

**THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
IN NORTHERN NIGERIA, 1954-1979**

BY

**Helen Adediwura ADEBAYO
ART1800888**

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by Helen Adediwura ADEBAYO
in the Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin,
under my supervision

.....

Professor Ehimika A. Ifidon
Supervisor

Date.....

.....

Dr Frank Ikponmwosa
Ag. Head of Department

Date

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God
for the Grace and Guidance
to accomplish this feat.

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I am thankful to God Almighty, who gave me the strength, wisdom and the ability to successfully go through my undergraduate programme; without His divine guidance, I would never have been able to complete it.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Certification Page	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Chapter One:	
Background to the Study	1
Chapter Two:	
Region, Religion and the Social and political position of Women in Northern Nigeria	26
Chapter Three:	
The Struggle for Women's Suffrage in Southern Nigeria, 1922-1954	36
Chapter Four:	
The Struggle for Women's Suffrage in Northern Nigeria, 1954-1979	49
Chapter Five:	
Explaining the Problem of Women's Suffrage in Northern Nigeria	65
Bibliography	80

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The right of women to vote in elections is known as women's suffrage. Some who attempted to amend the voting suffrage at the start of the 18th century so that women could vote. Later, liberal political parties would allow women to vote and increase the number of prospective voters for those parties. Organizations at the national and international levels were created to coordinate campaigns for women's suffrage, particularly the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (established in Berlin, Germany, in 1904).¹ Freely expressing one's personal political options by means of the ballot paper or seeking elective office are two acts which, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, feature among the most symbolic expressions of democratic freedom. Since 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has had them as two fundamental rights of the human person without distinction as to sex, race or status. The Electoral Regulations under the Macpherson Constitution of 1951, despite not being a federal document, mostly accorded respect to the many ethnic groups in the country following the tripartite administrative partition of 1939. A federal constitution with a distinct distribution of powers and acknowledged zones of influence did not actually enter into force until 1954.² It was only gradually that the vote was changed from a property and income right to a political right, and universal adult suffrage in Nigeria became a reality in the 1979

elections when women in the North were first permitted to vote.¹ Originally, the right to vote was thought of as a direct consequence of property interests rather than adhering to the person as a political right.³

Yet this has not always been the reality of the matter. Hugh Clifford, the British colonial governor who presided over the country throughout its colonial era, directed the start of elections in Nigeria in 1923 through a piece of legislation known as the Clifford Constitution.⁴ The ethnolinguistic groups and colonial authorities that dominated the northern, eastern, and western regions of Nigeria, namely the Hausa-Fulani, Igbo, and Yoruba people, respectively, often offered vastly different perceptions into suffrage qualifications, particularly including differences in gender, nationality, residency, age, tax, and income requirements in Nigeria. This is a reflection of the variety of people groups and distinctive cultures contained within the nation's borders. Voting rights were completely lost at the start of numerous military coups starting in 1966 and lasting until 1999, despite the fact that the criteria that guaranteed them eventually became standardized under the Federal Constitution of Nigeria of 1960. From 1966 through 1999, there were sporadic republican governments but only four elections. The electoral process has been different under many of Nigeria's governments and their accompanying constitutions throughout its history.⁵ Women in Nigeria's northern area were granted the right to vote in 1979, although women in the nation's southern and eastern regions did so in 1954. Several organizations, including the Women's

Movement of Nigeria and the Action Group's female branch, led the suffrage movement.

A response by the British colonialists to manage the different diversities and variations that plagued a country like Nigeria with diverse ethnic groupings, the research study analyzed the struggle for women's suffrage in northern Nigeria between the years 1922 and 1979. It also covered ethnic issues, which had dogged Nigeria's unity ever since the creation of regions in 1946 and aided the emergence of political parties there⁶ the study found that due to the Islamic purdah, women were prohibited from participating in political and economic activities in northern Nigeria. However, they engaged in politics and had a significant impact on the pre-colonial socio-political climate of the area.

Statement of the Problem

Universal suffrage from a gender perspective was introduced in Southern Nigeria in 1954. Generally speaking, women were given the right to vote organized women's groups and individual female agitators were asked to overlook whatever obstacles in the way of women suffrage.

These were mostly southern women not northern women. While women in the south could vote following the introduction of the Lyttleton constitution in 1954, women in the north could vote from 1979. Why did it take that long for women in the north to earn the right to vote. What were the impediment to women right to vote. These constitute the problem that the study has responded to.

Scope of Study

The study spans the years 1922 through 1979. 1922 saw the end of the Nigerian council, which had existed since 1914. Sir Hugh Clifford announced a new Nigerian constitution without consulting them first. There is now a legislative council. The limited franchise encouraged political activity and led to the formation of political parties and organizations. These organizations produced powerful tools for expressing complaints and requesting additional concessions from the colonial government. This study looks at the status of women in national politics in Nigeria and how it changed between the Presidential Constitution of 1954 and 1979.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the nature of the struggle for women's suffrage in northern Nigeria, 1954-1979.

The objectives are to:

1. investigate Nigeria's ethnic politics and regionalism. And how women's rights and constitutional advancement in southern Nigeria were influenced by the many constitutions that existed prior to 1954;
2. investigate the history of the northern Nigerian women's suffrage movement; and
3. consider the nature of the nation of Nigeria as it stands today and how to support the cause of women's equality and significance at the many political and decision-making levels in the nation.

Methodology

For the purpose of this research, secondary materials including books, articles in learned journals, articles in Newspaper/magazines and internet materials will be used.

Literature Review

Over the years, a number of disputes have arisen around the position of women in politics in northern Nigeria. Epiphany Azinge, in his article titled, “The Right to Vote in Nigeria: A Critical Commentary”, according to Azing, the reality is that not every citizen has access to the right. Rules that specify who is able to exercise their right to vote are supplied by statute or the constitution. This article discusses Nigerian law's recognition of the right to vote. It also looks at the limitations placed on the persons who have this right. More importantly, it focuses on the In Nigeria, voting rights have a very rocky past. When women in the North were permitted to vote for the first time in the 1979 elections, universal adult suffrage became a reality in Nigeria. The right to vote was initially perceived as a direct result of property interests rather than as a political privilege that belonged to the individual. The right to vote was gradually transformed from a property and income right to a political right. The concept of democracy is frequently seen as being intrinsically linked to the right to vote.⁷

According to Olufemi Vaughan, in his article titled, “The Transition to Islam in Northern Nigeria; A Historical Overview” examine Pre-Caliphate Hausa

land, women played significant political and economic roles in their civilizations. the customary responsibilities that women would have held in Hausa culture before Islam took hold.⁸ They provide proof of unrestricted interaction between men and women, women farming their own land, women marrying later in life, and Muslim women in northern Nigeria marrying men who are younger than they are. In these traditional civilizations, women's status appears to have been determined more by practical considerations than by religious principles. With the spread of Islam in Hausa country came new gender roles that were governed by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and the verses of the Quran.⁹

The process of bringing teachings from the Arab world to western Africa began long before the Fulani Jihad; yet, it was not until the formation of the Caliphate that religion truly took root in the region. The high rate of conversion can be partly ascribed to political and economic opportunism because having position and wealth as a Muslim citizen of the Caliphate was advantageous. Arabic, Fulfulde, and Hausa were among the languages used to spread Islamic teachings, which emphasized how the faith could be applied universally to the problems faced by Hausa commoners, or talakawa.¹⁰ He was quite elaborate especially on the Muslim women in northern Nigeria. The work will be useful to this thesis.

In addition, Nina E. Mba, in her article titled, "The Position of Women in Southern Nigeria Before 1900" It has been argued that pre-colonial Nigeria had a gendered division of labor. However, the nature and implication of such a division

of labor is often misinterpreted. While male dominance was built into the social system of some Nigerian ethnic groups, women played a significant and vital role in all aspects of the lives of their community.¹¹ This is due to the complementarity of male and female roles and functions. Complementarity gave women a great deal of autonomy in their own affairs.¹²

Although some women became leaders in politics, religion, and the economy, discrimination was on the basis of both class and gender. Women who, by virtue of their acquired or ascribed status became decision makers were by no means treated in the same way as other women in terms of their rights. Elements of structural inequality could be observed in unequal access to the means of production and control thereof as well as inequality in the ability to control reproduction.¹³ It will be useful to my project work when working on the southern women.

Furthermore, VerEecke Catherine, in her article titled, “Muslim Women Traders of Northern Nigeria: Perspectives from the City of Yola” contend that colonialism also contributed to the diminution of women’s rights. VerEecke argues that the women in Yola were extensively involved in agricultural production before the Fulani Jihad of the 18th century. Loathe to be identified as slaves in an economy that subsequently depended on slave labor for agricultural production, women were influenced by Islamic injunctions and embraced purdah.¹⁴ Hence my work will expatiate on the deficiencies in the article. The work of Pittin Renee, titled

“Selective Education: Issues of Gender, Class and Ideology in Northern Nigeria” attributes discrimination against women in education to the influence of colonialism. In response to the debate over pre-colonial Muslim women’s access of to education, It is hard to argue with Pittin’s contention that gender and class were the prime limiting factors to women’s opportunities for education, but if the problem is that Muslim women’s education is “shrouded by the mists of history”, then, scholars must look for evidence of what happened in the past without equating a lack of information with a lack of opportunity.¹⁵ Hence my thesis will address these deficiencies in a bid to bring out pre-colonial women.

