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Beware of Women: Analyzing the market literatures of Nigeria

In 1940s pamphlet literature burgeoned into a profitable industry in the market town of Onitsha, in Nigeria. As the pamphlets, also referred as 'chapbooks', were printed, and circulated in the market town of Onitsha this genre of literature came to be popularly known as Onitsha Market Literature. According to scholars like Obiechina (1973) Onitsha Market Literature is the 'literature of the mass' and it soared to popularity due to its cheap retail price and the lucidity of language. Obiechina further argues that Onitsha Market Literature represented the 'sentiments of an emergent urban culture'. The most interesting characteristics of these pamphlets was the didactic element, which dominated the thematic core of both the fictions and non – fictions. The central concern of these pamphlets was the intention of the writers to educate and guide the audience. The authorial intentions were sometimes clearly identified through the titles of the pamphlets; *Beware of Women*, *Why Boys don't trust their girlfriends?* *My seven daughters are after young boys*, *A Woman's Pride is her husband*; etc. According to Stephanie Newel (1996) Onitsha pamphlets presented a 'new female identity', which was a product of 'decolonization' and 'urbanization'. However, what structured this 'new female identity'? Who were the authors of these pamphlets? Were there any women authors, who were also instrumental in creating this 'new identity'? Around 1970s another form of 'literature of the mass' started making a mark in the urban areas of Kano, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna and Zariya. However, as Kano was the lead in the production of these texts the pamphlets, produced during this period, came to be known as the Kano Market Literature. According to Novian Whitsitt (2003) Kano market literature possessed aesthetic, thematic, and social similarities with the Onitsha 'chapbooks'. Thus, like Onitsha Market Literature, did Kano Market Literature also aim at creating a 'new female identity'? How did 'decolonization' and 'urbanization' affect the Market Literature of Kano? Therefore, the aim of the proposed paper is to find possible answers to the posed questions.

Works cited:

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