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The Role of Igbo Women in Leadership and Community Laws

By Chuka Odike

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FEATURE
IMAGE

**An Igbo women [identified as Dr
Florence Nwakoby c. 1966]
(postcard) by John Hinde Studios.**

Article image · caption retained from the published Ozikoro article

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Published in The Argus on December 12, 1944, Caroline Isaacson's article sheds light on the influential roles of Igbo women in Nigerian society during the mid-20th century. The piece recounts the experiences of Mrs. Kenneth Ross, who lived in Nigeria and observed the detailed balance of gender dynamics, cultural practices, and governance in Igbo communities....

An Igbo women [identified as Dr Florence Nwakoby c. 1966] (postcard) by John Hinde Studios. Published in The Argus on December 12, 1944, Caroline Isaacson's article sheds light on the influential roles of Igbo women in Nigerian society during the mid-20th century. The piece recounts the experiences of Mrs. Kenneth Ross, who lived in Nigeria and observed the detailed balance of gender dynamics, cultural practices, and governance in Igbo communities.



8—ARGUS, TUES, DEC 12/44

In Nigeria It Is The Women Who Propound Laws—And Enforce Them

By CAROLINE ISAACSON

One of the most precious gifts a kindly providence can bestow upon one, W. L. George, a popular writer in the early days of the century, but alas little read today, once declared in one of his books, is a sense of adventure. That sense that sends one questing and which invests even a tram journey with a certain amount of excitement. I thought of this when recently I met Mrs Kenneth Ross

For we got into conversation, and I learnt that she had been in Australia but a very short time, and had spent the greater part of her life in Nigeria. Her coming to this country was via Singapore, the same as so many other newcomers to these shores.

The name Ross and Nigeria instantly recalled to my mind a book I had once read by Sylvia Leith

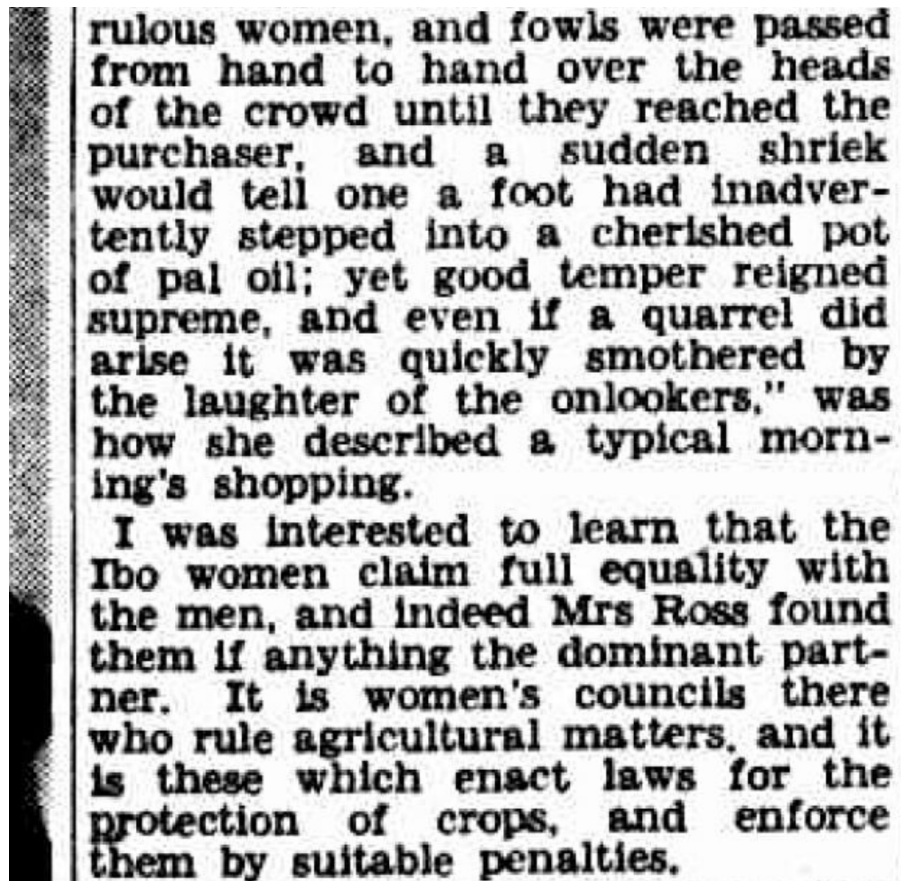
Ross about that particular part of the Empire, and I was most interested to learn that Mrs Leith Ross and my travelling companion were not only sisters-in-law, but had spent some considerable time together in Nigeria whilst the investigations which form the basis of the book were being made.

Mrs Kenneth Ross accompanied Mrs Leith Ross on many of her exploratory journeys. They travelled all over Nigeria, and the subsequent report on the life of the Ibos is considered one of the most comprehensive documentary research efforts compiled.

In Nigeria, It Is the Women Who Propound Laws—And Enforce Them.

The article highlights the vibrancy of Nigerian marketplaces, which Mrs. Ross found to be an exhilarating hub of activity. Women managed the bustling environment with humour and efficiency, even amidst the chaos of crowded lanes, where goods such as pots, mats, and poultry changed hands. She noted the community spirit that prevailed, often diffusing any tension with laughter and cooperation.

What stood out most to Mrs. Ross was the political and social authority exercised by Igbo women. Women's councils played critical roles in agricultural matters, drafting and enforcing laws to protect crops and ensure justice. These councils, far from being auxiliary to men's governance, held autonomous power in community decision-making. Their authority underscored the egalitarian nature of Igbo society, where women actively claimed full equality with men and often took the lead in crucial societal functions.



In Nigeria, It Is the Women Who Propound Laws—And Enforce Them

This article offers a historical lens into the cultural sophistication and progressive gender roles within Igbo society, challenging colonial-era perceptions of African communities as patriarchal or undeveloped.

Isaacson, C. (1944, December 12). In Nigeria It Is The Women Who Propound Laws—And Enforce Them. *The Argus* (Melbourne, Vic.: 1848-1957), p. 8. Retrieved July 14, 2018, from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/11374476>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chuka Odiike

I'm a dedicated civil engineer with a passion for infrastructure development and community empowerment. With a strong background in engineering, my work focuses on creating sustainable solutions for urban and rural development projects. Outside of my professional career, I'm deeply interested in Igbo history and culture. I actively explore ways to impact society by using historical lessons to inspire and educate others about the rich cultural heritage of the Igbo people, aiming to bridge tradition and modern development.



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