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## **Herbert Macaulay as The Father of Nigeria's Nationalism: A Historical Misnomer and Misogyny Regarding the Role of Igbo Women in the Decolonization Process**

By Uche Uwaezuoke Okonkwo<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

For over six decades of Nigeria's independence, history has continued to place the role of women in the decolonization process in Nigeria in a state of oblivion. Such obloquy on Nigerian women is the primary concern of this research. This paper raises questions on the impositions of Herbert Macaulay as the father of Nigerian nationalism. Historical evidence points to the direction that King Jaja of Opobo, Nana of Itshekiri and Oba Ovaranwen, were the pioneer nationalists, because of their resistance struggle against British colonial rule. Yet they were not acclaimed fathers of the nationalist movement in Nigeria. With the huge demographic loss of women in the decolonisation process and the activities of Magret Ekpo, Janet Mokelu, Funmilayo Ransom Kutu, there would have been a sense of equity if any of them had been placed as the mother of Nigeria nationalism. This historical loophole is the concern of this paper, to redirect our focus on the decolonization history of Nigeria, by examining the extent of the doctored gender imbalance, in pursuing the objectives of securing independence in Nigeria. This paper is based on primary data retrieved from the National Archives in Nigeria and secondary materials in journals and books using the historical narrative style of methodology.

*Keywords:* Herbert Macaulay, Nigeria, Nigerian Nationalism, Misogyny, Igbo, Igbo women, Decolonization,

### **Introduction**

An insight into the early nationalist movement in Nigeria indicates that the much acclaimed Herbert Macaulay was not at the initial scheme of affairs. J.S. Coleman in his book *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* published in 1965 acknowledges two notable figures, Edward Wilmot Blyden and John Payne Jackson as the founders of Modern Nigerian Nationalism (Coleman, 1965:183). Blyden according to Coleman, citing Casely Harford, was the father of African nationalism and was identified to be of the Ibo (Eboe) tribe (Coleman, 1965). The parameter used in imposing Herbert Macaulay's fatherhood of Nigerian nationalism remains unclear, especially when placed side by side with nationalistic spirit of women from Eastern Nigeria.

Herbert Macaulay (1864-1946) needs little or no introduction when it comes to nationalist struggles in Nigeria. Trained as an Engineer in both Fourabay College Sierra Leone and Plymouth in Southwest England. Macaulay returned to Lagos in 1893. On his return, he became a principal voice against the various colonial policies on land, water, and the judicial use of public funds. By 1912, when Lord Luggard was appointed the Governor General of Nigeria, Macaulay was to lead

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a popular protest against colonial authorities land grabbing in Lagos to the imperial government in London. The colonial government quickly arraigned him to court and he was sent to prison for the mismanagement of Mary Franklin Estate, a deceased client of Macaulay who handed him over some properties to manage (Sanni, 2006:47).

Macaulay became a popular figure with the introduction of the new constitution in 1922 with four unofficial members to be elected in Lagos and Calabar. The Clifford constitution is the most gender biased constitution ever in Nigeria's political history, because it promoted male adult suffrage, thus diminishing women. The constitution stipulated that only male adults who are residents in Calabar and Lagos could be nominated for the Legislative Council. Notwithstanding, Herbert Macaulay became the major player in Lagos politics by championing a popular course such as peoples' land rights, and the restoration of Prince Eleko to his throne as the Oba of Lagos (King) after he was thrown out by the colonial government (Cole, 1975:245).

With the opportunity provided by the Clifford constitution, Macaulay formed a political party known as the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) with other activists such as C.C Adeniyi-Jones, E. Shyngle, T.H Jackson, Karimu Kotun, J.J White and others (Okafor, 1981:189). The NNDP under the leadership of Herbert Macaulay emerged as the most powerful group with their candidates victorious in 1923, 1928, and 1933 elections (Coleman, 1965:198). Macaulay, before his death in 1946 earned the title of the father of Nigeria's nationalism from his various anti-colonial struggles.

