

Gender and the Paradox of Power in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

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Abstract

*This paper focuses on issues of state power and power distribution in the tribal system of pre-colonial Africa from a gender perspective. The assumption is that this power system is based on patriarchal, male-oriented structures but practically functions through matriarchal, feminine oriented ones. The aim is to shed light on the paradoxical nature of such a system that culminates in its collapse under the impact of a gender-balanced colonial power system. The hypothesis is that a male-based power system oriented towards marginalizing women ends up being marginalized by an integral female-based one through which it functions. To validate this hypothesis, a re-reading of formalistic elements of the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* is attempted. The writer adopts a feministic approach to data hinging on formalistic analyses of aspects of the theme and characterization of the novel. The writer concludes that in the case of political regimes tilting the scale in favour of one sex or a single value will result in the collapse of the power system and the annihilation of the ruled individual and community alike.*