

## Female Historians and Knowledge Production for Women's Studies: The Nigerian Example Since 1974

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### Abstract

Knowledge production is fundamental to the development of African history. Professor Bolanle Awe (a foremost Nigerian female historian) once affirmed that: "socio-economic conditions of African universities are not conducive to the production of knowledge, hence US and European scholars publish more about Africans than do African scholars". It is based on this conviction that she engaged the process that African women should be studied in their own terms. Several scholarly works of female historians on women has been purpose driven. Bolanle Awe, Nina Mba and La Ray Denzer are the most prominent female historians that located the directions of research on African women. They institutionalised African women's historical studies in spite of the difficulties encountered in presenting and promoting its scholarship. This paper examines the forms of knowledge production that evolved from these women and other female historians across Africa and the Diaspora. Furthermore, it investigates how the knowledge produced was institutionalised. It also explains the multi disciplinary nature of the knowledge forms produced. The methodology adopted here is a content analysis of books, journals and academic biographies and/or autobiographies.

**Keywords:** Female Historians, Knowledge Production, Women, Nigerian History, Africa

### 1. Introduction

The efforts of female historians in the production of knowledge are informed by the systemic challenges of women's education and access which is phenomenal to Africa. Various quantitative and qualitative study such as that of Boeku Betts agreed that education system in Africa is patriarchal thus it accounted for the gender disparities by which women's education at the tertiary level is often marginalized.<sup>2</sup> Empirical studies on the enrolment of women in schools up to tertiary levels all agreed that male domination was a static factor in all spheres.<sup>3</sup> The notion of writing and researching women was a context developed out of the gender disparities carried over from the neglecting of women in colonial development policies. Hence, historical production of knowledge for women's studies appeared as a form of reconstruction pitted for the development of scholarship.

### 2. Researching Women's Studies across Disciplines

Undoubtedly, women's history is one of the versatile and dynamic fields of African research in contemporary times. Thus, researching women's history has been multidisciplinary in nature.

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<sup>2</sup> J.A. Boeku Betts, Formal Education in Africa; An Exploration of the opportunity structure at the Secondary and Tertiary levels" in M. Block, J.B. Boeku-Betts and Tabachnick (eds) *Women and Education in Sub-Saharan African: Power, Opportunities and Constraints* London: Lynne Rienner.

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Boeku Betts, and Formal Education in Africa; An Exploration of the opportunity structure at the Secondary and Tertiary levels" in M. Block, J.B. Boeku-Betts and Tabachnick (eds) *Women and Education in Sub-Saharan African: Power, Opportunities and Constraints* London: Lynne Rienner.

Through WORDOC, women's studies have taken a trans disciplinary perspective which entails not only contribution to specific research projects, but also collaborative interdisciplinary writings between female historians and others in<sup>4</sup> the humanities.

In Nigeria, the first of its kind was the conference on Colonialism organised by WORDOC in 1986. The conference had over seventy scholastic contributions from various disciplines of the humanities, sciences and social sciences. The findings of the papers presented provided a broad spectrum to construct the developmental needs of Nigerian women. Thus, it set forth academic interests and aspirations in motivating female researchers to engage in African women's studies research.

### 3. The Rise of Female Historians

The discipline of history in Nigeria and Africa emerged as a response to the impact of European domination. Basically, the task of the first generation of academic historian was to contribute to the nationalist historiography by disproving the facts that Africa lacked civilization which foreign writers such as Hugh Trevor Roper, Reginald Coupland among others. Hence, the task of African historian was to write the history of human development. A major challenge was the fact that unravelling the history of non-literate peoples required absolute scientific approach and methodologies to establish virile African historical knowledge.

Initially, African historians did not focus on the significant contributions made by women nor did they bother to acknowledge. Masculine-centered writings were the focal of the knowledge produced. Books written on African history such as the eight-volumes of *General History of Africa, A Thousand Years of West African History* and various volumes of the Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria (JHSN), authenticate the general history of Africa and delivered it from the western notion. In spite of this, the task of writing women's history still remained problematic.

