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Women Nationalists in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Ghana and Zimbabwe: Case Studies of Charwe Nehanda Nyakasikana and Yaa Asantewaa

By Abdul Kuba¹

Abstract

Nation and nationalism have been associated with masculinity. Nations and states are often envisioned through heroic narratives. According to these narratives, nations are formed through the blood and toil of fore-fathers not fore-mothers. Women's roles in nation-building are regarded as supportive, relegating them to the background as supporters of their male counterparts. Heroines receive little or no attention in the historiography of national struggles. Pedagogically, heroines are understudied in most African school systems. It is easier for one to encounter names of nationalists like Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Thomas Sankara (Burkina Faso) among other heroes who led the liberation struggle in their respective countries compared to heroines like Yaa Asantewaa (Ghana), Charwe Nyakasikana (Zimbabwe), Mrs. Theodosia Salome Okoh (Ghana) among other women who contributed immensely to the development of their nation. Women have contributed greatly to the formation of the African nation. They served as reproducers of the state not only through their biological role as child bearers, but also their roles as cultural transmitters and liberators. Women's role in the nations of Africa must be examined if our understanding of nationalism is to be complete. There is the need for the history of nationalism in Africa to be examined through a feminist lens rather than the traditional masculine conception. This essay addresses this lacuna in the history of nationalism in Africa by examining the roles of Yaa Asantewaa of Ghana and Charwe Nyakasikana of Zimbabwe in the national struggles in their respective countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Keywords: nationalism, imperialism, liberation, reproduction, humiliation, women in Ghana, women in Zimbabwe, Charwe Nehanda,

Introduction

Nation, nationality, and nationalism have all proved to be difficult to define and analyze. Nationalism has been deployed in a variety of ways including; the process of nation building, a sense of national consciousness or sentiment, a symbolic and a linguistic representation of a nation,² an ideology and a movement intended to realize the national will.³ Nationalism could also

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² Alon Confino. *The Nation as a Local Metaphor* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 4.

³ Rick Wilford and Robert L. Muller. *Women, Ethnicity and Nationalism: The Politics of Transition* (London: Routledge, 1998), 7.

include the shared experience of a single language⁴, religion, and unitary historical experience.⁵ Nationalism is usually geared towards the achievement of a common goal, either to liberate oneself from oppression or to exert dominion over another group.⁶ For instance the colonization of most African countries was championed by political nationalism in Europe.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a nation's prestige was determined by the number of colonies they possessed. This made most European countries turn to Africa and Asia to acquire colonies. France incursion in Africa was motivated by national drive. After the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1871, the French had to look elsewhere to salvage their prestige. On the other hand, African nationalism was motivated by the desire to end territorial colonialism.⁷ This is not to say African nationalism began with the colonization of the continent. Nationalism and the need for the formation of a nation had been part of Africans since time immemorial, groups like the Zulus, Asante and Ndebele among other sought to distinguish themselves from their neighbors and exert their domination.

Nationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth century aimed at attacking colonial rule on the continent. Accounts of nationalism and the formation of nations in Africa are told mostly from the masculine point of view.⁸ Women's view of the nation and participation is either minimal if not solely missing from the historiography of African nationalist movement. This work examines women's nationalism from two different regions: Zimbabwe in the southern part of Africa and Ghana in West Africa. This work takes a careful look at the roles of Yaa Asantewaa and Charwe Nehanda Nyakasikana in the development of nationalism in Ghana and Zimbabwe respectively. It also takes a comparative analysis of the contribution of the two women towards modern nationalism in Africa.

Yaa Asantewaa

Yaa Asantewaa was born in 1832 to the Asona royal family of the Besease lineage of Edweso Stool. Her mother, Ata Po, and father, Kwaku Ampoma, were from Ampabame near Besease. Yaa Asantewaa and her brother Kwasi Afrane were the only children of the union of their parents. Yaa Asantewaa was said to have an in-depth knowledge of her culture since she received education on the cultures, customs, traditional norms, and history of her state and other states. She was groomed to assume the position of queen mother of Edweso. Yaa Asantewaa thus abided by the traditions and customs of her people. According to Asirfi-Danquah and Adu-Boahen, Yaa Asantewaa was a formidable looking woman. Asirifi-Danquah describes her as "thin brown, leathery woman with fierce blazing eyes."

Adu-Boahen on the other hand describes her as a stout woman giving her weight as two hundred pounds and height of five foot ten inches. She was a strong woman, known to be tenacious

⁴ Benedict Anderson. *Imagine Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 42.