In the indigenous resistance of Athahiru (1906), Jaja of Opobo (1887), Nana of Itshekiri (1984), and Oba Ovaranwen (1897) were all nationalist movements, and as such were before Herbert Macaulay. Nevertheless, in Eastern Nigeria, activities of the Women's War of 1929 in the view of Falola (1991) and Anyanwu (2003) were all responsible for the demise of the Warrant Chief system in Igboland. It is on record that women took to the streets of Olokoru, Aba, Ngor Okpala, Ibibio, and so many areas of Eastern Nigeria to protect against the obnoxious practices of the Warrant Chiefs appointed by the British colonial administration. Women leaders such as Nwanyeruwa, Ikonnia, Nwanedia, and Nwugo should have occupied eminence as matriarchs of the nationalist struggle against British imperialism. Even in historical scholarship, a book acclaimed to be a compendium of Nigerian history, Ikime (1980) (ed) *Groundwork of Nigeria History* did not include a chapter to highlight women's history in Nigeria. This excellent book, which is used in teaching Nigerian History across universities in Nigeria, ought to include women's role in nation building.

Reflections on the contributions of Margaret Ekpo and Janet Moklelu are vital to our claim of women's exclusion in the history of nationalistic struggle in Nigeria. Margeret Ekpo was born in the Creek town in Calabar and was educated as a teacher. She later studied at the Bathmine School of Domestic Economy in Dublin, The Republic of Ireland. Later she became a Yaba trained medical doctor under the first colonial medical institution in Nigeria and suffered the victimization of receiving a lower salary, unlike her foreign expatriates and colleagues (Attoe and Jaja, 1993:18). Janet Mokelu, like her counterpart Margaret Ekpo, received training as a nurse. Both women activists challenged the horrific policies of the colonial administration, especially the barbaric killings of 22 coal miners in Enugu in 1949.<sup>2</sup> Another significant area in which Magaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu played an active role was their insistence on a dual sex political system which

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<sup>2</sup>On November 18 1949 the British colonial government in Nigeria killed 21 coal miners and injured 51 others who were protesting against unfair labour treatment. This incident is referred to as Iva Valley Strike and Massacre at Enugu Colliery.

replaced male adult suffrage. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1954, Ekpo made the following remarks on the floor of the Eastern House of Assembly as follows:

I am taking this opportunity to render my sincere appreciation of our women of Eastern Nigeria and the women of Nigeria to the leader of this government for the introduction of universal adult suffrage (NAE, 1954, 391).

The emergence of Margaret Ekpo, Janet Mokelu, and Mrs. Young as members of the Eastern House of Chiefs in the 1950s was a significant step in destroying male adult suffrage in Southern Nigeria which continued in Northern Nigeria until the coming of the Second Republic in 1979 (Igbokwe, 2013; Okoli and Uroko, 2017:42; Ikpe, 1997:259). In spite of the achievements of these activist nationalist women, the decolonization history of Nigeria grossly omitted them. Furthermore, from the onset, the political machinery of the colonial state borrowed a page from British Victorian values. Under this arrangement, the ideas about gender in these Victorian concepts denoted that women should be seen but not heard.

This idea began in Europe during the medieval era and was backed by educational policies which trained women for domestic services that would confine them at home, thus minimizing their visibility and public recognition (Uchendu, 1993:51). The Victorian thinking was that men should provide for the home, protect women from the harsh labour of the industrial era, and that women should bear the duty of keeping the home safe for the men who would always escape the vicissitudes of public and working life (Ikpe, 2004:30).

### **The Concept of Nationalism**

Nationalism can be understood in the context of the attempts to build a nation. In nation-building, men and women contribute in one way or the other. AduBoahen, in his book *Topics in West African History* (1966), defines nationalism as the consciousness, on the part of individuals or groups of Africans, or membership of a nation-state either already existing or to which they aspire, and of a desire to achieve political and economic freedom, overall social and economic development as well as the cultural revival of the nation-state (Boahen, 1966:147). However, nationalism in Africa has been traced to the nineteenth century, when a number of individuals and groups rose up to defend their traditional independence against the threatening advances of the European powers (Fajana, 1979). Nationalism is an extremely dynamic set of ideologies and practices, and whatever constitutes a nationalist movement at a particular time and place has taken different dimension at another time. Nationalism can either be ethnic or civic as it deals with primordial and western forms of agitations based on rationality, law, and democracy. In all, nationalism must have three major components, namely a historic territory, a legal political community, and a common civic culture and ideology (Sabara, 2007:77).

