



THE INFLUENCE OF YORUBA WOMEN ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF YORUBALAND IN PRE AND COLONIAL NIGERIA: LESSONS FOR YORUBA WOMEN IN POST-COLONIAL NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

From the time of state formations, women in Yorubaland were parts of policy and decision making processes in the development of the Yoruba society. However, the system of integrating the male and female child into the customs and traditions of their community with a view to empower them for nation-builders became deteriorated after independence and this has affected the fortune of Yorubaland in the Nigerian state. The paper therefore, examines the causes, effects and ways by which Yorubaland can regain its past position. Through primary and secondary sources, it reveals those factors such as colonial policy against women, western education, non-teaching of history led to the decline on the influence of women in Yorubaland. The paper discovers that women contributed to the peace and conflict resolution which led to the socio-cultural and political development of Yorubaland. This paper concludes that the teaching of History of Yoruba Culture, Heroes and Heroines, Traditional Religion must be made compulsory from primary to tertiary levels to eliminate discrimination against women and its implications for national development. It also suggests that gender equality must be legislated to give equal opportunity and responsibility to male and female sexes to engender rapid development for Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: *Yoruba women, Influence, Development, History, Discrimination*

1.0 Introduction

Yoruba women in the context of this paper are women of Oduduwa offspring who in collaboration with Yoruba men contributed to the formation of some towns and villages in the present states of Ondo, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, Ekiti and Lagos, which situates in Southwestern part of Nigeria. The influence of these women have far reaching effects on the development of Yorubaland in the socio-economic and political areas to the extent that they were given recognition as traditional rulers, chiefs, war-leaders, priestesses, etc. From early childhood, girls and boys in Yorubaland were trained in the customs and traditions they were born into to be responsible citizens of the community in order to make meaningful contributions to the development of the community as they grow up. Every child is regarded as the child of the community as clearly stated in a Yoruba proverb "ojukan lo nbimosugbongbogboaiye lo nwo" meaning "only an eye bears the child but all eyes are the ones that sees to the welfare of the child." The child grows up to bears allegiance to the community. Unconsciously, that child feel the responsibility of making positive contributions or influence in areas that would bring development to the community through the set rules in traditions and customs. According to (Olugbemi V.K.2015:30) age-grade system was instituted to

incorporate every child in the community to the ethics and developmental activities of the community. As the child grows up, he or she exhibits love for the community by his or her dedication to the service of the community. The concept of development among the Yorubastarts from raising individuals with full sense of responsibility and belonging to the community hence raising an ideal family was the pre-occupation of the Yoruba. The Yoruba believes in family cohesion as the foundation of a virile, egalitarian and equitable society which engenders sustainable development hence the saying “*Ile la tinkoesor’ode*” meaning “charity begins at home” Consequently, both male and female members of the society were brought up and empowered to be culturally conscious about his or her responsibilities to her community. Many women in the past like their male counterparts have influenced the socio-economic and political development of their communities. The activities of many of these women were obscured due to lack of written records and the few ones that survived like Efunsetan Aniwura were maligned and painted in the red until recently.

Source materials for this research are located both in oral and written sources, such as eye-witness accounts, proverbs, festivals and artworks, therefore, this paper adopts the use of primary and secondary sources of information combined with the use of descriptive and narrative methods to demonstrate the influences of Yoruba women in the pre-colonial and Colonial eras, as well as their role in post-colonial Nigeria. The paper also examines some of the factors that have contributed to the deterioration of the influence of Yoruba women in post-colonial Nigeria and also suggest ways to sensitize and mobilize them for national development

With the global awareness about various conventions on gender equality, the objectives of this paper are to bring to the fore the influence of Yoruba women in the pre and colonial Nigeria socio-economic and political developments. The paper also highlighted the method adopted by the women to contribute to the development of Yorubaland. In addition, the paper examines the factors which led to the deterioration of Yoruba Women influence in socio-economic and political developments and brings out ways by which women in Nigeria can be sensitized and mobilized for national development.

The theoretical framework rested on the fact that there is need for women in Nigeriato draw lessons from the way women in the pre and colonial era who contributed to the development of their communities. Therefore, it is expedient to bring into limelight the contributions of women in Yorubaland which have not been documented for the upcoming generation of women who have lost touch with their roots due to western civilization. This will no doubt contribute to the revival of literatures and oral traditions about women’s contribution to the development of their communities like other women in every tribe, ethnic and nations of the world. Biobaku (Adeagbo Akinjogbin 2003:1) opined that the discovery of our roots which are rooted in lores and mores will remove the danger of a “false modernization in which we might gain this world only to lose our souls as Nigerians” This paper attempts to contribute to the importance of gender equality in engendering development.

