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they illustrate the concerns of this paper. 'Universal' explanations for the subordinate position of women in society will be considered first.¹

**Biological Universals**

Biological universalists view women's position as a given, a natural order of things, reflecting an attitude that 'biology is destiny'. The traditional view on the position of women is exemplified by Evans-Prichard in his statement that in all societies,

regardless of the forms of social structure, men are always in the ascendancy, and this is perhaps the more evident, the higher the civilization ... it is a plain matter of fact that it is so.²

Another such view links the subordination of women to the very origins of human society. The emergence of 'society' is marked by the incest taboo and the exchange of women by men and this signals the transition from 'nature' and its chaotic competitiveness to 'culture' and its ordered relations.³ Thus women are perceived as passive participants in a social and cultural universe structured by men. More than that, they become objects which are symbolically exchanged in an 'ordered' society and culture.

An assumption of a biological or 'natural' division of labour between the sexes is inherent in more contemporary theories such as modernization theory. The persistence of a sexual division of labour in modern society is seen to be a reflection of women's 'choice' of occupations which are 'natural' extensions of their nurturing roles in the family. Women are, except for "brief excursions into the world of men", satisfied to play the "role to which nature has predestined" them, "of being wife, mother and homemaker".⁴

The biological determination inherent in these views leads to the conclusion
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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a comparative study of the position of women and their work in two Nigerian societies, the Hausa and the Yoruba. The purpose of the study is to make a contribution to two central issues of theoretical concern, 'culture' and 'economy', and the way they interact to affect the position of women in society. The paper demonstrates how the evolution of the position of women in these two Nigerian societies is determined by the specific way in which culture and political economy interact in a context of historical change.
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Introduction

There have been many attempts at identifying the basis of gender inequality. Such attempts have tended to locate the problem in either of two areas: in the realm of 'culture' or, alternatively, in the realm of 'economy'. This paper argues, on the basis of a study of Hausa and Yoruba women of Nigeria, that it is the dynamic interaction between 'culture' and 'economy' in a context of historical change that, in fact, determines the position of women in society and the evolution of gender relations.

This paper seeks to establish valid and useful criteria for studying the position of women in society and the factors affecting their economic roles. Such clarification of criteria has its significance for assessing the relevance of various general theories regarding the position of women. Further, at the level of practice, especially with the recent emphasis on 'integrating women in development', the identification of constraints on women's productive roles is essential for policy-making and for planning development projects.

This study focuses on the contrasts in the position of women in two Nigerian societies, the Hausa and the Yoruba, in a context of specificity of history and culture and current political economy. A case study of Yoruba women is included. Case studies from Nigeria are important for the following reason. In many Nigerian societies, there is no 'tradition' that women should be excluded from income-generating opportunities. In fact, the opportunity to obtain an independent income and to control the profits thereof have been considered more a right than a privilege and perhaps, more an obligation than a right. This is certainly the case for Hausa and Yoruba women.
The two societies share Nigeria's contemporary political economy. Both Hausa and Yoruba women are active traders in the long tradition of West African women. The Hausa and a significant number of the Yoruba are Islamic. On the basis of these common cultural and economic factors, one might expect that the position of women and factors affecting their economic roles would be similar in these two societies. In this paper it will be argued that the key factors affecting the economic role of women in these two societies in contemporary Nigeria are quite different. The reasons for these differences will be identified through a systematic exploration of the historical and cultural changes to these societies from pre-colonial times and also through an analysis of women's economic role, especially in trade, in present-day Nigeria.

This paper argues for the crucial importance of specificity in analysing the position of women, with a view to countering the generalizations and 'universal' explanations for what is assumed to be women's universally subordinate position in all cultures throughout history, prevailing despite political and economic changes. 'Subordination' is the concept used to indicate male dominance in gender relations. 4

The central argument in this paper is that the position of women in society and their economic roles are determined by the dynamic interaction between 'political economy' and 'culture'. The perspective developed here takes as the object of analysis not 'women' in isolation but rather, 'gender relations', namely, the socially constituted relations between men and women. 5

'Political economy' signifies the historical process of interlocking social, political and economic relations. 'Culture' includes the process of defining gender identity and gender roles. In other words, culture provides the social
and religious norms and values that constitute the ideological rationale for explaining why the relations between the sexes should be developed in a certain way. Cultural and economic factors form the matrix within which family and gender relations are worked out.

At this point, a question could be raised: is not women's role in reproduction a persistent biological factor that overrides changing economic and cultural conditions? Clearly, any attempt at determining valid criteria for identifying constraints on women's productive roles has to acknowledge the continuity in women's fundamental biological role. However, for the specific analysis of women's position, the different meanings of the term reproduction have to be kept analytically distinct. For the purposes of this paper, the term 'reproduction' is clarified by distinguishing three uses of the term. Biological reproduction refers to childbearing or the reproduction of labour power. Reproduction of the labour force includes two aspects: first, the daily maintenance of the labour force through childrearing and domestic work; and second, the process through which human beings are allocated to different positions within the labour process and become workers. Social reproduction deals with the reproduction of the basic structures of society.

Women are distinguished as social agents by their involvement in three distinct areas which are interrelated in complex ways. Because of their role in biological reproduction women are almost always assigned the tasks of childrearing and domestic work, which are aspects of the reproduction of the labour force. Further, women are also involved in production as workers. Hausa and Yoruba women function as both mothers and traders. In this paper childbearing is distinguished from childrearing and it is argued that the
allocation of the tasks of childrearing and domestic work to women is not based on 'biological' or 'natural' grounds but is a consequence of determinate social practice. This paper will show that the social and cultural allocation of childrearing and domestic work to women, which are aspects of the reproduction of the labour force and not merely natural extensions of biological reproduction, has tended to prevail despite changes in the productive structures of society. Women's involvement in such reproductive activities remains as the basis for the division of labour between the sexes and sets limits on the participation of women in productive roles.

Chapter 1 provides an examination of theoretical perspectives that give general explanations for the position of women in society. The theoretical views considered here are classified as those that emphasize cultural factors and those that emphasize economic factors as determinants of women's social position. The chapter argues that generalizations or explanations that claim to be universally valid provide only a partial understanding of the complex and mutually interrelated factors that affect women as social agents. This chapter also discusses recent modifications to these theoretical perspectives. These modifications emphasize the dynamic interplay between basic economic structures on the one hand and biological, social and cultural factors on the other, within the context of historical change. Hence they support the thrust of the central argument developed in this paper. The concept of the sexual division of labour which is used as a tool for analysing changes in women's position resulting from changes in the historical process, is also developed in chapter 1. The 'sexual division of labour' refers to the allocation of tasks in society on the basis of sex.
Chapters II and III focus on Hausa and Yoruba women respectively. The concept of the sexual division of labour is used to identify traditional gender roles. There are several difficulties with locating the situation of women in the two societies considered in this paper. There is not much sophisticated literature which specifically relates the role of women in the family and culture to political economy. The micro-studies pertaining to gender relations and women's roles are not linked to macro-studies which examine how productive relations are restructured to suit the needs of capital accumulation. The macro-studies, in turn, do not systematically examine the ways in which political-economic changes are translated into changes in the allocation of tasks on the basis of gender. This paper attempts to forge some links between micro-studies and macro-studies in order to demonstrate the dynamic interaction between political economy and culture. These two chapters give a historical analysis of changes in the sexual division of labour, resulting from key external factors such as colonialism and capitalist penetration, in order to demonstrate the specificity of how political-economic changes are translated into changes in the traditional role of women in Hausa and Yoruba societies. Further, the specificity of cultural factors is demonstrated by identifying the differences in the way Islamic ideology, which has tended to be somewhat autonomous, has affected the sexual division of labour in Hausa and Yoruba societies. These chapters illustrate the crucial importance of history in understanding the evolution of women's position with respect to both cultural factors and larger economic changes.

The relevance and applicability of the general issues raised in Chapter I to specific cases is tested in these two chapters by raising the following key
questions: Is there continuity in women’s role in reproduction from traditional society to the capitalist mode and does this form the basis of the sexual division of labour? Have gender inequalities increased with the increases in stratification along class lines in Hausa and Yoruba societies? (A related question is whether women have been excluded from the modern sector.) What has been the impact of Hausa and Yoruba women’s economic activities on the process of socio-economic change? Was the income earned through such economic activities used to reproduce existing social structures, or used to change the future social structure by creating a ‘transformed’ labour force through education or was it used for capital accumulation which could bring about or extend capitalist relations of production for ‘transformation’ of society?

Chapter IV presents the Yoruba case study and demonstrates the extent to which political and economic factors in contemporary Nigeria constrain Yoruba women traders. Further, the chapter demonstrates how political, economic and cultural factors interact firstly, to constrain women’s opportunities for wage labour and secondly, contribute to women’s preference for trade as an economic activity. The specific ways in which the continuing responsibilities of women in reproductive tasks affect women’s participation in modern sector jobs are highlighted. The question is raised as to why women engage in certain kinds of economic activities and not in others. Are there cultural and ideological barriers to women’s effective participation in certain kinds of productive activities? Or is it that women are constrained from certain productive roles because of their continuing responsibilities in the reproductive tasks of childcare and domestic work? Do these constraints arise from the preferences and choices made by women? This paper argues on the basis of the two cases
considered here that it is by examining societies in the specificity of history, culture and current political economy that such questions can be addressed both from a theoretical perspective and in the practical development planning for women.
Footnotes

1. For a good overview, see Reiter (1977). Some important reports/books to understand the current state of the debate on gender inequality and women's position cross-culturally are: IDS Bulletin (1979); Signs (1981); Critique of Anthropology (1977); Review of African Political Economy (1984) for articles on Africa; Reiter (1975); Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974); Schlegel (1977); Etienne and Leacock (1980) for the impact of colonialism. The following are review essays on the literature, pertaining to the anthropology of women and contain excellent bibliographies: Lamphere (1977); Rapp (1979); Rogers (1978); Quinn (1977).

2. This is exemplified by the UN Conference on the Status of Women in 1975 and the declaration of the subsequent decade as the UN Development Decade for Women. The Copenhagen conference of July 1980 formulated the Programme for Action for the second half of the UN Decade for Women. In most countries, the situation of women from the so-called 'backward' sectors of the population had worsened, in particular with respect to employment and education for women in rural areas and in the so-called marginal urban sectors. It cited attitudes of male superiority, the 'invisibility' of women's labour in the informal sector and in family settings, and the structure of the world economy as the major reasons for the failure of constitutional guarantees of equal rights for women. The 'Women in Development' perspective is also referred to as developmentalism. Some overviews on women and development are: Tinker and Bramsen (1976); Wellesley Editorial Committee (1978); Development Dialogue (1982); for an overview of the Africa region, see Hafkin and Bay (1976) or Bay (1982). Boserup (1970) is probably the most quoted book on the subject of women and development and is an important point of departure for new and more recent scholarship. Rogers (1980) is a feminist critique of international development agencies and programmes but is not a critique of the concept of development itself.

3. See the Appendix for the methodology used in this paper. An attempt was made to do a case study of the Hausa for the purposes of this paper. However, research permit was refused in the North over an extended period of time while I was in Nigeria. The Yoruba case study was done in the context of a squatter upgrading project in Osileye, Lagos planned by UNICEF. This project was cancelled due to the year-end coup on Dec 31, 1983 and thus the extent of interviewing was affected. The case study is used as qualitative data and not as statistical data.


Chapter 1 - Theorizing About Women

The position of woman in society is neither determined by the eternal, inevitable fact of her biology, nor can it be predicted from a consideration of the economic structures of society. This chapter argues that it is from an understanding of the specificity of the interaction of cultural and political economic factors in a context of history that one may be able to understand the evolving position of woman in society.

There are no full-fledged theories on the position of women in society. Out of the body of literature on women, it was necessary to draw out some theoretical perspectives and to clarify them for the purposes of this paper. The theoretical views have been culled from anthropological and sociological as well as development-related literature pertaining to women.

In much of this literature on gender inequality and the subordination of women, there is no agreement on what constitutes 'equality'. There is an on-going debate on whether there have ever been sexually egalitarian societies, mostly based on ethnographic evidence on hunting/gathering societies. There is also an on-going search for the 'origins' of gender inequality. The issues raised include a consideration of women's position in terms of women's 'status', 'equality', 'power', 'subordination', 'asymmetry' and other related concepts, reflecting the reality that the process of developing theories about women is still in a state of flux. Many of these issues are beyond the scope of this paper. For the purposes of this paper, the terminology defined in the introduction to this paper will be used.

This chapter orders the theoretical perspectives on the position of women
under two main categories. Under the first category are grouped those theoretical views which aim at providing *universal explanations* for what is perceived to be the universal subordination of women. The second set of views focuses on *economic change* and its effect on the position of women.

The *universal explanations* put forward by the first set of theoretical views are based on either *biological factors* or on *cultural and social factors*. A consideration of the biological and cultural issues that are central to these two theoretical perspectives is useful in studying the persistence with which women are allocated certain functions and roles in society. Anthropological literature on women is discussed extensively in this chapter because of its importance in illustrating the power of cultural and ideological factors in determining the position of women in society. However, the thrust of the discussion in this chapter is against the determinism inherent in the 'biological universals' and the determinism implied by the 'cultural and social universals'.

The second set of views provides a link between the process of economic change and women's position in society. These views are organized in groups according to differences in the issues emphasized despite the fact that there is considerable overlap in their theoretical relevance. Three theoretical perspectives are discussed here: the perspective put forward by *developmentalists*, the perspective of those who focus on the effects of the *processes of capital accumulation* on women, and the perspective of those who explain the position of women on the basis of *materialist concepts*.

The focus of analysis in developmentalism is on the ways in which women's involvement in production is altered by the process of economic change. For example, developmentalists have argued that economic development has often
had a detrimental effect on women's position in society. The theoretical perspective of developmentalism is relevant for this paper to the extent that it elucidates how, within a context of economic change, cultural values and ideologies that come with modernization have affected the gender allocation of roles in production in a manner detrimental to women in traditional societies.

The next perspective demonstrates how the existing relations between the sexes are adapted to the needs of capital accumulation. The processes of capital accumulation restructure production relations and these changes, in turn, are translated into changes in gender relations. Such a theoretical perspective establishes the specificity of the interaction of economic factors with culture. This is of direct relevance to the concerns of this paper.

The third group of theoretical views relates materialist concepts of economic change to changes in gender relations and explicitly links the accentuation of gender inequality to the emergence of class society. Recent modifications have emphasized the interrelationship of women's productive and reproductive roles. This shifts the emphasis from the centrality of production to the link between reproduction and production. This change in emphasis makes it possible to identify, with specificity, the complex ways in which biological factors and cultural values interact with productive structures in determining the allocation of certain reproductive tasks such as childrearing and domestic work to women. This theoretical perspective elucidates the fact that the allocation of such reproductive tasks to women, in turn, affects the nature of women's involvement in production.

The literature explored in this chapter for theoretical consideration includes case studies of changes to women's position in society to the extent that
they illustrate the concerns of this paper. 'Universal' explanations for the subordinate position of women in society will be considered first.¹

Biological Universals

Biological universalists view women's position as a given, a natural order of things, reflecting an attitude that 'biology is destiny'. The traditional view on the position of women is exemplified by Evans-Prichard in his statement that in all societies,

regardless of the forms of social structure, men are always in the ascendency, and this is perhaps the more evident, the higher the civilization ... it is a plain matter of fact that it is so.²

Another such view links the subordination of women to the very origins of human society. The emergence of 'society' is marked by the incest taboo and the exchange of women by men and this signals the transition from 'nature' and its chaotic competitiveness to 'culture' and its ordered relations.³ Thus women are perceived as passive participants in a social and cultural universe structured by men. More than that, they become objects which are symbolically exchanged in an 'ordered' society and culture.

An assumption of a biological or 'natural' division of labour between the sexes is inherent in more contemporary theories such as modernization theory. The persistence of a sexual division of labour in modern society is seen to be a reflection of women's 'choice' of occupations which are 'natural' extensions of their nurturing roles in the family. Women are, except for "brief excursions into the world of men", satisfied to play the "role to which nature has predestined" them, "of being wife, mother and homemaker".⁴

The biological determination inherent in these views leads to the conclusion
that gender inequality is immutable, a given. They ignore the economic relations in society and their link to gender stratification. This kind of analysis is static and ahistorical and denies the reality of women's substantial contribution in production in many 'traditional' cultures. The ethnocentricity and male-bias tend to obstruct the clear evaluation of the relations between women and men in society. Others suggest that the universally subordinate position of women has a cultural and social basis and not merely a biological basis. Such views are considered next.

'Cultural and Social Universals'

In this perspective, cultural systems are seen to be characterized by sexual dualism, with men associated with culture and women with nature, with nature being subordinate to culture. Man is freer than woman to transcend the limitations of nature through culture since he is not constrained by the tasks of reproducing and sustaining life. This theoretical perspective is distinguished from the previous one because of the link it makes between woman's universal subordination and the universal definition of woman in terms of a largely maternal and domestic role. In this set of views, such roles and functions become the basis for the cultural definition of 'woman'. Thus the explanation for woman's subordination is located in her role as mother, a socially and not simply biologically defined role.

Proponents of this perspective argue that, in every known culture, women are considered inferior in some way to men. In this set of views, it is on the basis of women's social functions, particularly in childbearing and childcare, that they are universally the 'second sex'. In cultural evaluations, women's activities and bodily processes are considered inferior and polluting; in the
political realm, women are denied access to power and decision-making.

Others also emphasize universal explanations although they accept that the position of women varies cross-culturally. However, on the basis of ethnographic evidence of pre-class societies, mostly of hunting and gathering societies, they argue that these do not exhibit equality between the sexes. For example, one author offers a material explanation for female subordination, arguing that male monopoly of heavy weapons and male physical strength gives men ultimate control of force, and provides the basis for the universal subordination of women. In yet another view, the universal pattern excluding women from, among other activities, large animal herding, large game hunting and plough agriculture is seen to be linked to the special demands of childrearing. Some of the kinds of activities that are seen to be compatible with the special demands of childrearing include those close to home, those not requiring concentration, those that can be easily resumed after interruptions and those that are relatively dull and repetitive. Other proponents of this theoretical perspective consider it more instructive to examine the ways in which childrearing is accommodated to women's customary tasks cross-culturally. But they maintain that childbearing and childrearing are the basis for confining women to the less prestigious private sphere.

This theoretical perspective has several limitations. Firstly, it resembles biological determinism despite the acknowledgement that social orders vary cross-culturally. An example of this is provided by Rosaldo who assembles a wide variety of instances in different societies to demonstrate that women are disadvantaged compared to men and then asks

Why is sexual asymmetry a universal fact of human.
societies? 10

She includes as examples of this situation, the fact that Yoruba women, despite their role in trade, must kneel to serve men; she also cites the case of Iroquois women who, despite their noted political role, could not be chiefs. She conveys through these and other related examples, an impression of consistently lower status for women but dismisses the fact that Yoruba women travel to distant markets for trade, earn and control independent income or that powerful Iroquois women install and depose their chiefs. She then posits a universal dichotomy between a male 'public' sphere and a 'female' private sphere based on women's domestic role and argues that this is the basis for female social inferiority cross-culturally. 11

A second limitation of the perspective discussed here is its lack of specificity regarding the variability of sex inequality in different cultures and in different historical contexts. One can acknowledge that, cross-culturally, certain common elements can be found in the social and cultural position of women and also that biological differences play an important part in the allocation of roles. However, the differential impact of biological and cultural factors on societies at different stages of development is ignored. These viewpoints tend to make assumptions about the differential participation of women and men in reproduction which reflect the ideology and reality of maternity in Western society. 12 They have an ahistorical orientation, a view of societies as somehow static and they tend to assume from recent and contemporary evidence, the universality of male dominance and the cultural devaluation of women.

Another weakness in this perspective arises from the determinism inherent
in these viewpoints. On the one hand, the social basis of women's subordination is articulated, but on the other, there is inadequate acknowledgement that this is less immutable than 'biology', despite the obvious links to biology and to the domestic role of women as mothers. What is socially defined can change as society's dynamics change.

(The implicit or explicit belief in the universal subordination of women, if not in its inevitability, continues to obstruct efforts to understand [and to transform] both other societies and our own. 13

The 'universals' regarding women's subordination have been challenged on other grounds as well. It has been argued that the male bias or 'androcentrism' in ethnographic literature perceives women in other cultures as being subordinate and this has led to 'universals' regarding the position of women. 14

Another aspect of male bias is seen in the way Western colonizers imposed, on traditional societies, their Western practices and attitudes towards women, thereby creating a devaluation in the position of women in indigenous cultures. 15 Developmentalists have also challenged ethnocentric and androcentric views about women in traditional societies and these are considered next.

Developmentalism

Developmentalism emerged as a critique of the prevailing assumptions about the beneficial effects of 'development' on the position of women. Developmentalists argue that development has had an adverse impact on women in many instances and that women in traditional societies have lost economic independence and autonomy as a consequence of 'modernization'. 16

This perspective is well illustrated in Boserup's pioneering study which
examined the impact of development on women's position in developing societies. Many ethnocentric assumptions about women in traditional societies were challenged and the detrimental effects of colonialism on women were identified. Material circumstances rather than naturalistic explanations were emphasized for the division of labour in these cultures and gender was considered to be a basic factor in the division of labour. The generalization that men are providers of food was challenged by highlighting women's fundamental role in agriculture, particularly in Africa, the region of female farming par excellence. Women had important roles in the subsistence economy and hence had economic independence and autonomy. Polygamy in traditional Africa had a material basis because it enabled men to control more land and labour given the fact that each wife was assigned a plot.

The colonial powers introduced modern commercial agriculture and promoted the productivity of male labour to the detriment of women. Female cultivators were neglected when colonial administrators provided training, agricultural extension services and modern tools for improving the farming techniques and the productivity of men. The gap in labour productivity between men and women widened as women continued to use traditional methods of food production in the subsistence sector while men's productivity increased with the use of modern technology in commercial agriculture. In addition to subsistence farming for feeding themselves and their children, women also participated in commercial farming, either as free labour for men or as paid labour for plantations. They however, did not share in the profits. Men also benefited from higher earnings from cash crops. One of the examples cited by Boserup is that of Uganda where women had begun the cultivation of cotton but the European
administrator had stated that "cotton growing could not be left to women and old people" and a decade later, men were growing not only cotton, but also coffee. The colonial administrators also created a discriminatory policy in education in the colonies which resulted in women's unequal access to jobs in the modern and service sectors. Such a development had the unavoidable effect of enhancing the prestige of men while lowering the status of women.¹⁹

The main thrust of this perspective is that in the transition from a subsistence economy to an increasingly commercialized market economy, women lost autonomy and economic independence by being left out of the modern sector. This is attributed to the ethnocentricity of the colonialists in their imposition of stereotypes of appropriate roles and occupations for women and in their discriminatory policies in education and skills training. The way to redress these disparities, in this view, would be to implement special programmes for women so that they too could benefit from economic development. What is called for by the developmentalists is enlightened planning and "intensified action to ensure the full integration of women in the development process."²⁰

The contribution of the developmentalists has been very relevant to the understanding of women's position. However, implicit in their position is an uncritical acceptance of a unique model of development - that corresponding to capitalist economies. Further, the internal logic of the productive system as a whole is not distinguished from the ideology of modernization and hence there is no call for a profound modification of the entire productive system.²¹ These issues are addressed subsequently.

