

# Fetch the Bolt Cutters; We've Been in Here for Too Long<sup>1</sup>: An Analytical History of Women's Resistance to Patriarchal Systems in Nigeria 1912-1976

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## Introduction

*Fetch the Bolt Cutters, We've Been in Here Too Long* is an analytical history of women's resistance and existence within the binds of colonial and native patriarchal systems. It investigates women's realities of submission within educational, social, and political institutions to bring to light that women navigated these areas to gain political authority. Women's history in Nigeria has been a laborious existence. As colonial and native patriarchal systems waged war against one another, Nigerian women have carved out opportunities for themselves from their survival as slaves to changing relationship dynamics, education pursuits, and eventually to their inquiry in politics. By analyzing how these women were able to refuse male intervention to their livelihoods, this work hopes to reveal the hardships Nigerian women navigated under double binds of patriarchy's colonialist and native systems. We reveal women's rightful positions women have created for themselves in politics within Nigeria. By proving that women existed and resisted patriarchal systems in Nigeria and were able to carve out points in their suppressive history to stake out their inclusivity to end their suppression. However, women's quest for inclusion would force them into positions that would uphold male political power.

To organize and analyze women's history, this paper looks at the scholarly works of Paul E. Lovejoy, Peter Tibenderana, Ilene Pittin, and Sara Panata, and many other honorable mentions. Each scholar selected has helped navigate Nigerian women's history. Lovejoy offers analysis into the turn of marriage dynamics within Nigeria by investigating the role of colonial occupation and relations to the Emirates of Northern Nigeria to women's positions as slaves. In

doing this, Lovejoy opens this paper to discuss how colonial encounter has historically changed or not changed women's domestic relationships with their partners. Peter Tibenderana helps this work navigate the history of women's education. Tibenderana, like Lovejoy, analyzes colonial relationships to native administrations incongruency to women's educational opportunities. Engaging with Tibenderana's article allows this paper to include political authority to investigate women's existence in male-dominated spheres. Because education, everywhere, holds authoritative connotations, it played a significant role in women's access to engaging in politics. This paper employs Ilene Pittin and Sara Panata to discuss how the early existence of women's resistance to two patriarchal systems was permissible to them gaining influence in a change in politics to better their inclusion. Each scholar offered a substantial discussion of this paper's topic because their works created opportunities to discuss women in contexts that have historically aimed to exclude women. This work aims to shed light on the lack of women's ability to create influence for themselves because of patriarchal influence.

To create a paper that could argue that women existed and resisted in male-dominated spheres, this work first had to find out what those spheres were. Asking questions like, where are women most dismissed? In what ways were they submissive? Who puts them in positions of inferiority? Moreover, did women remove themselves from oppression? How? Correspondingly, organizing this particular research would be easier to explain women's history of submission in realms that women are typically noticed and mislaid. Marriage, Education, and Politics have been historically the home to women's submission and lack of inclusion. Scholarly works from many different disciplines that focus on women's history made it easier to decide that this work could not be confined by one specific timer period. This work has chosen to analyze multiple periods because women's history of inferiority to male domination is an unresolved and ongoing

event. This work chose three specific points in Nigerian history or organized where to stop and start. However, it is essential to note that much of this analysis spills over, and the periods chosen are more for organizational purposes. The Amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 starts the work off because it was an ultimate goal of colonial general Lord Frederick Lugard, and choosing this event made it easier to introduce the relationship between colonial and native administration. This work then evaluates how these relationships affected women and women's existence as slaves in early periods of Nigerian history to their roles within marriage. These relationships between colonial and native administration created a stronghold for women, which moves us to the Aba Women's Riot. This work identifies the Aba Women's Riot as the main effect and first mode of women's resistance to male domination.

This work moves on to 1930, which this work looks to Peter Tibenderana to identify as the first experience of colonial schools explicitly created for girls. Here, we identify women's educational purposes with a 1909 syllabus primary source that outlines classes offered to girls in colonial schools to educate them in domestication purposefully. These schools created spheres of restraint within Northern Nigeria because of economic failure. The colonial system's economic failure forced women's education to become background noise, forcing women to speak up about their desire for better livelihoods and become active in political participation. This participation created the realization that women were not considered necessary because women had no claim to citizenship because of their historic inferiority and objectivity. The second section ends with the Independence of Nigeria in 1960 because it marks a time that there was hope for women's suppression to be realized and repaired. Reparation to women's suffering did not happen with Nigeria's Independence, which becomes arguable that males fear losing power to women. This work finally concludes its work by identifying women activists and women's participation in

influencing political parties. Female activism would end in their suffrage in 1976. Overall, this work wants to shed light on women's ability to create something of change out of nothing; when odds were stacked against them, they could thrive. Although their laborious results are ambiguous, it is still as much impactful.

