Journal Homepage: -www.journalijar.com

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI:10.21474/IJAR01/23441
DOI URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/23441

RESEARCH ARTICLE

WOMEN, NIGERIAN NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES: INTERROGATING THE NEGLECTED, 1900-1960

Irom Obar Ayami[1], Patrick O. Odey[1], Otora Osmond Agbor[1], Ajor Joseph Okuta[1], Inyang Obia Gopeh[2], Umoh Margaret Sylvester[3], Utulu Celestine Benedict[4], Utulu Paul Benedict[5], Itam Barnabas Clement[6], Akah Pius Odey[7] and Oti Friday Achu[8]

1. Department of History and International Studies, University of Calabar, Nigeria.
2. University of Calabar Library, University of Calabar, Nigeria.
3. Department of Library and Information Science, University of Calabar, Nigeria.
4. Department of History and International Studies, University of Calabar, Nigeria.
5. Institute of Public Policy and Administration, University of Calabar.
6. Department of Mass Communication, University of Calabar-Nigeria.
7. Department of History, University of Education and Entrepreneurship, Akamkpa, Calabar, Nigeria.
8. Department of Philosophy and Leadership Studies, University of Calabar-Nigeria.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History
Received: 10 March 2026
Final Accepted: 12 April 2026
Published: May 2026

Key words:-
Women, African feminism, Nationalism, Nigeria, Subaltern theory

Abstract

Nationalism and political activities were the cornerstone of group and national consciousness amongst the citizens of Nigeria.These struggles, which went through different phases, were not carried out solely by men, as most available documents would have us believe. The extent and the nature of women's involvement in these struggles were determined by the needs arising out of a particular history and the nature and length of the struggle it self. Adopting subaltern and African feminist theories, the paper relies on documentary evidence to demonst rate that the protest movements women engaged in during the period under study were nationalist in orientation and involved in political activities as well.The paper finds that Nigerian women crystallised a nationalist struggle by strategically emphasising the need to question the link between the political policies,forest ordinances and regulations, and monetary policies of the colonial government and authorities, and the impact of these on their lives and those of their communities. In conclusion, the paper is a revisit of an important period in Nigerian history and of women's experiences and contributions during that period.

Introduction:-

Nationalism is associated with patriotism, a citizen's love for their nation-state. Nationalism is used here to mean "the consciousness on the part of individuals or groups of Africans, of membership of a nation-state either already existing or to which they aspire, and of a desire to achieve political and economic development as well as the

Corresponding Author:-Irom Obar Ayami
Address:-Department of History and International Studies University of Calabar, Nigeria.

cultural revival of that nation-state" (Boahen, 1970, p. 2). In the Nigerian context, this love began as protest marches in the first decade of the twentieth century. It was ignited by the people's social, political, and economic grievances, including those of women. On the other hand, political activity of women is used here to mean "women's effort to influence the allocation of resources and values in their communities by appeals to the leadership and their own participation in that leadership" (Mba, 1982, p.ix).

There are several approaches to classifying Nigerian nationalism. However, it seems that two of these approaches are more common. The first is the holistic single-phase approach, as may be seen in the works of eminent scholars such as Ajayi (1962, 1964), Ayandele (1966), Olusaya (1973, 1980), and Alagoa and Enemugwem (2015). This approach has illuminatedNigerian history and the channel through which nationalism passed in its journey to independence. This, in turn, has helped in no small way to diminish the effect of any due emphasis on a water-tight periodisation in the history of Nigerian nationalism. Worthy of mention about this approach is the lack of emphasis on women's roles. The second approach is the two-phase approach popularised by Coleman (1958), namely the earlier or primary resistance and the later movement or nationalism in the true sense. According to him, "between the collapse of the Congress Movement in the early 1920's and the arrival of Nnamdi Azikiwe in the late 1930's, there was comparatively little nationalist activity in Nigeria" (p. 201). He puts the latter movement in 1948 during "the provocative constitutional proposal of Governor Sir Arthur Richards and the emergence of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons and the publication of its Freedom Charter"(p.308).

Coleman's categorisation has far-reaching consequences for the rise of nationalism in Nigeria. Firstly, it focuses more on the influence of external factors, including constitutional developments and political parties, on the rise of Nigerian nationalism. Secondly, it tends to treat nationalism as a phenomenon that ended at independence, onceself-determination was achieved. Thirdly, in treating lightly, and labelling as primary resistance all that happened before the turning point in 1948, important events were disposed of from the mainstream of nationalism, since nationalismwas seen as a purely political phenomenon and not as a complex phenomenon in which socio- economic, socio-cultural aspects developed side by side and provided the main push for the political factors. Lastly and most importantly for this paper, like the single-phase approach, the two-phase approach pays little or no attention to women's contributions, which mostly fall under Coleman's classification as primary resistance.

