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**‘WITHOUT WOMEN, NOTHING CAN SUCCEED’: YORUBA WOMEN IN
THE OODUA PEOPLES’ CONGRESS (OPC), NIGERIA**

Insa Nolte

ABSTRACT

My paper examines the role of women in the politics of the Oodua People’s Congress (OPC), a militant ethno-nationalist movement of the Yoruba people in southwest Nigeria often understood as associated with the politics of Yoruba 'youth'. Case studies of women’s roles in Lagos, Ibadan, Osogbo and Ago-Iwoye suggest that while women play important roles within the association, primarily by enabling and supporting the vigilante activities of male OPC members, the particular roles and experiences of female OPC members differ greatly according to locality. Yet despite its strong local roots, the OPC aims at the creation of a united Yoruba nation, and within the OPC’s revalidation of traditional practice, women’s support is widely perceived as crucial. As a result, the pan-Yoruba politics of the national OPC leadership are associated with the expansion of women’s scopes of action. Although this takes place within complementary rather than egalitarian gender roles, women’s participation in OPC politics far exceeds their participation in the public sphere of the Nigerian state. Thus the OPC enacts an alternative nation not only in terms of ethnicity but also in terms of gender relations.