## **II. Historical Background:**

Much of women's suppression in Nigeria stems from a lopsided history from British colonial rule. Until 1912, when Frederick Lugard, colonial governor of Nigeria, mandated the Amalgamation of Nigeria, the country was split into two distinct protectorates- North and South. The split allowed each protectorate to have its own distinct social, economic, political, and religious practices based on colonial rule. The amalgamation of protectorates did nothing to change this split, as both Northern and Southern Nigeria were still two different parts of a whole. The amalgamation was a political effort by the British to take hold of Nigeria. The northern protectorate was significantly influenced by Islam, which would remain the cause of lesser colonial influence within the North. Indirect rule, where colonialists used native Nigerians political authorities, like Emirs, to enforce the colonial rule, was also causation to less colonial influence. Lack of direct rule would allow Islamic practices to distinguish a difference in their societies when it came to women. The Qur'an instructed Islamic practices in the North, and Shari law, which characterizes much of Women's underrepresented history throughout the North as the lives of women were predestined for submission. The South, however, was highly influenced by colonial rule and adopted many western establishments rapidly due to direct rule, opening more substantial opportunities for women's representation because Islam's patriarchal force did not dictate women in the South. Christianity's compulsory practice created a more substantial

influence of Colonial influence on southern Nigeria, making the South more favored by colonists officials than the Islamic North.

Changes to marriage institutions, education, and religious practices became vehicles for flexing patriarchal strength that women were undoubtedly affected by, especially in their journey for political representation. Colonial intervention in marriage practices within Nigeria expelled slavery and concubinage into "junior" wives within the North and monogamous relationships that mirrored western institutions in the South.<sup>2</sup> These changes in women's defined relations to male partners did not discourage husbands from possessing women but perhaps made women subjected to further male domination. Education within Nigeria was another institution from suppression as women's education was dictated by preparation for domestication, unlike their male counterparts. Religion also played a vital role in suppression as the North dictated women under Islam and, in the South, Christianity. Both religious institutions created a double bind for women in the North and South from obtaining authority. These institutions played a profound role in women's quest for political autonomy when Nigeria gained its independence in 1960. Nigerian women would sanction for representation, leading to their suffrage decades later in 1976.

### **1914 Amalgamation-1929 Aba Women's Riots**

The implementation amalgamation of Nigeria in 1914 transpired for many reasons- financial expediency, railway contingency, and to fix the backwardness of the North.<sup>3</sup> In simplest terms, it was all about power. The amalgamation of Nigeria was bringing together north and south Nigeria under colonialism and the governorship of Lugard. The document *Amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria and Administration, 1912-1919*, by Lugard, outlines his plans

for occupying both the North and South under one protectorate. His plans included many concepts, like occupation, education, politics, and laws. While all of these elements to the amalgamation are important, this paper stresses backwardness within these spheres discussed in Lugard's document. This section is determined to analyze the political, social, and economic spheres to illuminate how each concept affected women's roles within Nigeria. This section ends with the 1929 Aba women's riot to place it as an early existence of women's resistance to patriarchal institutions. This paper does not disregard that other forms of women's resistance as obsolete; it frankly uses this instance as a vehicle to move the research along. This goes for the rest of the timeline of the work.).

British colonial forces expressed interest in the betterment of lives for Nigerian women in the North. However, strained relationships between colonialists and Emirs throughout the state had forced their livelihood to have little impact. Politics has played a significant role in the relationship between Nigerians and colonialists. When colonialists took over, negotiation instances often allowed colonial influence to take hold. Colonialists attempted to influence native systems of marriage and politics, with women being the pawn within the rocky relationship between colonialists and Nigerians. Much of women's history within Nigeria has been about submission. In his article "Concubinage and the Status of Women Slaves in Early Colonial Northern Nigeria," Paul Lovejoy" gives a glimpse of the realities of women's submission before and during early colonial occupation. Lovejoy argues that the establishment of British rule in northern Nigeria from 1897 to 1903 did nothing to improve the condition of female slaves and used concubinage as a way to gain aristocratic support.<sup>4</sup> Concubinage was a sensitive issue to the patriarchal Muslim society. Women's inferiority to men was an issue not new or different from that of the colonialists. Concubinage is a form of slavery, but under Islamic law, concubines had

a particular category as Emirates chose these women for their sexual attraction to their masters. This issue of defining realms of slavery was important, especially to British colonialists who promoted the abdication of slavery, especially after its abolishment decades earlier in 1833. The British, however, tried to blur lines between concubinage and wives.