Contrary to what is generally held about the role of women, they participated effectively in stimulating the rise of Nigerian nationalism. They took part in several aspects, but the most outstanding include socio-economic, socio-cultural and political aspects. However,because of Coleman's two-phase approach, these protest movements have been treated lightly, rather than as epochal events that provided major props for the political factors. That women have a history worth researching and documenting is no longer debatable, hence the emergence of women's history. Women's history is used to include "a reconstruction, a retrieval of women's experience, expressions, ideas, and actions and their ongoing functioning in a male-dominated world on their own terms" (Irom, 2019).

The Nigerian society, being a patriarchal one, clearly manifests the social categorisation of women as being inferior to men and, therefore, not capable of or suitable for a position of leadership (Irom, 2023). This was the situation for some communities even before the incursion of colonialism, when women had token representation on the Oba's council in Yoruba land, with the Iyalode or Erelu representing women's interests in a council comprising mainly male title chiefs (Awe, 1977). Also, the Onu and Ada in Igbo land have some political and religious influence (Williams, 1992). The dominant Islamic tenets and traditions in the Northern parts of the country ensured that women were not accorded any visible political rights or participation in society (Lebeauf, 1963; Mba, 1982).

The introduction of electoral politics in Nigeria in the 1920s under colonial rule, with a limited franchise based on property and economic standing, ensured that women were disfranchised, as colonial officials regarded only men as heads of families and controllers of production. According to Mba (1982),the reason for this was that "the British administrators worked for a government in which there were no women at any level, and therefore they did not expect or wish to find women involved in government" (p. x).Thus, for the most part, the literature on Nigerian nationalism and political situation has pursued the subject mainly from male-centred perspectives. This did not, however, mean that women did not contribute to the political process at all. The paper attempts to reconsider some aspects of the role played by Nigerian women in both nationalism and political activities that culminated in independence. This focus on women is necessary to redress the imbalance in the treatment of women in Nigerian historiography, since these protests were not unique in themselves but rather part of a historical pattern. Subaltern theory as adopted in this paper is hinged on Antonio Gramsci's (1971, p. 54) reflections "…on a research

programme on subaltern historiography which has not been recorded by historiography." In this paper, the subaltern becomes both a socio-historical category and a perspective of observation (Das, 1989), thereby redressing the exclusion of women in Nigerian nationalist historiographical accounts. African feminism, apart from acknowledging women's contributions to knowledge creation and the emergence of new ways of learning about the world of women, their interpretation of that world, and their experiences in society, has also been shaped by African women's resistance to Western rule (Mikell, 1997). In particular, in the colonial era, African women fought side by side with men and communal perceptions were encouraged as African women were part of nationalist struggles against colonialism (Mama, 1997). This was possible because African women had a different starting point, as their roles grew from a long tradition of female integration into collective structures. Hence, the African feminist perspective is broader, encompassing the communities and societies from which they come and in which they live.

Women and the rise of nationalism in Nigeria:-

Women of southern Nigeria traditionally had an important place within the socio-political structure of their communities. This traditional social power of women, supported by specific women's societies, was eroded by the imposition of British colonial rule in the second half of the 19th century, characterised by a male-oriented leadership, ideology, and structure (Henn, 1984).By the 20th century, women had been ousted from their primary political and administrative functions in society. Their only stronghold remained in the local marketplaces where the traditional women's organisations continued to be the leading force. With regards to the socio-economic aspects of Nigerian nationalism, Nigerian women began as early as the 1920's to question the basis of European exploitation.This, in turn, produced mass reactions from the traditional women's movement against the colonial government's attempt to encroach on their economic base. They demanded justice and fair play as part of the nation-building process and resisted, even unto death, acts aimed at poor living and working conditions (Irom, 2022, 2024).

