

A Paradigm of Woman Leadership in History and the Contemporary Nigerian Society in Wale Ogunyemi's *Queen Amina of Zazzau*

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Abstract

Gender issue is not new in the literary discourse in contemporary Nigerian literature. It is an area that has attracted adequate attention over the years. And the main argument of it is to chart a new course towards the condition of woman in Nigerian society. Writers, in all genres of literature, have explored woman as a central subject in their works to address this salient issue. The purpose of this study is to further this discourse. Wale Ogunyemi is among the writers that have taken the giant step to go into history to make statements of immense contributions of women in Nigerian society, exploring the history of Queen Amina of Zazzau. It is on this note, therefore, that we intend to see woman leadership in the history of Nigerian heroines to deconstruct what the society has created for women when it comes to leadership in the country. The study submits that women can, of course, perform, if they are given an opportunity, taking a cue from some heroines of the past like Queen Amina of Zazzau. The study is examined through the lens of New Historicism, using history to underscore this burning issue in the Nigerian society.

Introduction

History, since inception of modern Nigerian literature, has served as source material for literature because of its literary relevance. This is why this essay is significant as the text to be discussed is

based on the history of one of Nigeria's heroines. In treating the objective of the work, New Historicism is the literary theory that guides us. We will also do a review of some related literature to lay a solid foundation for our work. Queen Amina is portrayed as a model of leadership for women in particular as well as for men that will not feel superior unnecessarily as there is a lot to learn from one another, drawing illustrations from the text and history. After all, John Donne once said that "No man is an island" in his poem of that title. Finally, we drew our conclusion on the ground that there are many qualities Nigerian leaders can learn from Queen Amina of Zazzau, which, we strongly believe, if well managed and implemented Nigeria will change for the better because the problems confronting the country are rooted in leadership.

Plot Summary of *Queen Amina of Zazzau*

The play begins with the Priest, telling the audience about Amina and the crisis of Kububuwa snake that has killed many. From here we are made to see Amina being advised to take a husband because of the importance of marriage in their culture. Amina does not agree with them, letting them know the importance of not getting married in her case. Amina's decision may be informed by the need to maintain her leadership hegemony which marriage to a man is likely to interfere with.

Amina is made a queen, and her first assignment on the throne is to kill Kububuwa snake that has been terrorising her people from drawing water from the river and she succeeds in the encounter. Before her return, her mother dies because of the fear that she might not come back alive. Amina goes to many wars and wins them all. One problem with her is that she mates with men both slaves and free-born and, after the act, she would kill them through poisonous drink. She does this to ensure that the secret of her sexual escapades with these men is not leaked or else she will lose her integrity and leadership hegemony.

Amina has the same plan for Aliyu for inviting him to her court; to have sexual intercourse with her and poison him just like the previous men. Mairo who has fallen in love with Aliyu lets him know the danger of having dinner with Queen Amina and Aliyu

does not heed her advice. He honours Amina's invitation as a rare privilege. They both have sexual intercourse and Amina offers Aliyu the poisonous drink as usual. When Aliyu takes this, he becomes mysteriously ill. His life is saved with the antidote that Mairo has stolen from Amina. When Aliyu is not dead, Amina then investigates what could be responsible for that. She thus realises that it is Mairo who has stolen her antidote to save Aliyu from the expected sudden death.

Mairo is fed poison and dies. But she dies happily for she has saved Aliyu, her heartthrob. Aliyu goes on exile so as not to be dealt with by the queen. Queen Amina wages a war against Atagara where she thinks Aliyu is being sheltered. Waziri advises Amina not to embark on the war, but she remains adamant. The Priest also does the same, but she turns a deaf ear, ignoring the threatening message of his dream. She embarks on the journey and dies mysteriously.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is read through the lens of New Historicism. History, from which the theory originated, is an essential part of man and his society without which its society would become static. It is a factor of man that keeps society going. E. H. Carr argues that "it is at once the justification and the explanation of history that the past throws light on the future, and the future throws light to the past" (123). Consequently, T. S. Eliot's classic view on history will remain evergreen in our hearts as "time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future and time future contained in time past" (13). Essentially, society cannot do without history. Hence, dramatists explore histories in their works to keep the society going as exemplified in Wale Ogunyemi's *Queen Amina of Zazzau*, the text of our study.