Colonial attempts at blurring concubinage and slavery allowed for Emirates to continue, while the British could create deeper ties to these emirates to promote influence. The blurring of this relationship becomes essential to identify, as many concubines would flee from their masters, providing insight into women's desire to be in these relationships-they did not. As women continued to flee, colonialists looked to establish their legitimacy. With regards to their establishments of relationships, women who left their husbands/ masters had to be returned because women could not be unattached from their male partners.<sup>5</sup> Unattachment would be their gateway into prostitution, which neither emirates nor colonialists supported. These fears that colonialists had about Nigerian women's engagement in being unattached to men call to what Lovejoy describes as colonialism reinforcing concubinage.<sup>6</sup> Lovejoy's research demonstrates how the British were more involved with keeping an exemplary role by allowing Islamic groups to partake in concubinage, making women a token in colonial campaigns to be influential in the North. As concubinage is, in fact, slavery and forced women in the North into submissive positions, a question arises how much of the same reality is applied to women in southern Nigeria?

Colonial intervention in concubinage and defining slavery within northern Nigeria affected marriage. Within the North, concubinage allowed men in the North to keep women submissive. In southern Nigeria, however, colonial influence created marriage definitions similar to those in Victorian England. Marriage dynamics in southern Nigeria are under English law.



English law permitted the introduction of monogamous relationships in Nigeria through the Marriage Act of 1884.<sup>7</sup> With southern Nigeria so influenced by colonialism, colonial courts were quickly established. However, it should be made a fact that the Marriage Act 1884 did not abolish polygamy in the South, but colonial systems deem its inferiority and, for the most part, phased it out in the South.

Colonial influence in Nigeria created two governmental systems of rule. In the North, it was an indirect rule. The indirect rule became a government system that Lord Lugard implemented to gain some sense of control. However, it was emirs who predominately ruled without much regard to colonial ideas. In the South, colonial rule was much more direct. British colonialists had direct implementation over who ruled certain parts of southern Nigeria, and a lot of the time, these were warrant chiefs. Warrant chiefs were established to create a seemingly peaceful dynamic that allowed colonial rule to thrive as their system was directed through native Nigerians. These systems of rule created different spheres of corrupt political conception. In the North, indirect rule allowed Islamic patriarchal systems to thrive, leaving women trapped within the same state women had been in since colonial occupation. The use of Direct rule created a corrupt use of power. Warrant chiefs specifically would become empowered to enact unfair taxation of the people these chiefs directed. Taxation amongst the masses, especially women, became an issue and a call for action to rise against warrant chiefs' direct native administration. This call to action influence thousands of women to strike, thus inciting the Aba Women's Riot of 1929. This act of resistance was an attempt to end the use of warrant chiefs and the native administration. These women were met with opposition to their resistance, leaving more than 50 women dead. The women's rebellion became a focal point in women's resistance in Nigeria. However, this case for women became downcast by colonialists as irrational and overlooked. To



colonialists, it was nothing more than an emotional outburst of women. The women's riot was also described as an organization of men inciting rage in the women who protested. The British colonial government deafened the meaning of the Aba riots.

When looking at how colonial rule impacted women's lives in Nigeria, it is apparent that women had different ways of existing to their surrounding circumstances. The colonial rule allowed for women to live within one of the same. However, different spheres of colonial and native control provided a positive environment for women to thrive. Women have never been presented a choice but had to either endure a religion's constraints notorious for robbing women of any agency or live in a corrupt system with unfair taxation and treatment.

