The political economy of market women in Western Nigeria

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Clark Atlanta University

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ABSTRACT
POLITICAL SCIENCE

AWOMOLO, ABIODUN ADEGBOYE B.A., University of Ibadan, 1988
M.P.I.A., University of Pittsburgh, 1991

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MARKET WOMEN IN WESTERN NIGERIA

Advisor: Professor William H. Boone

Dissertation dated: July, 1998

This study examined the political-economy of market women paying close attention to the impact of governmental economic policies on women’s trade. Our analysis was based on the experiences of market women in western Nigeria as a case study. The study focused particularly on the wage and salary restructuring awards (Udoji awards) of the 1970s and the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) of the late 1980s to present. On a secondary level, the study attempted theory-building of Africana feminism using the position of market women as the focus of analysis.

To achieve its primary goal, the study presented and analyzed the following: (a) the impact of presumably gender-neutral policies on women’s trade; (b) the plight of women traders in a gender-differentiated market arena; and (c) coping mechanisms market women utilize in light of the two preceding conditions. To fulfill the secondary objective, an examination was conducted of feminist writings theorizing the situation of African women vis-a-vis the reality of their existence.

In this case study, triangulation was used to test the validity of the data collected. Secondary data was collected as well as primary data using a questionnaire and personal interviews. In addition, a videotape recording of markets was undertaken to corroborate
survey findings. From our examination of the data, both primary and secondary, we found that market women were adversely impacted by SAPs conditionalities.

Three major findings resulted from this study: (1) Stagnation of trade: the combination of devaluation of the naira, lack of money in circulation, ban on imports, high maintenance fees for market space, and non-payment of workers salaries by the government, aggravate consumer buying power and result in the stagnation of trade; (2) Market overcrowding: mass retrenchment brought women and men into the market who would normally not consider trade as an occupation. This situation in turn creates a reduction in individual sales, excessive competition for customers, and market overcrowding; and (3) Political alienation of market traders by the state: The current oppressive administration, fluctuation in leadership, arbitrary enforcement of policies, and police harassment have forced market women to assume a reactionary posture whereby they ignore state policies, attempt to dialogue with government officials, or stage marches and riots in order to demonstrate their dissatisfaction.

Finally, our theoretical examination revealed the need for a socio-cultural construct to be integrated into the nexus of race, class, and gender within Africana feminism in order to make it a viable framework to discuss market women as a microcosm of women in developing countries.
THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MARKET WOMEN IN WESTERN NIGERIA

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

ABIODUN ADEGBOYE AWOMOLO

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

JULY, 1998
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAWRD</td>
<td>Association of African Women Organized for Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG</td>
<td>Action Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLP</td>
<td>Better Life for Rural Dwellers Programme (or “Better Life”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>Constitution Drafting Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COWAN</td>
<td>Country Women’s Association of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOMWAN</td>
<td>Federation of Muslim Women’s Association of Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAD</td>
<td>Gender and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFIs</td>
<td>International Financial Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>INSTRAW</td>
<td>International Training and Research Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGAs</td>
<td>Local Government Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAMSER</td>
<td>Mass Mobilization for Social and Economic Recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Naira</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAUW</td>
<td>Nigerian Association of University Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCLP</td>
<td>Nigerian Commoner’s Liberal Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCNC</td>
<td>National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCW</td>
<td>National Commission for Women</td>
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<td>NCWS</td>
<td>National Council of Women’s Societies</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLC</td>
<td>Nigerian Labor Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>Northern People’s Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC</td>
<td>National Republican Convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAMSCAD</td>
<td>Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAPs</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Programs/Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMC</td>
<td>Supreme Military Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWAN</td>
<td>Society of Women Accountants of Nigeria</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAD</td>
<td>Women and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAI</td>
<td>War Against Indiscipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>WID</td>
<td>Women in Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIN</td>
<td>Women in Nigeria</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
GLOSSARY

Adi. Local cosmetic.

Adire. Local tie and dye textile.

Alaafin. Head of government of Oyo kingdom.

Alake. King of Egbaland.

Alhaja. Female muslim who has been on pilgrimage to Mecca.

Aje. Market deity and goddess of prosperity.

Amirah. Leader of Federation of Muslim Women’s Association of Nigeria.

Ankara. Local multicolor textile.

Are. Traditional military head of Ibadan.

Asipa. Female market chief.

Baale. Ruler of hamlet or village.

Babaloja. Male conterpart of traditional head or subordinate head of market.

Balogun. Female market chief.

Egbe Iyalode. First Ladies Guild (group of prominent female chieftains).

Egbon. Older sibling.

Erelu. Traditional head of women in Lagos (pre-1836).

Gelede. Male secret society.

Igbejo. Chief’s court.
Iya Oba/Iyoba. Queen Mother.

Iyalofa. Traditional head or subordinate head of market women.

Iyamode. Female chief who oversaw the king’s spiritual well-being.

Kehinde. Second twin.

Kijipa. Local cloth.

Mogaji. Head of clan.

Oba. Head of a kingdom or metropole town.

Obinrin. Female.

Okunrin. Male.

Oloja. Ruler of subordinate town.

Omu. Igbo female counterpart to king.

Osi Iyalode. Female market chief.

Otun Iyalode. Female market chief.

Taiwo. First twin.

Udoji. 1974 wage and salary restructuring awards.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Trading among the Yoruba of western Nigeria, dates back to the pre-colonial period. As Ester Boserup notes, the women of West Africa are famous for their conspicuous presence in the marketplace and for their ingenuity in trade. In Ghana and southern Nigeria, women account for up to 80 percent of the labor force in both rural and urban trade.¹ Yoruba women traders distinguish themselves as having economic independence and historical political power which is deeply entrenched into the society.²

This study is a critical examination of the political-economy of market women paying close attention to the impact of governmental economic policies on their trade. The study will specifically focus on the wage and salary restructuring awards (Udoji awards) of the 1970s and the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) of the late 1980s to date. On a secondary level, the study will attempt to test and build Africana feminist theory using the position of market women traders as the cynosure of analysis.


The centrality of trade, including women’s trade to Yoruba economy cannot be overstated. J. D. Y. Peel in his study of a Yoruba kingdom from 1890s to 1970s, found that women had always been economically active. In a sample population taken in 1920, all but 14 percent had occupations other than being housewives; 62 percent engaged in trade, and 24 percent practiced crafts such as weaving and dyeing of cloth. 3 The Yoruba believe everyone must work irrespective of age or gender in order to stave off poverty and to earn respect and fame. 4 Hence, a woman’s involvement in trade goes beyond the basic need to feed and clothe herself and her children. Success in trade and control of her own income provides economic independence, a place to stand in domestic discord, and some political-economic power in the community. 5

Yoruba markets are multi-functional institutions associated with several non-economic aspects of the socio-cultural environment. As Hodder and Ukwu observed in their 1969 study:

Each market has a social organization; a set of notion and ideas or values, about what a market should be; a set of events which follow one another in

---


a chronological order; and a steady exchange of goods in one form or another.6

In pre-colonial era, trade and tolls provided a major source of revenue for political authorities and cemented relations between the Yoruba and their neighbors such as the Akan, the Nupe, Hausa, and Benin; thus, it was always an important component of the international relations of Yoruba kingdoms.7

In addition to being an economic center, the market is highly sociopolitical and provides a vital link in the chain of distribution. It involves the daily mass movement of people and goods and fulfils a vital social function.8 The nature of interaction within the marketplace is useful in ways which facilitate information exchange, social interactions, social control, influence building, and networking.9

Cosmologically, markets are associated with a female deity, Aje, who demands regular worship from her priestesses and all traders in order to provide them with success and prosperity in trade.10 Heads of market associations often double as priestesses and


they are responsible for the worship of Aje. The rituals involved in goddess worship is intricately linked to productivity, power and spiritual balance, all of which are controlled by women in the sociospatial structure of the market.\textsuperscript{11}

In the past, Yoruba men were farmers and craftsmen while women, even as today, were involved in trade. Urbanization is not a new phenomenon in Yorubaland - some towns and cities along with the markets within them, are over four centuries old and still exist today.\textsuperscript{12} The development of urban centers produced a marketing system in which agricultural produce, crafts, and imported goods changed hands, and much of this trade, particularly the daily markets of the towns, was traditionally handled by women.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite the prominence of markets in the culture, the Yoruba, like most African societies, were predominantly farmers. In 1969, Hodder distinguished 3 separate elements in the agricultural economy of Yorubaland: (i) an export production economy which centers on cocoa and oil palm; (ii) a local and internal exchange economy comprising of surplus foodstuffs; and (iii) a dominantly subsistence economy.\textsuperscript{14} Not all crops grown in the Yoruba region enters the market distribution system. For example, until recent years, export crops such as Cocoa and Palm Kernels were handled entirely


\textsuperscript{11}Falola, p. 24.


\textsuperscript{13}Endes, p. 80. Scc also Falola, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{14}Hodder, p. 15.
through a marketing board established during colonial rule. The situation today is that individual businesses are allowed to export the crops on their own.

Alongside the internal exchange system, the nonagricultural sector of Yoruba economy boasts a local industry consisting of cotton spinning, weaving, indigo dyeing, basketry, pottery, and leather work. In addition, Yorubaland, particularly Lagos and Ibadan, houses a highly developed network of factories and manufacturing industries comprising of: food processing, drink, textiles, cement, and furniture and others.

In her 1970 study, Boserup noted that two-thirds of adult Yoruba women, trade; half of this number traded as their sole occupation. For others, trade was a subsidiary to agriculture or crafts. These women sold their own products in the market. Several reasons have been proposed to account for women’s dominance of retail trade in West Africa. These include: lack of adequate male support, limited access to formal sector employment, women’s domination of subsistence agriculture, suitability of trade to child

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16 Ibid., pp. 16-17.

17 For illiterate women, this pattern has remained much the same today. Niara Sudarkasa, Where Women Work: A Study of Yoruba Women in the Marketplace and in the Home cited by Boserup, p. 93.
care responsibilities, and illiteracy. Up front, one major advantage of trade for women is that income from trade is steadier than farming which is more seasonal.\textsuperscript{18}

Boserup argues that, market trade is often the main occupation for those who belong to communities where married women, have inadequate financial support from their husbands and therefore must fend for themselves and their children. Furthermore, the marketplace became women's domain because men usually despise and avoid occupations staffed predominantly by women, be it agriculture or trade.\textsuperscript{19} As B. W. Hodder found in his study on Western Nigeria, the division of labor between the sexes is very marked both in agriculture and in the craft industries. Yoruba men dominate cash crop farming and women play a lesser role except in the harvesting operations. On the other hand, women dominate craft industries, food processing, and petty trade.\textsuperscript{20}

Although the market is generally conceded by a long historical tradition to be female turf in Africa,\textsuperscript{21} one finds a peculiar pattern whereby local women and immigrant men dominate petty trade and local men are found in wholesale and certain sex-differentiated areas of petty trade such as butchery and goldsmithing. In addition, men predominate the higher levels of trading hierarchy because they typically have had


\textsuperscript{19}Boserup, pp. 92-3.

\textsuperscript{20}Hodder, p. 17.

several years to build up capital before marriage and its responsibilities. For most market women, they start trading after marriage but domestic responsibilities make it difficult to save and move up the trading hierarchy.22

In order to start a trade, a woman is presented with cash gifts from her relatives a few days before marriage and from her husband after marriage.23 The woman then uses the cash accumulated to purchase domestic animals such as goats and fowls for rearing and plows the rest into trade.24 The regular practice is to start small, then progress into more capital-intensive forms of trade. Because it takes, in relative terms, a lot of capital to venture into general goods, a girl may begin her career with peppers and tomatoes from her father’s farm and then graduate to more heavily capitalized trade.

Status as a market woman comes with maturity and mothers often pass on to daughters, their bargaining skills and the goodwill of their customers.25 Unfortunately, many women never get beyond petty trading because several aspects of wholesale trade lends it to male dominance including: a high level of mobility, access to credit facilities, access to supplies and transportation, ability to work within an established trade, and a

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22Eades, p. 84.

23The advantage of this practice is that a newly wed woman is furnished with startup capital; the disadvantage is that it would have been more productive earlier in her life when she was not saddled with the responsibilities of building a new home. See Ibid.

24N. A. Fadipe, The Sociology of the Yoruba cited by Falola, p. 27.

supply network. Consequently, wholesale trade is dominated by men while retail/petty trade is dominated by women.

Depending on location, Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, identifies four types of trade: (1) ‘manoeuvre’ trade which involves the trader buying goods wholesale from the interior or exterior and carrying them to the various markets for trade to retailers; (2) ‘on the premises trade’ in which the trader has a stall in front of her home; (3) inland trade which requires a lot of travel to distant villages to buy foodstuffs for town markets; and (4) market trade whereby the trader obtains a stall in the marketplace from where she sells her goods.

Based on the nature of their trade, there are three cadres of women traders: the richest and most powerful are large-scale importers (who sometimes venture into unauthorized or illegal trade) of cloth, enamel, plastic ware and other items. Others in this group own large businesses in farm produce, for example, tomatoes, onions, and cassava, by buying large quantities from village markets or straight from the farmer’s field and selling them to retailers in the urban centers. Many of these women are


27 Aronson, pp. 118 & 133.


international traders who travel to neighboring countries from coast to coast throughout West Africa by land, sea, and air. The second cadre might own shops or shop fronts from where they sell their wares retail or wholesale.

Majority of women traders however, buy and sell in relatively small quantities within the internal market system. They specialize in fresh and cooked food, canned or processed goods (such as milk, sugar, beverages), mats, pottery and other crafts, knick-knacks, medicinal leaves, and so on. These category of market women, who sell at mini-retail level from within their homes or hawk on the streets, do not have considerable overhead, and do not make much profit.

Market women are mostly illiterate, few have other alternatives for earning money, and may not own land or have access to a farm. For these women, their primary income is in cash. They earn barely enough to take care of their children’s expenses but rarely do they earn as much or higher than their husbands. Jane I. Guyer argues that women’s access to resources appears to be inferior to men’s in several ways: smaller farms, less fertile land, less opportunity for occupational mobility, less wage employment, and limited access to credit facilities.

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30 Ibid., pp. 60-1. See also Eades, p. 83.
31 Brunger, pp. 60-1.
32 Boserup, p. 93.
33 Ibid., p. 25.
34 Guyer, p. 30.
Mini-retail is particularly well adapted to the average consumer’s extremely limited buying power. For example, taxi drivers or apprentices can enjoy the luxury of a daily cigarette or two even if they cannot afford to buy a pack. P. T. Bauer notes that by making commodities available in smaller quantities, many intermediaries make it possible for traders and consumers with little capital to have goods that would otherwise be beyond their reach. Consumers also enjoy the close proximity to the products they desire which can be purchased off a passing hawker’s head or at the nearest street corner.35

Setting of the Problem

The Yoruba are one of Africa’s largest ethnic groups totaling an estimated 20 million or more in Nigeria alone.36 They dominate the western region of Nigeria (the old Oyo Empire), and parts of Benin and Togo (see appendix 1:1). Consequently, when discussing women traders in Western Nigeria, one is talking predominantly about Yorubas.37 However, the traditional setup of the old Oyo empire is vastly different from today. As Robin Law states, Oyo kingdom was ruled from Oyo Ile and incorporated substantial territory to the east and south and comprised of a population less urbanized

35Brunger, p. 62.


37Krapf-Askari, p. 1.
and concentrated mainly in the north of the kingdom.38 The metro town, Oyo Ile
governed the subordinate towns, villages, and hamlets. In general, the rulers of the
subordinate towns, called Baale or Oloja, governed the towns, while the Oyo Oba or
Alaafin was the head of government for the whole kingdom.39 As the subordinate towns
were linked to the metropolis, so were their markets which formed a well-connected
distribution system. Today, the market system in western Nigeria is a conglomeration
of daily markets, periodic markets, and trade route termini.40 Typically, daily markets are
found in the towns and regular periodic markets in the rural areas. These daily markets
are major commercial centers of cities; they supply goods not only to local consumers
but also to traders from smaller towns. Such markets include: Balogun, Tejuoso, Gege,
Orita Merin, Aleshinloye, Bashorun, Sasa, Oja Oba, and Oje. Some of these markets are
specialized in that they trade in one commodity, for example, Oja Oba specializes in the
trade of Kolanuts. There are also specialized urban periodic markets such as Oje in
Ibadan which convenes fortnightly and deals in Yoruba cloth and locally produced
soap.41

38 Robin Law, The Oyo Empire C. 1600 - C. 1836: A West African Imperialism in
the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1977, reprint

39 Trager, p. 34.

40 According to A.I. Mabogunje, “some towns were termini on the long-distance
trade routes that linked the Yoruba kingdoms with the Akan to the west, and with the
Bariba, Hausa, and Nupe to the north.” A.I. Mabogunje, Urbanization in Nigeria cited by
Eades, p. 80.