This led to the question as to how western education contributed to the low level of the female gender in governance and if so, could it be that the school curriculum did not focus on our roots? Is it that the women were carried away by western cultures that they deviated from the traditional way of making contributions to national development? And if these questions are correct, how then do we mitigate them for national development

2.0 Concept of Development in Yorubaland

Development has been variously defined by many authors from social, political and economical perspectives. Ayua (1986:71) defines development as “a self-conscious process by which man in society attempts to mould the conditions of his existence”. This definition fits into the concept of Yoruba word for “development” which believes that peaceful co-existence gives way for development. They believed that “*Agbajo Owo la finsoaya, opogirigirieseninyeona*” meaning ‘combined hands emboldens and collective trekking makes a path’ which simply translates that through collective efforts, a lot can be achieved to make the community develop. To achieve this objective, the Yoruba made conscious efforts to enhance peaceful co-existence of her people thus there were traditional laws and code of conduct which jealously guided the character and activities of individual members of the community which were tagged as taboo and customs. Thus, women’s contributions to the community were equally as important as those of men in socio-economic and

political areas. In Old Oyo empire for instance, women occupied eight strong and prominent positions which were of great value to the community such as *Iya-Oba* (The King's Official Mother) as the feudal head of *Basorun*, *Iya-Kekere* was next to *Iya-Oba*, she was the one who placed the crown on the King's head on the coronation day. Apart from that she played a constitutional role of keeping the Royal Paraphernalia and exercised authority and arrest over the Commander in chief of the Royal Army, which served checks and balances over the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. She also had the power to curtail the King by withholding the Royal Insignia. The *Iya'leOduduwa* headed all the worshippers of Oduduwa to ensure that sacrifices and appeasement to the gods were made to ensure peace and tranquility in the community while the *Obagun* represented the King in the *Ogboni* fraternity as ears of the King and to protect the interest of the King in policy formulation and decision making process in the community.. The *Ewi-Oja* headed all the worshippers in town and also in charge of the market. On the other hand, The *Iya'leAgbo* was the private attendant to the king and also in charge of the private pharmacy of the King to ensure the well-being of the King. while there were female *Ilaris* with different roles to perform in the palace. Lastly, the *Are-Orite* remained constantly with the King as personal attendant and in-charge of king's meal, bedchamber and holding of silken parasol over the king's head as a canopy at coronation. These roles were assigned to these women for the promotion of peace and tranquility in order to give room for development..

3.0 Concept of History in Yorubaland

Oral information (Aribo:2007) states that the way the pre-colonial Yoruba people keep records in order to transmit the ideals of the society were reward for good works and punishment for evil work through customs, culture, taboos, festivals griots, talking drum, story-telling, folklore, music, age grade system, proverbs etc for perpetuity in order to teach lessons for the present and transmission to incoming generation. Examples of some women were *Osun* also named after River *Osun* and a state in Nigeria, *Orosen* celebrated during annual *Igogo* festival in Owo town. Some of these outstanding women and men were/are still being celebrated annually in

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Yorubaland, in annual festivals in their respective communities after their demise so that the incoming generation can emulate honour and appreciate them.

It was a way of inculcating the attributes of leadership into the incoming generations to imbibe for the development of the community and peaceful coexistence. Consequently, events and feats or misdeed considered appropriate for preservation for emulation or abhorrence were transmitted to the consciousness of members of the society in order to maintain law and orderliness in the society. The Yoruba believes these methods of transmitting and transmuted to be the foundation of strong socio-economic and political development which has been in existence before the colonial period.

Apart from the local way of cultural preservation mentioned above, other ways by which the Yoruba preserved her history was through the western and central Yorubaland elites who through contacts with Christian Missionaries around 1850s recorded their people's tradition. (Marjorie K Machintosh: 2009:10-11) One of those elites was The Reverend Samuel Johnson who wrote The History of the Yoruba. According to Machintosh (2009:10-11) foreign travellers as early as 1820 documented the narratives of their interactions with the people of Yorubaland which also gave information about the history of the area. However, these documents and records did not cover many parts of Yorubaland especially the Northeastern Yorubaland which did not have contact with European and Arabic travellers.

4.0 Influence of Yoruba Women in the Pre-Colonial Period

According to Bolanle Awe and Omotoye Olutoye, in 19th Century politics, war constituted a significant mirror of politics of the age in which women were fully involved in the three steps of war which were deliberation of war, actual warfare and peace settlement. (Adeagbo Akinjogbin 2003:122). Like it happens in every society, participation in politics or leadership roles are usually for the politically conscious individuals who are skilful in seeking support from the general public in the art of decision-making in order to be part of policy-makers for the state (Olugbemi V.K.

2010:152¹). Thus, since the period of settlement at Ile-Ife by the Yoruba in the pre-colonial period, women have been influencing the socio-economic and political activities for development. According to Samuel Johnson (2001: 115) Moremi single-handedly through diplomacy ended the Ugbo annual raid on the Ife people. The Yoruba believes that peace and unity are akin to development hence Queen Moremi was deified in annual festival of Omoluorogbo to engender and foster the development of Yorubaland. Apart from warfare, Yoruba towns and villages in the pre-colonial period, produced women traditional rulers who showed leadership qualities for the development of their towns and villages. For instance, in Ondo, Pupupu was the first Osemawe of Ondo and it was through her the Ondo town was established. Also, the 18th Ooni of Ife, Luwoogbagida nicknamed 'YareAkosulogbe' was a woman (Olasupo, F.A. Olugbemi V.K., Adeniran J.A., 212:15) Eye-Aro was a female King between 1393-1419 in Akure, and she went through all the traditional rites in the way they were made for male kings (Olugbemi, V.K. 2007:274).