A second, important limitation in the developmentalist perspective is the
inadequate analysis of women's role in reproduction, with its focal point in the household. By their emphasis on women's equal participation outside the home, they fail to identify the ideological and material underpinnings of the structure of the family under capitalist relations. Also missing is an understanding of the sexual division of labour in a global system of capitalist production, accumulation and expansion. Recent scholarship links the changes in gender allocation of roles to the needs of the processes of capital accumulation and these viewpoints are considered next.

**Capital Accumulation**

This set of theoretical views includes streams of thought that emphasize different key issues. One such strand has applied aspects of the 'dependency' paradigm to demonstrate that the dependent nature of Third World economies has intensified the subordinate position of women in those societies. In this view women's position is seen as an outcome of structural and conceptual mechanisms within the dynamics of the international capitalist system which restructure women's economic roles and relegate them to subordinate positions.

The proponents of this perspective criticize the reformist position of developmentalists who imply that women's full liberation is possible through education, occupations and family policies. The emphasis on the need for a profound transformation of the social and productive structures of society for an improvement in the position of women is an important aspect of this theoretical perspective. Another important issue highlighted is that the family maintains women as a reserve army of labour and that capitalist ideology is implicit in the family structure which assumes that women's position in the family is 'natural'. This viewpoint is well illustrated in Saffioti's analysis of the position of women in
Brazil. A limitation in this viewpoint stems from its primary emphasis on production relations and its inadequate analysis of the specific ways in which cultural values and the pre-existing gender relations in traditional societies may have interacted in a dynamic way with production relations in a context of historical change.

Another strand of views within this perspective has extended the analysis to include a consideration of the specificity of cultural factors in determining the content and direction of changes to the gender allocation of roles in society. This set of views examines the processes of capital accumulation set in motion during the colonial period and its varied effects on women's productive roles, depending on the specific historical context. Proponents of this perspective have argued that women, marginalized as reserve labour in the family, are drawn upon or discarded according to economic exigencies. Further, the pre-existing relations between the sexes in pre-capitalist societies are also adapted to the needs of capital accumulation in a variety of ways.

Firstly, the processes of capital accumulation affect the structures of society in general ways that affect both sexes. For example, the penetration of capital into subsistence economies in the context of the introduction of commodities and the privatization of land, in many instances, has led to an increase in class stratification, the proletarianization of the peasant population and the appropriation of surplus in new ways. However, the specific ways in which women are affected depend on the specific historical and cultural contexts. The general and specific effects of the capital accumulation process are well illustrated in case studies from Ghana and Ivory Coast and these will be considered here.
Among the Ewe of Ghana, the penetration of capital had several general effects on the existing production relations. The introduction of cocoa as a cash crop altered the values associated with the means of production, namely, land, labour and capital. Land was no longer an instrument of production for subsistence but a means of production for capital accumulation. There was increased utilization of non-household labour and increased private ownership and this resulted in increased stratification among peasants.

There were also specific effects on the sexual division of labour. The traditional division of labour in this lineage-based society reflected a co-operative structure for subsistence despite certain culturally legitimized inequalities. Changes to the sexual division of labour placed women in subsistence and men in cash crops. However, women's role in reproduction continued to be emphasized, deriving ideological reinforcement from traditional norms and values that persisted. The process of capital accumulation selectively restructured the division of labour to the detriment of women; women's work load was intensified in subsistence activities and their working days were lengthened. At the same time, men were drawn into the cash economy, first as cocoa producers and then also as migrant labourers. The consequence of male migration was that many households were female-headed, with women almost exclusively responsible for the daily subsistence needs of most households. A case study from the Ivory Coast is also useful for analysing the general and specific effects of the penetration of capital.

Among the Baule of the Ivory Coast, colonialism and capital penetration were decisive in women's loss of control over cloth, a valued item in the subsistence economy that contributed to women's autonomy. Women lost
effective control over productive resources, the labour process and the product. In the production of cloth which was 'owned' by women, the division of labour was such that women were responsible for growing and spinning cotton while men were responsible for weaving and sewing. With colonization, factory-made thread was made available and male weavers began to purchase thread for cash; thus women's role in spinning became non-essential. Further, the decision to grow cotton as an export crop required considerable preparatory work which, by the traditional division of labour, gave men the control over the product. Thus the pre-existing allocation of roles was altered by the penetration of capital into the subsistence economy. Again, cash crops became men's domain and women tended to remain in the subsistence sector and their autonomy was undermined.  

In some instances, capitalist penetration into subsistence economies has also created a new basis of differentiation among women, between the poorer majority and the wealthier households in whose hands agricultural land is concentrated. Women of the poorer classes, with virtually no access to land, have found it essential for survival to engage in economic activities. However, women from wealthier households have become more firmly enclosed in their domestic roles and have become more dependent on their husbands for their economic well-being and social status.  

The capital accumulation process has had varied effects on traditional societies at the level of the political economy and these have been translated into effects on the existing gender relations, often to the detriment of women. Firstly, by and large, women have been left in the subsistence sector and have been effectively excluded from the modern sector. This problem will be
assessed for applicability in the specific Nigerian cases of Hausa and Yoruba women in subsequent chapters.

Next, along with the increases in stratification along class lines, gender inequalities have increased to the detriment of women. This issue is explicitly addressed in the next section which discusses a theoretical perspective that employs materialist concepts to analyse changes to the position of women in society.

Finally, women's role in reproduction continues to form the fundamental basis for the sexual division of labour in both the traditional and capitalist modes and the norms and values associated with production and reproduction in traditional societies continue to persist. The links between the role of women in production and in reproduction are also explored through a discussion of recent modifications to the theoretical perspective presented below. We will now turn to an exploration of the relevance of materialist concepts to the central concerns of this paper.

Materialist Concepts

There is considerable overlap between this theoretical prespective and the previous one that was considered but the emphasis is somewhat different. In this set of views, sex inequality is accepted as a culturally-varying phenomena, the major differences existing between class-based and non-class-based societies. This perspective links the growth of private productive property to the dismantling of the communal kinship base in pre-state societies. The restrictions on women's autonomy are seen emerge with class societies. With the privatization of property, the administration of the household lost its public character and became a private service. Women and children became dependent
on the productive work of men in a newly defined public sphere. Socially necessary household labour became a private service and the wife became the first domestic servant, pushed out of participation in social production. This perspective is exemplified by Engels.\textsuperscript{32}

Others have argued that pre-class societies were egalitarian since they were characterized by a communal household and a reciprocal division of labour and also since women were not economically dependent on men. The subordination of women was due to the breakdown of communal ownership of property. Also, the public/private dichotomy is held to be inadequate for understanding societies not structured along class lines.\textsuperscript{33}

However, data pointing to the subordination of women in pre-class societies continues to be produced. Sacks, in her studies of four traditional societies in southern Africa, found non-class societies with sex-inequality and opens to question Engels’ position that private property alone forms the basis of male supremacy. Here, women’s involvement in collective social production was positively correlated with control over goods and services; in short, there was a material basis for social and political power.\textsuperscript{34} The dichotomy of male/public vs. female/private domains is held to occur only after women’s productive and reproductive capacities have become privatized.\textsuperscript{35}

This perspective has linked class and gender and this is of relevance to the concerns of this paper. However, the effects of women’s role in reproduction on their changing productive roles need to be clarified. In this perspective, the productive sphere was linked with reproduction by linking the introduction of private property and the need to pass it on, with the need to identify paternity of heirs through the institution of the family and through the control of women’s
sexuality and reproductive activities. However, the emphasis has been on productive structures, with the implicit assumption that the elimination of private property and the participation of women in social production would signal the emancipation of women.

Recent scholarship has pointed out that this analysis of the subordination of women is inadequate in two areas which will be examined next: first, the interrelationship between production and reproduction, and second, the sexual division of labour.

Interrelationship Between Production and Reproduction

In societies where productive forces are not well-developed and the future is of paramount importance and concern,

women as producers of the producers become the most potent of the means of production... and therefore subjugated to coercion and restrictions. 36

In pre-capitalist formations, the forms of production and reproduction of labour are of different significance than under capitalism. 37 Hence the primacy of the ownership of the means of production cannot be transferred from the analysis of capitalist societies to pre-capitalist ones since the concepts of ownership and control are of very different significance. 38 Rather, it is social reproduction that is central and crucial in pre-capitalist formations and the special importance of women's reproductive capacities for this, in some sense, necessitates that they be controlled.

In pre-capitalist formations, labour is not 'free', tools are an extension of the human body and so need not be considered analytically separate from the labour that sets them in motion and further, the labour process is not dominated as it is by machines under capitalism. Access to labour is controlled by other
mechanisms than the capitalist labour market. So in societies with such
different kinship forms, the social relations of human reproduction are crucial
in the allocation of labour to positions in the labour process both in the present
and the future. Meillassoux argues that in contrast to capitalism, in primitive
societies,

*power in this mode of production rests on control over the
means of human reproduction - subsistence goods and
wives*, and not ever the means of material production. 39

However, Meillassoux conflates under a single term, the different
meanings of 'reproduction' that need to be kept analytically distinct for an
understanding of the specific consideration of women's situation; for example,
the particular biological tasks of women are frequently conflated with the
overall process of social reproduction and this tends to hinder an analysis of
women's situation. 40 Hence, the concept of reproduction needs to be clarified by
isolating three different uses of the term - social reproduction, reproduction of
the labour force and human or biological reproduction. 41 Let us look at each in
turn.

The fundamental issue in social reproduction is the determination of what
basic structures of a society have to be reproduced for social reproduction as a
whole. The analysis of the dynamics of social reproduction could indicate the
extent to which women's position and male/female relations of a particular sort
are crucial for the reproduction of the social totality. Social reproduction
implies the transmission of control of resources from one generation to the
next. As we have just seen, in class societies this implied that the
institutionalization of private property required the identification of heirs and
hence the control of women.
The concept of the reproduction of the labour force is useful in determining the extent to which women's involvement in this process affects their position in society and the extent of its variation under different productive regimes. This concept is different from human or biological reproduction and there are two meanings within this concept that need to be distinguished - firstly, the maintenance of the labour force in the here and now and the related tasks of child care and the various aspects of domestic work, referred to as 'domestic labour'; next, the allocation of agents to positions within the labour process over time which is the process by which human beings become workers. For example, in polygamous households as in the case of the Yoruba, each wife is responsible for her own maintenance as well as for maintaining her own children in food, clothing, and in school.

Human or biological reproduction refers essentially to childbearing. An examination of the problems involved here will help the understanding of how women's reproductive capacities are controlled and also the importance of this control in determining women's position in society. While only biological reproduction is necessarily linked with women's specific reproductive function, women are almost universally assigned two other tasks which are fundamental aspects of the reproduction of the labour force, namely childcare and the complexity of tasks associated with the daily maintenance of the labour force through domestic work - the basis for the traditional division of labour by which domestic activities are seen exclusively as women's domain. Hence the division of labour by sex cannot be seen as a merely technical division of labour which distributes agents into socially equivalent places in production. The sexual division of labour and women's role in productive activities are linked to the
mechanism by which certain reproductive activities, not merely biological ones, are assigned to women. Also, control over women’s reproductive activities, in particular their sexuality, as for example among the Muslim Hausa by Islamic seclusion, makes the household the locus of women’s work.

A weakness in Meillasoux’s argument arises because he sees the control over women’s reproductive power as being the same as control over the differential allocation of labour power. So he assumes that women’s reproductive power must be socially appropriated through social institutions such as marriage or kinship which, according to him, are under male control; therefore women must inevitably be also subject to male control. This, however, does not necessarily follow.

What is lacking in this analysis is a clearly articulated understanding that the labour force is socially constituted and its reproduction is distinct from biological reproduction. To understand how the labour force is reproduced, it is essential to understand the means of allocation of agents to the labour process, the means by which certain categories of people become members of the labour force while others are removed from it. Individuals are also characterized by the position they occupy in the labour process and this has to be understood in order to understand the reproduction of the labour force.

A contribution of this viewpoint has been the demonstration of the centrality of human reproduction in pre-capitalist social formations and its link to the subordination of women. However, the control over human reproduction and over the reproduction of the labour force does not provide the total explanation for the restraint on women in their equally important role as producers. This analysis tends to over-emphasize women’s role as ‘reproducers’ and tends to
ignore their equally important role as 'producers', a role in which they are subject to as much social constraint.47

What needs to be understood is that it is not only the requirements of social reproduction that necessitate the control of women; rather, it is the interplay between these requirements and the cultural norms and values in specific contexts that determines the specific ways in which women are subordinated. Modifications to this perspective have been made in order to develop the concept of the sexual division of labour and to demonstrate how gender is a powerful ideological operator that mediates the allocation of tasks. These modifications will be discussed next.

The Sexual Division of Labour

In much of the literature using materialist concepts to analyse the position of women, the sexual division of labour is taken as a given, a 'natural' division of labour and it is then used to explain the different roles of men and women.48 In these views, the sexual division of labour has a significant role only in the characterization of primate communism.

(W)ithin the family, and after further development, within the tribe, there springs up a natural division of labour caused by the differences of age and sex, a division that is consequently based on a purely physiological foundation.49

Engels in his discussion of barbarism, wrote that the division of labour was a pure and simple outgrowth of nature; it existed only between the two sexes. The men went to war, hunt... the women cared for the house and prepared food and clothing... each master in their own sphere: the man in the forest, the woman in the house.50

However, this account of the development of private property on the basis of a 'natural' division of labour by sex, as determined by women's role in child
rearing and the separation of social from domestic production, was neither questioned nor was there an analysis of the inequalities arising from it.

Also, there is no articulation of the assumptions underlying this naturalistic explanation: for example, the assumption that male/female roles are due to temperament or biology. As Molyneux points out, in fact, production is organized on the basis of determinate social practices which in pre-class societies include kinship, mythology and ritual. Further, the notion of 'natural' conceals the existence of important mechanisms of social determination which articulate with 'biology' and prevents the formulation of crucial questions regarding the subordination of women. Therefore, the sexual division of labour is a social construct, irrespective of how it may have originated and while it is linked to biology, it is not founded on it. The sexual division of labour does arise in the first instance out of the specific demands of production but cannot be fully explained in terms of it. Rather, the sexual division of labour is given its specific character by the reproduction of labour power or biological reproduction which, though influenced by production, is nevertheless outside of it. This is of crucial importance in understanding the position of women, for women are distinguished as social agents by their involvement in these two areas which are interrelated in a complex way. So it is not biology in general but a particular social activity, the production of labour power, which influences the place of women agents in production.

Further, the allocation of tasks is mediated by a particularly powerful ideological operator, the social construction of gender identity, an affirmation and reiteration of difference, otherness. Hence, the content of the sexual division of labour varies from one environment and historical period to another.
and is neither 'natural' nor a given, nor a constant through history. So, the sexual division of labour is the:

system of allocation of agents to positions within the labour process on the basis of sex, and a system of exclusion of certain categories of agents from certain positions within the social organization on the basis of sex and lastly, a system of reinforcement of the social constitution of gender. 56

The social construction of gender and the allocation of tasks on the basis of sex, the sexual division of labour, are historically and culturally specific. For example, West African trade is not a homogenous structure; on the contrary, the history of the division of products, the availability of capital and the amount of income generated exposes a trade structure with clear divisions by sex and ethnic group.

Conclusion

It has been argued that the capital accumulation process affects the sexual division of labour in traditional societies; further, that the penetration of capital alters the political economy context in which gender relations occur and this in turn is translated into changes in gender relations, often to the detriment of women. As was discussed earlier, the capital accumulation process has different effects—women's role in reproduction continues to form the basis of the sexual division of labour, gender inequalities increase with increase in stratification in society and women tend to be left in the subsistence sector. These will be considered for applicability in the cases of the Hausa and the Yoruba subsequently.

Several factors must be taken into account in evaluating the changes in the political economy of Nigeria due to the processes of capital accumulation since
that is the context in which Hausa and Yoruba women are economically active. Firstly, there are differences in the 'key' changes to the traditional economies of Hausa and Yoruba societies – for the Hausa, Islam is a 'key' factor in changes to society; for the Yoruba, the introduction of legitimate commerce and cash cropping is a 'key' factor; colonialism for both.

Contemporary Nigeria is characterized by the increasing monopoly of social resources, especially oil revenues, by the Nigerian state. As we shall see, the capital intensive manufacturing sector has impoverished the indigenous economy and has contributed to the rising rate of unemployment and underemployment among Nigerians, both male and female. These factors must be taken into account in evaluating changes in the economic role of Hausa and Yoruba women.

As to the economic role of women in Nigeria, the relationship of this to women's reproductive activities must be examined. This is done by a historical analysis of the sexual division of labour among the Hausa and the Yoruba in Chapters II and III respectively. Firstly, as we shall see, the traditional societies differed, indicating cultural specificity. Secondly, the impact of external factors on the sexual division of labour and consequently on the economic role of Hausa and Yoruba women must be considered. The key external factors for the Hausa women of Northern Nigeria were Islam and colonialism; for the Yoruba, legitimate commerce and colonialism. Finally, it is necessary to examine the differing effects of the various types of economic activities on the process of socio-economic change; trade can serve to reproduce existing social structures or to change the future social structure through education of children within the context of physical and biological reproduction; or on the other hand, potentially it could provide profits for capital accumulation and for the
transformation which comes with capitalist relations of production. In this study of these two Nigerian societies, the Hausa and the Yoruba, the economic role of women, particularly in trade will be compared on the basis of these issues. The case of the Hausa of Northern Nigeria will be considered first in the next chapter.
Footnotes

1. See Quinn (1977:186-98) for different types of 'universal' explanations cited in anthropological literature. For example, she lists 'men's greater physical strength', 'men's greater aggressiveness', 'women's role in childbearing and childrearing', 'children's socialization' and 'women's compliance' as some of the factors identified as providing the basis for the subordinate position of women in society.


4. Patai (1967:10)

5. de Beauvoir (1952) exemplifies this perspective. However, she does acknowledge that historical circumstances intensify the subordination of women.


7. Gough (1975). This article is referred to here only to illustrate her argument that gender inequality exists in pre-class societies. She is close to Engels' schema in most of her analysis; Engels is discussed in a subsequent section.

8. Brown (1970). This work is also informed by Engels (1972).

9. Some argue that female status is not a unitary construct but is a composite of independent variables which are not always necessarily interrelated but could, in certain situations, be specified so. Sanday (1973; 1974) like Friedl (1975), also considers sex roles and status cross-culturally within the broad perspective of social tasks and requirements and looks at the economic variables. She measures female status by devising a scale of female participation and control within different areas and finds that females have low status when their productive activities contribute to less than 30% of subsistence but that they do not necessarily have high status when they make a high contribution to production. So, she perceives a curvilinear relationship between women's participation in production and their status. She concludes like Friedl that women's contribution to production is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the improvement of women's status.


12. Etienne and Leacock (1980:3)

13. Etienne and Leacock (1980:2)

14. The review essays cited in footnote #4 refer to articles with male bias in anthropology. See Molyneux (1977) for a critique of ‘androcentrism’ in Marxist anthropology. Aaby (1977) critiques feminist attempts to create a separate female reality and power to counteract androcentrism or male bias in anthropology.

15. Boserup (1970), Mintz (1971) etc. point out the differential treatment between men and women by Europeans. The issue of changes to the sexual division of labour due to changes in the social relations of production due to colonialism and capitalist penetration are dealt with later.


22. The ‘dependency’ paradigm emerged as an alternative to social evolutionary theories, both modernization and traditional Marxist, in order to explain the persistence of poverty and the lack of ‘development’ of Third World economies. Some theorists have emphasized the link between the development of the industrialized countries and the underdevelopment of Third World countries in the periphery and have emphasized the ‘unequal exchange’ between the two. Various issues affecting Third World societies are considered in the historical context of the world capitalist system and the incorporation of these societies into that system. See Baran (1959); Frank (1967); Amin (1976).

23. Leacock in her introduction to Saffioti (1978) summarizes key arguments of this perspective.

25. See Benneria and Sen (1981) for a useful analysis of the capital accumulation process and for examples.


29. Stoler (1977)

30. Young (1978)

31. Specific case studies employing this theoretical perspective also demonstrate how traditional forms of patriarchal control over women have been weakened and new forms have been introduced as a consequence of the capital accumulation process. See Deere (1977); Deere and de Leal (1981). It must be noted that the impact of the penetration of capital into traditional societies has not been merely 'economic'. Religious and political roles in pre-capitalist societies were also reorganized by this process. Okonjo (1976) writes about the way in which the 'dual-sex' political system of the Igbo of Nigeria was restructured during colonial rule from a system within which each sex managed its own affairs to one in which there was a great loss of political power for women. See Van Allen (1972; 1976) for more on the negative impact of colonization on the political position of Igbo women of Nigeria. Leacock (1975) discusses the impact of Jesuit ideology on the Naskapi; also Leacock (1980). Another area emphasis in this perspective has been an analysis of the position of women in the context of the international division of labour, especially with regard to the preferential employment of women in world market factories. See Lim (1981); Elson and Pearson (1981); Heyzer (1981); Wong (1981); Safa (1981).

32. Engels (1972)

33. Leacock (1972). Her subsequent works reconstruct a pre-colonial, pre-state ethnography for women in egalitarian societies in which neither women nor the products of their labour were privatized. In these societies men and women were able to be 'separate but equal'. Leacock (1975; 1977; 1978). Schlegel (1977b) also takes a 'separate but equal' position for Hopi society; she argues that their society is egalitarian, with male power no greater than female power, albeit in a different sphere. She sees male/female roles as complementary. In Schlegel (1977a), she sets out a systematic theory of sexual stratification. See Aaby (1977) for a useful interpretation of the concept of complementarity.

participation and status.

