

## HISTORICIZING THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE: EMPHASIS ON WOMEN INCLUSION, 1861 – 1955

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### Abstract

*The paper examines the evolution of Nigeria Police Force from 1861 when it was a separate police force to 1930 when the various police force were merged to a National Police Force. However, the study points out that a comprehensive Nigeria police force evolved in 1955 with the inclusion of women into the police force which by their recruitment were charged with the responsibilities of sexual cases involving children and women. It is also evident that with reforms in the Nigeria police force, the duties of Women Police were extended to include functions hitherto performed by men. In furtherance, the work highlighted that policing in colonial Nigeria was violent in nature and served the purpose of colonial administrators to suppress oppositions against colonial rule. Liberal feminism as applied explains the need for equality and the views of people in terms of role functions of women police and status recognition of women in the society. In achieving this work, we adopted interdisciplinary approach rooted in historical scholarship.*

### Introduction

The police is an institution body of civil officers in a city, town, district, state with the responsibility of preservation of lives and property, detection and preservation of crimes, keeping of public order and peace, and enforcement of the law. The evolution of the state as an entity with claim to control over the means of legitimate violence gave rise to the creation of special agencies such as the police and armed forces for the purpose of controlling violence by other groups (Agwanwo, 2014:2). It is on this premise that on April 1930, the Nigerian Police Force was established when the British colonial authorities merged the Southern and Northern Police Force which hitherto operated separately (Yaaseh 2011:94).

This development prompted the request for the employment of women into the Nigerian Police Force, which began in 1944, but was achieved on October 1, 1955. By the establishment of the Women Police branch in the Nigeria police force, officers were recruited as investigative agents on investigating duties with the Railway Police and at the headquarters on matters concerning offences involving females and children (Alemika and Agugua 2001:33). In achieving this, several motions were then moved by eminent Nigerians such as Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, A.O. Ogedengbe (Owo Constituency). Rabah Ahmadu (Sadauna of Sokoto) and Anthony Enahoro (Isham Constituency) who were in the legislative house.

### Theoretical Framework

Women studies for some decades have generated intellectual controversy among scholars over an acceptable theory to be used in gender study. This in effect gave rise to distinct schools of thought such as the biologists, bio-grammars and the feminist. The biologist believed that nature more than nurture is a determinant of human social identities and

positions. While the bio-grammers contend that gender inequality is as a result of sexual division of labour in the society (Agbo 2009: 105-106). But the one most appropriate in this study is the feminist theory. According to Haralambos and Holborn (1991:211-212) the theory aims at;

*Examining Women's roles, experience, interest and feminist politics in a variety of fields. Hence feminist theory focuses on analyzing gender inequality, the feminist sociologists have been mainly responsible for developing theories of gender inequality concerning women. Yet there is little agreement about the causes of inequality or about what action should be taken to reduce or bring it to an end.*

Haralambos and Holborn further distinguished feminist approaches into radical feminism, Marxist/social feminism and liberal feminism. Amongst these three, the liberal feminist is the most appropriate because they blame Women's subjugation on patriarchy and believe in gradual change as against the radical and Marxist feminists that believe on revolutionary change. Liberal feminism also aim at creating equal opportunity in education and job opportunities thereby eliminating all forms of discrimination based on sexes. They pursue this aim by attempting to change attitudes in addition to desiring reforms that takes place within the system.

Liberal feminists according to Okon (2012:18) believes that existing democratic structures contain the necessary ingredients for progressive reforms in the economic, political and cultural condition of women, and that radical changes will endanger the preservation of freedom. They also believe that the individual is the product of social institutions like the family, the education system and the mass media, which predisposes patterns of behaviour or role that is performed unconsciously and become an integral part of a person's identity.

Similarly, Ritzer (2000:455) was of the view that liberal feminism believed that;

*All human beings have certain essential features -capacities for reasons, moral agency, and self-actualization. The exercise of the capacities can be secured through legal recognition of universal right. The inequalities between men and women assigned by sex are social constructions having no basis in nature, and social change for equality can be produced by an organized appeal to a reasonable public and the use of the state.*

Relating this to the context of study, the theory in taken cognizance of the above features considered the educational status of women, their advocacy, physical fitness and the involvement of women in crime as basis for support in the enlistment of women in 1955 into the Nigeria Police Force.

