

Document A: Margery Perham (Modified)

Margery Perham was a British historian who studied African history. She travelled to Nigeria (though not during the Women's War) and wrote a book about Colonial Nigeria in 1937.

In Owerri province . . . there is a place called Oloko. Here a warrant chief, Okugo, under instructions from the district officer, was making a reassessment of the taxable wealth of the people. Okugo . . . sent a messenger [named Emeruwa] **to count** some of his people. This man entered a compound and told one of the married women, Nwanyeruwa, who was pressing oil, to count her goats and sheep. She replied angrily, "Was your mother counted?" at which they closed, seizing each other by the throat. A meeting of women was called and Nwanyeruwa's excited story was told as confirmation of the rumor [that women would be taxed].

From the whole countryside women poured into Oloko and proceeded according to custom to "**sit**" upon the man who had tried to assess Nwanyeruwa. All night they danced round his house singing a song quickly invented to meet the situation. Growing hourly more excited, they went on to Okugo's compound where his own people tried to defend him with sticks and bird arrows. The crowd mobbed him, damaged his house, demanded his cap of office, and charged him with assault before the district officer at Bende. "The women," said this officer, "numbering over ten thousand, were shouting and yelling round the office in a frenzy. They demanded his cap of office, which I threw to them and it met the same fate as a fox's carcass thrown to a pack of hounds." The women continued to camp in thousands round the District Office until Okugo was tried and sentenced to two years' imprisonment for assault. But this was not the end.

Source: *Perham, M. (1937). Native Administration in Nigeria. London: Oxford University Press.*

Vocabulary

to count: a process of counting people to decide who would be taxed.
sit (or sitting): traditional protest used by Igbo women against actions of men.

Document B: Interview with Nwanyoji (Modified)

In 1930, the British government assembled the Commission of Inquiry to investigate what happened during the Women's War. The commission interviewed 485 participants and witnesses. This is an excerpt from the transcript of an interview with Nwanyoji, a participant in the rebellion.

Witness: We were at a Church meeting when Nwanyeruwa raised an alarm, asking us to come and hear what Emeruwa had said to her. She said, "Emeruwa has said that I should count my goats and fowls [for taxes]. I told him, I am only a woman; what have I to count in the way of goats and fowls? Emeruwa then held me by the throat. With oil in my hands—I was preparing oil then—I held his hands and his clothes were soiled with oil. He ran and reported this to his father, and Okugo sent for me. Okugo questioned me. He asked me my reason for daubing his messenger with oil, and said that the matter would be reported to the District Officer." We sang and danced for Emeruwa and shouted upon him.

Chairman: What did you shout?

Witness: We shouted, "Tell us why we should be counted [for taxes]." He replied that it was Okugo who sent him, and said that women should pay tax. We said, "We do not wish to hear this from you alone. Take us to Okugo in order that we may hear it from himself." He took us to Okugo, and we sat outside his house. While we were there other women who had heard about the matter came. We asked them to remain, and said that we would prepare food for them. Food having been prepared, we brought it to them. Okugo did not beg the women to go away, as some of them had been injured. A woman was wounded with an arrow.

Chairman: Where?

Witness: On her cheek. We said to Okugo, "We have come to ask you why women should be counted and taxed, and now you have fought with us. We are annoyed with you because women are to be taxed."

Source: *The Testimony of Nwanyoji, March 14, 1930. In The Women's War of 1929 by Toyin Falola and Adam Paddock. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2011.*

Vocabulary

daubing: spreading on or over something

Guiding Questions

Document B: Interview with Nwanyoji

Sourcing: Answer these questions *before* reading the document.

- 1) Who created this document? Why was it created?
- 2) When was this document created? Does this affect the trustworthiness of the document?
- 3) What do you predict Nwanyoji's perspective on the Women's War will be? Why might her perspective differ from Margery Perham's?

Close Reading: Review these two questions before reading the document, then answer them as you read Document B.

- 4) According to Nwanyoji, what happened between Nwanyeruwa and Emeruwa?
- 5) According to Nwanyoji, which side used violence first? Use evidence from the document to support your answer.

After reading the document:

- 6) Do you think this is a trustworthy source? Explain why or why not.

Corroboration: Answer the following questions to compare these two accounts.

7) What are two ways that Nwanyoji's account is similar to Margery Perham's?

1)

2)

8) What are two ways that Nwanyoji's account is different from Margery Perham's?

1)

2)

9) Is one account more trustworthy than the other as evidence of what happened at the beginning of the Women's War? Why? Use the documents to support your claim.

10) What other perspectives, documents, or types of evidence would you need to further explore what happened at the beginning of the Women's War?

Guiding Questions

Document A: Margery Perham

Sourcing: Answer these questions *before* reading the document.

- 1) Who wrote this document? How might the author's identity have affected her perspective on the events?
- 2) When was the source written? Does this affect the trustworthiness of the document? Explain your reasoning.

Close Reading: Carefully read the language Perham uses to describe people and events to answer the questions that follow.

- 3) Based on the language that Perham uses, how do you think she viewed the protesters? Use evidence from the document to support your answer.
- 4) Based on Perham's description of events, who do you think she felt was responsible for the events that occurred at the start of the Women's War? Use evidence from the documents to support your answer.

After reading the document:

- 5) Do you think this is a trustworthy source? Explain why or why not.