More so, Nina E. Mba, “The Position of Women in Southern Nigeria Before 1900” Discrimination affects women's political and civil rights. The enfranchisement of women in the North was one of the political demands made by women's organizations in both the East and West after their own enfranchisement but the right to vote was only granted to women in Northern Nigeria in 1976.¹⁶ In the East, it had been granted in 1954 and in the West in 1958. Some have argued that the exercise of this right may be problematic even where it is guaranteed because of social constraints on the movement of women in purdah.¹⁷

For instance, Akande Jadesola, in his book entitled, *Laws and Customs Affecting Women's Status in Nigeria*. suggests that women who are secluded in purdah may be unable to vote as a result of the electoral rules which end the voting day at 6 pm because women in purdah cannot go out until after sundown. However,

claims that women in purdah turned out in such large numbers to vote in the 1976 local government elections (which was the first in which they could participate on an equal footing with men) that the voting day was extended by two hours.¹⁸ Thus, it is clear that women will exercise their rights with adequate and institutionalized protections. Women have also always exercised their rights as well as organized collective action within political interest and pressure groups for the enhancement of women's rights in society. Akande contends that Nigerian women do not have full legal capacity in so far as they are unable to "independently enter into contracts, acquire and own property enter into other legal transactions, sue or be sued."¹⁹ This is of immense contribution to this work.

Mba's work demonstrates that purdah in and of itself ought not to prevent women from voting, and there is no evidence that it has.²⁰ Akande presumes that women who are not living under conditions of purdah would be better able to exercise their right to vote. This presumption is stated rather than demonstrated.²¹

M. Okome, "Domestic, Regional, and International Protection of Nigerian Women against Discrimination: Constraints and Possibilities" examine, the Nigerian constitution of 1979 prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex, as do the constitutions of 1992 and 1999. All women have a right to suffrage once they are above the age of 18 and can contest in political elections once above the age of 21. No customary prohibitions prevent women's participation in politics, but women have not contested for political positions on a level matching man.

Women's hesitancy to be involved in politics dates to the period of decolonization period when politics was characterized by gross abuse and physical violence.²² Hence my work will reflect this aspect which is very key to the thesis.

Tekena N. Tamuno, "Governor Clifford and Representative Government", examines Legislative Council and Nigerian Council; how did Clifford try to fix the issues with the Legislative Council and Nigerian Council? Clifford had challenges in trying to reform both institutions, challenges that Lugard had already identified in 1913. These challenges included the size of the nation, poor communication and transportation infrastructure, cultural diversity, and legal discrepancies between a colony and a protectorate, to name a few. Clifford quickly dissolved the Nigerian Council. He then focused on reforming the Legislative Council. The goals of the plan Clifford presented to the Secretary of State in March 1921 were constrained. Clifford stated his plan was "no more than a step in the direction of securing a fuller representation of local interests and of giving articulate members of the various Nigerian communities a larger share in the discussion and management of public affairs than are provided by existing institutions."²³

Hauwa, Mahdi. "The Position of Women in Islam" examine the extent of women's practical freedom also varies with class, level of education and type of marriage. Within polygynous marriages, women may have more freedom than within monogamous ones because they are not subjected to the presumption of legal unity in monogamous marriage, which gives the man the advantage. In terms of

the capacity to marry, the right of consent and the requirements of bride wealth-payment, women's right to independent decision-making may be curtailed. In general, Nigerian law limits the rights of a woman in marriage under all legal systems (statutory law, Shari'a, and customary law).²⁴ The gap will be addressed in my thesis.

K. Okonjo, "Women's Political in Nigeria", Accounts of women's political marginalization commonly assign a critical role to Nigeria's socio-cultural and economic system in determining the eligibility pool for elected office. Okonjo, argue that women find it difficult to break into political positions because they are generally disadvantaged by gender ideology, cultural patterns, and predetermined social roles assigned to women and men as well as low literacy, poor childcare, inadequate health care, and poverty. It has long been assumed that traditional anti-egalitarian attitudes toward gender slow down the political advancement of women. Studies of political recruitment in established democracies found that these attitudes influence both whether women are prepared to come forward as candidates for office (the supply side) and the criteria that are used by political gatekeepers when evaluating candidates (the demand side).²⁵

Nwankwo Nkechi, *Gender Equality in Nigerian Politics*, in cultures with traditional attitudes towards gender roles, many women may be reluctant to run and if they seek office, may fail to attract sufficient support to win. A study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) found that female politicians in many countries cited

hostile attitudes toward political participation by women as one of the most important barriers to running for parliament there is a consensus in the literature that generally in Africa, women are socialized into passive civic and political roles in the family. This is then subsequently reinforced by the wider society based on cultural precepts that portray publicly active women as cultural deviants. In Nigeria, women political leaders are not just seen as cultural deviants, but there is very little public confidence in their capacity to perform.²⁶

Karam, Azza, *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. Political factors that constrain women's political representation in Nigeria relate to political institutions and practice. Institutional accounts of women's political underrepresentation lay emphasis on a country's political system and some of its specific features such as the electoral system and presence of specific institutions such as gender quotas in party recruitment processes. This approach suggest that political rules of the game are the primary explanation for systematic differences in women's representation among relatively similar societies, and that changing those rules is the most effective way to promote women's participation in political leadership.²⁷ The book and the articles will be particularly useful in the treatments of the political underrepresentation of the northern women.

Okechukwu Ibeanu, "Historicizing the Marginalization of Nigeria Women in Politics," For several decades, the Nigerian government, civil society organizations, and the country's development partners have made concerted efforts

to overcome obstacles to women's political representation. This section will take stock of these efforts. The earliest documented effort towards improving women's political representation in Nigeria came in the form of institutional measures taken by the government to ensure increased women's political representation.²⁸ These institutional measures include constitutional amendments of 1979, 1992, and 1999, which prohibit any form of discrimination against women. The constitutional amendments guaranteed the right of women to participate in politics at all levels. Another major institutional measure to increase women's political representation taken by the Nigerian government is the signing and ratification of the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women.²⁹ It will be useful though in discussing discrimination against Women.

Jeroma Barkow and Joseph Greenberg, "Muslim Women's Rights in Northern Nigeria" Due to their dependence on the male heads of their homes, women may have been subjected to further exploitation as capitalism developed over northern Nigeria. It is clear how some traditions and the treatment of women have changed in Northern Nigeria as a result of the transition from traditional Hausa society, the Caliphate's reign, to colonialism and post-colonialism.³⁰ However, viewing this history as a smooth transition between several phases hides the fact that previous customs continue to have a significant impact on the present. Because of the vastness of the Caliphate and the ease with which these beliefs might be incorporated into Islamic teachings, it was difficult for its rulers to fully construct

a strictly orthodox form of Islam. Not all socioeconomic classes or practices share the traditional Hausa culture's merger with Islam. In some areas, such as the wearing of the complete hijab, Islam has definitely won; in other areas, however, such as divorce and child custody, traditional non-Islamic norms have taken precedence.³¹ Given that both Hausa and Islamic standards are primarily patriarchal in character and as a result have given rise to a variety of methods for women to exercise their power in the domains that are open to them, it is crucial to stress that the dichotomy in this case is not between feminism-friendly Hausa norms and patriarchal Islamic ones.³² It will be useful in traditions and the treatment of women have changed in Northern Nigeria.

O.T. Kolawole, and Adeigbe K. Adebayo, in their article entitled. “Women participation in the political process in Nigeria”. argued that in the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women were an integral part of the political set up of their communities. For instance, in pre-colonial Bornu, women played active roles in the administration of the state, complementing the roles played by male counterparts. Also, Women also played a very significant role in the political history of ancient Zaria.³³ The modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as Queen. Queen Amina was a great and powerful warrior. She built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and extended the boundaries of her territory beyond Bauchi and she made Zaria

prominent Commercial Centre. The story was not different in ancient Yorubaland, where Oba ruled with the assistance of a number of women referred to as female traditional chiefs. They consisted of eight titled ladies of the highest rank. The significant role played by prominent women such as Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwei of Ossomari, cannot be ignored. Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed wonderful bravery and strength in the politics of Ife and Benin respectively, while Omu Okwei dominated the commercial scene of Ossomari in present day Delta State.³⁴

Kolawole further examined the colonial era, The Colonial Era Nigerian women suffered from colonialism because they were denied the right to vote. Women in Southern Nigeria were not given the right to vote until the 1950s. Chief (Mrs.) Olufunmilayo RansomeKuti was one of three women appointed to the House of Chiefs, along with Chiefs (Mrs.) Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu, who were both assigned to the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs. Political parties' female wings lacked a lot of practical utility.³⁵ It will be useful to this thesis when dealt with the role women play in the northern part.

D.T. Agbalajobi, his article entitled. "Women's participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and prospects". He examines the post-colonial period. Nigerian women started to take on increasingly active responsibilities at this time. The first female member of the Federal Parliament was Mrs. Wuraola Esan of Western Nigeria in 1960. Chief (Mrs.) Margaret Ekpo ran

for office in 1961 and won, joining the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly until 1966. Mrs. Janet N. Mokelu and Miss Ekpo A. Young also ran for office and won, joining the Eastern House of Assembly. But until 1979, when civilian administration was restored, women in northern Nigeria were still denied the right to vote. Due to this rejection, well-known female politicians like Hajia Gambo Sawaba in the North were unable to cast ballots and get votes.³⁶

A. Mohammed and B.A. Zaid, in their article titled, “Women and political participation: Toward attainment of 35% affirmative action and obstacles to the women participation in Nigerian politics and decision-making process”. Women participated in politics a little more during the Second Republic (1979–1983). A small number of Nigerian women were elected to the State Houses of Assembly and the House of Representatives at the national level, respectively. However, only two women were appointed as Federal Ministers throughout that time.³⁷ They were Janet Akinrinade, Minister of Internal Affairs, and Mrs. Adenike Egun Oyagbola, Minister of National Planning, respectively. The only female Permanent Secretary (first in the Federal Ministry of Establishment and afterwards in the Federal Ministry of Health) was Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel.³⁸

D.T. Agbalajobi in his book “Women's participation and the political process in Nigeria”. conservative thinkers contend that women's true roles and that of females in general are confined to the home, whereas liberals disagree, saying that women's roles typically end in the kitchen. Women's political processes are as

important as those of their male counterparts, so these responsibilities cannot be washed away in the grand scheme of things.³⁹ Moreso, However, opinions on whether women's roles are primarily at home or whether they can meaningfully participate in other socio-economic and political activities like their male counterparts and make substantial contributions are varied.⁴⁰ It will be useful to this thesis when dealt with the challenges face by the women in norther Nigeria.