41 Hodder, pp. 104-9.
Outside the cities and large towns are ‘rings’ of rural markets organized into four or eight-day cycles with a different market convened each day. According to J. S. Eades, "The best documented of these is the Akinyele ring, an eight-day cycle to the north of Ibadan." The markets in a ring are evenly spread out and produce is brought in by headload thereby making marketing very labor intensive. Ecology and food habits determine the uniformity of the commodities traded in rural markets. For example, maize and yam feature prominently in all markets while rice is dominant in Ilesa and Oriade local government areas (LGAs). Two main types of commodities are involved: manufactured goods moving outwards from the urban markets, and farm produce moving in the other direction.

Hodder suggests 5 classifications of Yoruba markets based on location and periodicity: (i) urban daily market, characteristic of large towns and cities; (ii) urban nightly market, commencing at dusk and continuing till about 10:00 pm; (iii) rural daily market, common for fresh meat; (iv) rural periodic night market; and (v) rural periodic daily market. As demonstrated in figure 1.1 below, all markets both periodic and daily, urban and rural, are connected within the market structure of western Nigeria. Goods

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42Eades, p. 81.


44Ibid., p. 82.

45Hodder, p. 59.
from one market are redistributed in others and the flow of goods determines the
frequency and specialization of each market.

**Figure 1.1 - Internal Market Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periodic markets where the dominant interest is the injection of local foodstuffs and craft products into the exchange economy by wholesale selling and buying</th>
<th>Daily markets associated especially with urban life, where the dominant interest is the buying of local and imported goods</th>
<th>Retail shops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialized wholesale markets</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In pre-independence Nigeria, scarcity of telephones, inadequate transportation, and lack of other resources, forced individuals to step in with their own labor and knowledge to find customers, carry goods, service their consumers, and make their own small profits along the line. However, since Nigerian independence, trade has expanded considerably, thanks to the growth of cash crop production, improvement in transportation, urbanization, and substantial revenue from petroleum.

Today, the market itself is changing in physical structure and arrangement. Urbanization, education, and population pressures are changing the institutional co-existence among users of market space. As new communities emerge, they evolve their own concept of marketing based on their previous experiences, for example, the 1960

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46 Diagram culled from Hodder & Ukwu, 1969, p. xii.


48 Falola, p. 28.
returnees from Ghana who had been accustomed to fenced and locked-up market stalls could not easily adjust to the open and unprotected make-shift sheds found in most rural markets therefore, they had to create their own markets.\textsuperscript{49}

Also, the young and educated are moving away from the traditional market system into “Better Life” markets which accommodate shopping centers and lock-up stores with commodities such as rice, beans, vegetable oil, and others, on retail. Further, this new class of market women do not adapt to the traditional management structure involving chiefs, rather they deal with the local government’s officers such as the Chairman, or Community Development Officers who communicate at their level.\textsuperscript{50}

In the market, each line of stalls belongs to a different commodity. Aisles comprise of dealers in silverware, flatware, grains and tubers, appliances, clothing, hardware, vegetables, fruit, foodstuff, palm wine, bedding, jewelry, and dozens of other lines of goods.\textsuperscript{51} Market women with the exception of hawkers, sit according to the commodity in which they trade.\textsuperscript{52} This study will look at a broad range of traders both wholesale and retail, hawkers and stall owners in four large urban markets, two in Lagos and two in Ibadan, and one rural market in the aforementioned Akinyele ring.

\textsuperscript{49}Adegboyе, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{50}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51}Aronson, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{52}Bernard, p. 31.
Statement of the Problem

As stated in the above preliminary discussion, this study is a critical examination of the political-economy of market women paying close attention to the impact of governmental economic policies on women’s trade. Our analysis is based upon the experiences of market women in Western Nigeria as a case study of market women in West Africa. The study will particularly focus on the impact of the wage and salary restructuring awards of 1974 (Udoji awards) and structural adjustment policies (SAPs) on women traders in markets in Lagos, Oyo, and Osun states of Nigeria. Emphasis will be placed on the effects of SAP while analysis of the Udoji awards will be used as a backdrop. On a secondary level, the study will attempt theory-building of Africana feminism using the position of market women as the central focus of analysis.

One of Africa’s major problems is underdevelopment. Increasingly, this problem is being defined as a woman problem because of the growing awareness of women's substantive role in the development process, international spotlight on women and women’s issues, and the significant ratio of women in the population. Since 1975, the International Women’s Year and the U.N. Decade for Women (1976-1985), women’s issues have come to the forefront of development studies. Also, the inclusion of women in development projects and processes has become mainstream alongside the acknowledgment of the crucial role women play in the socioeconomic development of their societies.53 Consequently, gendered analyses of political, economic, and social

phenomena became attractive to scholars particularly when the research focuses on societies undergoing rapid political and economic changes such as Nigeria.

Research on women in developing countries challenged the most fundamental assumptions of international development, added a gender dimension to development processes, and demanded a new theoretical approach.54 Prior to 1970, it was thought that the development process affected men and women in the same manner; productivity was equated with the cash economy, and most of women's work was ignored. When, it became apparent that women experienced development differently from men and that economic development did not automatically eradicate poverty through trickle-down effects, problems of distribution and equality of benefits became important foci of development theory.55

A significant number of gendered research focus on how development processes have bypassed or subjugated women. These studies emphasize the marginalization or victimization of women within the state structure paying little/no attention to the dynamic interplay between women's activities and the political and socioeconomic systems of their societies. The studies also ignore the ever evolving nature of women-state/cultural relations. Often, women are portrayed as reactants or helpless observers not as active

54 Momsen, p. 3.

55 Ibid., p. 3.
participants in development processes.\textsuperscript{56} As a result of the jaundiced analyses of women’s lives, there is a dearth of studies portraying the unbiased reality.

One-sided analysis however, do not eliminate the need for research on African women. According to Ingrid Palmer:

In no other region is making the distinction between women and men’s contributions to the family and national economies as important to successful policy formulation as in sub-Saharan Africa. Even in the event of rapid restructuring, this region will be crucially dependent on processed and unprocessed primary products for foreign exchange for a long time to come. This dependency is tantamount to a dependency on women to find the resources and time to achieve more in the economic sphere.\textsuperscript{57}

Though it has been established that women are of critical importance to successful policy-making, scholars argue that several factors mitigate against improvement in women’s status such as: (1) lack of involvement by men in efforts to change the position of women in society; (2) lack of political will in many countries to change women’s status; (3) attitudes of both sexes regarding women’s roles; (4) lack of recognition of the value of women’s work in both paid and unpaid sectors; (5) too few women in decision-making positions; and (6) insufficient social services such as day care centers and credit facilities to support women’s participation in national life.\textsuperscript{58}


As earlier stated, women form a substantial portion of the informal sector in several regions of West Africa and comprise of about 80 percent of the commercial sector.\(^{59}\) However, because women generally, and wives in particular, do not have direct access to the market and have less access than men to external sources of income, they are pushed to enter into petty trade rather than find more lucrative work in the informal sector.\(^{60}\) Other factors precipitating women’s concentration in petty trade include: high illiteracy hence non-admittance into the modern labor force, inaccessibility of large capital for investment, incompatibility of formal sector employment with child rearing responsibilities, discrimination in hiring practices, limited financial support from husbands, and sociocultural tradition.\(^{61}\)

Although, market trade appears to be the last bastion of African female domination which has withstood the up-heaving effects of modernization and remains a fertile ground of female employment, the reality is far from tranquil. Like subsistence farming, market trade is labor-intensive, time consuming, and yields low remuneration. It is often the employer of last resort for illiterate/little educated, low income, urban women. Unlike women farmers, women traders are not directly impacted by a lack of access to land or relegation to subsistence production but are equally affected by lack of

\(^{59}\)Boserup, pp. 87-9.


\(^{61}\)Boserup, p. 93. See also Guyer, p. 22.
information, credit and extension services, limited mobility, marginalization and isolation from the formal sector, a lack of support services from the government, and an over-reliance on an ill-organized network of peers and relatives for capital and other investment.62

Heavy responsibilities for household care and provisioning restrict women's working hours and mobility in ways that impact their choice of sector and business practices. For example, lack of affordable child care forces women into jobs with flexible hours and location but the consequences are often lower earnings, discontinuities in work, limited mobility, and lower levels of skill. In addition, women frequently have to withdraw from the labor market because of the demands of marriage and children. Thus, women's businesses tend to grow slower than men's and are more likely to be home-based, technologically unsophisticated, and in overcrowded sectors of the economy.63

For market women, a lack of access to credit limits the profitability and growth of their enterprises. Limited education and mobility - and in some cases, cultural barriers - restrict women's contact with institutions that offer financial services, as do the high cost of transactions and collateral requirements associated with making small loans.64


63 The World Bank, 1994, pp. 36-7.

64 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
Further, legal and regulatory barriers that do not apply to men exacerbate inefficiencies of the system and increase inequity.65

The structural position of market women like women petty commodity producers is characterized by several constraints: (1) they are trapped in exploitative relations of production/distribution; (2) they often lack the organizational and technical capacity to generate adequate income through marketing arrangement, credit, access to raw materials, and improved technology; (3) they experience increasing competition and fluctuating markets; (4) they are excluded from protective state policies; and (5) they are subject to male domination in the household and wider society.66

To further compound their economic marginalization, women did not play significant roles in immediate post-independent Nigerian politics. As the nation progressed, their role in politics became subjective to current leadership position. In other words, their participation under any administration (military or civilian) was dependent on the disposition of the current leadership toward women. Thus, while it is accurate to state that women’s participation increased under both systems as the nation progressed and as international spotlight was shed on women, there is still an insignificant number of women in government.

65Ibid., p. 36.

Beyond political office, a cursory glance reveals that women have enjoyed greater visibility and autonomy under civilian than military government. However, this situation is not a result of the fact that civil rule provides a more conducive participatory environment. Notably, the distinction between the military and civilian administration in Nigeria is not as sharply demarcated as would be expected. As Nina Mba argues, "There is such a close convergence of military and civil roles that it is fashionable to talk about the "militarization of the civilians" and the "civilization of the military." To wit, women have enjoyed greater legislative progress under military rule while their actual political participation and institutional visibility increased under civilian rule.

Not until 1983 and the Muhammad Buhari administration did women’s participation become part of the institutional structure when the government instructed each state government to have one woman commissioner. Along the same lines, the Babangida administration legislated that: "One in every four nominated local government councillors should be women and one woman should be on every government board or panel." Following these legislations and the international attention of the 1980s, Nigerian women became visible in both military and civilian government. For example, the events of the national election of 1983 showed that the number of women in the

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68 Ibid., p. 84
House of Representatives more than doubled from three in 1979 to eight in 1983. While this is not a fantastic leap, women's political participation has increased dramatically as will be further discussed in chapter two.

**Objectives of the Study**

In the words of Lawrence F. Locke, *et al.*, “All research emerges from a perceived problem, some unsatisfactory situation in the world that we want to confront.” In this regard, what we are confronting here are the inequities that exist in Nigerian economic policy-making arena which have failed to take cognizance of the special needs of market women in terms of economic and political development in spite of their substantive contributions to the economy of their communities and of the nation as a whole. Given these circumstances, this study proposes to present and analyze the following:

(a) the status of market women in a gender-differentiated market arena;

(b) the impact of presumably gender-neutral economic policies specifically 1974 salary increment or *Udoji* awards and SAPs on women's trade; and

(c) coping mechanisms market women utilize to survive the two preceding conditions.

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This being said, this study is directed at answering the following questions:

1. What is the role of market women in the economy of their communities and the nation and how is this role manifested?

2. What factors determine the status of market women in the market arena?

2b. To what extent do market women utilize institutional credit particularly banks and credit unions?

3. What is the impact of key economic policies on market women’s trade:
   (a). 1974 salary increment or *Udoji* awards, and
   (b). 1985 Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs).

4. How does market women’s political activity affect government policy or decision making concerning trade?

5. What mechanisms can be setup to generate growth in women’s trade?

To reiterate, the purpose of this research is to review the political economy of market women in the context of economic policies specifically the *Udoji* awards and SAPs on women traders in western Nigeria. Variables to be examined include: trader-state relations, inter-trader/associational relations, male-female relations in the marketplace, utilization of credit facilities, women’s participation in institutional organizations, mode of trading, and work environment or market infrastructure.

Key assumptions underpinning this research are as follows: (1) the impact of economic policies such as *Udoji* and SAPs, is not gender-neutral; (2) structural adjustment policies have had a profound impact on women's trading activities; (3) women's economic power is indicative of the economic well-being of their dependents, therefore, the impact of economic policies on women will have a reverberating effect on
their dependents and their communities; and (4) women's participation in decisions about
the allocation of resources is critical to assuring access to resources. In other words, there
are positional outcomes from political participation.

Definition of Concepts

Market Women: is a term generally used to describe women traders who are
geospatially restricted to a designated location known as the market. They are mostly
economically concentrated in a lower cadre of trade - mini-retail. Unlike ‘market
women,’ the term women traders can be used to describe a broad range of women
entrepreneurs from hawkers to international business women who travel and sell from
coast to coast.

Petty or mini-retail trade: is a term signifying a fairly standard variety of goods
such as cigarettes, needles and thread, biscuits and snack foods, and pieces of cosmetics
which can, in total, be head-loaded and sold from house to house, on a curb, or outside
one’s own door.\footnote{Aronson, pp. 118 and 133.} As explained earlier, the bulk of this research will focus on women
petty traders who make up about 70 percent of all women traders.

Informal sector: In the early 1970s, researchers began using the term ‘informal’
sector to describe economic activities of small producers, vendors, and service workers in
developing countries. The International Labor Office characterized the informal sector
by: (a) ease of entry; (b) reliance on indigenous resources; (c) family ownership of
enterprises; (d) small scale of operation; (e) labor-intensive and adapted technology; (f)

skills acquired outside the formal school system; and (g) unregulated and competitive

markets.72 Informal sector businesses include: crafts, petty trade, and small industrial

enterprises with less than ten employees.73

The distinguishing features of the informal sector are usually described as under-

employment, labor intensity, low productivity, and lack of capital formation.74 In

relation to the formal, the informal sector has less access to resources of the state, thus, it

lacks tariff and quota protection, administrative restriction on competition in its markets,

privileged access to foreign exchange and low interest rates.75 Businesses in the formal

sector are large, use imported capital-intensive machinery, and earn high profits while

those in the informal sector are the opposite. Informal sector labor is characterized by

reciprocal social relations, direct payment for goods and services, and no pension or

medical insurance. The scale of production is limited both by the ability of the owner to

reinvest income and the extent of his personal relationships.76


74Robertson, p. 42.


76For extensive discussion and citation of other sources, see Ibid., pp. 234-5.
**Udoji awards:** In 1972, the Public Service Review Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Chief J. O. Udoji (hence the informal names, *Udoji Commission* and *Udoji awards*), to review the structure and gradings of posts throughout the public services. The report of this body in 1975 found exaggerated income differences within the public sector whereby poverty was concentrated at the lowest level and wealth at the top.\(^77\) The commission recommended a salary increase which ranged from 30 to 100 percent for the lowest paid public servants. The Colonel Yakubu Gowon administration chose to make the increases retroactive by nine months to April 1974 in order to buy public approval for continued military rule.\(^78\)

Unfortunately, the increase in remuneration of one sector of employees led to strikes, demonstrations, and violence among other sectors to such a widespread extent that the government had to concede to a general application of the *Udoji* awards.\(^79\) In addition, though the *Udoji* awards was partly aimed at improving income distribution in the public sector, it worsened the distribution of personal income, caused massive

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\(^78\)Ibid., p. 49.