Since 1901, women in the southern part of Nigeria have combined nationalism and the struggle for independence with attempts to address the colonial administration's socio-economic policies and their impacts on women's status and quality of life. The formation of the Lagos Ladies League by Mrs Charlotte Obasa to combat infant mortality and malaria by distributing quinine to children points to women's integration into collective ventures that impact the community. Although the League declined in 1908 as "an active but private adjunct to the Medical Department" (Tamuno, 1966, p. 304), it was reactivated in 1923 under a new name, Lagos Women's League, and its activities now went beyond mere providing medical services. They criticised the colonial government for failing to provide housing for its African officials, failing to provide the scope for employment for both educated and uneducated women and failing to provide more schools for girls, since "both sexes must be equally and fairly educated in order to ensure a true nationhood" (Mba, 1982, p. 220). The League spearheaded the agitation against the government's proposal in 1930 to close down Ikoyi cemetery for Africans because there was no room left, and in 1931, the policy was reversed.

The government proposed retrenchment in the civil service in 1934. Mrs Charlotte Obasa led 500 members of the League on a protest march to the secretariat. In the petition handed to the Deputy Chief Secretary, it was suggested that, rather than retrenchment, salaries be reduced. The women's petition was regarded as sufficiently important to be debated in the Legislative Council, and the government reduced the proposed retrenchment. The League also had wide political concerns. When the Richards Constitution was debated in the Legislative Council in March 1946, the League, led by its President, Charlotte Obasa, was at the forefront of agitation against it (Coleman, 1958; Sklar, 1963;Olusanya, 1982). It invited the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), the NigerianCouncil for Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) and market women to a sponsored mass meeting on 10th April 1945. The sole aim of the meeting was to debate the constitution, after which the meeting decided to send a cable to London. The cable included the rejection of the constitution and a vote of no confidence in the unofficial member of the Legislative Council (Olusanya, 1982). Along with other women's organisations, such as the Women's Welfare Council, the Lagos Women's League continued to work to promote the welfare of women and also campaigned independently for other socio-economic reforms.

The revolt of the market women at Calabar in 1925 was a major violent revolutionary uprising aimed directly against the colonial economic system. This revolt was sparked off by the government's attempt to encroach on the women's traditional territory, the local marketplaces, and impose the payment of market tolls from market women whose incomes were above the poverty line. The Native Authority did not erect lock-up shops, open sheds, nor provide basic amenities, yet without adequately consulting the women,they demanded tolls from them. As a result, the women of Calabar boycotted the markets and preferred to sell from the verandahs of their houses, thus creating

food shortages for the Europeans and their servants (Bassey, 2016).They were forced to retreat, humiliated, but no life was lost because political and military might had superseded constitutional rights.The distraught women whose nascent nationalistic impulse had driven them to demand a simple constitutional process were left to bemoan their fate. This was the beginning of women's nationalistic impulse. In 1928, Mr R.K. Floyer, the Assistant District Officer, began counting women's boxes of clothes and trinkets in Queens Town and other riverine areas to tax their owners, who were women (Jaja, 1986). Although the District Officer for Egwanga, Mr Whiteman, had allayed the women's fears that they would be taxed, the African members of the assessment team had told them that they would be taxed 2/= or 3/= per annum. It was in the midst of this confusion that the news of the women's war spread like wildfire.

In 1929, women had already begun to bear the burdens of taxation imposed on men, due to the intertwined nature of the village economy. For example, while in Andoni an adult male was levied 8/= per annum, adult males in Owerri and Ogoja were levied 5/= and 7/= respectively (Igwe, 2002). The household or village income could not be computed solely from male production, so women had to share the burden of taxation as wives, mothers, and widows, paying for their young sons who had no income. The trouble started when, in October 1929, on the initiative of an Assistant District Officer, a fresh headcount of men, women, and livestock was to be conducted. For the people, the obvious conclusion was that the counting was a prelude to taxing women. The actions of the warrant chiefs buttressed this belief because they misunderstood the instructions and also believed that women were to be taxed. The protest that resulted from this singular misunderstanding was exhibited in the tragedy known as the Aba Women's Riot of 1929. Afigbo (1972) suggested that the label 'Aba Riot' was inappropriate because it did not reflect the accurate picture of what happened or the women's own intentions. As he rightly pointed out, Nigerian women who took action against the British administration in 1929 termed their movement 'Women's' War' Ogu Umunwayi or Ekong Iban (p. 238).

The women in Aba, South-Eastern Nigeria, were strongly opposed to the imposition of taxation; hence, over 10,000 women carrying sticks, described as noisy and appearing ready to fight, marched around the township. It is on record that this war spread to other areas, such as Owerri, Ikot Ekpene, Opobo, Itu, and Biase. However, there were no lives lost in the face-off between the police and women in Aba. "British soldiers killed eighteen unarmed Ibibio women at Utu Etim Ekpo in the Abak division and thirty-one women in Ikot Abasi. As far as official records can tell, the killings at both places represent all the casualties in the women's war of1929" (Ndem, 1988, p.31).