During the pre-colonial period, there were gender roles in war, politics, culture and economic activities. During warfare in the pre-colonial period, the men would go to the war front to fight while women would form 'a kind of rear army to organize civil defense to chase back any deserted soldier from the war front and organize food for the soldiers' (Samuel Johnson 2001:36-37) The contributions of these women led to victories in war and this led for instance, Ibadan to develop as a formidable state. Apart from forming a rear army, wives of warlords were responsible for empowering their husbands with spiritual charms before going to war like the example of Salegan, the wife of Ogedengbe the Agbogunbororo of Ijesawarlord, who used to perform daily ritual for her husband before he went to the battlefield. She would stand with her legs opened apart while chanting some incantations; her husband would then crawl in between her wide opened legs (Olugbemi, V.K., 2014:86). This was done to ensure Ogedengbe's safe return from war. She was said to have mystical powers, hence, was regarded as Ogedengbe's talisman because she was believed to have power that controlled unseen supernatural forces that enhanced victory for Ogedengbe at the end of the war. According to oral tradition, the wives of these warriors were the one keeping vigil on the potency of the charms that empowered them to conquer wars by making sure the fire of the charm was alighted until the warrior returns from the warfronts (Chief Benjamin Aribo) Warriors in the pre-colonial period knew that their wives contributed on equal basis to their success at warfront because if their wives did not carry out their own part of the war charms, they would fail and be defeated at the war front, made them part of policy and decision making. We also have the examples of Orosen of Owo, Queen Moremi of Ile-Ife who was the power behind the Olowo of Owo Oba success at warfront. The contributions of these women brought victories Oduduwa to enjoy peace from the Ugbo hence, Ile-Ife to remain and develop as the traditional head of Yorubaland. On the other hands, Ilesa, town where Ogedengbe originated from developed as a major town in Yorubaland through Ogedengbe Agbogunbororo's successes at war front. Owo, Akure Ado-Ekiti, Oye etc which these warriors led developed to prominent towns in Yorubaland. According to Johnson (2001:64), on the political field, in every Yoruba community, there was *Yeye Oba* that is King's mother and another powerful woman called *Oloso* who had power of arrest over the kings. They served as checks and balances of the King to prevent him to become tyrannical which she had the power to put the king in chain when he offended the community. Another woman, *Oya* was Sango's faithful and beloved wife who alone out of all Sango's wives fled with him to *Tapa* (Nupe) his maternal home but decided to stay back at *Ira* when she could not go further with her husband, *Sango*. For the love of her husband, she committed suicide when she heard that her husband, *Sango*, had committed suicide, hence, she was deified for her loyalty and bravery. (Samuel Johnson 2001:34) The River Niger became consecrated to her by naming the river *Odo Oya* after her name. Like other deified heroes and heroines, she was not counted among the dead. It is rather believed that she disappeared according to this saying: "*Oyawoleniileira, Sango woleni Koso*" meaning (*Oya* disappeared in *Ira* town, *Sango* disappeared at *Koso*). Both Sango and Oya were deified divinities in Yorubaland. (Ibid.). They were worshipped annually in elaborate festivals to commemorate them from generation to generation thereby inculcating the like-spirit among the incoming generation. Loyalty and bravery were part of traditional virtues inculcated from birth to Yoruba Children to make them develop to adults who would safeguard the community from external aggression, hence, the marriage chastity is enshrined in Yoruba tradition

(Olugbemi 2015:) As said earlier, the Yoruba believes that peaceful co-existence is akin to development hence, wives loyalty to their husband and bravery were regarded as virtues which contributed to development.

Spiritually, women also contributed to the religious development of Yorubaland. An example of women's contribution was a woman named Aiyelala in Ikale Area of Ondo State. According to OtemAtum, Ayelala is a popular goddess worshipped by the Ikale people in Yorubaland after her demise because her name makes people to confess the evil which they did in secret. It was said that her spirit, even in death was capable of fetching out and punishing evil (*The True Woman of Courage* in NairalandForum:1 Accessed 28/12/2020 and corroborated by Prof. Monday Ehinmore on 29/12/2020) Today, Ayelala's influence had spread beyond Ondo state to other parts of Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, African Journal of Legal Studies, described Ayelalaa the goddess that dispenses justice and protects morality (Itohan Mercy: African Journal of Legal Studies, vol. 6: Issue 1:3, 2013) The woman Aiyelala was said to curtail the activities of demonic people and this in no small measure contributed to the peaceful co-existence in Ikale and gradually spread to other parts of Yorubaland hence, she was deified after her death..

According to Johnson (Samuel Johnson 2001:77), the Iyalode which means the queen of the ladies was a title bestowed upon the most distinguished lady in the town. Some of these Iyalodes such as Efunsetan Aniwura commanded a force of powerful warriors and have a voice in the council of the chiefs part of which made Ibadan to develop to not only a military state but also a centre of commerce to this present time. (See Adeagbo Akinjogbin 2003:128). In warfare, Bowen T. J. (Ayandele (ed) 1968:307) stated that many women were engaged in trading activities and used their wealth to supply soldiers to the army and also to provide food and weapon for the army at the war front. For example, Iyaola was honoured with the title of the first Iyalode of Ibadan for her contribution to the success of Ibadan war in 1850s. Reverend Wood acknowledged in 1884 that during the Ekitiparapo war, both male and females seemed to be equally represented in the Ibadan camp. (Bolanle Awe & Omotayo Olutoye ed. Akinjogbin 1998:127) Likewise, in the economic field, it is no gain saying the fact that there was dual sex economic system in Yorubaland, women dominated trading and crafts while the men dominated farming, all combined for the development of Yorubaland.