\(^79\)Ian Campbell, “Army Reorganization and Military Withdrawal” cited by Rimmer, p. 50.
inflation, increased income inequality creating huge gaps between the rural/urban and formal/informal sectors, fueled price hikes, and increased the cost of living index.\textsuperscript{80}

**Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs):** are a package of policies imposed on debtor nations by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Structural adjustment policies generally involve an increase in production for export combined with demand-reducing policies such as privatization, removal of subsidies on basic foodstuffs, reduction in welfare services, price rises, wage cuts, and retrenchment.\textsuperscript{81} The Nigerian structural adjustment package, adopted in 1985, includes macro-economic changes such as: cutting down government subsidies of social services, food, and productive inputs; privatization of large public enterprises or parastatals in order to attract foreign investment; devaluation of the naira by over 200 percent; and drastically cutting food imports and other essential commodities.\textsuperscript{82}

According to Christina H. Gladwin, “Underlying the prescriptions of structural adjustment reforms is the neoclassical economic assumption that markets work; markets


\textsuperscript{81}Momsen, p. 97.

are generally competitive; and market signals are good guides to resource allocation."\(^{83}\)

In keeping with its goals, structural adjustment policy recommendations demand a reduction of budget and balance of payments deficits through fiscal and monetary measures; a public service that is efficient and reliable; a more intensive use of the private sector through divestiture; and the removal of exchange rates and other biases against exports.\(^{84}\)

**Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical and conceptual framework chosen to guide this study is Africana feminism. As Richard L. Sklar notes, many factors affect one's choice of an approach. They include: one's value orientation, training, and perceptions of disciplinary goals, among other things.\(^{85}\) In this respect, this writer's choice of Africana feminism as a frame of reference is influenced by her keen awareness of the interaction between gender, race, and class amongst other factors in explaining the position of women in developing countries. The following is an analysis of several feminist approaches utilized in development studies which include: liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, and variations of Black/Africana feminisms.

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\(^{84}\) Ibid., p. 1.

The earliest theory in development studies is modernization which contrasted traditional (non-western) with modern (western) societies and was consequently labelled the ‘dual economy’ theory. The development of third world/traditional societies was projected to take a linear pattern whereby these states moved from mercantilism to development following the western prototype. By the mid-1960s, when the prescribed pattern of development failed to unfold, modernization came under criticism from ‘underdevelopment’ or ‘neo-Marxist’ scholars and from statist scholars in the 1970s.86

Theoretically linked to the modernization approach, liberal feminism traces its roots to western feminist movements such as the 1920s suffragettes and earlier feminists struggles for ‘natural’ or equal rights for women. Feminist theorists in the natural rights tradition argued that women were “persons” entitled to the same basic rights as men.87 By the early 1970s, liberal feminism was brought into the development arena to explain the plight of women in developing countries.

Undisputably, the first work on the development role of women in Africa is Ester Boserup’s Woman’s Role in Economic Development published in 1970.88

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88 Although concepts relating to women and development originated during the independence movements of the 1950s and 1960s, they became increasingly interwoven with feminist theory in the mid-1970s.
the liberal feminist tradition, the book opened the eyes of scholars to the diverse roles women play in African development. Taking its cue from Boserup, standard liberal feminist theory sees women’s development as part of an overall process of modernization—technology, the movement from subsistence to a cash economy, and the development of complex organizations which increase the need for labor mobility. Consequently, any differences between male and female absorption into this process is seen as a failure of diffusion, not as a failure of the model itself.\textsuperscript{89}

During the International Women's Year and decade, it was uncovered that women were excluded from development planning, policy-making and projects. Therefore, for liberal feminists, the goal became engineering women's equal participation into the existing framework. Studies focused on how women were marginal to economic development programs, how it is not economically rational to discriminate against women, and how the exclusion of women in development programs or projects predisposes such projects/programs to failure.\textsuperscript{90} Organizations committed to the liberal tradition put their efforts into promoting petty trade, crafts, food processing, cooperative activities, and so on. Their activities produced the growth of fields/frameworks and splinters of approaches including: women in development (WID), women and development (WAD), and gender and development (GAD).


\textsuperscript{90}Ibid., p. 272.
The objective of the WID school is to spread the benefits of modernization, particularly the western model, to women. This, they proposed to accomplish by the fuller integration of women into the formal sectors of third world economy. WID describes women's distinctive roles in developing economies and criticizes established male perspectives, either for ignoring the sexual dimensions of social change or for simply asserting that economic modernization and westernization will liberate women.

Margaret S. Snyder and Mary Tadesse identify several splinter groups within the WAD framework: (a) welfare approach, the oldest, is founded on the premise that women are solely passive recipients of development benefits because their basic roles are reproductive whereas men's roles are productive; (b) human development approach proclaims women's needs are intricately linked to national development; (c) equity and human rights approach concerns itself with equality between the sexes using legal methods; and (d) anti-poverty approach focuses on providing basic needs and stamping out poverty through income-generating activities.

WID never questioned the nature of development itself, nor the international division of labor. It did not challenge the increasing gap between the rich and poor.


92 S. Tiano, "The Separation of Women's Remunerated Household Work" cited by Bandarage, p. 496.

93 For complete citation of approaches, see Snyder and Tadesse, pp. 9-14.
worldwide nor did it query imperialism/capitalist or state structures. Thus, by the 1970s, WID came under intense criticism particularly for its conception of women who were already integrated into the capitalist system as the most exploited and oppressed populace. Overall, the liberal perspective is criticized as being reformist, pluralist, and incrementalist, however, it is still extensively used by international organizations. In this study, liberal feminism may bias the research in favor of the impact of modernization or western influence on women traders.

Just as liberal feminism and the inception of the WID framework opened a whole new discourse on Third World women, it also gave rise to intense criticism. One critical school, Marxist feminism, operates within the framework of classical Marxism. Marxist feminists represent a wide variety of scholars who have attempted to apply dialectical materialism to analyze sources of gender oppression. They situate the oppression of women in racism, class stratification, ethnicity, and their inability to participate in the public sphere.


95Jaquette, p. 272.

Classical Marxism assumes that the “woman question” is subsumed under the general critique of capitalism thus women’s low status derives from the structure of production.\footnote{Jaquette, p. 272.} Women’s exclusion from wage work and their confinement to the “non-productive” sphere are key explanations for women’s subordination under capitalism.\footnote{Sharon B. Stichter and Jane L. Parpart, eds. “Introduction: Towards a Materialist Perspective on African Women” in Patriarchy and Class: African Women in the Home and the Workforce (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1988), p. 2.} They contend that though the oppression of women had its origins in the rise of private property and capitalist industrialization, it survives in the present despite technical changes and liberal values that favor women's participation because the exploitation of women serves the needs of capitalism. For example, women’s role as unpaid family workers and in reproducing the labor force make it possible to pay workers less than subsistence, and thus increase capital accumulation.\footnote{Felicia Madeira and Paul Singer, “Structure of Female Employment and Work in Brazil, 1920-1970” cited by Jaquette, p. 273.}

In addition, Felicia Madeira and Paul Singer posit that the introduction of technological changes alongside industrialization, affects women because it involves a deep alteration in the social division of work and isolates production for use from production for exchange.\footnote{Felicia Madeira and Paul Singer, “Structure of Female Employment and Work in Brazil, 1920-1970,” Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs 17 (November, 1975): 491.} Shelby Lewis makes the same argument that technology had
the unanticipated or unrecognized effects of increasing African women’s problems and workload while providing few monetary or other rewards.  

Marxist theorists maintain that the dependent status of women will be altered primarily by socialist revolution, and eventually by the elimination of domestic labor. Like the liberal model, Marxist feminism views technology as a liberating force for women. According to Jane Jaquette, marxist feminism “finds positive aspects for women, and for society as a whole, in the diffusion of modern values and social organization of the male exchange economy and the public arena - to the domestic sphere.” Curiously, the position of women in socialist societies does not give credence to the argument that capitalism is the root cause of women’s oppression.

To avoid the criticism leveled against Marxist feminists, Socialist feminists fuse an analysis of patriarchy to materialist discourse in order to explain women’s position. They wrestle with classical marxist theory and the practice of socialist states in attempts to rescue women and their cause from the defeatist ring of naturalizing, patriarchalist discourse. They open women’s oppression to human, political intervention and link their status to that of the proletariat. Socialist feminists argue that the failure to integrate 

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102 Jaquette, p. 275.

women into the revolutionary societies of the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba proves that socialist revolution does not liberate women. Consequently, a critique of capitalism must be intertwined with a critique of male domination. Socialist feminists are concerned with: locating the material basis for women’s subjugation; finding a relationship between the modes of production and women’s status in order to determine connections between the realms of production and reproduction; determining the role of the household in capitalist society; and settling the question of women and class.

In reaction to WID, the Gender and Development approach, is theoretically rooted in socialist feminism. Its main components are: a preoccupation with gender relations; viewing women as agents of change rather than recipients of development assistance; reifying a holistic perspective encompassing the private and the public spheres; viewing development as a beneficial process; and emphasizing the need for women’s self organization to increase their political-economic power. GAD focuses on developing countries and promotes analysis of concepts such as ‘underdevelopment,’ ‘overdevelopment,’ ‘production,’ and ‘reproduction.’ However, it focuses solely on

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104 Jaquette, p. 276.

105 The author believes Contemporary Marxist feminism is more appropriately labeled “Socialist Feminism” because it no longer presents an undiluted Marxism but a Marxism modified primarily by radical feminism. See Donovan, pp.76-83.

development rather than an integration of development and feminist discourse. GAD
aims at reaching complementary goals for men and women. Thus, the emphasis is on
gender relations in the family and in the community rather than on women in isolation,
and on practical rather than strategic needs.

To critics, the socialist feminism's focus on patriarchy dilutes revolutionary
consciousness and undermines the materialist base on which Marxism rests. Also
important are intra-gender class differences which influence the status and opportunities
of individual women. For example, girls born to elite families have the opportunity to
acquire a good education, move on to prestigious careers, and marry men who wield
power and influence and their lives are different from poorer women. Further, Rosalyn
Terborg-Penn argues that, because Marxist/socialist feminist theory considers class to be
the most salient variable in the analysis of Black women’s oppression, it applies a “white
filter” through which western standards are superimposed on the discourse which
excludes the race variable.

107 Ibid., pp. 415-6.

108 Practical needs refer to the demand for goods and services such as pipe-borne
water, health care and so on, while strategic needs focus on equality in legal, educational
and employment opportunities. See The World Bank, 1994, p. 15.

109 Jaquette, p. 277.

110 April A. Gordon, “Women and Development” in Understanding Contemporary
Africa, eds. April A. Gordon and Donald L. Gordon (Boulder, CO and London: Lynne

111 In her opinion, this “white filter” corrupts any discussion of Black women’s
oppression because it brings the discussion under western acceptable standards which
negate the experience of Black women outside western culture or influence. For
On the extreme end of the feminist spectrum, radical feminists are concerned about the structure of male dominance and women's subordination, a structure called 'patriarchy.' With the slogan, "The personal is political," they open up for debate, the entirety of domestic and intimate social relations previously ignored by both liberals and Marxists and empower women to analyze their lives in relation to patriarchal domination. Proponents talk about the universality of patriarchy using the commonality of such phenomena as rape, wife battery, prostitution, genital mutilation, and dowry murders as expressions of patriarchy everywhere. Radical feminists believe women form a class or caste within society.

Radical feminism generally works within women/men, male/female dichotomies whereby the concepts of women and men tend to be essentialized and naturalized. Women are 'essentially' nurturing and cooperative while men are 'essentially' competitive and instrumental. Initially expressed by writers like Shulamith Firestone (1971) and Kate Millett (1971), radical feminism seeks to understand women's oppression by focussing directly on sex: on male/female inequality in biological reproduction, which they conceived as a trans-historical fact, independent of and more

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\(^{112}\) Bandarage, p. 505. See also Mannathoko, p. 75.

\(^{113}\) Donovan, p. 83.

\(^{114}\) Mbilinyi, 1992, p. 43.
important than class inequities. Consequently, they advocate a restructuring of nature in order to balance out relations between male and female. As Shulamith Firestone argues, “Feminists have to question...the organization of culture itself, and further, even the very organization of nature.”

However, the radical feminist approach is insensitive to the interrelations between sexual and other forms of social oppression such as class, race, and nationality and therefore cannot be utilized in this analysis. In addition, its apocalyptic view of revolution precludes incremental changes to women’s condition. In general, the foregoing feminist theories tend to marginalize the study of Africana women. To Africana women, liberal feminism denies the impact of race and class on their position and other theories are a reaction against the liberal feminist position without giving thought to the existence of another view of reality.

Black political feminism is often linked with the civil rights movement of the 1960s and influenced by the disillusionment of Black feminists with the movement’s neglect of the woman question in favor of racism which occurred at the time. The Combahee River Collective, a group of Black feminists state: “We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black Women’s lives as are the politics of

115 Stichter and Parpart, p. 2.


117 Bandarage, pp. 105-6.
Hence, the need to create a politics that is anti-racist, unlike those of White women, and anti-sexist, unlike those of Black and White men.\textsuperscript{119}

As a variant of black feminism, Africana feminism is “a liberationist theory and a subversive movement which attempts to seek out, subvert and destroy racist-class patriarchy on a world scale.”\textsuperscript{120} It challenges the western feminist view of gender bias as a unidimensional force to be addressed separately from race and class bias. In contrast to western feminist thought, Africana feminism views the variables of oppression - race, gender, and class - as integrally linked and acknowledges the uniqueness of Africana women’s situation in the peculiar interaction between the three. It merges development theories (dependency/underdevelopment), state theories, and feminist theories in order to study the condition of Africana women. Strains of the framework can be found in the works of Filomina Steady, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, Aida Hurtado, Deborah King, Shelby Lewis, and Clenora Hudson-Weems (Africana womanism).

Filomina Chioma Steady postulates: “African feminism combines racial, sexual, class, and cultural dimensions of oppression to produce a more inclusive brand of feminism through which women are viewed first and foremost as human, rather than


\textsuperscript{119}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 27.

sexual beings.” It encompasses freedom from oppression based on the political, economic, social, and cultural manifestations of racial, cultural, sexual, and class biases.\textsuperscript{121} Steady’s brand of Africana feminism does not romanticize the African past, nevertheless, she emphasizes the traditional complementary values of precolonial Africa. Values of motherhood, communalism, cooperation, and complementarity between the sexes are highlighted.

The discourse portrays colonialism as a disruptive force that created a sharp demarcation between Africa’s pristine past and its turbulent and corrupt present. It also forms a linkage between African feminists on the continent and in the diaspora especially since they suffer similar oppressions as a result of racism expressed through colonialism and slavery.\textsuperscript{122} A shortcoming of Steady’s analysis is that with such strong emphasis on Africa’s history, it does not perform an adequate job of explaining the present or projecting the future.

Shelby Lewis identifies two basic assumptions which underlie the marginal treatment of African women in development literature and activity. The first assumption is that African women are oppressed, marginal, and backward and the second assumption is that African women are no worse off than women everywhere and are in some


\textsuperscript{122}Ibid., pp. 1-2.
respects, better off. Further, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie contends that analysis of African women tend to be either oversimplified or over-generalized in development discourse. She argues:

There is no such thing as “the African woman.” She cannot be essentialised in that way; rather she has to be considered, analyzed and studied in the complexity of her existential reality; her classes, cultures, races, and ethnicities among other variables. African women are not a monolithic group of illiterate peasants sporting some twenty to thirty educated women who speak internationally and are discredited for being educated.

Analytically, April A. Gordon opines that the forms that gender inequality take in Africa reflect indigenous precolonial and European colonial influences. European colonization both undermined the sources of women’s status and strengthened elements of indigenous male dominance or “patriarchy.” The African woman experienced racism in the denial of her traditional rights along with the following: (a) a denial of her otherwise prominent place in the sociopolitics of her nation; (b) relegation to complete domesticity through a withholding of opportunities for equal participation with men in public service; (c) denial of full unhindered opportunity of education at all levels and in all disciplines; and (d) denial of participation in governance.

Colonialism also affected the legal structures of Africa through the introduction of patriarchy which superseded the sexist tendencies of traditional African society.