### **Colonialism and Development of Police in Nigeria**

The history of police in Nigeria is traced from the colonial era, following the complaint of the British consul William McCoskry who was in charge of the administration of the colony of Lagos to colonial office in 1861. McCoskry needed men to maintain Law and Order within his jurisdiction. Sequel to his request, he was granted an authority from London to introduce a consular guard consisting of thirty men (Tamuno 1970:15).

*"This formation marked the beginning of the colonial Police Force in Lagos and Nigeria in general. By 1862, the numerical strength of Police in Nigeria was one hundred (100) only, to contain the people's resistance" (Asenime 2014:9).*

In 1863, the number rose to six hundred (600) and they were called Armed Hausa Police Force as many of them were Hausa speaking group of West Africa. "Later the number was increased by the movement of West Indies Regiments from Gambia to Lagos to complement the force. And in 1879 an Ordinance creating a constabulary for the colony of Lagos was published. With this, the staff strength was increased to one thousand two hundred men" (Balogun, 2013:1). The force was mainly military in nature, but the men performed some civil police duties. Describing the first set of clover's force, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the premier of Northern Nigeria then said;

*When the British came to the North they started recruiting their army of soldiers by getting slaves who ran away from their masters, labourers from the market and so on, and had them enlisted in the force. They had a bad start then (Asenime 2014:10).*

On 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1896, the Lagos Police Force was established. This force was under a Commissioner of Police, who was at the same time Sheriff, Inspector of Weights and Measures and in charge of Prisons. In 1901, a criminal investigation Department and Fire Brigade at Alagbon close, Ikoyi was established. They were mainly to defend and enforce the policies of the newly created colony with the absolute powers of sanctioning defaulters.

In 1891, a small police force was created to police the oil river protectorate with Calabar as headquarters. By this, a Niger Coast Constabulary was established in 1893 to maintain law and order in the colonial exploited areas within the protectorate. It was the constabulary that was used to bombard Benin in 1896. The Police was then used for dual purpose, as both Police and Military Force.

In the Northern part of Nigeria, the Royal Niger Company (RNC) was granted a Royal Charter and Right to set up a constabulary in 1866 and 1888 respectively. They were to protect all colonial interest along River Niger. It was with the strength of the Royal Niger company constabulary that Bida and Ilorin were destroyed.

*"With the transfer of administration, the Royal Niger Company and the British proclamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, the Royal Niger constabulary was split into Northern Nigeria Police Force and Northern Nigeria Regiment. These sister forces were to maintain and monitor the exploitation and conquest of Northern Nigeria by the British" (Balogun, 2003:154).*

Agwanwo (2014:45) on his part opined that;

*"The Lagos Police Force and part of the Niger Coast Constabulary formed the Southern Nigeria regiments, fully responsible for the quelling of resistance, crisis and maintenance of Law and Order in the colonial Southern Nigeria in 1906. With the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern protectorates in 1914, the Police Force continued to operate separately until April 1930 when they were merged. It was at this time that the Nigeria Police Force took off with headquarters in Lagos under an Inspector General of Police. In 1937, the office was renamed office of the Commissioner, but was reverted to the former name in 1951 which is maintained till date".*

However, the establishment of the national force out of several Police Forces in Lagos colony, Niger Coast, Northern and Southern Protectorates, and native and local forces in 1930 reflected administrative policy poised towards the reduction of colonial administrative cost.

This is expressed in the direct and indirect rule colonial administrative systems employed in the various parts of Nigeria. According to Tamuno;

*"The police given to the Native Authorities after the 1914 amalgamation were therefore of greater relevance to Western and Northern Nigeria than to the South-Eastern parts of Nigeria. As Native Authorities, the Chiefs had their Police Powers extended and consolidated under the law of 1916 and 1924. The Native Authority Ordinance (No. 4 of 1916) conferred on the Native Authorities, the responsibility of maintaining order in their respective areas. Under it they were allowed to prevent crime and arrest offenders by employing any person to assist them in carrying out their police duties. Their Police Powers were increased under the Protectorate Law (Enforcement)" Ordinance (No. 15 of 1924)".*

With these laws in place, the Yoruba land 'palace messenger's *akodas* were reformed, renamed *olopas*, and recognized. And in the Northern emirates, the palace *dogarai* became known as *yan dan doka* which means the enforcer of law. They enforced the colonial laws through the directives of the local chiefs and rulers.