5.0 Yoruba Women and the Change of Collective Leadership in Colonial Yorubaland

According to the Yoruba traditional system, both men and women were deified heroes and heroines such as Moremi, Oya, Sango, Osun, Ogun, Ayelala etc They are never spoken of as dead but as having disappeared As much as some women distinguished themselves in the pre-colonial period like some men distinguished themselves, they were accorded similar recognition without discrimination as they were involved in the leadership roles. However, the reality of sex differential roles between men and women in social, economic, religion and culture inadvertently reared its ugly head during the colonial period as influenced by the British culture in the 19th Century. In no small time, women in Yorubaland were regarded as weaker sex and therefore

were not able to in any way assert themselves like their men counterparts. Undoubtedly, the coming of the British Missionaries who introduced Christianity and western education into Yorubaland brought a new phase to the erstwhile influence, rights, privileges, and opportunities as well as responsibilities on equal basis to an arbitrary level between the female and male members of the community due to Christian teachings on gender roles. Consequently, the indirect policy of British Colonial Government to use Yoruba traditional Rulers as their agents made women leadership roles to be altered from what it used to be during the pre-colonial period, it became struggles hence, crumbled as women lost their economic power as they have no access to land ownership again. They lost the power of inheritance after the death of their parents hence, women were not able to contribute to either social, economic or political development as it were during the pre-colonial period.

Apart from the above, the British Colonial policy brought out the biological 'weakness' of women as one who could be pregnant in schools hence, the place of women is in the kitchen. Many fathers in Yorubaland preferred to train the male children than the females in schools and this led to wide margin between the educated men and women. The result was that women became relegated during the Colonial period in Nigeria. According to Williams, western education brought with it

western religion, cultures, norms and values which have weakened our traditional and cultural systems. In due course, women were seen as weaker vessel and discriminated against in social, economic and political spheres (F.K.Ekechi, 1995:23-40). This colonial policy negates the erstwhile parity contributions to the development of the community; women could no longer be installed as a traditional ruler but only as a regent.

Eye-witness account (Benjamin Aribo:2007), stated that men no longer see their wives as co-partners in building the family as women are to take orders from the husband due to the Missionary's preaching about male superior power over women in the Holy Bible. The educational gap between the boys and the girls further reduced the influence of women in the affairs of the society thereby were relegated to inferior, weaker and second class citizens. Men inadvertently took over the reins of both the socio-economic and political powers. However, few women who were privileged to have access to education such as MrsFunmilayoRansomeKuti, MrsOgunlesi, MadamWuraolaEsan and other few educated women struggled to take up the mantle of leadership to lead other women to confront the British Colonial Administrators on behalf of other women. In spite of that, colonial officers were policy and decision makers and these closed the window of participation of women in the development of their society.

The relegation of women came to a head with the introduction of cash crops for exports, according to Falola(F.K.Ekechi,1995:36-37)., Nigerian men and the European firms dominated the distribution of rubber, cocoa, groundnuts, and palm oil hence, women were forced to be left with no choice than to shift to the production of subsistence crops which means lesser income to women. He went further to elucidate that the production of cash crops changed the land tenure system and prevented people from acquiring land from the community due to commercialization which only those who had access to money were able to purchase. Eventually, women had no power to make meaningful contributions to the development of Yorubaland.

6.0 The Changing Influence of Women in Yorubaland during the Colonial Period

As explained above, women leadership roles during the colonial period were more of struggles, maneuvers and confrontations because the colonial policy worked at variance with the Yoruba traditional system of policy making and implementation which usually involved men, women, youths and old. Only few women who were privileged to receive western education or were influenced by those who had western education and culture struggled to make themselves relevant in nation building. However, they were not involved in the policy making and the implementation of it. One of such few privileged educated women was FunmilayoRansomeKuti in Yorubaland during the Colonial period struggled to circumvent the colonial protocols by first of all using Church canopy to organize the Abeokuta Ladies Club (ALC). She used the club as a civic and charitable organization with mostly western educated Christian women as members that gradually metamorphosed to a political group comprising the non-literate women known as Abeokuta Women's Club (AWU) between 1944 and 1946 with the hope of involving women in governance, yet, women were relegated. The decision to tax women and price control but directives through the traditional rulers hence, MrsKuti used AWU platform to campaign against price controls, imposition of special tax on women which led to the abdication of the traditional ruler Oba LadapoAdemola II in 1949 (Editors of Encyclopedia Britannic) hence, women's contribution to the development of Yorubaland were at secondary level of being agitator rather than participants.

Politically, she made frantic effort to exert her influence as a woman in government by co-founding National Council of Nigeria and Cameroun (NCNC) in 1944 so that the rights of women could be restored. It was said that when she lost election to Senate seat, she strategized to run as an independent candidate thereby split the NCNC vote and gave victory to the opposition party. (Ibid) Even though she was expelled from NCNC, she re-strategized to form her own political party known as The Commoner's Party. Her political influence traversed Yorubaland to other parts of Yorubaland, Igboland and Hausaland where she mentored other women such as MadamSawaba, Adekogbe, Margaret Ekpo, WuraolaEsan among others, yet the fate of women under the colonial level was as agitators.