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123 Lewis, 1980, pp. 36-40.
125 April A. Gordon, p. 203.
126 For other items, see Acholonu, p. 77.
Economically, as women became more marginalized in the production process following the introduction of cash crops, there developed, new economic arrangements between men and women and new attitudes of male social and economic superiority.\textsuperscript{127} Today, African women’s position is structured by a double set of determinants arising from relations of gender and relations derived from the economic organization of society.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of capitalism and imperialism in order to grasp the complexities of the structures that shape the subordination of African women.\textsuperscript{128} As Ogundipe-Leslie argues, “Her race is important since the international economic order is divided along race and class lines with the industrialized countries in the North of the North-South dialogue, notably White or approved White, like the Japanese.”\textsuperscript{129}

Socioculturally, the liberation of Africana women is not simply about sexual freedom as most men tend to think and fear, but about the larger problem of the redistribution of privilege, property, and power between the rich and poor, encompassing the smaller problem of the redistribution of privilege, property, and power between men and women.\textsuperscript{130} In addition, most Africana theorists de-emphasize gender divisions in

\textsuperscript{127}Ogundipe-Leslie, p. 29.


\textsuperscript{129}Ogundipe-Leslie, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{130}Ibid., p. 36.
favor of discussions of family togetherness and wealth inequality. As Catherine Obianuju Acholonu stresses:

African feminism must...resist the ideology of gender warfare that has been imposed upon it by the Eurocentrics. This is an unfortunate distraction that removes attention from the real issues at stake, namely western imperialism, racism, apartheid, the threat of global extinction, and the progressive exploitation of all people of color especially in the Third World.131

On a practical level, like other black feminisms, Africana feminism is still grappling with self-definition. However, it gives central place to the study of marginalized women both in the western hemisphere as well as in the third world. It is particularly useful for this analysis of women traders in western Nigeria because it allows the researcher to investigate the interaction of race, gender, and class in the situation of these women. It also permits the researcher to investigate to what extent the literature on Yoruba women traders is accurate and unbiased. Finally, Africana feminism provides the tools for embracing the multiplicity of African women’s existence, the variety of their experiences, and intra-gender differences. As bell hooks notes:

We cannot speak of all women as being oppressed, because to do that is to negate the reality that there is a difference in my life as a black woman intellectual who makes a good salary, who has no kids, no concrete unchosen responsibilities to anybody other than myself...and my mother, who never went to college, who never completed high school. To try to act like our social circumstance is the same would not make sense, even though we have both been victimized by men.132

131Acholonu, p. 102.

It is difficult to contextualize the current analysis of African women’s political economy within an Africana feminist framework because reactions to feminism in Africa vary from outright denial of the need for such a framework to renaming the concept to suit each scholar’s perception/need. Many writers tend to shy away from the label, “feminist” because of the virulent responses it evokes, to placate their’s or other’s perceptions, or to dissociate themselves from its western imperialistic connotations. Instead, terms such as “womanist,” “motherist,” or simply “female scholar” are coined to explain the pro-female tendencies of these writers. Hence, Africana feminism is often defined in terms of ‘one author, one theory,’ with differing levels of variation in the advocation of each scholar.

Alongside the denial for the need of a feminist consciousness is a denial that there is a problem. Scholars such as Catherine Acholonu and Oriaku Nwosu equate the traditional position of the African woman to her present-day position. If at all she is currently disadvantaged, they submit that the situation was caused by colonialism, Islam, and other foreign influences and therefore can be remedied by a resurrection of the traditional legacy.

Unlike most, Ogundipe-Leslie presents a clearly feminist approach to the study of African women. She states that, one might say that the African woman has six mountains on her back: one is oppression from outside (colonialism and neocolonialism?), the second is from traditional structures, the third is her backwardness,
the fourth is man, the fifth is her color, and the sixth is herself.\textsuperscript{133} From her analysis, Ogundipe-Leslie points theoretically in the direction of Africana feminism in her inclusion of race, class, and gender in her framework. Finally, the utilization of Africana feminism in this research does not imply that it is the most suitable theory to analyze African women, rather, it is the most appropriate available to the researcher and because this study is partially concerned with theory testing, it is a useful framework. Further analysis of Africana feminism vis-a-vis African-generated theories and as a framework to study western Nigerian market women, will be carried out in Chapter Three.

**Literature Review**

This review of literature will focus on the general impact of economic policies on women both in the developed and developing, urban and rural, and formal and informal worlds. We will start by providing a general overview of how economic policies impact women, then proceed to an analysis of the influence of colonial and post-colonial economic policies on women’s lives. Later, we will narrow our focus to the impact of the *Udoji* awards and SAP on women particularly western Nigerian market women. This literature review will lay the foundation for our survey analysis on the impact of these packages on women traders.

Factors influencing the activities of women traders (i.e. who trades, what goods are traded, and what profits are made), include: (a) microeconomic and macroeconomic

\textsuperscript{133}Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, p. 28.
policies that directly impact women’s trade; (b) government-imposed administrative and legal control through licenses, stall allocation, and so on; (c) structure of production in the overall economy which discourages local manufacturing in favor of imports and encourages local consumption of foreign goods; and (d) modern gender relations which limit women’s role play in the economy.\(^{134}\)

According to Diane Elson:

Macro-economic trends and policies are usually presented in language which appears to be gender neutral. No specific mention is made of gender or of the sexual division of labor. The focus of attention is on the gross national product (GNP) or gross domestic product (GDP); on imports, exports, and the balance of payments; on efficiency and productivity...However, this apparent gender-neutrality masks a deeper gender bias.\(^{135}\)

She adds that, terms like ‘cost’ and ‘productivity’ and ‘efficiency’ frequently used in discussions of economic policy, are ambiguous. What is regarded by economists as ‘increasing efficiency’ may instead be a shifting of costs from the paid to the unpaid economy. For example, a reduction in the time patients spend in hospital may appear to economists to be an increase in the efficiency of the hospital, while it is in fact a transfer


of the costs of care for the sick from the paid to the unpaid economy with women bearing
the brunt of such a transfer.\textsuperscript{136}

In Africa, the relationship between the sexes has been influenced historically by
colonialism, sociocultural practices, and presently, by the rigid division of the market
into formal and informal, urban and rural economies. The state plays a major role in
perpetuating or condoning political, economic, and social practices that subordinate
women. As Elabor-Idemudia notes, women’s exploitation is tied to the machinery of the
state which promotes capitalism and tends to treat women’s work as “natural,” non-
market oriented, and therefore of less value than men’s.\textsuperscript{137} Also, women are treated as
dependents of men in legal and administrative processes, rather than as persons in their
own right.\textsuperscript{138}

To the contrary, the market appears to treat women as individuals in their own
right - women can earn their own income whichever way they choose. Ruth Meena
writes, the market as a social institution is made up of women and men who are
consumers and producers in specific and in different ways within their diverse locations -
geographical, race, class, sex, and cultural contexts. Thus, since the market cannot
function in a vacuum, the relationships between women and men in given contexts have a
definite impact on production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.\textsuperscript{139}

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\textsuperscript{136}Ibid., p. 58.
\textsuperscript{137}Elabor-Idemudia, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{138}Elson, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{139}Meena, p. 5.
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Further, the pattern of economic development under colonial and indigenous rule has generated and perpetuated structural inequalities between sectors of the economy, ethnic groups, and sexes.\(^{140}\)

In addition, several built-in biases circumscribe the choices women may make in the marketplace. These include: unpaid work in reproduction and maintenance of human resources,\(^{141}\) limited education,\(^{142}\) familial systems, marriage and divorce patterns, and religion.\(^{143}\) Hence, so long as women suffer these limitations, equal pay and equal opportunity legislation, and other favorable government policies may not level the playing field.\(^{144}\)

Ingrid Palmer identifies four main gender considerations inherent in the function of markets: (1) the element of gender discrimination in access to resources or outlets for produce which may stem from sociocultural factors or the implicit or explicit biases of government intervention; (2) additional tasks women face in reproduction and family

\(^{140}\)Dorothy Remy and John Weeks, “Employment and inequality in a Non-Industrial City” cited by Remy, p. 123.

\(^{141}\)Elson, p. 63.

\(^{142}\)Although the high level of illiteracy among women is rooted in the colonial period, sex disparity in school enrollment in favor of men still exists at all levels of education. For an in-depth analysis, see Bolanle Awe and Nkoli N. Ezumah, “Women in West Africa: A Nigerian Case Study” in *The Women and International Development Annual*, vol. 2, eds. Rita S. Gallin and Anne Ferguson (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc., 1991), p. 191.


\(^{144}\)Elson, p. 63.
maintenance; (3) the cost-efficient factor in family trade; and (4) the distribution and absorption of resources within producing households.\textsuperscript{145} Across the board, women lack direct access to market resources; their access is mediated, either directly or indirectly by men hence, they are often dependent on household income.\textsuperscript{146}

In most African nations, women form a minimal proportion of the wage-earning labor force. They are concentrated in agriculture, crafts, and commerce, as low-level, self-employed producers or traders. The aforementioned sectors tend to offer an unsteady income with no workers’ benefits.\textsuperscript{147} Because the formal sector is characterized by male dominance facilitated by discriminatory hiring practices, lack of specialized training, and other institutional biases, women are concentrated in the informal sector.\textsuperscript{148} In 1966/67, 81.4 percent of urban Nigerian women were self-employed compared to 59.2 percent of the men.\textsuperscript{149} In 1976, only 11.2 percent of federal civil servants in the southern part of Nigeria and only 3.6 percent in the northern part were women and most served in the lower rungs of the service.\textsuperscript{150}

\textsuperscript{145}Palmer, pp. 11-15.

\textsuperscript{146}Young, Wolkowitz and McCullagh, p. ix.


\textsuperscript{148}Robertson, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{149}Statistics from Republic of Nigeria 1966/67 cited by Ibid., p. 35.

\textsuperscript{150}Authors also note that the limited participation of women in the formal sector is related to their lack of education, a legacy of colonial times. See Awe and Ezumah, p. 190.
Majority of female wage-earners are employed in ‘service occupations’ such as primary school teaching, nursing, and domestic work. Women are rarely found in newer economic sectors so vital to future economic development: manufacturing, science, technology, and communications.\textsuperscript{151} In the formal sector, women [globally] confront more barriers than men in their pursuit of good, gainful, employment. Even when employed, women face a variety of conditions that tend to keep their status marginal, to make them look, feel, and act like outsiders, and to limit their power. They are disproportionately employed in slow track or ‘ghetto departments’ (such as human resources), experience tokenism, sexual harassment, and the effects of the glass ceiling.\textsuperscript{152} Discriminatory attitudes against women include: gender stereotypes regarding abilities, social attitudes about the proper place of women, in-group exclusionary attitudes and practices on the part of men, and structural difficulties concerning household responsibilities.\textsuperscript{153}

On the other hand, fluidity and unregulated activity continue to be marks of the informal sector. As an employer, the formal sector hires workers on a permanent or regular basis for fixed rewards; those in the informal sector, in contrast, hire labor engaged in unregulated and competitive markets and dependent on skills acquired outside the formal school system, and are heavily reliant on indigenous resources, labor intensive

\textsuperscript{151}Mbilinyi, 1972, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{152}Lips, pp. 167-9.

operations.\textsuperscript{154} The informal sector in Nigeria grew in the 1970s as the returns from oil facilitated its development. However, the oil economy created new opportunities for participation in the economy only for some women while it led to a withdrawal of possibilities for others. For example, women were integrated into the feverish Nigerian oil economy as wives of high-ranking army officers who were supposed to trade in imported goods; outside this group, women traders could not cash in on the windfall.\textsuperscript{155}

Although women are not usually more numerous than men in the informal sector, female participation rates are much higher in the informal than in the formal sector. The ease of entry, flexible working conditions, and small initial capital requirements, are some of the attractive features.\textsuperscript{156} Unfortunately, what makes the informal sector attractive also makes it the more unproductive sector of the economy. Ann Brunger argues, it is highly probable that, were other economic sectors active and open to women, the large number of women now engaged in trade (particularly mini-retail) would move into these sectors resulting in a reduction in the number of traders and an increase in the volume of business which therefore generates wealth.\textsuperscript{157}


\textsuperscript{156}Palmer, p. 109.

\textsuperscript{157}Brunger, pp. 62-3.
Lack of access to credit, both formal and informal, is a major barrier, often restricting women’s ability to smooth consumption over time and undertake productive activities. Women have lower likelihood of borrowing from formal sources because of collateral requirements, high transaction costs, high perceived risk of default, limited education and mobility, social and cultural barriers, and the nature of women’s businesses. Property that is acceptable as collateral such as land, are in men’s names and valuables women own such as jewelry, are often unacceptable by formal financial institutions. In addition, transaction costs of obtaining credit such as transportation, time spent waiting and so on, are higher for women because of higher opportunity costs from foregone activities.

On a negative note, several self-employed in the informal sector are illegally employed, either operating without trading licenses or bending the laws a little. For example, Christine Obbo found in East Africa that, food sellers often operate without licences while officials turn a blind eye; there are those who were licensed to brew liquor but distill as well or are distiller licensed to supply the government distilleries with a set amount of gin and who make three times as much selling ‘under the bed.’ Unfortunately, the laxity of government laws in the informal sector only promotes the self-aggrandizement of public officials who can pretend to overlook a transgression after

158 The World Bank, 1994, p. 36.
159 Ibid., p. 36.
receiving bribes. As Toyin Falola argues, to the political class, the market is a place to collect revenue in the form of taxes, tolls, fees, dues, levies, gifts, and bribes. Officials benefit from corruption, for example, by taking bribes in the allocation of stalls and exercising control through laws or the use of physical coercion.

Janet Momsen Henshall identifies four dimensions of ‘marginalization’ in urban female employment. Firstly, women are prevented from entering certain types of employment, usually on the grounds of physical weakness, moral danger, or lack of facilities for women workers. Secondly, women are concentrated on the periphery of the labor market - in the lowest-paid, most insecure jobs. Thirdly, workers in particular jobs may become so overwhelmingly female that the jobs become feminized and of low status. Finally, formal employment perpetuates ‘economic inequality’ or the economic distinctions which accompany occupational differentiation such as low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of both fringe benefits and job security.

Illiterate women who migrate to cities find themselves tackling urban labor from a position of extreme social weakness exacerbated by limited economic opportunities and lack of familial support system. In rural areas, women provide about 70 percent of

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161 Ibid. See also Aronson, p. 121.

162 Falola, pp. 29-30.

163 Momsen, p. 68.

164 Susan Hill Gross and Marjorie Wall Bingham, Women in Africa of the Sub-Saharan Volume II: The 20th Century (St Louis Park, MN: Glenhurst Publications, Inc., 1982), p. 72. See also Cutrufelli who juxtaposes this situation with the position of women in rural areas where they have greater social strength and bargaining power (p. 105).
subsistence needs by growing and gathering food and in cities, this function is heavier as women are responsible for feeding their families and performing other ‘traditional’ responsibilities in uncertain terrain.\(^{165}\) Urban living brings new demands and expectations in terms of standard of living, accommodation (rent), entertainment, school fees, and other required services.\(^{166}\)

Claire Robertson notes that, because of their restricted access to credit and capital, management problems, and family obligations, few women can manage large-scale trade or businesses on a long-term basis. The problem of lack of credit becomes more complicated even as kin-based women’s associations break down in the urban setting.\(^{167}\) Thus, in the absence of support services, a large number of poor, urban women, eke out a living as service workers, laborers, artisans, prostitutes, and unskilled factory workers.\(^{168}\)

In addition, urban taxation policies reinforce the idea that husbands are the main/sole providers for child welfare, when in actuality this is hardly the case. It is common practice particularly in western Nigeria for spouses to maintain separate financial arrangements. The situation is compounded for market women by policy requirements for tax clearance as a prerequisite for obtaining trade licenses. This cuts

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\(^{165}\) Robertson, p.34.

\(^{166}\) Ibid., p. 48.

\(^{167}\) Ibid., p. 37-8.

\(^{168}\) Author adds that while men often have alternative employment to fall back on because of more advanced education, women are confined to small-scale trading in local commodities. See Ibid., p. 43. See also Steady, 1989, pp. 13-4.
into women’s incomes without the tax reliefs usually given to men.\textsuperscript{169} It is interesting to note that most of tax and other draconian laws against women today, have antecedents in the colonial period.