35. Sacks(1976). Both she and Leacock use the concept of 'state bias' and point to a conceptual flaw in the use of such a dichotomy.


37. Sacks has also emphasized this difference in her works.


40. Edholm, Harris and Young(1977:110). For critiques and references to Meillassoux(1975), see Edholm, Harris and Young(1977); O'Laughlin(1977); Aaby(1977); MacIntosh(1977).

41. Edholm, Harris and Young(1977:103-16)

42. Various types of labour, for example domestic labour are termed 'reproductive' because they maintain the labour force; domestic labour is not directly set in motion by capital and so there is a tendency to lump 'reproductive' tasks such as cooking, cleaning, etc. With biological reproduction of human beings; also because such activities are mostly associated with women's share in the division of labour, there is a tendency to see reproduction of the labour force as a specifically female activity, separate from production. Edholm, Harris and Young(1977) point out that under capitalism, domestic labour is not subjected to the law of value and so it can be treated as an analytically distinct category; however, they caution against transferring this concept developed for an analysis of capitalism to non-capitalist systems; it might be confusing to treat as 'domestic labour' the similar tasks by women in pre-capitalist societies where little or no labour is valorised. The domestic labour debate concerns itself with this aspect of the reproduction of the labour force, for example, see Beechy(1977).

43. Beneria(1979:209)

44. Edholm, Harris and Young(1977:108-9).

45. Edholm, Harris and Young(1977)

46. Meillassoux(1981:42-99)

47. Edholm, Harris and Young(1977:117)

48. For a detailed discussion of this and other criticisms, see Edholm, Harris and Young(1977).
50. Engels (1972:218)
51. Molyneux (1977:63)
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Edholm, Harris and Young (1977: 117-9)
56. Young (1978:125)
Chapter II - Hausa Women of Northern Nigeria

Muslim Hausa women of Northern Nigeria are kept in Islamic seclusion and are confined to their husbands' compounds. In fact, the strictness of wife seclusion in Northern Nigeria is greater than in other parts of the Islamic world. Even in Morocco, women use the veil to segregate themselves from men and enter the public sphere; but in Kano, women rarely go out during the day. However, despite the restrictions of seclusion, Hausa women in contemporary Nigeria are economically active, especially in trade and food processing.

In earlier times, they were active agriculturalists. In fact, among the Maguzawa, the Hausa-speaking non-Muslims, women still engage in agriculture in a substantial way; but the numbers of Maguzawa are dwindling rapidly due to twentieth century Islamization. This chapter will trace the historical changes to the sexual division of labour in Hausa society from traditional to contemporary times in order to demonstrate the crucial role of history in the evolution of the position of women.

Further, by analysing the impact of cultural factors, particularly with respect to the influence of Islam, and also the impact of larger economic changes, especially changes due to colonialism and the penetration of capital into Northern Nigeria, this chapter will show that, on balance, it is the continuing influence of cultural factors that constrain Hausa women in their work in contemporary times. It must be mentioned that there are only scant references in micro-studies to large economic factors and in macro-studies, to the effects of political economic changes on gender relations. However, this
chapter will attempt to make the links with a view to providing more than a partial explanation for the changes affecting Hausa women.

One might tend to speak of 'women in Islam' and generalize their experiences everywhere - whether among the Hausa in Northern Nigeria, or among the Yoruba in Southern Nigeria or among Islamic women in the Middle East. This chapter will argue, on the basis of a detailed study of Hausa women, that universal explanations are inadequate for explaining the specificity of the way Islam affected the position of women and their work in Hausa society. This study of Hausa women will set the stage for demonstrating the specific differences in their experience of Islam when compared to those of Yoruba women. We will begin with some general background material on Hausa society because, more often than not, traditional societies continue to be profoundly affected by the values and norms that have evolved in their history.

**General background to Hausa Society**

The Hausa, a large heterogeneous population, are settled mainly in a savannah region in Northern Nigeria and in the south of the Niger Republic. Hausa is primarily a linguistic term and in literature, it usually refers to Hausa-speaking Muslims who were typically organized in large, centralized states. Hill estimated that, in 1972, there were some 15 million Hausa speakers in Northern Nigeria which would make them one of the largest linguistic groups in sub-Saharan Africa. This definition ignores the fact that Hausa ethnology is complex, reflecting the association of two ethnic groups, the Habe and the Fulani and several centuries of acculturation. This definition also excludes the non-Muslim Hausa, the Maguzawa, who are scattered throughout Hausaland and also excludes the non-Muslim nomadic Fulani, the Bororo, whose
way of life precluded their incorporation into any one state.⁶

Hausa legend and history refer to the significant political role of women. The Daura legend, the legend of origin in Hausaland refers to the emergence of the Hausa Bakwai, the seven Hausa states, between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries. The legend embodies the common origin of the pre-Fulani rulers of these states. It appears likely that the emergence of the Hausa Bakwai signified a shift from a matrilineal to a patrilineal system.⁷ There are tales of women rulers like the legendary queen of Daura or Queen Amina of Zaria. Also, Hausa political structure generally had important positions which could be held only by women.⁸

Hausa women also had a crucial role in religion and rituals in pre-Islamic Hausaland. This role continues among the Maguzawa. Central to the religion of the Maguzawa is the worship of Iskoki, an infinite number of good and bad spirits, a number of which are known by name and have definite personalities and powers.⁹ The Borj cult, which refers to the possession by the Iskoki of their worshippers, is almost entirely the domain of women. Women also receive the substantial portion of meat from rituals.¹⁰

Islamic penetration into Hausaland occurred gradually over several centuries through the movement of Muslim traders into the Central Sudan. Islam was first adopted among the Hausa as a class religion by the ruling group; the faith was parallel to traditional religion and did not replace it; it remained chiefly in the urban centres and the masses in rural areas remained non-Muslim.¹¹ However, conversion to Islam accelerated among the Maguzawa after the British took control of Hausaland in 1907 as this period provided greater ease and security of communications.¹²
Hausa women also had important roles in subsistence, especially in agriculture. This was to alter when changes occurred in the pre-capitalist, pre-Islamic society of the Hausa. The effects of such changes can be traced through a historical analysis of changes to the sexual division of labour. This is done by starting with a systematic determination of the gender allocation of tasks in traditional Hausa society, which is designated by the society of the non-Islamic Hausa, the Maguzawa.

Sexual Division of Labour in Traditional Society

Women had crucial roles in production as well as social reproduction in pre-capitalist pre-Islamic Hausa society. The economic organization of the Maguzawa compound with the women supplying the bulk of subsistence was probably an ancient pattern for Kano and remains true even now for most of the rural Hausa of the Niger Republic.

Traditionally, the Maguzawa obtained subsistence from agriculture. The chief means of subsistence among the Maguzawa was farming on ancestral land, the gandu, held collectively by the patrilineal core, usually a number of brothers. The oldest brother was the compound head and was considered as the administrator of the gandu with well-defined privileges and obligations. The brothers and their wives laboured on the gandu land as well as on the private plots assigned to them.

However, it should be noted that all farm land was inherited in the male line and could only be owned by men; women were only assigned temporary shares for cultivation. The grain from gandu land belonged to the compound head and was sold and used for bride price for wives of the younger brothers and sons. Thus the grain grown by women's productive activity on gandu land was used to
reproduce the existing social system.

The sexual division of labour among the Maguzawa was such that the wives had the obligation to provide for their husbands during the long dry season by growing food on their small private plots; hence Maguzawa men have claimed that "our women feed us". Maguzawa women earned independent income from the sale of non-consumption crops and surplus grains from their assigned plots; they had the responsibility to clothe themselves and their children from such income. Maguzawa women were respected by their men for their role in food production and this was reflected in the higher bride price than for a Muslim woman.

Thus Maguzawa marriage, like marriage among the Baule, was not only an association for reproduction and childrearing, but also for production. Women rather than men, and younger rather than older men carried the burden of responsibility in this subsistence economy. This division of labour was based on a complementary structure where men and women shared in the tasks of physical production for the survival of the household rather than compete for goods and services. However, this did not preclude culturally legitimized inequalities along the lines of age and sex. As it has been pointed out earlier, women did not own any of the land, but they had traditional rights to land via the private plots allotted to them, such rights being of considerable importance in subsistence economies. Social reproduction was central and crucial in this pre-capitalist subsistence economy and women's productive and reproductive activities were essential for the reproduction of the existing social system. This essential role of women in traditional Hausa society was to change with the coming of Islam.
The Impact of Islam

The impact of Islam led to changes in settlement patterns, social status and economic structures although Non-Muslims and Muslims among the Hausa are practically identical in language and material culture. Maguzawa culture has been subject to a slow process of assimilation, whose effect on the sexual division of labour has been a dramatic change in the position of women and their economic roles. When the Maguzawa adopt Islam, they abandon a society characterized by patrilineages, hereditary spirit cults and predominantly subsistence agriculture for one with bilateral kinship, official hierarchies, occupational specialization, market production and exchange, and, urbanism.

Conversion to Islam had several implications for the social organization of the Maguzawa. The political functions of the clans lapsed as kinship ties were weakened. The extended family was weakened by the loss of religious functions as sacrifices to spirits by the compound head were abolished upon conversion. There was a consequent loss of the religious bonds among the Maguzawa. Further, the communal base of the Maguzawa compound was altered as was its organization as an interdependent unit. There was also increased segregation of the sexes: the household became the locus of women's work. Islamic ideology, as it was adopted in Northern Nigeria, provided the rationale for the control of female sexuality.

It is relevant to examine the impact of Islam on women's crucial role in subsistence. Under Muslim law, the husband is responsible for the support of his wife and children. Upon conversion, Maguzawa men made their women discontinue farm work. In fact, what Muslim law maintains is only that a wife cannot be compelled to work, not that she is forbidden to do so. Rather, the
forbidding of women from farm work reflects the values of urban Muslim culture in its move towards seclusion. The realities of rural life, however, limit the practice of total seclusion as women are required to assist in the planting and picking of crops and may also fetch water and go to the market.

One consequence of the cessation of farm work by women was that they were no longer assigned private plots from the communal gandu, and thereby their traditional rights over land were alienated. A further consequence of this for the economic interdependence of the Maguzawa compound was that subordinate males had to work extra land to compensate for the loss of female labour and had less time to work on the communal gandu which became reduced to a private plot owned by the compound head.

There is yet another provision in Muslim law that further weakened the interdependence of the extended family: a man's property must be divided at his death. This led to a fundamental alteration of the Maguzawa system, whereby the administration of the undivided gandu passed from the oldest brother to the next. After the advent of Islam, the ancestral land was equally divided among the brothers and each one then had a plot called a gandu which was not comparable in size or in function to the traditional gandu. The gandu was further divided among the sons upon the death of the father. So, among the Muslims, the compounds as well as property are smaller; the productivity is also lower due to the loss of women's contribution to subsistence.

It is relevant to mention that, among the Muslim Hausa, women do inherit and own land. It is ironic that seclusion per se does not prevent women from owning land but they can cultivate it only through the patronage of a male. The complexities of women inheriting land are difficult to disentangle due to great
variations in custom. A daughter is legally entitled to inherit land from her father, but usually receives only half of what her brothers would inherit. Longhurst observed in Malumfashi district of Kano that the proportion of land that is owned or held in trust by women is higher than the insignificant acreage directly cultivated by them, the rest being cultivated by males. Hill found in her study of Batagarawa village near Katsina that the proportion of mapped acreage farmed by women was only 4.3 percent.

It is important to underline the specificity of the interaction of Islam with traditional Hausa society. In this interaction with the productive structures, Islamization led to a shift from communal to increasingly private ownership. Class differentiation was accompanied by increasing gender inequalities and by greater segregation of the sexes. Whereas, traditionally, Hausa women were involved actively in the public domain, Islamic seclusion confined them to a private domain. With regard to women’s role in production, the impact of Islam led to a definite shift from agriculture to trade and diminished the importance of women in subsistence. The penetration of capital into this pre-capitalist society was to lead to the restructuring of Hausa society which, in turn, affected the role of women.

Impact of British Colonialism

Islam and British colonialism reinforced each other during the colonial period. Colonial conquest, like the spread of Islam, had a strategic impact on women’s productive role in the agricultural sector.

The colonial state assisted in the systematic destruction of the local textile industry in a variety of ways to ensure that the British Cotton Grower’s Association (BCGA) could buy up available cotton in Northern Nigeria to meet the
needs of the British textile industry. Firstly, the colonial state abolished taxes in kind or in local currency and insisted on taxes being paid in British currency which could be obtained by selling cotton to BCGA. The BCGA also pressed for monopoly buying rights. Since the local spinners and weavers' price for cotton was determined by conditions of the regional market and exceeded the world price offered by BCGA, BCGA aimed at destroying the local market. Legislation enacted in 1916 prevented the planting of other than the 'improved' American Allen seed which was more difficult than local cotton to hand gin, to spin and to weave due to its shorter staple. Also, its red lint was unsuitable for undyed white cloth and hence it was unpopular among the local producers and harmful to the local textile industry. The consequence of this was that peasants, farmers and traders became dependent for their livelihood on the metropolitan market for export crops.

Merchant firms attacked the local textile industry by offering payments in cheap imported cloth for certain agricultural commodities. This cloth was sold in the local market to get cash for taxes. Thus the massive importation of cheap cloth made the local products noncompetitive. Women's involvement in spinning as an income-generating activity in the pre-colonial period left them vulnerable to changes in the colonial period relating to the decreased profitability of the local textile industry. The expansion in demand for imported cloth and the establishment of textile mills affected spinning and weaving adversely.

What must be kept in mind is that items produced by rural African households were exchanged with industrial commodities produced under technical conditions unknown to indigenous craftsmen producing items of the
same use value.\textsuperscript{29} Cash advances were made to the producer and the amount deducted from the payment he would receive upon delivery of his crop at harvest. In the past, households were able to exchange simple commodities they produced for other items of necessary consumption but after the arrival of foreign firms, necessary goods became European goods obtainable only with cash.

The substitution of cash purchase of European goods for locally produced goods played a major role in the extension of the production of agricultural commodities for sale. This resulted in the extension of commodity relations within the household by altering even for necessary items of subsistence. For example, enamel pots and umbrellas were needed for bridal payment instead of carved calabashes and sheanet oil. European tea and sugar were needed to break the fast during Ramadan. Naming ceremonies involved large cash outlays for European goods.\textsuperscript{30}

After the early colonial period, there also was a significant change in the nature of \textit{kayan daki}, the dowry that women must provide for their daughter's first marriage. In poorer households, \textit{kayan daki} comprised local items with only a few brass bowls and it was not an overwhelming obligation. But by the late 1940's upto 200 enamel and brass bowls were a part of \textit{kayan daki} among prosperous peasantry. These changes were to some extent due to the drop in the price of imported brassware and the increasing money income and also due to the taste transfer from rich to ordinary households. It must be mentioned that, by the mid-seventies, inflation had made \textit{kayan daki} difficult to meet and women had to borrow extensively to meet this obligation.\textsuperscript{31}

An important consequence of the expansion of the cash advance system was
the increase in the commoditization and the differentiation among the rural producers and the creation of a market for food and labour in the rural economy. The extension of the production of commodities continued to drastically alter the conditions of production. The commodity relations in the household were intensified by the increased sale of labour and the purchase of food. Thus, with the commoditisation of production relations, the relations within the gandu were restructured, causing rural Hausa society to be reproduced in a fundamentally different form. These changes were reinforced by the rapid spread of Islam during the colonial period.

As for the sexual division of labour, women's role in production was altered while they continued to have responsibilities for reproduction. Women's role in agriculture was reduced. Traditional occupations such as spinning were rendered un.rewarding due to the processes of capital accumulation in Northern Nigeria and the consequent spread of commoditisation.

Thus, the development of the colonial social order altered the Hausa female economy, particularly women's role in agriculture and crafts. Women's involvement in trade increased as Islamization increasingly confined them to the household. A consideration of the way cultural and economic factors continue to affect Hausa society reveals the crucial and determining role of Islam and related cultural factors on the position of women and their economic activities. In fact, as we shall see, there is a link between Hausa women's perceptions of and reasons for work and their reproductive role and further, this interrelationship dictates the ways in which women use the income earned.

Aspects of Muslim Hausa Society Affecting Women's Work

Despite the norms requiring Islamic husbands to provide for their wives,
several aspects of male-female relations and the division of roles explain why women want independent income. Further, factors affecting the position of women and their work are inextricably linked to the norms and values in Hausa society.

The obligations between husband and wife in Islam are clearly defined. Islam requires a man to support his wives and children and for his wives to obey him. Among the Muslim Hausa, the husband provides food, water, firewood and housekeeping money and the wife is responsible for food preparation, childcare and domestic work. However, women are expected to provide for their own personal needs. According to one study, in Zaria villages, nearly ninety percent of the women interviewed provided at least a part of their own and their small children’s midday meal as well as snack items.

Women also seem to feel that they should not depend too strongly on their husbands given the situation of easy divorce and polygamy. Independent income and savings form a hedge against insecurity and smooth relations with co-wives. Polygamy is permitted under Islam. However, the obligation to financially maintain wives and children limits the number of wives a man may take in practice. Polygamy is a factor affecting women’s work because it allows women to share domestic responsibilities. Each of the wives of a man take turns in domestic activities which might include maintenance of living quarters and preparation of the evening meal; hence women are somewhat freer to engage in personal economic activities.

Divorce is easy and frequent and has long been so. The average Hausa woman probably makes three or four marriages before menopause according to one estimate. This perhaps reflects customs from the pre-Islamic past. The
automatic divorce of women upon reaching menopause is quite common. This may be a reason why, through their own economic activities, women try to be good providers for their children who may be their only social security in old age. Because of the frequency of divorce, it is considered important for women to have a measure of economic independence and also to maintain good relations with their own kin.

An important social reason for income is that secluded Hausa women engage in complex friend relationships such as baki or kawa with other women that involve gift exchanges. Baki involves doubling the gift amount by turns and when the amount gets very high, it is reduced by mutual consent. Women also have kawa or bond friendship with other women of equal social status in a formal gift giving relationship. Further, social norms are such that it is considered proper for a Hausa woman to have an occupation, āya'a, appropriate to age and status, in order to be a respectable adult in the community.

Most importantly, however, women generate income to provide kawan daki, a part of the dowry for their daughter's marriage and which will subsequently become the personal property of their daughters. The need to provide kawan daki is the basis of the mutual dependence of adult women and unmarried girls who work under the control of these women and whose labour is essential for secluded women's trade. The obligation to provide kawan daki is a key to understanding women's perceptions of work and, as we shall see, also to understanding how women's productive activities reproduce and perpetuate the very social system which maintains them in Islamic seclusion. The position of women and their work are determined by a combination of Hausa social norms and Islamic practices, the most crucial being seclusion.
Marriage is considered the most important institution and an absolute pre-requisite for adulthood for men and women. The average age of Muslim Hausa girls at the time of marriage in Kano is twelve. Upon marriage, their dependence on their fathers is transferred to dependence on their husbands. Muslim Hausa society is organized in such a way that there are many domains where adult men and women are virtually autonomous. There is very little daily interaction between men and women, for example with men eating separately and going out separately. There is a clear division of responsibility according to gender and this is maintained and reinforced by the practice of purdah or seclusion which also regulates women’s sexuality.

It has been pointed out that the control over women’s sexuality and reproduction occurs at two levels, the private and the public. The private has its roots in family traditions and customs. Its ideologies are backed by the family and other supporting institutions. The public level refers to the state apparatus and related institutions of political power which represent civil society but also function as its arbiter. In Islamic societies, the control over reproduction and sexuality are effected via Islamic ideology through the segregation of the sexes into separate domain. This in turn determines women’s position and the nature of their work in society. The household becomes the locus of their work. However, as Rapp points out, whereas distinction is made between the two domains, domestic and public, it is not their separation but their problematic interdependence that needs to be analysed. The female domain is maintained to oversee women’s sexual purity. ‘Private’ is not reducible to a general ‘domestic’ and its cultural specificity is based on the control of female sexuality. Let us now consider the cultural specificity of the practice of seclusion among the
Hausa.

The strictness and prevalence of rural wife seclusion found in Nigerian Hausaland is found nowhere else in rural West Africa. Hill emphasizes that these restrictions on personal freedom which are so much at variance with modern notions of individual rights are innovatory, not traditional.51

Referring to earlier times, it was observed that Hausa women ...are not kept in seclusion but are allowed to go about as they please.52

At the beginning of the twentieth century, only Mallams' (Koranic Scholars) wives were in seclusion in villages.53 However, seclusion is on the increase.

One reason for the increased seclusion of rural women in the twentieth century may have been the abolition of slavery by the British.54 Female slaves previously involved in agricultural production seemed to prefer seclusion in imitation of the wives of former masters.55 However, seclusion may be better understood in terms of the economic interests and roles of Hausa wives rather than in terms of Islamic injunctions despite the fact that, to husbands, prestige factors are important.56 Women may prefer seclusion because of the freedom they get to pursue their own trading and crafts and because of the time saved from gathering firewood and farming.57

The evidence, however, is not conclusive. According to Hill, for full seclusion or auren kulle, four physical conditions are needed – house latrines, wells, clay-walled compounds and donkeys to carry firewood. In North Central Hausaland, the water table is high and hence wells are cheap. Hill argues that the low level water table in Bornu might account for the absence of wife seclusion among the Kanuri though they have been Islamic for a long time.58

Seclusion is more strict among urban women than among rural women;
village women are more secluded than women from dispersed settlements.\textsuperscript{59} However, it is difficult for rural peasants and the urban poor to keep women in seclusion since women's contribution to subsistence is essential among the lower classes. Yet, overall, seclusion is increasing as it is a sign of high position in society.\textsuperscript{60} At the present time, seclusion is easily enforced since women face social pressures and financial burdens if they do not enter marriage and seclusion.

Married Hausa women are maintained in "auren kulle", full seclusion, and their day time activities are confined to their husband's compounds. Schildkrout argues that the acceptance of such strict seclusion is \textit{precisely} because secluded women do continue their economic activity concurrently with the myth of total dependence on men.\textsuperscript{61} Some important determining effects of seclusion have been suggested—first, that seclusion may put a secure 'floor' under married women by guaranteeing their food and shelter (since men are obliged to provide these for their wives) and also by providing them with time to carry on their economic activities. Next, seclusion may provide a 'ceiling' on the extent and nature of women's access to information and resources that would allow them to respond to economic incentives and opportunities.\textsuperscript{62}

During her active married life, it is considered ideal for a woman to be fully secluded. Thus Islamic ideology gives religious sanction to the dependent position of women. The political and social position associated with the economic roles of men is enhanced and, by defining dependence in terms of kinship, the importance of family is enhanced. Thus religion plays a part in curtailing the economic role of Hausa women.