Socially, Kuti concentrated her efforts through AWU to defend women's political, social and economic rights. According to Wikipedia 2020, she used AWU platform to advocate for women representation in the local Council and it yielded result as four women were given seat. Her doggedness led to her nomination to the House of Chiefs and as one of the delegates who

negotiated Nigeria's independence with the British Colonial Government (Wikipedia, 2020). The success of AWU under the dynamic leadership of Mrs. Funmilayo Kuti, Mrs. A. Elizabeth Adekoge, Wuraola Esan and other women, expanded from Yorubaland to become a national organization known as Federation of Women Societies. After the colonial period, it expanded to become the umbrella body for all Women Societies in Nigeria as it transformed into National Council of Women Societies (NCWS). The West African Pilot described her as the 'Lioness of Lisabi' because of the way she stood up against the British Colonial District Officers. (Editors of Encyclopedia 2020) In spite of Mrs. Kuti's collaboration with other women did not improve or reinstate them to pre-colonial period level.

However, the foundation laid by Chief Mrs. Funmilayo Kuti in the economic field served as an impetus to another woman, Chief Alimotu Pelewura a Fish Seller (Michael Orodare, 2020) who also played a leadership role and again, women struggled to contribute to the development of Yorubaland as the leader of Market Women Association in Lagos. She combined her economic activities with politics by organizing women to establish Lagos Women Association (LMWA) in 1920s to protest against women taxation and price controls of produce thus, was able to halt the taxation of women earning income below fifty pounds; the colonial government shifted the taxation to women whose income started from two hundred pounds as against the fifty pounds they earlier proposed. Subsequently, Chief Pelewura's activities especially her mentorship of the downtrodden women, only yielded her a chieftaincy title by Oba Esugbayi in 1910 and was appointed as a Women's representative in the *Ilu* Committee, an advisory body by the Oba of Lagos in the 1930s and became the Erelu of Lagos in 1947 (Ibid.) She was only an adviser to the King who took orders from the Colonial government. She was able to only restore women a ceremonial 'Iyalode and Iyalaje'. Chief Mrs. Alimotu Pelewura was succeeded by Alhaja Abibatu Mogaji the mother of Asiwaju Bola Tinubu. Her influence spread to other parts of Yorubaland as the position of Iyalode and Iyalaje were conferred on women in virtually in all Yoruba cities such as Abeokuta, Akure, Ibadan, Osogbo, and Ado-Ekiti. After independence, as Market Women Association which gave them population strength, they were seen to have electoral value, the position of Iyalode in Lagos became strengthened thus, dictated the political pendulum in Lagos, it has been replicated in every town and village in Yorubaland as a winning strategy for political parties. However, subsequent Iyalodejas have not been seen to have any proof of their commitments to the emancipation of women than their personal well-beings.

Chief Wuraola Adepeju Esan (Michael Orodare, 2020), who also like her other women in the colonial period continued the agitation for women involvement in the development of Yorubaland through her profession as a Domestic Science teacher at Ibadan. In spite of limited educational facilities, she used her profession to wield influence by establishing the Ibadan People's Girl Grammar School in Molete at Ibadan to educate women in different subjects especially Domestic Science to become good housewives in order to set up ideal families in order to enhance the value of women in the family. During the decolonization period, Mrs. Esan dabbled into politics in 1950s as part of agitation for women representation in governance like the pre-colonial period by joining the Action Group to be part of decision and policy makers. She only succeeded as the first female nominated Senator to the Nigerian National Assembly between 1960 and 1964 (Ibid.). In pursuit of her agitation for women representation, she also collaborated with other women to establish the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) as advocating voice for Nigerian women's right, yet, that women's rights has not been achieved to this present era. Again, NCWS which became an umbrella for all women organization body in 1987 advocated and lobbied Mariam Babangida, wife to President Ibrahim Babangida to set up 'Better Life for Rural Women' to get women involved, it only succeeded in the appointment of at least a woman as a councilor in the 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria.

Another pre-independence politician and human rights activist was Adunni Oluwole struggled to campaign against independence in 1956 when a date was proposed for independence and vigorously opposed independence because of the way the politicians continue to see women as weaker vessel like the Colonial government. She categorized them as "African Colonialists who if given power would abuse it (Olusanya:). The fears of Adunni Oluwole as a foresighted leader with genuine interest for the development of Nigeria became a reality we are all witnessing today. In her leadership roles, she contributed her quota through the exhibition of her interest in social justice.

She used advocacy in favour of the striking workers in Lagos by donating monetary resources to support the strike in 1945 which forced the Colonial government to meet the workers demand in 1946 and backdated to 1945 (Ibid.) It is evident that the agitation, advocacy and lobby system adopted by the women during the colonial period to the earlier stage of independence gave them opportunity to contribute to the development of Yorubaland in spite of the British Colonial policy against women. Today, such voices of women who boldly fought for the reinstatement of women's contribution to social, economic and political development of Yorubaland are silent among the elite of Yorubaland.