Indeed, colonial rule produced complex and contradictory effects on African women’s political-economic position. Women’s workload increased in several areas due to factors such as male out-migration for wage labor, overemphasis on a cash economy, and gender bias in education. Colonial administrators, overwhelmingly male, brought their assumptions of male supremacy with them. No recognition was given to the status or role of women in political, economic, or social processes. Rather, western ideals were superimposed on colonized societies for example, women chiefs were overlooked. Women’s legal rights to land were circumscribed and men controlled the proceeds from the introduced cash crops.\textsuperscript{170} On the other hand, women have benefited from western education which provides the tools for them to strive to be men’s equals.

According to Margaret Jean Hay and Sharon Stichter, “Although the process of modernization with its emphasis on capital accumulation and the move away from artisan production is not of itself necessarily gender-specific, its effect has often been to deprive many poorer women of ready access to reliable revenue based on subsistence

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Women’s work in the cash-crop economies tend to cluster around two occupations: food farming and market-oriented activities in processing and trade. As Marjorie Mbilinyi argues: as the money sector increased in importance, the role of women correspondingly declined. Where women contributed so much economically, their contribution became marginal, particularly in urban areas and much less money went into women’s hands than men’s. Furthermore, as women were deprived of traditional tasks, they were disproportionately burdened with historically unprecedented forms of toil such as the unpaid contributions to motherhood, housework, and the creation of monetary values.

According to Gail Warshofsky, modernization destroys the comparatively undifferentiated distribution of sex roles which prevails in traditional societies, creating new public roles almost exclusively for men while relegating women to private and less satisfying social functions. For example, in colonial times, when the need to produce a class of semi-educated, white-collar workers arose, young boys not girls were sought for

171 Afshar, p. 1.
172 Guyer, p. 25.
173 Mbilinyi, 1972, p. 61.
education. This laid the foundation for the exclusion of women from education and circumscribed their employment possibilities. Also, it can be argued that because the Nigerian state structure inherited the British system of government with the latter’s inherent biases against women and the lower class, the former has engendered the marginalization of women and a situation of double-jeopardy for women traders.177

European industrial and commercial firms, settlers, and supportive colonial administrators clearly disregarded African development. There was limited or no investment in cogent, rational programs of development designed to make African states self-sufficient, in fact, colonial policies worked to handicap independent Africa’s economic future.178 On the economic front, natural resources were exploited to feed metropolitan powers. The growth of cash crops was encouraged to the detriment of food production and colonial agricultural policies disrupted traditional patterns which brought about changes in the gender division of labor.179 Donald Gordon argues that colonial administrations left Africa with weak, malintegrated, and severely distorted economies

176 A. Lebeuf cited by Mbilinyi, p. 60.


179 Awe and Ezumah, p. 179.
which placed most African countries in a multifaceted and tenacious dependency relationship vis-a-vis western countries.\textsuperscript{180}

Although, the negative legacy of colonialism continues to be a strong influence, one must not deny the impact of bad leadership on the political-economy of present-day Africa. In post-colonial Africa, global developments, have in most instances, intensified the existing social and economic hardships for women by restricting their activities to the uneconomic/informal sectors.\textsuperscript{181} Many scholars argue that the role Africa has been assigned in the global economy as a producer of cheap raw materials continues to prevent it from achieving its economic potential and preconditions sexual economic inequality.\textsuperscript{182}

The way Africans have developed their economies, often following western advice, has indirectly promoted urbanization by favoring industry, export production, and cities over rural areas. It has also discriminated against women and neglected their interests as producers, mothers, and individuals, with detrimental effects on the economy and social welfare.\textsuperscript{183} The post-independence development process, has neglected the need for human resource development, especially that of women, has largely excluded them from participation in executive positions in the political system, and has increased the marginalization of women such that, majority of women belong to a class of illiterate

\textsuperscript{180}Donald L. Gordon, p. 54

\textsuperscript{181}Elabor-Idemudia, p. 128.


\textsuperscript{183}Ibid., p. 4.
subsistence farmers and petty traders. Many issues are simply classified as 'women's issues' and are overlooked or ignored thus neglecting the linkage of such problems to the society at large.

Further, the unprecedented growth in population in Africa and the rapid expansion of urban areas have both reflected and exacerbated economic and political problems. According to Filomina Chioma Steady:

In Africa, urbanization far exceeds the rate of industrialization, which is often capital-intensive, foreign-owned, and oriented toward production for an external market, rather than an internal one. Because industrialization was inspired primarily by colonialism, the dominant pattern has been the establishment of mines, plantations, and export-oriented industries.

Thus, lower income groups in both urban and rural areas have less access to social services, so their ability to escape from poverty is further reduced by demographic variables such as higher dependency burdens, fertility rates, and mortality rates as well as lower life expectancy.

Since independence, the political-economy of Nigeria has been characterized by rises and slumps precipitated by the euphoria of independence, oil boom, debt crisis, rabid corruption, and economic restructuring under SAPs. In December, 1974, largely based on the report of the Udoji Commission, the Nigerian government announced details of substantially increased public service pensions, large wage and salary awards,

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184 Awe and Ezumah, p. 195.
185 April A. Gordon and Donald L. Gordon, p. 3.
187 Diejomaoh and Anusionwu, p. 80.
together with lump sum payment arrears backdated nine months to April 1974.

Consequences of this oil bonanza were: (1) neglect of extensive reforms of the public
service recommended in the report; (2) early retirement from public service accelerated
by generous pension provisions; and (3) a sharp increase in inflation as the substantial
boost in purchasing power swallowed up available goods.\(^\text{188}\)

The awards which were widely interpreted as an attempt to buy middle-class
support for a disreputable regime, created an upheaval as workers struggled to get their
bonuses. Dissatisfaction over regrading and relativities led to widespread protests and
strikes involving practically all professional and public sector groups. By February,
1975, there were 202 trade disputes directly linked to Udoji awards.\(^\text{189}\) The clamor for
"Udoji" spread to the private sector and the government was forced to make more
concessions by increasing minimum wage by 30 percent and increasing federal
discretionary transfers to states and local governments.\(^\text{190}\)

Although it was not aimed directly at the informal sector, its impact on the sector,
was crippling. In 1975, low income self-employed urban workers (including traders) had
a monthly wage equivalent of only 62 percent of the monthly wage of the lowest paid
wage earners.\(^\text{191}\) In addition, poorer, urban consumers experienced food shortages and a

\(^{188}\) Tom Forrest, Political and Economic Development in Nigeria Africa
Modernization and Development Series (Boulder, San Francisco & Oxford: Westview

\(^{189}\) O. Oyediran, ed. Survey of Nigerian Affairs, 1975 cited by Ibid.

\(^{190}\) Ibid., p. 144.

\(^{191}\) Diejomaoh and Anusionwu, p. 103.
deterioration in diet due to their lack of purchasing power in the wake of *Udoji*-triggered inflation.\(^{192}\) In all, the effects of *Udoji* lasted into the 1980s.

The rapid expansion of government expenditure in the 1970s created extra employment particularly in the construction industry which did not employ women except for small-scale, labor-intensive construction enterprises in the informal sector. But women took up many of the teaching, nursing, and clerical jobs created by the expansion in social infrastructure and benefited from the increase in educational opportunities and health facilities.\(^{193}\) However, the 1980s debt crises halted hard-won social and economic progress. It catalyzed a profound political-philosophical shift in development strategies moving it away from more autonomous, nationalistic, inward-oriented development towards *laissez-faire* capitalism.\(^{194}\)

Although Nigerians experienced economic crisis for at least six years before the imposition of SAPs, it is not easy to distinguish between the effects of the two. SAPs have exacerbated the crisis, reduced formal sector employment by direct retrenchment in government and parastatals and created a lack of raw material supplies in industry amongst other developments.\(^{195}\) As in other states, the Nigerian SAPs package has had a

\(^{192}\)Forrest, p. 185.

\(^{193}\)Dennis, 1991, p. 92.


\(^{195}\)As stated earlier, Yoruba women bear heavy responsibility for household income and needs particularly in polygynous and female-headed households. See Dennis, 1991, p. 98.
gender-differentiated impact directly economic and social, and indirectly, political, on the population.

Carolyne Dennis opines that, the manner in which SAPs is experienced by women and the coping strategies they utilize, depends upon the definition of women’s responsibilities and the resources with which they are expected to meet them. In Yoruba society, there is a wide definition of women’s household responsibilities, both traditional and modern. For urban Yoruba women, the situation created by SAPs affects their income-generating capacities and the prices and availability of essential commodities. The crisis increases the need for them to bring in an income into the household, manage available resources efficiently particularly regarding access to food, and to sustain the family. It means longer hours of work, both paid and unpaid; for instance, maintaining a household on reduced resources takes more time (e.g. hunting for bargain deals) and holding on to paid employment requires greater dexterity.

Economic distortions have particularly adverse effects. High inflation, for example, hits poor and low wage earners hardest and taxes women’s ability to manage scarce time and resources. In order to cope with SAPs, women have developed new survival strategies, a behavior pattern called ‘the invisible adjustment’ which implies that

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196 Ibid., p. 88.
197 Ibid., pp. 101-2.
198 Elson, p. 69.
women make adjustment policies socially possible by increasing their own economic activity, by working harder, and by self-abnegation.\textsuperscript{200} Definitely, by adopting SAPs and cutting back on public services (desubsidization), the Nigerian government implicitly relies on a quiet army of wives, co-wives, mothers, daughters, aunts, grandmothers, sisters, female friends and neighbors to pick up the slack.\textsuperscript{201}

Studies show that majority of women have become increasingly economically dependent on their families for handouts due to their lack of technical skills and formal education, which limit their opportunities for employment.\textsuperscript{202} Further, Pamela Sparr found that, most rural women, in addition or as an alternative to farming, set up small retail businesses to generate adequate capital to finance their children’s school fees and sustain their families.\textsuperscript{203} Particularly, the economic and social impact of SAPs is greatly exaggerated in the situation of female heads of households who have no male source of income to complement or supplement their income. As Jean Due contends, female heads of households are poorer because of the lack of able-bodied males to till the land, limited access to credit, labor-saving devices, and less access to extension services.\textsuperscript{204}

\textsuperscript{200}Momsen, p. 98.

\textsuperscript{201}Also opines that the rise in the number of street children is evidence of the strain on women reaching breaking point. Sparr, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{202}Grace B. Aluko and Mary O. Alfa, “Marriage and the Family” cited by Ibid., p. 154.

\textsuperscript{203}Ibid., p. 155.

According to Ingrid Palmer, the debate on the outcome of SAPs for the informal sector can be reduced to different views on: (a) the impact of reduced real demand in the economy; (b) the share of tradables in informal sector goods and the direct effects of devaluation and external trade reforms on domestic demand for them; and (c) how far market deregulation measures remove obstacles to fairer competition between the formal and informal sectors. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie reports on the events unfolding in a lace manufacturing plant in Ijebu, western Nigeria thus: salaries of the expatriate managers could not be paid following devaluation so they had to go. Then, local workers, the majority of whom were women, were fired although they had been with the company for years. Hence, the impact of SAPs on this plant not only affected the plant workers but also reverberated to their families and dependents.

Although standards of living had already fallen during the economic decline before SAP, the abrupt harshness and the particular inequitable distributional effects of the economic remedies have caused so much strain. The reductions in real wages and the steep rise in prices of essential consumer goods have undoubtedly been severe, there is a serious slippage in health and welfare even as social sector budgets are being cut, and generally, the standard of living of an entire nation is slipping. Services such as health, education, water supply, rural electrification, and transportation, which provide support

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205 Palmer, p. 108.


207 Palmer, pp. 102-3.
for meeting women’s everyday survival needs, have fallen further short of doing so following desubsidization.208

The hardship brought on the people of Nigeria by SAP cannot be overstated—newspapers, television and radio reports continuously highlight the discontent of the country expressed through mass demonstrations, riots, and other forms of protest.209 Even the intellectual class is so harassed by hunger and repressions that many of its members are escaping to places where they can live a decent life and practice their skills in peace. This departure of middle class elements has led to the subversion, shattering or restructuring of immediate families - spouses have to live apart and parents are separated from their children as they have gone abroad to forage for those children.210

Women bear the brunt of deteriorating living standards and it is mainly up to them to find compensatory means to uphold family consumption and welfare. Hence, more time is spent finding the best bargains, walking farther distances for firewood or cooking in a different way, and keeping sick family members at home in order to keep health costs down.211 As family resources become scarcer so discrimination against girls in nutrition, health, and educational expenditure increases.212 Parents realize limited

208Elabor-Idemudia, pp. 144-5.
211Palmer, p. 103. See also Dennis, 1991, p. 99.
212Palmer, p. 4. See also Dennis, 1991, p. 99 and Elson, p. 65.
benefits from their children's education, less from daughters than sons hence, they tend to invest more in boys.\textsuperscript{213}

Jean M. Due, in her research on the impact of SAPs on health found that children and the poor are the most affected. She also found a higher probability of infant and maternal morbidity and mortality.\textsuperscript{214} The same findings were revealed by Patience Elabor-Idemudia in her study on Nigeria. She found that measures to beat the high cost of living since SAPs resulted in undernutrition, malnutrition, reduced resistance to diseases, and poor health.\textsuperscript{215}

Socially, one cannot ignore the role of the state in maintaining particular oppressive structures, policies, and ideology regarding women. Women have suffered from neglect in distributional policies. They are generally not targeted for crucial training and education schemes, nor is their work, in rural or urban areas deemed worthy of formal inputs.\textsuperscript{216} In addition, one could argue that the implementation of SAPs is simply another example of the state actively reinforcing gender-biased divisions of labor and perpetuating women's unpaid labor. However, following complaints from implementing countries, the IMF initiated the Programme of Action to Mitigate the

\textsuperscript{213}The World Bank, 1994, p. 30.

\textsuperscript{214}As a result of the emphasis on minimized spending within SAPs, there is a reduction in government expenditure on health and nutrition. See Due, p. 103.

\textsuperscript{215}Elabor-Idemudia, p. 141.

Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD). The package often consists of provision of basic needs through community initiative projects, employment generation for the unemployed, and women’s programs including credit and skills and management training.217

Although the effects of PAMSCAD are yet to be felt, the Nigerian government initiated several women-specific programs to improve women’s economy. The Better Life for Rural Dwellers Program (a.k.a “Better Life”), was founded in the late 1980s by then first lady, Maryam Babangida. It was directed toward the mobilization of rural women and the harnessing of their resources in agriculture and cultural arts and crafts through exhibitions, trade fairs, seminars, cottage industries, cooperatives, and other avenues.218

The Babangida administration also set up the Women Commission as an administrative arm of Better Life. The program succeeded in bringing women’s issues to national spotlight however, whether or not it achieved its set goals, is debatable. One of the major criticisms of the program, and perhaps its undoing was that though its client base was poor rural women, it was organized by elite urban dwellers, wives of then state

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218Acholonu, pp. 98-99.
Methodology

The distinguishing feature of feminism is the focus on gender-related situations which have tended to privilege males in both society and in academic research. According to Kathleen Driscoll and Joan McFarland, “The application to women’s experiences of concepts and modes of analyses developed in studying men’s lives in the public sphere often devalues women’s experiences and reinforces women’s subordination.” Thus, in order to undercut the effects of male bias, the researcher should emphasize the use of qualitative research techniques which allow greater access into women’s lives and reduces the male-biased distinction between public and private spheres.

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219 Ibid., p. 98.