The milieu of academic/research orientation could not allow for women's studies, until the 1980s when few female historians attempted to write women's history through the use of biographies to explain the cause of women's contribution to development, especially in the colonial era. The methodical approach to writing and researching women's history in the colonial era was given an overview by La Ray Denzer when she presented a paper on 'Women in Colonial Nigerian History: An Appraisal' at the WORDOC conference on the Impact of Colonialism on Nigerian Women, at the University of Ibadan in October 1989.

### 4. The Concept of Knowledge Production

Understanding the trajectories of knowledge production in women's history in Nigeria can be explained in the path of Lawrence Scaff's research types, categorised into four:

- \* The deconstructive work of revealing andocentric and misogynistic tendencies;
- \* Women-centered research without much or any analysis of traditional historical thought;
- \* A dialogue with the traditions of and appropriations of concepts and theories from traditional research, and integration of these with feminist insights and;
- \* establishing new feminist theories, interweaving existing helpful models of scholarship with new models.<sup>5</sup>

The adaptation of these models is a little different to the part of writings in general African history, as female historians of women have produced writings that covered the pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial era. From this various aspect of research in women's history have emerged such as in reproductive health studies, motherhood, sexuality and so on. Like other historians, female historians of women evolved the task of writing by deploying array of sources using the conventional and new ones to explain new perspectives in women's studies. The pressure for the production of knowledge in women's studies was an outcome of the impact of voices from women's movements evolved around the 1970s. The impacts led to the establishment of academic formations aimed fostering knowledge production. Female historians have been able to prove in writings that there is a disconnection between the western theories and the realities of African women. Thus, sources of writing women's history could also be found in the accounts of missionaries and explorers, private papers, diaries, oral histories, works of anthropologies archival documents and so on.

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<sup>5</sup> B. Awe 1991. *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives* Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. p. 215.

## 5. Methodologies, Conferences and Institutions

Initially, the approaches to women's studies in Nigeria lacked bearing as it gradually gained momentum in the 1980s. Firstly, the Nigeria was articulated by Adetoun Ogunshye in her article – "The Role and Status of Women in Nigeria." Though several women groups advocated for women on general issues outside the academia. Within the academia, the researching and writing of women's history was aided by the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), which motivated female historians to articulate methodologies and advances for women's history.

While it is a fact that there are historical differentials, between Africa and the West, Bolanle Awe called for a methodology to the writing of African women's history. She expressed that: While the observation of the foreign researchers can be useful, the time has now come when emphasis should be on indigenous scholars; by virtue of their permanent membership in their society they are likely to have a better insight into its problems and areas that need closest attention.<sup>6</sup>

This quest for the visibility of women's studies was institutionalised by Professor Bolanle Awe, when she and colleagues from other disciplines worked out the establishment of Women Research and Documentation Centre (WORDOC). The premise for the evolution of WORDOC was that non-African Scholars dominated research in women's studies because of the dearth of teaching and research materials in an editorial, she commented that: Prevailing socio-economic conditions in African Universities are not conducive to the production of knowledge. Scholars situated in the impoverished or beleaguered institutions lack the time or resources (libraries are in Shambles; there are few current books or journals) to produce scholarly work. With greater access to resources, U.S. and European Scholars publish more about Africans than do African Scholars.<sup>7</sup>

Her focus on the methodology at the 1977 conference on Women and Development was aimed at ensuring that African women's experiences were objectively presented and not misrepresented in the interpretation of Western Scholars. Thus, historical reality of African women's experiences was collaboratively worked out as a book – *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*. This book emphasised the contributions and relevance of women in pre-colonial and colonial Nigerian Societies. Through the adoption of biographic analysis, the life and times of women were articulated. The lives of the women studies revealed the experiences of women in the political and economic spheres of their era. In the field of history, this work provided the direction to the study of women. As sources of articulating history of women in the pre-colonial era was rare. Bolanle Awe researched into the political status of women as she identified in the article – "The Iyalode in the Traditional Yoruba Political System".<sup>8</sup> Other women with the humanities discipline such as Ifi Amadiune, Obioma Nnemeka and Oyeronke Oyewumi all engaged in discourses to express the realities of women's live in Africa.