Despite the constraints from seclusion, Hausa women choose to stay
economically active. Because they control children's labour, Muslim Hausa women are able to gain access to the market. They obtain a limited number of goods and services provided by Muslim women traders who enter their compounds. However, everything else they need must be obtained by a child of a male member of the household. Thus the household and a degree of co-operation with the kin-based family are a major determinant of these women's activities.

It must be kept in mind that even if women are able to earn good income, the constraints on the position of women tend to limit the transferability of economic gain into social or political advantage. This is due to the way 'status' is determined in Hausa society. There are distinct status orders regulating the placement of men and women in Hausa society. Given the frequency of divorce, spouses cannot share the same social position and indeed have independent status systems.

The variables determining women's status such as age, marriage order to a common husband, ethnicity and descent, fertility, marital career and the position and prospects of offspring do not seem to be related in any simple, consistent way. Since marriage is the only proper condition for Muslim Hausa women, karuwai or courtesans are of a lower status than matan dure or married women according to the formal status system although the latter may express envy at the independence of the karuwai. Purdah or seclusion has high prestige among Hausa women as it indicates the ability of a man to support his wife. However, it has clearer implications for the social placement of husbands, who decide what form the marriage will take and will likely have the economic responsibility for it. What is noteworthy is that women's occupational roles do
not define women's status except in a very minor way.\textsuperscript{66}

Women's mobility and opportunities are restricted by seclusion and this is one of the barriers to the diversification of occupations available to women, both in urban and rural settings. Some of the factors constraining women in urban settings are different than those affecting women's work in rural settings. We will consider each of these in turn to assess the extent to which cultural factors, as compared to economic factors, affect women's work.

**Hausa Women's Activities in Urban Settings**

Economic activities for most women involve participation in the informal sector which is characterized by intense competition and low returns. The opportunities for Hausa women in the local economy must be seen in the context of a division of labour based on ethnicity as well as gender.\textsuperscript{67} It must be borne in mind that important differences exist between Hausa and non-Hausa men: Hausa men are under-represented in the formal state-supported sector of the economy and also in well-paid artisan occupations and are over-represented in the informal sector, especially in petty-trade. In Gwagwarwa, a poor area that is structurally a part of Kano, it was found that the Hausa who are the majority are the poorer members of it.\textsuperscript{68}

In addition, the pattern of economic development has created differential distribution of wage employment and opportunities between regions and between ethnic groups. In the early colonial period, schools and industries were concentrated in Southern Nigeria and Christian missions were excluded from Northern Nigeria. Hence, administrative and commercial jobs in the North were filled by educated Christians from the South.\textsuperscript{69}

Remy found that, in Zaria, rural women who have moved to the city lacked a
household base for participation in the urban economy. These women often accompanied their husbands to the city but lived in isolation, having no friends or older female relatives there. Urban migration and the need for specialized skills in an urban environment implied the discontinuity in the transmission of women's roles. The trading in agricultural products and processed foods was more complex for rural women in urban settings since capital investment was needed for purchase of raw materials and also since 'customer' relations needed to be established for economic success in petty trade and in the sale of cooked foods or 'snacks', where a customer is either the buyer or the seller.  

In the indigenous economy, economic activities are characterized by transactions between buyers and sellers of very small units of goods and services, high degrees of product specialization and the use of short-term credit. Because of the large numbers of buyers and sellers, it becomes important to maintain good 'customer' relations. This is done by extending credit or by giving 'dash', a small extra amount of item sold, to show good will on the part of the seller. The buyer maintains her end of the relationship by regularly buying from the same seller. So access to 'customers' is crucial for economic success, whether for home-produced goods or market trade. Non-secluded women can have stalls in the market and this gives them a definite advantage over secluded Muslim women who are cut-off from direct access to the economic life of the community. In urban Kano, the market place is dominated by men and there is noticeable absence of Hausa women. 

Despite seclusion, women make clothing and cooked foods for sale and also sell small items. Processed or cooked foods or 'snacks' are the most widespread of Hausa women's economic activities, both rural and urban.
Women usually cook the evening meal and buy the other meals or 'snacks' from one another. In addition, women engage in pounding grain, hair dressing and some weaving which provide low and erratic income of about one Naira per month. 

Urban home-based crafts such as knitting or embroidery require access to a teacher and capital for initial acquisition of equipment. Sewing would require a period of apprenticeship which has an associated cost in addition to a substantial capital investment in a sewing machine. In Gwagwarwa, a part of urban Kano, few Hausa women had sewing machines or grinding machines. Secluded women also embroider men’s caps to earn money and usually learn the skill from other women in the household. In Gwagwarwa, this was found to have replaced spinning as an occupation compatible with other duties in the household. Embroidery of caps pays three and a half to five Naira (one Naira or 100 kobo is approximately $1.50 CDN.) for two to four weeks' work. Cooked foods may earn four to eighty Naira per month but very few earn the high limit of the scale. By contrast, male wages are relatively higher. Thus Hausa women are at a disadvantage in comparison to men as well as to non-Hausa women with respect to their inability to enter occupations requiring machinery or equipment or face-to-face interactions. These women are also at a disadvantage due to the small scale of their operations and due to their inability to accumulate capital compared to others. Secluded Hausa women had ambitions to be successful in economic venture but found themselves limited by circumstances.

Hausa men have no obligation to give their wives starting capital unlike, as we shall see, the Yoruba. So women raise initial capital from a variety of sources - from the household budget, from their dowries, from gifts usually
from their kaya or baki friends or from belonging to an adashi, a traditional rotating credit association to which members contribute equal amounts, the total of which is available to each member by turn. However, for generating an income, the vast majority of women use as starting capital the cash provided by husbands for domestic consumption. Most women do not cook three meals a day but send children to buy food from their neighbours. Some women buy food from themselves but most women buy two out of three meals from other women. 81

Cash from domestic consumption is channelled into a sphere of production and exchange by women who act as independent producers instead of as wives. Thus, indirectly, men provide the capital for women’s economic enterprises while intending to provide subsistence for their families. Women free their time by not preparing three meals a day and men subsidize women’s activities by paying a price for food which includes their labour costs. So, in effect, women are receiving payment for their domestic labour by cooking for sale and not just for personal consumption. The ability of secluded Hausa women to transform the domestic domain from an arena of unpaid domestic labour to one of production for exchange represents the persistence of West African women’s pattern of engaging in economic and market activity despite the prevalence of Islamic ideology which forces them into ‘hidden trade’. 82

Rural Hausa women also engage in economic activities and are also secluded, although in a less strict fashion. A consideration of women’s work in rural settings reveals similarities and differences between them and their urban sisters. For this, the role of women in the rural economy has to be examined.

Hausa Women’s Activities in Rural Settings

Food processing for trade is the predominant activity of rural women whose
participation in village commerce is significant. In one study of Zaria villages, ninety-five percent of the women interviewed reported that they were economically active, indicating the prevalence of a pattern of female self-employment for economic gain. Of these women, ninety percent were involved in food processing. In Malumfashi district in Kano, another study reported that two-thirds of the women interviewed prepared foods for sale. The significance of this activity is indicated by the fact that cash expenditures for ready-to-eat or 'snack' foods is an important component of rural spending patterns. Trade in snack foods is one aspect of a localized but fairly complex rural economy in which cash is used for exchange and labour is specialized.

The food processing industry is characterized by small scale, simple technology, single owner/operators using household technology, no formal standards for quality or quantity, consumer orientation, and sale of items where the consumers are to be found. In Zaria villages, the rural food processing industry was found to be well diffused through the rural countryside, providing locally-generated income to thousands of rural people, especially women. Food processing was compatible with the varying levels of skills, interests, capital, labour availability, social and familial constraints as well as the profit requirements of women. The largest proportion of costs were raw material costs. Wages and profits were less than thirty percent of the total revenue, with most of the labour input from the owner/operator along with that of unpaid children, especially unmarried girls.

There is a distinct segregation of tasks by gender in the rural economy. In agriculture, men are engaged in crop cultivation. Agriculture provides a limited amount of work for women who assist in the harvest provided their husbands
allow them to go out. But this is mostly done by poorer women and post menopausal women. Married women in much of Muslim Hausaland do not do a lot of on-farm cultivation but do receive payment for planting or picking done on their husband's farm. Women are generally excluded from non-farm occupations because of seclusion, lack of economic resources and also because of differences in inheritance. Women are also involved in some crafts and also in local medicine. However, women are predominant in trade.

Trade is characterized by a division of products with men as traders of agricultural raw materials and women as distributors of food products and as petty traders. Since trade usually needs larger capital inputs than say, food processing, older women are usually traders. In Batagarawa village, six miles south of Katsina city, fully secluded women traded in farm produce, especially grain, from within the privacy of their husband's compounds in what was effectively a market place. Only a few women, however, were involved in grain selling. Two-thirds of married women were engaged in housetrading on their own account and at least a half of the wives were involved in food processing and almost 85% were involved in spinning.

Though there are a few wealthy women traders, their social relations of production are the same as those of other women. There is considerable uniformity among village women in contrast to the inequalities among Hausa men. Women occupy a certain place in the production process, peculiar to women and to all women, one clearly linked to their role in reproduction. Women do not have access to the major means of production in agriculture and there are no significant vertical cleavages among them. While there are inequalities among women, what is more clear cut is the subordination of
women's work to men's work and the clear sexual division of labour ensures that there is no commensurability of tasks. 92

An analysis of the sexual division of labour in rural Hausa economy, not only with respect to who does what but also with regard to the underlying socio-economic structure determining the returns to labour, reveals a degree of differentiation among women. There was pronounced economic inequality in Batagarawa where it was the wives of kwarami, the farmer-traders, who were involved in grain trade. 93 Elsewhere as well, the wives of the higher class households such as the wives of the aristocracy (sagauta), mallams or merchants, were able to carry out income-earning work such as trading in grains, peppers and kerosene, or processing kuli and groundnut oil which had higher returns while the wives of ordinary households were not able to do so. They were also able to free themselves of menial tasks by hiring other women. 94 A consideration of the constraints on rural women and their reasons for work reveals similarities and differences between them and their urban counterparts.

Firstly, the range of occupations open to them, as in the case of urban women, is constrained by preference for self-employment, segregation, the need for compatibility with seclusion, responsibilities for domestic tasks and childcare, the need for easy entry and exit, illiteracy, lack of skills, lack of substantial capital or credit and also by competition from the modern sector. Each woman works individually as owner/operator of her own firm. In Zaria villages, the women did not work for others or co-operatively, pooling neither resources nor labour for mutual benefit. None of the women had been taught and each woman had developed her business skills independently through
experience. This variation in skills was reflected in returns to women within occupational groups as well as between them. Diffusion of new or better techniques was limited since seclusion set limits on new learning methods by observation.95

Secondly, women face a degree of competition from the modern sector despite the fact that, among other things, the low operating costs, low returns on labour and the lack of imported ingredients make snack foods prepared by women an important component of rural spending. However, in rural areas, the demand for 'modern' foods as for modern textiles is increasing. Women face competition from products such as groundnut oil, bread and sweets which are produced by urban-centred firms of different scale and technology. For example, factory-made wheat bread is sold along road-sides, in bus stops and in stalls. The government partially owns flour mills and the price control on flour encourages the growth of that industry.96 Clearly this is likely to have an effect on the sale of millet-balls by secluded Hausa women.

The demand for 'modern' products has increased even as there have been no changes in items produced by women.97 Further, this demand makes the future look uncertain since the income generated by the agricultural sector goes to the modern sector.98 The village economy is increasingly less self-sufficient and women have less cash income and their economic roles are downgraded in a context where the alternatives are restricted due to Islamic seclusion, limited financial resources and illiteracy.

Thirdly, secluded rural women, like their sisters in urban areas, use children as intermediaries and their economic activities are confined to the local economy. They, like urban women, are also faced with a challenge to their
trading activities by the expansion of Universal Primary Education. In the last twenty years, the prevalence of children doing *talla* or street hawking has increased, perhaps due to the increase in seclusion or in women's non-agricultural activities. But Universal Primary Education has caused the overall enrollment of children in schools to increase and thus has reduced children's involvement in trade. However, proportionately more boys than girls attend school: for example, in 1975/76, there were three times as many boys as girls in primary school.

The consequence has been that it has become increasingly difficult for women to carry on their economic activities. Their incomes are lower, their activities are curtailed and women are more cut-off from information from the outside world without children around. Thus Western education directly challenges the position of women in seclusion especially among the poor and raises questions as to how Muslim Hausa women will continue to be economically active, given the variety of needs for independent income, the most important being the provision of *kayan daki*, the dowry for their daughters.

This is the case for both rural and urban women. As we have seen, the economic activities of women and girls are geared to the marriage system by the reinvestment of income earned into that system through *kayan daki*. Thus women's work cannot be understood as an end in itself nor as a 'means of making a living' but rather as a means towards the realization of Islamic and Hausa ideals regarding marriage, family and the ideal status of Muslim women. Thus the street trading or *talla* of girls and the 'work' of married women are not a means of subsistence but are a means of obtaining *kayan daki*, the *sine qua non* of entry into the marriage system.
One is left with the question: what are the consequences of Western education for Hausa women? Since education removes girls from doing *tala* and assisting secluded women in trade, it has the potential of altering women's role in reproducing the marriage system that maintains them in seclusion. However, it appears that Western education may be only an alternate means to *tala* to obtain dowry and marriage, as the dowry may be met by the grooms themselves with larger courting gifts. Examples from urban case studies examine the effects of Western education on women's economic roles.

In a study of two wards of Kano, Kuruwa and Kofar Mozugal, there is evidence that there were differences in education and work among girls, reflecting differences in men's occupations. In Kuruwa, the men had salaried civil service jobs and girls rarely did *tala* but attended school and few women traded. In Kofar Mozugal on the other hand, men were involved in mercantile activities, the girls did *tala* and women engaged in 'trade'.

Both groups shared the same ideological commitment to Islamic ideals. Although the roles of women and girls reflected these ideals of early marriage and seclusion, they were also complementary to men's economic roles and reflected a degree of divergence. Thus one began to note the reflection of class differentiation on women's independent economic activities. The girls and women among the salaried classes were more dependent on men and did not engage in trading activities extensively.

What is clear is that in Kuruwa, women were more dependent financially on husbands and children were more likely to attend school. In Kofar Mozugal, women were more dependent on children for trade. It is ironic that it was in Kuruwa that purdah was more strictly enforced in the very context in which
Western education for girls was accepted while women’s occupations were limited and *talla* prohibited for girls. However, the differences between the situation of women in the two wards was negated because even where women earned independent income, they just reinvested it back into the marriage system only to reproduce the existing social system.

However, the variations in women’s economic activities do not alter the position of women vis-à-vis men in the socio-political structure of society as a whole since the definition of women’s position in Muslim Hausa society is based primarily on the sexuality and reproductive role of women rather than on their productive roles.  

Another study of women in Katsina also examined the situation of women in two wards - Yarinci in which many men had salaried occupations and Marina, where men were involved in a variety of occupations such as trading, dyeing and government jobs. Social and occupational differences in household composition again affected economic activities of women and women’s dependence on husbands. Women in Yarinci tended to give up their occupations reflecting values in which the ultimate demonstration of position and wealth was the non-utilization of time for personal economic advantage.  

An important determinant of wives’ status was the husband’s position and, in wealthy households, a number of servants were employed to help women. There were a greater range of occupations to be found among Marina women. Again, education was seen as a way for girls to marry well. But education for girls in both cases did not necessarily translate into other kinds of occupations, for example in the formal sector, but rather, served as an alternative to traditional ways of securing an acceptable marriage partner.
The above examples seem to indicate that the prevalence of Islamic ideology continues to determine women's position in society and their ability to transform the social structure instead of reproducing the very structure that confines them. Yet, the case of rural Hausa women who undertook a strike against BUD, a Brussels-based, agribusiness company, raises the question of how subordinate Muslim women were able to act on their own behalf and succeed in getting better wages and why they did not choose to strike against Hausa peasants.

The increased prosperity for men on irrigation schemes such as the Kano River Project implied increased seclusion for wives, but women in kulle came out for harvest with their husband's permission. Hausa peasants grew wheat on the irrigated land but BUD, a large agri-business company, undertook to grow and market beans. Since it was considered different to work for male kin as opposed to others, most of the women on the bean harvest were older women over forty-five or widows. Farmer's wives, however, withdrew from agricultural tasks other than wheat harvesting. BUD used two older ladies as 'headwomen' to recruit women for the planting, weeding and harvesting of green beans. Women earned thirty to thirty-six kobo per day or one and a half kobo per kilo of beans while men's labour was worth two Naira and twenty kobo per day.

Some of the management staff of the Kano River Project also either owned private farms or rented them for growing beans. A senior staff member on the scheme management wanted to attract women to harvest on his own farm and so offered three kobo per kilo. This prompted the head women to demand higher wages from BUD. BUD refused and so the women went on strike. When BUD recruited women from a neighbouring village to resume the harvest, the women
on strike persuaded them to join them. So BUD gave in and agreed to new wages of two and a half kobo per kilo compared to the previous one and a half kobo per kilo. 107

It is important to analyse how Muslim Hausa women who are legal minors and lacking in public power were capable of such action. Of course, these women were a special group in some sense since most were older and more influential and also were village dwellers with close experience with KRP. Yet Hausa women are expected to defer to men in all things and they possess few rights.

Marriage offers both dependence and independence for Hausa women. Hausa women manifest a level of autonomy and independence and, relative to men, they appear as free agents as they are not embedded in kinship relations. They change households as a consequence of frequent divorce and remarriage; so there is opportunity for solidarity to develop among women, due to the absence of kin or marriage loyalties.

Women can be characterized as landless labourers, constituting a wage labour group, 'free' due to freer ties of patronage and dependence and also 'free' in another sense because marriage guarantees daily subsistence. Women are also freer to resist exploitation since marriage is a safety net. While women are not in a better position than men who are paid more, they are however, in a stronger position since they are freer. But women are not a rural proletariat. Other important work relationships exist for them. The perspective of gender and their role in reproduction is more important than their role as 'wage labour'. 108

A key question we are left with is why women in the wheat farms on the Kano River Project did not strike. Most of the women in the wheat farms were
farmstead rather than village women with low expectations and with a more active tradition in agricultural labour for the household head. They also had fewer alternatives like crafts and they were increasingly dependent on wage labour. They were also younger with dependent children. But interestingly, there was a total absence of men in the bean harvest for BUD and hence greater opportunities existed for female solidarity. Also, in the wheat farms, the gaps between men's and women's wages were legitimized by Islamic ideology and further, it was impossible for women to defy men who were kin or connected socially. Hence the household was part of the reproduction of structures of domination in the productive sphere. Yet, paradoxically, the household—and especially the economic security of marriage provided women with tactical mobility. So, paradoxically, the household proved to be the basis for the ideology that limits women in some cases but also 'frees' them to take action in others.

Conclusion

This chapter considered the factors affecting the position of women and their economic activities in contemporary Nigeria. It was argued, on the basis of case material, that the determining factors affecting the role of Hausa women in production stem from the cultural context rather than from current political economy of Nigeria. Further, women's perceptions of work and reasons for work were seen to be inextricably linked to their reproductive role in Hausa society. In examining the economic role of women, a key issue considered was whether the profits from trade were used for the reproduction and the perpetuation of the existing social structure or for bringing about social and economic change.

Despite seclusion, Muslim Hausa women are active in food processing and
trade but are confined to the local economy. Their income is cycled back into the marriage system that confines them and thus their productive activities are used to reproduce the social system. Even education for girls is a means of perpetuating the existing social system. Women enjoy a measure of economic independence despite domestic dependence but need children as intermediaries for their trading activities from behind Islamic seclusion. Universal Primary Education poses a challenge to this. While women's primary reasons for work is to earn money for kayan dokki for their daughter's, they also value their independence. In one instance, Muslim Hausa women struck against a foreign company for a rise in wages and won, showing that the situation is not static and that women can act in an autonomous and collective way.

At the present time, women's indigenous economic activities face competition from manufactured goods. As we shall see, they also face competition from men who are able to accumulate capital from wage employment and to invest it in trade and craft production. The material on Hausa women provides a basis for comparison of similarities and differences with the Yoruba women of Southwestern Nigeria.
Footnotes

1. Mernissi(1975)
2. M.G. Smith(1961:55)
3. M.G. Smith(1952:333)
4. Hill(1972:3)
5. M.G. Smith(1952:333)
6. M.G. Smith(1959:240)
7. Tringham(1963:127). A. Smith suggests that ecological factors may have led to the early migration of Northern peoples, providing the core of history to the oral traditions in Hausaland and Bornu-Kanem which are linguistically homogenous consisting of the Northern Chadic language groups. A. Smith(1972:150-64). Following this, Hausaland was probably characterized by small agricultural communities out of which the birane or urban settlements emerged. Tringham(1959:126-7). Between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries emerged some states taking their names from the great birane which became the centres of political power. Tringham(1963:106). According to the Daura legend, the Hausa Bakwai, the group of seven state-governing dynasties had a common origin as the descendants of the hero Abuyazidu(also referred to as Bayajida or Abayajida), who fled from Bagdad via Kanem-Bornu to Hausaland. He killed a sacred snake called Sarki and the Queen of Daura married him. They had a son called Bawo whose children were the founders of the Hausa Bakwai - Biram and Daura; Katsina and Zaria; Kano and Rano; and Gobir. The Banza Bakwai are the seven states within the field of Hausa influence - Zamfara, Kebbi, Gwari, Yauri, Nupe, Yoruba(Ilorin) and Kwararafa(Jukun). Greenberg(1946:12). State formation in Hausaland pre-dates the Hausa Bakwai; the traveller Al-Bakri indicated that Daura was a senior kingdom in the eleventh century. Ifemesia(1965:90-2); Hodgkin(1960:54-6) - from the Kano Chronicle in Palmer(1908). The slaying of the snake and the marriage of Queen Daura signified a shift from a matrilinear to a patrilinear system. Ifemesia(1965:94).
8. Barkov(1972:326-7)
9. Greenberg(1946:27-63)
11. Ifemesia(1965:94). Islam spread via Muslim merchants and nomadic Muslim groups rather than by military conquest; Al-Bakri reported Arab merchants in Ghana in 1067; Ibn Battuta found that Islam was in Mali in 1353. Hunwick(1965:117-28). It is important to understand the link between the avenue of trade and the avenue of propagation of Islam into the Western and Central Sudan. Greenberg(1946:5). Islamic penetration into Hausaland accompanied an opening of Hausaland to the East-West trade in West Africa in which Hausa traders became active and this absorption of Hausaland into the wider West African and Muslim world was

12. Greenberg (1946:9). He has estimated that, in 1921, there were around 120,000 non-Muslims in a total population of around 3.4 million in Kano. Greenberg (1947:194).