### **[1930-1960 Independence for Nigeria]**

Women's advancement seemed to be out of grasp, with women in the North restricted to being submissive wives and the south women's autonomy overlooked. Nevertheless, opportunities presented themselves the longer colonialist stuck around. The year 1930 became a rough time for all Nigerian women, as educational practices made for women started to take root all over the state. In northern and southern Nigeria, primary schools were established to educate women for domestication. The establishment of education for all Nigerian women would help them discover and desire freedom from their patriarchal binds. Northern Nigerian women would bargain for their educational practices, and southern Nigerian women would lead the way for establishing women's autonomy in politics through their desire for education as Nigeria's financial capabilities were rocked by the effects of the great depression. In doing so, these women's desires will build momentum to establish themselves apart from Nigeria's patriarchal bonds with Nigeria's independence in 1960.

Up until 1929, there was no mention of establishing girls' schools. In 1929, E.R.J Hussey, director of education in Nigeria, proposed establishing two girls' schools in two major Islamic cities, Kano and Katsina. In the article "The Beginnings of Girls' Education in the Native Administration Schools in Northern Nigeria, 1930-1945," Peter Tibenderana argues that Muslim social culture and lack of British monetary involvement hindered the advancement of girls' education in native administration schools in northern Nigeria. The school's establishment was to coach girls to be good wives for educated chief sons, make schools prominently focused on the attendance of wealthy Nigerian families. Although Tibenderana's work focuses on the northern girls' schools, the same schools, and courses created for girls in the South, schools may not have been successfully established until 1930. However, previously there were inquiries for girls' education as early as 1902. In 1909, the colonial educational board created a syllabus for King's College (A secondary school in Lagos, Nigeria, for boys). Analyzing the gender constructs represented in the document, the source also lays down a very Victorian/ patriarchal view of its female attendees. The disparity between classes reveals their ancient attitudes to female colonial subjects' education as training for homebound domestic lives.

Kano and Katsina's Emirs supported the idea of girls' schools in attempts to seem liberal enough so the British that kept them in office, as failing to do so would be causation to remove them from office. Tibenderana points out that aristocratic recruitment in the girls' schools was very harmful to the advancement of girls' education in northern Nigeria because many of the girls would have to leave to abide by their social responsibilities. However, these responsibilities allowed Muslim girls to engage in Islamic establishments for religious schooling. Emirates decided they wanted to pull their daughters out of these schools, and in doing so, allowed them to receive an education through Religious studies. Alaine Hutson analyzes women's authority in

her article “Women, Men, and Patriarchal Bargaining in an Islamic Sufi Order: The Tijaniyya in Kano, Nigeria, 1937 to the Present” that Muslim women in Kano, Nigeria were affected by the patriarchy. However, women were still able to hold spiritual positions and have agency through "patriarchal bargaining." Hutson points to these patriarchal bargains across generations of women who a Tijaniyya and women as the reason for improving women's role in society with authoritative positions within brotherhoods. British colonization was able to help shift some of the patriarchal bargains that occurred in Kano with the implementation of colonial schools because their relationship with the Emirates created pushback. Religious orders like the Tijaniyya encouraged women to join their order, so they did not have to join the colonial schools. In doing so, allowed emirates were able to make sure women were following instructions under Islamic laws' regulations. Nevertheless, Muslim women's participation in the brotherhoods demonstrates their ability to navigate their patriarchal binds.

Northern Nigerian women in the brotherhoods created a sphere where they could advocate for women’s education. With education becoming more desirable, these women passed on their knowledge from their religious training down to their daughters. Women took over spheres of religious practices and created centers of authority through the religious practice of *Bori*. Amber Gemmeke adds to the argument that women played an essential role in authority with their participation in the traditionally male-dominated divination practices of esoteric sciences.<sup>8</sup> Islamic esoteric knowledge includes dream interpretations, Arabic numerology, and astrology, all aspects of Islamic divination. Gemmeke refers to an exchanged use of marabout to esoteric sciences created by Soares. The term marabout is traditionally averse in connotation. Marabout women had to face uphill battles as writing and knowledge associated with writing was dominated by men, forcing them to align with male paradigms. These paradigms included

...dressing and replicating men practitioners and denying any existence of menses, as this deafened their work because menstruation makes the women unfit to practice.