New Historicism is a platform to challenge the old manner of narrating histories which claims perfection in historical narratives. The new historicists ignore and reject the paramount perception of traditional historicists that accommodates only the winners to tell their histories with the high tendency of fabrications. What about the side of the losers? Few people bother

to inquire about their fate (Dobie, 176). The interesting point of New Historicism is that of not claiming absolute knowledge. New historicists believe that knowledge of history can be contingent on other factors. Dobie maintains that:

The new historicists do not claim to have the "truth" about a text or historical event; rather, they assert that the truth, if such a thing could even exist, would be narratologically and culturally contingent. History and literature, it seems, are more complicated than earlier readers had assumed (176).

New historicists deny objectivity in the reading of historical stories. Rather, they maintain that there are elements of subjectivity in historical narratives. Therefore, historical narratives are seen as texts in New Historicism. In addition, New Historicism also argues that a historical account cannot be seen from one perspective or angle; rather, from diverse angles that make the society. The belief of "spirit of an age", in the words of Dobie, should be discarded (177). Dobie argues in clear terms in these words:

According to new historicists, there never was, and there never is, a single history or a single worldview. Instead, many discourses come together in a complex cultural interaction. In fact, some new historicists charge that the very notion of a standardised culture is a false one that has been imposed by powerful institutions and classes as a way of maintaining their own interests (177).

New historicists work on two principles, namely; "... to understand text by examining its cultural context - the anxieties, issues, struggles, politics and ... seek to understand the culture by looking at its literature" (Dobie, 179). It also investigates the "understanding of a culture's power structure" (Dobie, 179). More so, New Historicism sees history as a means to address social issues in all ramifications to create desired impacts. Dobie opines that "in fact, according to the New Historicists, all texts are social documents, and as such, they both reflect and affect the world that

produces them" (179). New Historicism, as a literary theory, encourages reference to non-literary texts in the analysis and criticism of a literary text that represents history implicitly or explicitly.

Thus, we will consider all these aforementioned and explained tenets of New Historicism in our reading of Wale Ogunyemi's *Queen Amina of Zazzau*. The main objective of doing this is to see a guide which will make us realise the interpretations of the work that will inform the truth. Looking at diverse angles to tell a history as postulated by New Historicists, we will perform better in our study.

Literature Review

Adequate attention, admittedly, has been paid to gender discourse in Nigeria, revealing various gender issues that have appeared in different genres of the arts. To this end, we have had anthology or collection of essays where the main subject is on gender. *Gender Discourse in African Theatre, Literature and Visual Arts: A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Mabel Ekwierhoma* (edited by Tracie ChimaUtoh-Ezeajugh and Barclays FoubiriAyakoroma), and *Writing the Female Image in African Fiction* (edited by Sophia Obiajulu Ogwude) are two such collections. In both volumes on gender studies, different issues are raised, which we can quickly look at.

Bifatife Olufemi Adeseye's essay, entitled "Gender Issue in Leadership: a Critical Appreciation of *Irosun Ankara* – a Corpus of Yoruba Ifa Lore", is apt as it looks into the leadership consideration and recognition accorded women in Ifa tradition. The essay argues that in the history of the world, generally and Africa in particular, there are women that have shown exemplary roles in their various communities. It maintains that "success or failure in leadership has no respect for gender" (517). This is against the perception that failure is attributed to woman leadership.

The paper is of the view that there is leadership potential in women if they are allowed to lead as their male counterparts. Their gender should not be a factor for consideration or rejection for

positions of responsibilities and various leadership positions. Adeseye posits that the work focuses on "the relevance of Ifa to the potentials and limitations of women in leadership positions" (518). Adeseye does a comparative study of Queen Amina of Zazzau and Queen Idia of Benin (the first Queen Mother of Benin), on the one hand, and Helen of Troy (the daughter of Leda and Zeus), on the other, to see a meeting point between African woman leadership in history and Western woman leadership in history (524).

He furthers his argument by saying that womenfolk usually see themselves as objects of oppression, even when they are in positions to make right decisions. In Adeseye's view, women are more vindictive or violent than men when the former assume the position of leadership. His position is captured in this excerpt:

Typically, a woman feels she is oppressed by menfolk even when she is in a position to order things. She therefore sees power as a means to even things about perceived male domination. It is observed that the female folk are more vindictive than the male gender. This accounts for most malevolent actions of the cult of *Iyami* (the esoteric club of the witches) (524).

