

tial placement of the women is important. Indeed, the women are outsiders; although the trial is about a woman's experience of violence from her husband, no woman has been invited to join the *ndichie* council of elders. Even Mgbafo, Uzowulu's wife whose case is being tried, is not invited to speak. She remains silent as do the other women who stand as props to a male-dominated hearing. When the two quarreling parties face each other before the elders in the *ilo*, Mgbafo is the lone woman. She is surrounded by two groups of men, three in each group. Uzowulu's party consists of his two relatives and him, while Mgbafo is accompanied by her three brothers, who act as her protectors. Achebe further underscores the "maleness" of this trial and of the *egwugwu* by pointing out that women cannot enter the "*egwugwu* house," although "specially chosen women" decorate the outside of the house. "These women never saw the inside of the hut. No woman ever did....No woman ever asked questions about the most powerful and the most secret cult in the land."<sup>67</sup> Clearly, in Okonkwo's Umuofia, patriarchy dominates because "the nine villages of Umuofia had grown out of the nine sons of the first father of the clan."<sup>68</sup> Thus, the nine *egwugwu* spirits represent the nine patriarchs of the nine villages of Umuofia.

Manhood or maleness in traditional Igbo society as presented in *Things Fall Apart* rests on a man's achievement or demonstration of his ability to achieve some measure of success. Hence, Unoka, Okonkwo's father, is seen as a failure because he was lazy, had not "taken a title" before his death, did not show or make any attempt to achieve any success, including maintaining his own farms, and "was heavily in debt."<sup>69</sup> Unlike his father, "Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements."<sup>70</sup> Okonkwo had thrown "Amalinze the Cat... the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino."<sup>71</sup> Okonkwo's great feat had gained him a title and brought honor to his village. Nwakibie praises a young Okonkwo when he visits the elder man seeking to borrow some "seed-yams" from Nwakibie.<sup>72</sup> The latter agrees to lend Okonkwo twice the amount of yams he requested because Nwakibie "can tell a ripe corn by its look."<sup>73</sup> In other words, Nwakibie can "read" Okonkwo's determination and senses that Okonkwo will succeed where other young men his age will not. Besides,



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Okonkwo has already earned his people's respect, for although "[he] was still young...he was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife...he was already one of the greatest men of his time."<sup>74</sup>

The *ikenga* is generally used by the Igbo to signify a man's success or achievement, and most titled men in traditional Igbo society had an *ikenga*, a wooden statue that could be described as the symbolization of a man's personal god. According to cultural anthropologist Dorothy C. Ukaegbu, an *ikenga* "was the embodiment of Igbo manhood and a powerful emblem upon which male authority and identity were constructed....As an emblem (symbol) the *ikenga* encoded key cultural messages and values that must be adhered to in order for a male to be perceived as