7.0 Lessons from the Yoruba Women in the Pre and Colonial Periods

The Yoruba believe that family is the nucleus of the society hence men and women are encouraged to bear their influences on their children for the growth and development of their communities. The success of collective influence has led to the popular dictum among the Yoruba as "*Omodegbon, agbagbon, la fida Ile Ife*" meaning "the wisdom of both the young and the old was accountable for the founding of Ife" As stated above, women got involved in socio-economic and political activities as part of decision and policy making body. They were patriotic, loyal, brave, selfless and trustworthy. From the written and oral information collected thus Yoruba believes that "*Eiyeko le fiapakanfo*" meaning "A bird cannot fly with one wing" that for sustainable development, men and women must be part of decision and policy making body. However, the globalization of the world has tremendous impact which has altered and halted some traditional ways of imparting the younger ones into norms of the Yoruba traditional practices. Frank Musgrove (1966:2-3) opined that the remarkable social changes of the past century in advance countries of the west has radically curtailed the powers of parents in law and the rights and interests of the child protected. He went further to state that in particular, the authority of mothers declined due to the overriding influence of large scale capitalistic enterprises over domestic industries. The two Acts of Parliament, the Education Act of 1880 and the 'Children Charter' of 1889 and the Children and Young Persons Act of 1933 gave the courts wide powers over young person below the age of seventeen to overrule parental authority wherever this is falling short of what the Magistrate considers as 'proper care and guardianship'. (Musgrove 1966:8) These laws were also effective in the British colonies especially in Nigeria particularly in Yorubaland through western education. Parents could no longer dictate the family the boy-child could marry from or the girl-child he could marry, neither could parents dictate to their children the type of religion he/she should practice. These Acts gradually diminished the traditional form of education as the products of this western education due to the British Colonial government re-orientation the youths became focused on professional careers and progression instead of communal interest.

Yoruba women in Southwest Nigeria were not left out of the impact of western education in Nigeria, in spite of the fact that Charlotte Mason advocated for the merging of the Home and the School with the Home as a senior partner in the late 19th century. In spite of this advocacy, the schools in British territories were as Vaizey argued that:

in Universities, the teachers have absolute control, in schools, the politicians and the administrators have the whip hand, often the parents feel that their interests are neglected" while the family which is the social unit should be given due weight. (J. Vaizey, Britain in the sixties: Education for Tomorrow, 1961, Musgrove: 1966: 133-134)

Teachers were regarded as professionals with expertness to diagnose children's needs to prescribe appropriate educational procedures hence institutions were made to see it as their duty to minimize the tremendous influences of the family on the life and prospects of the young. This was the basis of the type of education the British Christian Missionaries brought to Yorubaland from 1842 before the British finally colonized Nigeria and amalgamated Southern Protectorate with the Northern Protectorate in 1914. This gradually led to the erosion of family influence on the children that attended schools established by the British and caused a transformation of the Yoruba culture, custom and values. The effects of the impact of western education were that "things started to fall apart and the centre could no longer hold" in Yorubaland. The converted Christians started to see the deified heroes and heroines as idolatry hence were not ready to learn about them or participate in the festivals which brings into remembrance of their

feats. Those who attended the schools but were not from Christian homes became what Mary Kingsley termed as “Caricature” Africans, they were mixing Yoruba Culture with Western Culture (E. A. Ayandele, 1966:242) Segregation set in between those with western education and the illiterates. By the time Nigeria attained independence in 1960, the Yoruba women that could have assumed the leadership position were/are those who had acquired western education and the western orientation had rubbed on them hence, were still living in the colonial sensibility of women being the weaker vessel..

Consequently, in thepost Colonial period, many Yoruba women though more educated than the colonial period, they were more relegated in policy and decision making process due to colonial legacy to Nigeria.

TABLE 1.0 TOTAL MALE, TOTAL FEMALE AND TOTAL ENROLMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN YORUBALAND BETWEEN 1999 AND 2005

STATES	YEAR	TOTALNO.OF MALE	TOTALNO.OF FEMALE	TOTAL ENROLMENT
LAGOS	1999	255,904	264,880	520,784
	2000	245,663	254,930	500,593
	2001	196,911	205,531	402,442
	2002	264,622	273,696	538,318
	2003	244,918	253,645	498,563
	2004	270,947	278,655	549,602
	2005	257,563	266,232	523,795
OGUN	1999	234,193	221,523	455,716
	2000	235,475	221,962	457,437
	2001	198,686	188,846	387,532
	2002	224,006	217,908	441,914
	2003	277,383	273,935	551,318
	2004	225,178	214,757	439,935
	2005	225,281	217,211	442,492

ONDO	1999	237,735	241,994	479,729
	2000	260,248	266,200	526,448
	2001	257,316	264,027	521,343
	2002	265,008	274,425	539,433
	2003	388,243	338,327	726,570
	2004	301,131	307,415	608,546
	2005	322,166	330,490	652,656
OSUN	1999	220,368	224,234	444,602
	2000	226,152	231,320	457,472
	2001	197,325	202,102	399,427
	2002	257,818	251,766	509,584
	2003	217,221	219,133	436,354
	2004	202,215	204,416	406,631
	2005	205,394	206,152	411,546
OYO	1999	399,175	391,430	790,605
	2000	404,474	405,422	809,896

