FEMALE POLITICAL PROTESTS IN COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL NIGERIA: THE ABEOKUTA WOMEN'S REVOLT AS A FRAMEWORK, 1945-1999

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Abstract

Political protests, especially organized by women were a crucial arm of state-civil relations in colonial Nigeria. Through them, elite women in collaboration with market women and those in rural parts of the country synergized to challenge government policies that impinged on their rights and interests. One of those notable political protests was the Abeokuta Women's revolt of 1946. Despite the salience of women revolts in colonial Nigeria, the postcolonial period has not had significant protests organized by women. This study uses the organization, tactics and mobilization of women in the Abeokuta women revolt as a framework to compare the inertia in women organization in Nigeria. It concludes that women have been disadvantaged by the inability to sustain the momentum facilitated by the colonial forbears.

Keywords: Political Protests, Abeokuta Revolt, Abeokuta Women's Union, Colonial Taxation.

Introduction

In line with the core mandates of European imperialism in Africa, the British colonial raj established structures that fostered the achievement of its objectives. In Nigeria, this came in form of what has been popularly dubbed indirect rule. Colonial rule came with unprecedented social and economic disruptions and dislocations, which expectedly the people resented; there were little they could do to unyoke themselves (Renolds, 2015). Nonetheless, there abound instances where the people could not take certain

colonial policies, in such instances, the resorted to organized protests and resistance. Apart from the resistance mounted by Nigerian peoples during the wars of pacification, Nigerian women were known to have resisted the colonial system more in the entire colonial period. Celebrated cases included the popular Aba Women's protest in 1929, the Okigwe palm protest in 1945 and the Abeokuta women's revolt in 1946.

In 1946, seventeen years after the Aba women's riot, an uprising began in Abeokuta in Western Nigeria when the market women objected to arbitrary colonial taxes and the apparent failure of their traditional rulers to address their grievances. Some of the methods allegedly adopted to force women to pay taxes were degrading and entailed beating them up and searching their houses. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, a teacher, subsequently established the highly effective Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU), estimated to have 20,000 members, which organized massive, protracted anti-tax demonstrations, some of which were held outside the palace of the Alake of Egbaland, Oba Ademola II (Judith Byfield, 2003). In spite of being challenged by a police force that utilized teargas among other aggressive methods, the women remained steadfast and in the end their demands were met, leading to the abdication of the Alake in 1949. These uprisings were among the earliest campaigns against British rule in Nigeria and West Africa during the colonial period. The women were armed with their conviction, united by their determination and motivated by a sense of dignity and justice. Otherwise, they were technically powerless since

they were still deemed socially inferior and docile to their men folk. A significant number of them were not formally educated and did not have the privilege of engaging the colonial system diplomatically, whether at home or abroad (Panata, 2016).

This study employs the Abeokuta Women's war as a framework for (re)commencing a conversation on female political protests in post-colonial Nigeria. The imperative derives from the way studies on female protests in Nigeria have been generally framed. There seem not to have been much interest in female political protests and resistance in general, against unwelcomed government policies in post-colonial Nigeria. The existing studies tend to focus almost exclusively on the colonial period. Byfield (2003), for example, has examined several aspects of the Abeokuta women's revolt, the tactics employed by the women in their protests, the coalition of rural and urban women and generally a historical framing of taxation in colonial Abeokuta. Byfield (2003), expectedly had nothing to say about women mobilization, protests and revolts outside the era that her research focalizes. Johnson (1982) burrowed into grassroots mobilization and organization of three women's association which challenged the colonial system in southwest Nigeria. Of the three associations studied – the Lagos Market Women's Association, the Nigerian Women's Party, and the Abeokuta Women's Union, the later received a somewhat detailed attention, providing a nuanced understanding of the how Funmilayo Anikulapo-Kuti organized the AWU, strategized and confronted the combined forces of the traditional political stool and its