The methodology advanced in her article – "The Iyalode in Traditional Yoruba Political System" was initially presented at the Annual Congress of Historical Society of Nigeria in 1974. This and other works especially her doctoral work – *The Rise of Ibadan as a Yoruba Power (1851-1893)* awarded by Oxford University in 1964, enriched her academic calls for advancement of women's studies.

The establishment of WORDOC by Bolanle Awe was a response to the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985). At the end of the decade, 1985 to be precise, the Institute of African Studies organised a National Conference Women in Development, of which over seventy papers were presented. This response geared Professor Awe, as the Director of the institute and others such as Professors Okediji and Toun Ogunshye to set up WORDOC. The constitution of WORDOC was meant to attract multidisciplinary attention. Therefore, researchers in women's studies from anthropology, economics, psychology, political science, law, history and others were involved in the scope of WORDOC programmes. Thus WORDOC apart from its basic outlook in library and documentation, it is involved in research and consultancies, education and outreach. The institution was also virile in the publication of occasional papers, and compilation of conference proceedings.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> B. Awe, 1977. "Reflections on the Conference on Women and Development Part I." *Signs* Vol. 3 No. 1. Pp. 314-316.

<sup>7</sup> B. Awe et al., "Editorial," *Signs* 16, No. 4.

<sup>8</sup> B. Awe, "The Iyalode in the Traditional Yoruba Political System, pp. 144-160.

<sup>9</sup> Bola Akanji 1999. "WORDOC" in Ifeoma Isiugo-Abanihe (et al) *Bolanle Awe: Portrait of an Academic and Activist* WORDOC p. 7.

Bolanle Awe's methodology spans through biographical writing, historiographical tradition and feminist ideology. The use of biographies was regarded as an adjunct to history of which Smith regarded as an adjunct to history of which Smith and Ikime affirmed.<sup>10</sup>

## 6. Female Historians in Diaspora and Knowledge Production

Methodology in the articulation of women's studies could be described as universal female historians and other gender studies scholars in diaspora use qualitative approaches such as life histories narratives and narratives to present the realities and experiences of African women. In this regard a consortium comprising scholars from Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Egypt, Brazil, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and UK was commissioned on the project – *Pathways to Women's Empowerment*. Through life histories, female historians in diaspora showed distinct ways by which women and gender issues played out in pre-colonial and colonial era.

### **Nwando Achebe**

Nwando Achebe though a historian but her contribution to knowledge production could not be devoid of the fact that she was the daughter of internationally acclaimed literary scholar Chinua Achebe. She stated her methodology of writing history by affirming that: I write African history from within, on its own terms ... , I define myself as a people's historian, an imagined term on my part elucidates the fact that I serve as the medium that transfers the spoken work entrusted me in the permanent medium of writing in as close a form as possible as the original articulation.<sup>11</sup>

In this regard, she focused on reconstructing the lives of women in Northern Igboland by engaging oral life histories of elderly women.<sup>12</sup>

From her, contribution to knowledge production for women's studies manifested in the book – *Farmers, Traders, Warriors and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960*.<sup>13</sup> Her methodology focused on 'seasonality' as its is deployed to explain how specific periods in a woman's life determined her power status. According to her, these seasons are: chronological, positional, locational, reproductive and agricultural.<sup>14</sup> Hence, these seasons are instrumental to explain a women's status as a girl (daughter), wife, mother, state woman and so on. For instance, the agricultural season explains women's power in a sense that the crops termed female and produced by women, placed them at a vantage position as a breadwinner of the family. The female crops such as cocoyam, beans, vegetables, maize and cassava form the daily diet which women were expected to farm and produce.<sup>15</sup>

Recently, Nwando Achebe published a book in furtherance of the explanations on the female power and authority. The book – *The Female King of Colonial Nigeria: Ahebi Ugbabe*<sup>16</sup> explained the travails of an Igbo woman's fame and fortune by focusing on issues of gender, sexuality and colonial encounters she had. And this work lends credence to the fact that colonialism was paradoxical, beneficial and otherwise. It was argued that Igbo gender transformations were favoured by British colonialism as it reinforced the powers of Ahebi Ugbabe as a female king.