Anifowose R., “Women Political Participation in Nigeria, Problems and Prospects” holds that “Locating the historical background of male dominance over women in matters of society is practically impossible”. He then maintained that such expectations are better appreciated when one considers the genetic make-up and the relative differences that exist between men and women. Unarguably however, Anifowose opined that men are generally heavier, taller and even physically stronger than women and therefore more capable than women to enforce their will through physical strength and threat of violence. In addition, discrimination and subjugation of women are further enforced by custom, traditional practices, beliefs and the law behind which once stood the coercive force of the state. However, the rise in the profile of women in Nigerian politics is a major inclination that the discrimination and subjugation of women that was once endemic has come to reduce drastically, but it will be useful when deal on the northern women in politics.⁴¹

Davis, Thomas and Kalu-Nwiwu, Azubuike, in their article titled, “Education, ethnicity and national integration in the history of Nigeria: continuing problems of Africa’s colonial legacy” examine in post-colonial Nigeria, politics and religion coexist. Nigeria officially became a secular state in 1960, the year it gained independence. At the same time, postcolonial politics to some extent mirrored the fact that Christianity and Islam were both closely, but never entirely, linked with very diverse socioeconomic and geographic groups. Southern Nigerians, who, aside from those in the south-west, tended to be Christians, envisioned national unification and development in line with Western concepts of modernity, democratization, and meritocracy, despite the fact that the independence movement had split along ethnic lines.⁴²

Davis, Thomas and Kalu-Nwiwu, Azubuike, in their article titled, “Education, ethnicity and national integration in the history of Nigeria: continuing problems of Africa’s colonial legacy” examine in post-colonial Nigeria, politics and religion coexist. Nigeria officially became a secular state in 1960, the year it gained independence. At the same time, postcolonial politics to some extent mirrored the fact that Christianity and Islam were both closely, but never entirely, linked with very diverse socioeconomic and geographic groups. Southern Nigerians, who, aside from those in the south-west, tended to be Christians, envisioned national unification and development in line with Western concepts of

modernity, democratization, and meritocracy, despite the fact that the independence movement had split along ethnic lines.⁴³

Education became a major concern for the Muslim communities in both the north and the south of the country as many northern Nigerian leaders, the majority of whom were Muslims, were cautious about political independence for a variety of reasons, including their concern that the north's low levels of literacy might result in the north being ruled by southern Nigerians after independence rather than British officials. Since independence, the Muslim community in Nigeria has undergone significant change and internal differentiation as a result of the participation of Nigerian Muslims in larger political, intellectual, and religious debates. This has given rise to both a secularization trend and more fundamentalist movements that are critical of the regional Sufi traditions, The political impact of religion was generally viewed as less problematic for Nigeria than that of ethnicity and regionalism, despite the fact that religion and education played an important role in structuring political competition in the early postcolonial years, and even in the clashes that ultimately led to the first military coup (1966) and the Civil War (1967–1970).

The literature, *Constitutional Development in Nigeria* by Kalu Ezera begins with a physical, cultural and historical background of Nigeria. The linguistics groups of Nigeria were extensively examined. The British acquired Nigeria from Royal Niger Company, who had sole right to trade in the area called Nigeria today.

The various Constitutions of Nigeria beginning with the Clifford Constitution of 1922 and how it brought about the elective principle was discussed. The Richard's Constitution of 1946 brought about the division of Nigeria into regions by its creation of regional assemblies. This shifted the focus of Nigerians from Nationalism to ethnic politics. This led to the emergence of tribal nationalism in the three main regions of the country (North, West, and East). The Richard's constitution can actually be said to have led to the build-up of federalism in the country.⁴⁴ The Macpherson constitution further strengthened federalism in Nigeria. The making of the Constitution proved it was to further strengthen federalism as constitution making meetings were held from the village level to the national level.⁴⁵

The Lyttelton Constitution formerly entrenched federalism as the system of government for Nigeria. Both the Richard's and Macpherson Constitution can be said to build-up to it. The Constitution established regional premiers for each region. This truly gave the country its federation outlook by granting the three regions autonomous status. The Lyttelton Constitution was followed by the independence Constitution of 1960. The Lyttelton government gave Nigeria the self-government she had sought all along in 1960. The Independence constitution created a fourth region for Nigeria (the mid-west region). In 1963 Nigeria became a republic and came to be known as the Federal Republic of Nigeria. A republican constitution was enacted. This literature is limited in dwelling on what impact

federalism had on ethnic politics. The literature dwelled extensively on all the constitution Nigeria has had until independence. Though it examined tribal nationalism which can also be called ethnic nationalism it failed to dwell extensively on it. The constitutional conference of 1957 and 1958 in London and Lagos further strengthened federalism in Nigeria due to the reforms agreed upon such as the creation of the office of the prime minister, universal adult suffrage in the West and East and adult male suffrage in the North. The West and East were granted self-rule in 1957 but the North postponed hers till 1959. The country was granted independence in 1960, became a republic in 1963. The Republican Constitution granted exclusive powers to the federal government, concurrent list were areas which the federal government and regional governments could both legislate on. The residual was given to regional law-making bodies alone.⁴⁶

Although the above literatures contain valuable information given us an overview of the right for women to vote in elections is known as women's suffrage. Historically speaking, access to suffrage has undoubtedly tied in with an elitist view of society. The surest evidence of this is that, for the great majority of the inhabitants of the planet, men or women, the achievement of voting rights has been the outcome of a bitter struggle signifying victory over social or racial prejudice and, in many cases, a victory over colonial oppression. As to women, while undergoing the same vicissitudes as men, they have had to overcome the additional obstacle of men's sexual prejudice. Hence in many countries they were granted the

rights to vote and to stand for election much later than men - who also happened to be the sole arbiters in the matter - and often in stages, and it is against this backdrop that this thesis is set to look at suffrage in the north part of Nigeria from historical point of view and to critical assess its impact and how it affects the women in northern Nigeria.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER TWO
REGION, RELIGION AND THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL
POSITION OF WOMEN IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

Introduction

Politics is about power and influence. It is a struggle of contending ideological viewpoints on the allocation and distribution of resources. It determines who gets what, when and how? Resistance to politics is constructed in response to the distributive mechanism adopted by the governing political party in the polity. In the practice of politics, the disadvantaged groups feel oppressed or marginalized. The resistance to oppression manifests itself in any of the following categories: class, ethnic, race, regional, religious or gender. Elements in these categories argue for systematic changes that will eliminate the causes of their oppression, they demand for equity and fairness.¹ The contest for political power in Nigeria, like in other African countries, is driven by the contrasting imperatives of ethnicity and regionalism, which, by implication is devoid of any sustaining unifying theme or ideology. The lessons of Nigeria's political history teach that political regionalism is not compatible with the empowerment of a multiplicity of politicized ethnic groups. Once regions are established and endowed with political power, ethnic interests are routinely sacrificed to regional interests, which often prove to be the interests articulated by the leaders of large ethnic groups; while the large groups become regionalist, smaller groups look to the center for protection against their overbearing neighbours within the region.²

The Position of Women in Northern Nigeria

Since the Fulani infiltrated Hausaland, and what finally became northern Nigeria, the dominant culture has been influenced by the Islamic religion.³ Hausa has remained the lingua franca of the region, the Kanuri has remained an influential ethnic group, there are several ethnic groups, particularly in the middle belt, that are not Islamized, adhering to the other Christian denominations, yet the political dominance of the Fulani is everywhere to be seen. References to the north or the northern region in general, in this work are to the conservative complex erected by the Fulani.

The Hausa-Fulani are predominantly Muslims due to their contact with Arab traders. The Hausa-Fulani are very tied to their religion and as a result of this they are totally ready to do the biddings of their religious heads which are usually their traditional rulers. This feature about them was very useful to the British in administering the Northern Region through the Native authority system of indirect rule.⁴

Of the three main regions of Nigeria: Northern region, Western region and Eastern region, it is seen that the British were able to impose colonial rule successfully in the North, due to the help of their leaders whose subjects were unwaveringly devoted to. The Hausa-Fulani would not have easily accepted the British if their rulers had not been intermediaries. Also, average Hausa-Fulani does not question the authority of their ruler. In the Western Region it was also

successful with the help of the traditional rulers. It was more difficult for the British to impose their rule on the Eastern Region due to the politically decentralized nature of the Region as well as the ability of the average Ibo man to be less malleable unlike in the North.⁵

Northern People's Congress (NPC)

Up until 1949, there was no nationalist political activity in the North. This was mainly due to the policy of administration of the North by the British. The indirect rule system of administration adopted by the British to administer over the North preserved the traditional system of government which existed in the North. Since there was no formidable middle class in the North, the ruling class tended to be totalitarian and monolithic in their system of administration. By 1949, the situation had changed when some leading Northern politicians got together and formed a Pan-Northern Nigerian cultural organization known as the *Jami'yyar Mutanen Arewa* (Northern People's Congress), founded in December 1949.⁶

The foremost leaders of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) were Aminu Kano, Tafawa Balewa, Dr. Dikko and Yahaya Gasau. The *Jami'yyar* later broke up, the dissidents such as Aminu Kano formed the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) also known as *Jamiyyar Naman Sawaba*. The prospect of election in 1951 caused the *Jami'yyar* to re-organize. The *Jami'yyar* which was the NPC won the election in the North in 1951.⁷ The play of ethnic politics can be seen in several events in the country between 1954 and 1966. On November 10 and 11 of