In 1930, all the forces were amalgamated into a single Nigeria Police Force, primarily focused on the occupation, suppression, exploitation and consolidation of colonization of the Nigerian people. They destroyed and occupied resisting areas, suppressed uprisings, enforced the British colonial economic policies and ensured the consolidation of colonial rule. "From 1930-1960, the Nigeria Police Force was policing the people through armed mobile patrols, raids, arrests and detention in protection of the colonial economy" (Onqge, 1993:178).

### **The Nature of Policing in Colonial Nigeria**

By the establishment of Nigerian Police Force in 1930 they played a significant role in protecting the exploitative nature of British colonial interest through the suppression of the indigenous people against colonial government. This manifested as the colonial government used the police to destroy Nigeria's traditional institutions.

Against this, Agwanwo (2014:12) cited Achebe (1959) as he said:

*"The white men had also brought government. They had built a court where the District Commissioner Judges cases in ignorance. He had court messengers who brought men to him for trial"* (Agwanwo, 2014:12).

The colonial government used the Police Force to maintain Law and Order at all cost to their own advantage. An example of the colonial government leadership of tyranny and aggression against the colonized people was the case of chief Nana of Ebrohimie who was accused of misusing his position to support slave raid. As a result of this two hundred and fifty (250) armed policemen were dispatched under Admiral Bed force to capture his stronghold at Ebrohimie in Benin River. Nana was eventually defeated and deported. This was achieved because police forces were the instrument used to sustain the alien dominance of colonial rule (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2010:6).

Similarly, the violent nature of the colonial police in Nigeria was extended to Munshis (Tiv tribe) who inhabited the bank of the Benue, and burnt the Royal Niger Company store. This provoked the mobilization of a force of six hundred (600) younger men under Hasler, who instructed to deal ruthlessly with the offenders. The mission was accomplished leaving hundreds of indigenous lives destroyed. And in 1896, Umukoroshe (now Rumukwurushi) in the present Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State was visited with a punitive following the closure of the access roads leading through the town to the hinterland. This was

done on account of a trade dispute between Okrika and Rumukwurushi. In the course of the dispute, Rumukwurushi was burnt down in punitive expedition (Ofonagoro, 1979:161).

In 1867, Glover who was appointed to take charge of the administration of Lagos colony in 1863 led his armed Police Force against the Ijebu people on the allegation that the people resisted the extensions of British control to their area (Tamuno, 1977:33).

The violent, fraudulent and oppressive character of the colonial police was also demonstrated on November 18, 1949 when the Nigeria Police Force shot at the striking miners at Onyeama mines in Enugu (Isichei, 1983:407). This resulted in more demonstrations against police brutality in the Eastern provinces like Aba, Port Harcourt and Onitsha. The casualty figure at Enugu from the police attack led by senior superintendent F.S. Philip was twenty one (21), while fifty one (51) persons sustained serious injuries. Thereafter the police blocked every inventory of damage they caused in Aba, Port Harcourt and Onitsha areas during the crisis.

Between 1929 and 1930, there was a protest by women from Ibo, and the Niger Delta, which was referred to the popular "Aba Women Riot". The riot was purely a resistance against the inclusion of women to pay tax as planned by the warrant chiefs. It was also a demonstration against the treatment given to Nwanyereuwa because of her reaction to Emeruwa who was a warrant chief (Onwuzirike, 2005:125). As the women protested, the colonial government used armed policemen against the women, and in effect thirty two (32) women were killed and almost seventy were wounded (Isichei, 1983:400-401).

The activities of the colonial police were clear indication that its establishment was for the protection and consolidation of the British administration (Tamuno, 1970:90).

*"Viewed from an economic perspective, the ruling class in colonial Nigeria was foreign and an illegitimate one which sought to dominate and exploit the indigenous people in the interest of its own metropolitan economy"(Ahire, 1991:13).*

This was achieved through the use of the police system in both surveillance and conquest. The 19<sup>th</sup> century police system in Nigeria performed the duties of protecting trading depots of the British merchants because of repeated attacks on the depots by the indigenous people. Ahire (1991: 13) further asserts that;

*"The early employment of police to advance the colonial political agenda explains the present history of the police as an agency of oppression solely used both legally and illegally to enforce whatever policy that suits the government of the day. Again, the traditions of civility, efficiency, and submission to the rule of law that constituted the bedrock of the British police system were not emphasized in the running of colonial Police Force in Nigeria".*

Rather the maintenance of law and order, suppression of riots and other forms of resistance were over emphasized (Alemika, 1988:163-164).