Thus, Olukoju accounts that cultural nationalism was put to noble and ignoble uses as occasion demanded, by different social groups during the colonial period (Olukoju, 1997:298). Simply put, nationalism is an instrument of group agitation against ill economic, social, and political policies with the aim of achieving indigenous participation in government and decision making. And as such, equal representation of gender makes it more egalitarian and undermines inequity. However, as above noted, nationalism has been traced to the nineteenth century, when a number of individuals and groups rose up to defend their traditional independence against the

threatening advances of European powers (Oriji, <http://www.icaap.org/iuicode?> Accessed 15 October 2007).

The women of Eastern Nigeria on or after 1918 (end of the First World War) were already politically organized. Their political organization can be equated with the political awareness created by the New World Negroes of W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Casely Hayford in Ghana of the 1920s. The women of Eastern Nigeria traditionally were armed with fundamental ideas of militancy and resistance. The activities of these women have been categorized as follows for reading convenience:

- i. Pre-Second World War resistance
- ii. Post-Second World War resistance. Be that as it may, a series of women's resistance and militancy activities listed below will characterize this discussion:
  - i. 1925 Women's Dance War
  - ii. Aba Women's War 1929
  - iii. The Tax Revolts Beginning from 1938
  - iv. Oil Mill Revolts of the 1940s in Owerri and Calabar Province
  - v. The Activities of Janet Mokuolu and Margaret Ekpo in Partisan Politics

### **First Phase: Pre-Second World War**

Igbo women revolts drew the attention of the British colonialists in their intelligentsia study of the Igbo. The works of Leith Ross, M. Green, Meek C.K and European ethnographers' account for the renaissance in Igbo studies. In the same vein, Igbo traditional views of humane living, advocate the position of women in terms of pursuing their fundamental human rights. Examining the Igbo women in this regard, Judith Vallen Allen in describing 'Sitting on a Man' had this to say:

A woman could also bring complaints about her husband to the "mikiri" if most of the women agreed that the husband was at fault, they would collectively support her. They might send spokeswomen to tell the husband to apologize and to give her a present and if he was recalcitrant they might "sit on him" (Allen, 1972:171).

Sitting on a man includes singing, dancing, and throwing stones in front of the man's hut. The episode can reach its climax with the destruction of the man's building. The emphasis here is that there existed cultural facilities that provided a stepping-stone to women's agitation deep rooted in culture, prior the advent of the colonialists. In the Southeastern area of Nigeria, the British military and administrative officers employed various means against the determined individual opposition of each village. These means involved promises, negotiations, military force, seizure, and deportation of village chiefs, etc. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British rule was firmly established only along the coastal line and British "gun boats" (military naval ships). The British imperialists changed the economic scenario of Africans with capitalist oriented ideologies, which have not favoured indigenous Africans. Korie's view is that:

Taxation was introduced into the eastern province in 1927, at a time of economic instability. By 1929, the women had begun to feel the pinch of this new measure because of the inter-dependent nature of the village economy (Korieh,1994:28).

This view can be ascertained based on the decline of the palm oil trade in the Eastern region. The women in Eastern Nigeria with the advent of colonialism continued to reject British policies.

Another example of women's revolt actions was the Dance Revolt of 1925. It was pronounced among women in Akpuje and Owelli towns of Awka. In the Onitsha Province of Ihiala, Nnewi, and Nobi town: in Ohazara, Okigwe, Bende and Umuahia, the Dance movement was envisioned. Women from Owerri province came to Ihiala. From Ihiala, they visited Nnewi, and from Nnewi they proceeded to Nobi. The women dancers of these towns came together and placed obstructions on one of the main provincial roads. They then proceeded to Nobi court, burnt the market and filled the court with refuse (NAE, M.P No. 18/1926 Memorandum From The District Officer Onitsha To Senior Resident Onitsha Province). The reason for these actions was justified as follows:

English money should do away with entirely and that cowries must come more for use; to pay only one bag of cowries for marrying young girls and a half bag for marrying a woman, and that men must not go to market but women (NAE, M.P No. 18/1926 Memorandum).

In Akpuje and Owelle towns in Awka District, the women, close to 150 in number, were found in the Achi Native Court area chanting songs for change. They made agitations on the following areas:

- i. That they were sent by Chineke (God) to deliver the message and that it would help women to bear children.
- ii. Old customs should be observed and not allowed to lapse.
- iii. Poor men were often punished in native courts by rich men; all cases in which poor men were defendants should be tried at the Chiefs' houses and only taken to the native court if they remained unsatisfied.
- iv. More honesty should be shown in dowry disputes when stating amounts paid or claimed (very desirable); (NAE, No 124/Mp. 62/196, 1962).