Three remarkable things are worth noting. Firstly, on many occasions during the disturbances, individual women refused to identify themselves except as ohand'inyom (the women is the English translation of Igbo ohand'inyom, which means literally "a gathering of women/women's movement) in acknowledgement of the sex solidarity which united Igbo, Ibibio. Annang, Opobo, Andoni and Ogoni women. In his elaboration, Perham termed it "spirit of womanhood" (1937, p. 214), a definition which Gailey (1970) adopted. Secondly, among the demands these women made to A.R. Whiteman, the Divisional Officer who summoned them for a meeting, was that apart from the government not taxing women, the "women do not want any man to pay tax. District Officer response: I will inform the Government" (Isikalu, 1988, p. 60).Thirdly, the incident was the first in the nation's history in which any group of people laid down their lives for what they believed was a national cause.

In Lagos, along with women paying water rates and tenements rates Madam Dabiri countered the argument that women were not affected by the taxation of men thus: "if a husband has 25/- and then pays 15/- for the new baby and 10/- for the wife and then in walks the tax collector, what is this man to do under the circumstances? Are they all in that house to starve? Do you still say that women are not affected directly or indirectly now?" (Mba, 1982, p. 200). In 1932, three years after the women's war in South-Eastern Province, rumours spread in Lagos that women were to be directly taxed. A delegation of market women representatives was immediately sent to Major C. T. Lawrence, the Administrator of the colony. He assured the women that "if anyone should come and tell you that you women have to pay tax, whether he be a clerk or khaki man (policeman), take hold of him and tear his clothes and bring him here to me" (Mba, 1982, p. 201)

Women, apart from protesting for their own interests, also protested for the good of the community. Traditionally, the land had never belonged to women, but when the communal land was threatened, it was the women who confronted the administration and defended their community rights. In Obubra, the dense rainforest, composed of high forest trees such as iroko, mahogany, ebony, and red ironwood, among others, presented economic advantages in terms of forest cover, as evidenced by the colonial Forestry Ordinance and Regulation in 1906. This ordinance led

to the constitution of the ten Forest Reserves in the former Ogoja province from 1916 to 1928. The 717-square-kilometreOkpon River Forest Reserve in Obubra territory was among (Irom, 2018). The implication of this ordinance was far-fetched on the socio-economic existence of mainly women. This was because, as long as the economy was tied to the land, land became insufficient for cultivation. Whenever the women tried to show their dissatisfaction, the government of the day would often use force to restore order.By 1932, the ordinance was relaxed, and some land returned to the original owners. However, the restriction on the free felling of trees was not removed from the returned land. This meant that, apart from insufficient land for farming, the women, in particular, could not obtain firewood for cooking. The colonial government entered the closing month of 1934 satisfied with its policy on forest reserves, the structures put in place to make the government work, and the assumption that its policies had been accepted. However, for Obubra women, this ordinance did not in any way improve their economic base, hence:

Over 1000 of them held a two-day violent demonstration, requesting the removal of cement boundary pillars used to demarcate the reserves. The women refused to be intimidated by truckloads of police reinforcements from Enugu. Instead, they attacked the village heads, destroyed their property, and accused them of selling their lands to the Forest Department for reserves (Irom, 2018, p. 125).Sixty-three women were arrested in Apiapum for interfering with the demarcation party. As a result of this opposition, the lieutenant governor ordered adjustments to the demarcated area. Thatwas the only timepeace was restored (Mbah, 1982). In 1935, women in the Itu and Uyo divisions of Calabar Province staged demonstrations against the surveying of land. The demonstration only stopped when the District Officer gave them a white paper declaring that the surveying of the land did not mean that the government intended to take their lands (Mba, 1982). In 1937, the women of the Ibeku clan, Bende division, also refused to allow inspection of an area at Isieke for a forest reserve (Mba, 1982).

During World War 11, the British administration introduced compulsory food distribution and price control. This brought about control over the prices and distribution of garri, a by-product of cassava that is grown and processed mainly bywomen. The women were the hardest hit when government agents came to buy from their markets at fixed government pricesbelow normal. At the same time, wartime shortages and rising prices worsened the situation. It was against the backdrop of this economic pressure that, in October 1944, a government agent came to Ikot Ekpene market and purchased garri at the government-fixed prices. To the women who produced garri, this action heralds the government takeover of their cassava farms (Jaja, 1986).