⁵ Nana Pokua Wiafe Mensah. "Nana Yaa Asantewaa, The Queen Mother of Ejisu: The Unsung Heroine of Feminism in Ghana", A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, 2010, 29.

⁶ Norman M. Niamark. *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 8.

⁷ Ali Mazuri. "African between Nationalism and Nationhood, A political survey", *Journal of Black Studies: Vol. 13. No.1*, Septembe, 1982, 23.

⁸ New African, June 2006.

and believed that “men were not fences for any woman to lean against.”⁹ She used this slogan to encourage her fellow women to have faith in themselves. Oral tradition has it that Yaa Asantewaa’s farm at Boankra, a town found on the Kumase-Accra trunk road derived its name from Yaa Asantewaa’s focused trait. She was known not to bid farewell to any one when she was going to her farm. This generated the saying “Yaa ko afuom a onkra,” meaning “Yaa always leaves for her farm without bidding farewell to anyone.”¹⁰

Yaa Asantewaa grew up to marry Owusu Kwabena of Kantinkyiren near Trede. This union produced only a daughter, Ama Serwaa Brakatu.¹¹ Yaa Asantewaa was known to uphold human dignity and justice not despising anyone but had high regard and concern not only for her state but also the Asante kingdom, which she saw as having a unique tradition and culture. Yaa Asantewaa was installed as queen mother of Edweso in 1877 when she was in her mid-40s. She was later made the paramount chief of Edweso when her grandson Akwasi Afrane Kuma, chief of Edweso, was sent into exile together with Nana Agyemang Prempeh I at Seychelles Island by the British in 1896.¹² Though with no western education, Yaa Asantewaa was noted for her patriotism, intelligence, and hatred for imperial domination. It was this drive for freedom that culminated in one of the most famous wars in Asante’s history “The Yaa Asantewaa War.” The outcome of this was the declaration of the Asante kingdom as a colony.



Youthful Yaa Asantewaa on Ghana Currency¹³, (Source: Google picture.com)

The 1900-1901 Yaa Asantewaa War

Historical records on relations between Kumase Paramountcy and that of Edweso suggest unfriendly relations between these two authorities. This has raised questions about Yaa Asantewaa’s involvement in the 1900 war with the British. The mid-nineteenth century saw the execution of Edwesohene, Osei Borobe Dankwa by Asantehene Kwaku Dua for protesting a ruling against him in a dispute over Nyameani.¹⁴ In addition to this the people of Edweso were fined as a punishment for protesting the verdict and the territory of Manhyia, which happened to be under

⁹ Wiafe Mensah, “Nana Yaa Asantewaa, 41.

¹⁰ Ibid., 42.

¹¹ PRAAD, Kumase, ARG 1/2/13/12, Ejisu Affairs 1925-1938, Edwesohene Kwabena Owusu to CEPA, dd. Kumase, 9th March 1925.

¹² New African, June 2006.

¹³ New African, December 2000.

¹⁴ Nyameani is from the Akan words, ‘Nyame’, meaning God and ‘Ani’, face. Nyameani literally means face of God, this was a town on the north ridges of lake Bosomtwe.

Edweso, was seized.¹⁵ The 1860s also saw the conviction and de-Stoolment of Edwesohehene Ata Nuamoia for committing incest. Again, Edweso was heavily fined.

In the 1870s, Kwabena Tia the then Edwesohehene defaulted on a loan given by the Kumase palace official Krakyere and then assaulted his creditor. He was de-Stooled by Asantehene Kofi Kakari, and Edweso was heavily fined when its people protested. Some Stools of Edweso, regalia and people from Besease, Bonwire, Dwenaase, and Hwereso were handed over to Kumase palace functionaries. Finally, in the early 1880s, there was an attempted assassination of Edwesohehene KwameWuo by his own subjects for alleged theft and cruelty. Mensa Bonsu the king of the Asante kingdom at the time de-Stooled him, but also charged the people with insurrection.¹⁶

The latter half of the nineteenth century however saw the resolution of the tense relation between the dynasties of Kumase and Edweso. Asantehene, Mensah Bonsu was de-Stooled in 1883. The years that followed witnessed five years of civil war as two royals, Yaw Twereboama and Agyeman Prempeh, fought over the 'Golden Stool'.¹⁷ The conflict destroyed Kumase's military might and towns and villages were ravaged. Yaw Twereboama had fresh non-Kumase troops, raised and led by Sawuahene and later by Kokofuhene and Mamponhene. Agyeman Prempeh on the other hand lacked these advantages because his core Kumase supporters were war-weary.

