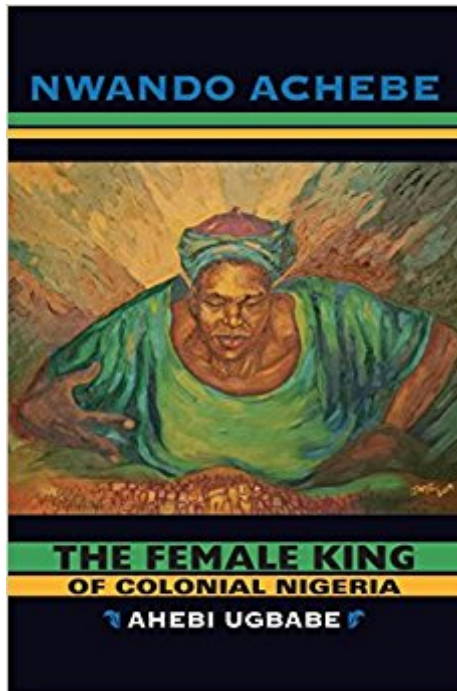


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# The Female King Of Colonial Nigeria: Ahebi Ugbabe



## Synopsis

Nwando Achebe presents the fascinating history of an Igbo woman, Ahebi Ugbabe, who became king in colonial Nigeria. Ugbabe was exiled from Igboland, became a prostitute, traveled widely, and learned to speak many languages. She became a close companion of Nigerian Igala kings and the British officers who supported her claim to the office of headman, warrant chief, and later, king. In this unique biography, Achebe traces the roots of Ugbabe's rise to fame and fortune. While providing critical perspectives on women, gender, sex and sexuality, and the colonial encounter, she also considers how it was possible for this woman to take on the office and responsibilities of a traditionally male role.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Readers have to praise the publishers and author for a creative title, since Nigeria as a country did not have a colonial king, male or female. The title diverts attention to an important topic: the rise of an Igbo woman to the status of warrant chief, a position created by the British as part of their 'indirect rule' system of government, and how she later became her town's head chief. Historian Achebe (Michigan State Univ.) aims to use the biography of a successful woman to talk about women/gender history within a colonial framework. In the book's conclusion, the author also wants history to become memory, so that the legacy of Ahebi Ugbabe and her town in eastern Nigeria can be retained and converted into tourism to generate revenues to benefit the community. The narrative is structured around difference and agency. If the majority of women in colonial Africa were marginalized, here was a case of one who had power. The tone and contents fall within nationalist

historiography in three strands: first, the recovery of African history pioneered in the 1940s; second, the need to insert gender into nationalist histories as advocated in the 1960s; and third, extending the frontiers of Igbo history. Summing Up: Recommended. All levels/libraries. --Choice T. Falola, University of Texas, November 2011 "An important contribution to the study of modern African history. It will be of special interest to scholars of African history, women's studies, and comparative politics." *Choice* Anene Ejikeme, Trinity University "The Female King of Colonial Nigeria will be a valuable read for a variety of audiences. Whether one is interested in colonial history, gender history, family history, or women's history, there is much to be found in this biography to enrich and complicate one's understandings." *Choice* Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History "The Female King is a thoughtful, well-written, and amply documented work that should have great influence on those who write about the Igbo, about African women, and about African history." *Choice* Women's Review of Books "[A] fascinating exploration of the fluidity of gender and the nature of political authority. And it's a remarkable reconstruction not only of colonial rule at the local level, but also of pre-colonial life and post-colonial memory. I highly recommend." *Choice* New Books in Gender "The Female King of Colonial Nigeria... is one of the most compellingly argued, rigorously researched scholarly writings in the fields of history and women studies in colonial Igbo society, Nigeria and Africa." *Choice* Leeds African Studies Bulletin "The Female King of Colonial Nigeria makes a solid contribution to the literature on women's (auto) biography and the cogent treatments of gender, and sexualities. The book will benefit scholars, students, and those interested in issues of women and gender." *Choice* African Studies Quarterly "An unusual biography and a compelling tale about the life of an extraordinary woman." *Choice* Stephan F. Miescher, University of California, Santa Barbara "Achebe presents a compelling history that embodies yet transcends the local. This thorough and detailed biography will be of great use to specialists in Igbo history and to scholars of women's and gender history more broadly." *Choice* American Historical Review "[This is] the story of a woman, Ahebi Ugbabe, who rose from the status of a local girl and commercial sex worker to that of a village headman, a warrant chief and a king....[This book]... salvage[s] the history of a woman who became the only warrant chief in colonial Nigeria...distinguishes between Western concepts of gender and sexuality, and the indigenous meanings of these concepts in an African setting.... [A] well-written, amply researched, and efficiently documented [book]. It is a major contribution to African history and the practice of oral history." *Choice* Reviews in History, March 2013 "This important, but neglected, story of Nigeria's only female warrant chief is thoroughly grounded in local meanings and local categories, yet speaks to some of the most

important concerns in comparative women's history: from slavery and freedom, to sexuality, power, and spirituality." Jean Allman, Washington University of St. Louis "The Female King of Colonial Nigeria is a rich and significant book that illuminates history, culture, politics, and gender constructions in Igbo land. The book is lucidly written, provides good examples of field methods, and will enrich scholars and students of a wide range of disciplines from history to anthropology and gender studies." Intl. Journal of African Historical Studies

Nwando Achebe is Professor of History at Michigan State University. She is author of *Farmers, Traders, Warriors, and Kings: Female Power and Authority in Northern Igboland, 1900-1960*.

Took a class at the university taught by the authors daughter. Great read, empowering.

very good

great

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