backer, the British colonial raj. The theme of women campaigns for political rights in Nigeria in the 1950s was the concern of Panata (2016). Originally written by Elizabeth Adekogbe, an unsung teacher, journalist and public scholar who was evidently a ranking member of the Women movement in Egbaland. The study offers new and interesting perspectives on how women in colonial Nigeria confronted the state and the obstacles against their political aspirations. Others have also written studies which focus on varying existential realities of women's political protests in colonial Nigeria. When compared with the post-colonial period, one wonders what has gone wrong with the abilities of women to mobilize and protest against government policies, actions that impinge on their collective group interests as well as those of their loved ones. This study examines the Abeokuta women protest as a frame to critique the issue of female political protests in post-colonial Nigeria. The article is written in five parts, this ongoing introduction is followed by the nature, course and organization of the Abeokuta women protest. The second part examines the outcomes of the women's protest – in terms of the colonial government's responses to it. The third part attempts to situate the question of female political protests in colonial Nigeria. The penultimate attempts a framing of women political contests in postcolonial Nigeria. The paper is concluded in the fifth section.

Background to the Abeokuta Women's Protest: Nature, Organization and Course

It was not until the outbreak of World War I in 1914 that the colonial government gained real ground in the disruption of Abeokuta's relative independence. The town became fully incorporated into the colonial state (Bufield, 2003). After the incorporation of Abeokuta, colonial officials faced difficulties with a significant decline in revenue. The war led to the increase of import duties; to offset the cost, the government increased export duties. After a while, the export duties became insufficient so colonial officials requested the Colonial Office to allow the imposition of direct taxation, but it refused. In order to alleviate the decline in revenue, local officials began imposing sanitary fines, which largely affected farm and market women. Eventually, the fines were abolished and replaced by taxes on women. On January 1, 1918, Abeokuta residents began paying taxes. The tax plan was essentially a collective tax on the adult population assessed at an average of five shillings per head. Based on the estimated number of adult men and women in a compound or in a village, compound heads and chiefs were given a figure that the entire group was responsible for paying (Johnson, 1982). From the inception of the tax scheme, Egba women were assessed independently from the men. The decision to tax women independently was contrary to the model used in Northern Nigeria, the first region to be taxed by the colonial government. This model of taxation was very much informed "by Yoruba cultural practice that expected women to work and have independent incomes.

Since most women were involved in trade of manufactured goods or foodstuffs and predominating in the markets across Yoruba land, Yoruba and European men shared the perception that women often had money (Byfield, 2003). On June 13, 1918, six months after the imposition of the tax, a revolt occurred in Abeokuta known as the Adubi war (Chukwu, 2008). The revolt consisted of 30,000 rebels destroying much of the railway and telegraph lines south of Abeokuta, along with the murder of a European trading agent and a high-ranking Egba chief. When the colonial government quelled the revolt, some compromises were made to the governance structure and methods of collection, the tax on women remained in place. By the late 1940s, the burden of taxation was becoming unbearable as the colonial authorities squeezed more and more from its protectorates in the aftermath of the Second World War (Olukoju, 2002).

In Abeokuta, colonial taxation emerged as an unfair practice that predominantly targeted women. While girls were taxed at the age of fifteen, boys started paying tax when they turned sixteen. Wives were taxed separately from their husbands. Women considered the taxation alien, unfair, and excessive. They detested the imposition of taxation on them and their daughters, and objected to the methods adopted by tax collectors (Chukwu, 2008). Homes were invaded and women were sometimes physically assaulted, including being stripped naked on the pretext of assessing their ages to determine eligibility for taxation. Tax defaulters were jailed until they paid their taxes and accrued fines. While women had the sympathy of some

men, including institutions that openly criticized the taxation of females, the Alake, Ladipo Ademola, who headed the Sole Native Authority (SNA) as well as several Egba chiefs, defended the imposition and the process. For instance, Abeokuta Society of Union and Progress, a male elite organization headed by Reverend I. O. Ransome-Kuti (the husband of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti) criticized the method of collecting tax from women and proposed a concomitant increase in men's taxes and elimination of female taxation (Byfield, 2003).