Much of women's participation in the brotherhoods and search for political autonomy stems from the shortcomings of the colonial economic system's collapse. Ochonu argues that colonialism does not equate to surplus and profitability, especially in times of crisis. The Great Depression of the 1930s was the first to affect Nigeria and affect the profits of its colonial status. Before the Great Depression, Britain successfully cultivated an export-oriented agriculture system in Nigeria that produced many products. With the Great Depression in full effect and Nigeria no longer balancing the budget, the British resorted to "pay cuts, retrenchments, broadening taxation, an aggressive revenue drive, and the suspension of public works." Ochonu highlights that colonial officers tightened up their indirect rule during these difficult times of the 1930s. Ochonu also argues that the excess pressure exerted on Nigeria by British rule during the depression was a start to seminal anticolonial struggles and asserts that Britain's control was never that strong. Ochonu's work opens the discussion to economic effects that would create strife within the education fields. Because technically, Nigeria could not afford to educate the native Nigerian population.

The *Annual Report on the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Nigeria in 1938* provides insight into the lack of colonial interference to better education- specifically in chapter X (10). When evaluating the document's education report, two agendas are available for the North and Southern Provinces. The North's agenda included teacher recruitment, English courses, female education, religious classes, and community work. For the South, its grants/aid, health units/rural reconstruction, agricultural education, teacher funds, and salary scales for African teachers. These agendas seem to provide context to education issues and successes in

both provinces, provided to prospective teachers or aids to education. Evidently, the Northern agenda is less advantageous within the colonial system than in the South. We see this disparity as English is still being required in education, and female education while from lack of inclusion on the agenda has already happened and established in the South.

Further, the document discusses how large the provinces are. A lack of established schools near homes makes education recruitment difficult while simultaneously providing that those within the educational system succeed, and so does the program. The distinction between the North and South successes is not evident until paragraph 187. It mentions that 'prejudice in the Mohammedan areas in the North against the education of girls is gradually being broken down.' There is a clear need for teachers or educational centers in individual provinces, like the North.

The disparity between the Northern and Southern Provinces' educational plans shows a profound disengagement of colonialism in the North. The colonial government is trying to stifle that from what is being reported. Colonial trust and connection lie with Southern Nigeria as their agenda is more reform and betterment of education and job opportunities. This frankly shows economic control spread between the North and South, contributing to education success in the North. The lack of teachers in the North and schooling are highly contributory to colonial implementation failures through education in the North, with a majority of the aids and grants available to the South only compared to the North. The lack of real explanation of the North and South's success is vague within the paragraphs compared to the agendas. This contradiction in information is a scream of failure of the colonial system. Bade Onimode adds to this discussion by stating that colonial provisions to education were forced<sup>9</sup> due to the lack of economic surplus.

The casual attitude that Omnibode believes to be over Nigeria's education and overall infrastructure, in turn, creates colonial resentment.

With the changing of ideologies and political structures rooted in colonial resentment, women attempted to establish themselves within the race for independence. As we already know, women created some authority within the Islamic state through their brotherhoods' religious practice participation. However, the idea of women's place still was up for question, especially to their inclusion of citizenship. Women have been subjected to slavery, but it was not until circa 1960 that the discussion of whether or not women were considered people were brought into the conversation. This is a topic Renee Pittin discusses in chapter three of her book "Women and work in Northern Nigeria." Pittin identifies women's resilience in the changing structures are procured differently based on women's realities concerning wealth and power. According to Pittin, wealth and power are based on age, class, marital status, all of which she believes divide women, placing them as pillars to a patriarchal society. By analyzing the role women may be playing in upholding the patriarchal system, she reveals that women's roles in political authority are not always leveled equally for all women, which becomes a tactic that this paper will later discuss on women activists. Further, the analysis reveals that Nigeria's Independence was not the event it was hoped to be for women becoming independent of the patriarchy.

By identifying the role education played in an economic collapse coupled with women's status on the rise of Nigeria's independence in 1960, we can identify that women held authoritative positions. These positions prove their existence within a patriarchal system but beg the question, were women the ones upholding the system rather than tearing it down?

### **Subsection III [1960-1976 Women's Suffrage in Nigeria]**

When the Independence of Nigeria came around in 1960, women hoped that this would be the event to make their realities of submission different. When that did not happen, women took an opportunity to deep dive into politics, more so than before. Women like Elizabeth Adekogbe and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti advocated and spoke up and congregated women's groups to stir up change. Their efforts were radical and monumental, and this time, women had allies. Many political groups attempted to gain momentum in speaking up about women's education issues, lack of agency, and inferiority to men. However, this did not come without opposition. Both men and women did not want women in politics. Male and female distaste for women's agency created strife as those opposed to it defeated women's efforts by marginalizing women as prostitutes because of their lack of education. This irony would reveal male fears about women's superiority and women on women hate because men did not want all women to gain superiority either. This further brings to light the efforts women took to rise out of the ashes but then burn themselves back into the arms of the patriarchy.