13. This section draws on Greenberg (1946;1947) to a considerable extent.

14. Barkow (1972:327)

15. At the base of the clan was the extended patrilineal household, the land-holding group. Among the Maguzawa, residence was patrilocal. They lived in compounds with the core of the compound consisting of a group of males related in the paternal line. Succession to leadership of the compound was collateral, going from older brother to younger brother and in the next generation, to the oldest son of the older brother. In former times, the household included slaves who were almost like sons or sons-in-law. Greenberg (1947:194); Greenberg (1946:15-7).

16. They laboured on the gandu land for four days per week and on their private plots, the gayawanas, for the remaining three days. Wives and married sons of the compound head also received such private plots allotted from the gandu land. Still smaller plots, the gayangayan, could be assigned from their private plots by younger brothers to their wives. When a younger brother's sons grew up and had children, it was often customary for him to ask for his share of the gandu. He then became a gandu head, allocating private plots to his wives and married sons. Greenberg (1946:17-8).

17. Ibid. The compound head provided equipment and seeds for all members. The grain grown on gandu could not be touched until the next rainy season when it would be used to feed those who worked the gandu the previous year.

18. They also earned income from their domestic animals, usually having received a goat or a few chickens from their husbands upon marriage. They sold goat's milk and eggs along with crops in the market. They also spun the cotton they grew on their plots. Brewing of beer was a major craft. Greenberg (1946:18-9).

19. Greenberg (1947) provides most of the material used in this section.

20. Greenberg (1946:13)

22. An interesting point made by Mernissi is that Islam does not advance the thesis of women's inherent inferiority; quite the contrary, it affirms the potential equality between the sexes. Existing inequality stems from specific social institutions designed to restrict woman's power. In Islam, woman is assumed to be a powerful and dangerous being. Sexual institutions such as segregation are a strategy for containing her power. Seclusion is based on the notion of female sexuality as an active concept. Mernissi (1975).


24. Hill (1972)


26. Williams (1976:19)

27. Shenton and Lennihan (1981)

28. Benson and Duffield (1979:15)

29. Shenton and Freund (1978); also Shenton and Lennihan (1981).


31. Benson and Duffield (1979)

32. The famine of 1926-27 and the influx of cash into the rural areas had an uneven effect with the more prosperous using the cash as productive capital while others were forced to buy food with cash and also to sell their labour for wages. Shenton and Lennihan (1981); also see Shenton and Watts (1979).


34. Simmins (1976)

35. Simmons (1976:6-8)

36. Polygamy existed in pre-Islamic Hausa society but had different implications. Women's central role in subsistence made them economic assets. Mernissi makes an interesting comparison between polygamy in pre-Islamic Arabia and Islamic polygamy. In pre-Islamic Arabia, marriage was of a uxori-local character whereby women remained with their own people. Thus polygamy could very well exist with a similar polyandrous right of the woman who could be visited by many men. Hence it had different implications for a woman's status and sexual freedom than the virilocal polygamy of Islam whereby a woman moves to the husband's household upon marriage. Further, in pre-Islamic Arabia, woman's sexuality was not bound up by the concept of legitimacy. Children belonged to their mother's tribe. Mernissi (1975:29-37).

37. In reality, many men are monogamous due to financial constraints. Pittin (1976) found a greater number of wives per married man in a higher income ward in Katsina city compared to a lower income one. 1.45 and
1.26 wives per married man respectively. Similar results were noted by Hill (1972) for Batagarawa with 1.3 wives per head of farming unit and 1.1 wives per dependent man.

38. Simmons (1976:11)


41. Schildkrout (1978:118)

42. These gifts are a very important source of informal credit. Longhurst (1982:99)

43. Simmons (1976:6-8); Benson and Duffield (1979:14).

44. Kayan daki is an indicator of status as well as a form of savings for women. Benson and Duffield (1979:14); Schildkrout (1978:118)

45. Pittin (1976); Schildkrout (1982:59)

46. Schildkrout (1982)

47. Schildkrout (1978:115)


49. Rapp (1979:576)

50. See Mernissi (1975) for an analysis of the regulation of female sexuality and control of women's reproductive activities in Islamic societies; seclusion in Hausa society is described in Hill (1969; 1971; 1972); Schildkrout (1978; 1979; 1982); M.G.Smith (1952; 1955); M.F.Smith (1954).

51. Hill (1972)

52. Robinson (1896:205-6) as quoted in Hill (1972:279)

53. Longhurst (1982:99)

54. M.G.Smith (1955)

55. Trimingham (1959:189)

56. M.G.Smith (1955)


59. Longhurst (1982:100); Barkow (1972)
60. Also the increase is due both to urbanization and to the conversion of the Maguzawa to Islam in the twentieth century. Longhurst (1982:100); Schildkrout (1982:74).

61. Schildkrout (1982:74)


63. Remy (1975:364)

65. The following information on the determinants of women's status is drawn from M. G. Smith (1959:245-6).

66. Schildkrout (1979:70)

67. Benson and Duffield (1979:113)

68. Benson and Duffield (1979). The division of labour in Zaria was also found to be based on ethnicity and gender as was the case in Gwagwara. Remy (1975).

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Remy (1975:361-4)

72. Schildkrout (1982:61-2); also by personal observation.

73. Remy (1975:364)

74. Benson and Duffield (1979:16); one Naira is approximately 1.50 Cdn. $.

75. Remy (1975:362)

76. Benson and Duffield (1979)


78. Ibid.

79. Benson and Duffield (1979); Remy (1975)


81. Ibid. See Ardner (1964) for a study of rotating credit associations.


83. Simmons (1975)

84. Longhurst (1982:107)
85. Simmons (1976)
86. Simmons (1975; 1976)
87. Simmons (1976: 10)
88. Married women do a lot of farm work in other countries like the Gambia, Kenya or Ghana, Longhurst (1982: 102-12)
89. Simmons (1976: 4-9)
90. Hill (1969: 399)
91. Jackson (1978: 27-9)
92. Longhurst (1982: 114)
94. Longhurst (1982: 114)
95. Simmons (1976: 20)
96. The irrigation schemes and the large World Bank projects have also given an impetus to the cultivation of wheat. Wallace (1980; 1981)
97. Simmins (1976)
98. Simmons (1975)
99. Schildkrot (1978: 127)
100. Schildkrot (1979: 131-2)
101. Schildkrot (1979)
102. Ibid.
103. Schildkrot (1979: 82)
104. Pittin (1976)
105. Jackson (1978)’s case study of the strike against BUD is used extensively.
106. The Kano River Project transformed the production process, accelerating the trends of integrating the rural area into the market economy. Farmers ended up with less choice regarding what to grow and how to grow on irrigated land and were dependent on inputs from the Kano River Project. The farmers were also increasingly dependent on BUD which undertook to market and distribute projects. Jackson (1978). For more discussions of capitalist farming in Northern Nigeria, see Wallace (1980; 1981). For more about the activities of BUD elsewhere in West Africa, see Mackintosh (1977) cited in Jackson (1978).
106. Jackson (1978)
107. Ibid.
108. Jackson (1978:31)
Chapter III - Yoruba Women of Southwestern Nigeria

In marked contrast to Hausa women, Yoruba women are not secluded despite the fact that a significant percentage of the Yoruba are Muslim. Yoruba women of Southwestern Nigeria are renowned for their trading activities and have been characterized as perhaps the most independent women of Africa. Almost all Yoruba women engage in trade and there is no separate status associated with it as for instance among the Nupe. Crucial areas of family life affect and are affected by women's involvement in trade. In fact, it has been argued that at certain points in a woman's life, "trade becomes the most important domestic duty." This chapter will argue that, in addition to women's reproductive responsibilities, the influence of economic factors have been quite significant in affecting the involvement of women in trade.

Some authors have suggested that Yoruba women contribute only a little part of the actual work on the farm while others have argued that there has been a tendency to underestimate the amount of female labour in agricultural production, especially before the 19th century. However, their predominance in trade is unquestioned. In contemporary Nigeria, Yoruba women have an overwhelming presence in the distributive sector but in a context in which the percentage of total economic activity represented by trade is declining.

Yoruba women have been traders long before the twentieth century and their importance in trade has increased in recent decades. However, there is a distinct division by gender along product type and availability of capital. This chapter will trace the historical changes to the sexual division of labour in
Yoruba society from traditional to contemporary times, especially due to legitimate commerce and colonialism, in order to demonstrate, as in the case of Hausa women, the crucial role of history in the evolution of the position of women.

This chapter will also examine women's economic activities, especially in relation to their reproductive activities, with a view to understanding the basis of the division of labour in Yoruba society. The extent to which cultural and political economic factors affect Yoruba women's work will be assessed. A consideration of how Yoruba women use the income they earn will indicate whether their economic activities have the potential for transforming existing productive structures of society.

Yoruba women had an important role in subsistence in traditional society. We will begin with a consideration of the division of labour in traditional society in order to examine historical changes to it due to capitalist penetration.

In the Yoruba subsistence economy, as in other West African lineage-based societies, the division of labour was dictated by the tasks of production and reproduction for lineage survival. The lineage was an instrument of production, and output was distributed to members through the head of the lineage. All members shared the tasks of agricultural production; men doing the heavy work of clearing the bush and women and children planting and weeding. Women also harvested, processed and marketed the products. Women's help on the farm was strongly institutionalized in traditional Yoruba social structure and Yoruba women were engaged in production and reproduction through farm work as well as in trade. The amount of female labour in agricultural production before the
19th century has been somewhat underestimated in the literature. In fact, the economic transformations of that century had significant effects on the sexual division of labour in Yoruba society.

In the Yoruba subsistence economy, women's services were controlled through brideswealth and also by rules that limited women's ownership of land even in areas of bilateral kinship. Land was passed through men and the usufructs of land were controlled by men of the lineage. As has been mentioned before, West African trade was not a homogeneous structure. The history of the division of products, availability of capital and income generated reveals that the trade structure had clear divisions by sex.

Women in the subsistence economy controlled items of subsistence, food, cloth, pots and so on. Men controlled the more valuable products of the farm, especially those that could generate capital. They also had exclusive control over long-distance trade items. Yet, the physical presence of women at the market was not a sufficient indicator of their status in the community. The bulk of items for sale by women was surplus from their husbands' farms but women did not control the crops or their proceeds. Further, the division of crops did not encourage self-enterprise by women since women's crops were for consumption and men's crops were prestige crops with potential for capital accumulation.

As in other traditional West African subsistence societies, men and women in Yoruba society co-operated in tasks of production and women were responsible for reproduction. Although a certain level of inequality was culturally legitimized, the sexual division of labour reflected complementarity.
of responsibilities and co-operation for lineage survival. As will be shown below, when external factors affected the sexual division of labour in Yoruba society, men were in a position to exploit their position as guardians of lineage resources, values and status to create an even more inegalitarian structure.

**Impact of Legitimate Commerce**

It has been argued that the insecurity during the civil wars affected the sexual division of labour in Yoruba society, and in particular, the predominance of women in rural marketing. The civil wars have been attributed to the crisis of adaptation to small-holder production of export crops in the era of legitimate commerce. It had been unsafe for men to move away from their farms while women had enjoyed immunity from attacks. However, others argue that women have been involved in the distribution of goods for as long as the Yoruba have lived in urban areas and that the historical precedent for present day trade by women can be found in their participation in the markets within the towns in which they resided. The conditions of insecurity in the 19th century could have indeed intensified the already existing pattern of the sexual division of labour. Johnson implies that most of the traders in the markets were women though he does not state so explicitly -

> in the marketplace every seller sweeps the space around her stall.

Some women were also engaged in inter-urban trade along with men.

When legitimate commerce was introduced, land ceased to be an instrument of production for subsistence but became a basis for capital accumulation. Paid labour began to replace family labour in areas of cash-crop
production. Differentiation began to occur between cash crop farmers and peasant farmers. These changes signalled the transformation from communal, collective ownership to private property and the accompanying changes in the relations of production. These changes in property relations were similar to changes from communal to private ownership that occurred in Hausa society due to Islam and capitalist penetration.

With the introduction of legitimate commerce and the emergence of paid labour, women were remunerated for their labour in cash crop production initially in kind and later in cash. The differentiation between cash-crop farmers and subsistence farmers was also reflected in differences between the women. Wives of cash-crop farmers were able to invest the remuneration they received for their labour in trade which gave them an edge over the wives of peasant farmers. This difference is comparable to the differences in the capital invested and income earned as well as in the returns to labour among Hausa women based on their class position that has been referred to in the last chapter. As guardians of family resources, especially land, men were in a more advantageous position vis-à-vis capital for cash-crop production as well as for entry into trade as middlemen. With the commercialization of land and the emphasis on private property, only a few women had access to cash-crop production, although some women inherited cocoa-farms in bilateral kinship areas.

Because men controlled women’s labour and reproduction in the subsistence economy and also had control over capital, land and family labour, they were in an advantageous position when foreign technology was
introduced. Traditional values continued to persist with the emphasis on women's role in reproduction and thus provided the basis for the SDL when external factors affected traditional society. Missionaries came to Yorubaland in the wake of legitimate commerce; while the British missionaries had in fact established some mission schools for girls, these schools emphasized European domestic skills and hygiene to train the girls to be Christian wives thus reinforcing the emphasis on women's role in reproduction. The initial penetration of capital was followed by the imposition of formal colonial rule which expanded the opportunities in trade for men and women, but in a differential way due to the pre-existing division of labour in Yoruba society.

The Impact of British Colonialism

Yoruba women first entered paid employment in the late nineteenth century as porters to and from the hinterland to the coast. They were also a part of the forced labour used for construction by the colonial regime. Changes in the scale of trade and in the commodities traded along with changes in agricultural production had a significant impact on the sexual division of labour, particularly on women's participation in trade relative to other economic activities. The development of produce trade created many intermediaries in the buying and selling of goods by mercantile firms—a complex hierarchy of traders developed. As was shown above, men had greater access to capital when changes occurred in traditional society and hence they, rather than women, controlled whole-sale trade. Such large-scale trade gave men the opportunity to acquire managerial experience and to accumulate capital which placed them in a position to take over from European commercial houses after independence.
However, women continued to dominate small-scale retail trade in the open market and in small retail shops.  

Formal education primarily by missions, expanded rapidly in Yorubaland but women had less access to education, skills and employment due to their continued involvement in reproductive activities and due to the persistence of a value structure which emphasized their role in reproduction. Colonialism required intermediaries in commerce and administration whose education and capital made them privileged relative to peasants, traders and craftsmen. Mission activities and colonial administration required and provided the development of education and offered opportunities for salaried employment, mostly to men, as teachers, clerks and so on.

The vast majority of men and women in Nigeria were excluded from access to gainful employment in the formal sector and in the state bureaucracy. Most of the women were unable to pursue occupations other than trade or agriculture due to lack of education and skills and thus they have been constrained by their structural position in the economy and by their role in reproduction and in the household. Next the economic activities of Yoruba women will be examined with a view to determining their reasons for work and the factors that affect their work.

Economic Activities of Yoruba Women

According to one view, Yoruba women work precisely to fulfill their roles within the family. However, Yoruba women also play an important role in the distributive sector. We will examine women's reasons for work. This section will also analyse the ways in which Yoruba women use the income they earn; to
reproduce the social system as Hausa women seem to or to transform it in some manner. Various norms and values of Yoruba culture affect women's involvement in trade. We will begin with a consideration of these factors in order to identify constraints on women's economic roles. An argument will be made that, unlike in the case of Muslim Hausa women, Islamic practices are not the determining constraints on Yoruba women's economic activities.

Although many Yoruba women are Muslim, they are not as secluded as their sisters are in Hausaland; in Yorubaland, Islam has always been a personal religion unlike in Hausaland where it has been a state religion. Islamic regulations of marriage, divorce and inheritance are not followed and seclusion is not practised. Hence Yoruba women's mobility is not restricted, pointing to the likelihood that women were already established traders when Islam arrived in Yorubaland. As we shall see, their mobility allows them to engage in trade in a different way than Hausa women.

Marriage among the Yoruba is exogamous and virilocial. Upon payment of brideswealth and the completion of marriage ceremonies, a man gains the right to his wife's domestic labour and to sole sexual access to her and he also has the right to the children borne by her during the term of her marriage. Prior to marriage, a woman may have been working for or with another woman but upon marriage, she usually begins to trade on her own. Upon marriage, it is the duty of the husband to supply his wife with the capital needed for starting a trade. In reality, many women begin trading with money they saved while working with other women or by purchasing initial stock on credit since only a few women
receive their initial starting capital from husbands. Women follow their own trade independent of their husbands and the income earned is their own property. 32

Given the situation of polygamy and divorce, Yoruba women, like Hausa women, prefer to have independent income. Polygamy is practised among the Yoruba. In rural society, men often reside for long periods in their farms, away from their home in towns. This residential pattern and also the severe sexual taboos during lactation tend to foster polygamy. A recent wife may move to the farm with the husband. In a polygamous household, domestic duties are shared by the wives and this frees the women to devote more time to trading activities. However, the securing of wives was cited by men as their biggest expense in one survey and this certainly places a limit on men acquiring more wives. 33 Traditionally, divorce was infrequent. 34 Upon divorce, a man has the right to claim immediate custody of all the children and this may have been a deterrent to the seeking of divorce by women. However, in recent times, the divorce rate has been high. This might be due to women's economic independence as well as due to their closeness to their own descent groups. 35

Trading is regarded as part and parcel of a Yoruba woman's overall role; although a woman is first and foremost a wife and a mother, she is expected to contribute to the upkeep of the family. 31

Probably no people on earth has institutionalized women's rights to engage in trading activity so fully as have the Yoruba. 37

Among the Yoruba, there is no special class of women that can be termed 'traders' since virtually all women are engaged in some kind of trading activity.
Although Yoruba women engage in trade for family reasons, the economic role of women traders as intermediaries is quite central to the distribution of goods from the perspective of the urban economy as a whole. Most Yoruba women carry on their trading activities in the world of markets which are found throughout Yorubaland. This is in contrast to Hausa women who trade from the confines of their compounds. The Yoruba have a long tradition of urbanism and urban markets but the permanent rural settlements and rural markets are a comparatively recent phenomena.\(^3^8\)

Yoruba markets have been described by different authors. Yoruba women traders are involved in daily and periodic markets of the day and night varieties which are to be found in or near every type of settlement. Some women also operate stalls in other areas in urban centres or on the road sides, others work as hawkers moving about the streets. Large urban centres like Lagos or Ibadan have several markets of different types. The trend in the twentieth century seems to have been towards daily markets in large urban centres and periodic markets, either 'five-day' or 'nine-day' markets in farmland areas. Every Yoruba town has at least one daily market and large towns have several of these. In large centres, some of the daily markets are mainly consumer markets while others are both local and inter-area trade centres which serve traders as well as consumers. Most large cities have 'all-purpose' markets like Ougbe market in Ibadan or Jankara market in Lagos and also have 'specialized' markets dealing in specific types of items.\(^3^9\)

The vast majority of traders in the markets are women.\(^4^0\) Yoruba women enjoy considerable freedom of mobility in order to pursue their trading
activities. This is considered a right and once a woman has begun a line of trade, she is free to go wherever her work leads her. In a study of Yoruba women traders of Ilesa, a medium-sized city in Yorubaland, a significant number of the Yoruba women traders were found to be engaged in the wholesaling and retailing of agricultural and manufactured goods. The internal marketing system involved producers, middlemen or intermediaries and consumers who moved to and through various markets in rural and urban areas.

The market system relied heavily on intermediaries. Before final sale to consumer, manufactured goods would go through a long chain of intermediaries such as importers, wholesalers, warehouse owners and a number of supplementary merchants who sold both in bulk and in small quantities, blurring the distinction between wholesale and retail operations; women were intermediaries in this process. The prosperous market woman selling in bulk and extending credit to customers was linked with the penny-penny hawker through perhaps three or four other traders. Women travelled from one market where they bought wholesale to another where they could sell to others who, in turn, sell to consumers in even smaller quantities. Sudarkasa has described the five-day periodic 'night' market at Igbeti, a small town north of Oyo, which specialized in agricultural items. Traders from many towns attended. It and the bulk of the farm produce was sold to women traders who came from towns near and far; some women from Lagos and other cities bought and resold in smaller quantities to traders at home. In Ilesha, women predominated as intermediaries in agricultural produce and most traders in manufactured-goods were women.
The chain in the movement of goods by intermediaries included many steps - the bulking of agricultural produce in farms and rural markets; bulk-breaking or resale of agricultural products to other traders in Ilesha; resale of agricultural products, mostly kola nuts, to other intermediaries who were predominantly women who bulked it further for redistribution to other cities; buying of manufactured goods in the large urban markets of Lagos or Ibadan; reselling to other traders selling in Ilesa or small towns or villages; and finally, retailing both agricultural and manufactured goods in Ilesha markets. Thus these women provided the most important links in the internal marketing system. Women travelled distances of less than ten miles to buy from local markets all the way up to several hundred miles for goods bought in Northern Nigerian markets. However, it must be mentioned that there tends to be a neat separation of agricultural produce circulating in internal trade from the marketing of export crops, with women being confined almost exclusively to the former.