1954, elections were held in to the Federal House of Representatives, were held into the Eastern and Western regions of Nigeria. In the West, only adult males that paid tax were eligible to vote while in the Eastern region both sexes from twenty-one (21) years above were allowed to vote through the secret ballot system. In the North, elections lasted from October to December 1954. The need for each region to prevent the dominant party in the other region to win any electoral position in another region other than theirs was seen in the campaigns and manifesto of the regional parties. The NPC in the North held on to its slogan 'North for Northerners', they did this to curtail any form of Southern domination.⁸ The Manifesto of the NPC for the Federal elections of 1954 was based on foreign trade and higher education. It promised sending more students to study in foreign universities. Its foreign trade policy was limited to what it wanted for Northern traders. In the North, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) defeated the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and captured majority of the seats to the Federal House of Representatives. The NPC which had the majority in the House needed to form a government. The party eventually had to form a coalition government with the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) due to its limited number of members in the Council of Ministers. They both formed a coalition government of 6 members of the NCNC and 3 members of the NPC in the Council of Ministers. The NPC and the NCNC were different ideologically; the only issue they agreed upon was the issue of Lagos being a Federal territory.⁹

The general election of December 12, 1959 was to determine the political party that would form the government of an independent Nigeria. The NPC in its manifesto, promised justice and progress for all. This favored an alignment with the Western Bloc on emphasizing that an act of neutrality in Africa's foreign policy was an unmitigated disservice to humanity; no more and no less than the projection, conscious and unconscious of the deep seated prejudices which those nations had towards some of the \countries of Western democracies.¹⁰ At the end of the elections, the NPC had 148 seats in the parliament, the NCNC obtained 89, while the Action Group obtained 75.¹¹ No party was able to attain the simple majority of the 312 seats in the Federal Legislature. The NPC and the NCNC/NEPU alliance formed a coalition government with Tafawa Balewa, the Prime Minister of Nigeria (1963-1966). The NCNC and the NPC had opposing views on various issues such as the possibility of welding West African states into a single political entity. The NPC opposed the creation of a West African state union or the creation of a United State of Africa as suggested by the NCNC. They argued that the creation of a West African State was premature and that Nigeria's internal problem could not be solved by a West African State Union nor by Pan-Africanism, while the NCNC argued that the creation of a United State of Africa was feasible, imperative and non-negotiable.¹² The party further argued that the welding together of all African states into a single political unit would solve many of the problems being encountered by many African states. Another issue the parties disagreed on was the

issue of alignment and non-alignment. In line with that the NPC which constituted the head of the federal government, boycotted the preparatory conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Cairo, Egypt in June 1961 and the Non-Aligned Conference in Belgrade in September 1961. The NPC favoured alignment with the Western Bloc particularly Britain.

In 1962, Britain resumed its nuclear tests in Sub-Saharan Africa. Tafawa Balewa, who had prior to this time, denounced a similar act by the Soviet Union, supported and justified the act of the British. The NCNC criticized the Prime Minister of aligning with the West even though its policies and actions were detrimental to Africa's interest. These were some of the squabbles between the two parties who had aligned to form a government for the center. In 1962, the three regions had the issue of the creation of a Mid-Western region to deal with. On March 23, 1962, a two-third majority vote was passed in favour of a government proposal for the creation of a fourth region. This proposal was approved by the legislatures of the Eastern and Northern regions while the Western region's Legislature rejected the proposal.¹³ A referendum was carried out in the proposed Mid-Western Region and 89% of the electorate was in favour of the creation of the region. 89% was a far cry from the 60% approval of the populace required by the constitution for the Region to be created. It is worthy of note that the Western Region legislature later approved the creation of a Mid-Western Region when the Legislature was controlled by a U.P.P./N.C.N.C coalition government. On August

12, 1963, a sixteen-men all party team, headed by D.C. Osadebay, leader of the Mid-West State Movement and President of the Nigerian Senate, was appointed by the Federal Government to administer the new region for the interim period of six months.¹⁴

In 1963, a census was taken. This was to enable the Electoral Commission allocate parliamentary seats to the regions on the basis of population among other reasons. What this meant was that, the Region with the highest population would have more seats in the parliament and would therefore form the Government of the country. Having cancelled the 1962 election, due to disagreements over the results after lots of politics was injected to an otherwise technical matter, the 1963 election meant a lot to the regions especially the NCNC, since the only means of getting back power from the North was in showing that the combined population of the East, West, Mid-West and Lagos exceeded that of the North.¹⁵ This would ensure her a better place in the play of federal politics. After the 1962 elections, measures were put in place to curtail a repeat of the misgivings that characterized the previous census. A verification team of over six thousand members were sent to each region by the other, that is, two thousand from each region, two United Nations Advisory team was on ground to monitor the census exercise. Three enumerators were mandated to count only physically present persons while in 1962, the enumerators were instructed to try and see every individual to satisfy themselves that they actually existed.¹⁶

Two thousand trained educated and matured women inspectors were sent to the North to help count women in *pardah*. On February 23, the result was announced by the Census Board. The Northern region had a population of 29,777,986, the Eastern region had a population of 12,388,646, the Western region had a population of 10,278,500, the Mid-Western region had a population of 2,533,337 and Lagos had a population of 675,352. All other regions other than the North rejected the result.¹⁷

Another the angle to the discussion on ethnic politics in Nigeria is the issue of ethnic minorities in Nigeria. Ethnic minorities came into existence with the creation of regions in 1946. The ethnic majorities in the regions created by the British became the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yorubas in the West and the Ibos in the East. Ethnic groups that were not Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo became minorities. Prior to this time, some of these minorities were majorities in the pre-colonial era and existed as empires. Examples are Kanem-Bornu and Nupe in the North, the Benin in the West and Calabar in the East. The rise of regional nationalism brought the marginalization of ethnic politics in Nigeria.¹⁸

Regionalism structured on ethnic and regional politics became the organizing principle of Nigerian's political and electoral behaviour. The three political parties, the National Congress of Nigeria's Citizen (NCNC), Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) and the Action Group (AG) dominated their regions and sought to control Nigeria at a national level or federal level.⁶ In the North, the

Middle-Belt Peoples' Party (M.B.P.P), the Tiv Progressive Union (T.P.U) and the Idoma State Union (I.S.U) called for the creation of a Middle-Belt State for the minorities in areas like Adamawa, Plateau and Niger provinces. Another Northern minority movement, the Ilorin Talaka Parapo Party (I.T.P.P.) wanted a Kwara state in Western region.¹⁹ Until 1966, when the military took over the helm of affairs in Nigeria, each of the federating units known as regions, operated its own regional Constitution, police, civil service, judiciary and even a separate coat of arms and motto different from that of the federation. This took ethnic rivalry to another level with each region's fear of domination. It is worthy to note that this rivalry was fueled by the elites who were in charge of administering the regions. On several occasions there were outright demands for secession from the regions. When policies taken by the central government were favourable to them, they would want to stay but when it didn't fall to their advantage, a demand for secession would be made.²⁰

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CHAPTER THREE
THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN
SOUTHERN NIGERIA, 1922-1954

Introduction

The political and economic realm in Nigeria has historically favoured men and been marked by "patriarchism," which Dagunduro and Adebimpe define as simply "rule by men." Many nations, both ancient and modern, have historical evidence supporting the notion that men are superior than women.¹ In post-1960s feminism, the term "patriarchy" has been used to describe the systematic coordination of male supremacy and female subordination, according to Aina. Women have always been marginalized and have experienced male dominance over them as an inferior category. Through a mixture of a gender-biased culture and traditional practices that favoured men, they were seen as inferior to the male population.² However, in spite of this culture of patriarchy and male supremacy, Nigerian women have participated actively in all stages of the country's development from the pre-colonial period to the post-colonial period.³ The struggles and intervention attempt by women at every stage of the country's development are a very important aspect of the country's history of economic and political development.⁴

According to Ajayi, and Owumi, feminism has been a distant tool of intellectual discourse and political action to the majority of women scholars and

activists in Sub-Saharan Africa. In other words, there have long been some forms of feminist struggle in Nigeria before what is acclaimed and identified as a feminist movement.⁵ The history of women's activism in Nigeria dates back to the pre-colonial era, in fact, women appeared to have been more politically strong in the pre-colonial era. Before British colonization, Nigerian women participated in politics and played prominent roles in decision-making in the Nigerian society.⁶ Some of the political positions occupied by the South Western Yoruba women within the traditional Yoruba political structure include: Iyalaje, Iyaloja, Yeye-Oba, Erelu and Iya Osun, among others. Notable Nigerian women asserted their rights and started their own political movements on a low scale. Women's activist movements then were easy to organize through informal associations, such as the market women associations that brought so many women together under one umbrella. Women's activist groups then were based on type of trade, age, and kinship and they were able to fight collective cause.⁷

An example of women's activism was witnessed during the Aba riot of 1929 in the South Eastern part of Nigeria, where over fifty women lost their lives in their fight for justice.⁸ Another example of women's activism in Nigeria was when Ife and Igala land were invaded and notable women, like Moremi of Ile Ife and Princess Inikpi of Igala land, sacrificed their lives to save their people.⁹ Also worthy of mention is Madam Tinubu and Madam Funmilayo Ransome Kuti. These women projected and promoted the interest of women in their regions. The emergence of

women's activism in Nigeria can be traced to the demands of women to improve the second-rate status of women, and to remove or reduce those factors that deprive women of enjoying their full human rights as Nigerians.¹⁰ Nigerian women have faced a wide range of problems in getting past the numerous hindrances that have confronted them in religious, cultural and economic aspects. Despite the active involvement of women politically in the pre-colonial era, the advent of colonial administration was laden with anti-women policies, which gradually transformed the political scene to a male-dominated one.¹¹ Pre-colonial Nigerian women's activism has a long history, with heroic figures like Moremi of Ife, Amina of Zaria, Emotan of Benin, Funmilayo Kuti, Margaret Ekpo, and many others making a name for themselves.