	2001	350,791	351,836	702,627
	2002	388,791	385,986	774,403
	2003	498,840	499,448	998,288
	2004	414,864	416,475	831,339
	2005	437,852	444,565	882,417
EKITI	2000	179,072	205,887	384,959

	2001	220,237	242,689	462,926										
	2002	215,663	241,530	457,193										
	2004	370	22,085	19,663	21,109	18,789	18,583	16,946	19,321	17,462	18,413	15,916	13,635	11,680
	2003		183,539	199,945	383,484									
	2004		91,246	97,518	188,764									
	2005		91,730	96,565	188,295									

This shows steady higher increase of total female students in primary school enrolment of total enrolment from 1999-2005

10

Culled From Statistics of Education in Nigeria 1999-2005

ENROLMENT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN YORUBA STATES BY GENDER(2003-2005)

State	Year	No..of schools	JS1 M	JS1 F	JS2 M	JS2 F	JS3 M	JS3 F	SS 1 M	SS1 F	SS 2 M	SS2 F	SS 3 M	SS3 F
Lagos	2003	844	53,922	56,847	60,329	59,969	51,181	53,765	58,993	57,958	50,145	50,571	36,799	36,998
	2004	799	54,888	56,130	57,742	60,025	52,689	53,570	57,195	54,741	50,953	48,949	39,508	38,309
	2005	799	52,013	134,024	55,896	58,161	51,888	51,876	56,836	53,588	51,484	49,567	39,872	36,366
Ogun	2003	398	38,435	33,746	36,917	33,548	31,625	27,436	37,943	26,588	31,044	25,422	20,583	17,065
	2004	348	25,587	24,782	25,626	24,381	21,933	21,092	23,206	22,013	20,393	18,877	16,083	14,614
	2005	348	22,990	21,515	22,904	21,982	20,917	19,594	21,497	20,514	20,114	18,706	15,412	13,652

STATE	YEAR	TOTAL MALE	TOTAL FEMALE	TOTAL MALE&FEMALE
LAGOS	2003	311,369	316,108	627,477
	2004	312,975	311,724	624,699
	2005	307,989	385,582	693,571
OGUN	2003	196,547	163,804	360,351
	2004	132,828	125,759	258,587
	2005	123,834	115,963	239,797
ONDO	2003	103,007	94,449	197,456
	2004	113,146	100,458	213,604
	2005	108,582	96,236	204,818
OSUN	2003	115,016	100,209	215,225
	2004	124,123	115,300	239,423
	2005	121,766	114,269	236,035

OYO	2003	220,138	198,485	418,623
	2004	204,188	185,669	389,857
	2005	207,457	183,846	391,303
EKITI	2003	59,323	55,846	115,169
	2004	40,727	38,800	79,527
	2005	37,227	37,162	74,389

Culled From Statistics of Education in Nigeria 1999-2005

This table shows close attendance of male and female students who enrolled in Secondary Schools in Yorubaland

From the records and statistics of enrolment from pre-primary school to secondary school, there were more school attendance of female students than the colonial periods due to the implementation of national policy on education which aimed at 'Equal Opportunity For All' and tagged 'Education For All' (EFA). However, many of the girls did not further their education to attain higher education after the University Level. Thus at the Higher University level, the National University Commission's (NUC) report on University annual review from 2001-2005 shows that female students who obtained master degree were 16,567 (27.20%) of the total enrolment while Female students with Doctoral degrees in the same period, females were 798 (23.57%) of the total enrolment.

In spite of the primary and secondary education of the female-child, gender equality in civil service, educational institutions, medical line, law, politics etc. has not been achievable with the statistics available. For instance, a Nigerian Statistical Report between year 1999 and 2015 states that only 6% of Councillors were Women in all the 774 Local Government Areas (LGA), only 24% of Judges of the Federal Courts were women and average of 7% of each type of high level Government Officials and Service Administrators were women. Women political participation in both Elective and Appointive positions has remained at 6.7%. (Nigeria National Bureau of Statistic, 2018). Women in the post-colonial period could not improve or reversed the colonial policy against women. The consequence is that men continued to take the centre stage of the policy and decision making apparatus for the society in Nigeria irrespective of state, tribe or ethnicity have a lower percentage of women as part of the policy and decision-making body. Therefore, women contributions to national development were hampered more so when the western educated Yoruba women did not associate with the semi-educated Yoruba women in western civilization as they were look down upon as anti-social and illiterates.