Abeokuta women suffered, like their counterparts in other southern provinces, from the economic hardships of the World War II years. Food shortage was one of the greatest problems that faced many Nigerians, especially those living in the urban spaces. The shortages were occasioned by the general insecurity, shipping irregularities, increased freight and insurance charges associated with World War II. In order to ensure self-sufficiency in food supplies, adequate storage and preservation arrangements, and reserves for emergencies with priority to military demand, the government introduced a food price–control scheme in 1941 under Captain A. P. Pullen (Oyemakinde, 1972). Quotas were issued to a few traders to market both the local foodstuff and imported goods. The unlucky ones turned to smuggling as a way to sustain themselves and their families during this very critical period. The use of quota meant that in most cases, no foodstuff was sold until government quotas were sold and filled. The result was increasing prices of goods especially in the cities. The

brunt of the Alake's administrative policies and methods was borne by women during the war; they were the main producers of food and distributors of it. The Native Council police set up road blocks at strategic points along the way to Ibadan, Lagos and Ijebu-Ode in order to stop the women and examine their cargoes, seize chickens, yams, garri and rice, curtly dismiss protests with the statement that "nobody should eat until enough food was collected for the soldiers" (Perham, 1937:42). Often, the women received no compensation for their seized produce, or when they did it was at a rate lower than that set by the administration. Hence angry women charged that the Alake pocketed the profit he made in selling the produce to the government at the price legally specified.

In 1945, female rice sellers in Abeokuta lodged a complaint with the Abeokuta Ladies Club (ALC), an elite women's association founded by Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, for seizure of their rice by government agents without compensation (Mabogunje, 1961). ALC protested on behalf of the female rice sellers by sending delegations to the District Officer, Assistant District Officer, and the Egba Native Administrative Council. It also held a press conference urging the press to intervene and condemn the colonial price-control policy. ALC also fought against another government policy called 'conditional sales', a policy that compelled market women to buy and resell unpopular goods along with a few sought–after commodities. An example was forcing them to buy salt (a very highly sought–after provision) with cutlasses (which were hard to sell). This policy reduced women's profits

and even resulted in trade deficit (Mabogunje, 1961). During this period, women also witnessed increased taxation. For instance, in early 1940, the Alake increased the water rate without any explanation. This was followed by an increase in the flat rate on women in late 1946. Women complained against the triple taxation - income tax, water rates, and levies to pay salaries of market supervisors imposed on them. They accused some tax collectors, Egba chiefs, and the Alake of corruption, embezzlement of tax funds, and maladministration (Johnson, 1982). In the same year, the ALC expanded its membership to include any Abeokuta woman interested in joining the club. The name of the club was subsequently changed from Abeokuta Ladies Club to Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) "an explicitly political organization uniting the working class market women and the middle class women, to challenge both colonial rule and the patriarchal structure" (Johnson, 1982:135-157).

With a membership of more than 100,000, the AWU went to war against the Alake and all supporters of the oppressive and exploitative policies of the colonial government. AWU leadership was able to articulate women's grievances against the Alake. These included his negotiation of land contracts with foreign trading companies without the consent of the proper owners, support for food and price controls, forced eviction of market women from a section of the Itoku market in order to lease the space to a European company, improperly monopolizing salt supplies from foreign companies, and reselling to local women traders at inflated prices, as well

as profiting from and abusing the dipeomu system, which allowed wives the freedom of leaving their husbands and taking refuge in the Alake's palace. One of the most important grievances of Abeokuta women was taxation, and specifically taxation without representation. Ever since 1918 when taxes were instituted, women were required to pay income tax upon reaching the age of fifteen and continued to do so when married. Men did not have to pay until the age of sixteen (Johnson and Mba, 2005). Women thus provided as much as one half of district revenues. Yet, women had no direct representation on the Sole Native Authority (SNA), a situation they resented very much. Furthermore, the manner in which taxes were collected was often insulting, violent, including the chasing of women, beating and stripping of young girls naked to see if they had breast, allegedly to assess their age and were therefore old enough to pay taxes. Over the years, the number of complaints increased, finally reaching a point where women decided that their only chance to gain redress of their grievance was a more militant approach. As a result of the oppressive tax conditions, the AWU under the leadership of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, in order to end the taxation regime, at a special meeting on March 16, 1946, wrote and forwarded their resolutions to the Egba Council. The resolutions included the following demands:

> to replace the flat rate tax on women with taxation on expatriate companies, investment in local initiatives and infrastructure including transportation, sanitation and education, public play

> grounds for school children, government support for adult education, no tax increase and no taxation without representation, the abolition of the Sole Native Authority and its replacement with a representative form of government, including women (Mba, 1981:67-90).