His mother, Asantehemaa Yaa Kyaa resorted to desperate measures to ensure her son ascended to the throne. She offered wealth and honors to non-Kumase chiefs who still had fighting men in return for their support in making her son Asantehene. It was these measures that rejuvenated relations between Kumase and Edweso. Edwesohehene, Kwasi Afrane who also doubled as the brother of Yaa Asantewaa took an oath of allegiance to support Prempeh and defend the Asante kingdom when called on. This was probably the oath invoked during the 1900/1 British Asante war also referred to as "The Yaa Asantewaa War".¹⁸ Tied to this was British oppression. In 1895 the newly enstooled Edwesohehene, Kofi Tene granted a concession over Obuasi mines, (land Edweso is reported to have been acquired from the Kumase dynasty) to G.A. Robertson, the king of Winneba on the Gold Coast colony and his concubine and business partner Amma Sika (Amma money).¹⁹

In January 1896 Kofi Tene was among those arrested by the British and exiled with Asantehene, Agyeman Prempeh to the Seychelles Islands off the northern tip of Madagascar.²⁰ Yaa Asantewaa took charge of Edweso after the arrest of Kofi Tene, and she was paid the renewal rent on the concession by Robertson. However, the new British rulers in Kumase were determined to regulate gold mining in Asante to maximize profit. In late January 1896, Stewart had a talk with Yaa Asantewaa about the Robertson concession. Yaa Asantewaa expressed her dissatisfaction with the earlier arrangement with Kofi Tene adding that if she had negotiated the terms she would have

¹⁵ T.C McCaskie. "The Life and Afterlife of Yaa Asantewaa", *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 77, no. 2 (2007), 153.

¹⁶ The reconstruction that follows here is based on a wide range of sources. See in particular MRO (Manhyia Records Office), Kumase, E/DC/11, 'Ejisu Stool 1913-1935'; 'Correspondence concerning the claims of ex-Omanhene Yaw Awua against the Ejisu Stool 1915-1931'; DCK No. 37, 'Enquiry into Ejisu Stool Lands and Properties 1938-1941'; Correspondence concerning Privy Council Appeals, 'Affairs of Donyina, Apromasi, Ekisu, Akyinakrom and Kwaso 1921-1948'; PRAAD, Kumase, ARG 1/2/13/12, 'Ejisu Affairs 1925-1938'; ARG 1/2/13/13, 'Ejisu Affairs 1935-1936.'

¹⁷ Boateng Osei. "Yaa Asantewaa on Stage", *New African*, ProQuest, April 2001, 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁹ McCaskie, "The Life and Afterlife of Yaa Asantewaa", 157.

²⁰ *New African*, 6.

secured greater share of the profit for the Edweso Stool. Governor Maxwell on hearing this declared the Robertson concession null and void, stating that Kokofu's claim to the land should be recognized as its chief was known to be pro-British. Yaa Asantewaa was also told that under the new regulations Asante lessors would only receive concession rents and no share in the mining profits. Under the new arrangement Edweso lost all title to Obuasi by 1900.²¹



Agyeman Prempeh, (Source: Google pictures)

Prior to 1900 all effort by Asante to make the British return Asantehene, Agyeman Prempeh and other royals of the kingdom proved futile. He had been there for four years with 30 of his most important paramount chiefs and elders, including his mother and brother.²² To make matters worse, the British governor, Sir Frederic Hodgson attempted to take possession of the 'Golden Stool', the embodiment and the "soul and body" of the Asante nation. According to Asante's folklore, the 'Golden Stool' was commanded from the skies by the famous priest, Okomfo Anokye, at the beginning of the reign of the first Asantehene, Osei Tutu I.²³ The Stool is rarely seen in public and under no condition must the Stool depart from the kingdom since it was the very thing that united the various polities of Asante kingdom together.²⁴

²¹ Elizabeth Isichei. *History of West Africa Since 1800* (London: Macmillan Publisher Limited, 1977), 168.

²² Roger S Gocking. *The History of Ghana* (London: Greenwood Press, 2005), 38.

²³ David Kimble. *A Political History of Ghana, 1850-1928*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 305.

²⁴ McCaskie, "The Life and Afterlife of Yaa Asantewaa", 158.



