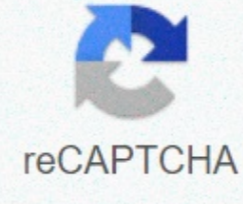




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## History of west africa

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When British colonial officers refused to give permits for demonstrations, activist Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti mobilized the women of the local market for what he called picnics and festivals. One of the few women in early 1920s Nigeria to receive post-primary education, Ransome-Kuti used her privilege to coordinate resistance against colonialism in Nigeria that targeted not only the British, but also the local traditional personalities they used to enforce their rules. The Abeokuta Women’s Association, which she founded, complained of unfair taxes, corruption and a lack of representation of women in decision-making corridors. While she is perhaps best known now as the mother of Afrobeat pioneer Fela Kuti (an activist in his own right), Ransome-Kuti’s role and years as the mother of anti-colonial activism in Nigeria are rarely celebrated outside the early texts of elementary school. Her son once sang: She is nigeria’s only mother. Nigeria’s Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti led the women’s movement in the region of southwestern Nigeria and played an important role in the independence movementIn many ways, the muted legacy of Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti in Nigeria’s independence movement plays out across the continent. In the six decades since many African countries achieved political independence, the stories of women in the liberation struggle have not yet been told and celebrated in contrast to their male counterparts who wasted no time in having universities, airports and major highways named for them and putting their faces in national currencies. For those whose stories have been told, such as anti-apartheid activist Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, it is filled with double standards and sexist tropes that often try to position them as assistants to men and reduce them to wives. Women, educated and uneducated, were vital to liberation parties, though they were often doves with the less powerful wing of the women’s party if they had one. While they had few opportunities to be part of the broader organization chart of these parties, the leaders of the women’s wing were able to demonstrate tremendous leadership potential. Within a year of her recruitment, Bibi Titi Mohammed, as head of the women’s wing of the National Taganika Union (TANU), had attracted 5,000 women to join. Bibi Titi used the cultural and economic network of women to mobilize, exchange information, sell party membership cards, announce rallies, organize marches and raise money for TANU, which would become the freedom party of modern Tanzania.In Ghana, Mabel Dove-Danquah, described as a pioneering feminist was well ahead of her time as an outspoken supporter of women’s equality. Women. worked as a writer, journalist and editor for several liberating-minded newspapers including the Accra Evening News founded by Kwame Nkrumah. She was among a number of women Nkrumah and his People’s Assembly Party used to promote the fight for independence and would go on to become the first African woman to be elected by popular vote in parliament in 1954.The women’s wing of the CPP was largely made by women of the market who, while crossing the country to buy and sell , went along with the gospel of self-determination. Just as in other African struggles, women in the market were also the economic backbone of the party, but as Ghana commemorated 62 years of independence this month, their names and contributions have indeed been written by popular history. In contexts where the struggle for independence took a particularly violent turn, women were also at the forefront. Young Muslim women were a central part of FRELIMO’s resistance against Portuguese colonial rule in Mozambique. FRELIMO recruited teenage girls and young women as guerrillas and mainly in intelligence gathering, as they were considered by the Portuguese as non-threatening. They also performed household tasks such as cooking and cleaning. Women were vital to liberation parties, but they were often doves with the less powerful wing of the women’s movement. But the lack of recognition for the role of women in history, she says, is not unique to Africa. Around the world, attempts have been made to rewrite the past and make it fuller and more subtle, says Professor Akosua Darkwah, head of the sociology department at the University of Ghana. Often because, these stories are told by men, so to tell it for their part, he says, but there must be a constant reminder that it couldn’t be that all women were just sitting watching. In 2017, Darkwah co-written a paper on women and African politics after independence. In times of struggle, african liberation leaders spoke passionately about women’s equality and recognized their contributions. By Nkrumah’s admission: much of the CPP’s success is due to the efforts of female members. From the beginning, women were the lead field organizers. They have travelled through countless towns and villages in the role of propaganda secretaries and are responsible for most in achieving the solidarity and cohesion of the party. But this progressive rhetoric was at best a veneer, as they did little after independence to structurally include women in government