Women's participation and calls for reformation would not be heard independently; women had to employ help from those who would be their enemies- men. Women's authority in politics was created by women-only groups but backed by male politicians. In her article, Barbara Calloway, "Women and Political Participation in Kano City." Calloway argues that the women's role, especially in politics, is complementary to men and not equal.<sup>10</sup> Her work focuses on Kano's politics during the establishment of Nigeria's first republics post-independence in 1960 and women's participation. Calloway analyzes the role of women within Nigerian society is the inset of the Qur'an and Sharia law. She acknowledges how Muslim scholars have interpreted that the Qu 'ran beliefs in coordinate conjunctions between males and females; however, her work deciphers that male interpretations came to a disparity in women's roles in politics. Calloway



uses the three political parties- Northern People's Congress (NPC), National Party of Nigeria (NPN), and Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) to make her claim. She analyzes their political positions, including women and women's place within their political parties. She meets her analysis with the opinions that women's lack of substantial education, the stifling of Islamic social degrees forced parties to look for "free women"/ prostitutes, which poses another problem, and male fear of female superiority, forcing them to take women's positions.<sup>11</sup> Callaway offers insight into women's inclusion in politics and the wall Islam puts up to stifle this inclusion. Pittin also offers details into the little existence of women's political affiliations in the North. The political association was not granted to women in the North, according to Pittin; with the seclusion of women, along with political denial of women's authority, Northern Nigerian politicians felt little need to educate in politics or advocate for inclusion.

As women expressed their discontent with Nigeria's patriarchal government with the rise of independence, it was met with male discontent. Women's advocacy was met with slander to their efforts. Men aimed for women's lack of education, which men credit to advocate accurately. The irony that is male claims to women's lack of education opens the discussion of what form of education was sufficient to be apart of political advocacy? Peter Clarke's article *Islam, Education, and the Developmental Process in Nigeria* argues that colonial education might have helped create real political change. Clarke discusses that education plays an essential role in creating nation-building within Nigeria as the North and South were divided. His work focuses on Islamic roles in the process. Clarke focuses on the colonial government's establishment of Universal Primary Education (UPE) as a bridge to conjoin northern and southern Nigeria. However, Muslim responses to western education have hindered the amalgamation. Through a series of interviews, Clarke builds a narrative of responses to western education, providing that

Muslims believed that Western education was immoral to the ways of Qur'anic/ Islamic teachings. Many Muslims deemed Western education to be an instrument of a counterculture.<sup>12</sup> Many of their arguments lied that western education was pagan-like, allowing for western haircuts, girls' heads uncovered, and the creation of disobedient children. Clarke recognizes that these attitudes stem from the sizeable Islamic structure within Northern Nigeria. Through interviews, Clarke found that western education went against Muslim social culture and found that parents' reactions to not sending their students to school were also due to the lack of real establishment- like lack of classrooms, which caused classes to be taught outside. Leading parents to respond that their children would be better off in Quranic schooling. Clarke's work and discussion of Muslim attitudes reveal that although Islamic schooling created an excellent Muslim, western education provided opportunities like full Nigerian citizenship through one nation's creation.<sup>13</sup> This is important in analyzing women's education and shows that authoritative Islamic attitudes toward western education were a more personal vendetta than their desire to keep women submissive.

As Northern Nigerian's educational endeavors were convoluted compared to Southern Nigeria's, it does show that western education may have been best to advocate for women. Elizabeth Adekogbe and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti are both distinguishable figures for women's advocation. Their positions provide an anecdote that western education could have been better. Both women had been raised in colonial southern Nigeria, and their education was highly western. Their advocating called for women's participation; this becomes important because women were highly critical of male figures that claimed to be for women, had other ideas. One of the main criticism was that men were using women as select members of political assemblies.<sup>14</sup> This is important to note because men had been critical of women calling them

prostitutes and free women in the wake of their advocacy to dismiss their attempts. However, these women were the ones employed as select members. Panata discusses that these women were chosen because they agreed with those male figures.<sup>15</sup> The women chosen did not represent women as a whole but parts that suited them. Allocating seats, introduced in the 1956 constitution<sup>16</sup> For women was further criticism of Nigerian politics. It was proposed that male representatives not assign those seats and instead put them up for election. The seats to women would give women political recognition while also forcing the idea of women voters.