### **La Ray Denzer**

In 1982, Dr La Ray Denzer a United States citizen became a faculty in the Department of History, University of Ibadan. in furtherance of Prof. Bolanle Awe's methodology on studying women's history, La Ray Denzer embarked on an holistic agenda of adopting biography to explain and answer questions on the lives of women. Though, not a Nigerian, her scholastic products almost perfectly fit into the Africanist methodology of women and gender history.

<sup>10</sup>R.S. Smith, 1978, "Explanations in African History: How and why," *Tarikh* vol. 6, No. 1. O.Ikime 1979. *Nigerian History through the Changing Scenes: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* Inaugural Lecture, University of Ibadan.

<sup>11</sup> Nwando Achebe and Bridget Teboh 2007. "Dialoguing Women" in Catherine M. Cole, Takwiyya Manuh and Stephan F. Müeschler (eds) *Africa After Gender?* Indiana: Indiana University Press. pp. 63-84.

<sup>12</sup> Nwando Achebe and Bridget Teboh 2007. "Dialoguing Women" in Catherine M. Cole, Takwiyya Manuh and Stephan F. Müeschler (eds) *Africa After Gender?* Indiana: Indiana University Press. p. 71..

<sup>13</sup> N. Achebe, 2005 ... Portsmouth: Neimann.

<sup>14</sup> Nwando Achebe and Bridget Teboh "Dialoguing Women" p. 73.

<sup>15</sup> Nwando Achebe & Bridget Teboh "Dialoguing Women" p. 74.

<sup>16</sup> Nwando Achebe 2011 ... Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Her works mapped a direction for the historical study of women. Specifically, her article – “Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study”<sup>17</sup> provided various paradigms to engage research on Yoruba women's history. Beyond Nigeria, she diversified research location to Sierra Leone to deploy the use of biographies in studying the contribution of women. In analysing the roles of women in politics and nationalism she produced a monograph: *Constance Agatha Cummings – John: Memoirs of a Krio leader*. Various sphere of research opened up through her initiatives as she introduced themes of research on education, domesticity, career, politics and enterprise. To advance Bolanle Awe's exposition on the Institution of Iyalode in Yorubaland. She organised a monograph to honour Bolanle Awe. The monograph titled – *The Iyalode in Ibadan Politics and Society ...* was a well researched work in which biographical designs were used to reveal the roles and contributions of various Iyalode to the development of Ibadan. Thus, she added to the historical visibility of women and gender history at the University of Ibadan. An article on “Women in Freetown Politics, 1914-1961: A Preliminary Study.”<sup>18</sup> Both articles added value to research. They proved the fact that Africanist methodology on women was universal across Africa and basically studying African women in their own terms. An area of research she focused was women's work. Her understanding of methods to explain this focused on the political economy of phases Nigeria's history. The book on *Falayegbe Akintunde Ighodalo: A Public Life* was a blend of biography and career studies, as it was organised to explain women's work and relevance in public spaces.

On domesticity and education, La Ray Denzer's works revealed the seasons in the life of Yoruba girls and women, she explained how Yoruba women acquired formal education, giving account of the roles of the missionaries. The Christian ideology of training women for a middle-class life which also relate to the British ideals of a woman manifested in the type of education given to girls. This, could be describe as a relatively exclusive education, because, the girls were not allowed to take some general subjects which boys did. This form of gender discrimination advanced some forms of domestic and vocational education for girls. But, subsequently, the consequent implication of the discrimination reflected in Denzer's article titled – *Women in Government Service in Colonial Nigeria*. She analysed the implication of gender discrimination in curriculum as a cause of limited female employment in colonial civil service. White women were considered for employment to mid-career levels while few Nigerian women worked as typists, clerical assistants, hostel attendants and so on.