This chapter centers on the political claims made by Nigerian women that from the Women Movement of Nigeria (WM), a political party for women. It lays forth the voting reforms advocated by these women, who wished to actively participate in shaping the future of their nation. This text, dated 15 February 1954, was written by Elizabeth Adekogbe, president of the WM, who was also a journalist, teacher, and headmistress. The WM was established in Ibadan in December 1952.¹² Mrs. Adekogbe composed it in the background of the 1956 Nigerian constitutional conference that was planning to prepare for the nation's independence. She took use of the occasion to further the conversation about the political rights of Nigerian women. The acknowledgement of women's rights to

such Assemblies can be seen as having started with the nomination of women as "special members" in our Legislature. Our team has won. However, this system will not last as it cannot withstand the test of time and popularity, therefore hope that men who stubbornly hold onto outdated customs and biases when discussing the issues facing women will have an open mind and research exactly what women want. Just as it did not satisfy males, the nomination system will never satisfy us. It gives women in our country a lower standing, and the fact that we have been pushed to the side should cause us to really consider how we will be perceived in the future. If only we could work hard to obtain the public's cooperation and inspire their support for our cause, the future would be bright and nothing would stand in our way.

The year 1956, when the revised constitution is scheduled to be reviewed, should be a year of victory for Nigerian women.¹³ The selection of Mrs. Margaret U. Ekpo, known in the East as Aba who has always linked herself with the goals of Nigerian women. The nomination of Mrs. Remi Aiyedun, on the other hand, was received with opposition from the general public in the Western Region. Why? Except for Mr. Awolowo, who placed her there, no one was aware of her residence prior to her assignment. Her contribution to the cause of women cannot even be addressed when her name is spoken. Only when the House of Assembly meets in Ibadan is she visible but unheard.¹⁴ They gave preference to men who wished to be elected to higher electoral colleges, whereas women could not advance past the first

college for two reasons: first, they did not receive strong support from men, and second, the number of women who might have wanted to support them was insufficient due to the taxpayer suffrage system.¹⁵ However, the underrepresentation of women in the House, which was partially caused by this rigged electoral system, seemed so inexcusable at the time that the members themselves (who were all men in the 1950s) requested the British Lieutenant-Governor give women one of the three seats designated for special members.¹⁶ This stance in favour of women also reflects the members' desire to select women who shared their views. Yes, the Minister of the AG was there.¹⁷

However, the political situation of women in Nigeria appears to have changed since independence as no woman has been a state governor, vice president or president of the country. The few top political offices, like ministerial appointments, that have been occupied by women have been handed over to them by the men, usually to keep them quiet. Udegbe, argues that women's representation in the three arms of government from the 1960 independence till the late 1990s was merely two per cent of the office holders. Hence, women were continuously grossly underrepresented.¹⁸

Nigerian women have failed to live up to expectations as rights groups or political movements. Some of these women's activist movements are more radical than the women as traditionally conceived and have tried to raise the struggle to a higher level. But they are still conscious of what the men would say or do to thwart

their efforts. Even though these women's activist groups have for activism sometimes varies.¹⁹

The Colonial Period

Colonialism affected Nigerian women adversely as they were denied the franchise. It was also only in the 1950s that women in Southern Nigeria were given the franchise. Three women were appointed into the House of Chiefs, namely Chief (Mrs) Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti (appointed into the Western Nigeria House of Chiefs); Chiefs (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu (both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs). The women's wings of political parties possessed very little functional relevance.²⁰

The right to vote has taken many forms in Nigeria's history. In the period from 1922 to 1950 under which both the Clifford Constitution of 1922 and the Richards Constitution of 1946 were enacted, the right to vote for members of the legislative council was extended exclusively to residents of Lagos and Calabar in the south.²¹ Under colonial Governor Hugh Clifford, indigenous Nigerians were first granted the right to elect their own representatives into the Legislative Council of the aforementioned municipalities. This right, termed the elective principle, emphasized that 4 of the 36 members of the Legislative Council must be elected by the native population. Though northerners were still not afforded the right to vote, with the enactment of the Richards Constitution, Nigeria was integrated under one general council with three regional councils in the north, west, and east. Voting

rights in Lagos and Calabar were limited by gender, nationality, residency, age, and income requirements.²² The franchise was granted to those who were male, British subjects or natives of the Nigerian protectorate, residents of the Lagos or Calabar areas for at least a year, at least 21 years old, and generators of an income of at least £100 in the year prior to the election.²³ Under these provisions, only 3,00 of the population of 4000, were qualified in Lagos, and only 1,000, of the population of 10,000, were qualified in Calabar. Though elections took place in 1923, 1928, 1933, 1938, 1947, 1954, and 1959, under British colonial rule, suffrage was only extended to northern Nigerians in 1947.²⁴

The Post-Colonial Period

During this period, Nigerian women began to play very active roles. In 1960, Mrs. Wuraola Esan, from Western Nigeria became the first female member of the Federal Parliament. In 1961, Margaret Ekpo, contested and won the election, becoming a member of the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly till 1966, Mrs. Janet N. Mokelu and Miss Ekpo A. Young, also contested elections and won, they became members of the Eastern House of Assembly. In northern Nigeria, however, women were still denied the franchise even after independence until 1979 that is, the return of civilian government. As a result of this denial, prominent female politicians like Hajia Gambo Sawaba in the North could not vote and be voted for.²⁵ The Second Republic (1979-1983) saw a little more participation of women in politics. A few Nigerian women won elections into the House of Representatives

at the national level and also few women won elections into the State Houses of Assembly respectively. However, During the same period, only two women were appointed Federal Ministers. They were Chief (Mrs) Janet Akinrinade and Mrs Adenike Ebun Oyagbola, Minister for Internal Affairs and Minister for National Planning respectively. Mrs. Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel was the only female Permanent Secretary (first in the Federal Ministry of Establishment and later Federal Ministry of Health). A number of women were appointed Commissioners in the states also. In 1983, Ms Franca Afegbua became the only woman to be elected into the Senate. Also, very few women contested and won elections into the Local Government Councils during this period.²⁶

The pioneer women group to challenge the British policies during the colonial period was the Igbo women, who have a history of organizing themselves for social and communal development. Aba women were able to use indigenous mechanisms and strategies to organize, mobilize, and wage the Women's War of 1929 against the colonial government and its native authorities.²⁷ The riot primarily centered on the protest against the imposition of tax by British colonial representatives and collective defense of women's role in the sphere of authority. In the British colonial records, the women's war (as popularly referred to by the southeastern indigenes) which was named the Aba Women's Riot of 1929, was a strategically executed anti-colonial revolt organized by women to fight against social, political, and economic injustices meted out to them. One of the most

powerful women's activist groups in colonial Lagos was the Lagos Market Women's Association (LMWA). The LMWA was able to resist colonial attempts to tax women in 1932, using indigenous grassroots organizing tactics and the negotiating skills of a representative committee composed of women leaders like Madam Pelewura, who met with C.T. Lawrence, the administrator of Lagos Colony²⁸ the group fought the colonial government on two fronts: increase in taxable income and price control. As a result of the determined resistance of the LMWA, the colonial government was unable to effectively implement its policies and ended price control in September 1945.

The concerted effort made by women's activists in gaining independence for Nigeria mapped their shifted focus from primarily rejecting exuberant taxation and policies of colonial representatives to the total rejection of British colonial rule in the country.²⁹ This was carried out alongside other prominent male nationalists, which led to independence in 1960 and brought about the call of women's activist groups for political participation and full representation of women in all legislative houses. Women's activism took a definite shape in the political landscape in Nigeria with the formation of Nigerian Women's Party (NWP) in 1944 (it existed predominantly within Lagos State) and the appointment of the first Nigerian woman parliamentarian,³⁰ Lady Oyinkan Morenike Ajasa (later Abayomi), a leader of NWP in 1953. The Action Group's (AG) appointment of Mrs. Remi Aiyedun in 1956 made it the second time a Nigerian woman was appointed as a

parliamentarian. With the prior involvement of notable women in political parties before independence, existing women's groups continued to find their foothold in those political parties.³¹

In the bid to put an end to the practice of excess and unnecessary tax collection, another pioneering effort was made by a group of Abeokuta market women in 1948. This action was a combined effort of both the elite class and market women, with the elite coming into the struggle through the initiative of the then head teacher of Abeokuta Grammar School, Olufunmilayo Ransome-Kuti, who formed the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU). Under the inspirational leadership of Mrs. Ransome-Kuti, the Abeokuta Women's Union became a model organization for the struggle for women's rights in Nigeria, Africa and across the world.³² This women's group coordinated by Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti recorded enviable achievements. It was able to question the colonial government's mode of operation with regard to its authoritativeness and inhumane nature of making decisions. This later grew to a movement that became a string component of the independence movement. Also, through this development, women were able to get a clear voice in questioning the repercussion of existing policies on the quality of life and status of women.³³ The continued resistance of colonial policies by Nigerian women ushered in different activist groups for women's emancipation, equality and empowerment, with the National Women's Union (NWU) of 1947 as the first female activist group. The leading figures of the union were Olufunmilayo

Ransome-Kuti and Margaret Ekpo; these two figures were among the nationalists that fought for Nigeria's independence.³⁴ This group brought about other women's activist groups in the country, as such, an umbrella for women's organizations across Nigeria was formed in 1959, with the name the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS). Although these groups' aims were achieved, they did not venture into the space of women's marginalization and male dominance.³⁵ A glaring distance that was also maintained by the women involved in activism during this period was the application of the feminist label to their struggle, which could have resulted from the fear of societal exclusion.

