nature of spirit". (**The Igbo Worldview 2001, p.190**)

Conclusion

The patriarchal dominance in Igbo culture is manifested through the character of Okonkwo who lives his whole life running away from femininity. The atmosphere of Umuofia recognizes supremacy of male dominance which dashes all the female characters to the background. Selected rituals and customs are centered on the male characters where the women stand as mere props. Okonkwo's dominance omits the possibility of the representation of any other values. Hyper-masculinity of Okonkwo leaves him in a sea of formats from where he can never find any escape. The idea of masculinity does not compromise with its standards in Igbo culture. As a result, the protagonist leads a pre-decided life from his childhood driven by the macho man concept which he picks up in his early age. Okonkwo takes the standards to extreme of his lifestyle being always conscious of its maintenance which brings downfall of his life eventually. Okonkwo's burning rage and desire to be masculine results in the ash of his familial relationships and the ash of his own life as he commits suicide ending in tragedy. Kimmel points out, "Maleness has meanings which vary from one society/culture to another, within any society/culture over time, within each individual over time, and, perhaps most important, among different individuals in one group at one point in time (i.e., within-group variability). In the lives of Achebe's male characters in *Things Fall Apart*, as well as the general conceptions of the society of Umuofia, the notion of masculinities, is defined by specific traits of maleness, which appear to be collectively approved by the society. (**The Gendered Society Reader, 2000a, pp.1-6**) The battle between masculinity and femininity are socially constructed ideas which tend to vary from people to people, place to place and even individual to individual. The conflict really is not between male and female, masculinity and femininity, rather it is about cultural ideas and beliefs about masculinity. The main character in the novel, *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo represents the traditional masculine culture. He wanted to take action and kill everyone who was trying to change his way of life that he grew up with. Masculinity is so important to Okonkwo that he would have done everything he could to prevent anyone from questioning his masculinity. He built his whole life on the masculinity of the tribe, the masculinity that helped the tribe survive before the arrival of the Western culture and ideologies who unable to fit into the new effeminate way of life commits suicide. According to Achebe, "His whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and weakness. It was deeper and more intimate than the fear of evil and capricious gods and of magic, the fear of the forest, the forces of nature, malevolent, red in tooth and claw. Okonkwo's fear was greater than these. It was not external, but lay deep within himself." (**Things Fall Apart, 1986, pp.9-10**) Okonkwo's dominance omits the possibility of the representation of any other values. Hyper-masculinity of Okonkwo leaves him in a sea of formats from where he can never find any escape. The idea of masculinity does not compromise with its standards in Igbo culture. As a result, the protagonist leads a pre-decided life from his childhood driven by the macho man concept which he picks up in his early age. Okonkwo takes the standards to extreme of his lifestyle being always conscious of its maintenance which brings downfall. Thus, the pride of his manhood and fear of losing his own masculinity fuels all other traits resulting in Okonkwo's eventual tragedy.

References

1. Akers Rhoads, Diana. "Culture in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *African Studies Review* 36 (1993): 61-72.
2. R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 71
3. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 4
4. Kapline, C., & Glover, D. (2000). *Genders*. London: Routledge
5. Olney, James. *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972
6. Boon, K. A. (2005). "Heroes, Met narratives and the Paradox of Masculinity in Contemporary Western Culture." *The Journal of Men's Studies*. 13. 3. pp: 301+. Men's Studies Press; COPYRIGHT 2005 Gale Group
7. Levant, R. F., Hirsch, L., Celentano, E., Cozza, T, Hill, S., MacEachern, M., Marty, N., & Schnedeker, J. (1992). *The Male Role: An investigation of Contemporary Norms*. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 14, 325- 337.
8. Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 1
9. Thompson, E. H., Pleck, J. H., & Ferrera, D. L. (1992). Men and masculinities: Scales for masculinity ideology and masculinity-related constructs. *Sex Roles*, 27, 573-607.
10. Hoffman, R.M., Hattie. J. A. & Borders, D. L. (2005). Personal Definitions of Masculinity and Femininity as an Aspect of Gender Self-Concept. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*. 44. 1, 66+. COPYRIGHT 2006 Gale Group
11. Champion, Ernest A. "The Story of a Man and His People: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *Negro American Literature Forum* 8, (1974): 272-77.
12. Nnoromele, Patrick C."The plight of a Hero in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*" *College Literature* 27 (2000): 146-57.
13. Aji, Aron and Kirstin Lynne Ellsworth. "Ezinma: The Ogbanje Child in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*." *College Literature* 19-20 (1992):170-76.
14. Kimmel, M. S. (2000b). Epilogue: A Degendered Society? In M. S. Kimmel (Ed.), *The Gendered Society* (pp. 264-268). New York: Oxford University Press.
15. Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. London: Heinemann, 1986, p. 92.
16. Ibid. p. 147.
17. Okoro, C., (2001). "The Igbo Worldview". In A. E. Eruvbetine (Ed.), *Humanistic Management of Pluralism*. Lagos: University of Lagos Press.
18. Kimmel, M. S. (2000a). Introduction. In M. S. Kimmel (Ed.), *The Gendered Society Reader* (pp. 1-6). New York: Oxford University Press