Sudarkasa points out that

(even though women earn money and own property, it is the men who own and control most of the real property in Yorubaland and who have been able to accumulate the greatest cash and surety reserves. Therefore men have been in a better economic position to take advantage of the trade niches created by the necessity to decentralize the process of collecting export crops. Then too, because the men cultivated crops, it was they who received information from the government and other sources concerning the procedures by which the crops were to be marketed and hence some of the farmers themselves negotiated for jobs as buyers (commission agents or middlemen traders) with the firms licensed by the Marketing Board. In Awe, a small town in Yorubaland, at the beginning of each season, the
licensed agents for the Marketing Boards made advances to their buyers for the purchase of export crops and guarded against defaults by taking securities from the buyers. The terms of security accepted were "deposits of cash, deposits of deeds, of buildings and guarantees by sureties." 48

However, it must be noted that the neat separation of the internal marketing system from the channels by which agricultural commodities reach the export houses is not strictly a difference between subsistence and cash crops but is rather a difference between locally-produced goods for local consumption and for export. 49 Whereas cocoa is grown mostly for export, palm kernels are grown for the internal market as well. However, those palm kernels circulating in internal trade are almost entirely handled by women traders. 50

An interesting parallel is that of the Haitian coffee sold in the internal markets for local consumption being handled by women while coffee for export is handled by men traders and licensed buyers. 51 This division excludes women from an important aspect of peasant production even in Yorubaland where women intermediaries are important. While the relative incomes earned by men and women are not available for comparison, one might speculate that the expansion of market and commercial activities tends to benefit the male trader. Sudderkasa, however, stresses that the evidence of the Awe informants indicates that men do not have substantially higher cash incomes than women. 52 However, one might recall that men control the real property in Yorubaland.

Although Yoruba women are confined to the internal marketing system and are excluded from the more economically significant marketing of export crops, they continue to be economically active for a number of reasons. In a 1975
sample survey of 824 working mothers in Lagos, the most important reason cited for working was to help their families; 73% said that it was their duty to do so. Yoruba women control their own incomes and there is no common budget for a man and his wives. There is no clear-cut division of responsibility between husbands and wives, unlike among the Muslim Hausa. Ideally, men are responsible for the upkeep of the family dwelling and for supplying the major staples for meals. Women are expected to clothe themselves and their children and to supply the rest of the food. Women are also expected to contribute towards the education of their children. Thus it is essential for women to work and to generate an independent income. The economic independence of women protects women against future uncertainties, and polygamous marriage encourages income generation since husbands' income is shared among many women and their children.

In a study of women traders in Ilesha, earnings were found to be spent regularly on household and family expenses or 'other' expenses usually to fulfill household and kinship obligations. However, there are a number of other factors which affect the viability of women's economic activities.

Like Hausa women, the vast majority of Yoruba women are economically active in the informal sector which is highly competitive. There are limited barriers to entry and women are able to start in a small way in petty trade or in trade in fresh foodstuffs with only a small starting capital. The vast majority of women traders are illiterate. A woman's choice of commodity line is determined to a large extent by the amount of capital at her disposal. The very fact of low barriers to entry make it hard for small traders to accumulate
capital and grow.

Income seems to depend in general upon the capital invested rather than on the kind of stock. Because women traders usually have less capital, they tend to earn less. A penny-penny hawkers in Lagos may earn a profit as low as one to three pounds per month while a large scale trader may earn a hundred pounds or more. In Isale Eko, an area of Lagos with three or four contiguous markets, an earlier sample survey by Marris has revealed that a trader's average income ranged from six to forty pounds per month. Large businesswomen, especially textile traders, earn a great deal more and have the reputation of being the most prosperous of all traders as well as the most aggressive traders in Lagos. Estimates of the amount of income earned in Ilesa ranges from fifty kobo per day to ten Naira per day although many earn near the lower end of the scale. Most of the individual traders are thus very small scale petty traders earning small amounts of money which goes towards meeting immediate needs.

The economic success of Yoruba women traders depends on effective communications regarding supply and demand, especially when they have to travel to distant markets to buy wholesale. Hence 'customer' relationships, known in Yoruba as onibara are formed between suppliers and middlemen and their retail customers. In cases like retail cloth trade, onibara relationships involve granting of credit, gift giving and friendship but usually, 'customer' ties are largely economic. Because people from the farms did not usually extend credit, the capital available to sellers of foodstuffs depended on their ability to collect from customers to whom they extended credit. Traders in provisions,
were involved in elaborate networks of credit and while it appeared that they had large amounts of working capital, the women often reported having small amounts of liquid capital. 64

For most women, it is seldom possible to separate trading capital from other monies since they have to respond to demands for cash to meet their financial responsibilities. So women are not often able to substantially increase their trading capital or their net incomes. More often than not, children’s school fees, obligations to kinsmen and other responsibilities require the expenditure of any extra cash earned. 65

As in the case of Hausa women, the range of occupations open to women is constrained by their preference for self-employment, and in particular, trade since it is seen to be compatible with domestic tasks and childrearing. Further, even though Yoruba women have mobility and work outside the home, unlike Hausa women, the trading orbit of a woman depends primarily on the type of goods she handles and the amount of capital she has. 66 Only a few women trade regularly between points at great distances apart. A woman’s trading orbit is affected by what point she is at in her domestic cycle as well as her age, number of children and co-wives and so on. The most mobile traders are those who buy agricultural products primarily for resale in city markets. 67 The trading orbits of women with young children are more restricted than those whose children are older and hence can be left to the care of others or who are old enough to take care of themselves. 68 Thus certain types of trading activities are usually avoided by women with young children, especially those involving frequent trips to distant markets. At certain points in a woman’s life cycle, she is very
concerned with her children’s education and the intricate system of
'child-exchange' that exists among Yoruba women allows them to share childcare
and financial responsibilities with other women while they pursue trading in
order to put their children through school. This support of wider kin is
essential for facilitating women in their trading activities.

Clearly, a Yoruba woman’s trading activities are integrated with and
affected by her involvement in reproduction. Thus there is a regularized pattern
of accommodation between the occupational and domestic life cycle of a woman,
with trade becoming an important domestic duty when children are of school age.

Thus, women also trade at home when they have young children. Also, as
has been mentioned before, the extended family and polygamous households
facilitate women’s trading by the division of domestic or childcare
responsibilities. The care of children cannot devolve entirely on mothers if they
are to trade; so they rely on other women and in turn assist them with their
children.

While children are growing up, most women do not realize personal benefit
from their increased trading activities. Their major investment is the financial
support which they provide for their children and to the other children dependent
on them. In fact, most of the returns on their labour are spent on their
children, especially on their education. In one instance, prosperous Lagos
market women, who had high aspirations for their children, boasted of sending
sons to universities abroad through accumulated savings. In a study of Awe-
women, school fees and the hardship they endured to give their children the best
education possible was a central concern. Women whose children had reached
Commerce of this character creates conditions in which it is virtually impossible, as well as economically irrational, to engage in the development of capitalist production. It is relevant to examine the effect of the oil era on the role of traders.

As has been mentioned before, in the oil era, there has been a phenomenal increase in imports; this has implications for the role of traders in a predominantly commercial economy. We have seen earlier that it was men rather than women who became involved in import-export trade and also in commercial triangles. Although the changed consumption patterns due to the oil boom have enhanced the role of merchants and traders, including that of women traders; because women mostly sell retail and buy ‘imported’ goods from wholesalers who are likely to be men, their role in the marketing system in the oil era is likely less important than before when their role as intermediaries was crucial in the movement of goods to and from cities to rural markets. Further, when wholesale prices skyrocketed due to inflation, women traders whose access to capital has been limited, have been unable to carry on retail trading successfully. Thus the exclusion of women traders from important aspects of commerce in the oil era has left them vulnerable to the changes at the political economic level in contemporary Nigeria. Also, their access to positions in the modern sector have been limited due to a number of different factors which will be considered next.

Women-in-Wage Labour

Before examining the situation of women in the labour force, one must bear in mind that the wage labour force is very small due to the capital-intensive pattern of development in Nigeria. Also, the non-oil industry is concentrated in the South. A 1970 Industrial Survey indicated that twelve major cities in Nigeria
had paid their daughters' fees hoping that they would become professionals. In a study of women students in the University of Lagos, most of the women were from upper or middle class families. Thus a high percentage of women have limited or no education. Fapohunda reports that 54% of women in Ibadan, 35% in Lagos and 81% in Zaria were found to have had no education according to a 1970 survey.

Yoruba women use their income to educate their children; Hausa women use their incomes for their daughters' dowry; generally speaking, neither seem to reinvest accumulated savings as capital. However, Yoruba women seem to have greater potential to transform social structures than Hausa women. Both Yoruba and Hausa women have continuity in their reproductive role and this continues to form the basis of the sexual division of labour in each society and to constrain women in their economic activities.

Conclusion

We have examined the changes to the sexual division of labour in traditional Yoruba society due to key external factors. The changes at the level of the political economy resulted in greater differentiation on the basis of class and gender and, as among the Hausa, the role of women in reproduction continues to form the basis of the sexual division of labour.

Unlike Hausa women, Yoruba women are not secluded and have mobility to carry on their trade. Yet gender continues to be a limiting factor in their trading activities. There is a distinct division of spheres of trade on the basis of gender and product type, with women being mostly confined to the internal marketing
system. Thus Yoruba women are also confined to the local economy like Hausa women although their mobility and non-seclusion gives them greater access to customers.

Like Hausa women, Yoruba women also prefer self-employment and thus the range of occupations open to them are limited; both prefer trade since it is compatible with domestic tasks and childrearing. Thus women's reproductive role affects their productive role. In fact, Yoruba women's trading activities are integrated with and affected by their involvement in reproduction and become an extension of their reproductive role.

Unlike Hausa women who use their income for their daughters' dowry, Yoruba women use the income earned from their productive activities for the education of their children and this could potentially reproduce a 'transformed' labour force; Yoruba women appear to have a greater potential than Hausa women to transform social structures. However, the employment opportunities have not kept pace with educational opportunities; the reasons for this have to be sought in the political economy of contemporary Nigeria and the type of 'development' that has taken place in the post-colonial period. We will now turn to Chapter IV for a consideration of these issues and also examine the factors limiting women's participation in the modern sector as well as the political economic factors constraining women traders.
1. Le Vine (1970:179)
2. Nadel (1942)
3. Sudarkasa (1973:143)
7. Lloyd (1955)
9. Pedler (1955); Marshall (1964)
10. Afonja (1981)
11. Ibid.
12. Afonja (1978)
13. Johnson (1921)
16. Sudarkasa (1973:26)
17. Johnson (1921:92)
18. Sudarkasa (1973:31). The earliest travellers to Yorubaland like Lander and Clapperton encountered wives of the Olofin (king) trading in various parts of Yorubaland. According to Lander, they more than any other women could afford to travel because they were exempt from taxes levied on other traders and because they could stay at the chief's compound in towns enroute. Lander (1893, Vol.1:181-2) cited in Sudarkasa (1973:35).
20. Ibid.

22. Afonja (1981:310). Other instances of this were discussed in Chapter 1 with respect to the work of Boserup (1970).

23. Fapohunda (1978:227-8)


25. Williams (1976:22)


27. Williams (1976:28)

28. Sudarkasa (1973:117)

29. See Remy (1975) for a comparison of Hausa and Yoruba women's work in the urban setting of Zaria in Northern Nigeria.

30. Lloyd (1966:574)

31. Lloyd (1966:488)

32. Sudarkasa (1973:117); Fadipe (1970:87)

33. Sudarkasa (1973:129)

34. Johnson (1921:116)

35. Lloyd (1966:488)


36. Sudarkasa (1973:2)

38. Sudarkasa (1973:48). According to her, the classification of settlements outside the major towns as either rural or urban is not clear-cut. Even though many Yoruba settlements would be classed as 'urban' based on the definition of traditional Yoruba urbanism, the difference between small towns and large cities is a matter of kind rather than degree. So she classifies small towns along with villages and hamlets as rural settlements. Sudarkasa (1973:40, footnote #3).


40. Baker (1974) found that two-thirds to three-quarters of the traders in Lagos were market women.

41. Sudarkasa (1973:132)

42. 80% of the traders interviewed claimed Hesa as their home town. The central market had about 1500 stalls. The overwhelming majority of the traders were women - 93 out of the 102 in Trager's survey; ibid.


44. Sudarkasa (1973:43).

45. Trager (1977)

46. Ibid.

47. Sudarkasa (1973:67), emphasis added.


49. Mintz (1971:262)

50. Sudarkasa (1973:67)

51. Mintz (1971)

52. Sudarkasa (1973:128)

53. Fapohunda (1978:226)

54. Sudarkasa (1973:120-8). Sudarkasa found in Awe that a husband was not expected to bear the major financial responsibility for the day-to-day upkeep of a woman and her children.

55. Fapohunda (1978:226)

56. Trager (1977)


140. Marrie (1962:76) found in a Lagos slum clearance area that two-thirds of the women earned less than 11 pounds per month as opposed to one-fourth of the men. Only 14% of the women as opposed to 38% of the men earned
more than 21 pounds.


60. Marris(1962:70)


62. Trager(1977:5-7)

63. Ibid. Trager cites the case of two women who obtained yams from farmers in an area about seventy miles from Ilesha; they had been introduced to their suppliers by other traders some twenty years before and had maintained good 'customer' relationships through that time. Also, Lagos traders surveyed by Marris did not depend on casual custom alone but, in fact, had regular 'customers' whom they trusted and to whom they extended credit to counter competitors. Marris(1962:73).

64. Sudarkasa(1973:85-6)

65. Ibid.

66. Sudarkasa(1973:66)

67. Sudarkasa(1973:76). See pp.65-96 of the same for details of individual women's trading activities in different types of products.

68. See Chapter VI of Sudarkasa(1973) for a detailed treatment.

69. Fapohunda(1982) reports on the child-care dilemma of working mothers in Lagos where conjugal units are physically separated from their extended families.

70. Sudarkasa(1973:143)


72. Sudarkasa(1973:121-2)

73. Ibid.


75. Girls grow up with the bustle of trade and trading becomes second nature to them as they learn the techniques of the market. Marris(1962:73); See also Sudarkasa(1973:145-6).

76. Fapohunda(1978:226)
77. Adeyemi (1984)

78. Fapohunda (1978:227)
Chapter IV - Constraints on Women's Productive Activities in Contemporary Nigeria

In the previous chapters, the effects of key external factors on traditional Hausa and Yoruba societies were considered; in both societies, colonialism and capitalist penetration increased the stratification on the basis of class and also restructured traditional gender roles. More recently, especially in the oil era, there have been massive changes at the level of the political economy and it is relevant to analyse the ways in which these changes have translated into changes in gender relations and in women's roles, especially in productive activities. In contemporary Nigeria, most Nigerians seem to live in an environment of inflation, unemployment and instability. The recent coups may be viewed as only the most recent evidence of what has been characterized as Nigeria's 'chronic, inherent instability' under commercial capitalism. Some opportunities for wage labour exist in the modern sector. These are examined based on case material provided by contemporary observers of Nigerian society. Also, some first-hand interview material is provided to enrich the materials provided from the various case studies for analysing the ways in which changes at the political economic level affect women in their everyday life and work.

Interviews were conducted with women in the Lagos slum of Olaye with a view to understanding the factors affecting the viability of their economic ventures. It appears that severe constraints on women's 'productive' activities, specifically in trade, arise from factors beyond and outside the family, in the interlocking set of social relations constituting Nigeria's political economy. The
everyday experience of these women and indeed that of the vast majority of Nigerians who are excluded from access to the state and from control over the allocation of social resources, seem to be shaped by the on-going historical processes which have culminated in the economic crises of the 1980's and the military coups.

We will now examine the changes in Nigeria's political economy in the post-colonial period, especially in the oil era, since this has provided the context in which women are economically active and then consider the specific ways in which women traders have been affected.

Changes to Nigeria's Political Economy

As has been shown, the colonial state played a crucial role in the maintenance and expansion of commerce by structuring the existing social relations to trade. The import substitution that followed the earlier export promotion perpetuated Nigeria's dependence on imports of inputs and technology for the production process, with key foreign firms in control; capital intensive 'industrialization' thus promoted external trade instead of generating local linkages. ²

As Williams has pointed out:

(through their control of the political process of decolonization, the British promoted class and power relations which would ensure the continued domination of Nigeria by international capitalism. ³

The dominant class was allowed to come to power because their interests were compatible with that of key foreign firms. ⁴ Indigenous entrepreneurs lacking the resources to compete with vertically integrated multinational corporations became 'compradors' or intermediaries between the state and foreign capital. ⁵
Thus there was very limited stimulus for local production within capitalist relations.

This role of the state in furthering the development of commerce has continued into the post-colonial period; Turner describes commercial triangles involving local traders or middlemen, state officials and representatives of foreign firms. Continuing from the colonial period, the Nigerian state has played a crucial role in commerce in that it has itself been the main market for many commodities and has regulated the exchange of others and has thus proven to be the arena for intense competition especially in the oil era of the 1970's. Foreign firms have sought access to the lucrative local market and to raw materials by enlisting local businessmen to offer commissions to state officials who hold the power to award contracts.

Local businessmen and state officials thus act as 'compradors' and foreign firms are the main and ultimate beneficiaries from 'government by contract'. The role of politics as a means of access to the state for personal gain and the competition among middlemen for state patronage and among state officials for control over decisions has tended to create instability as evidenced by the coups.

Further, there is also conflict between the 'comprador' state officials and the state technocrats who are civil servants with responsibility for national control of the economy and for running state institutions and parastatals. Turner argues that the technocrats lack the strength to eliminate the triangular relationships and thus the state remains the site for unruly primitive capital accumulation. It is relevant to examine the implications of the mode of
organizing commerce through 'commercial triangles' for women traders.

As was discussed in the previous chapters, men, especially Yoruba men were in a better position to establish themselves as local businessmen in large-scale trading while Yoruba women were dominant in retail trade. Further, although the missions provided educational opportunities, women had less access in part due to their reproductive responsibilities and in part due to the persistence of a value structure emphasizing their reproductive role. These factors have implications for women's participation in business as well as in the state.

In 1974, women held only 11.5% of the positions in the Federal Civil Service; an earlier survey in 1966 indicated that only 2.9% of the professionals in Nigeria were women. As will be discussed later, women are under-represented in the higher levels of the occupational hierarchy in the modern sector. So women traders are less likely to be 'middlemen' or 'comprador' state officials in the 'commercial triangles'; they do not reap the benefits from these commercial circuits. Next, we will look at the effects of such commercial activities on the role of traders especially in the oil era.

In the pre-oil era, the state obtained most of its revenue through the Marketing Boards' monopoly over the surpluses from the sale of crops produced by around sixty million peasants who were closely linked to the state. In contrast, after 1973 when oil prices quadrupled, state revenue has been based on 'rent' payments generated by the highly capital-intensive production of oil employing only about thirty thousand including those in service and contracting companies. It is relevant to consider the consequences of the oil boom and
bust for the ordinary Nigerian and assess specifically the way in which the role of traders has been affected.

In the oil boom era, Nigeria's GDP has increased twenty seven-fold at 1984 prices from 1.55 billion dollars U.S. in 1950 to forty two billion dollars U.S. at the end of the seventies. As can be seen from Table 1, agriculture's share in the GDP dropped from fifty five percent in 1965 to five percent in 1983 even as oil's share rose from five percent to eighty eight percent in the same period. Only eight percent of the planned investment in the Third Plan (1975-80) was for the agricultural sector. This neglect of agriculture in the oil era has affected millions of peasants adversely and has led to a dramatic increase in the import bill for food, quadrupling between 1976 and 1981, exceeding two billion Naira as can be seen from Table III.14

A consequence of the enormous increase in revenues from oil is that in addition to being a supplier of strategic commodities, Nigeria is now firmly entrenched in the international division of labour as a massive importer and consumer of foreign goods, with a substantial portion being non-durables and raw materials as can be seen from Tables III and IV.15 This has occurred even as oil revenues have flooded the bureaucracy and caused its unprecedented expansion and 'middlemen' traders have increased in numbers to benefit from the gains of Nigeria's 'rentier' state not to mention the surplus value realized through commerce in Nigeria by sections of international capital. Oil has replaced agriculture as a source of revenue for 'compradors'.16 The consequence of increased commerce of this sort has been the inflation of the costs of imports and services, with costs in the late seventies running at about
Estimates for the rate of inflation vary widely. Newspaper price reports and Central Bank Data suggest that inflation has averaged fifty percent per year since 1975, running at three hundred percent in 1983 alone. By contrast, World Bank figures place inflation at only fourteen percent.\textsuperscript{18} Table VI shows price changes reported in a Lagos newspaper in 1983; this and the prices reported below based on interviews with women traders in Lagos in 1983 tend to indicate that the first estimates are closer to reality. At the same time, there has been extensive retrenchment; it has been estimated that one million workers have lost their jobs between 1980 and 1983.\textsuperscript{19}

Oil revenues peaked to a high of twenty billion dollars in 1980 but were down to an estimated ten billion dollars in 1984; Table II shows crude oil statistics. Spending however, has continued to escalate from 7.6 billion dollars in 1978 to 18.3 billion dollars in 1981. Nigeria's external debt in 1984 stood at 14.7 billion dollars of which 5.6 billion dollars were short-term arrears, resulting in intervention from the IMF.\textsuperscript{20} These changes at the macroeconomic level stemming from the oil era have benefited those involved in 'commercial triangles' but have made the life of the ordinary Nigerian very difficult. Ekekwe and Turner argue that commercial capitalism attracts entrepreneurs by its promise of quick profits and the dominant and preemptive role in which it operates, prevents the emergence of social relations for productive enterprise, the essential context in which productive capitalism can function.

The consequence of this form of commercial capitalism includes lack of planning, heightened tribalism, state expansion, infrastructural irrationality and breakdown, political violence and the instability of the state.
Commerce of this character creates conditions in which it is virtually impossible, as well as economically irrational, to engage in the development of capitalist production. It is relevant to examine the effect of the oil era on the role of traders.

As has been mentioned before, in the oil era, there has been a phenomenal increase in imports; this has implications for the role of traders in a predominantly commercial economy. We have seen earlier that it was men rather than women who became involved in import-export trade and also in 'commercial triangles'. Although the changed consumption patterns due to the oil boom have enhanced the role of merchants and traders including that of women traders; because women mostly sell retail and buy 'imported' goods from wholesalers who are likely to be men, their role in the marketing system in the oil era is likely less important than before when their role as intermediaries was crucial in the movement of goods to and from cities to rural markets. Further, when wholesale prices skyrocketed due to inflation, women traders whose access to capital has been limited, have been unable to carry on retail trading successfully. Thus the exclusion of women traders from important aspects of commerce in the oil era has left them vulnerable to the changes at the political economic level in contemporary Nigeria. Also, their access to positions in the modern sector have been limited due to a number of different factors which will be considered next.