However, women globally had been agitating for emancipation of women and had yielded appreciable results hence, Some Yoruba women who studied abroad were and are more conscious of the global agitations for the emancipation of women but returned from abroad armed with western education started to propagate women's liberation right without the using the traditional method of resolving issues or carrying the local women along,

subsequently, men saw the agitation as a confrontation to men's authority. Unfortunately, they were labeled as "*Egbekogbot'oko*" meaning "Association of Defiant Wives" hence; women who studied at home crawled back into their shells leaving the 'well-educated' ones to pursue the objectives of gender equality in their area of career jurisdiction to prove their mettle that a woman is capable of performing on equal pedestal with a man. This led to the dictum "what a man can do, a woman can do better" between 1960s and 1980s. The effect on Yoruba women led to increase in divorce rate and single parenthood which does not augur well for the society. This method adopted by the western-oriented women negated the foundation laid by women like MrsKuti, MrsWuraolaEsan, ChiefMrsPelewura and others who used the traditional system of collective bargaining and family cohesion to struggle, advocated and lobby for women emancipation in Yorubaland. At the end of the day, it couldn't achieve much in the struggle for women's contribution to development of Yorubaland. Yoruba men saw these Yoruba 'feminists' as confrontational, more so when these women did not involve the less educated ones in their struggles, the progress made by their predecessors could not be extended to greater level. For instance, during the first Republic, some of the women in the colonial era who traversed to the post colonial period set examples of the capability of women to contribute to the social, economic and

political development of Yorubaland in their professional field and home fronts. They also set good examples in their marital lives by having close-knit families. For example, it was remarked that Chief MrsWuraolaEsanwas a good example of role model to females that passed through her or had contact with her especially through the Ibadan People's Girls Grammar School (Sheroes,2020).In like manner, Chief MrsBabafunkeAjasin as a role model, established Girls Brigade to train women in charity and patriotic services in Ondo State while Chief MrsBisiOgunleye also revived the traditional saving system known as 'Esusu' and cottage industries for rural women to produce garri (Cassava flakes), hand-woven clothes, local blood tonic etc so that women could be economically buoyant to contribute to the development of Yorubaland. She also established non-governmental body known as Country Women Association in 1982 (COWA) and later changed to Country Women Association of Nigeria when it spread to other parts of Nigeria (COWAN) rallied the rural Yoruba women to be politically relevant for their voices to be heard in Yorubaland. She taught the power of negotiation and this the women in Ogun state put into practice with Governorship Aspirants to slate position for women before they can vote en-mass for him and this yielded result in Ogun State under the Governorship of Otunba Gbenga Daniel hence Hon. Mrs.TitiOseni became the first Female Speaker of Ogun State House of Assembly in 2003. She also encourage women that participation in elections and lobby after elections are another method to gradually open the vista for women to contribute their quota to the development of Yorubaland and Nigeria as well. Among the women that COWAN influenced werewomen such as Hon YinkaAlabi who became a Commissioner in Ondo State, Hon. AbikeDabiri-Arewa in Lagos State to win election into the House of Representatives at the National Level. And many other women got political appointments at the local government, state and federal levels. It is unfortunate, that women in Yorubalandtoday are almost reclining to their shells as there are very few agitators, advocates and lobbyists for collective emancipation and empowerment of Yoruba women to influence the social, economic and political development.

8.0 Conclusion

In a nutshell, women with western education needs to embrace the less educated ones, mentor them in socio-economic and political skills to become empowered to be able to influence policy and decision-making alongside with their men counterparts both at local and national level for development. The Yoruba women from pre-colonial to early post colonial periods had been inculcated into deep loyalty to the traditions through taboos, folklores which teaches reward for loyalty and punishment for disloyalty as well as teaching them the reward of patriotism. This system of mentoring became a generational method throughout the pre-colonial to colonial periods to early part of the post-colonial hence, women were contributing to the development of various Yoruba communities significantly at the period of warfare and peace. However, the impact of Colonial education and civilization rub-off on women in Yorubaland the ideals of African traditional culture and this drastically limited their participation in development when compared with the pre-colonial era. Western education had drastically replaced the informal African Traditional education. For instance, Yoruba women due to influence of western education became professionals in different fields such as teaching, Nursing, Lawyers, Medical Doctors, Engineers, Business etc at the detriment of traditional education which emphasized loyalty, bravery, patriotism and communal living. By the 21st Century, Yoruba Women had discarded virtually everything about their tradition to the extent that the children of these educated women could not speak their Yorubaland language and dialects. They were focused on attaining great feat in their career subsequently they gained recognition in their careers. Only those who traversed the Colonial era to post colonial eras such as Prof. Bolanle Awe, Chief Mrs. BisiOgunleye, Chief Mrs. OnikepoAkande, and Prof. Mrs. Oluwole kept touch with their communities and they were warmly rewarded with Chieftaincy titles as part of policy and decision makers in their communities. Consequently, Yoruba women became more involved in National politics than thecommunity'spolitics because that is the area where their influence is contributing to National Development. It is not gain saying the fact, that non- impartation of Traditional education has contributed a lot to the vices whichare the bane of development in our society today. Therefore; western education must be taught along with traditional education for balanced upbringing of the female child for sustainable development. The teaching Science and Technology should be imparted along with the teaching of History which focuses on culture, religion, heroes, heroines,

and the emergence of the villages, towns, and Nigeria as a nation. The exclusion of History in the school curriculum especially at the primary and secondary school levels is a major contributory factor to the underdevelopment of Yorubaland and Nigeria by extension. Any nation without full knowledge of her history cannot develop. For Nigeria to become a developed nation, it is expedient that deliberate effort should be made to incorporate the system of Yoruba women of influencing the mainstream of socio-economic and political activities in Yorubaland into the Federal Republic of Nigeria through legislation. The British who brought gender disparity to Nigeria have for a long time jettisoned it to embrace gender equality.

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