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CHAPTER FOUR
THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
IN NORTHERN NIGERIA, 1954-1979

Introduction

Article 1 of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women states that discrimination against women (CEDAW) is "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of any right, privilege or power".

According to the CEDAW, discrimination is a sign that patterns of structural inequality are being upheld by laws, customs, and practices that assign women a subordinate position in all facets of society. The necessity for a radical redefinition of the method and content of economic, social, and political progress is highlighted by this appeal for an end to all forms of discrimination against women.¹ It emphasizes the necessity of a holistic approach that recognizes women's crucial contribution to development and engineers their incorporation therein as partners on an equal footing with men. For this reason, it is suggested that coordinated domestic, regional, and global legal and substantive protection is necessary to significantly improve women's status and circumstances. It has been asserted that there was a gendered division of labour in pre-colonial Nigeria. The

nature and implications of such a division of labour are frequently misunderstood, though. Women played a substantial and essential role in all facets of the life of their society, even though male supremacy was ingrained in the social structure of several ethnic groups in Nigeria.²

According to Pittin and VerEecke, colonization also played a role in the reduction of women's rights.³ VerEecke contends that prior to the Fulani Jihad in the 18th century, women in Yola were actively engaged in agricultural production. Women were inspired by Islamic edicts and embraced purdah because they did not want to be associated with slavery in a society that later relied on it for agricultural output.⁴ Pittin blames colonialism for the exclusion of women from the school system. The extent to which less affluent Muslim women in the pre-colonial period had access to any education, much less the opportunity to pursue it, is still hidden in history.

According to Pittin, in response to the discussion on pre-colonial Muslim women's access to education.⁵ Most women probably only received the most basic of Muslim education, if ever given.⁶ Given the responsibilities placed on women in the domestic sphere, especially in cases where slaves and servants were not available (or where the women were themselves slaves or servants, the early onset of marriage and childbearing, and the early involvement of women in farming, processing, and petty commodity production, it is likely that the issue of access to education or of opportunity for continued education rarely arose.⁷ Therefore,

historically, class and gender have played a major role in limiting women's access to higher education, with ideologies simultaneously serving as a basis for both its support and its restriction.⁸ Pittin's claim that class and gender were the main factors limiting women's access to education is difficult to contest, but if the issue is that Muslim women's education is "shrouded by the myths of history," then researchers must look for evidence of what occurred in the past without equating a lack of knowledge with a lack of opportunity.⁹

According to the Civil Liberties Organization of Nigeria, discriminatory responsibilities imposed on women include those of chastity, making marriage work at all costs, fertility and fertility management, and the responsibility of being "clean and desirable" as symbolised by female circumcision.¹⁰ Others include the duty to raise "good" children, to prove rape in both the society and in court, and to grieve their husband in accordance with the preferences and rules of his family. Women in Northern Nigeria are treated as little better than animals of burden in comparison to men.¹¹ Olufemi's initial claim is significantly less credible in comparison. The position of women was assumed in traditional Nigerian civilization, she was expected to look after the house and raise the kids.

However, much of the literature on women's rights tends to attribute the persistence of discrimination against women to ill-defined "traditions" that are viewed as stubborn relics of a harsh and distant past.¹² Alele-Williams contends that cultural norms, values, and practices shape perceptions of gender roles and the

creation of knowledge when examining discrimination against women in science and technology careers. Only if colonialism is acknowledged as a determining role in the formation of still-viable traditions would this argument be credible. However, colonialism is sometimes credited with introducing modernism, whereas African cultural practices are seen as the last stronghold of tradition.¹³ Modernity is often associated with change and progress, while tradition is the source of conservative and regressive tendencies.

Uchendu, demonstrates how constrained and troublesome such concepts are. Societies in pre-colonial Northern Nigeria were not exclusively built around hierarchical structures that automatically disadvantaged women's access to leadership roles and the means of production.¹⁴ Due to their exclusion from all levels of administration during colonial rule, women lost a significant amount of power and the chance to participate in decision-making. Due to the emphasis on and application of the male-dominated aspects of society in all spheres of social, economic, and political life, they also lost their power to manoeuvre.¹⁵ Although it is commonly believed that education frees women from historical oppression, this was not always the case because colonial education placed more emphasis on training women for domestic rather than leadership roles in society.¹⁶ There is evidence that many prominent women (both economically and politically) in pre-colonial Nigerian culture rose to their positions as a result of their accomplishments

or as rewards. The possibility of such upward mobility was significantly reduced during colonial control.

Some women, according to Mba, were able to participate more actively in trading. However, a lot of previously female-only economic sectors were taken over by males, and the introduction of new European businesses as well as the cash economy turned their fortunes around.¹⁷ Therefore, pre-colonial societies with primarily male-dominant social systems are where patterns of inequality that result in discrimination against northern women first emerged. Nevertheless, during colonial authority, they were formalized into a new legal system called "Native Law and Customs." Genital mutilations and child marriage both have pre-colonial antecedents, as do betrothal and widowhood customs. Because of the conceptual change brought about by colonization and the passage of time, it may never be possible to fully comprehend the social environment in which these rituals developed.¹⁸

The establishment of a system with less opportunities for women to be active in administration was an aspect of colonialism's imposition. Men were given greater opportunities to participate meaningfully in the economy, men lost some of the advantages available to them in pre-colonial societies in the legal system, and men lost some of the power and authority that women had in pre-colonial societies in the religious system.¹⁹ The educational system was more accessible to men than to women, and the predominant brand of Islam in the North was upheld despite its

mistreatment of women. These aspects of institutionalized male supremacy were in large part a result of Victorian philosophy, which discouraged women from fully participating in society. The civil and political rights of women are impacted by discrimination.²⁰ After gaining their own voting rights, women's organizations in the East and West made the enfranchisement of women in the North one of their primary objectives; nonetheless, Northern Nigeria was the last region of Nigeria to allow women the right to vote, in 1976. It was given in the East in 1954 and the West in 1958. Some have claimed that social restrictions on women's movement in purdah could make it difficult to exercise this right even in cases when it is guaranteed.²¹ For instance, Akande believes that because women in purdah are not permitted to leave until after dark, the election regulations that finish the voting day at 6 pm may prevent ladies living in seclusion from voting.²²

The voting day was extended by two hours, according to Oruene, since so many women in purdah participated in the 1976 local government elections (the first in which they could do so on an equal footing with males). It follows that women would exercise their rights in a way that is appropriate and supported by institutions. In order to advance women's rights in society, women have historically utilized their rights and organized collective action inside political interest and pressure groups.²³ According to Oruene's research, purdah in and of itself shouldn't preclude women from voting, and there is no proof that it has²¹. Akande makes the assumption that women who do not live in purdah-like circumstances will be better

able to use their right to vote. Instead of being supported by evidence, this assumption is made.²⁴

The constitutions of 1992 and 1999, as well as the Nigerian constitution from 1979, prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Once they reach the age of 18, all women have the right to vote, and once they reach the age of 21, they are eligible to run in political elections. Women are not traditionally prohibited from participating in politics, but they haven't competed on an equal footing with males for political offices. Since the time of decolonization, when politics was characterized by egregious abuse and physical violence, women have been reluctant to participate in politics²⁵. Women's autonomy in making decisions may be restricted by factors including marital eligibility, consent rights, and bride wealth-payment obligations. In general, Nigerian law (statutory law, Sharia, and customary law) restricts a woman's rights in marriage.²⁶

The historical trajectory of the entity known as Nigeria must always be referred to in any serious discussion or evaluation of the role of women in governance and decision-making processes. It can be fairly argued that the colonial experience the nation underwent and the pattern of colonial administration, which may have isolated and disempowered women economically, politically, and socially, overturned a feat already accomplished in the pre-colonial era, are to blame for the voicelessness of women in public decision-making in contemporary Nigeria. Thus, to speak about emancipation is to acknowledge the predominance of

oppression, deprivation, seclusion, exploitation, and slavery in some manner. The exploits of women were an important part of Nigeria's history before colonization.²⁷ Even while achieving female suffrage was the primary goal of the women's emancipation movement, the word "political emancipation" was frequently used in political concerns of the 18th and 19th centuries' political discourse, as in Catholic or Jewish liberation movements.²⁸ In his essay "on the Jewish Question" from 1844, Karl Marx was one of the people who helped spread the idea of political emancipation. Political emancipation as a concept is not used in modern political discourse outside of academic, foreign, or activist contexts. Today's world places more emphasis on the political empowerment of women, which liberation naturally aims to achieve.²⁹

According to Halfani, the process of empowering the weak involves changing their economic, social, psychological, political, and legal situations. Halfani's observation that the word "powerless" in this context could be interpreted to refer to women who are frequently stereotyped as being weak, frail, chatty, irrational, talkative, emotional, and easily moved to tears.³⁰

Women in Nigeria and the Obstacles to Political Participation

However, women have historically been marginalized politically, economically, socially, culturally, and in other ways, and this has had and continues to have serious implications for their level of involvement in public decision-making. It is interesting to note that there is a growing awareness throughout the

world of the untapped resources in women needed for achieving sustainable socio-economic and political development. The historical marginalization of various types of women in Nigeria has surely prevented them from making a significant impact on the public or political sphere. In Northern Nigeria, women's conditions are actually precarious, and this cannot be separated from the different practices that have prevented them from reaching their full potential. Therefore, the purpose of this section of the essay is to explore the customs, beliefs, and preconceptions that have seriously impeded women's political engagement in Nigeria.³¹ First are the beliefs that, by virtue of their biological and psychological characteristics, have successfully constrained women—including Northern Nigerian women—to a position of submission and subordination.