To fight back against this threat to their livelihood, there was a mass demonstration beginning in November 1944 by women armed with branches of cassava sticks and leaves at Nto Edino, Ikot Abia, Odoro Ikot, and Mbiaso- all in the Ikot Ekpene area (Jaja, 1986). The unrest continued for several weeks and was marked by several violent incidents. The two issues of taxation and garri control were intertwined, as the proceeds from the garri trade helped women contribute to the men's tax payment. By the end of December, the show of force had effectively contained the women's agitation. In the months that followed in 1945, the garri controls were eased, which relieved the womenof their immediate grievances.

In the west of Nigeria, Alimotu Pelewura, a Muslim illiterate, was the leader of Lagos market women for over half a century until she died in 1952. She organised formidable resistance to colonial policies. Most importantly, demonstrations related to the food distribution monopoly during WW11. In December 1940, she led a protest of 7000 women who marched to the Glover Memorial Hall to register their grievances against having to pay taxes owed by unemployed husbands and male relatives. She is said to have threatened to direct women to close down all trading activities if the government did not honour their demands. In 1944, the government offered her a monthly allowance of seven pounds and recognition as the official leader of market women if she stopped mobilising women against wartime emergency policies. Instead of succumbing to this corruption, she continued to mobilise women in rural areas of Ijebu-Ode and Sagamu who worked with her to ensure that foodstuffs were not taken to Lagos unless the women's demands were met (Falola &Aderinto, 2010).

By 1946, women'snationalistic impulse manifested itself again. This time, it was in Abeokuta, and the traditional ruler was at the centre of the conflict. It was alleged that the then Alake of Abeokuta had decreed that the Egba women must pay tax. Moreover, responding with what may be termed a characteristic opposition to the despotic act of a ruler, reminiscent of the experiences of the Calabar market women of 1925, and women's war of 1929 and Obubra women's revolt of 1934 respectively, the Abeokuta women, led by Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, stormed the palace of the Alake in 1946. The Alake was forced to flee his throne (Sani, 2001).These women scored a historic

political victory. The outcome of this woman's resistance included preventing the taxation of women, having some warrant chiefs dismissed and others prosecuted, influencing the selection of new chiefs, and appointing a few women as court members.

By November 1950, pioneer oil mills had been established in Calabar, Eket, Ikot Ekpene, Uyo and Opobo (Ikot Abasi) Division of Calabar Province. These oil mills soon became the reason for uprisings against the colonial authority. The Lieutenant Governor of Eastern Nigeria, Sir James Pyke-Nott, was the first to rationalise the incidents by identifying both the economic and political reasons for the women's actions in Calabar Division in the following words:It would seem that the women feared that if their menfolk sold palm fruits directly to the mills, they would be deprived of their traditional share, the kernels, upon the sales of which they depend to meet the significant expenses of their household. This is a legitimate and understandable fear(Jaja, 1988, p. 22).However,Pykenott also "complained about other depressing instances of mob rule which had followed in quick succession" (Jaja, 1988, p. 23) in Calabar Division. Others occurred in Owerri Province, where "there were major and protracted disturbances" (Afigbo, 1972, p. 95).

In the Rivers Province,one important feature of women's activity during the period under study was that they bore the burden of fending for their homes when men went into hiding, not necessarily to evade tax payment but because the poor and inefficient collection system made them the innocent victims of harassment, flogging and imprisonment (Alagoa, 1972).In defence of their community, inumivitamamunbgo, which means "only women who were nursing children were involved in the protest" (Gabriel, 2002, p. 175), occurred in the Udekama community in 1925.In this protest, nursing mothers rose in arms against the desecration of their lands by prisoners and warders. The community had traditional practices performed by nursing mothers. One of them was for the women to assemble at a designated part of the community before proceeding to bathe in the river. This gathering, apart from protecting them from the fear of attacks by wild animals and evil spirits, also allowed them to share their experiences as nursing mothers and exchange ideas about domestic life. It was on one of these trips to the river that they met some prisoners, supervised by warders, who were cutting an okaka, a large tree of religious and economic significance, without the consent of the elders and chief.

These women went back home, reported to the men, and pleaded with them not to attack the prisoners and warders, probably for fear that the colonial authority would imprison the men. These nursing mothers mobilised themselves, laid siege to the prisoners and warders and attacked them. In the usual tradition of colonial rule, the District Officer demanded the arrest of these women. When the colonial police came to arrest them, they went along with their newly born babies. The District Officer cautioned them against acts that would breach the community's peace and released them.