220 Further discussion of Better Life and current programs for Nigerian women will be presented in chapter two.


223 Ibid., p. 188.
Since the 1960s, feminist scholars have been developing a gendered view of social life and social science in order to direct social science analysis towards issues and interpretations focused on gender.\textsuperscript{224} They suggest that when participants are able to influence the research process beyond simply supplying answers to the researcher, the resulting data is not only more complete, but also 'richer.'\textsuperscript{225} Such an interaction between the researcher and the participants is possible through ethnographic research. As Robert K. Yin notes, ethnography allows the investigator to observe and record the regularities as well as the irregularities of life which occur in an unstructured, natural fashion. She is also able to represent fairly, the various multiple realities observed without pretense of a value-free research.\textsuperscript{226}

A case study analysis is appropriate in this study because it allows the researcher to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context and it permits the use of both qualitative and quantitative data. In order to utilize an ethnographic method within a case study framework, the researcher will use triangulation to verify the validity of her data. Similar information will be sought through archival data, interviews, and questionnaires. The convergence of these data will prove the validity and successful


triangulation of the data. Also, because this investigation is partially a theory-building, exploratory study, qualitative methods embedded in ethnographic research will facilitate the extension and deepening of theoretical propositions and understanding that have emerged from previous field studies on Africana feminism. Thus, the variables and relationships studied will serve as a catalyst in the elaboration of theoretical knowledge.227

Triangulation provides a means of comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information in order to improve the reliability of our qualitative data. In this study, in order to ensure “consistency” and “dependability” in our data gathering, we will adhere to the principles of data collection described by Robert K. Yin in his 1984 book, Case Study Research: Design and Methods. These principles are: (a) the use of multiple sources of evidence and types of methods in order to certify construct validity; (b) the clear explanation of linkages between variables in order to ensure internal validity; (c) the creation of a retrievable and replicable data base to ensure reliability of data and to allow other investigators the opportunity to retrieve the evidence; and (d) the establishment of the domain in which the study can be generalized.228

The setting for data collection will be two large daily markets in Ibadan namely Aleshinloye and Bodija; two markets in Lagos, Balogun and Tejuoso; and one market,
Olufi in the Akinyele marketing ring as representative of rural markets. The markets in Lagos, Tejuoso and Balogun specialize in all kinds of commodities possibly because they cater to a metropolitan clientele. Aleshinloye and Bodija are daily markets which specialize in foodstuff and diverse kinds of local goods. Olufi specializes in farm produce and local crafts.

The study will consist of three parts: (1) the literature review, which defines issues and questions to guide the collection of data; (2) data collection, which will be done in western Nigeria; and (3) data analysis, interpretation, and synthesis, which will utilize the data collected and the researcher’s experience to establish relationship and interpret data results. While consideration will be given to available data on market women’s activities, the intent here is to explore the more subtle but highly significant indicators of women’s political-economic activities. Indicators include: women’s involvement in political-economic activities in their communities; women’s exercise of authority and decision-making concerning market activities; influence of traders associations on governmental activities; and political mobility of women traders.

Data will be collected using surveys (questionnaires and personal interviews) of individuals and associations. In addition, the researcher will utilize non-participant observation and videotape accounts to support findings. The bulk of the Udoji data will be collected from secondary material focussing on the period between 1974 and 1979 and will be corroborated by respondents recollections of the period. For structural adjustment, data will be collected in two categories:
The first category will focus on the questionnaire which contains general questions about market women’s perception of the impact on their trade of the economic policies under scrutiny. The second category will focus on in-depth discussion with leaders of women traders association on their perception of key economic policies and how their associations survive. The videotape account will provide a third perspective and will enable the identification of political-economic factors that might have been overlooked or underrated in the documents or interviews. As stated earlier, the use of several types of data collection methods is referred to as triangulation in data collection.

A pretest exercise will be carried out on randomly selected market women to test the viability of the research tools. The pretest will also determine whether or not the research tool and questions are culturally sound and relevant. Since the target population is illiterate, the research questions will be phrased in simple language to allow for easy translation and response during the administration process. Basically, the questions will focus on three major areas: (1) women’s political-economic activity; (2) the effect of Udoji and SAPs on the women’s trade; and (3) what women traders consider to be avenues for improving their trade. The third focus of the questionnaire is of particular importance because it is more effective to inquire of a target population what their needs are than to assume the researcher knows their needs.
Limitations of Study

The examination of the political-economy of women traders in western Nigeria will basically cover the period from 1970-1996. This time frame was chosen to cover the historical impact of Udoji in the mid-1970s and of SAPs initiated in the late 1980s. This study does not presume to speak for all women nor for all women traders for that matter. Rather, it is a study of a cross-section of women traders namely, market women or those women who trade in the marketplace as a primary occupation. Because of the small sample population, generalizability is limited. Issues which will not be addressed in-depth in this study include: price regulation, resource allocation, income distribution and wealth inequality, and inflation. The study is not a political or economic analysis of economic policies but a feminist analysis of women’s political-economy. Finally, the study will not debate the merits/demerits of the principles of SAP, instead it will discuss impact of SAPs from the viewpoint of market women.

Significance of Study

In light of the foregoing, the significance of a woman-centered analysis cannot be over-emphasized. Women produce half the food in some areas, bear most of the responsibility for household food security, and make up a quarter of the workforce yet, because of political, economic, and social limitations, their productivity relative to potential, remains low. Christine Oppong records that the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women, which took place in
Nairobi in 1985 reiterated some of the themes already circulating about women’s role in society. As noted by a World Bank Spokesperson:

Women’s contributions to national economies are...central to economic as well as social development; that women workers, whether their activities are yet recorded in official labor statistics or not, must be taken into account in all national planning exercises;...they form the backbone of agricultural labour forces; that often their unpaid and undervalued work in house, community, and farm is essential for the subsistence and well-being of their dependent families; that they alone are increasingly responsible for the maintenance and well-being of a large proportion of the world’s children.²²⁹

Sound economic policies and well-functioning markets are essential for growth, employment generation, and the creation of an environment in which all sectors of the population, including women and girls receive full investment.²³⁰ The economic crises of many countries today has been aggravated by the neglect of major producers of food and services - women - in development plans.²³¹ In recognition of this fact, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) stresses the need for national plans to recognize women’s contributions and skills and to prepare labor and welfare legislation adapted to women’s multiple responsibilities within an African setting.²³²


²³⁰The World Bank, 1995, p. 11.


²³²For further study, see Lagos Plan of Action cited by Oppong, “Introduction,” p. 16.
In poor households, women often shoulder more of the workload than men. They spend long hours doing domestic chores such as collecting firewood and water, preparing food, and caring for the sick. They have less access to education, health care, and they contribute a proportionally larger share of their income to family survival. Hence, to the extent that women are overrepresented among the poor, programs aimed at enhancing their economic participation and productivity are highly compatible with approaches to poverty reduction.233

According to The World Bank:

Enhancing women’s part in development is essential not only for achieving social justice but also for reducing poverty. Worldwide experience shows clearly that supporting a stronger role for women contributes to economic growth, it improves child survival and overall family health, and it reduces fertility thus helping to slow population growth rates. In short, investing in women is central to sustainable development.234

Because women control most of the reproductive economy by bearing and raising children and providing labor for household maintenance and subsistence agriculture; improving women’s productivity contributes to growth, efficiency, and poverty reduction - key development goals.235

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234Ibid., p. 7.

235Investing in women is a major concern of the World Bank. It’s two-pronged strategy for poverty reduction comprises of: (a) generating income-earning opportunities and (b) improved access to education, health care, and other social services. See Ibid., p. 9. See also Momsen, p. 93.
In addition, Claire Robertson opines that, so long as a majority of third world women remain poor, the cycle will be perpetuated of high fertility, low education, low skills, and low income.\textsuperscript{236} Other costs of ignoring women’s needs include: uncontrolled population growth, high infant and child morbidity and mortality, a weakened economy, ineffective agriculture, a deteriorating environment, a generally divided society and poorer quality of life.\textsuperscript{237} Therefore, programs aimed at enhancing economic participation and productivity should be targeted at women.\textsuperscript{238} For market women, their role in the informal sector could expand and enhance local and national market flows only if there is a degree of understanding on the part of planners and legislators about the significance of women's contribution to the economy.\textsuperscript{239}

In several African countries, women head more than a third of families, suggesting that there is potential for reducing poverty by expanding income-earning opportunities for women. Women also improve the social position of their households as they improve their individual positions. As observed in \textit{Women and Empowerment: Participation and Decision Making}: “Men and women generally spend their incomes in different ways: women use their income to meet the basic needs of their families, such as food, education, health care, and clothing, while men devote a greater percentage of their

\textsuperscript{236}Robertson, p. 49.

\textsuperscript{237}Nafis Sadik, \textit{The State of World Population 1989} cited by Palmer, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{238}The World Bank, 1994, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{239}Lewis, 1980, p. 45.
income to non-essential personal goods. Hence, facilitating women’s entrepreneurship is an “empowerment” strategy. In the same vein, improving opportunities for women is critical to ensuring development compatible with environmental sustainability since it appears that women rely more heavily on the environment for survival and thus, pay closer attention to environmental concerns.

Several studies focused on women’s situation reveal that the inequity women suffer in most developing countries stems to a large extent from mass poverty and general backwardness caused by underdevelopment which is a product of imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and unjust international economic relations. Further, the position of women is aggravated by de facto discrimination on the basis of sex. As a result of precolonial, colonial and post-independence policies and practices, African women continue to lose ground economically, politically, and socially thus, concerted efforts have to be made to ensure that both women and men can enjoy the fruits of development.


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241 The World Bank, 1994, p. 27.

242 Ibid.


244 See April A. Gordon, p. 203.
The improvement in the status of women requires action at the national and local levels and within the family. It also requires a change in the attitudes and roles of both men and women. Women’s development should not be viewed as an issue in social development but should be seen as an essential component in every dimension of development. To improve the status of women and their role in the process of development, such development should be an integral part of the global project for the establishment of a New International Economic Order.²⁴⁵

Women’s equal participation in the economy is important because: firstly, without equal participation in governance and development, there can be no true democracy; secondly, the goals of development cannot be fully achieved without women’s participation; and thirdly, women’s participation brings higher priorities and better perspectives to issues under consideration.²⁴⁶ As a group, market women have frequent contact with ordinary people in a myriad of villages and urban neighborhoods where national policies have considerable impact. In their frequent interaction with various classes of people, market women serve as unofficial channels of communication, political workers, and sensitizers hence constitute a critical mass in national development.

Reasons for past nonrecognition of female contribution to nationhood include:

(1) the assumption that because women were granted equal citizen status, they were well provided for, and (2) an overemphasis on industrialization which shifted women’s work in rural agriculture and urban trade from the limelight. Hence, when technology was

²⁴⁵United Nations, p. 5.

²⁴⁶Women and Empowerment, p. 1.
being transferred to the modern sector, women’s work was relegated to the traditional sector. As a result of past neglect, women in the third world now carry a double or even triple burden of work as they cope with housework, childcare, and subsistence food production in addition to an expanding involvement in paid employment. In conclusion, studies on women such as this, allow women’s work to be moved from the marginal or neglected to center or mainstream.

**Organization of Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One consists of the introduction, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, definition of key concepts, theoretical and conceptual framework used as basis for the research, review of the literature, methodology for data collection, scope and limitations of study, significance of study, and organization of study. The chapter provides a general overview of the study.

Chapter Two focuses on the place of market women in Nigerian political-economy. It provides a general overview of women’s trade, political activism, institutional and associational affiliation, and the interaction between politics and women’s trade. It deals specifically with state-trader, trader-trader (associational), and

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247 Lewis, 1980, p. 43.

248 Momsen, p. 1.
trader-consumer relations within the larger context of Nigerian women’s political participation.

Chapter Three centers on a theoretical analysis of the position of market women within the context of feminist theory. This chapter is brought into the analysis in order to test the boundaries of feminist theory in capturing the reality of the lives of women in developing countries and to broaden the focus of Africana feminism where necessary.

Chapter Four consists of study findings, observations, and analysis. Discussion centers on: (a) variables which constitute women’s political-economy; (b) constructs which affect women’s political-economy (e.g. traditional values, institutional bias, and others); and (c) the impact of economic policies on women’s trade in western Nigeria. Literature is analyzed alongside survey findings in order to generate conclusions for the study. As stated earlier, data analysis is both quantitative and qualitative.

Chapter Five provides a concluding assessment of the political economy of market women and the impact of Udoji and SAPs on their trade. Also, alternative approaches are discussed and conclusions drawn concerning the theoretical exploration.
CHAPTER II
WOMEN AND NIGERIAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

This chapter will focus on an analysis of Nigerian women’s political-economic activity paying close attention to market women. We will investigate the impact of variables such as colonialism, imperialism, modernization, development, and structural adjustment on market women. We will examine the salience of trade to Nigerian economy and to market women. In addition, several spheres of women’s political activity will be analyzed including: voluntary associations, grassroots mobilization, and government officialdom; and the vagaries of women’s political power.

Judith Van Allen argues that:

African women today, are not for the most part in politics. More accurately, they are between politics. Those who had opportunities for political power and autonomy suffered the impact of colonialism and what westerners call modernization. But, they have not gained power in modern political institutions, nor autonomy in modern urban social and economic life.¹

In light of the preceding assertion, the political activity of market women presents an interesting study because they constitute the most cohesive, easily mobilized, and

politically active segment of Nigerian women. Their political manoeuvres provide insight into the dynamism of women’s grassroots organization and into its interaction with the state. We can, from our study of market women determine whether or not this subset of African women are in-between politics and to what extent they are marginalized in their political-economic environment. This chapter will begin with an historical overview divided into pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods of women in Nigerian government, then we will provide a synopsis of the problems of women’s under-representation in government. Later, we will analyze the different manifestations of women’s political activity and offer some insight into market women’s political-economy.

On the surface, it appears as if gender, like class, does not influence politics in any significant way. The state is presumably gender-neutral and women are potentially equal competitors who must build organizations and develop political savvy in order to gain access and control over decision-making. However, this is the utopian dream of liberalpluralists. In actuality, the state reflects gender inequality insofar as its institutions are staffed and controlled by men, its policies and laws reflect male domination of women’s lives, it maintains oppressive structures and ideology against women, and it continues to perpetuate male domination of females both in the public and private spheres.

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3Ibid., pp. 7-8.
State support for an ideology of the family and women's primary allegiance to it provides numerous opportunities for state involvement in the division of labor, wages, and terms and conditions of employment, so intensively that it reinforces women's subordination to men. Gender bias is perhaps most apparent in state support for the household wage system wherein women and children are supposedly dependent on a male 'breadwinner's 'family wage' and a woman's wage is regarded as supplemental.

On the other hand, the expansion of the state could offer attractive, or even the only viable alternative to oppressive family or kin relationships that prevent women from realizing either strategic or practical goals. Women in developing countries particularly, look to the state for opportunity to move away from family control and to lay claim to resources generated by development. Though state interests always supersede state concerns for women, policies provide the clearest link to gender concerns. Policies either benefit or disadvantage, liberate or oppress, women. Therefore, one can argue that the status of African women is enhanced or circumscribed by state/institutional structures, office holders, and dominant societal interests. However, the interaction between women and the state is constantly changing as is intra-gender association within

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4Barrett, p. 231.

5Ibid., p. 229.

6Charlton, Everett, and Staudt, p. 11.

the state. Women construct their own histories within a network of constraints and their activities subsequently affect both the capacities of the state and its effectiveness.8

Up-front, we must disclaim arguments that Nigerian women have made no progress since independence because there are more women participating and making an impact in all spheres of life, and to a lesser extent, in politics. Concerning the latter, some argue that there is a critical lack of political awareness, minimal participation, and negligible contribution to the political process. Although they constitute about 51% of Nigeria’s population, the unequal distribution of institutional and economic power coupled with an acute lack of representation or under-representation in government limit women’s ability to influence the legislative process and to access resources. Most women are apprehensive about, or fear, taking up a public role. Uninformed about their legal rights, encumbered by timidity and traditional notions of a “woman’s place,” or fearful of ridicule and insults, they stay out of politics.9 Hence, there is an urgent need for women to know what is at stake and to effectively get involved in politics and the governing process in order to make progress.10

8Chazan, pp. 185-6.