### **Recruitment of Women into Nigeria Police Force**

The recruitment of women into the Nigeria Police Force took about twenty-five years after its establishment in 1930 by the colonial government.

*"The initiative for their recruitment came from outside the Police Force. The move began in 1944 when women leaders showed much interest in police reform by leading a delegation of the political and social section of the women's party of Nigeria to see the chief secretary to the government" (Tamuno, 1970:135).*

According to Okoronkwo (2007:323) the colonial government called for the; *"Recruitment of female constables and proposed that women between the ages of forty (40) to fifty (50) should be so employed because they were better able than men to prevent prostitution and deal with female criminals. In the same year, the women petitioned C.W. King, then commissioner of Police for the admission of women into the ranks of the Nigeria Police Force. Responding to their request, C.W King explained that policing was not a job for women"*(Okoronkwo, 2007:323-324).

He was of the view that there were mainly two types of women, the rough and the respectable. The respectable according to, him was not suppose to mingle in the dirty world of crime and delinquency to which police women would be naturally exposed.

As the statement sent conflicting messages to the public, he (King) argued that his memo to A.E.T. Benson chief secretary to the government did not mind words:

*" I find it quite impossible to visualize women police in action in Lagos. They may patrol along the marine where prostitutes wait for their victims, but I cannot see that they will do better than the present police. The other places are low class bars or so-called hotels adorned with lights where on interference with clients, a free fight ensues and the same is certainly no place for any women police".*

C.W. King the police commissioner who ran the force from 1942 till 1947 was unbending in his rejection of the whole idea because he felt that Northern Nigeria would not accept due to their strong belief in Islamic religion.

However, events outside Nigeria, aroused interest of Nigerians in the agitation. In 1914 women were recruited into the Police Force in the United Kingdom as a result of student campaign by the women freedom league against male violence on women (Hammer et al, 1989:15).

Again, the United Nations Economic and Social Council an influential organ of the United Nations Organization secured international agreement for the implementation of an international protocol for the suppression of traffic in persons, especially young girls and women into prostitution. The convention was adopted on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1949, and required the government of the world to show adequate sensitivity to the need for Women Police Officers to assist in the prevention of prostitution and protection of its victims" (Hammer et al, 1989:15).

Sequel to this, at the legislative council in Lagos in 1951, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe canvassed a motion for the recruitment of women into the Nigeria Police Force but other members refused on the matter. Another motion was moved in March 1953 by A.O. Ogedengbe a member of the Federal House of Representative, who represented Owo constituency, and seconded by Anthony Enahoro of Ishan constituency, and Ahmadu Rabah from Sokoto" (Tamuno 1970:136-137).

According to Alemika (1988:163), "responding to the mood of the House A.E.T. Benson, the colonial secretary remarked that the government was already considering the issue but had not made up its mind on how women were-to be engaged". He further said:

*"Those women could be employed in several departments of the police. Women should be most used in helping to prevent juvenile delinquency. When it comes to moral behaviour of the people, soliciting, prostitution*

*and that sort of thing, women will be the greatest help to us. There will naturally be some jobs for which women will not be fit. We do not send a squad of six, seven women to deal with several healthy hearty hooligans. That will be unfair to them".*

After several arguments, a final decision was taken by government to begin the enlistment of women into the Nigeria Police Force. The advert for recruitment of Women Police was done in August 1955, and selection was at Southern Police College, Ikeja. Interview was conducted personally by the Inspector General of Police, R.V.P. Maclaughlan. They commenced training on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1955 and passed out on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1956. Among those recruited were Beatrice Okebugwu, Stella Okuyiga, and Meg Adibua. Their passing out parade conceded with the visit of Queen Elizabeth to Nigeria (Okronkwo 2007:326).