In 1950, Bille women protested against visiting European medical doctors who tried to give powdered milk to school children in Bille. The women's protest against what they understood as the Greek gift forced the doctors to leave the community, thereby closing schools (Syer-Digbani, 2002). The Kalabaro women reacted against a Supreme Court judgment over their fishing rights, said to have been expropriated from them by the Okrika people of the neighbouring fishing settlements. The upshot was the Ochokorocho massacre perpetrated along with their men, possibly to wreak vengeance against those who had taken benefits under unjust colonial laws (Mba, 1982).

From the above examples,it is clear to see that women had been bitten by the bug called nationalism. This period, which Coleman classified as primary resistance, can instead be termed a period of revolutionary and continuous nationalism; continuous because there were protests in almost all parts of Southern Nigeria, with the most intense in the South-eastern parts of Nigeria. These women seemed to have had a premonition of the country's future political development. So that when Nigeria subsequently moved into the era of political activities, especially in the form of political parties, a period of later movement or nationalism in its true sense, according to Coleman's classification, Nigerian women were ready to make their contributions. This forms the subject matter of the next section.

Nigerian Women and Political Activities:-

Politics, especially the formation of political parties, was the one area in which men maintained open dominance and almost complete exclusion of women,it has sometimes been claimed. However, even in this area, which appears to be exclusively male, women's contributions must be acknowledged. With the founding of the pioneer political party, the People's Union (PU) in 1908, the women's wing, known as the Women's Union, was inaugurated by Mrs Charlotte Olajumoke Obasa, the wife of DrOrisadipe Obasa. As a cultural nationalist, she used the wing to mobilise

men and women in Lagos, both Nigerians and non-Nigerians, as well as chiefs into party politics (Alagoa&Enemugwem, 2015). The Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) also had a women's wing when it was founded in 1923 (Sklar, 1963). With this development, the stage was set for women's wingswithin political parties to cater to women's political activities.

Subsequent developments will show that, because women were unfairly treated within political parties, they took bold steps and founded their own political parties. One such person was Lady Olayinka Abayomi, who was involved in the formation of the Lagos Youth Movement, later the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), in 1934. Despite the existence of a Ladies Section and the recruitment of women, the NYM, like the previous parties of the period, had no women in its executive committee or other political-making positions. On May 10, 1944, in Olayinka Abayomi's home, the inaugural meeting of the Nigerian Women's Party (NWP) was held(Odim, 1982). The formation of the party was a significant contribution of women to nationalism and political activities. However, it was also an attempt to challenge the belief that Nigerian women were cheated by both the British colonial government and Nigerian men, hence they must demand their rights.

One of the female leaders who is remembered as one of the most colourful and dynamic political leaders of this period was Olaniwun Adunni Oluwole. Initially an itinerant preacher and later a champion of workers' interests, she participated in the 1945 General Strike. After the strike, she turned her attention fully to political activities since she became convinced that "the only way workers and other Nigerians could achieve better living conditions was to drive the colonial exploiters away." (Olusanya, 1982). A great admirer of Herbert Macaulay, she made herself available for campaign meetings and lectures and early in 1954, she announced her intention to start a political party of her own. In May of the same year, her intention found fulfilment when she founded the Nigerian Commoners Liberal Party (NCLP). At the inaugural meeting of the party held in Mushin, Lagos on the 29th May, 1954, she expounded the three main objectives of the party to include: Firstly, opposing independence in 1956 since, like some other nationalists, she believed Nigeria was not ripe for self-government(Awo, 1960; Padan, 1986). Secondly, she promised that the party would not only work for the recognition of the rights of Obas and their release from the bondage of pseudo-politicians, but would also oppose the constitution, which aimed at creating disunity in Nigeria, wrangling amongst political leaders and exploitation of the masses and fair treatment for the common man and woman. Thirdly, the lofty ideas expressed by politicians in Nigeria were intended to secure support for themselves, which they would exploit to feather their own nests (Olusanya, 1982).

