Nigerian Women in POLITICS

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF [illegible]

Edited by
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NIGERIAN WOMEN IN POLITICS:

Essays in Honour of Nina Emma Mba

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CHAPTER

8

Nina Mba and Women's Political Participation: Filling the Political Communication Gap

Sharon Adetutu Omotoso

> *"It is only by understanding and articulating our realities that we can promote our innovation, that women's political communication entails the processing of politically charged information designed to influence particular intended outcome."*[1]

Introduction

NINA MBA (1944-2002) lived an exemplary and selfless life. As a historian, she chose the unusual path of documenting women's engagements in politics, a task that was not trendy in her days. Her research spans gender, race and imperialism in Nigeria. This has enabled her to study "distinct categories of women: wives, daughters, or sisters of government officials, missionaries, explorers, travellers, and natural scientists, ethnographers and anthropologists, and government service, educational, medical and administrative officials."[2] Topmost on her agenda was to research and document the history of Nigerian women and she

succeeded remarkably with her publications: *Kaba & Khaki: Women and the Militarized State in Nigeria* and *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965* and the biography of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti which she co-authored; *For Women and The Nation: Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of Nigeria* (1997).

The primary objective of women's studies, which Mba[3] noted, is to redress the imbalance in the treatment of Nigerian women in Nigerian historiography.[4] Mba was not only a researcher in women's studies; she was also an activist and an advocate for women. This was reflected in her contributions as a member of the Organizing Committee of the Women's Research and Documentation Center (WORDOC) at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. Today, the works of Nina Mba remain masterpieces, as they are essential reads for anyone who seeks to be grounded in women's studies research especially in the Nigerian context. This chapter is a reflection on Mba's works around Nigerian women's political participation, specifically about their "affirmative performance and inadvertent feminist practices in African political activities."[5]

Political participation here encapsulates the behaviour directed towards governmental authorities, policies and/or institutions, the efforts to change or maintain the forms of government, the recruitment and deployment of civil structures to influence governmental decisions, the promotion of behaviour that has intended and unintended actions and the fostering of women's political awareness and membership of political parties.[6] For Huntington and Nelson,[7] political participation includes actions by private citizens to influence the actions or the compositions of national or local governments. Nelson's[8] conception of political participation in developing countries includes violent and illegal actions. These are treated as the constituents of political participation based on the militarisation of states across Africa at that period.

Okwuosa[9] notes that "any discussion of how much political power women or any group of persons have in society, hinges directly on the degree of that group's participation in the political

processes of the society in question." Across Africa, women have meandered through the spectatorial, transitional and gladiatorial stages of political participation.[10] The spectatorial level had the usually docile women gravitate from political apathy to political awareness as they began to expose themselves to political stimuli, initiate political discussions, wear political stickers and attempt winning new supporters in politics. Okwuosa describes women at this level as those who, by their exposure to political developments in the news media, participate "merely through occasional discussions of political issues."[11]

The transitional stage of political participation for women got them into party membership, pressure group activities and political leadership. However, women have not been able to transit to the gladiatorial stage. It is at this stage that political powers are held and party decisions are made. That space has remained male-dominated. Despite the staggering population of women who have gained political awareness, what is striking is the meagre population of those who have attained the gladiatorial stage. For instance, not many women are found within the role of party leadership and senate leadership among others.

Suffice to say that the underlying common index of all definitions and descriptions ascribed to political participation above is communication, which could be verbal or non-verbal. As Omotoso notes, "the power to influence (political power) is embedded in the power to communicate."[12] She further describes politics as a game of influence and communication and as a major tool for instituting political influences.[13] The media amplifies political messages and directs them at a large and heterogeneous audience and political communication (also called *policom*) may be used "to develop paradigms that will take into cognizance the communicative components"[14] of political realities. It is important to note here "the crucial factor that makes communication 'political' is not the source of a message but its content and purpose."[15] Hence, political communication describes the interaction between three key and legitimate actors: politicians, the masses and the media; and how such interactions influence and

impact on day-to-day realities of societies. Political communication provides various platforms for political actors to keep abreast of happenings in public spaces while also cultivating specific perceptions of cogent political issues.[16] Political communication often concerns itself with four key issues (in no specific order): election campaigns, government operations, media contents and public communication processes.