The Women's Dance War was indeed a revolutionary song prepared by the Igbo women against the obnoxious British laws, especially as it had to do with taxation. Thus, with the head count and the imposition of taxes, championed by Chief Okugo in Olokoru district near Aba, what was known and addressed as the Aba Women's War became inevitable. Oriji (2000:4) noted that: "Emeruuwa never expected that the task he was asked to perform would trigger a mass fateful day. On November 18, 1929, he went to late Ojim's compound, his first place of call and asked his widow, Nwanyeruwa, to count her goats, sheep, and people." In anger, the woman retorted, "was your (late) mother counted? In other words, why do you want me to pay tax? Don't you know that women don't pay tax in traditional Igbo society?" The violent encounter and verbal exchange between the two, infuriated Nwanyeruwa who then rushed to the town square to report the incident to women who were coincidentally holding a meeting that day to discuss how they would respond to the tax problem (Oriji, 2000).

Nwanyeruwa in Oloko triggered the much-publicized Aba Women's War of 1929, in a town near Aba—not in Aba. It was from Oloko that the war spread to Owerri, Owerinta, Aba, Umuahia and up to Ibibio land. The speculation of taxation against women in the area was already a rumor before Chief Okugo (Warrant Chief) through his agent Mark Emeriwa, tried to actualize it. On November 18, 1929, Emeriwa, acting on Okugo's instruction entered the compound of one Ojim in Olokom whose widow was Nwanyeruwa. He asked Nwanyeruwa to count her goats and sheep as a prerequisite step of preparing women in the division for taxation. She was infuriated and asked Emeriwa whether his mother was counted. Perham Magrey in her book, *Native Administration in Nigeria*, opined that "a meeting of women was called and Nwanyeruwa's excited story was told as confirmation of the rumor. A palm leaf, which appeared as once a symbol of trouble and a call for help, was sent round to all the women of the neighborhood. From the whole countryside, women poured into Oloko and proceeded according to custom to sit upon the man who had tried to assess Nwanyeruwa" (Magrey, 1937:207).

Nwanyeruwa's protest quickly moved women into action on the prolonged rumored plan by the colonial government to tax women. The success of Nwanyeruwa's protest came to fruition with a prison gift of three months in custody, given to Emeriwa. Similarly, Chief Okugo December 3, 1929 was found guilty of a two-count charge. The first reason for the charge was spreading news likely to cause alarm; the second reason was the physical assault on women demonstrators, for which he was sentenced to two years in prison (Oriji, 2000). However, from 18<sup>th</sup> of November 1929 to February 29 1930, the court deliberated on Okugo and Emeriwa's cases. Oriji, in his paper "Igbo Women from 1929-1960", recalls that "Nwanyeruwa played a major role not only in precipitating the revolt, but emerged as a leading advocate of non-violence during the protests marches (Gailey, 1971:111). Akpu's view about Nwanyeruwa in the 1929 Women's Revolt reads as follows:

The women's leadership in the protest includes: Nwanyeruwa who was the woman mobiliser. She was a native nurse, a spirited, bold and selfless woman. This attitude in her was shown on how she handled the money donated by the women for the entertainment of the delegates and traveling expenses to Port Harcourt, Mbawsi and Umuahia (Akpu, 1984).

Similarly, Ikonnia, Nwannedia, and Nwugo from Umuigwu in Oloko Bende Division became public figures by leading the women during the litigation over the assault meted on the women by Warrant Chief Okugo and Mark Emeriwa. The Commission of Enquiry set up to investigate Okugo (Warrant Chief) and his agent Emeriwa, acknowledged the prowess of Ikonnia, Nwannedia and the Nwugo-led Women's Delegation as follows:

The women numbering over 10,000 were shouting and yelling round the office in frenzy. They demanded his cap of office (Okugo), which I threw to them. It met the same fate as a fox's carcass thrown to a pack of hunds (NAE, Umproof 1/5/5).

The Ikonnia Nwannedia and Nwugo-led women's delegation, accused Okugo as incompetent, and corrupt; thus, they alleged him as follows:

- i. He collected money to pay the dowry on a woman to let out as a harlot. Later he married her himself but the town paid the dowry.