The women of the AWU were effective organizers, who fought against the colonial government with different types of resistance tactics. Many women refused to pay the tax and either ended up in jail or fined. However, they did not relent in their efforts and continued to send out several petitions to the Alake between June 1946 and May 1947 (Johnson and Mba, 2015). In June 1946, the Women led by Ransome-Kuti launched a campaign protesting the SNA system of government. It was well-organized and forceful, bringing together women of the community and eventually, at a very late date, the men. They also presented a petition to the SNA which demanded that the government pay salaries of the market supervisors and that women receive representation. The women believed that the tax burden fell heavily on their shoulders. Not only were they paying income tax and water rates, but they also had to provide the money for the market supervisors. The women also argued that most of them could not afford the flat tax of five shillings and most of them suffered economic hardship as a result of their declining economic position under colonialism. In addition, many of them helped their husbands to pay their tax bills, water rates and many other fees imposed by the local government. They insisted that

since the entire community, buyers as well as sellers use market facilities, the entire community should help pay the cost of running the market (Daily Service, 1946a). The second demand stated:

In as much as Egba (a subgroup of Yoruba which made up the majority of Abeokuta's population) women pay taxes, we too desire to have a say in the management of the country, because a tax payer should also have a voice in this spending of the taxes. We request you to please give consideration to our being represented in this council by our own representatives at the next general election (Daily Service, 1946b). The polite and meek tone of this request notwithstanding, the women did not intend to compromise on the issue. The petition fell on deaf ears. In late 1946, the Alake retaliated by increasing the tax rate for women (Daily Service, 1946c). Thousands of women marched to the palace to protest the increase. The Alake's only response was that if any woman felt her taxes were too high, she should appeal to him individually since it was "no group business". The AWU next sought to contest the tax levies in court through a test case involving Janet Ashabi, a trader who believed her annual income tax assessment was excessive. Ashabi lost her case when the resident, E.N. Mylius, refused to accept her own assessment of income and decided instead to raise her taxes. The AWU protested this decision in a letter that charged the resident was "not conversant with the conditions in which the women of Egba land live…" (Daily Service, 1947). He refused to reconsider his decision. Meanwhile, Ransome-Kuti and the AWU

intensified their effort to gain support for an all-out protest movement with three main objectives. Firstly, the abdication of the Alake; secondly, the abolition of the SNA and its replacement by a more representative form of government which would include women representatives; and thirdly, the abolition of flat rate taxation of women. Ransome-Kuti engaged in a tremendous letter-writing effort, outlining the women's grievances to the newspapers in Lagos and Abeokuta. They presented more petitions and sponsored a number of court cases when the evidence suggested a good opportunity for illustrating women's grievances, for it was clear that the British administration tended to exonerate its agents, white or black, even when there was no doubt that complaints against them were justified. To give one example, early in 1948, the AWU brought to court a case against the Superintendent of Police for criminal assault in tax collecting, but he was acquitted even though he had admitted to beating between six and twelve women. (Daily Service, 1948).

When it was clear that going through the proper channels (petitions, test cases in court, and publicity in the press) produced no results, the AWU adopted more radical methods – sit-ins, mass protest demonstrations, and outright refusal to pay taxes (Daily Service, 1946b). Just like their counterparts in the Eastern region. The new militant approach began early in 1947 when Ransome-Kuti refused to pay her taxes and was arrested. At her arraignment where she pleaded not guilty, eight thousand women congregated at the courthouse to demonstrate their support. The following week at her trial, where she pleaded

not guilty, five thousand women conducted a protest demonstration outside the court. She was fined three pounds or one month's imprisonment and she decided to pay the fine since she was due to leave within the week with the NCNC delegation which was going to Britain for constitutional talks. Part of the reason for her decision at this time was her belief that this was an excellent opportunity to take the women's cause before the British public like the male dominated groups had done often in the past (Denzer, 1976). Once in England, she lost no time in airing the women's grievances. She met with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur Creech Jones, long a champion of African rights, in order to argue her case. In addition, she published an article in the *Daily Worker*, the journal of the British Labour Party, for which she was attacked by the conservative leaders of the Nigerian Women's Party (NWP). In her article, she deplored the poverty, oppression and repressive system under which Nigerian women lived. At home, Madam Palewura and the Lagos Market Women Association (LMWA) held a huge meeting to support the statement she made to the *Daily Worker* and to pass a vote of confidence in her leadership (Johson, 1981).