Focusing on the works of Mba, this chapter explicates the historical patterns of "women's organization, leadership or thinking,"[17] and by extension, their communication strategies. The overall aim is to present how Mba's works still provide a grounding for new and emerging fields of study and how these may be connected with women in contemporary politics. This introductory section is followed by Mba's analysis of women's political participation in Nigeria. Section three provides insights into women's political communication in Nigeria, section four discusses the political communication tactics that women deploy in their mobilisation of other women for political participation, section five presents the media gestures towards women's political communication and section six discusses key points of departure in women's political communication and participation beyond Nina Mba's research and section seven concludes the chapter.

Mba's Analysis of Women's Political Participation in Nigeria

Women's political participation across Africa manifests in various forms. In her work, *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965*, Mba assesses the roles and status of women. The pre-colonial society of what is now southern Nigeria witnessed women's political participation through some "informal mechanisms."[18] Her study covers women in Yoruba, Benin, Itsekiri, and Igbo/Ibibio communities. She establishes, with relevant examples, that women had their spheres of influence in the family, economic and religious domains of their societies. Although Mba notes that female title holders such as *Iyalode, Iyaoba, Iyeye, Omu, Ada* (found in Yoruba and Igbo communities respectively) among others exercised political power

in their rights, she asserts that "pre-colonial women occupied a position complementary, rather than subordinate, to the men." Mba makes a political differentiation, which was not subject to whether women thought it or sought power. This, on its own, begins the political participation of pre-colonial women and may be linked to the philosophy of *occassionalism*[19] where occasion and class determine women's roles and status in communities. Here, occassionalism is used to describe how pre-colonial women possessed "maximum" political power, in minimal contexts.

The colonial era saw women who kicked against all forms of infringements on their prior rights becoming and belonging. Although the colonial era did not see women "articulate clear political objectives,"[20] they decried how their societies had been corrupted by the new systems and "sought to cleanse it by expelling all the vestiges of the new system."[21] Hence, Mba describes colonialism as the key trigger of women's victimisation and deprivation as it led to protests and other forms of civil unrests championed by the women. Suffice to say that women's agitations against oppression and exclusion progressed through the colonial era into the independence era. She highlights women's political participation within the male-dominated political parties. Such aspects of political participation include the roles of women's leagues in political parties, the practice of women representations at national conferences, the establishment of women's political parties and other such activities. Despite the efforts, Mba notes that:

> *token recognition was accorded to women by the appointment or nomination of individual women to legislatures and party executives, but the powers of these women were not in any way equivalent to the political authority possessed by the Igbo omu, the Yoruba iyalode, or the palace women of precolonial times.*[22]

Using key issues in political communication to explain women's political participation as portrayed in the selected works of Mba, government operations are found to trigger varying reactions from the masses. It was also found that perceptions about leadership determine the corresponding responses to its actions.

For instance, Mba compares women's perception of government "as they understood it" in 1925 with that of 1929. She notes "a great difference between the 1925 dancing women's movement and the 1929 movement."[23] In 1925, women perceived colonialism as a welcome development so long as it protected them from the excesses of the warrant chiefs and the native courts. However, "the introduction of taxation of men, the drop in palm produce prices and the threat of taxation of women had made the economic factor more urgent in 1929 than in 1925."[24] Similarly, in Abeokuta, women, having heard that their counterparts in the East were not paying taxes, saw the government as a relative oppressor.[25] Both cited instances consequently changed the women's communication gestures to government operations.

Public communication as a political communication issue has also featured in women's mobilisation for political participation. Distortions and misinformation becloud the clarity of political messages and hamper women's political participation. An instance was "a widespread belief that the proposal to tax women came not from the government but from the warrant chiefs." This lingered for a long while after the incident.[26] Rumours also complicate women's disposition to political participation particularly when they are not consulted before key decisions in leadership and governance are taken.[27]

Another case in point is the 1932 rumour that women in Lagos would be taxed directly. That was met with much assurance from the colony administrator, Major C. T. Lawrence, who dislodged the rumour and asserted that: "If anyone should come and tell you that women have to pay tax, whether he is a clerk or a Khaki man [policeman], take hold of him and tear his clothes and bring him here to me."[28] The administrator's promise could not be upheld as the reverse happened in 1940. Corroborating how public communication affects women's political participation, Mba asserts, "the market women and especially those leaders, who had been present at the 1932 meeting, felt that the government had betrayed its promise and was violating local customs."[29] This spurred another uprising and campaign which was led by Madam Alimotu Pelewura.