- ii. He collected £100 to build a house he said the district officer had told him to. Having received the money nothing more was done.
- iii. Sometime ago he collected yams alleging they were for the district officer. These he planted for himself.
- iv. Sometime last year he insisted on all the women in the town rubbing the walls of his house.
- v. He brought a cap gun and gave it to a man to shoot game for him. The government caught the man, confiscated the gun, and fined him £5. Okugo not only refused to help him but made him a refund of 2 for the value of the confiscated gun (NAE, Umproof 1/5/5).

For Oriji, he described Ikonnia, Nwannedia, and Nwugo as women of youthful vigor, intelligence and oration. With the resumption of duty on 30th November 1929 by the District officer, the atmosphere of the court was still jam-packed by women demanding the prosecution and detention of Warrant Chief Okugo. Furthermore, Oriji accounts further that:

The women continued to follow the D.O. (District Officer) “sitting on him” until his wife got in touch with the two and reached an agreement with them. The two promised to get the women out of the District Officer’s way, then he granted their quest (Oriji, 2007).

J. Cook, in his response to the women’s petition, issued a warrant arrest to the following:

- i. Tribunal member Okugo
- ii. Ahakuo
- iii. Ejurugo, a wife of Okugo
- iv. Ekpbum a son of Okugo
- v. Inokori a servant of Okugo and
- vi. Obonnanya Orianu

At the point of arrest, only Okugo, Ejurugo, Ekpbum, and Inokon were arrested as Ahakuo and Obonnanya Orianu were declared wanted. Thus, on Monday evening (i.e. the 2nd) the two leaders viz Ikonnia and Nwannedia with another woman (Nwugo) brought a letter addressed to Mrs. Hill (wife of the District Officer), explaining their grievances (Aba Women’s Riot: 80 Years of Distorted History, <http://www.nairaland.com/1306141/1,2007>).

On Wednesday 3rd of December, 1929 Warrant Chief Okugo was tried, and was sentenced to two years imprisonment (Hill, Umproof 1/5/5).

Ikonnia, Nwannedia, and Nwugo were in control of women during this period. The District Officer and the Commissioner of Police Mr. King commended the actions of these women with the brightest praise, and furthermore depended largely upon them to disperse the disorderly bands of women. For instance, on hearing of a disorderly mob in Umuahia on 4th December 1929, Captain Hill sent for the women (Ikonnia and Nwannedia) who promised to quell the disturbance. That was as good as their word, since on their arrival at Umuahia next day, Captain Hill and the Commissioner of Police met crowds of women on the road returning home (Osuji, 1955:44). The Umuahia demonstration was triggered by low prices of produce given by the factories. J.N Hill applauds the responsibility of the women as follows:



Mr. King (Commissioner of Police) endorses my view that the highest praise is due to these two women and one or two of their lieutenants for the wonderful control they exercised over' what at one time seemed like a raving mob (Hill, Umproof 1/5/5).

The active roles of Nwanyeruwa, Ikonnia, Nwannedia, and Nwugo in the anti-colonial struggle have been silent in the Nigerian historians' accounts, dominated by men. After all, how could the nationalist schools of History at Ibadan, Zaria, or Darsalem, dominated by men, include women's active participation as part of its nationalist history? Parochialism ordinarily has everything to do with one's state of mind and not necessarily the level of one's education.

Akpan Ekpo observes that the Women's Revolts of 1929 were a reaction of a traditionally democratic people to the continued repression by a foreign power and its agents. According to Ekpo,

In the absence of due democratic channels and procedures for seeking redress which was customarily available in the Ibibo and Ibo women's cultures, the uprisings were the only recourse the women had to express pent up grievances and stop unjust practices meted on them, their men folk and their children. It was a nationalist struggle. It was a major revolutionary epoch. It eventually caused fundamental reforms in the format of indirect rule in colonial Nigeria (Ekpo, 1988: 18).

Nevertheless, the Aba Women's War of 1929 has been mischaracterized as a riot. Pellow asserts that the 1929 Women's War was part of the traditional method of setting grievances when he opined that:

Riots, the term used by the British, conveys a picture of uncontrolled, irrational action, involving violence to property or person or both. "Aba Riots" in addition, neatly removed women from the picture "women's war" conveys an action by women that is also an extension of their traditional methods for settling grievances with men who had acted boldly towards them (Deborah, 1977:119).