The ‘Golden Stool’ symbolizing the “soul and body of the Asante Kingdom,
(Source: Google pictures)

British demand for the Golden Stool was therefore seen as the ultimate insult Asante could ever bear. It was against this backdrop that Yaa Asantewaa called on the chiefs and the entire Asante kingdom to rise and defend the kingdom against British oppression. She is reported to have evoked these words:

Brave men of our motherland, we face serious confrontation because of this governor’s insulting demand for our Golden stool. We should remember that not long ago the white man invaded our country and declared our kingdom a British protectorate. Let us not forget that this same white man set ablaze Kumase our seat of government after looting all the priceless treasures bequeathed to us by our forefathers. Our king, Nana Agyeman Prempeh I, was arbitrarily arrested and deported to foreign lands, together with our queen mother Nana Yaa Akyaa and our leading chiefs without any one raising a finger. Today the governor has come to demand for the very soul of the Asante nation! Countrymen shall we sit and accept humiliation by these rogues? Arise! Resist the white man whose sole purpose in our land is to steal and destroy. It is most honorable to perish in defense than to live in perpetual enslavement. I have seen that some of you fear to go forward to fight for our king. In the brave days of old, chiefs would not have watched their king being taken away without firing a shot. No white man would have dared speak to Asante chief of old the way the governor spoke to you chiefs this morning. Is it true that the bravery of Asante is no more? I cannot believe it. If you men of Asante won’t go forward, then we women will. We will fight until the very last of us falls in the battlefield. I, Yaa Asantewaa am prepared and ready to lead you to war.²⁵

²⁵ New African, December 2000



Yaa Asantewaa at war in 1900, (Source: Google pictures)

With these words, Yaa Asantewaa, the queen mother of Edweso near Kumasi, the Asante capital, declared war against the British in March 1900. Yaa Asantewaa proved to be an astute strategist, mounting roadblocks on all routes leading to Kumasi to halt the advance of British reinforcements and supplies from the Coast. Telegraph poles were also destroyed to disable communication between Asante and the Coast, laying the grounds for the siege of the Kumasi Fort, where the governor and his people were trapped.²⁶ With an army of four thousand, Yaa Asantewaa and her army scored some notable early successes though she eventually lost to the British due to their superior weapons. She was betrayed and captured at Sreso Timpomu (town 130 kilometers from Kumasi).

This ended the last significant attempt by the Asante to halt the machinery of British military and cultural imperialism.²⁷ Yaa Asantewaa's role in Asante nationalism portray her as the

²⁶ New African, June 2006.

²⁷ New African, "Yaa Asantewaa: A woman of Iron", December 2000.

light of women nationalists movement in Ghana and Africa at large. Despite her role, Yaa Asantewaa has not received the necessary attention like her fellow male heroes in Asante history. This is mainly due to tradition and male chauvinism, which makes women play second fiddle to their male counterpart irrespective of their role in history. Yaa Asantewaa was deported to the Seychelles Island in the Indian Ocean by the British, where she lived and died twenty years later in 1921. Her remains were later brought back to Edweso in 2001 for a final burial.

Charwe Nehanda Nyakasikana

Charwe Nehanda Nyakasikana was born to the Shona people of Zimbabwe in 1863. The Shona were one of the greatest ethnic groups in Zimbabwe during the colonial struggle. Charwe Nyakasikana was one of the major spiritual leaders of African resistance to white rule in Northern Rhodesia now Zimbabwe. She was a woman who lived in the northern part of the country and whose influence was widespread. Nehanda²⁸ and other two priests, Mukwati and Kagubi, but especially Kagubi in Western Mashonaland led a direct resistance against foreign assault. In 1896 after British invasion of Zimbabwe, English settlers started confiscating land and cattle. Initially in search of gold, they ruthlessly sought to impose white supremacy through forced labor and heavy taxation.²⁹ Imbued with racial arrogance, they rarely hesitated to engage in acts of physical cruelty, beating and torturing Zimbabweans as they saw fit. It did not take long for the Africans to start resisting and fighting back.