As would be discussed in the latter part of this chapter, media contents inform political participation gestures in unprecedented ways. On one hand, the means of communication available to women and the influence they have on such platforms determine how contents would be created for or against women. Just as the traditional means of communication may limit the speed and the coverage of women-focused news,[30] the new media and social media could, by their speedy nature, destroy women's ambition for political participation. On this, Omotoso laments how the media use women for their development while downplaying the media usage for women's development.[31] Likewise, press framing could make or mar the spread of mass mobilisation for women's political participation. In the case of the Abeokuta Ladies Club (ALC), they resorted to the press to present their agitations against price control and the seizure of goods. The favourable press framing was effective as it achieved the expected objectives within six days.[32]

Election campaign as another important aspect of political communication defines political participation in their contexts and their objectives. As women gained political awareness, Mba identifies how women, during the 1950 elections for the new Lagos Town Council, did not seek or receive nominations. Rather, "the main contributions of the market women were in campaigning, canvassing voters and raising funds."[33] Later in 1953, women established a stronger political participation by seeking seats in the legislative bodies.[34] Overall, this section has established how Mba's conceptions of political participation, in some cases, emanated from political communication and, in the other cases, implied political communication. She foregrounds the mutual inclusiveness of political participation and political communication as concepts. The next section gives insights into women's political communication in Nigeria and expounds the key political communication strategies in Mba's works.

On Women's Political Communication in Nigeria

Women's political communication brings to the fore "the colonial-

motivated denialism of the African social order, the retrogressive effects of (neo) colonialism on African female power, and the repressive logic which works against women in contemporary African politics.[35] Nigeria has transitioned through authoritarian political communication, soviet-communist political communication, social responsibility political communication and libertarian political communication.[36] Overall, Nigerian women have struggled through the systems. Pointing at "similarities between colonial and military states in their policies and attitudes towards women," Mba stresses how "women in the southern regions have been enfranchised, in stages, from 1950; [while] women in the Northern Region were not."[37] The military take-over after the first coup on July 29, 1966 did not have a deliberate policy, but "women were just not there in the eyes of the military rulers — not in the armed forces, not in the civil service, and not in the professions."[38]

Women also communicated through both violent and non-violent resistance "ranging from leading warriors to war fronts in ancient and pre-colonial histories to other domestic, religious, economic and political roles."[39] Amidst the 1967 Nigerian Civil War when the Eastern Region of Nigeria seceded as Biafra, women were found to be "more involved in wartime administration in Biafra than in Nigeria" as recruits into the civil militia, the intelligence and Propaganda Directorates and the medical corps. Three women were [even] sponsored to the United Kingdom and Europe on a diplomatic mission.[40]

The end of the civil war heralded the oil boom and "it was not until 1970 that the civilian administrator of the East Central State appointed a woman commissioner, novelist Flora Nwapa. Subsequently, a woman commissioner was appointed in the North-Eastern State – D. Miller, two were appointed in Oyo State " Folake Solanke and Ronke Doherty while Kofoworola Pratt was appointed in Lagos State."[41] From then, Mba concluded, "the integration of women was reinforced at the international level by the new gender consciousness generated by the UN Decade for Women." She further hoped that, "given proper political

organization and agitation by Nigerian women, women's prospects of augmenting their political power..."[42] should improve.

Since the return of democratic rule to Nigeria in 1999, women's active participation in politics has not improved significantly. Perhaps this is due to the lack of proper organisation as Mba suggests. Alternatively, perhaps the media may have been almost consistently unfair to women. What about the political class and the structural configurations of the political parties? There are many questions seeking answers within women's political participation research in Nigeria. A recent article in *The Punch* [43] which was published to reflect on women's roles in Nigeria in the context of Nigeria's 60th independence only focused on the glamorous styles of the Nigerian first ladies. This attests to how the media reinforces the dearth of women's perspectives and contributions to politics. Hence, "feminine and feminist idiosyncrasies, patterns, and strategies"[44] become secondary in the political sphere.