When Ransome-Kuti returned to Abeokuta, she became more firmly resolved than ever to mobilize the women. She once again refused to pay her taxes, this time preparing herself for a term in prison, if necessary. Meanwhile, she led the AWU in laying down plans for a systematic programme of mass demonstration and protest. The first major demonstration took place on November 29

and 30, 1947. More than ten thousand women took part, never swerving in their support. As they neared their destination, the Alake's palace, Ransome-Kuti commanded the marchers to stop, closed her eyes and told them that all those who were afraid should leave while her eyes were closed. None withdrew. They maintained an overnight vigil during which they sang abusive songs to ridicule the Alake. Thus:

> *- Idowu (Alake), for a long time you have used your*
> *Penis as a mark of authority that you are our husband.*
> *Today we shall reverse the order and use our vagina to play the role of husband on you…*
> *-O you men, vagina's head will seek vengeance*
> *You men vagina's head will seek vengeance*
> *-Even if it is only one penny*
> *If it is only a penny Ademola,*
> *We are not paying tax in England*
> *If even it is one penny*
> *-Ademola Ojibosho!*
> *Big man with a big ulcer!*
> *Your behaviour is deplorable*
> *Alake is a thief*
> *Council members' thieves*
> *Anyone who does not know Kuti*
> *Will get into trouble.*

> *Whiteman will you not get to your country safely.*
> *You and Alake will not die an honourable death (*Daily Sun, 1948).

The women were dedicated, well-organized and well-disciplined. No violence or looting took place and no weapons were carried. In planning the demonstration, the women were careful to stress the importance of not allowing the authorities any excuse to attack them or use violence. After the November demonstration, the AWU claimed that the Egba General Council promised to suspend taxation while their grievances were investigated. Thereafter, several AWU members appeared before the Council to answer questions and were informed on December 3 that other women would be consulted in the near future. Instead, harassment began. Several women were put in prison on charges of defaulting in their tax payments. The AWU responded by staging another protest demonstration and vigil from December 8 to 10, 1947, equally as large and well organized as the November demonstration, determined to remain outside the palace until the imprisoned women were released. On December 10, 1947, the prisoners were released and the Abeokuta women riot ended its vigil, but the government continued its harassments and jailed more women. The AWU sent letters of protest to the *Daily Service*, the Alake, the Egba Central Council, the Chief Secretary of the Government and the Governor (Daily Service, 1948).

Government Response and the Aftermath of the Revolt

The protest resulted in the government authorities promising the women that "taxation would be suspended and the final decisions on the issue communicated to them within three days". Unfortunately, this turned out to be another empty promise as more assaults were committed and more arrests made; hence the women organized another protest (Daily Service, 1948b). After this incident, the women continued to send petitions to the British administration until they claimed victory. The effect of these demonstrations was very great. Although Ransome-Kuti was banned from the palace because of her role in organizing the demonstrations, it was apparent that the Alake had been forced to reconsider his position. At various times in January and February 1948, he announced that women would be appointed to positions within the government: two councilors to the central council, an Iyalode, two other women chiefs, and representatives to the finance committee. However, he stalled for time, claiming that these appointments would be made as soon as good candidates could be found. Meanwhile, the British administration attempted to stem the tide of opposition. On February 27, 1948, the resident officer read a prepared statement before the Egba central council declaring his support for its decision to ban Ransome-Kuti from the palace and regretting the "insulting of the Alake" and other recent activities of "certain persons who had disturbed the peace and tranquility of Abeokuta''(Daily Service, 1947c). Further, he refused to change the government position on the taxation of women and warned that future demonstrators

against it would be treated like common criminals. Administrative attempts to use divide-and-rule tactics to woo away the AWU executive from its support of Ransome-Kuti failed. The District Officer invited the executives to a meeting of the central council in order to present its grievances to the government, specifically excluding Ransome-Kuti. By an embarrassing mishap, however, the invitation had been addressed to her. When this was pointed out, the District Officer replied that it was clear that she could not be present since the central council had banned her from the palace. The AWU executive refused to attend the meeting without her and organized a demonstration before the palace which blocked the two main colonial officials, the resident and the district officer, from leaving the palace.