### **Training**

In colonial Nigeria, the training of the first twenty women police took place at the Police College, Ikeja with their male counterparts (Okoronkwo, 2007:326). During the training both sexes underwent the same programmes, but the only exception for female was the use of arms and riot drill. Their training was basically theoretical while in the classroom with their male counterparts. But in the field or at the range, the women observed their male colleagues demonstrate or manipulates the weapons. In written examinations, they were tested equally on the same questions. But against the colonial form of training, Kenneth (2015) informed that women at present participate in all activities including juggling, musketry (which deals with everything about arms and ammunition) Fatigue parade, games (based on areas of specialization), snake crawling, diving, police monkey position, muster parade, shooting range, statue (mainly in the night) and passing-out parade. The training are of two types: The Induction courses and in-service training. In the induction courses, new intakes are given basic training aimed at giving the right orientation to new entrants along the line of the demands of the profession. While the in-service is for officers and serving members of the police force designed to equipping them with basic skills and discipline required of their duty. It is purely base on merit.

### **Deployment**

It is a custom in the Nigeria Police Force that after the basic recruitment training of three to six months as a police constable, all successful recruited constables irrespective of sex are posted to various police stations in the state for quick actions. The serving female officers are also expected to be transferred or deployed from one police station to another when the need arise. Such deployment may be intra or inter-state. At the new station, officers are allocated by the officer in charge of administration. Thereafter, functions are assigned based on the provision of the Police Act and Regulations.

### **Duties of Women Police in Nigeria**

Apart from the general police duties for both male and female contained in section 4 of the Police Act and Regulations, section 121 and 122 of the same ACT outlines the duties of policewomen to include:

*"Investigation of sexual offences against women and children, Recording of statements from female witnesses and female accused persons and from children, Attendance when women or children are being interviewed by male police officers, The searching, escorting and guarding of women prisoners in police station, and the escorting of women prisoners to and from police stations, School crossing duties,*

*and Crowd control, where women and children are present in any number"* (Alemika and Agugua, 2001:37).

Also, "section 122 stipulates that Women Police Officers recruited to the General Duties Branch of the Force, may in order to relieve male police officers from their duties, be employed to any of the following office duties, namely; Clerical duties, Telephone duties, and Office orderly duties".

But after two years of women recruitment in the Nigeria Police Force, the headquarters of Nigeria Police Force was re-organized to meet the challenges of policing in Nigeria. Six branches were created with specific duties assigned. Probably, with this the duties of policewomen were expanded. The branches include: "A" Department (finance and administration). "It consists of: Administrative branch, Secret registry branch, Personal branch, and Welfare branch" (Ehiede, 2007).

"B" Department (operations) consisting of: "Operations branch, Traffic branch, Force signals branch, Force mechanical workshops (transport) branch, Force Marine branch" (Ehiede, 2007:269).

"C" Department (logistics and supply) consist of works, equipment, stores, cooperative, accoutrements (Balogun, 2003:9) and "D" Department (Federal Bureau of Investigation and Intelligence)" consists of the following: Investigations branch, Technical aids to investigation branch (C.I.D), C.I.D training branch, Interpol bureau, Finger prints branch, and Central registry of offenders".

Furthermore, Ehiede (2007) posits that "the "E" Department (training) "F-G" Department (public relations) consists of: Press and publication branch, Employee information branch, Community relations and publicity branch, and Complaints bureau".

Each of the departments is under the leadership of an Assistant Inspector General of Police. Significantly, police women who serve in these departments perform their duties in a professional manner. But in the operation branch women are not found in the squad team.

## **Conclusion**

The evolution of Nigeria Police Force in the colonial era came as a result of series of complains and request by the colonial administrators who needed men to maintain law and order in the territory. This resulted to the establishment of a consular guard that marked the beginning of the Colonial Police Force in Lagos and Nigeria in general. But the formation of a national police force was achieved in 1930 when several Police Force in Lagos colony, Niger Coast, Northern and Southern protectorate were merged to a single Police Force known as the Nigeria Police Force.

By the establishment of Nigeria Police Force, they implored all available means to maintain law and order strictly to the benefit of the colonizers. They were violent in nature and were used to oppress any opposition to colonial rule. However, upon their violent nature, Nigerian Women did not relent in their effort to agitate for their inclusion into the Nigeria Police Force. The movement which started in 1944 was achieved in 1955 through the support of some eminent Nigerians in the federal legislative house. Significantly, by their establishment, they took charge of sexual cases involving children and women. The study however established that the role of women in the Nigeria police force since their enlistment in 1955 is inevitable.

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