For instance, Enemuo's work sparked debates over the relative merits of biological and cultural justifications for women's subordination. It is a prevalent belief that women's biological characteristics explain their sensitivity, passivity, and submissive tendencies.³² Once more, Talcott Parson's structural functionalist theory offered a different theoretical angle for the investigation of women and the obstacles to their involvement in the public sphere. According to Parson, the functional imperatives of society are adaptation, goal achievement, integration, and tension management or pattern maintenance. He argues that for the social structure to survive, certain actions and processes must take place within it.³³ Talcott Parson established a division of labour within the family system as a result, designating the

husband-father as the "instrumental leader" with primary responsibility for adaptation and goal attainment while designating the wife-mother as the "expressive leader" with responsibility for family integration, community involvement, and pattern maintenance. These ideas have established a distinct line between men and women, showing them to be at the two poles of the bipolar adjective spectrum, with males possessing desirable attributes (as actors, providers, and the final say) and women possessing undesirable ones. This gave civilizations ample opportunity to create prejudices that portray women as inferior and unsuited to leadership in the public sphere.³⁴ According to Enemu, gender differences between men and women are not caused by nature but rather social construction. Overall, they have had the effect of placing women in a subordinate position to men.³⁵

The second category is made up of cultural and traditional societal norms that oppress, undervalue, and deprive women of their potential. While certain cultural and traditional practices are the outcome of societal structure and composition due to widely accepted norms, others were imposed as a result of colonial experiences. The patriarchal social structure prevalent in Northern Nigeria and most of Africa is one of these. It is a widely held notion in the majority of African civilizations that men perform the role of gods since they are the custodians of ultimate authority and are therefore accountable for providing for the needs of the family members. This also has an impact on how male and female children are

given domestic tasks and female children are given more freedom to play. The devaluing of women's contributions to the public sphere is reinforced by this patriarchal relationship at the household level.³⁶ Pogoso makes the following insightful observation: Patriarchy has also been recognized as a significant social structure that has legalized the dominance of women by their male counterpart. A patriarchal social structure is one in which men's roles as the primary authorities and members of social organizations are crucial.³⁷ Egbue summarizes the detrimental impact of patriarchy on women's political involvement in the public sphere. Marriage customs that limit women to the home are still constrained by cultural and historic barriers. Since social norms assign domestic responsibilities to female children, it is believed that women are naturally equipped to manage a home and raise children. Marriage institutions thus give women the flexibility needed to put this home training into practice. They are responsible for cooking, making sure the house and environment are maintained, and raising and caring for the children. Because of these widespread cultural practices, women have been persistently underrepresented in positions of authority, depriving humanity of its distinctive capacity for governance.³⁸

Enemu, as a byproduct of gender insensitivity in the development, design, and execution of governmental policies, this has the impact of perpetuating gender inequality in several spheres of Nigerian society. Religious rules are another latent impediment to women's political participation in Northern Nigeria. Sometimes,

religious prohibitions are used to oppress women. In some other cases, women are not even counted and are consequently not included when counting the children.³⁹ A good example of this is found in the Holy Bible, where Jacob had thirteen children, twelve male and one female, but the name of Dinah, the only female, was always left out of the passages where the names of the children of Jacob (also called Israel) were mentioned. This situation further exacerbated the 'feminization of poverty' syndrome because female children have no right of inheritance, especially on landed property, and this has further disempowered women economically. When women are kept in "Purdah" (home seclusion), as is typically done in the northern portion of Nigeria, specific Islamic edicts are frequently cited as explanation. The upshot of this is that female children are not given the same opportunities for a proper education as their male counterparts, and this surely affects how they are socialized to take an active role in leadership roles in both the public and private spheres.⁴⁰

In conclusion, there are several causes that have contributed to the degradation of women's status in the power structure throughout Nigeria's history, including cultural and traditional, marital, economic, and religious hurdles to women's political engagement. This thesis has thus far shown how religious prohibitions, marriage institutions, cultural practices, and colonial legacies have all had a negative impact on women's status, which has led to low political participation for women in Nigeria at all levels, and how the situation has been

made worse by the entrenched patriarchal structures in the country's political system and the consequent marginalization of women in the public sphere.

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CHAPTER FIVE

EXPLAINING THE PROBLEM OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

In pre-Caliphate Hausa land, women had significant roles in their cultures' political and economic life. The roles that women traditionally fulfilled in Hausa culture before Islam took hold. Their arguments are supported by the fact that women in northern Nigerian Muslim society freely associate with men, cultivate their own land, marry later in life, and choose partners who are older than they are. In these traditional civilizations, women's status appears to have been determined more by practical considerations than by religious principles. With the spread of Islam in Hausa country came new gender roles that were governed by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and the verses of the Quran. As traders and travelers carried knowledge from the Arab civilization to western Africa, this process began long before the Fulani Jihad; Usman dan Fodio and his followers proclaimed the Fulani War in 1804, calling for the purity of Islam in opposition to the pervasive syncretism in Hausa society and preaching against the abuse of power in the courts of Hausa kings.¹

In line with long-standing Muslim traditions, women were included in many of Fodio's writings and teachings. Mohammed Bello and Nana Asma'u, his daughter, who established the Caliphate. Islamic scholar Nana Asma'u was well-known for his influence. She taught both men and women throughout the jihad and

produced a large number of poetry and instructional writings for the Muslim women's organizations that resisted the expansion of Shari'a in the twelve northern Nigerian states.² However, as a result of British colonialism and its indirect rule strategy from the late 1800s to the early 1900s, religious practices were institutionalized and Islam was strengthened in northern Nigeria. Missionaries were prohibited from entering Muslim territories, and the federal structure strengthened the authority and rule of Muslim Emirs. Increased religiosity was used as a kind of resistance against the additional threat posed by western Christian culture. Because women could work from home weaving or grinding nuts, economic changes like a greater emphasis on cotton and groundnuts are also partly to blame for the noticeable growth in the practice of wife seclusion, or purdah. Due to their dependence on the male heads of their homes, women may have been subjected to further exploitation as capitalism developed over northern Nigeria.³

Perspectives for Women's Political Participation in Northern Nigeria

Women in Nigeria never experienced equality with men in matters of government during the pre-colonial and colonial periods, and the same is true today. The history of Nigeria's political change is rife with concerns about male dominance and women's token involvement in public affairs.⁴ Women had the fewest opportunities to change the system of gender inequality during the military era because the military encouraged women to hold lower social status through the "First Lady" syndrome, which prevented the "woman's question" from being

addressed within the mainstream development paradigm.⁵ Shamim and Kumari, claim that appropriate representation of women in all decision-making bodies was one of the major objectives outlined by the Fourth World Conference on Women, which took place in Beijing in 1995. 1996 Beijing Platform for Action. Any representative group, it was suggested, should have a "logical balance" of men and women to represent the concerns of society as a whole. Being participatory, accountable, predictable, and transparent are qualities of good leadership and governance, and these qualities logically demand that there be a gender balance in political decision-making. It is acknowledged that the whole decision-making process can be improved and enriched by the perspectives and governance values of women. Additionally, women are frequently noted to be more attentive to local issues.⁶

Due to the non-applicability of many general qualifications, regionally specialized and general voting requirements for federal elections coexisted throughout the period from 1950 to 1958. The 1954 Lyttleton Constitution, passed by colonial governor Oliver Lyttelton, gave increased authority to each area by converting Nigeria from a unitary to a federal government. The voting procedure and suffrage in each region were still governed by specific provisions for choosing the members needed to fill the designated number of seats.⁷ In 1954, adult males in the Northern area were granted universal suffrage thanks in part to the respect for local voting laws. The general elections of 1954 saw the use of electoral colleges

in both the northern area and the southern Cameroons, illuminating yet another instance of uneven regional voting practices. The Northern House of Assembly Electoral Regulations of 1956 also gave male native foreigners in the northern region the right to vote. Despite the fact that the Elections (House of Representatives) Regulations of 1958 standardized the federal distribution of voting rights across the country, northern women were not allowed to vote until the late 1970s. When women in northern states received the right to vote in 1979, universal suffrage was finally attained. Marriage customs that limit women to the home are still constrained by cultural and historic barriers.⁸

Since social norms assign domestic responsibilities to female children, it is believed that women are naturally equipped to manage a home and raise children. Marriage institutions thus give women the flexibility needed to put this home training into practice. They are responsible for cooking, making sure the house and environment are maintained, and raising and caring for the children. Because of these widespread cultural norms, women have been persistently underrepresented in positions of authority, depriving humanity of its unique capacity for rule of law.⁹ Due to the lack of gender sensitivity in the conception, development, and application of governmental policies, gender inequality is perpetuated in several spheres of northern Nigerian society as a result. Religious rules are another latent impediment to women's political participation in northern Nigeria. Sometimes,

religious prohibitions are used to oppress women. In some other cases, women are not even counted and are consequently not included when counting the children.¹⁰

Religious Restrictions

Many northern Nigeria women focus their lives on their homes and leave the men in charge of affairs because of patriarchal ideas that have been propagated through numerous theological interpretations that mostly favour males over women. The multi-religious structure of Nigerian culture and the steadfast hold that religious leaders have over their followers have contributed to women having a dominant gender.¹¹ Claims that a substantial part of women's disproportionate subjugation to men's authority is due to the prevalent gender stereotypes and religious interpretations that exist in many countries.