and remove sexist colonial era Although his government introduced a gender quota (9%) [pdf p.3] in the legislature in 1960, Kwame Nkrumah’s cabinet as head of government and president, for example, was exclusively male for 11 of the 14 years he ruled. As the newly independent Ghana found itself in dire plight due to decades of colonialism, the Cold War and the financing of other liberation movements, Nkrumah, which took on market women as a cause of economic challenges. Again, women did not get away with the violence that accompanied criticism of the authoritarian governments that ruled Africa after independence. Shortly after independence, Bibi Titi was arrested by the government of her former ally, Julius Nierere, on treason charges. She was sentenced to life in prison, but was released after two years on grace and spent the rest of her life out of public view. Similarly, Malawi’s first female lawyer Vera Chirwa endured exile and many years in prison when, along with others, she fell out with President Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Chirwa is a founding member of Malawi’s Congress Party, which eventually led the country to gain independence. She also founded the Association of Malawian Women who not only fight for women’s rights, but were a leading supporter of the resistance against white supremacy in Malawi. Generations later, the power that wings women of political parties across the continent exercised have been decimated and usurped by the first ladies. They have been evacuated by charismatic, educated, professional women to the extent that a coherent progressive feminist agenda can now be found with civil society. For example, the African National Congress women’s union (which has been described as the guardians of patriarchy) until 2017 argued that South Africa was not ready for a female president, despite the fact that the party held a group of accomplished female politicians. For example, Helen Johnson Sirleaf remains Africa’s only elected female president. There are many untold stories about the role of women in the resistance against European colonialism from women at the forefront of Algeria and Zimbabwe to Somali female poets whose words fascinated and inspired their freedom movement. However, a new generation of African feminists is determined to regain these narratives. In Lusaka, Zambia, the Women’s History Museum has collected 5,000 pieces of audio files and other objects and is already changing the narrative about women and equality, which was almost erased by colonialism. Similarly, tech savvy feminists are using ghana’s heritage month opportunity to reposition the role of women in history. But Professor Darkwah warns: This is not the job just for feminists... This is our story, this is a more complete rendering of our past, it should not be a responsibility young feminists to tell us that. We should all be. Subscribe to Quartz Africa Weekly Brief here for news and analysis on African business, technology and innovation in your inbox In the 1960s, dozens of countries in central and sub-Saharan Africa won european colonialists. This began a remarkable period of experimental architecture in these newly sovereign nations, which sought to build cutting-edge buildings for parliaments, universities and banks to demonstrate new national identities. Architecture of Independence: African Modernism, an exhibit at the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein, Germany, examines revisiting these future designs, with an emphasis on the delicate process of mixing past traditions with future goals. Curated by Swiss architect Manuel Herz, it explores more than 80 buildings in Kenya, Ivory Coast, Zambia, Ghana and Senegal. Kenyatta International Conference Centre, Nairobi (Kenya), by Karl Henrik Nostvik, 1967-1973Iwan BaanScreen projects represent contradictions inherent in the process of building a newly independent set of countries. Most of the architects commissioned to build these monuments to African modernism were introduced by European countries such as Norway and France. And in the midst of the building boom, the bold ideals of modernist architects were occasionally stymied by political turmoil. For example, the University of Zambia, designed in 1965, was built by Israeli contractors. But during the Arab-Israeli war and the 1973 oil crisis, Israeli companies were expelled from the country, leaving parts of the Lusaka campus unfinished. However, the works also present an amazing architectural heritage that is rarely part of the discussion about Sub-Saharan and West Africa-projects that deserve to be recognized and, in many cases, restored. Rinaldo Olivier’s administrative office pyramid in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, with the façade of the sun’s angular shadows, looks like no other building in the world. In Senegal, an exhibition centre, the Foire Internationale de Dakar, protrudes from the ground like a futuristic mountain range. The Kenyatta International Convention Center in Nairobi, Kenya-the country’s tallest building for more than two decades-features a towering, round pavilion that opens to the sky with a series of wooden and metal panels mounted on a cane. These designs play with form and heritage in a way that deserves more attention. A book accompanying the exhibition is available from Park Books. [via Guardian] Guardian]

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