The idea of giving up the seats to elected women was challenged and was not agreed upon by all women. The successful election of women into those seats was not guaranteed. Women like Margaret Ekpo, another woman activist who highly criticized Elizabeth Adekogbe, believed that politics should be reserved for men. However, other women activists alluded that women already had the seats. By challenging the occupant of the seat without women's ability to vote would be death to any women's political affiliation.<sup>17</sup> This division of women created inconsistencies within female activism for political rights, making women submissive to the patriarchal system.

The woman-on-woman hate and distrust that ensued with male intervention created a weakness in women's political activism, and male politicians saw this as an opportunity. Nevertheless, women's activism was not stifled; women on either side of activism for female representation created a presence. Male politicians saw this presence as an opportunity for more considerable voter outcomes.<sup>18</sup> As a token, women were granted the right to vote in 1976 because women created a presence for rallies, adding to the voter population. Therefore, the concept of giving women the right to vote became merely a conversation piece that would incite more of a division between women and men. The multiple attempts by male forces in Nigeria's

politics to pin women against one another and drum their inclusion as an entertainment value negated women's attempts to remove themselves from male oppression.

## **Conclusion**

Women's history in Nigeria has been overlooked for centuries as women were seen early on as the latter compared to colonial and native forces' relationships. Nigerian women navigated the rocky relationship between colonial and native administrative forces seeking to define women's inferiority. Through social, economic, and political systems, women attempted to carve out a meaning for themselves, including being their advocates for education and a say in the political world. Their attempts to overtake male domination in their lives did not go unnoticed in this research but revealed that women themselves were upholding the patriarchal systems within Nigeria.

This work attempts to analyze and organize women's suppression using scholars of multiple fields to reveal women's work in fashioning out spheres of change to end their suppression within colonial and patriarchal spheres. In doing this, this work sheds light on those attempts to reveal that patriarchal ideals not only lie within men but women. Exposing women's ability to uphold the system that has, for centuries, chalked women down to inferior shows that women can rise above the patriarchal system but have accordingly created a new system of suppression-woman on women. The disparity between North and South based on colonial pressure has influenced a sense of inferiority and superiority over both regions' women. Both colonial and native patriarchy's influence has had a lasting effect on women that enable women to be their suppressors.

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<sup>1</sup>This is an ode to the album "Fetch the Bolt Cutters" by artist Fiona Apple, which the author listened to during her writing process.

<sup>2</sup>Harinder Boparai, "The Customary and Statutory Law of Marriage in Nigeria" *Journal of Comparative and International Private Law* (1982): 531

<sup>3</sup>Emmanuel Oladipo Ojo, "NIGERIA, 1914-2014: FROM CREATION TO CREMATION?" *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 23 (2014): 69-71

<sup>4</sup>Paul E. Lovejoy, "Concubinage and the Status of Women Slaves in Early Colonial Northern Nigeria.", *The Journal of African History* (1988): 245

<sup>5</sup>Lovejoy, 249

<sup>6</sup>Lovejoy, 250

<sup>7</sup>Boparai, 532

<sup>8</sup>Amber Gemmeke, "Marabout Women in Dakar: Creating Authority in Islamic Knowledge," *Journal of International African Institute* (2009): 128-129

<sup>9</sup>Bade Onimode, *Imperialism and Underdevelopment in Nigeria: The Dialects of Mass Poverty*. London: Zed Press, (1982): 63

<sup>10</sup>Barbara J. Callaway, "Women and Political Participation in Kano City.", *Comparative Politics*, (1987): 379

<sup>11</sup>Callaway, 384-388

<sup>12</sup>Peter B. Clarke, "Islam, Education and the Developmental Process in Nigeria.", *Comparative Education* (1978): 134

<sup>13</sup>Clarke, 139

<sup>14</sup>Sara Panata, "Campaigning for Political Rights in Nigeria: The Women Movement in the 1950s.", *Women, Gender, History* (2016): 178

<sup>15</sup>Panata, 179

<sup>16</sup>Panata, 181

<sup>17</sup>Panata, 182 "AG profoundly criticized the idea of independent organization and proposed to fight for women's rights in existing parties, which they saw as more likely to ensure the political emancipation of women..."

<sup>18</sup>Renee Ilene Pittin, *Women and Work in Northern Nigeria*, Indiana University Press, (2018): 89



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