The 1929 Women's Riot had a severe impact on the overhauling of the colonial administrative system. The geographic dimension upon which the revolution took place cannot be in actual sense called a riot. Ekpo V and Akpan E cited Onabamiro that:

It was not the women of Aba who rioted. It was women from various parts of Owerri province, who converged on Aba at the time of the riots. In the second place, if a disturbance is to be described, then this particular disturbance should be called the Opobo riots, because the riots at Opobo were far more serious than those which took place at Aba, and the loss of human lives was much heavier, indeed; however, what happened at Aba was a mild affair compared with the tragic event that occurred in Calabar province (Ekwereotu and Ekpo, 1988:2).

Although the 1929 Women's Revolution was feminine in outlook, it still did not lack the support of the men. Judith Allen records that "the absence of men from the riots does not indicate lack of support. Men generally approved and only a few older men criticized the women for not being respectful to the government" (Allen, 1972:175).

Nevertheless, the Women's War was targeted to hurt European establishments, but not with the intention to loot. Perham's view is that "women were far more interested in destroying the native courts and mobbing the Warrant Chiefs than in looting (Margery, 1937:208). The achievements of the women in the Aba riot remains a reference point. Rose Acholonu insists "the 1929 Aba Women's War has placed the Igbo women on the world map as front liners in the female struggle for actualization and self realization in the political arena (Acholonu,1993:291). In appraising developments of the women's revolts of the pre-Second World War era, the oil mill tax revolts in Okigwe and Benda Divisions, namely Isuikwuato, Uturu, Nneato, Isuochi, Umuchieze, Otanzu, Otachara, Alayi, Item, and Umuimenyi are too numerous to buttress. Nevertheless, Oriji's paper offers insight to the nature of the 1938 revolts as follows: "Women began massive anti-tax protests in Okigwe Division from December 5 to 15 and in some places like Isuochi, they destroyed the Native Court house and released prisoners" (Oriji, 2007:8). The incessant oil mill revolts were imminent in view of the capitalist economy created by the British colonialists especially to cash crops. The decline in palm oil in the 1930s affected the ability of the people to pay tax. Women throughout the Division were economically hard-hit when in December 1938, troops of the Royal West African Frontier Force who had become the major consumers of their foodstuffs, were relocated from Okigwe town to Enugu (Oriji, 2007). However, the Second-World War created a new dimension in the the women's resistance struggle.

### **Post-Second World War Resistance**

The women's resistance struggle in Nigeria can be sub-divided into two periods, namely the pre-Second World War era (1929-1944), and the post-Second World War era (1945-1960). The second category which took place from 1950–1960, was associated with educated Urban women.<sup>46</sup> Notable is the fact that the Aba Women's War of 1929 fought in Southeastern Nigeria, influenced women's participation in subsequent Nigerian politics. With the formation of the political party, the Nigerian Union of Young Democrats (N.U.Y.D) in July 1938, TamunoTekena highlights that,

The N.U.Y.D. encouraged women to participate in its activities. Thus Madam AlimotuPelewura, the Alaga (president) of Erekomarket, was often a principal speaker at the meetings of the N.U.Y.D. At another meeting of the N.U.Y.D. in July 1938, there were present some representatives of about seven market societies (Tamuno, 1979:55).

The presence of women in the political formation of pre-independence Nigeria was limited, and characterized by adult male suffrage; thus, women were disenfranchised. In the case of the Nigeria National Democratic Party (N.N.D.P), Tamuno accounts for adult female disenfranchisement as follows: the N.N.D.P derived both moral and material support from market women's associations, though women could neither vote nor be voted for in the legislative council elections of 1923 -1947 (Tamuno, 1979).

This was the development and scenario in women's decolonialisation history in Nigeria that warranted women in Eastern Nigeria, notably Magret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu, to fight to institute women's rights in voting and political representation. The various women's resistance efforts in the post-Second World War period was eminent in 1949 and 1954 respectively. The killing of twenty-two coal miners, mentioned earlier in the paper in Enugu, triggered Janet Mokelu's demonstration in Enugu and Magret Ekpo's demonstration in Aba respectively. These women felt that men were silent over gross injustices; thus, they revolted. In November 1949, a labour protest saw the annihilation of twenty-two coal miners, which warranted a protest led by Magret Ekpo alongside Jaja Nwachukwu, S.O. Mazi, Janet Mokelu, and others. Attoe and Odini accounts Magret Ekpo frown as follows: "The colonial government should thank their stars that only men were killed, if any women had been killed, I would have made fire to burn at Aba" (Attoe and Jaja, 1993:23).