Historical Analysis

Politically, as in other spheres of interaction, women in several societies of pre-colonial Africa, occupied positions complementary rather than subordinate to men. Also, the traditional bisexual political system characteristic of most African societies, allowed women to choose their own leaders to run state affairs particularly in areas considered to be ‘women’s province’ such as the marketplace. As such, the system of sex segregation enabled women to control their own affairs while still subject to communal government.11

Women were able to wield considerable power. For example, traditional Yoruba society accorded women high social and political status which necessitated their participation in politics at all levels. Generally, Yoruba women married within the same town so that they were physically close to their own families and retained rights to family land, farms, and participation in the ancestral and orisha cults of their lineage.12 At the village level, women met to discuss matters affecting the welfare of their communities and in most towns, women’s councils and their leadership exercised tremendous pressure. In addition, wives of Obas had great influence in all political affairs where they represented their husband’s interests at women’s meetings.13 For example, in Oyo

13 Uchendu, p. 72.
kingdom, there were eight titled ladies as well as eight priestesses who saw to the smooth functioning of the political machinery. These included the *Iya Oba* who was the king’s official mother and the *Iyamode* who oversaw the king’s spiritual well-being.\(^{14}\)

As in Yorubaland, the *Iyoba* (Queen Mother) in traditional Edo society, wielded great political power and governed cities on behalf of her son and in traditional Ibo society, the *Omu* was the counterpart of the king.\(^{15}\) At a higher level, women played kingship roles as evident in the oral tradition and records of female *Obas* in Oyo, Sabe, Ondo, and Ilesha. For example, traditional records reveal that a female regent, Orompoto, drove the Nupe out of Oyo.\(^{16}\) Further, early colonial period witnessed the political visibility of Yoruba women through their pressure groups and the recognition of the *Iyalode* and the “*Egbe Iyalode*” (First Ladies’ Guild) made up of women producers, sellers, and buyers. The guild, was a force to reckon with and the leader Iyalode was a member of the British council of state until 1914.\(^{17}\)

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\(^{14}\) Okonjo 1981, pp. 91-2.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., pp. 93 and 98.


The impact of colonialism on African women was as varied as the by-product of intermingling diverse colonial policies with the socioeconomic and political structure of differing societies. In cases where the British found women autonomous, they instituted a Victorian framework which circumscribe women's power and in others where women had lost autonomy, they reinforced existing patriarchal traditions. For example, colonialism in northern Nigeria encouraged the expansion of Islamic ideals thereby reinforcing the exclusion of women from politics and other public affairs.

As public matters became more dominated by men, women became more dependent and oppressed. Consequently, following independence, northern women were not allowed to vote or participate in politics, and their access to education and other resources was severely restricted. On the other hand, in southern Nigeria, the British simply swept aside previous female political structures in Yoruba society, replacing them with completely male structures and positions and perpetuating male dominance in erstwhile complementary systems.18

The colonial period witnessed the disappearance of several female titles among the Yorubas. As the titles disappeared, the privileges and functions of their holders became obsolete through colonial legislation. For example, the colonial government refused to recognize the Iyalode as the direct link between womenfolk and thus undermined her position. The Iyalode was dropped from membership in the local government or council of elders and her long-standing function as supervisor of the

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market was terminated and entrusted to the local government council.\textsuperscript{19} As the titles dropped, so did women become less visible and less able to attract the attention of British administrators.\textsuperscript{20}

For northern women, the influence of Islam on their lives cannot be overemphasized. The Islamic conquest of northern Nigeria by the Fulbe in early nineteenth century resulted in the gradual introduction of wife seclusion among all classes.\textsuperscript{21} As a result, women lost the economic independence they had enjoyed as farmers and traders. Although Islam guaranteed certain rights, seclusion ensured that female political and economic work was severely circumscribed and the capacity to exercise guaranteed rights, were constrained.\textsuperscript{22} Subsequently, the history of women’s emancipation in northern Nigeria presents a different picture from that of southern Nigeria.

For both northern and southern women, the loss of traditional political status which began through islamization and continued during the colonial period, manifested in the exclusion and marginalization of women by both the civilian and military regimes.

\textsuperscript{19}Uchendu, p. 45.

\textsuperscript{20}Mba, 1982, p. 38.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., p. 300.

\textsuperscript{22}Women could still trade in crafts and processed food from seclusion but they could not form political or economic associations with other women. A. Lebeuf, “The Role of Women in the Political Organization of African Societies” in Women of Tropical Africa and R. Hill, Hidden Trade in Hausaland cited by Ibid.
Although women aggressively resisted colonial marginalization through press campaigns, petitions, mass demonstrations, and riots, they achieved very little toward regaining pre-colonial autonomy. And as the British formed executive and legislative councils in preparation for decolonization, only Nigerian men were integrated.

Thus, from the beginning, territorial politics was an arena into which only men were admitted, and national politics became male-only terrain. Hence, while several Nigerian women attended the constitutional conferences preceding independence in London, only a handful have actively participated in post-independent politics. For socio-cultural reasons such as the disapproval of husbands, Margaret Ekpo reports, very few women could actually attend political party meetings and other similar rallies which were considered unsavory and sole men province.

The decade from 1950 - 1960 witnessed seven years of post-independent civilian politics but, not one woman was elected into any regional or national legislative bodies! Both southern parties: the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) and Action Group (AG), attempted to correct this situation by appointing some women to

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24 Okonjo, 1994, p. 514.

25 Uchendu, p. xii.

26 Margaret Ekpo cited by Amina Mamman, “Where are the Women?” This Week cited by Ibid., pp. xiv-xv.
various legislatures. These female appointees included Margaret Ekpo of the Eastern Nigerian branch of NCNC and Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti of the Western Working Committee, also of NCNC.\(^{27}\) They along with Janet Mokelu, were relatively well-educated and organized and recruited both rural and urban women for their parties. The women took part in political rallies, fund-raisers, and demonstrations against British brutality. For example, they actively participated in the 1947 coal-miners strike at Iva-Valley Coal Mines in Enugu during which the British shot several strikers.\(^{28}\)

Though the NCNC and AG were committed to the women’s suffrage, they could not shift the position of the Northern People’s Congress (NPC) thus, in the 1959 federal elections, only southern women could vote and participate.\(^{29}\) Yet, very few women contested in national elections and only one woman was appointed to the senate and a second woman in 1964. Women were marginally represented in the federal and regional civil service, and there were very few women senior civil servants. Though women could vote and contest in elections in the south, the unisexual nature of national politics did not allow their full participation in government.\(^{30}\)

\(^{27}\)Only the Action Group nominated a woman - Wuraola Esan in the pre-independence federal elections of 1959 but she lost. See Okonjo, 1981, p. 95; Uchendu, p. 46.

\(^{28}\)Nwosu, pp. 80-1.

\(^{29}\)Mba, 1989, p. 71.

\(^{30}\)Because fewer women than men obtained tertiary education, or education specifically relevant to political or economic activity, their avenues to power were limited to political parties and governmental nominations. See Ibid.
Nigeria inherited the British parliamentary system of government, with a bicameral federal legislature and four regional legislatures which were contested by three major political parties and several minor ones. This system was maintained until 1989 when it was changed to a two-party system for civilian rule. Today, the military continues to maintain a bureaucratic centralism in which women were either not represented or marginally so. In the first military government, three civilian Nigerian women were appointed commissioners: Kofoworola Pratt in Lagos State, Flora Nwachukwu in East-Central State, and D. M. Miller in North-Central State.

Despite its progressive role in pro-women legislation, the military’s patriarchal structure limits the number of top female officers in the different forces. No woman has been appointed to the Supreme Military Council (SMC), the nation’s highest ruling body under the military nor has any been appointed a minister. Because the military maintains a rigid patriarchal hierarchy, the highest ranking female officer is Major General Aderonke Kale, a two-star General who commands a military hospital. Further, there

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31Ibid., p. 70.

32The military first came into power in 1967, and have ruled the country for over twenty-eight of its thirty-seven years. Since independence, no woman has reached the executive or decision making body yet. See appendices 2.1 and 2.2 for the level of women’s participation in military and civilian structures of government. See Ibid., p. 87.

33Uchendu, p. 77.

are no women governors, despite the fact that there are quite a few senior women military and police officers.\textsuperscript{35}

In 1978, in a bid to return to civil rule, a fifty-man Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) was selected on the criteria of professional competence and equal representation from then nineteen states of the federation, but there were no women! The establishment of the Constituent Assembly (to approve of the draft constitution) which followed, brought the election of one woman and the appointment of four making a total of five women out of two hundred and fifty members.\textsuperscript{36} When we juxtapose the percentage (51\%) of women in the country to those in the Constituent Assembly (2\%), it presents a more alarming picture of the situation. If 51 percent of the population could be marginalized at such a crucial gathering, what hope then do they have of adequate attention or representation based on this same constitution?

Following the pattern of earlier political parties, those running in 1979 ignored the issue of women's representation. Some had separate women's wings but nominated far fewer women than men. None fielded women as gubernatorial or presidential candidates. According to the parties, the electorates and male party members were prejudiced against women in government and will not vote for women candidates.\textsuperscript{37}

Other excuses proffered include: the false assumption that women could not stand the

\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Mba, 1989, pp. 75 & 78.}
\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Ibid.}
rigors of politics, the campaigns, the machine control, and the physical violence, hence the continued marginalization of women in Nigerian political-economy.  

Similarly, socioeconomic factors such as: age distribution of society, rural/urban migration, marriage, fertility and child-rearing patterns, prevailing family organization, societal attitude to female participation in the labor force, and educational patterns, contribute in varying degrees to the marginalization of Nigerian women in politics. In addition, Victorian ideas concerning women and their place in society spread through colonialism, urbanization, industrialization, and the rigid separation of the public and private spheres, significantly restricted women's roles in immediate post-independent Nigeria and contributed to their under-representation in government and the resulting domination of the public sphere by men. In turn, problems resulting from marginalization and under-representation include: high levels of illiteracy/minimal education, un/underemployment, legal minor status, and second-class citizen treatment.

In every state of the federation, there are more boys than girls receiving formal education as demonstrated in table 2.1 below. At primary school level, the percentage of girls is 30-40 percent, at the secondary school, it drops to 20-30 percent and at the

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tertiary level, it is only 10-15 percent. Universal Primary Education (UPE), which was introduced in 1975 in order to provide free education at the primary level, expanded the chances of girls receiving education because it was free and compulsory. However, poverty is still a major determinant because poor parents tend to make female children earn a living while boys get an education. Although there has been a rapid expansion in secondary and tertiary education, major differences exist between regions and in facilities available in schools. In addition, the economic depression has instigated cutbacks in government funding of educational facilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>6,939,680</td>
<td>8,930,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>53,939</td>
<td>59,617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>1,850,049</td>
<td>2,182,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher (University/Polytechnic)</td>
<td>335,824 total (no differentiated data available)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As the data shows, there remains a huge gap between male and female education which widens with higher levels of education.\textsuperscript{43} Total adult illiteracy is 42.9 percent with female illiteracy accounting for 52.7 percent and male illiteracy for 32.7 percent. Education is an important index because it often impacts women’s socio-economic status. For example, in Nigeria, 48 percent of women with no education were in polygamous relationships while only 17 percent of women with secondary or higher education had co-wives. Economically, women in polygynous unions tend to have greater financial responsibilities and often bear full responsibility for household management and child care. Since the husband has other families to support, the financial support to each child is generally lower than in monogamous unions.\textsuperscript{44} On the whole, sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 20 percent female-headed households and fertility is the highest in the world at about 6 children per woman.\textsuperscript{45}

Fostered by Victorian ideals, the first Nigerian women to be educated were taught “women’s subjects” such as home-economics, nursing, and primary/elementary education - subjects that would enable them fit better into their roles in the modern home. With limited education, many women were forced to take jobs as nurses, teachers and caterers, which were extensions of their domestic roles. Those employed in technical and


\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., p. 5.
mid-level positions constituted only 8.4 percent of the total employment figure.46

Further, women were concentrated in secondary sector jobs characterized by low wages, limited upward mobility, and low security.47

United Nations publication, *The World’s Women 1995: Trends and Statistics*, states that, sub-Saharan Africa has achieved minimal progress in basic social and economic indicators. Health and education gains have faltered in the face of economic crises and civil strife. Since there is a strong linkage between education and formal employment in modern society, it is alarming that literacy rates in sub-Saharan Africa remain the lowest in the world at 43 percent of adult women and 67 percent of adult men. Moreover, while women’s labor force participation has increased in every region, it has dropped throughout the past two decades in sub-Saharan Africa. It dropped from a high of 57 per cent in 1970 to 54 per cent in 1980 to 53 per cent in 1990.48

Seventy-five percent of the female labor force is in agriculture, and most are unpaid family workers. In the region, women’s activity rates are 50 percent in rural areas and 35 percent in urban areas. Globally, women are very much underrepresented in urban production jobs—except in Asia, where 33 per cent of economically active women

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in cities hold such jobs. On the contrary, in the other regions including sub-Saharan Africa, fewer than 20 percent of economically active women are in production jobs. Women in large cities work mainly in professional, clerical and services occupations.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 41-2.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectors</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>3,458.4</td>
<td>9,800.6</td>
<td>13,259.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and quarrying</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>457.3</td>
<td>806.4</td>
<td>1,263.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, gas, and water</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>127.0</td>
<td>130.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>545.6</td>
<td>545.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade, restaurants, and hotels</td>
<td>4,740.8</td>
<td>2,676.6</td>
<td>7,417.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, storage, and communications</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>1,094.7</td>
<td>1,111.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financing, insurance, real estate, and business services</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>109.8</td>
<td>120.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community, social and personal services</td>
<td>962.6</td>
<td>3,999.5</td>
<td>4,902.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities not adequately defined</td>
<td>147.8</td>
<td>597.1</td>
<td>744.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Employed</td>
<td>9,797.8</td>
<td>19,704.1</td>
<td>29,501.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>453.8</td>
<td>809.8</td>
<td>1,263.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Labor Force</td>
<td>10,251.6</td>
<td>20,513.9</td>
<td>30,765.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As shown in the preceding table, together with restaurants and hotels, trade is the only sector of the Nigerian economy dominated by women.\footnote{The Europa World Year Book 1996 Volume II Kazakhstan - Zimbabwe, p. 2408.} It is the third largest sector
of economic activity in the country, the second largest employer, and it continues to
demonstrate steady growth. Within the formal sector, the 1977 National Manpower
Survey revealed that women constituted less than 18 percent of the total staff of all major
organizations. Also, the proportion of women in the technical, professional, and
scientific manpower categories was below 7 percent for all occupations and below 1
percent in engineering and aircraft operations. In 1982, women accounted for only 14
percent of all employment under the federal civil service though the figure continues to
slowly increase.\textsuperscript{51} From 1980-87, out of 56 percent of the self-employed in the labor
force, 37 percent were women. Out of 28 percent total employees, 18 percent were
women and out of 9 percent total unpaid family workers, 42 percent were women.\textsuperscript{52}

Patterns of female economic participation are linked to such factors as control
over rural land resources, cultural division of labor, employment opportunities in rural
and urban areas, and longer duration of schooling for rural boys than girls. In addition,
problems of measuring women’s participation in subsistence agriculture and the informal
sector (trade) tend to bias women’s economic activity rates downwards. However, the
large number of women reported in this category are as much the result of biased
reporting and inaccurate classification of women’s work as they are a result of limited
opportunities for work outside the home or family.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51}Mike Akpan, “Commission for Women: Vehicle of Liberation,” \textit{Newswatch}
(December 10, 1990): 37.

\textsuperscript{52}Schmittroth, p. 559.

\textsuperscript{53}United Nations, 1995, pp. 112-4.
Employers in both the public and private sectors are key decision-makers in the recruitment and promotion of women therefore, they control the level of sex inequalities in the workplace. Most employers perceive women as being more suitable for subordinate-type jobs where docility and submissiveness contribute to higher productivity and less labor trouble than supervisory and higher administrative positions. Other barriers against women’s employment and upward mobility include: marriage and family (particularly in occupations involving traveling), structure of industrialization, female self-perception, maternity leave (which employers do not wish to pay for), and social perception.

Although domestic service continues to be an important occupation for unskilled women all over the world, in Nigeria, it is a profession relegated to younger women and foreign women. Domestic workers are subject to exploitative work conditions. Domestic work comprises of long hours, low wages, no benefits, a high dependence on the employer for food and housing, limited freedom of movement, and restricted access to means of communication. In Nigeria, domestic workers are often foreign girls from Togo and Benin Republic. They speak little English and are isolated from their families by shylocking benefactors who pay their passage to Nigeria in return for a substantial portion of their salaries and several years of contractual servitude. These girls are forced

54 Anker and Hein, p. 28.
55 Awosika, p. 81.
to work in different middle-class households for up to 5 years before visiting or going back to their home countries.

In addition to employment issues, there are legal rights issues. Though Nigeria awarded women equal rights and equal access to resources, gender-biased mixtures of colonial and customary laws which deprive women of their constitutional and civil rights as citizens, are still in the books particularly in matters concerning land, marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Nigerian laws require that a married woman obtain permission from her husband to get a passport. She may not post bond for suspects at police stations and she is exempt from tax rebates and holidays. In addition, the implementation of laws discriminates against women; for example, in their access to credit.