Political Communication Tactics as Women Mobilized for Political Participation

Historically, a vital marker of women's success in political participation has been a strong reliance on the 'collective strength', which comes in the forms of kinship, trade links, village groups, associations, and sex solidarity.[45] Discussing the 1929 women's war, Mba recalls women's consciousness of their importance to society. While not demanding any equal political participation with men, they maintained a network of associations, which men did not have. The records have it that "the men's resistance was quickly crushed, but the women continued the opposition even after they experienced harsh repression."[46] An instance was when women even addressed and signed a letter to authorities under tags like "The Women, Owerri Road, Aba" (*Oha nd'inyom*, literally meaning 'a gathering of women').[47] In the same vein, women in Western Nigeria mostly deployed collective actions (except for a few who fought individually) via "traditional commodity associations to form pressure groups."[48] An instance of

this was the press release stating thus: "We, the members of the Abeokuta Ladies Club, on behalf of all Egba women...."[49] Such impressive solidarity was recorded "when any woman was arrested for non-payment of tax, thousands of women protested outside the court or jail."[50] The solidarity equally resonates oneness as found in the women's call to "help rally round...and fight not only those who will relegate women to the background but also those who may try to separate the Western women from their Eastern and Northern counterparts."[51]

Discussing the political communication strategies of women, Omotoso notes how verbal and non-verbal cues are deployed. Alongside their embodiment of "personality traits portraying grassroots fashion sense, natural gracefulness, simplicity and friendliness,"[52] the women also employed "strategic lobbying, appeal to logic, subtle persuasion, bold-face approach and confrontational method."[53] As women struggled to participate in politics, they engaged others with liberal, negotiating, and radical political communication tactics.[54] There is no strict categorisation of these tactics, as they "have been variously deployed by women depending on their level of education, leadership background and desired political objectives."[55]

This section highlights the singular use of tactics and, often, a mix of two or more tactics depending on the responses of the authorities. These would be discussed with salient examples from Mba's *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965* (hereafter *Nigerian Women Mobilized*).

Radical Tactics

Mba recalls some instances that contextualise the women's radical political communication. A hilarious instance around the women's war at Oloko showed a face-to-face attack where women verbally mocked government officials. For example, a witness named Nwato is said to have responded thus:

> *"I wish you would stop asking stupid questions" in answer to "Did you tell your husband that you were coming to give*

evidence?" Nwato replied, "didn't he see me when I was going out? I did not fly to come here.[56]

This is similar to the case of Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti who was known for her wit and courage in "facing police, and judges, and on one occasion even had a physical struggle with a District Officer."[57] Mba describes Kuti as:

An eloquent and compelling speaker, using expressive, idiomatic language and a sharp wit. She always spoke in Yoruba to the women and often insisted on speaking Yoruba to the British officials and having their replies translated into Yoruba.[58]

Equally noteworthy is Mrs. Esan's "face-to-face confrontations with Northern ministers in the Senate" on the position of women in the north. She once addressed women's exclusion from governance by replying Waziri Ibrahim, the Minister for Economic Development thus: "the last speaker is the least competent to say anything about women because there are no women in his own area politically and constitutionally."[59]

Another instance was that of a woman called Nwanyeruwa. During a sitting of the panel of inquiry into the Aba women rebellion of 1929, the women gave evidence that Nwanyeruwa helped to prevent them from paying taxes. The testifiers explained thus:

She warned us not to loot, but advised us to go for the chiefs' caps [caps of office worn by warrant chiefs].... Nwanyeruwa denied that she had told them to take the caps. She was fined for contempt of court ***because she abused one Inspector of police under her breath.***[60] *(Emphasis mine)*

Here, cursing under the breath is classified radical in the communicative sense. It exemplifies how trivial the core can become depending on who is involved. Radical tactics also come to play in the women's use of demonstration songs to present their grievances or discredit the government or its officials.[61] Another radical tactic in women's political communication may be found in the use of legal actions. Mba reports a case of Mrs. Subuola Egberongbe who took the then Alake of Egbaland to court and won

the case.[62] Mba also records how the women in Abeokuta proceeded on a mass protest contrary to the 'no procession' injunction by the government:

> *When the women arrested were taken to jail, hundreds of other women...went to the residency and waited there. From there, they could see the jail and hear the women inside singing as well. They maintained their vigil till late the next day when the women were released on bail. As Mrs. Kuti later described it, "the whole incident as regards the firmness of the women was most encouraging."*[63]

There is also the "sit-in" or civil disobedience where women kept vigils at the palace, carried out mock traditional sacrifices and sang abusive songs to the displeasure of the King.[64] These may be linked to the boldface approach in political communication (pretending not to be shaken amidst distress), as was adopted, more recently by Dora Akunyili and described by Omotoso.[65] This thus exemplifies the radical reformist strategies where women can be "direct and confrontational rather than subtle and withdrawn."[66]

Liberal Tactics

In the use of liberal tactics, Mba notes how women "consistently drew attention to their sexual identity through their dress, body gestures and songs. They adorned themselves with palm leaves and branches, which in some areas meant peace and in others war or mourning."[67] On the issues of women, peace and war, Omotoso retorts how the "arguments that women's definitions of war, often transcends their understanding of 'acts of war' to 'war-like act' restricts women from rational/political spheres and situates them only within natural and cultural spheres.[68] Here, dress and body gestures as political communication tools connect with women's "conscious attempts to re-enable and inspire female power"[69] through the so-called mundane yet highly communicative tools. Equally categorised, as a liberal tactic is the use of spokeswomen to represent them and present their grievances to the authorities.[70] Rallies[71] and peaceful marches were mainly exemplified by the

1940 market women's protest in Lagos where Madam Pelewura acted as the spokeswoman. As reported, when they were not "not satisfied... the women marched.... The meeting was orderly and peaceful as the march had been."[72]

Negotiation Tactics

Negotiation tactics feature in different forms. They include note-taking, petition writing, using quotes and, asking for a voice.[73] "In addition to mass demonstration and varieties of traditional tactics, the Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) also made an effective use of modern pressure group tactics... of petitions, propaganda, legal processes, and the press."[74] Here, the political communication of the women was identified as either traditional or modern. It brings to the fore Madam Pelewura's press conference where she "issued a challenge to the authorities...to allow gari from Okitipupa to come to Lagos."[75] Like the press conference, article writings in newspapers also helped the women to negotiate with the authorities.[76]

Soft Power Tactic

An add-on is the soft power tactic wherein women deploy cultural sensibilities to achieve their goals. This is found where women addressed the Alake as "father".[77] This contrasts with the demonstrations where "women were consciously reverting to the traditional Yoruba practice of saying publicly to the Oba, "we reject you."[78] In the cited crisis, other tactics were introduced only after this failed. Suffice to say that there is no monopoly of tactics across the regions. Writing on women's movements in Eastern Nigeria, Mba notes, "not all protests were violent and not all areas were involved.... Although the township women did not demonstrate, women in the province did and, generally, there was more opposition in the rural areas and in the poorer sections of the town."[79] Mba, in certain cases, attributed violence with the Eastern women and non-violence with the Western women. She notes that, "unlike the Igbo women in 1929, the Abeokuta women never carried any implements of any sort which could be construed as

weapons. The AWU rejected the use of violence as a tactic."[80] Yet in other instances, she avers that "women in all parts of Southern Nigeria protested both peacefully and violently..."[81] What is important is the fact that women explored both violent and non-violent means in their political communications.

Media Gestures toward Women's Political Communication

Women have managed to do the following in their political effort: use of political communication tactics to express their views, discrediting of unfavourable policies, rallying of support for specific causes and decrying of their exclusion from governance. However, the media has played critical roles in either fostering or sabotaging women's efforts towards enhanced political participation for themselves. The instances drawn from Mba's works will be discussed below.