While Denzer's scholarly outputs initially, appeared elitist, that is studying privileged women in Yoruba societies, she also adopted the political economy approach to study ordinary women. She analyzed the influence of the economic doldrums of the 1980s and 1990s, most especially in the structural Adjustment era on everyday lives of Women in Ibadan, as regards work and clothing. In a chapter she contributed – “High Fashion and Fluctuating Fortunes: The Nigerian Garment Industry Under Structural Adjustment,”<sup>19</sup> She focused on the nature of work in the garment industry of the informal sector that is, the process of work as seamstress, the impact of second hand cloth importation on Nigeria's garment industry, and the organisation of trade groups (tailors associations) expressing the politics and conflicts therein.

The era of post colonialism in the writings of Denzer also analysed the plight of women in the public spaces of the militarised State. It questioned the impact of political factors in the activities of three Women – Alhaja Kudirat Abiola, Alhaja Suliati Adedeji, and Chief Bisoye Tejuoso. In the work – “When Wealth Kills: The Assassination of Three Yoruba Businesswomen, 1996”.<sup>20</sup> She critically connected how the complications in the military era of the 1990s affected the three women and eventually led to their assassination. Thus, the work exposed how power, wealth and politics led to the circumstances that explain their murder.

### **Nina Mba**

Nina Mba, was a professor of history at the Department of History, University of Lagos. She died in 2002. But, before then, she developed historiographical traditions to study women's political history in Nigeria. Her book – *Nigerian Women Mobilized:*

<sup>17</sup> L. Denzer “Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study” *International Journal of African Historical Studies ...*

<sup>18</sup> L. Denzer, R.V. *Africa* vol. 57, 4, 1987, pp. 439-456.

<sup>19</sup> La Ray Denzer “High Fashion and Fluctuating Fortunes: The Nigerian Garment Industry Under Structural Adjustment,” in *Money Struggles and City Life: Devaluation in Ibadan and Other Urban Centers in Southern Nigeria, 1986-1996*, (Ed) Jane Guyer, La Ray Denzer and Adigun Agbaje Portsmouth, Nit. Heinmann 2002, pp. 93-114

<sup>20</sup>In Adigun A.B. Agbaje, Larry Diamond and Ebere Onwudiwe (eds) (2004)*Nigeria's Struggle for Democracy and Good Governance* Ibadan: Ibadan University Press. pp. 303-321.

*A History of Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria 1900-1965*<sup>21</sup> expanded spheres of research into the lives of women. The political actions and engagement of Yoruba and Igbo women was exposed and specifically their contributions to nationalism and decolonization. The desire to study the nexus between women and politics in the ways of Mba was aimed at constructing the misrepresentation or neglect of women in Nigerian history. Of course, the study of women, generally had show scholarly attention because the nature of formal education actually favour early entry of men into various disciplines. Hence, scholarly work on women had to emerge as a form of reconstruction of the malestream nature of scholastic involvement.

Mba's discourse analysed the socio-political and economic milieus that conditioned women's political activity since the pre-colonial era. As an Australian married to a Nigerian she contributed to the ideology of homogenising knowledge of African women differently from Western women's experiences because as Oyeronke Oyewumi emphasised in *Invention of Women*,<sup>22</sup> it was targeted at differentiating and examining gender constructs in African (Yoruba) society and Western society. Then, her historical intervention of women's status and power in pre-colonial era was unprecedented and further warrants the need to interrogate the implications of colonialism on the lives of women. Mba's analysis of women in the pre-colonial era touched on various ethnic groups in Nigeria by explain the status of women among the Igbo, Itsekiri, Ijaw, Kalabari, Benin and Efik, as regards their roles in the formation and administration of Empires.