He, therefore, gives the narration of the Ifa corpus of Ose-Otura when men left a single woman in their midst on their journey from Olodumare to accomplish a mission on earth. Their belief was that the mission would be too tough for the woman. Their assumption was that she would not be able to confront the challenges surrounding the journey. And she felt bad at being left behind. Consequently, she used her esoteric power to make their mission impossible (527). Adeseye accounts for the rest in these words:

When the missionaries encountered series of problems, they cried back to Olodumare. Olodumare saw the cause of their predicament and inquired why they left behind the only woman in the contingent. They pleaded that the decision was taken in good faith, believing that the

mission would be too tough for her. They were admonished and the woman was pacified (527).

This is to tell us that in Yoruba cosmology, there is nothing we can do with the exclusion of woman. Adeseye, then, argues that the "real power" lies with women, depending on how this natural privilege is explored by them. He maintains that:

Spiritually, Ifa submits that every human community is matrilineal, because the female gender is the primary path to the beginning of procreation ... Ose-Otura asserts that we should all revere womanhood if the society is to have peace ... both genders must recognise the need to cooperate for spiritual peace to engender physical harmony in society (528).

Gowon Ama Doki's essay, "Theatre and the Woman Question in Nigeria" probes into the violence against women physically and emotionally. He heaps the blame on "Cultural beliefs, stereotypes and prejudices ..." (398). Doki is of the view that this ugly situation requires reassessment "if we intend to achieve a socio-cultural and economic leap in the 21st century" (399). The situations of women in recent years are becoming better than what they used to be.

Nkechi Okadigwe's essay, entitled "Woman as Change-Agents in Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Olamma* and *Every Day Is for the Thief*" is insightful as it searches into the history of the world to see that "Women have historically been taken as the weaker sex" (200). Okadigwe's position is consistent with Adeseye's belief that, looking beyond physical appearance and strength, women are stronger than men (200). She is then worried why and how women are still not living up to the expectations in the society despite the opportunities given to them in the modern time. She posits:

What is it that makes some women proactive and creative while some others remain subservient and passive? Tracing from history, we can see that women in the African traditional society were constituted to take just the limited roles of child-bearing, child-nurturing;

some minor crafts like weaving and home management. Yet the traditional Nigerian periods also produced such women as Moremi of Ile-Ife and Queen Amina of Zazzau who are notable legendary figures. From pre-colonial Nigerian times to the early 21st century, the role and status of women have continuously evolved (201).

Ameh Dennis Akoh's "Gender, Sexuality and Power in Select Nigerian Drama" addresses possible shift of focus "from 'woman-as-victim' and 'woman-as-heroine' to the wider spectrum of both...sex and gender as social formation" (155). Akoh also investigates the Utopian gender thought of Tess Onwueme in her plays as she builds female husband or female as male. Wazobia, in Onwueme's *The Reign of Wazobia*, becomes the 'king' after she completes the mandatory three seasons on the throne. Wazobia beats everyone to it, including men through her "cunning and brute force" to be substantive king (162). She then changes the status quo as the tradition demands. Akoh's argument is revealed in these words:

She becomes the 'king' not queen, an unprecedented feat in the land. She, consequently, inherits the three wives (Wa, Zo, Bia) of the former king, as tradition demands. This is quite unusual or un-African because a woman can only become the queen (wife, woman of a king, husband, man) (162).

In Hagher's *Mulkin Mata*, Onwueme's *The Reign of Wazobia*, *The Broken Calabash* and *Tell it to Women* and Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* that Akoh explores, women are placed as violent leaders, a feature which has been for long attributed to menfolk alone. It is, therefore, a manifestation of changing face in Nigerian drama, in the submission of Akoh. His critical position is further clarified in the following words:

It is in the light of this that I believe that, both in literature and politics, "it is no longer fashionable to delineate the principal culprits of gender-based violence as men alone; neither will it be an infallible claim to see the major power players as men" (166).

The position Akoh takes here is not strange in modern time, and we can also see some examples of this in history. The case of Queen Amina of Zazzau adequately illustrates this argument. Amina is violent in the play and in reality. Although one can still argue that this is done by her to maintain and sustain the hegemony which resides in the corridors of power, and possibly to achieve peace and progress as in Queen Amina's reign. We are more concerned with her positive sides in leadership rather than her negative sides to deconstruct the perception that women cannot rule successfully.

Sophia Ogwude's essay entitled, "Women as Warriors and Women in Resistance", is another work where the social commitment of women is interrogated in some selected novels written by men in which women are given strong roles to play because of the belief they have in the female gender. The portrayal of women in the novels cited by Ogwude is similar to what Wale Ogunyemi does in *Queen Amina of Zazzau*. Justifying her reasons for the choice of novels, Ogwude states that:

...these novels celebrate womanhood and the assertive woman and that they have done this long before feminist concerns became an issue in African studies. In addition to whatever readings they might be subjected to, these novels are unquestionably female gender friendly... (170).