The officers of the party at its formation were Miss Adunni, President, Mr M. Sanni, Vice President; Mr L. Aromire, Treasurer; Mr T. Oduntan, General Secretary; Mr I. Dawodo,the Financial Secretary, and four assistant secretaries are responsible for spreading the party's aims and objectives. The party was active in the old Western Region and particularly in Lagos. As a party leader, Adunni was firm and successful. These successes were evident in two areas. Firstly, although founded by a woman, it was not a female party as such, but a party composed of men and women and in which the men formed the majority. Secondly, in the 1954 general election, the party's candidate, Mr D. L. G. Olateju, defeated the NCNC and AG candidates and won a seat in the House of Representatives from Osun North (Ikurun) in the Western Region (Olusanya, 1982). This was barely six months after the party's formation. With her death in 1957, NCLP went moribund.

Another party worthy of mention here was the Commoners People's Party (CPP), founded by Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti in 1959. Her party, the National Council for Nigerians and the Cameroons (NCNC), which initially supported her candidacy for a seat in the House of Representatives, later endorsed a man, prompting her to run as an independent. This singular action divided the party into two factions and culminated in the NCNC's loss in the general elections. It was when NCNC expelled her from the party that she formed the CPP, an independent party to fulfil her political dreams. The party whose symbol was the lion of Egba lasted only a little over a year because it lacked support(Mba,1982). These minor parties, like those formed by men, became viable only in alliance with one of the three major parties. From its inception, the NPC opposed the enfranchisement of women, thereby limiting women's participation in political parties (Odey, 2023). The NCNC and the AG had women's associations, but patronage was based primarily upon the administrative structure of a regional government (Sklar, 1963). In the end, they joined the three major political parties and heraldedNigeria's independence.

Conclusion:-

The paper demonstrating women's visibility as partners in the processes that culminated in independence in Nigeria disagrees with Coleman's first classification of earlier or primary resistance. Since nationalism was not only a political phenomenon, the increasing numbers of women mobilised for the anti-colonialism campaign give credence to their conviction that they were hindered by colonialism, especially its obnoxious tax regimes. Hence,their conscious contributions to nationalism as members of a nation-state to which they aspired, and of a desire to achieve political and economic development, as well as the cultural revival of that nation-state.In the second classification, which is the later movement or nationalism in the true sense, women were equally not found wanting in political activities, which culminated in the emergence of political parties.

This is because the circumstances in which political parties developed were colonial, and the opposition to colonial policies by female nationalist movements was translated into political activity and the formation of political parties. Women's involvement in political developments and political parties revealedbroader political concerns than mere reactions to economic issues and their impact. Although they were told their roles in society were pacifiers and that they were not expected to compete for what was popularly believed to be political office or a position of authority, they struggled for representation. They attempted to form political associations and parties.

References:-

1. Ade-Ajayi, J.F. (1962*). Milestone in Nigerian History*. Longman.
2. Ade-Ajayi, J.F. (1964). The 19th-century origins of Nigerian nationalism*. Journal ofHistorical.Society of Nigeria*, 2 (2), 1964, pp. 196–210.
3. Afigbo, A. E. (1972). *The warrant chief: indirect rule in South/Eastern Nigeria, 1891-1929*. Longman Group Limited.
4. Alagoa, E. (1972). *A History of the Niger Delta*. Ibadan Press.
5. Alagoa, E. &Enemugwem J. (2015). *Ernest Sisei Ikoli(1893 -1960: Pioneer Nigerian Journalist and Nationalist*. Onyoma Research Publications.
6. Awe, B. (1977). The Iyalode in the traditional Yoruba political system. In A. Schlegel (ed.), *Sexual Stratification: A Cross-Cultural View* (67-80). Yale University Press.
7. Awolowo, O. (1960). *Awo: The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo*. Cambridge University Press.
8. Ayaodele, E.A (1966). *Missionary impact on modern Nigeria*, 1842-1914. Longman.
9. Bassey, I. E (2016). Efik women in political activism: echoes from the Calabar market women's revolt of 1925. *SOPIA, African Journal of Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 17 (1), 188–197.
10. Boahen, A. (1970). *Topics in West African History*. Longman new edition.
11. Coleman, J.S. (1958). *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism.* University of California Press.
12. Falola, T.,& Saheed Aderinto (eds) (2010). *Nigeria, Nationalism and Writing History*. University of Rochester Press.
13. Gabriel A. (2002). Udekama women in history. In N. C. Ejituwu and A. Gabriel (eds) *Women in Nigerian History: the Rivers and Bayelsa States Experience*.Onyoma Research Publication.
14. Gailey, H.A (1970). *The Road to Aba*. London University Press.
15. Henn, J. K. (1984). Women in Rural Economy, Past, Present and Future. In M. J. Hay and S. Stitcher (eds) *African Women South of the Sahara* (54-70). Longman Group Limited.
16. Igwe, A. (2002). Migrant Labour and its Effect on the Economy of Eastern Nigeria. [Unpublished PhD dissertation]. University of Lagos.
17. Irom, O.(2018). Women and Electioneering Apathy: The Case of Cross River Central Senatorial District, 1999-2015. InP. Ukase, S. Ugbegili, B. Audu & E. Ikpanor (eds) *History, Globalisation and Relations in Africa: Festschrift in Honour of Okpeh O. Okpeh, Jnr* (121–143). Integrity Publishers.
18. Irom, O. (2019). The genres of history and their relevance: the case of women's history. *International Research Journal of Humanities, Languages and Literature*, 6,5, 1–16.
19. Irom, O. (2020). Cross River women in traditional politics 1900-1950. In Olufunke Adeboye and Bolanle Awe (eds) *Nigerian Women in Politics: Essays in Honour of Nina Emma Mba* (185–212). Ben and Nina Mba Foundation.
20. Irom, O. (2023). Women and trends in the Nigerian military since independence. *Gender and Society*, 1, 140–164.