In the colonial era, Mba explained the mobility or change brought by influences of urbanization and education on the emergence of elite women. The core of political actions Mba exemplified as more of protests and mobilization which in itself was a response to the implications of colonialism on the lives of women. The responses of Aba women to the imposition of tax could be described as part of a form of militant nationalism which created and awareness against imposition and ultimately the need for decolonization. Although, Mba perceived the war as more of a feminist movement and thus a feminine perspective to nationalism. Similarly, Mba's co-authored work with Cheryl Johnson-Odim was a biographical analysis of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti. She organised a network of women – Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU), market women inclusive to mobilise against the autocratic rule of Alake (King) Ademola II in 1949.<sup>23</sup>

Post colonialism in the historical writings of Mba featured the crisis that ravaged the political economy of Nigeria. The emergence of military governance in Nigeria complicated women's participation in public sphere. While civilian men were excluded from power, women hardly had spaces, thus marginalization ensued. Thus, female based pressure groups and movements emerged to respond to marginalization of women in public spaces. Mba aptly exposed the problematic nature of military dictatorship in the work – “Kaba and Khaki: Women and the Militarized State in Nigeria”<sup>24</sup> Except for few women pressure groups, that engaged in developmental actions such as National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) in the military era, most women groups could not work out the desired change.

## 7. Projection of African women's History in Diaspora

Gloria Chuku's analysis of *Igbo Women and Economic Transformation in Southeastern in Nigeria, 1900-1960*<sup>25</sup> explains the balance between Africanism and feminism in the lives of Igbo women. A major form of militant nationalism was that displayed by women in the 1929 war which revolted the colonial imposed tax system. Hence, anti colonial activism as displayed by Igbo women within the context of Igbo political economy. The peculiarity of each Igbo society expresses various forms of flexibilities and complexities in the lives of women in Nsukka, Aro, Onitsha,

Anioma and Ngwa. Her concept of economic transformation revealed varieties of economic activities of Igbo women, of course shaped colonial induced innovation in craft production and other economic spheres. Before the publication of the book, she had earlier synthesized methodological approach to the study of Igbo women through historical analysis of the work of commissioned ethnologists and anthropologists. Thus, knowledge production on the historical writings of Igbo women entailed an array of sources to include oral traditions, understanding of socio-cultural norms expressed through festivals and religious rites.

<sup>21</sup> N. Mba 1978 *Nigerian Women Mobilized: A History of Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria 1900-1965* Berkeley: California ...

<sup>22</sup> O. Oyewumi, 1997. *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourse*. Minnesota Press.

<sup>23</sup> Johnson-Odim and N. Mba *For Women and Nation* p. 63.

<sup>24</sup> N. Mba, “Kaba and Khaki: Women and the Militarized State in Nigeria” in James, Pappart and Kathleen A. Staudt (ed)(1989) *Women and the State in Africa* Boulder Co: Lynner Rienner Publishers, pp. 69-90.

<sup>25</sup> G. Chuku ... Psychology Press, 2005.

G. Chuku, 'Recovering the voices and Life Histories of Igbo Women: Apart from accounts given sources and Methodological Consideration by European visitors, are understanding of Igbo women in her writings explicitly recognised uncommon archival materials such as marriage registers and other court records are relevant of course, the accounts given by missionaries kindly explains the economic engagements of Igbo women in the colonial era.<sup>26</sup>

Gloria Chuku's sojourn in researching women's history could be understood in the context of being an Igbo women as she developed historical method to study women and political economies of Igbo society. Colonial era had an array of events which had been thematically explored by female historians. The projection of African women's history in Diaspora highlighted the undiscovered aspects of women's lives and under a plethora of sources the initiatives of African women are clearly revealed in historical writings. Abosede George in *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood Labour, and Social Development in Colonial Lagos*<sup>27</sup> focused on the life of girls in Lagos society, specifically the subjection to hawking and the attendant social vices and abuses which they experience. Thus, the problem of girls was in colonial Lagos became a social vice that warranted the interventions of the colonial state and more importantly response emerged from African women social workers such as it were from the activities of Lady Oyinkan Abayomi and some others. Her unravel research on girlhood, and the phenomenon of childhood in Africa of the colonial era and ultimately the perspective of motherhood which reflected in the social work of elderly women.