Women in Wage Labour

Before examining the situation of women in the labour force, one must bear in mind that the wage labour force is very small due to the capital-intensive pattern of development in Nigeria. Also, the non-oil industry is concentrated in the South. A 1970 Industrial Survey indicated that twelve major cities in Nigeria
accounted for most of the industry in Nigeria and that Metropolitan Lagos alone accounted for 38 percent of all establishments, forty-nine percent of employment, more than half the wages and salaries and three-fifths of the gross output. Lagos thus continues to be a magnet which attracts many in the hope of employment. Industrialization has frequently taken the form of joint ventures by State and Federal governments with multinational technical partners. The organization of the work place is usually under foreign control. One estimate in 1976 suggests that approximately three percent of the Nigerian population were wage and salary earners with sixty percent of these in the public sector. More recent figures from the World Bank indicate that nineteen percent of labour force were employed in the industrial sector in 1981. While opportunities do exist in capitalist enterprises and in state administration for educated persons, the vast majority of Nigerians remain in peasant and craft production and in petty trade. By and large, this lack of opportunities in the modern sector discriminates against women who have had limited access to education and are consequently more likely than men to be employed in jobs of lower status and salary.

Women, as well as men, perceive wage employment as a valued stage in a career towards a profitable trading or artisan enterprise. Work is seen in instrumental terms as a means to improved life positions. Women, as well as men, are family-oriented and share multiple financial obligations to dependent children. So there are similarities between the sexes regarding commitment to work. However, women are perceived by employers in a very different light. Differential processes are at work in incorporating women into the formal labour
force. The two issues that need to be considered are women's unequal representation in the wage labour force and women's placement in the occupational hierarchy. Women's low levels of education and their continuing responsibilities in reproduction which form the basis of the sexual division of labour are important deterrents to women's employment and placement in positions of power in the formal sector.

Neither sex is keen on long term industrial employment. In fact, the model of success for industrial workers and others in Nigeria is that of the private businessman appearing to have unlimited supplies of cash to distribute. Mobility between one form of employment and another, that is between wage labour and self-employment, and even running a small business on the side while in wage employment is part of this pattern. Given the industrial structure, men are better able to accumulate capital through savings from wage labour than are women. Though women may also desire the same career pattern, they are at a disadvantage in pursuing it. For many women, the conflict of child-care responsibilities with wage labour forces them to re-enter self-employment even before they have saved enough capital. Meanwhile, men who do so are able to buy in greater bulk and to sell at lower price at the expense of women traders. Further, the economic context in which women set up small business has changed and the generation of reasonable turnover requires the initial investment of more capital than women tend to have. Both men and women find it difficult to save capital; both have commitment to kin and both have to function in a context of high inflation. The lack of formal employment opportunities implies that the dreams of the male or female Nigerian worker are highly
In 1950 less than two percent of paid employees were women. The estimate for 1966 was that women were 7.2% of the labour force. In 1974, 11.5% of the positions in the Federal Civil Service were held by women. More recently, women's participation in the industrial labour force has been decreasing. In a survey of sixteen factories in Ibadan, there was a drop in the percentage of women employed from 15.5% in 1976 to 12.6% in 1980, mostly due to the drop in employment of women in private industry. The ratio of men to women was thirteen to one in private industry compared to three to one in the public sector according to the survey. It was found that over this period, the number of men employed in the private factories surveyed had increased by 37.5% while the number of women employed had dropped by 9.3%; the number of women employed in private industry had dropped from 11.4% to 7.8% while the number of women employed in government-owned concerns had remained fairly constant.

This differential employment of women in private industry can be attributed to a number of different factors. A number of government regulations exist regarding maternity benefits and leave and they also prohibit shift work for women. These are disincentives in the employment of women, especially of married women with children, particularly from the perspective of private industry. Women tend to bear five to eight children, generally every two years and maternity leave is twelve weeks. Government regulation also allows lactating women to finish work one and a half hours earlier than usual to breast-feed.

The government's role in Universal Primary Education, in low tuition fees
for secondary school, in the removal of university tuition fees and in the lowering of private educational cost has increased the enrollment in education, including that of women.\textsuperscript{37} However, educational opportunities have substantially outstripped the availability of wage employment and hence employers are able to demand higher levels of education. This serves to limit women's participation since the education of women has lagged behind men. While elsewhere in the Third World, unskilled wage labour in the industrial sector has been the domain of women workers, in Nigeria, men are available as alternatives to women's semi-skilled or unskilled labour.\textsuperscript{38} Men are also employed as clerks, typists and office messengers. Thus the development of these labour market conditions has tended to inhibit women's employment in factories.\textsuperscript{39} Employers also believe that women are not as hard working as men and that they are prone to absenteeism.\textsuperscript{40}

In addition to being under-represented in the labour force, women find themselves in the lower levels of the capitalist hierarchical structure. In 1966, only 2.9% of the professionals in Nigeria were women.\textsuperscript{41} In EMCON, a factory in Zaria, a third of all the employees were women but ninety percent of the senior and intermediate staff were men. This exclusion of women is partly due to men's previous access to training, especially technical education and managerial experience.\textsuperscript{42} As Whitehead points out, gender becomes an organizing factor within the hierarchical relations of the capitalist labour force.\textsuperscript{43} Thus capitalist relations become the bearers of gender.\textsuperscript{44} It must be borne in mind that gender-typing is due to traditional as well as Western values and attitudes.

Nigerian women's preparation for the modern labour market as well as the
way they are perceived in it are influenced not only by indigenous but also by imported norms and definition of social roles. During the colonial period, the British selected young men and not women for training for colonial administration. Mission schools for women emphasized gender-typed roles and, in post-independence Nigeria, school curriculum reflects Western definitions of women's social role. Fapohunda argues that this socialization is reflected in the disproportionate number of women who are found in 'women's jobs', traditionally given to women in Western economies, jobs that are extensions of women's domestic and mothering roles such as those in nursing, teaching, cooking, etc. This gender-typing due to Western values is combined with that due to traditional values whereby, as Pittin argues, 'respect for elders' combines with 'respect for men' and helps to maintain a male 'management prerogative' as was found to be the case in her study of EMCON in Zaria, where women employees were characterized by their youth, lack of experience and minimal education.

Conventional wisdom in the industrialized world is that women are better suited to jobs that are boring or requiring minimal agility or dexterity. This value system is transferred to Nigeria despite the fact that traditionally Nigerian women were and are engaged in heavy manual labour. Di Dominico reports that women in a cashew nut factory in Ibadan used to lift bags of produce weighing about a hundred kilograms but with a change in management, the task was reallocated to men and the women were left only to peel, grade and pack cashew nuts. In factories, a distinction is made between light women's work and heavy men's work in the production process. In Nigerian Tobacco Company, the factory
men were found in primary processing and women in packing.\textsuperscript{51}

Thus one finds segregation of women's work in low-paying, essential but repetitive jobs with little prospects for promotion. For women, there is often no step towards more skilled employment from unskilled work and the only advantage seems to be some level of job security and the lack of hard physical labour. Dennis reports that women do not perceive their experience in the factory as one which will enable them directly to broaden their opportunity in trade or business while men in more skilled jobs could hope to set up as artisans rather than as traders due to the type of experience gained.\textsuperscript{52}

In addition, gender can also distort supervisors' perceptions of women's performance. In EMCON in Zaria, informal ways of reaffirming gender hierarchy were practised; women were made to sweep the unit at the end of the day even though it was not their job.\textsuperscript{53} Women with fewer choices and less mobility than men are also less likely than men to articulate grievances and to strike. Thus the combination of gender-typing and unbalanced occupational distribution for women in the modern sector tends to reinforce the unequal status of women.\textsuperscript{54}

Factory work tends to be concentrated in the period during which women are most likely to be child-bearing and child-rearing. Women are almost exclusively responsible for taking children to school and also for domestic duties.\textsuperscript{55} As mentioned before, in traditional and rural settings, women could count on extended family support and the nature of the work could be modified to increase the complementarity with their life cycle.\textsuperscript{56} But with industrialization, the nature of market activities have changed and women have to contend with a fixed hour work day, with the separation of work place and home, and with the
limitations of urban transport facilities. Women also have access to very limited day care facilities. Over forty percent of working mothers in a Lagos survey had their youngest child cared for by a relative. Further, the influence of Western attitudes on Nigerian child-care practices regarding close mother and child relationships may have created difficulties for the educated working mother since she does not freely follow the traditional practices of leaving her children with other women. So in Nigeria, the traditional sexual division of labour with the emphasis on women's continuing role in reproduction minus the extended family implies barriers to women's wage employment in the modern sector. 57

Thus there is a need to reallocate child-care tasks for equal participation of women in the labour force. Otherwise women in Nigeria are faced with a conflict between traditional domestic and modern work roles. Under the present circumstances, women are increasingly relegated to a narrow, restricted area in the modern factory sector and are likely to find themselves in part-time, seasonal employment in industries like state-owned food-processing enterprises. 58 In turn, the relations between men and women, the relations of gender in capitalist society are dependent on the opportunities for economic independence available to women and the status of those occupations that are accessible to them.

In conclusion, though women in Nigeria have historically had economic responsibilities in the family and thus have been engaged in productive labour, the pattern of industrial development in Nigeria has offered inadequate opportunities for women to fulfill their responsibilities 59; gender has been a factor limiting their access to education and skills as well as in allocating them
to lower levels in the occupational hierarchy at lower wages when they do enter wage employment. So, women prefer trade and the next section looks at the factors affecting women in their trading activities on the basis of interviews conducted with some women traders in a low-income area in Lagos.

The Everyday Experience of Women in the Lagos Slum of Olaleyeye

In the Lagos slum of Olaleyeye village, the predominant economic activity is trade. Even a superficial look in the village reveals a staggering number of women traders. Women are also active in the production and vending of street foods and in running small food stalls and beverage places. A few women are grinding machine operators and tailors. The majority set up very small scale operations along the streets, often outside their homes. The better established traders have stalls in the badly organized and illegal market. There is only one entrance/exit road into the village and it is not easily motorable even in the dry season. So the market and all the other vendors primarily service the local community. Several days spent in the village and the market revealed the very depressed situation of the traders. The recurring complaint is that "the market is not moving"; high wholesale prices, low demand and oversupply from many traders seem to contribute to the difficulties faced by the traders.

At a glance, one sees many women on the streets, each selling small quantities of the same commodities such as tomato paste, Maggi cubes and tinned fish. It is hard to imagine who the buyers are with so many selling. Many spend several hours a day selling, but earn only small amounts due to the slow movement of commodities. However, the opportunity cost of their labour is zero since most of them have no possibility of wage employment. The pre-eminence of
traders is due to the comparative ease of entry into petty trade; this situation is, however, not static. As in the case of most informal sector activities, petty trade is characterized by intense competition among individual operators. The low level of required skills and capital combined with the small scale of the business activity attracts many women. Consequently, many women who are constrained by their role in the domestic sphere find trade and food production to be one of the few means of generating income compatible with household responsibilities.

Much of the informal petty-trading found in Olaleyè involves face-to-face interactions between buyers and sellers. Very small units are exchanged in response to the poverty of the urban population and the seasonal variations of income. Most women reported the extensive use of short-term credit and the cultivation and careful maintenance of 'customer' relationships between sellers and buyers and the offering of 'dash', a little extra amount of the item to 'customers'. This is often critical to a woman's ability to earn some regular income. The women who have stalls in the market have the advantage that their 'customers' will find them in a fixed location.

Most women had begun their trading from money saved from their own pre-marriage trading or by saving from household money. Although upon marriage a Yoruba woman's husband is expected to provide her with capital to begin trade, none of the women interviewed reported having received starting capital from their husbands. Many of the women reported that they had started out by selling fresh foodstuffs which did not require large capital outlay and then moved into provisions or other commodities which require greater starting
capital. This tends to indicate that there is some progression in capital accumulation although the amounts involved are rather small. Most of the women were engaged in retail trade but some women reported that they sold retail to some customers and in bulk as wholesalers to others. While response was not forthcoming when asked about amount of income earned, there was general agreement that women who had invested more capital earned more income and that income depended more on capital invested than on the kind of stock.

Women responded in a variety of ways about their reasons for preferring trade as an economic activity. Some women suggested that lack of education and opportunities for acquiring training and skills prevented them from attempting other occupations but other women with education still preferred trading.

A fish vendor, a forty-five year-old illiterate Muslim woman said that she preferred trade.

I have done nothing else for over twenty-five years. I learned this trade from my mother. I have no other skill.

Abike, a twenty-eight year-old Muslim woman with secondary school education has a stall in the market. She sells sewing accessories and cosmetics which require more capital investment than foodstuffs. She has only one competitor in Olaleye who is illiterate and relies on her children to help her business. Their business is dependent on the demand from the tailors and business is always good during festival seasons. She intends to pursue trade as a full-time occupation.

I completed Muslim Commercial Secondary School in 1973. When I finished, I worked in clerical jobs for almost three years. During that time, I got married and
had my first child. I had to spend a lot of time and money for transport, my hours were inflexible and my work made it difficult to take care of my responsibilities at home. I saved 300 Naira from my job and started my own business. I like the independence of trade. I helped my mother in this trade in my home town in Ogun state, especially in buying items from Lagos, and I learned from her. My education has helped me in my business, especially in managing my finances and in banking.

A thirty-five year-old illiterate street vendor also chose trade but for different reasons.

I moved to Lagos with my husband who came to look for work. I have no education or other skills that I can use in a big city like Lagos. So, I used money from house-money and started selling soup ingredients. I buy from myself to cook for the family. Business is very slow.

Sarayu, a fifty year-old Muslim woman also moved to the city with her husband but was able to maintain her links with her rural area and to engage in rural-urban trade.

My husband moved to the city. I still have a small farm. I employ others to work on it and go to attend to it at the start of the rainy season. I buy corn wholesale in the village market in Ogun and sell it at Olaleye. I also bring a few chickens from the village to sell here. I sell steamed corn meal during Ramadan.

Another illiterate woman spoke on behalf of a group of women who nodded in agreement.

If something would earn us money, we will be prepared to do it, but we don't know how to do anything except sell. No education.

Muniratu is thirty-three years old and a seller of plastics.

I don't know anything else. I have some primary education but no money for training. I am prepared to do anything, even a cleaning job. I want some money so my children can get training.

Another street trader speaks of the compatibility of trade with her other duties.
I could set up just outside my house on the street. It is convenient. I can look after my children and do all my housework and cooking.

What is interesting to note is the fact that women with or without education prefer trade. One reason for this is its compatibility with childcare and domestic responsibilities which have continued to be allocated to women. Women who had engaged in wage labour found it incompatible with their role in reproduction; this has been identified as a major reason for the limited participation of women in the labour force by contemporary researchers as discussed earlier. Further, wage employment was perceived as a means to acquire some capital to engage in self-employment which was preferred. Women without education seem to perceive education as a way out, but in reality this is not the case because of the many constraints on women in wage labour as has been discussed in a previous section and also given the high levels of unemployment and lack of opportunities in the formal sector. Women face many constraints in their work.

Women face severe constraints in their attempts to generate adequate income through trade and food production. We have seen that inflation, lack of demand, competition from other traders and lack of education and other skills were problems faced by the women traders.

A fish vendor complained of the increase in wholesale prices as a major problem for her:

The wholesale price has gone up almost five times from about a hundred Naira per bag in the last few years. I don’t have money for a large bag, so I don’t make good profit. People are not buying much. The market is not moving.

A vegetable vendor spoke of the time and costs involved for transport to the
market where she buys wholesale.

I spent from five am to ten am travelling to the twelfth mile on Badagary to get tomatoes and pepper from the new location of the wholesale market to sell here. Transport costs are high. Business is not good. Customers don’t buy much.

Others find that the costs have gone up. A food vendor complains of this.

I have spent two Naira on firewood already today. It is midday and I have had practically no customers.

Adda, a thirty year-old Christian woman with some primary education is a market vendor in soup provisions such as Maggi cubes, tomato paste, oil, etc. She believes that excessive competition is an additional problem.

Market is not moving but wholesale price is going up. The street vendors of provisions are the problem - when the new market is built and licences are issued for only a limited number of vendors by the Council, then my business will pick up.

Adeja who is forty-five and illiterate, is a grinding machine operator. She has a different problem of machine breakdown in addition to costs of inputs and repair services.

Business is not too bad but the machine breaks down often. Diesel and repair costs are almost two hundred Naira per month. Repairs are a big part of the cost, sometimes upto three breakdowns occur in a month. I am managing because I was the first and my old customers still come to me even though there are many others now with grinding machines in the village.

The skyrocketing of wholesale prices and of the prices of essential commodities, the rising costs of services and not the least, the lack of demand due to the low purchasing power of the low-income urban dwellers have combined to severely constrain women traders. There is enormous pressure on
women for greater capital outlays in a context of high inflation of the prices of essential commodities as indicated in Table VI. The 500% increase in the wholesale price of stock fish over a few years is an example of this. At the same time, women are facing decreasing levels of income from trade.

This lack of demand for their products is certainly having an adverse impact on the women traders who lack education and other skills and who are unable to switch to another commodity line due to limited capital. Women selling cooked food and snacks reported that they had to extend credit to the maximum possible extent to their customers many of whom have been unable to pay up for their previous purchases and hence were not buying much. Some women were earning a negligible amount of income with respect to the capital invested and the amount of labour time invested. But they lack skills for other occupations and lack opportunities elsewhere and are also constrained by their reproductive responsibilities.

What is clear is that the poorer vendors are most severely affected. The market vendors felt that once their market became legal, the others would be prevented from selling without licences; the market women of Olaleye would share the benefits of belonging to the market women’s association in Lagos which is discussed below. One might also speculate that the requirement to obtain licences might involve some payment of bribes and this would be difficult if not impossible for most of the poorer vendors.

The organization of the Lagos market system and the market women of Lagos have been characterized as:

the most highly organized, socially cohesive... occupational group in the city whose numbers, economic
resources and significance in the commercial affairs of the town have vastly increased. 62

But there are many other sellers and traders in Lagos who are not a part of this group of organized traders. This is the case for most of the women traders of Oialaye. Even if the Oialaye market were to be made legal, only a few market women would benefit. It would be highly unlikely that the situation for the rest would change dramatically.

According to a 1974 study, the Lagos City Markets and Women's Organization had a claimed membership of 63,000 and Lagos had a total of thirty-three markets. Market women tended to specialize in foodstuffs, textiles, provisions and related commodities. The great majority of Lagos market women were illiterate. A large proportion were polygamously married and Muslim. The overwhelming majority of the Lagos market women were Yoruba and the immigration from other areas had not altered this pattern of ethnic dominance. 63

The market women of Lagos are organized around a powerful hierarchy of traditional market leaders who strictly supervise the main city markets, resolve conflict and enforce discipline among the thousands of urban traders who are in daily competition. The Iyalode or 'mother of markets' is at the top of the leadership pyramid and is second in status only to the Oba of Lagos. Under her are the Alagas or market chairpersons. At the next level are section heads and finally below them are commodity heads. 68 Depending on the size of the market, there may also be subsellers who work with the leaders. The chain of command from the Iyalode to the subsellers applies throughout the markets of Lagos and collectively, the leaders exercise a remarkable degree of control.
over the markets - levying dues, resolving rivalries, maintaining order and peace as well as directing affairs of group interest. Baker writes:

(t)his efficient authority structure, combined with economic independence and corporate solidarity of the traders, makes the market women one of the most autonomous and self-sufficient interest groups in Lagos.65

The women traders of Olaleye indicated that although they are not a part of such an organizational structure, they would like to be. They also talked about their primary responsibilities in the family.

In almost every instance, the primary responsibility for running the household and taking care of the children rested with the women interviewed. Even though men have traditional obligations to provide their wives with a room and with money to start their own trade, to pay for children’s education and to ensure that wives have adequate clothing and food, many men do not meet these obligations in practice. Most often, it appears that men provide what they can and women manage to run the household and also often assume financial responsibility for themselves and their children. The husbands of the women interviewed were often in bad economic situations and some of the women were in fact, if not officially, the heads of households:

Abike spoke of her financial responsibilities rather reluctantly.

I am managing financially. Business could be better but I have some money saved. My husband is a driver for Leventis [a large retail chain] and has struck work. He moves goods to and from Lagos and his job requires him to leave town often and stay away for several days. He and his co-workers went on strike sometime ago. His income is irregular and he helps when he can. He travels for his job and is away for several days at a time. I take care of the household.
Sarayu, a fifty-year-old woman is the primary breadwinner in the family. 
My husband is a carpenter. He is making no money. So I am looking after the family.

Addo's husband is employed as a worker.

My husband works for Costain's [a large business enterprise]. He is in repair work. He has had some salary cuts in the last four years but he contributes financially quite regularly. My business is not good but we manage.

Adeja, the grinding machine operator is the head of her household.

I have no husband and only one of my seven children is working. I look after the running of my household.

Both men and women suffer from underemployment and inadequate income. The situation is acute for women because of their primary responsibilities for children and households. Women tend to consider children as the most valuable thing in their lives and are very concerned for their well-being. Many of the women interviewed expressed their concerns regarding education and employment for their children.

A forty-five-year-old illiterate woman, a vendor, expressed this concern for her children's well-being in a very moving way.

What is eating my bone marrows is that my children whom I educated by my own labour have no work.

Adeja, the grinding machine operator also faces this problem.

I have seven children and no husband. I am finding it difficult to make ends meet because my children are unemployed. My one son who trained in refrigerator and fan repair couldn't find work and so he is working with me. I will be okay and manage okay if my children find work and are able to support themselves.

Muniratu, the seller of plastics, expressed her wish to train her children.

I have twelve children. Everything we had, both personal
things and business inventory burned down in the fire of six months ago. We now have nothing. My husband is a driver but doesn’t earn regularly or much and does what he can. My business is very bad, so I am prepared to do any work to get money so that I can give my children education and training.

Ester, a fifty-five year-old street vendor has four children who are unable to find work. Over and over again, women expressed concern for their children’s future.

As was discussed in the last chapter, women do not accumulate savings for reinvestment as capital in their business ventures during the years when their children are growing up. Most Yoruba women do not spend the returns on their trading activities on themselves but on their children, especially for their education. However, education does not seem to guarantee employment or transform the future labour force of Nigeria. The unemployed educated youth end up assisting their uneducated trader-mothers in their business activities. The women interviewed spoke time and again of the problem faced by their children in finding employment.

Yoruba women traders are often characterized as very independent and the women interviewed did report that they controlled the income from their trading activities and spent it on themselves and their children. However, this does not appear to translate into ‘autonomy’ at other levels in women’s lives.

Abike spoke of this.

Earlier in my marriage, I spoke openly with my husband about money but he was always asking me for money. So now I save in secret for my business and my children.