On media support for women, Mba reports how an editorial in the *Lagos Weekly Record* of 8 August 1909 lent support to the women's concerns on water rate payment. It read thus:

> *The female street hawker represents the bottom rung of the trade ladder, and the earnings of these sellers hardly exceed 18d to 2/- weekly. After providing for body and soul, could these people who form the majority afford to pay a water rate?*

Here, the media report helped to amplify the voice of women as Oladejo submits that "petitions written in the colonial era were rendered legitimate by the publicity given to them by the press."[82]

The owners of media houses also exerted some positive influence by supporting women's political participation. Reference can be to Omotoso's assertion that these owners and their party affinities are influential in the African media space.[83] The *Daily News,* owned by Herbert Macaulay, helped to publish a number of women's petitions and appeals. When a European official damaged some property at the Oko Awo Market because the women had no licenses, Macaulay editorialised the event thus: "The gentleman who goes to Oko Awo and starts bamboozling 200 ignorant women and molesting them in this aggravating and

savage manner cannot be deemed to be the state."[84]

On how the lack of access to mass media hampered women's movements, Afigbo[85] affirms, "the women's traditional means of communication limited the speed and distance that their message could travel." In addition, by criticizing their activities and opinion on public matters, the media contributed to the naming and shaming of women. The Abeokuta Women's Union was reported to have waged "a running battle with the *Daily Service* and the *Daily Times*, which were consistently critical of the AWU and very favourable to the Alake." Mba cites an example of an edition of the *Daily Times* " the Alake was a member of the Board of Directors. The *Daily Times* editorial of 13 December 1947 "labelled Mrs. Kuti a 'Dictatrix.'" On the contrary, the *West African Pilot*, Nnamdi's Azikiwe's paper, which was generally sympathetic, referred to Mrs. Kuti as the 'Lioness of Lisabi'.[86] Similarly, Mrs. Adebisi Adebiyi who joined the NCNC and contested for a seat in the Legislative Council in 1950 was nicknamed by the press as 'Nigeria's Portia'.[87] All these have lasting implications on how women are viewed or perceived in political participation.

On the distorted coverage of women, Mba recalls how the then Action Group (AG), under the leadership of Obafemi Awolowo in the Western Region, persuaded Mrs. Adekogbe "to dissolve the movement and in its place form a women's wing of the AG." Her refusal led to the victimisation of the women's movement, as "the *Tribune* gave the movement very distorted coverage and Awolowo told the Western Nigerian Broadcasting Service to discontinue Mrs. Adekogbe's weekly radio broadcasts."[88]

On intra-feminist bickering traced to press articles, Mba reports the split between women groups which were spurred by press articles. Macaulay publicly criticised Mrs. Abayomi for complaining, "Madam Pelewura had led the market women for years without obtaining official recognition, but shortly after Mrs. Abayomi had formed the Women's Party, she was nominated to the Lagos Town Council."[89] Three years later, Mrs. Kuti replied via the *London Daily Worker*..., "by 1950, the fragile alliance between elite, educated Christian women and the illiterate Muslim

market women had completely broken down."[90] Such intra-feminist crises are captured in Omotoso's[91] 'hairy-hairless' dichotomy. Scholarly African Feminists were hairy (SAF, hairy) and Indigenous Survivalist African Feminists were hairless (I-SAF, hairless). These two classes emerged from within the African feminists class and Omotoso opines that those "who exhibit the capacity...to command respect in significant spheres and maintain an ability to attract attention and influence decisions are at loggerheads with the class lacking the critical awareness that would be needed to combat feminized poverty."[92] As far back as 1989, Nina Mba asserted that:

> *The gap between urban and rural women, between the 'formal' and 'informal' sectors, and between the 'elite' and the 'masses' is very wide. Urban, educated middle-class women have the national leadership potential but not the mass support needed for effective political action. Besides, the majority of such women insist on the depoliticization of 'women's issues' and operate within the framework of voluntary associations which cannot enforce sanctions on their members. Urban market women and rural community-based women have the potential for mass mobilization and can enforce effective sanctions, but they lack the national leadership and political objectives.*[93]

Mba further explains this in her narration that "the connection between the elite women and the market women provided the Women's Party with both its *raison d'etre* and its strength. When the connection was severed, the Women's Party collapsed."[94] It points out how "the relationship between the elite and the market women was always ambivalent[95] and was far more one of patrons and clients than of comrades."[96] These clearly reflect how communication patterns, including misinformation, disinformation, or even silence could make or mar a thriving movement.