On the production of historical knowledge of Igbo women, Egodi Uchendu researched various themes in the lives of these women through conference presentations. On the life histories of Igbo converts to Islam, she was able to explain the trajectories in the patterns of conversion and subsequently their integration into the society.<sup>28</sup> A holistic study of Islam among the Igbo has influenced her writing on the process of re-Islamisation which featured as a form of social change in Igbo society. Apart from examining the dynamics of Islam, she focused on Anioma women with various research themes related to girlhood, elections, female education, religious rites, the status during the Nigerian Civil War, modern female chieftaincy and so on.<sup>29</sup>

## 8. Non-Nigerian Female Historians

Some non-African women organised African women historical research based on the models of African realities such were Judith Byfield whose work corroborates those of the nineteenth century explorers, that identified textile work as an occupation of the Yoruba and particularly, women. As evidenced in the works of William Clarke,

Anna Hinderer, High Clapperton among others portrayed various economic activities engaged. The sources provided by the explorers exposed various themes of research. Byfields explanation of women and the Adire industry in Abeokuta was a continuum and a derivative of the scholarly calls established by La Ray Denzer and Bolanle Awe. Scholarly questions answered by some foreign women expatiates the negative impact of colonialism on African women. In this regard, Rina Okonkwo in her book – *Protest Movements in Lagos* elucidates how women as individuals and groups partook in political events and protested for the establishment of Queens College in 1927.<sup>30</sup>

Recently, Marjorie McIntosh's Yoruba women work and social change draws on variety of sources the put into context the economic activities Yoruba women and the dynamics of change associated with it. McIntosh articulated the ideas and approaches introduced by Awe and Denzer as she pointed the challenges in everyday life of all categories of women in the cabinet.

<sup>26</sup> Paper presented at the Atlantic Crossings: Women's voices, Women's Stories from the Carribean and Nigerian Hinterland Workshop organised by Dartmouth College and York University (UNESCO Nigerian Hinterland Project May 18-20, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> A.A. George *Making Modern Girls: A History of Girlhood Labour, and Social Development in Colonial Lagos* 2014 Ohio: Ohio University Press.

<sup>28</sup> E. Uchendu, "Women Converts to Islam in Eastern Nigeria" Paper presented at the Joint Conference of the Swiss Society Middle East and Islamic Cultures and the Swiss Society of African Studies in Bern (Switzerland under the theme. Islam in Africa: Historical and Contemporary Process of Islamisation and Re-Islamisations, April 23-26, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> The conference presentations in which these themes featured are as follows: E. Uchendu, "Anioma Women and the Nigerian Civil War," West African Seminar Series, Department of Anthropology, University College, London, December, 2004; E. Uchendu, "The Last Passage rite and Women in Anioma," Conference of Nigeria in the Twentieth Century, The University of Texas at Austin (USA) March 27-30, 2002. E. Uchendu, "Rural Girls' Lives in Anioma," UNCG Conference on Girls' Real Lives, North Carolina, Greensboro (USA), February 2002. E. Uchendu, "Modernizing Female Chieftaincy Institution in Anioma," 7th Annual Conference of the Mid-America Alliance for African Studies (MAAAS), University of Missouri, St. Louis, (USA) September 27-29, 2001.

<sup>30</sup> R. Okonkwo *Protest Movement in Lagos 1909-1936* Leviston New York: Edwin Mellen Press. 1995. P.1-85

## 9. Conclusion

Writing of women's history and the production of knowledge on women's studies in Africa as projected by women was a response to male dominated dimensions to scholarly works. In Nigeria, the works of Bolanle Awe was a reaction to the fact that existing historiography focused solely on men, with a passive highlight on women. Thus, various methodologies and approaches were deployed to writing women into history. Generally, western perceptions of African women needed a form of counter discourse, hence, the perspectives of African women was relevant to present the objective realities about women's roles, contributions and of course challenges.