The military campaign to push the British out of Zimbabwe, known as the Chimurenga or the war of liberation, started in May 1896 out of the initiative of the Ndebele people another important ethnic group in Zimbabwe. During the time of white invasion in Zimbabwe, the Nehanda medium was Charwe Nyakasikana. Being the spirit medium, Nyakasikana effectively conveyed to the people that Mwari, their supreme deity, disapproved of British presence and action and demanded that the white people be removed from the land. Nyakasikana served as a leader and offered spiritual support to the army during the first Chimurenga.³⁰

The army of the local people at the initial stages of the war enjoyed many victories on the battlefield and the realization of the wish of Mwari (the physical removal of the British from the land) seemed near. H.H. Polland, a European commissioner who operated in Nehanda's zone and had become notorious for his cruelty, was captured.³¹ He was brought to Nehanda who had him work as her servant for a while and then had him executed. However, running out of supplies, the Africans were eventually defeated by the Europeans. Nehanda allowed herself to be taken into captivity to avoid further African bloodshed and deaths. She was kept at the Harare jail. Her trial opened in March 1898 found her guilty of having killed Polland, she was executed by hanging on April 27, 1898.³²

Before she was hanged, Nehanda announced to the Europeans that her body would rise again to lead the second liberation war. She assured the British that she would gain victory over them in

²⁸ Nehanda was a spirit medium sometime referred to as a lion spirit in the history of Zimbabwe.

²⁹ Jean Allman, Susan Geiger and Nakanyike Musisi. *Women in Africa Colonial Histories: Introduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 305.

³⁰ Ruramisia Charumbira. "Rooted and Winged, Keeping Traditions without being Traditional: Zimbabwean Women's Ancestral, Historical and Contemporary Agency in Afrocentric Development", A Thesis Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in International Development Studies, Saint Mary's University Halifax, Nova Scotia, September 1999, 55.

³¹ Nakanyike Musisi, *Women in Africa Colonial Histories*, 306.

³² *Ibid.*, 307.

the second struggle. Because of the courage and heroism that she never failed to display, Nehanda is considered by many to be the single most important person in the modern history of Zimbabwe.³³ She was a major source of inspiration during the more recent nationalist struggle of the 1960s and 1970s. She is still referred to, out of affection and respect, as Mbuya (“Grandmother”) Nehanda by Zimbabwean nationalists. The main maternity hospital in Harare is named after her.



Plate 1 Charwe, the medium of Nehanda (left), with the medium of Kagubi in prison. 1897.

Charwe (left) with Kagubi (right) in prison 1897, (Source, Wikipedia.com)

Women Nationalism in Ghana and Zimbabwe after Yaa Asantewaa and Charwe Nyakasikana

Yaa Asantewaa and Charwe Nyakasikana were great women in the struggle for the national identity of their regions. But they were not the only great women in Africa in the nineteenth and

³³ Emmanuel Chiwome. “The Role of Oral Traditions in the War of National Liberation in Zimbabwe: Preliminary Observations”, *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 Indiana University Press (Sep. - Dec. 1990), pp. 241-247.

twentieth century to take leading roles in male dominated nation building. Ivor Wilks, the British historian and an authority in Asante history, stated, “instead of speaking of Asante ancestors in the 1800s, we should speak of ancestress because women dominated in policy formulation and direction”.³⁴ The road to Kumasi, for instance, was constructed on the orders of a woman, Akyaawa Yikwan, an Asante royal who hailed from Akorase. She is described as one of the best diplomats and negotiators of the nineteenth century. Again, when the Asante kingdom began to fall apart in the 1880s, it was Asantehemaa (Queen) Nana Yaa Akyaa who restored it.³⁵ That notwithstanding the roles of Yaa Asantewaa and Charwe Nyakasikana were extraordinary to nationalists and national identity in Africa in general. Their roles paved the road for anti-colonial struggle and the decolonization process in Ghana and Zimbabwe. The role of Yaa Asantewaa and Charwe Nyakasikana provided motivation for other women that followed them. For instance, in Zimbabwe women were actively involved in the second liberation struggle which eventually led to the independence of Zimbabwe.³⁶

Though their roles were supportive as the nationalist movement in Zimbabwe was clearly male-dominated, women nationalists had a significant impact in the anti-colonial struggle.³⁷ With the banned placed on the National Democratic Party (NDP), (Anti-colonial movement) in 1960, women in the party led a protest in Salisbury (now Harare), the capital, leading to the arrest of over two thousand women. Women in the NDP organized a demonstration against the approval of a new constitution which cemented white domination by allocating only fifteen out of sixty-five parliamentary seats to Zimbabweans. Sally Mugabe, wife of Robert Mugabe, president of Zimbabwe remembered:

We didn't tell our husbands about our plans. Early one morning we left our homes and by 7 a.m. we were all assembled in the foyer of the prime minister's office in the city center to protest in a peaceful manner, by means of placards, against the new Constitution. The placards read: 'Women Do Not Accept This Backward Constitution,' 'Give Us our Land and Country,' and 'One Man One Vote'. Soon our number increased to over 1,500 women. The police were in their hundreds with dogs. Thousands of women were arrested, beaten and jailed.³⁸

Robert Mugabe, then a leading nationalist and currently the president of Zimbabwe, argued that women organized the large protests because ‘the men failed to respond to the nationalist call for several strike actions, indeed some men actually hindered the women actions’. Husbands threatened their wives with divorce while they were in prison for their involvement in the strikes. These women however remained firm and stood for their cause. This bravery of women during the anti-colonial struggle in Zimbabwe in the twentieth century undoubtedly was inspired by the role of Charwe Nyakasikana in the nineteenth century.³⁹

³⁴ New African, June 2006.

³⁵ Nakanyike Musisi, *Women in Africa Colonial Histories*, 308.

³⁶ Chiwome, “The Role of Oral Traditions in the War of National Liberation in Zimbabwe: Preliminary Observations”, 245.

³⁷ Charumbira, “Rooted and Winged, Keeping Traditions without being Traditional: Zimbabwean Women's Ancestral.

³⁸ Nakanyike Musisi, *Women in Africa Colonial Histories*, 310.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 311.

Women's roles in the national struggle in Zimbabwe were not limited to strikes and passive resistance. Women took part in the guerilla warfare in the Second Chimurenga (second liberation war). Monica, one of the women who took part of the second liberation struggle, has this to say:

I was appointed to guard a camp, as much as I wanted to go to the front, since I had come to fight the enemy, they always wanted people who would look after the camps. We were given our rifles, to go and guard the women in this camp, Osibisa. All women who had joined the war to liberate Zimbabwe, the same women were being attacked in their training camps across the border, were described by the nationalist movement as both liberated and fighting for equality with men.⁴⁰

In 1978, Teurai Ropa, then leading ZANU's Department of Women's Affairs asserted, "Gone are the days when all women did was to sew, knit, cook, commiserate with and mourn their fallen soldiers. Now they too participate in the fighting, they too face the music". In 1979, she repeated those statements: "Today women are not only mere bedroom women to produce children as the concept used to be, they are in the vanguard liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. This oppressive and exploitative system has affected women to the same degree as it has affected men".⁴¹

In Ghana since Yaa Asantewaa, many women have pushed their skills and qualities from the home and the family level to the national and international level. For instance, Mrs. Theodosia Salome Okoh originated and designed the Ghana national flag when the country gained its independence from the British. Her flag signifies the liberation struggle and the pride of Africa.⁴² To date Ghanaians accord reverence to the flag designed by Mrs. Okoh. Another great woman was Dr. Esther Ocloo of the Nkulenu Industries Limited who was named as one of the foremost women leaders by the Cambridge Biographical Society. She contributed tremendously towards the economic independence and empowerment of Ghanaian women. Her products allow Ghanaians in the diaspora to enjoy their local dishes outside home.

Women have helped shaped Africa identity yet women as national heroines in Africa are either unnoticed or receive little attention compared to their male counterpart. It is easier for one to find history of heroes being thought in most Africa education institutions compared to heroines. In contemporary Ghanaian society Yaa Asantewaa is the woman who has her portrait on the country's currency compared to eight males.⁴³

Conclusion

Women all over the world have been considered second fiddles to their male counterparts throughout history. Despite their role as biological producers, reproducers of boundaries of national groups and cultural transmitters, they still are rated as second class citizens because of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 314.

⁴¹ Ibid., 316.

⁴² Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana*, 308.

⁴³ Nana Pokua Wiafe Mensah, Nana Yaa Asantewaa, "The Queen Mother of Ejisu: The Unsung Heroine of Feminism in Ghana", A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, 2010.

culture, laws and religion.⁴⁴ Their tremendous roles in history are always considered as supportive roles to men. There can never be a nation without women. The roles of Yaa Asantewaa and Charwe Nyakasikana show women have been significant during nation-building. Their roles still continue to inspire women to play their roles in the development of their countries. It is therefore necessary for scholars to pay more attention to the heroines who either laid down their lives or contributed in diverse ways to make the world what it is today.

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⁴⁴ John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith. *Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 315.

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