Women's Political Communication and Participation beyond Mba

Since the publication of Mba's works, many more issues have emerged on women's political participation. One of such is the

prominence of the office of the First Lady whose advocacy programmes have been some sort of political communication in content and purpose.[97] The growing influence of patriarchal, religious[98] and ethnic issues which divide women's efforts, corruption, and the mediatization of politics itself[99] have hampered women's political participation in a reckless manner. Prominent in this regard is the emergence of the social media as a platform for political communication and its influence on women's political participation. As shown in this chapter, historical works can be interpreted in a multiplicity of fields thus teasing out hidden issues which the author might not even have spotlighted. It is hoped that future historical studies like Mba's will provide viable platforms for multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary explorations to expand the frontiers of knowledge.

Conclusion

This essay has assisted us to place Nina Mba's works within a contemporary context. The chapter identified how communication is key to any form of group activity and how political communication (policom) underlays political participation. Two of Mba's works: *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965* and *Kaba & Khaki: Women and the Militarized State in Nigeria* were extensively reviewed. This chapter has examined specific political communication tactics and strategies which have brought Nigerian women into the limelight. Bringing Mba's work into the current reflections, one should be worried about the organised networks that women had and men did not have back then. How have such networks fared and what impact is being made on women's political participation in this democratic regime? What are the goals and aspirations of women in today's politics?

Today, it seems women are still ambivalent about their intra-feminist interactions and agenda. While only a few elite women show interest in and actively participate in politics, most elite women prefer to stay in the realm of advocacy, social media activism, and criticism of the few active women. The assertion that

'politics is a dirty game' still pervades the air. To worsen their plight, the media, the political parties, and the masses continue to vilify the few women who venture into politics. In a seemingly different scenario, the non-elite and grassroots women, in the absence of the full awareness of their rights and roles in politics, continue to confuse fanfare with active political participation. They clad themselves in colourful uniforms and take up cheerleading roles at political rallies thinking that they are also actively participating in politics. Sadly, such gestures have ended in shame and disappointment as governments transit year-in-year-out. While it remains important for the media to revalidate women's commitment to political participation, the womenfolk must mobilise as individuals and groups to ensure their due and impactful representation in politics via constructive political communication and other ethically viable means.

Endnotes

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[12] Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, "Political Communication and the Nigerian Democratic Experiment: Critical Insights from Yoruba Philosophy." *Yoruba Studies Review, Vol.*1 (2018b), No.3: 189–210.

[13] Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, "*Acada*-Activism and Feminist Political Communication in Nigeria" in *Women's Political Communication in Africa,* ed. Omotoso, Sharon. Springer: Chams, 2020, 158.

[14] Sharon Omotoso, "Political Communication and the Nigerian experiment", 191.

[15] Robert Denton & Gary Woodward, "*Political Communication in America"*. New York: Praeger, 1998, 11.

[16] Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, "*Acada*-Activism", 158.

[17] Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", xi

[18] Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 2

[19] Sharon Omotoso, *"Gender and Hair Politics"*, 11. The philosophy of occassionalism is drawn from Omotoso's analysis of the politics of hair in pre-colonial Africa. Being a highly religious continent, it was held that occasions and class should primarily determine hairstyles or hair patterns; these are believed to be set by God who ultimately designs seasons of joy and sorrow and solely decide the one to come to His subjects- the creatures.

[20] Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 72.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 302.

[23] Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 89.

[24] Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 90.

[25] Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 193.

[26] Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 86.

[27] Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 107-114 see the 1946/47 Amuro and Owerrinta oil mill crisis.

[28] Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 201.

[29] *Ibid.*

30 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 93.

31 Sharon Omotoso, "African Women and the Mass Media" in *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studies*, eds. Yacob-Haliso O., Falola T. Palgrave Macmillan: Cham. 2019

32 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 144.

33 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 208.

34 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 268 (see Enahoro's plea for women's representation to the House)

35 Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, & Ololade Margaret Faniyi, "Women's Recipe for the African Policom Stew" in *Women's Political Communication in Africa*. ed. Omotoso, Sharon. Springer Publishers: Chams, 2020, 3.

36 Sharon Omotoso, "Political Communication and the Nigerian experiment", 193 explains that *authoritarian policom* pervaded Nigeria's early post-independence era where media ownership and control rested solely on government and so was characterized by one-way-communication of government policies and programmes to the masses for compliance. There was also the *Soviet-Communist Policom* which pervaded the latter part of the military rule in Nigeria. It was characterised by the party-press ownership; the posture of the media as teachers of the masses; the emphasis on the positive impact of harnessing of media outlets for national development and social change and the placement values on unity. The return to civil rule which began with the failed third republic in 1993 heralded the arrival of the *social responsibility policom* which directs critical attention at the media's commitment to both the government and the masses. The *libertarian policom* approach began to grow in Nigeria as democracy was taking root. Thus, since 1999, the press has been in the struggle for the freedom of information.