In Benjamin Onwukah Orji-Mba's "Towards a Marxist Criticism of Sembene Ousmane's *God's Bits of Wood*", Marxist inclination is established in women in the reading of *God's Bits of Wood*. In that novel, Ousmane carefully and intentionally places female characters in strong roles. This artistic creation of Ousmane says a lot for his belief in women as the gender that can perform praiseworthy acts like their male counterparts in our society. Orji-Mba argues that some Nigerian writers have also been involved in the tradition of positive construction of female characters in their texts. He is of the view that:

... in Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, Segi is cast in the mould of a revolutionary, as she constitutes a critical agent in the drive for good governance. Titubi, including Mama Kayode and the other women in Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*, take the frontline in the struggle for an egalitarian society. In Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* and J. P. Clark's *The Wives Revolt*, women are presented as forces of change as they demand structural transformation and capacity development in society (180).

Therefore, we would realise that calling people's attention to what womenfolk can do is not the sole business of women. Men have greatly contributed positively as seen in their critical and creative works and Wale Ogunyemi is another obvious example. The discussion of this paper, therefore, is on Wale Ogunyemi's *Queen Amina of Zazzau* and its significance as a model of leadership in contemporary Nigerian society.

Queen Amina as a Model of Leadership in Contemporary Nigerian Society

Gender discourse, over decades now in the world, has become interesting and germane in Africa and Nigeria in particular. Consequently, what gender means and stands for has been addressed in no small measure by African scholars. Gender is a social construct which separates the two sexes of the society. It also gives them different roles to play. Gender does not stop at that, it has relegated the status of women to the weaker sex as gender construction and identity made us believe. The weakness attributed to women in gender construction has been argued against in several quarters.

Wale Ogunyemi's *Queen Amina of Zazzau* is an interesting dramatic piece to deconstruct the gender bias in Nigerian or African society. It is a historical play which is sourced from a history of one of the greatest heroines in the history of women not only in Nigeria or Africa but also the world over. The play and its subject are obvious testimonies to the fact that gender bias did not originate from Africa, since Africans in history have given women

opportunities to lead, although by chance or providence. Queen Amina of Zazzau is one out of many examples of women heroines in Nigeria. Other important women heroines in Nigerian history are Efunsetan Aniwura (Iyalode of Ibadan land) who was greatly respected for her courage and immense contributions during wars to save and protect her people, and Moremi of Ile-Ife who salvaged her people and land from the terror of Igbo marauders. Omodoko and Inikpi were also two great women that belonged to the royal family and confronted all odds to save their Igala communities on different occasions. The examples are numerous in Nigerian history.

Queen Amina is another example of a woman who served as a major factor that contributed to the growth of her community. Reading histories of these past heroines, one is impressed and surprised by their credentials as against what the West has erroneously established about Africa and how it treats its own women.

Wale Ogunyemi creates *Queen Amina of Zazzau* out of his astonishing and amazing desires for this woman in the similar vein that other playwrights such as Akinwumi Isola, Femi Osofisan and Emma Idogu, among others, have written about women personality and integrity. Ogunyemi expresses his mixed feelings about the personality of Queen Amina and how this has influenced him to write the play. In the author's note, Ogunyemi writes:

One morning in 1980, the calendar of the Federal Republic of Nigeria came to my desk....On flipping through, I came face to face with the alluring eyes of Queen Amina who once ruled the ancient city of Zazzau. It was an artistic impression of her through the imagination and ingenious brushes of Erhabor Emokpare. The brief account of her life under this impression jolted my psyche to an unfathomable desire to want to have such a beauty with unquantifiable attributes for a wife, yet I dreaded a one-night stand with her under any circumstance had she not existed before my time. What manner of woman was she? (v).

Thus, Queen Amina's history is astonishing for the courage, commitment and good leadership demonstrated by this woman. History has it that she came to power between 1588 and 1589 A.D. (Ogunyemi, v). It is the immense attributes of this woman that one is impressed with. Not only this, her kingdom under her watch extended impressively and recorded many achievements. Ogunyemi maintains that:

Queen Amina was a formidable woman credited with many spectacular feats romantically into legends. She is believed to have fought many wars and won them all. Through these conquests she expanded her area of jurisdiction as far as the River Niger, Idah, and Nupeland to the south; Bauchi, Jukun, Kwararafa empires, and Kano to the north. From many of her subjects, she exacted levies of eunuchs and thousands of kolanuts. A strategist for all times, Queen Amina is remembered for the walled camps she established wherever she halted during her campaigns. It is therefore hardly surprising that the famous Zaria wall is attributed to her reign (v-vi).