By April, the AWU and its supporters were determined to get rid of the Alake and obtain their demands. Ransome-Kuti, who had refused again, to pay her tax, was scheduled to appear in court in April. The AWU planned a massive demonstration but cancelled it because some anonymous person paid her tax the day before the trial. The anonymous person in question was probably either the Alake or a British official (Daily Service 1948d). The AWU next presented to the resident a petition, "The Women's Union Grievances", which reiterated grievances and demands, including the demand that the Alake be removed from his office. They followed this with a five-hour march through the streets of the city chanting their demands (Mba 1981). At this time, the AWU now had the support of the entire community. At

first, the men, except for Ransome-Kuti's husband, a strong supporter of the AWU from the very beginning, did not show any signs of support, although a number of men in Abeokuta had gone on record to protest certain abuses of the Alake's power. By the end of 1947, the situation had changed. The Majeobaje society, an ethnic self-help union of which Rev. Ransome-Kuti was president, offered its sympathy and help. On December 20, 1947, there was a mass meeting of men at Sapon market square where they passed a unanimous resolution expressing their endorsement of the women's effort "in the cause of happiness, freedom from oppression, and the peace of Egba land" (Daily Service, 1947). Editorials in the most important African newspapers in the Western Region also indicated widespread support for the AWU's demands. It was only a matter of time before the government capitulated. To gain time, the Alake left for holiday at the beginning of June 1948, hoping that things would cool off in his absence. Before he left, he appointed a special committee of men and women to investigate the complaints of the AWU. He also suspended taxation of women and agreed to women representation on the central committee. At this time, it was a bit too late. The AWU continued its demonstrations while the Alake was away, joined now by the Ogboni society and even by some members of the central council. After the Alake returned, he ceded further ground by relinquishing his position as the Sole Native Authority; however, the AWU and its women sympathizers refused to accept nothing less than his total abdication and continued their demonstrations. Seeing that

the situation was not negotiable, the resident advised the Alake at the end of June 1948 to leave the city for an extended period of time.

Finally, on January 3, 1949, the Alake abdicated the thrown. The women's protest had been successful. The Native Administrative Council was replaced with an Egba Interim Council- four women as members, all executives of the AWU including Ransome-Kuti were appointed to the Interim Council. Female taxation, including the flat-rate tax and water rate tax, was abolished and men's taxes were increased. The Alake was forced out of office. Abeokuta women had won a great victory in colonial Nigeria; but they did not stop there. The women continued to advocate for women's right in Nigeria and played a role in the Nigerian nationalist movement. The group was in fact extraordinary and emerged as one of the first proto-nationalist feminist activist groups in Nigeria.

Framing Women's Protest in Post-Colonial Nigeria

Women mobilization for challenging the political status quo in the form of protests would appear to have been a colonial phenomenon; this is because since the post-colonial period, there has not been anything similar to women protests in colonial Nigeria. How does one explain the relative inability of women to organize protests in post-colonial Nigeria? Does it imply that women's rights and interests have never been sufficiently assailed by the postcolonial Nigerian state? What is the role of role and involvement of elite women with the postcolonial state? The foregoing does not suggest that women's protest in the traditional public have

altogether ceased. Daniels (2020) has noted that among the Yoruba, nude protests have survived into the postcolonial period. Following Peter Ekeh's diametric classification of African publics, nude protests in the traditional or primordial public were designed to protest unwanted policies by traditional authorities. It is the instrument of last resort that women employed, especially when they found themselves pushed to the extreme. "It is symbolic, as it draws attention to power in women's bodies. It is usually averred, the act of nudity is even more potent if the women are mothers, especially post-menopausal women." (Daniels, 2020:12) Although, these forms of protests have subsisted in the form of group and lone nude protests, it does not, however, have sufficient employment in the postcolonial Nigerian public.