21. Irom, O. (2024). Political Developments and Party Politics, 1914-1960. In David Imbua, Joseph Ajor, Felix Okorn, and Zara Kwaghe (eds.),*Nigeria from the earliest times to the dawn of the twenty-first century* (285–304). Aboki Publishers.
22. Isikalu, N. (1988. The revolt and civil liberties of women. In In S O. Jaja, Prof. E.B. Ndem and Kate Oken (eds)*Women in development: Cross Rivers Experience* (57–67). Association of Media Women.
23. Jaja, S. (1986). Women and the rise of Nigerian nationalism. In S. Jaja, Prof. E.B. Ndem and Kate Oken (eds.),*Women in development: Cross Rivers Experience*, Association of Media Women.
24. Lebeuf, A. (1963). The role of women in the political organisation of Africa. In D. Paulme (ed) *Women in Africa* (87–102). University of California Press.
25. Mama, A. (1997). Heroes and villains: conceptualising colonial and contemporary violence against women in Africa. In M. J. Alexander and C. T. Mohanty (eds*) Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*(33–52). Routledge.
26. Mba, N. (1982). *Nigerian Women Mobilised: Women's Political Activities in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1960*. University of California Press.
27. Mba, N. (1982) Olufunmilayo Ransom-Kuti. In Bolanle Awe (eds) *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*(133-148). BookCraft.
28. Mikell, G. (1997). Introduction. In G. Mikell (ed) *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa* (1–52). University of Pennsylvania Press.
29. Ndem, E. (1988). Women in constitutional and political development. In S O. Jaja, Prof. E.B. Ndem and Kate Oken (eds)*Women in Development: Cross Rivers Experience*(29–40), Association of Media Women.
30. Odey, P. O. (2023). "Nigerian Women and Political Development 1929-1960". In *Gender and Society*, 1, 1–15.
31. Odim, C. (1982). Lady Oyinka Abayomi. In Bolanle Awe (ed) *Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective*(149–162). BookCraft.
32. Olusanya, G. (1973). *Second World War and Politics in Nigeria*. University of Lagos Press.
33. Olusanya, G. (1980). Nationalist Movement in Nigeria. In O. Ikime (ed) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*(pp 545–569). Heinemann.
34. Olusanya, G. (1982). Olaniwu Adunni Oluwole. In Bolanle Awe (ed) *Nigerian women in Historical Perspective*(121–132). BookCraft.
35. Paden, J. (1986). *Ahmadu Bello Sardauna of Sokoto: Values and Leadership in Nigeria*. Hudahuda Publishing Company.
36. Perham, M. (1937*). Native Administration in Nigeria* [1962 ed.]. Oxford University Press.
37. Sani, H. (2001). *Women and National Development: The Way Forward*. Spectrum Books Limited.
38. Sklar, R. (1963). *Nigerian Political Parties*. Princeton University Press,
39. Syer-Digbani, G. (2002). Bille women in Niger Delta history. In N. C. Ejituwu and A. Gabriel (eds) *Women in Nigerian History: the Rivers and Bayelsa States Experience*.Onyoma Research Publication.
40. Tamuno. T. (1966). *Nigeria and Elective Representation, 192-1947*. Heinemann
41. Williams, P. (1992). Women in Politics in Nigeria. In A. Fasoro, D. Haastrup & F. Olubanjo (eds*.) Understanding Democracy (*63–80). ADIFERE, pp. 63–80.