These enviable attributes are essential in the Nigerian society of today for our women to emulate so as to explore their qualities which can contribute at large to our society. Also, to serve as a counter-reaction to those who hold the erroneous belief that nothing good can emanate from women, let alone giving them the chance to lead.

Queen Amina, like other female heroines of the past, is exemplary as the history demonstrates to us. Her leadership qualities are relevant to Nigeria precisely and Africa as a whole. Wale Ogunyemi does not attempt to re-write history or falsify it; rather, he attempts to dramatise those qualities that placed Queen Amina of Zazzau in her enviable position. As a dramatist, he has the permission to do that. This is why he makes Queen Amina to kill Kububuwa snake as against what obtains in the history document. This is done to build further on the enigmatic personality of Queen Amina. Ogunyemi argues that:

Since she was said to be 'a woman as capable as a man! With a reputation for spectacular feats, which were shrouded in mystery, I have to bring the Kububuwa snake alive and make Amina kill it all over again for dramatic effect' (viii).

So, in the play, Queen Amina is given a required position that can endear her to any would-be woman leader to wish to exhibit similar qualities. It will also serve as a pointer to the position given to woman in leadership in the contemporary Nigerian society. At the beginning of the play, Ogunyemi uses narrative technique which is played by Priest who narrates the historical development of Zazzau and the character in focus, Amina, so that audience or readers would have knowledge of what they will see or meet in the play proper. The narrator (Priest) says:

Amina learnt statecraft from her grandfather, so she went to practice with swords, bow, and arrows and spears. She learnt military tactics and logistics. While all girls were attached to their mothers or grandmothers, thereby acquiring the skills usually associated with that sex, Amina attached herself to her grandfather, and by identifying herself with the Court, began to acquire different skills normally unexpected of girls...Her interest in war was beyond imagination. In courage and bravery, she excelled. (2-3).

The implication of the above for the construction of gender identity of Queen Amina is the significance of social influence on the making of a man or woman within a given cultural context. Amina deviates from the norm of feminine conscription into the culture of silence and docility by daring the known and familiar terrains of men – love for warfare and hegemonic leadership.

Amina, in the play, sees herself as a "he-woman" and because of this realisation it is impossible for her to take a husband despite all the offers from noble men near and far. When the pressure is too much on her, she tries being 'a real woman' with no success. She realises that being under the control and influence of a

man will limit her power and influence over her subjects. Incidentally, she learns from history of the experience of Queen Victoria of England who lost her power and influence in marriage. In the play, Ogunyemi writes:

The peculiarities of Queen Amina's character are often stressed in legends, one of which reports that she habitually took a new lover whenever she camped during her wars, and as a rule, had them killed when she left. It is doubtful if she ever married (vi).

Apart from lessons from history, Queen Amina's decision not to marry is influenced by her initiation into the Bori cult. The cult forbids that any man that has sexual intercourse with Amina is forbidden to have sexual intercourse with another woman. Realising that the condition may not be easy to be met by any man, Queen Amina resorts to the unusual – having a sexual partner that must die after the act. This is a way of protecting her hegemony and absolute control over her land and subjects.

Amina has accepted to have a husband but when she joins Bori cult, the calabash she chooses changes her earlier promise to the elders to get married. According to the Priest:

... A covenant with the cult cannot be reversed. From now on her lust for men will be great. Her strength and courage will be immense. She will not tire easily. But the day a man shares her bed and afterwards shares a bed with another woman that day her power and authority will begin to wane. The consequence will be disastrous especially if the man lives, and freely walks the earth (15-16).

It is the striking covenant she has with the gods that makes her change her earlier promise of having a husband. We suspect that the fear of a man capable of being the source of her downfall stops her from marrying. Most importantly, as a potential Queen of Zazzau, she must not undertake or embark upon anything that can forfeit the greatness of her empire. Therefore, she is ready to

sacrifice her marriage to the glorious fulfilment of her society. This is an immeasurable commitment demonstrated by Amina to bring her kingdom and herself to the Olympian height. Amina maintains the following on her coronation day:

I am here to bring prosperity to our land and defend her honour. During my reign our land will expand even as far as to the Sudan, thereby opening ways for trade and commerce. The period of slumber has come to an end for you warriors. You must reshape your weapons which had been abandoned in neglect during the long reign of my mother (24).