Women were often in fact economically independent and supported their children as indicated in the previous sub-section. Trade does indeed alter aspects of
women's family life. It requires a level of mobility and it provides a means of economic independence to women as well as freedom to go where it is necessary to pursue trading activities. Yet this does not seem to imply autonomy or equal authority to men. Abike did not see herself as equal to her husband and this seemed all the more surprising because she was educated and also economically independent.

I must ask my husband before I go visiting. He lets me go to my family but often says 'no' when I want to visit friends. If I don't listen, he may ask me to leave or bring someone else home.

However, she did not have to get permission to go to buy things for trade. Since her husband's work involved travel, it seems that he would not be around to forbid Abike from visiting her friends when he is away. She felt that he was a good man and that she needed a husband. She also felt that if anything should happen, she wanted her children to be with her.

Many of the women interviewed did not see themselves as equal in authority to their husbands. Yet the reality of their everyday lives indicated a high level of autonomy and decision-making powers. In Yoruba society, women's independence as traders is accepted. Despite most of the traders being Muslim, they were not secluded like Hausa women. Women in fact enjoy a considerable level of domestic autonomy and age and wealth seem to give them status. Yet women are not considered equal to men either by men or by women.

While polygamy is prevalent among the Yoruba, the interviews indicated that this was not the case among the urban poor. Women interviewed said that, given the situation of polygamy, they continued to maintain ties with their own lineage, especially with their mothers who were seen to be a source of both
emotional and economic support in times of emergency. When asked about how they felt about polygamy, one woman laughingly said that her husband could not afford another wife. Yet there are indications that men are not, as a consequence, monogamous but rather that they have 'girlfriends', indicating the breakdown of traditional systems of obligations. The fact that many of the women interviewed were the only wives of their husbands is perhaps a reflection of the economic realities facing the men in that they are unable to find the money for bride price payments. Interestingly enough, many of the landlords of the compounds in Olaleyeye were polygamously married with some of them having as many as seven or eight wives, indicating their wealth; it must be noted that one of the several ways in which Islam has been adopted in Yorubaland is to override the prescribed limit on the number of wives.

The majority of the women interviewed had difficulties earning enough income trading but did not have the education and skills let alone the opportunities to do anything else. However, their domestic responsibilities especially in childcare made trade a compatible occupation. When one looks around in Olaleyeye, one sees a large number of pre-school children under the loose supervision of the women. Women's role in childcare needs to be addressed concurrently with any solutions for better income generation. The short response to the question 'What would you like to do?' indicated that women would like to do something, anything, that earned them money. The older women did not feel that they could do anything else except trade since they had done it for so many years. Some of the others expressed interest in acquiring home-economics skills such as baking, handicrafts or sewing. Yet there was a high level of competition already existing
in these activities as well.

Women seemed to prefer the flexibility of running single-operator enterprises. However, some of the women who were rather desperate because of the bad state of their businesses, indicated that they would do anything at all that would improve their business including, they emphasised, even working with others.

Women have a preference for and an overwhelming presence in trade; they lack skills and education and lack viable alternatives; yet their reproductive responsibilities continue. Given the context of recession and the realities of the commercial political economy of Nigeria, one is left with the rather crucial question 'what is to be done?'; it appears that changes have to be effected at the level of the political economy but it is doubtful that they will occur in the immediate future given the level of compradorial activity in Nigeria’s commercial political economy.

A Trader in Olaleye

Abike A invariably has a long day. She wakes up before dawn and cooks in the morning and if necessary goes to the market to buy things. She is in her stall at the market from nine in the morning till seven in the evening, Monday through Saturday. One child, the oldest, goes to primary school. A young girl looks after two children at home and the youngest baby, a girl, is in the stall with Abike. The housegirl looks after the children’s lunch and Abike comes home to make the evening meal. Abike usually washes the bulk of the family’s clothes on Sunday and is often tired on a Monday morning.

She has a good relationship with her neighbours in the market, especially
the one to the right of her and the one across. If any one of them has to run errands, or buy wholesale or deal with family problems, the others will attend to her stall. All the sellers are women. The men are in a separate section and are mostly meat sellers. When business is slow, she and her neighbours often chat. Other women from other stalls come by, sit down for a chat and some older women play with Abike's child.

Abike has saved over 500 Naira in a bank. Her husband does not know that she has this money. She is saving it to enlarge her business when the market is rebuilt and the stalls are more secure. She is also saving it for her children. She generally plans her expenses. She does not spend money on new clothes for every festival and even for her children; she has one or two sets of smart clothes and uses them for special occasions as they tend to grow out of clothes so quickly.

She loves her children and she would like at least two more. She wants to be in a position to give them a good education and opportunities. She does not question why she should feel or be primarily responsible for her children; she does believe that her husband will help if he can.

She had bought all the materials for her business from within the Lagos city markets; she stocks laces, threads, buttons, zippers and other accessories for sewing. She does not keep a large stock and replaces commodities that move quickly. She also had a button press that could make buttons using the fabric that was being sewn into a dress and this capital investment earned her regular income.

She is interested in learning other skills but does not see wage labour as
compatible with her family responsibilities or her need for flexibility.

Conclusion

In contemporary Nigeria, the overwhelming constraints on Yoruba women traders stem from the political economic situation of Nigeria. Factors such as inflation of wholesale prices, unemployment and instability constrain women in their business activities. Opportunities in the formal sector are restricted, first, because of women's continuing responsibilities in reproductive activities, especially for childcare, and, also because of the way gender hierarchies exist in the capitalist hierarchical structures in the modern sector. Women use the income earned to educate their children rather than for capital accumulation. However, the educated children are often unable to find work and sometimes end up working with their uneducated mothers. Although the potential exists for the economic activities of Yoruba women to reproduce a more educated labour force, the overwhelming constraints from current political economy of Nigeria limit this transformation of the labour force. Cultural factors do affect Yoruba women's work. However, the specificity of Islam in Yoruba culture is markedly different than in Hausa culture. Yoruba women have considerable mobility despite Islam unlike secluded Muslim Hausa women.

There have been considerable changes at the political economic level in Nigeria in the oil era. Nigerian society is in a state of flux and it would be difficult to make generalizations given the context of political instability and economic crises. The political economic changes are affecting women's roles in such a way that women are being forced to continue with their responsibilities as well as take new ones on without corresponding opportunities. However, it
appears that although the constraints are severe, women traders are continuing in the long tradition of West African women in being economically active with a view to earning independent income.
Footnotes

2. Biérsteker (1978)
3. Williams (1976:28). This provides an analysis of the changes to the Nigerian political economy from pre-colonial times.
5. Williams (1976:31)
6. Turner (1976). Turner describes the events involving the commercial triangles in the oil sector that led up to the coup that overthrew the Gowon regime; the technocrats as authorized individuals had not been able to make, apply and enforce public policies to regulate the Nigerian society.
10. As was discussed in the last chapter, cash cropping was expanded through the active intervention of the colonial state and much of the large scale trading, especially import-export trade was monopolised by British capital. However, Yoruba men were able to enter large-scale trading to some extent and hence had the opportunity to acquire managerial experience and to accumulate capital and so they became businessmen after independence; this was possible because men, compared to women had greater access to capital as guardians of lineage resources when changes occurred in traditional society. It was also discussed in the earlier chapters that there were differences in opportunities and skills on the basis of ethnicity, for example, between the Yoruba and the Hausa, as well as on the basis of gender.
11. Afonja (1981:312)
13. Ibid.
15. Ekekwe and Turner (1984:3)
16. Ibid. In fact, one estimate of kickbacks to government officials during the...
civilian regime of Shagari from 1979 to 1983 is fourteen million dollars in local currency and eighteen million dollars in foreign currency in return for contracts worth 997 million dollars awarded to foreign contractors. There have been other consequences of such commercial circuits; the real objective of most of the projects embarked upon, including government-funded ‘industries’ has been primitive accumulation. Misallocation of funds for the benefit of ‘commercial triangles’ has been rampant. A case in point is cited by Turner regarding the ordering of twenty million tonnes of cement, eighty percent of which was by the Ministry of Defence alone, which would have taken twenty years to unload under the existing port capacity. Turner (1976:68). The managing director of the International Bank for West Africa, Mr. Olasore, has suggested that of the 11.5 billion Naira supposedly spent in 1981 for imports, only goods worth 2.97 billion Naira actually came into the country. Mustapha (1984:3). Smuggling and fraud had become prevalent; hoarding and price inflation had been organized by national compradors with their international partners. False customs declarations were used to bring in banned goods duty free, as Keydrl Nigeria Ltd., a U.S. oil industry service contractor had done for goods worth millions of dollars. Of course, the oil industry itself provided has provided the greatest arena for primitive accumulation. Abroadcast on 22 February 1984, after the Dec 31, 1983 coup by Buhari indicated that the theft of oil had increased to about one million dollars’ worth of crude and products per day during the civilian regime of Shagari. Ekekwe and Turner (1984:19).


19. Oluokish (1984:37). There was a drop in membership of the National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria from 75,000 in December 1980 to 48,000 in August 1983. In 1983 alone, 10,000 workers in the Metal industry and 15,000 Printing workers lost their jobs. There was also considerable retrenchment in parastatals. Ibid. The employment of textile workers fell from 200,000 in the 1970’s to 80,000 by December 1983. A poll by the Manufacturer’s association of Nigeria (MAN) showed that over a twelve month period to July 31, 1983, 101 companies had closed for between seven and twelve weeks involving a labour force of 20,000 workers. There was also non-payment of salaries in both the private and the public sector. Bangura (1984:33-4). Out of the estimated three million workers in Nigeria, the largest number are employed in the public sector; but there has been a ban on hiring since 1981 and considerable retrenchment in 1983/84. Ekekwe and Turner (1984:26).


22. Filani (1981:296)
23. Dennis (1984:110)
27. Di Domenico (1983:257)
32. Dennis (1984:112); Mintz (1971)
33. Di Domenico (1983:262)
34. Afonja (1981:312)
35. Di Domenico (1983:259). Since the sample size is small, this may not be a significant change.
38. Fapohunda (1978:228)
39. Dennis (1984:114)
41. Dennis (1984:112)
42. Afonja (1981:312)
43. Pittin (1964)
44. Whitehead (1976)
45. Elson and Pearson (1981)

46. See Van Allen (1978) on the conflict between British and traditional institutions during the colonial period.

47. Fapohunda (1978:227-8)

48. Ibid. See Remy (1975) on the role of the churches in reinforcing an ideology of subordinate status for women.

49. Fapohunda (1978:222)

50. Pittin (1984:73)


52. Di Domenico (1983:260-1)

53. Dennis (1984:116-7)

54. Pittin (1984:73)


56. Ibid.

57. Sudarkasa (1973); Fapohunda (1978:229)

58. Fapohunda (1978:230-1)

59. Dennis (1984); Di Domenico (1983); Fapohunda (1978)

60. Di Domenico (1983)

61. Dennis (1984:119-10)

62. Interviews were conducted with groups of women traders in Olaleyeye. The women interviewed spoke at group sessions and not in response to specific questions. They were generally reluctant to speak about the financial aspects of their business; in any case, they did not follow any specific kind of accounting practice yet they were knowledgeable on basic business matters. In all about 30-35 women were interviewed, often in groups and sometimes individually. They were of varying ages, nearly all of them were Yoruba and most of them were Muslim. They were traders of different commodities or foodstuffs.


65. Ibid. See Awe (1977) for more on the role of the Iyalode in the traditional Yoruba political system. See Trager (1977) on trade associations as an organizing mechanism for trade.


67. ILO's Jaspas Basic needs Mission to the Government of Nigeria had identified unemployment as a major problem in Nigeria, particularly for school leavers. It quoted a 1974 labour force sample survey which recorded unemployment rates of 20.7% for age group fifteen to nineteen and 11.4% for age group twenty to twenty-four in urban areas. The situation is clearly worse in recent times. ILO (1981)
Conclusion

In this paper, an attempt was made to analyse and to theorize about women's position on the basis of the study of two Nigerian societies, the Hausa and the Yoruba. The importance of a historically and culturally specific analysis was emphasized.

The concept of the sexual division of labour was used as a tool to see the ways in which political economic changes translated into changes in gender relations and more specifically into changes in women's roles in society. The interrelationship between women's roles in production and reproduction was analysed.

In traditional Hausa society, women's production was organized on a communal basis; women had important roles in production and reproduction and their productive activity was crucial for social reproduction. Islam altered the social organization of this society by altering the property relations from a communal base to private ownership, an effect which was reinforced by capitalist penetration and colonialism, which also increased the stratification in Hausa society on the basis of class. A consequence of the way in which Islam affected gender roles was that women's participation in agriculture was reduced and their traditional rights over land were alienated, resulting in loss of autonomy for women. Class and gender intertwined to the detriment of women.

Despite Islamic ideology and seclusion forcing them into 'hidden trade', Muslim Hausa women have continued to be economically active, reflecting the strong tradition of independence and the persistence of the pattern among West African women of engaging in the economy and the market. Hausa women use the income earned for their daughters' dowry. Their economic activities thus
perpetuate the existing social system rather than bring about socio-economic change; also, education for girls is an alternative means to the use of income earned for the traditional end of providing dowry.

There exists a division of labour on the basis of ethnicity and gender in which Hausa women are at a disadvantage vis-a-vis men as well as non-Hausa women. There is also a difference in the returns to labour on the basis of gender. Also, political economic changes have affected gender relations to the detriment of women and the rationale for this is provided by Islamic ideology.

Yoruba women are renowned for their trading activities. The extent of their involvement in farm work in traditional society has been debated. As among the Hausa, the division of labour in traditional Yoruba society was for survival but men controlled land and its usufructs; trade was divided by gender along product type and availability of capital. However, society was organized on a communal basis.

Legitimate commerce and the penetration of capital changed the property relations from communal to private ownership among the Yoruba as well as Islam and capital accumulation did among the Hausa. With changes occurred in traditional society due to cash cropping, differentiation occurred between cash crop and subsistence farmers. Also, men as guardians of family wealth were able to enter trade as middlemen. Colonialism promoted export crop production and altered the sexual division of labour in such a way that men controlled wholesale trade. There was a division of spheres of trade on the basis of gender, with women being confined to the internal marketing system.

Thus Yoruba women, despite their mobility are confined to the local economy as Hausa women are under seclusion. Thus gender appears to be an overriding factor in determining women's productive activities. Also, what is
interesting to note is that many Yoruba women are Muslim. Yet the way Islam was adopted in Yorubaland did not confine Yoruba women who were perhaps already well-established traders when Islam arrived there.

Both Hausa and Yoruba women prefer self-employment, especially trade. Yoruba women use the income they earn for educating their children and this could bring about socioeconomic change through a 'transformed' labour force. Thus they appear to have a greater potential than Hausa women for transforming social structures.

An attempt was made to assess the applicability of some generalizations regarding the effects of capitalist penetration from the theoretical perspectives discussed, for the specific instances of Hausa and Yoruba societies.

Firstly, there appears to be continuity in women's role in reproduction from the traditional to the capitalist modes and the role of women in reproduction continues to form the basis of the sexual division of labour in these societies. Next, the effect of capitalist penetration in these societies increased the stratification along class lines; this reinforced the differentiation on the basis of gender.

Another issue to be considered for its applicability to the Nigerian cases is with regard to women's participation or the lack thereof in the modern sector. Men and women in Nigeria see wage labour in instrumental terms - as a step in a career towards self-employment since it offers an opportunity for accumulating capital. Women's continuing role in reproduction is one of the limiting factors in their participation in the highly structured formal sector. Also gender continues to be a factor confining women to the local economy. This is not only the case for Hausa women who are secluded but also the case for Yoruba women who have considerable mobility in carrying out their trading activities. Differential
processes are at work in the incorporation of women into the formal sector, with

gender as an organizing factor: firstly, there is unequal representation of
women in the wage labour force. Further, gender is operative in the placement
of women in the lower levels in the hierarchical structure of capitalist
enterprises reflecting the intertwining of class and gender. Traditional and
Western values combine to accentuate gender typing, which leads to the
unbalanced occupational distribution to the detriment of women in the modern
sector and also reflects in the allocation of women to the lower levels of the
occupational hierarchy in the modern sector. The cultural and ideological
underpinnings locate the responsibility for accommodating women's productive
and reproductive roles with women and hence women are forced to make choices
regarding work based on its compatibility with child care and domestic tasks.

In contemporary Nigeria, the constraints on women in their role as traders
stem from the events in the political economy such as the inflation of wholesale
prices, the increased dependence on imports whose prices are increasing, the
overall context of unemployment and underemployment, and not the least, the
chronic political instability reflected by the coups. In the oil era, the
overwhelming constraints faced by women traders stem from the commercial
political economy of Nigeria and these are reinforced by cultural and ideological
factors.

Women and men use wage labour as a means to accumulate capital only to
return to activities in the informal sector; reentry into the sphere of circulation
is preferred to the sphere of production. The reasons for this appear quite
complex and likely include a variety of factors - the greatest profits are
perhaps to be made in the sphere of circulation in Nigeria's commercial political
economy; also, the enclave nature of capitalist development in Nigeria does not
offer much scope for capitalist production relations to develop outside of the very highly capital-intensive, foreign dominated manufacturing sector; or perhaps there is demand lacking for intermediate level goods that could be produced with small levels of capital investment; yet another factor may be the ideological and cultural factors from pre-capitalist times that affect the choices of Nigerians in this realm.

In conclusion, the cultural factors in the North are more determining of the position of women. Interestingly, education for girls does not affect or fundamentally alter women's lives; on the contrary, it recreates the cultural conditions that continue to locate them in the home. So any issues dealing with women in the North would have to take into account, the condition of seclusion and, more generally, culture.

The effect of cultural factors are less in the case of the Yoruba. This is illustrated by the fact that both Islamic and Christian women among the Yoruba identified their problems in trade in very similar ways. Yoruba women have considerable mobility and greater freedom compared to Hausa women and, in general, the opportunities for them are larger. Compared to the North, culture is less of a constraining factor. In fact, the changes in the Yoruba case might be more closely correlated to political economy than to culture. In the South, the conditions of the economy and the polity become quite central in women's lives.

The non-oil industry is concentrated in the South and in general, it appears that the non-agricultural sector is sensitive to changes. This is translated to changes that affect women's lives and work. Some of these differences could be due to the fact that the North has stayed a relatively closed society despite the penetration of capital while there was much earlier penetration of capital in Southern Nigeria.
This paper has attempted to examine women's role in reproduction and their responsibilities in the family. In both cases, the responsibilities within the family entirely devolve on women. This is especially so in the Yoruba case where, in effect, women are the sole support for their children, not only in terms of maintenance and childcare, but also for education.

This paper has demonstrated through an exploration of social and cultural values, as well as the Nigerian economy, that there are no blanket formulae or 'universal' solutions for altering the position of women through development effort. As for its relevance to theory, this paper has demonstrated that biological determinism is inadequate as an explanation for the subordination of women. Cultural factors are not totally determinate either since the interact constantly with economic changes. Social and cultural norms have indeed changed over time and have made adjustments in response to the economic changes.

The relations between men and women in society are affected by, and in turn affect the political economy in which they are embedded. Political economy and culture interact and reinforce each other in affecting the everyday experience of women in their productive and reproductive activities.
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<th>Exports Barrels (000)</th>
<th>Value (Naira million)</th>
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Source: Compiled from Central Bank Files and returns from Lagos Chambers of Commerce.
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<td>32.2</td>
<td>6,662.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1/ Provisional
2/ C.B.N. estimates

### TABLE 5: IMPORT DUTIES, 1982 (FROM OLUKOSHI (1984))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Old Duty</th>
<th>New Duty</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Old Duty</th>
<th>New Duty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stock fish</td>
<td>30% (a.v.)</td>
<td>50% (a.v.)</td>
<td>Cereal flour</td>
<td>15% (a.v.)</td>
<td>30% (a.v.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulk Tea</td>
<td>10% (a.v.)</td>
<td>50% (a.v.)</td>
<td>Cotton lint</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>5% (a.v.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>20% (a.v.)</td>
<td>30% (a.v.)</td>
<td>Cotton yarns</td>
<td>-10% (a.v.)</td>
<td>30% (a.v.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>50K per Kg</td>
<td>70K per Kg</td>
<td>Electric fans</td>
<td>70% (a.v.)</td>
<td>150% (a.v.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>20% (a.v.)</td>
<td>Panel vans</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>100% (a.v.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Creams</td>
<td>20% (a.v.)</td>
<td>33% (a.v.)</td>
<td>Cameras</td>
<td>50% (a.v.)</td>
<td>100% (a.v.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyres of cars</td>
<td>55K per KG</td>
<td>75K per Kg</td>
<td>Bicycles</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>50% (a.v.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B.: a.v. - ad valorem tax

### TABLE 6: COMPARATIVE INCREASE IN THE PRICES OF SOME ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES IN LAGOS (1983) (IN NAIRA CURRENCY) (FROM OLUKOSHI (1984))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>FEBRUARY</th>
<th>AUGUST</th>
<th>OCTOBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Tin of Palm Oil</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>52.00</td>
<td>79.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Gallon of Vegetable Oil</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Size of Yam Tuber</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Tin of Beans-staples</td>
<td>56.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>78.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Tin of Gari-staples</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>47.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Size Omo-detergents</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Tin of Peak Milk</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Size Maclean Paste</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin of Medium Size Nescafe</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Concord, 20 October 1983
APPENDIX

Methodology

This paper draws on a number of case studies of Hausa and Yoruba societies by different authors. Most of the material on the role of women and their economic activities are from anthropological sources. Case studies were intended for both the Hausa and the Yoruba. However, a research permit was not granted in the North over an extended period of time and hence only secondary material is used on Hausa women. In the South, the case study was conducted in Lagos, where most of the traders were Yoruba and the majority Muslim. This was in the context of a UNICEF urban slum renewal project in Olaleye slum area of Lagos.

The methodology used for conducting interviews was to obtain a factual account of the every-day experiences of the women of Olaleye. About thirty-five women were interviewed. The interview process often consisted of discussions among a group of women, with several of them commenting on any particular issue that was raised. Several days were spent in the market area, observing the day-to-day lives and experiences of women traders. The interview process was not structured through the use of questionnaires. Although a more in-depth and extensive data collection through a more structured interview process was intended, this was not possible due to the cancellation of the UNICEF project by the leaders of the Dec 31, 1983 coup.

The data is used in this study primarily to enrich the material found in the literature. It is recent and speaks directly in the words of the women of Olaleye. As to the extent one might be able to generalize from the data, personal observation and informal discussions during an extended period in Nigeria indicated that, in fact, the experiences of the women of Olaleye were fairly representative of that of most women, particularly among the Yoruba.
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