37 Nina Mba, "Kaba and khaki: Women and the militarised state in Nigeria", in *Women and the State in Africa*, ed. Jane L. Parpart and Kathleen A. Staudt, Boulder: Lynne Reiner, 70.

38 Nina Mba, "Kaba & khaki", 72.

39 Omotoso, 2018:58 JWT

40 Nina Mba, "Kaba & khaki", 72-73

41 Nina Mba, "Kaba & khaki", 72.

42 Nina Mba, "Kaba & khaki", 88

43 *The Punch* (27, September, 2020) "Nigeria @60: Life & Style of First Ladies". https://punchng.com/nigeria60-life-style-of-first-

ladies/?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1601187974

44 Omotoso and Faniyi, "Women's Recipe for the African Policom Stew", 2.

45 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 68.

46 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 45.

47 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 91.

48 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 140.

49 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 144.

50 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 150.

51 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 209.

52 Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, "*Acada Activism*", 169

53 Ibid.

54 See Omotoso & Faniyi, 2020 for details on policom tactics.

55 Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, "Policom for Polipart: Structuring Political Communication for Women's Political Participation in Africa", forthcoming.

56 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 90.

57 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 151.

58 Ibid.

59 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 274.

60 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 81.

61 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 150 & 153

62 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 139-140 for details on Mrs Subuola Egberongbe and the Alake of Egbaland

63 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 163-164.

64 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 153.

65 Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, "Acada Activism", 167 This was a more recent event raised to portray the salience of bold face approach.

66 Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, "Acada Activism",167

67 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 91.

68 An "act of war is an action that is sufficient to precipitate a war while war-like acts are those acts which are not sufficient to be considered as acts of war, yet do pertain to the general category of acts construed as belonging to the conditions of war" (Moseley 1997:39). These spheres of war are held similar to Moseley's analysis of the hierarchy of man's values where he notes that the lower order values – instinct, self-preservation and fear – are never fully superseded by higher values but remain necessary conditions of higher action and

development. Just as reason cannot annihilate emotions, highly political wars are those characterised, for instance, by the balance of power games, cannot sever the ties to deep cultural structures or even the underlying nature of human biology. Moseley, D.A (1997). *A Philosophy of War.* PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh. 39.

69 Sharon Adetutu Omotoso & Ololade Margaret Faniyi "Women's Recipe", 4

70 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 40.

71 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 191.

72 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 202-203

73 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 88.

74 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 153

75 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 229.

76 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 181

77 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 139

78 See Johnson, 1921:74, *The History of the Yorubas from the earliest times to the beginning of the British Protectorate* [1966 ed.]. Lagos: CMS Bookshops.

79 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 129.

80 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 153.

81 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 45.

82 Mutiat Oladejo 2019 p. 16

83 Sharon Adetutu Omotoso *"Media and Politics"*, 561.

84 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", see note 1 on p.199

85 Afigbo, A.E. (1972:241). *The Warrant Chiefs: indirect Rule in South-Eastern Nigeria 1891-1929.* London. Longman.

86 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", See notes on p. 154

87 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 208

88 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 186

89 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 231

90 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 232

91 Omotoso, 2020 Hairiness and Hairlessness

92 Omotoso, 2020:123 Hairiness

93 Nina Mba, (86-87). "Kaba and khaki: Women and the militarised state in Nigeria", in *Women and the State in Africa*, eds. Jane L. Parpart and Kathleen A. Staudt, Boulder: Lynne Reiner.

94 pp. 225-226

95 Sharon Adetutu Omotoso, *"Gender and Hair Politics"*, 11. The philosophy of hair in colonial Africa was that of 'ambivalence' as

Africans (men and women) were caught in a dilemma to either imbibe colonialist cultures or to keep strictly to their cultural ideals.

96 Nina Mba, "*Nigerian Women Mobilized*", 226

97 See Elebute and Oyedele, 2020. p.131

98 Ogwezzy, 2013.

99 Omotoso, 2018a.