

CHANGES IN THE GENDER ROLES OF THE IGBO SOCIETY IN RESPONSE TO EUROPEAN COLONIZATION

CLAIM: The gender roles in the Igbo society of Nigeria shifted from incorporating relatively egalitarian ideas to incorporating strict patriarchal ideas in response to European colonization.

I. MEN'S PLACEMENT IN THE SOCIAL HIERARCHY

A. Prior to European colonization, men in the Igbo society filled a high societal status amongst others in the hierarchy.

1. A polygamy existed in which an individual associates with multiple spouses. From this, men got entitled to power in a marriage by taking on the responsibility of providing for women (*Igbo*, 2017, p. 310).
2. Families typically placed male figures at the head as opposed to female figures. In this way, members of the community viewed men slightly more formidable (*Historical Context*, 2003).
3. Masculine characteristics, like courage and strength, considered to be crucial factors in earning respect for men (*Igbo*, 2009, p. 282).
4. Thoughts amongst the Igbo society preserved former traditions by considering the birth of boys to be superior to the birth of girls (*Igbo*, 2017, p. 310).

B. Following European colonization, men in the Igbo society succeeded as the sole option for authority in the eyes of the British.

1. Western colonizers and African men sought the public domain of men as opposed to the public domain of women (*Gender*, 2008, p. 440).

2. Many aspects of the patriarchy depleted over time. Feminism movements inspired confident, intelligent women to take charge by challenging societal norms (Falola, 2007).

II. WOMEN'S PLACEMENT IN THE SOCIAL HIERARCHY

A. Prior to European colonization, women in the Igbo society filled a decent societal status amongst others in the hierarchy.

1. A great rank for women in terms of their treatment by the Igbo society prevailed despite an overwhelming presence of men (*Igbo*, 2009, p. 282).
2. Feminine characteristics, like calmness and selflessness, considered to be crucial factors in perceiving women. (*Igbo*, 2009, p. 282).

B. Following European colonization, women in the Igbo society failed as the impractical option for authority in the eyes of the British.

1. Although inadequate, Western education allowed women to gain new knowledge that could not have been attained before (*Igbo*, 2017, p. 310).
2. Grooms expected more money from brides through marriages in the Igbo society. In this way, expectations (*Igbo*, 2017, p. 310).

III. MEN'S ROLE IN THE GOVERNMENT

A. Prior to European colonization, men in the Igbo society occupied formidable responsibilities within the present political structures.

1. Members of the Igbo society appointed an assembly of male tribal elders in the form of masked spirits, known as the egwugu. From this, disputes reached verdicts by presenting their claims (*Historical Context*, 2003).

2. Despite the presumption that men held all the power in the Igbo society, women also possessed influential roles within the implemented governing systems (*Derrickson, 2007*).

B. Following European colonization, the implemented political structures granted men in the Igbo society with further control.

1. Europeans enforced a strict patriarchy in the Igbo society. As a result, men occupied most of the leadership roles (*Gender & Power, 2013*).

2. British colonialism practiced indirect rule through assigned native leaders, most of whom classified as men, within the village to correlate with the assumption that males were the only possible candidates (*Gender & Power, 2013*).

IV. WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE GOVERNMENT

A. Prior to European colonization, women in the Igbo society employed respected voices within the present political structures.

1. Enforced political structures consisted of a dual-sex system in which men and women formed separate governing groups. In this way, women voiced their thoughts to deplete male dominance (*Derrickson, 2007*).

2. Chielo, a female priestess of the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves with special powers, communicated information, knowledge, and wisdom to the Igbo society, reflecting trust in a female figure (*Historical Context, 2003*).

B. Following European colonization, the implemented political structures limited women in the Igbo society got limited in terms of influence.

1. Europeans eliminated the existence of female authorial figures to maintain their own cultural traditions (*Gender & Power*, 2013).
2. Collaborations between the male chiefs of the Igbo society and the colonial administration of Britain restrained positions for the female chiefs (Falola, 2007).

V. MEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE ECONOMY

A. Prior to European colonization, men in the Igbo society applied significant amounts of command across various contributions to the economy.

1. Men established themselves as skilled role models by taking charge of the community in response to anticipated expectations from the Igbo society (*Igbo*, 2009, p. 282).
2. The number of yams possessed by a man determines his economic status in the Igbo society (*Historical Context*, 2003).

B. Following European colonization, advancements in the economy existed through a dependency on men in the Igbo society.

1. Europeans radically changed labor distribution so that cultivation relied on male workers to be more productive than female workers (*Gender & Power*, 2013).
2. With a shift towards a cash economy, men received monopolies that designated power to his trade (*Gender*, 2008, p. 440).

VI. WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE ECONOMY

A. Prior to European colonization, women in the Igbo society applied significant amounts of compassion and dedication across various contributions to the economy.

1. Women primarily acted as supporting roles in the Igbo society by focusing on home life, family, and children (*Igbo*, 2009, p. 282).
2. Long-distance trade, involving the Igbo society, appointed women for successfully seizing opportunities that accumulated worth (Falola, 2007).

B. Following European colonization, advancements in the economy did not rely on women in the Igbo society.

1. The economy prohibited women from obtaining occupations in response to men as the main workforce (Derrickson, 2007).
2. Western capitalism forced women to become solely reliant on their husbands in the Igbo society (Derrickson, 2007).
3. Europeans brought attention to men in key roles of the economy, pushing women away (Gender, 2008, p. 440).
4. Western education discriminated society in that equal opportunities did not apply to both men and women (Falola, 2007).