Onyeka Onwenu accounts that Magret Ekpo was arrested alongside Barrister Jaja Nwachukwu, Mr. Samuel Mazi, and Mr. Nwachukwu Abengowe. They were harassed and faced with deportation from the country of their birth. In retaliation, the famous Aba women threatened to set the town ablaze, should the colonial authorities make good their threats of arresting and prosecuting the women. That was the end of the matter; Magret Ekpo and the others were promptly set free (Onwenu, 2005). The women's resistance struggle in the Eastern region achieved universal adult suffrage; it was yet to be accomplished in the West and Northern regions. Nevertheless, women's marginalization continued into the 1950s. Magret Ekpo was refused nomination on the ground of gender bias: Fumilayo Kuti's mandate was given to J.A.O. Akande in 1959, and in 1954, Adunni Oluwole formed a political party known as the Nigerian Commoners Party, while Wuraola Esan (Ibadan) and R.T. Brown (Port Harcourt) lost out in the 1959 elections.

Nevertheless, the activity of women in the 1950s decolonialisation era was rudimentary to their inclusion as special members in the respective regional House of Assembly in Nigeria. The understanding of the women's status quo, organizational ability, and numerical strength necessitated their inclusion as special observers of the London Conferences of 1957 and 1959 respectively. In spite of women's exclusion from voting rights, they consultatively achieved their dreams in south Nigeria, especially in the eastern region in 1959; with the independence constitution for the Western region in the 1960's; and more recently, in 1979 for the Northern region. A critical appraisal of women's history in Nigeria in the post-Second World War epoch, must put into cognizance the efforts of women in demanding constitutional changes to the most obnoxious laws found in pre-colonial Nigeria. These efforts resulted in the significant role of women as elected legislative members, from the 1960s with the likes of Magret Ekpo, Janet Mokelu, Miss Ekpo Young, Wuraola Esan, and Mrs. Fumilayo Ransome Kuti. In Southern Nigeria, the agitations of these women granted them franchise, but it wasn't until 1979 that women in Northern Nigeria could vote and be voted for.

Notably and most important during this era, was the influence of the Second World War on the Women of Eastern Nigeria towards their perception of the activities of the colonialists. Having participated in the war, most Nigerian soldiers (especially those from the Eastern region) and some indigenous female nurses that went with the soldiers to the war, returning with a true picture of the Europeans and their cultures. This clarified some of the contradictions and misconceptions, fear, and the like, that Nigerians had towards Europeans; hence, breaking some long-held barriers of confronting whites adequately. Equally, the power of western education was acknowledged and put into use by women: women and girls began enrolling in school; women

entered into politics, and formed political parties, all to equip themselves for a proper showdown of the colonialists and their unfavourable politics.

The post-Second World War era launched a new style and phase of revolutionary agitation (Falola and Paddock 2011,96-99). Considering the caliber of women that graced this era, it can be rightly asserted that the post-second world war resistance was a period of elites struggle and revolt against the colonialist. Hence women playing their own part in anti-colonial resistance struggle scored their own goal, which of course contributed to the achievement of the political independence of Nigeria in 1960.

## **Conclusion**

A critical review of various colonial legislation, namely the 1922 Clifford Constitution, the Sir Bourdilion Constitution of 1939, the Arthur Richards Constitution of 1946, the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, and the Oliver Lyttelton Constitution of 1954—under which colonial rule in Nigeria operated—all point to raising men for leadership and the relegation of women by extension. According to Modupeolu Faseke, these male-dominated constitutions created institutional prejudice (Faseke,1995:2), which persists. This paper has argued that women who challenged colonialism should be incorporated into the teaching of Nigeria's national history. Unfortunately, as I have shown, early Nigerian historians such as those in the Ibadan School of History dominated by men, did not consider including women's significant role in the pedagogy of teaching Nigerian History in schools.

Nonetheless, women were powers to be reckoned with in Nigeria's history of decolonization. It is imperative, as a measures to ensure gender equity in contemporary historical scholarship, to re-write the patriarchal norm in the telling of national history. In rejecting the colonial barbaric ideology, women in Eastern Nigeria pressured men to recognize them. By implication, I have proven that the pioneer nationalist historians were, to a large extent parochial, in their attempt to reconstruct the decolonization history of Nigeria.

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