From gleaning the available sources, it would appear that the postcolonial state was markedly different in the ways that they affected women's rights and interests. There have not been direct assailing of women's rights in colonial Nigeria. There is also the challenge of pan Nigerian mobilization of women in postcolonial Nigerian. The myriads women groups in Nigeria since independence seem to have lacked the ideological tincture and thus, most of their contestations with the Nigerian state. Although, women groups have fought alongside their male counterparts in a couple of the popular confrontations with the postcolonial state, especially in the struggles against military rule, their impact, crosscutting mobilization, organizational ability and strategy pale in comparison to

what obtained in the colonial period. Peasley (2020), for example, has noted that,

> as Nigeria began its transition from a military ruled government to a democratically elected one in 1999, the "100 Women Groups" were an important grassroots effort. They had rallied in Abuja to push for affirmative action and representation of women in public decision-making; they expanded female voter registration; they encouraged women to run for office (and one-third of those who did won).

As identified above, there are so many women's groups in the post-colonial Nigeria that they lacked/lack coordination, cooperation and integration. Hence the women groups in the post-colonial Nigeria lack solidarity among women. This lack of solidarity has hampered the strength of women's agitation in postcolonial era unlike in the colonial period. Besides, there is lack of continuity, all the groups which synergized to achieve the feat of the Abeokuta Revolt like Egba Women Association, Lagos Market Women's Association and others had long been inactive without a proper transfer of skills, strategies or knowhow in women mobilizing, organizing and tactics of agitating. Other women's colonial groups that had gone defunct immediately independence include; Nigerian Women's Party (founded in 1944), Women Movement in Nigeria(founded in 1952) Federation of Nigerian Women

Societies(founded in 1953) and National Council of Women's Societies(founded in 1959). It seemed to be that activism died at the attainment of Nigeria's independence.

After the civil war, groups of Women organisations sprang up but lacked the substance, since they were organized inform of NGOs which were seeking for foreign donor to function. They can at best been seen as CSOs. They included; Women in Nigeria (founded in 1983 but defunct), Better Life for Rural Women (founded in 1987 but defunct), Women's Consortium of Nigeria (founded in 1995 and still active) and Kudirat Initiative for Democracy (founded in 1999 but defunct) (Dagunduro and Adenugba, 2020). These post war women's groups had participated at several agitations against the post-colonial government policies, positions and issues such as the Structural Adjustment Programme (1986), Pro-Democracy Campaigns (1996-8), June 12 Movement. However, the argument here is that, their efforts, momentum, popularity, and achievements are negligible compared to the colonial women's activities/protests. Even when more than four thousand women groups exist in postcolonial Nigeria, women political protests in postcolonial Nigeria has been insignificant. From what we have seen in the Abeokuta Women struggle one can surmise that in terms of ideology and mobilization women groups in the colonial period were better organized and instrumental to influencing the state and shaping political outcomes than in the postcolonial state.

Conclusion

The study examined the phenomenon of political protests in colonial Nigeria by focalizing the Abeokuta women's revolt. Johnson (1981) has asserted that in colonial Nigeria, the 'new' elite women who owed their partially to new trends introduced by colonialism, namely, western education and Christianity addressed those concerns of women who sought a role in colonial system: expanded educational opportunity, equal pay for equal work the wage labor market, expanded occupational opportunities in the civil. Furthermore, elite women in colonial Nigeria attempted to forge working alliances with the market women, some of them illiterate Muslims. This did not achieve complete success. From the case of the Abeokuta women and several other political protests organized by women in colonial Nigeria, there is no gainsaying the fact that these women were able to influence political developments in Nigeria. This, as the study showed has not found replication in the postcolonial Nigerian state. The study attempted to review why this has been the case and concludes that the inability of postcolonial women to sustain the gains of the forbears by constantly challenging the recrudescence of male dominance manifested in public policy since independence has kept them women at a disadvantage.

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