Queen Amina establishes progress and peace through her campaign of collective fight and struggle through which they can achieve their desired goals and objectives. Amina makes them to see their expansion and victory as collective responsibility. Her words corroborate this point:

This campaign is not Amina's campaign alone, it is our campaign. You fight alone, you lose. We fight together, we win and share the glory of victory. We fight together, together we emerge victorious over those lands we traverse whether green or desolate. And if we must kiss the dust we do it together in the service of our beloved Zazzau. Make Zazzau great (28-29).

Amina also demonstrates fairness, justice and equity. She believes strongly that the success of the society is based on excellence rather than on injustice. In her administration, she takes care of all her subjects diligently as required of a leader of any community or country. This attitude can also be emulated by our contemporary Nigerian leaders both female and male. In her address to her council of chiefs, she posits:

I charge you with the welfare of our women and their children. In my kingdom, let no one regret being born a woman. Lady of the chamber and lady of rooms will hold briefs for me as well as for you in civil matters.

Mine is an open administration. Therefore, respect the dignity of the individual. Excellence should be rewarded at all times...Waziri, honour those deserving of honour and punish those deserving of punishment. Justice should be given to all (40).

The deduction from the above citation is that Queen Amina is determined to base her leadership style on justice and equity for all, irrespective of gender and social status. She believes that every individual should be treated equally with no preferential treatment. It can be argued that Queen Amina makes the statement by evaluating the social status of women before her emergence as the Queen of Zazzau. With the statement, it is, therefore, argued that Queen Amina wants to use her office and authority to re-brand and re-position the status of women in her kingdom. The queen also believes that there should be poetic justice for every misdemeanour and reward for actions that are within the norms of the society.

The only flaw of our heroine is her mantis-like attitude about her relationship with men. One would have expected her to get married to a sincere and faithful man: a man that would protect her mission on the throne rather than those seeking her downfall. After all, it has been prophesied that her lust for men would be great. I think this is her concern and worry, for she trusts no one for the protection of her destiny. Thus, she cannot do without responding to natural sexual desire. And her actions with men after mating with them is what Mairo, her servant calls "the ways of the praying-mantis".

In the Aristotelian concept of tragedy, a hero or heroine must always possess a flaw which will bring him or her down from grace to grass. This has been seen in the play as Amina's flaw brings her down. Therefore, the priest who plays double roles (narrator and priest) says that "she left a vacuum that her successors could still not fill. So, Amina died and Zazzau could be said to have risen and fallen with her ..." (89). In addition and despite this flaw that brings Amina down, she still possesses enviable qualities which can be emulated by any woman leader or man – she is daring, proactive, tactful and visionary. This is why she is able to hold the kingdom together despite her status as a

woman. She does more than what a woman is expected to do within gender stereotype and gender role definition.

Indeed, Queen Amina contributes to the history of Zazzau more than what male leaders of Zazzau had done before or after her. She proves that women have the capacity to live and survive beyond the pigeonhole of the culture of docility, invisibility and inaudibility. Queen Amina possesses outstanding leadership qualities that actually assist her in making the kingdom of Zazzau of her time and age greater than ever. More women in the contemporary Nigerian society can still record outstanding success in the current political dispensations if they are given the same opportunity.

Concluding Remarks

The essay has given diverse insights into the leadership qualities (such as justice, equity, sincerity, commitment and hard-work, among others) demonstrated by Queen Amina in the play in focus, *Queen Amina of Zazzau*, by Wale Ogunyemi. The paper further unravels the contributions of Amina to the development of Zazzau during her time which has made her become memorable. We also add that those leadership qualities can be learnt by both women and men in the corridors of power in the contemporary Nigerian society as the major problem confronting Nigeria is leadership problem.

Queen Amina in history established justice and fairness in her time and she also sacrificed herself for the glory and victory of her beloved Zazzau. These are the germane qualities Nigerian leaders can emulate to lead us to our promised land. The paper explores the negative sides of Queen Amina also and she is seen as stubborn, wicked, reckless and murderous, although reasons are suggested for those attitudes. The most important point is that Queen Amina possesses dual attributes, both negative and positive. This is the main tenet of New Historicism that considers historical account from diverse positions. However, the thrust of our paper is to assess mainly the endearing leadership qualities of Queen Amina within the context of the contemporary Nigerian society.

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