The emphasis on submissiveness ignores the fact that God expects husbands to love their spouses as much as He loves His Church to the point of laying down His life for her. Any type of agitation, including that by women, is viewed as rebellious. Nigerians' cultural life is greatly influenced by religion, and how religious texts and beliefs are interpreted affects how women are viewed in society.¹² For instance, Genesis 2:18 in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible has been read to show women as helpmates for men and not leaders themselves, leaving out other times where women leadership was depicted.¹³ The Quran likewise holds to this position, stating that "Men are guardians over women by what Allah has favoured some over others." (Sura 4:34 of Sura Nisa).¹⁴ The hardest phrase or word

to define is "religion," which is the oldest discipline in human society. Theologians and social scientists do not agree on how religion is best understood. This is largely due to the intrinsic difficulty in comprehending the "inner essences" of religion, not just because academics struggle with the element of subjectivity. Depending on their disciplines, different people have different viewpoints on religion or have different understandings of it.¹⁵

Yesufu defines religion as the practice of serving and honouring a god or gods¹⁶. According to Mbat, who was referenced in Ilesanmi, religion has a significant influence on how people think and feel and is a significant component of traditional backgrounds¹⁷. Obilor, asserts that religion gives a person the ability or capability to follow the laws of nature, the divine law, or both. As a hindrance to human self-actualization¹⁸, Oruene, sees religion. There is no question that religion can be viewed in this light when it has been transformed into an intellectual tool; otherwise¹⁹, Karl Marx wouldn't have referred to it as the opiate of the masses. a remedy that the authorities used to keep the people under control. When used by an evil person, religion can serve as a tool for dehumanizing people, stroking their egos, and advancing society, but when used by a good person, it can be a tool for advancing humanity. Islam and Christianity are essentially the two most prevalent religions in Nigeria. While Christians and Muslims both believe in one God, African traditional religion predominates. Our current global religious war is a result of these philosophical divides.

Today, one would be inclined to argue that religion is irrelevant to society progress and should therefore be removed from human social life in light of the emergence of religious bigots and extremists²⁰. In contrast to the guy, who is seen as the decision-maker and person in authority, the woman is seen as a supporter and subordinate. The cultural ideal of a woman is one of virtue and complete submissiveness. They are not, however, accessible to the general public in northern Nigeria.²¹ This makes it harder for women to join activist movements and political organizations. Specific identities are shaped by cultural expectations and gender stereotypes, which limits women's ability to mobilize and engage in politics in northern Nigeria. Women have historically faced discrimination at home, at work, and in the political sphere in most northern Nigerian civilizations. The patriarchal culture prevalent in the majority of African cultures has also restricted the involvement of women in activism and politics more broadly.²²

Okpe contends that patriarchy is a vast network or system of hierarchical organization that cuts across the political, economic, social, religious, cultural, industrial, and financial spheres, under which the vast majority of upper positions in society are either occupied or controlled and dominated by men. Any patriarchal system that gives men an unfair edge over women will not allow for the success of women's movement in northern Nigeria. It is still unclear how much less affluent Muslim women in the pre-colonial era had access to education, much less the chance to pursue it. It seems likely that the majority of women had only the most

basic of Muslim education, and that very few of them had the opportunity to study it. if ever. Given the duties placed on women and girls in the home sphere, particularly in cases where slaves and servants were not accessible (or if the women were themselves slaves or servants!), it is likely that the subject of access to education or to opportunities for ongoing education rarely arose. the early marriage and childbearing of women, as well as their participation in farming, food processing, and small-scale commodity production. As a result, in the past, class and gender have played a major role in determining how many options women had for education, with ideologies serving as both justifications for and barriers to such opportunities.²³

However, It is difficult to dispute Pittin's claim that gender and class were the main factors restricting women's access to education, but if the issue is that Muslim women's education is "shrouded by the mists of history," then researchers must look for evidence of what happened in the past without equating a lack of knowledge with a lack of opportunity. In northern Nigeria men hold a dominant position in terms of political power because they have control over assets and a relative advantage in education. Men may serve as council members without necessarily having advanced degrees, but women with comparable levels of education are not offered those posts. Because of their ignorance, they frequently end themselves depending on male political figures or organizations. When men take on leadership roles, their interests will take precedence over those of women.

Many women in northern Nigeria lack real influence or power, especially in the federal government system. Many of them lack the abilities needed to successfully express ideas. Lack of political engagement awareness results in poor support for public affairs and women's empowerment. Women's inadequate representation, lack of participation, and lack of involvement in the creation and implementation of plans for their economic development and social justice through decentralized institutions are some of the significant reasons why they have not reaped the benefits of years of planning and development.²⁴ Few women are given election tickets, and most political parties do not even keep records of their female members all financial, economic, commercial, and political conversations that take place outside the home are carried out by men because politics is traditionally a masculine realm, Women in Nigeria have extremely little influence over financial resources and very little access to the decision-making process.

This effectively lowers the likelihood that women will run for office. Scholars have been paying close attention to the causes, consequences, and problems of women's marginalization and poor involvement in political leadership and decision-making. Women and men may share characteristics in terms of educational background, socioeconomic standing, and occupation, among other things, even if they are biologically and physiologically distinct from one another. However, they are relegated to the periphery of almost every aspect of public life.²⁵ There are a number of barriers that prohibit women from fully engaging in political

leadership and governance in all spheres of government and political positions/offices in emerging democracies. The following, among others, are some of the variables:

1. Disgusting sociocultural customs like widowhood, female genital mutilation (FGM), repressive religious practices (as shown in the country's northern geopolitical zone), and the purdah system. Numerous of these socio-cultural practices put obstacles in the way of gender equality and women's empowerment, obviously putting more of a load on women. Women frequently lack access to information, education, and wealth-creating resources like land, capital (including credit facilities), labour, and entrepreneurial skills because of the myriad exclusions and deprivations they suffer due to cultural and traditional beliefs, according to Aina. The low engagement of women in politics and organizational decision-making might be attributed to these limitations imposed by sociocultural practices.
2. The treatment of widows in a dehumanizing manner, wife-battery, and other subjugating behaviours that may eventually cause a woman to lose confidence. Such behaviours keep women "silent" in both the public and private spheres.²⁶
3. Stereotypical constraints against women in striving to attain political and organizational leadership roles to the top.
4. Denying daughters their fair portion of the family inheritance (common in the Northern Nigeria). Women do not have any rights to land or landed property in practically all of the states of the federation since they cannot inherit land or landed property under customary rules, either directly from their fathers or their spouses.
5. The customary responsibilities placed on women and girls in the home, which frequently leave them with little to no time for formal education and self-development.
6. Limited opportunities for women to pursue education and careers, which hinders their ability to effectively compete with males for better-paying and more satisfying positions in the labour market. These restrictions also affect women's access to education and careers.
7. Family societies in Africa tend to be patriarchal: The culture of male supremacy present in regional customs and cultures, including peculiar religious practices, typically reproduces the poor position of northern Nigerian women.
8. Emerging democracies' high crime rates and corruption make it difficult for women leaders to fulfil their jobs. Additionally, women may not be as well-positioned as males to fight corruption when it arises. As an alternative, people

can encounter gendered corruption, such as the requirement of sex in exchange for specific goods or resources.

9. High maternal mortality rate: The northern Nigerian health sector is beset by a number of issues, such as the improper distribution of health facilities, poor management of the health systems, inadequate referral systems, and the disregard for rural areas, where a larger percentage of the population lives, particularly women and children. Up until recently, when the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) was 545 per 100,000 live births the topic of women's health did not garner much attention in either health policies or health studies. Health research, particularly in northern Nigeria's field of maternal and child health, has historically prioritized the wellbeing of children over that of women. Even when a woman's health is the focus, the conversation still revolves around reproductive health, with a focus on family planning.
10. The denial of equal rights to all people, particularly women, who in some regions of the nation are viewed as second-class citizens. In such circumstances, individuals are prohibited from taking part in any activities, not even at the local level. Women are made to believe that the kitchen is their permanent job, one that they may perform to the fullest extent.²⁷

The aforementioned issues frequently hinder many women in developing democracies from learning the knowledge and abilities that will help them understand their rights and give them the confidence they need to hold positions of leadership. The fact that the girl child is typically groomed for a second-place position from the start, with the focus of her instruction being on how to be a good wife, mother, and homemaker, makes the issue even more challenging. As a result, particularly in the areas of education and social exposure, women are rarely given the skills necessary for public leadership. Nigeria is just as difficult as any other country in the same league for Northern Nigerian women seeking to enter positions of public leadership. Therefore, the environment that will allow women to reach

their full potential, play leadership roles, and thereby make a contribution to the socio-economic growth and nation-building of their respective countries.

Conclusion

This investigation showed that in northern Nigerian politics, class, religion, and ethnicity have all played a dominant role, and that women's interests and gender issues have been marginalized as a result of involvement. It discussed the existence and severity of gender inequality in Nigeria as the impetus behind the development of the National Policy on Women, including its politics and content. The NPW came into being as a result of intersecting, though widely disparate, indigenous and international feminist/womanist demands and social inclusion movements. Without a question, women in northern Nigeria continue to be severely underrepresented in all aspects of society. When the ratio of males to women in politics and decision-making positions is contrasted, this is more obvious now. The low representation of women in politics has been attributed to a number of factors, including sociocultural practices, a lack of funding and women's empowerment, religious discrimination, a lack of political funding, illiteracy and inadequate education, marginalization in political party structures, patriarchal environments, early marriages, and stereotypical limitations²⁸. The constitutions and manifestos of political parties should contain gender-sensitive clauses. Gender mainstreaming will benefit from this in their operations. Another critical necessity is the creation of a Women's Political Institute, where political parties, female candidates, and

aspirants will receive the necessary training to run successfully for the elected posts in government. As a result, they will be able to raise their educational level and be better equipped to handle any difficulties that arise due to political pressure. Fighting against corruption and electoral bribery should be a top priority for women. In order to limit the use of money in elections, they should be leading the charge for electoral reforms. Initiatives for gender equality should be put into place at all levels of government if women are to engage in leadership and politics. Government must try to alter the political systems that give rise to gender inequality. Regarding women's poverty, socioeconomic conditions, and political considerations, gender disparity needs to be addressed. Having women and men participate equally in positions of decision-making will create a balance that more correctly reflects the makeup of society, individual interests, and the welfare of all citizens. Lastly, the government and other stakeholders should implement programmes and policies that will empower women politically, socially, and economically in order to increase their participation in all aspects of northern Nigerian society.

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