Further, wide gaps exist between laws, women’s knowledge and understanding of them, and enforcement by authorities. These gaps are particularly evident in rural areas where discriminatory beliefs and practices prevail and sometimes result in human rights violations against women. To compound the situation, the government is constrained in its efforts to curtail most abuses because of the rigid separation between the public and private spheres, and because of its avoidance of intervention in the jurisdiction of Sharia or customary law courts.

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58Eze, pp. 38-9.

59Huston, p. 47.
require his signature and consent. Also, because most women did not know jewelry could be used to a subjective degree, as collateral, obtaining loans and overdrafts are major constraints. Until the establishment of the People’s Bank, women had restricted access to credit facilities particularly in rural areas. Fashioned after the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, the People’s Bank specialized in giving loans to women and the poor. However, it has not been as successful as the Grameen Bank partly because it was more a political entity than an economic one and it gradually sunk into the quagmire of Nigerian corruption.

In cases where banks may have wanted to extend funds to women, other factors prevented such transactions. For instance, given the low level of education of most female entrepreneurs, accessibility to credit is a thorny issue because both male and female entrepreneurs do not keep good records. In addition, some keep money at home and have difficulty separating their personal from business funds. Thus, the fact that


62Nwosu, p. 62.
formal creditors require proper documentation and accounts before granting credit means that most female entrepreneurs are excluded from the use of such facilities.  

Socially, the acceptance of both monogamy and polygamy in Nigeria poses a problem for the government and for women’s organizations which, for economic and other reasons, have been campaigning to reduce the annual birth rate to below 3.5%. The government decreed that each woman can only have four children. However, this policy limits women’s child-bearing options while giving men free range to have countless groups of four children with different women. The situation is aggravated by the fact that Nigerian society worships male children and for many wives, the way to a husband’s heart (other than through his stomach), is by delivering a male child!

Fortunately, the awareness created by the UN Decade for Women, set the agenda for state governments to review their stance on women. Subsequently, women’s concerns became a political issue and both progressive and self-serving politicians touted programs ostensibly beneficial to women. The international attention accorded women’s issues caused national goals to undergo a near-revolutionary change which manifested in the form of women’s programs. Prior to the 1980s, the Nigerian

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64Nwosu, pp. 85-6.

65Eze, p. 39.


67Nwosu, p. 43.
government, when drawing up its manpower programs, disregarded women as a distinct category of human resource separate from men. Instead, projects designed with women in mind were oriented toward social welfare rather than empowerment or economic development. In fact, the only specific references to women occurred in the sections on social welfare alongside beggars, children, the destitute, and the handicapped.⁶⁸

**Women’s Political-Economic Activity and the State**

Taking its cue from the UN, the fifth military regime headed by General Ibrahim Babangida took several positive steps toward improving the status of Nigerian women. In 1986, Professor Grace Alele-Williams was appointed Vice Chancellor of the University of Benin and in 1990, Professor Jadesola Akande at Lagos State University. The Babangida administration supported the promotion of women’s issues through the sponsorship of Better Life for Rural Dwellers (BLP) from 1987 to 1992. According to its brochure, BLP aimed at effectively mobilizing rural women and providing markets for their agricultural, arts, crafts, and other products through exhibitions, trade fairs, seminars, lectures, publications, loans, machine grants, and others.⁶⁹ In June 1990, the eleven-member board of the NCW was inaugurated in conformity with the provisions of

⁶⁸Fapohunda, p. 205.

⁶⁹Acholonu, p. 98.
the United Nations General Assembly resolutions 3320 and 3523 of December 1975, as the administrative organ of the BLP.\footnote{UN resolutions 3320 and 3523 called on all regional commissions to accord special attention to government programs aimed at the full integration of women in development. Akpan, p. 36; Awe and Ezumah, p. 194; and Acholonu, p. 98.}

The program, directed toward rural women, had urban organizers who were wives of state governors, and at its apex was the First Lady, Maryam Babangida. On the one hand, BLP became no more than a propaganda tool of the military because of its political bias and it marginalization of most women’s organizations, societies, and institutions where women’s affairs had previously been handled. In addition, its urban (elitist) leadership, weakened efforts to integrate rural women into the program thus reducing its impact at the grassroots level.\footnote{Wives of state governors who were not intellectually or mentally disposed to the leadership demands of such a program became redundant hence, the program suffered in those states. See Awe and Ezumah, p. 193; Acholonu, p. 99; “Better Life? Well...,” Newswatch (August 5, 1991): 15.}

As a critic noted:

By ordinary observation, the real rural woman is still as underprivileged as she was before BLP. The program is a political thing. The concept is fine but the implementation is a sham. You cannot bring a woman to Lagos and say you have improved her life. After the visit she goes back home. How does that affect the life of the woman who has to work very hard to feed her family?\footnote{Hauwa Mustapha in interview with Newswatch, Ibid., p. 12.}

On the other hand, BLP put a much-needed spotlight on women’s issues. It established and publicized cooperative activities and trade fairs in which items produced...
and manufactured by women were displayed and sold.\textsuperscript{73} Continuing the momentum begun by BLP, the National Commission for Women (NCW) was established to institutionalize women's concerns by catering to all women's issues in the country while integrating them into national development. Interestingly, it's inauguration, marked with much fanfare, was the major highlight of its existence.

Analytically, the commission had limited jurisdiction because of its broadly-defined focus (women’s needs) therefore, it was unlikely to be effective in its ability to relieve women’s prevalent problems such as legal minor status or second-class citizenship. In addition, Bolanle Awe, inaugural head of NCW, in her acceptance speech stated, “NCW is neither out to subvert the religious or cultural order nor try to make women superhuman beings and superior to men. What [we] demand through the commission is that the man should be a democratic boss and give woman a chance to develop herself.”\textsuperscript{74} Implicitly, the NCW would maintain the status quo because without challenging the status quo, there is no other method of changing women’s status in Nigeria.

In addition to BLP and the Family Support Program, several economic initiatives were undertaken by the federal government, including the People’s Bank, UN-sponsored African Development Bank’s credit line for women, and cooperative societies. People’s

\textsuperscript{73}Whether it was beneficial or detrimental, BLP was abolished at the inception of the Abacha administration and was replaced by the Family Support Program and the Women’s Ministry in 1995. See Acholonu, p. 101.

\textsuperscript{74}Akpan, p. 37.
Bank, the most popular of the ventures, was introduced by the Babangida administration in 1989 and gives loans of between N50 to N2,000 to lenders without security. The requirement is that the people form a group of 10 to 15 and nominate a secretary and a chairman. The first five people excluding the secretary and chairperson receive the loan first. After repayment, which is monitored by the whole group, others in the group then receive loans in rotating order.\(^75\)

From 1991 to 1993, the Babangida administration introduced a transition program to civilian rule. For women, this presented a unique opportunity to participate in politics, hence the aborted 1992 elections witnessed the most spectacular showing of women in Nigerian politics. The list of political aspirants included: Sarah Jubril as presidential aspirant under the umbrella of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), Lizzy Ajufo vying for vice-presidency under the auspices of the National Republican Convention (NRC), and Tokunbo Dosunmu as governor of Lagos State under SDP. In the proscribed elections, Pamela Sadauki and Latifat Okunnu were elected deputy governors for Kaduna and Lagos states respectively.\(^76\) At the ward, council, state and national levels, the list of women who contested and won elections multiplied to an all-time record, for example, in

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\(^76\) Akinrinade, p. 31; Anietie Usen, “The Political Amazons,” *Newswatch* (December 10, 1990): 32.
Oyo State alone, 130 women were elected into executive positions at the ward level, while 176 won their elections at the local and state government levels.\textsuperscript{77}

Throughout the country, women performed impressively. In Plateau and Lagos states, women floored tough male opponents to emerge as chairpersons of the NRC. Bose Oshinowo, 42, a wealthy plastic manufacturer and wife of former speaker of the House of Assembly in Lagos State, defeated nine men to head the party, while Helen Gomwalk, a businesswoman defeated six men. Victoria Aguiyi-Ironsi, wife of a former head of state performed a similar feat to become party vice-president in Imo State. At the national level, Onike Oshodi, a businesswoman was elected ex-officio member of the NRC and was the only woman to win a party post at the national level.\textsuperscript{78}

Likewise, Titi Ajanaku floored all her male opponents to emerge as chairperson of Ake Local Government in Ogun State. Sinolu Ojikutu became the Deputy Governor of Lagos State but Oluremi Adiukwu was defeated for governorship. During the same period, many women emerged as local government councillors in different parts of the country including the muslim North where two women became councillors in Kano State. In addition, women led the NRC in Lagos, Plateau, and Benue.\textsuperscript{79} Several explanations have been proffered for the unprecedented influx of women into politics in 1992 including: MAMSER, the government's mass mobilization outfit, mobilization

\textsuperscript{77}Usen, pp. 32-3.

\textsuperscript{78}Ibid., p. 33.

\textsuperscript{79}Godwin Agbroko, "More than a Heart-beat Away," \textit{Newswatch} cited by Uchendu, p. 92.
efforts of women’s organizations such as the National Council of Women’s Societies (NCWS), the BLP, and the establishment of the NCW.\textsuperscript{80}

In spite of their progress, several challenges still remain. Many women are turned off by violence, political insults, thuggery, and other ‘murky practices’ which characterize Nigerian politics.\textsuperscript{81} In addition, family status (presence of young children), money, religion, and financial inadequacy, bar women’s widespread participation.\textsuperscript{82} Opponents of women’s political participation tirelessly emphasize how women are neglecting their roles as wives and mothers to chase after public glamor thereby contributing to the degradation of Nigerian society.

When not actively involved in politics, women were members of civic organizations which may also act as springboards for political careers. Hundreds of formal and informal women’s associations flourish in post-independent Nigeria, each drawing attention to the problems and needs of women. Some are autonomous bodies such as NCWS, while others are female wings of larger organizations such as Society of Women Accountants of Nigeria (SWAN). Others include: Women in Nigeria (WIN), the Nigerian Association of University Women (NAUW), and various service organizations such as the Lionesses, Inner Wheel, and the Soroptimists.

\textsuperscript{80}Olarembi Elizabeth Adiukwu in interview with Usen, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{81}Usen, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{82}Uchendu, p. 93.
Urban women’s groups reflect more western influences. Typically, these groups are dominated by the middle-class and their views and interests often diverge widely from those of the poor. They support social welfare activities such as literacy campaigns, seminars, symposia, and so on. In order not to offend the male establishment, they tend to be anti-feminist and to promote their own interests in securing greater access to their husband’s income, seek more advantageous marriage and divorce laws, and promote education in the domestic arts, beauty, and fashion. Consequently, they are limited in addressing the plight of poor urban or rural women.

These groups champion causes which include: equality of status and opportunity with their male counterparts; the abolition of whatever economic handicaps hinder their socioeconomic mobility; equal opportunity in education, employment, and promotions; abolition/reduction of bride price; repeal of laws which prevent women from owning property; ineligibility of women to post bond; abolition of inheritance laws which exclude women from inheriting their deceased parents or husband’s property; custody laws and convention; polygamy; divorce in traditional marriages; and purdah.

NCWS, which acts as an umbrella body for most women’s groups, was founded by elite women in 1959 to represent women’s views in a non-political setting and to promote the education, welfare, and status of women. The organization is recognized

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83April A. Gordon, pp. 212-3.
84Ibid., p. 214.
85Nwosu, pp. 81-2.
by the federal government from which it receives an annual subvention. Though nonpartisan, the league has organized women's meetings, civil rights talks and championed the cause of women using a variety of non-threatening methods. For example, in 1951, under the leadership of the late Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, NCWS (then Nigerian Federation of Women’s Organizations), successfully lobbied for the enfranchisement of Northern women.\(^7\)

On the other hand, WIN was formed in 1982 at Ahmadu Bello University Zaria as a radical feminist organization on the premise that a prerequisite for a solution to the problems facing women in Nigeria is their mobilization to fight against the oppressive conditions which deprive them of basic human rights.\(^8\) According to WIN, the majority of women like men, suffer from the exploitative and oppressive character of Nigerian society, but women suffer more.\(^9\) Over the years, WIN’s militancy has won several small wars for women particularly in the North. Outside formal organizations, women also join church or other religious organizations from where they exert some influence in the community at large. For example, the president of the mother’s union of a Protestant church could directly influence the political affairs of her community.\(^0\)

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\(^7\) Kuti was also the Treasurer of the NCNC and led a protest march against *Alake* of Egbaland because of the taxation of women and lobbied for a reduction in the powers of the monarchy. See Nwosu, p. 28; Uchendu, p. 46.

\(^8\) Mba, 1989, p. 85

\(^9\) Imam, p. 99.

\(^0\) Uchendu, p. 72.
Unlike instituted organizations, grassroots self-help groups, formed often by poor rural women, provide vital economic assistance. They often assist in obtaining credit for farming or business ventures, and provide other forms of mutual assistance to members such as child care and maternity services. Reciprocal service is a common basis for solidarity. Women regulate trading practices, perform voluntary community work such as construction of roads, schools, and health clinics, and stabilize prices among themselves using systems with built-in penalties.

Also, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs), have formed with explicit goals addressed to development issues. For example, the Lagos State Women’s Association for Home Gardening and Farming concentrates on increasing food production and encouraging women to grow food for consumption. Another NGO, the All Nigerian Women’s Association led by Lady Oyinkan Abayomi, acts as a pressure group which brings together subgroups of women such as the elite and market women, to dialogue and improve the conditions of women. However, the best known development-oriented organization is the Country Women’s Association of Nigerian (COWAN), founded in 1982 and oriented toward increasing the productivity and earning capacity of rural folks and promoting self-sustaining growth.

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91 April A. Gordon, pp. 212-3

92 Snyder and Tadesse, p. 43; Adegboye, p. 24.


94 Ibid.
Women’s groups have succeeded in drawing the nation’s attention to women’s needs. In addition, they have made women themselves aware of their problems, the possibilities of solving them, helped to broaden their outlook, and enhanced women’s self-confidence.\textsuperscript{95} Owing partly to the activities of these women’s organizations, and partly to the efforts of individual women to challenge the status quo, some Nigerian women have attained enviable heights in both the public and private sectors. In addition, issues such as pay equity, comparative worth, maternity leave without forced resignation, housing allowances, and others are gradually being resolved.\textsuperscript{96}

\textbf{Market Associations}

Market women’s voluntary organizations, set up under the umbrella of the Nigerian Market Women’s Association, contribute tremendously to the profitability of their trade. These organizations, normally grouped by commodities traded, help their members start or enlarge a business by providing necessary capital. They put the trader in touch with customers and show novices how to effectively reinvest and make profit from their businesses. Some traders associations engage in cooperative buying while

\textsuperscript{95}Raliat Sanni, Director-General, Department of Women Affairs, Kwara State in interview with Akinrinade, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{96}Ibid.
others engage in production for example, one with a membership of 80,000 run bakeries, laundries, calabash factories, and weaving corporations.  

These associations prevent under-cutting by discouraging competition between women trading in similar commodities. Members of market associations themselves are responsible for certain functions, e.g. financing social engagements, organizing informal thrift and credit among members, making financial contributions towards community development, and holding meetings to discuss and effect prices. Typically, any woman caught in the practice of destabilizing trade or going against established rules is ostracized by her colleagues. They may bring a case against her to the leader of the commodity group or higher, to the Iyalode or Iyaloja. Market functionaries play the following roles: maintain peace among market users, organize self-help projects, administer “lost and found,” enforce discipline, employ cleaners, and pay homage to traditional chiefs.

Unlike market women’s associations, rural cooperatives draw their membership from individuals interested in their set-out goals, which include: open membership, democratic control, limited return on capital, bonus on patronage, one vote per member,


98 Ibid.

99 Adegboye, pp. 10-1.


101 Adegboye, p. 10; Falola, p. 30.
religious and political neutrality, and cash (no credit) sales. After fulfilling the conditions of registration. These conditions include: membership of a minimum of 40, savings of at least N10.00 per month, regular, well attended meetings, prompt repayment of loans, and preparation and presentation of accounts at annual general meetings. While market associations concentrate on spending their contributions to help members finance social engagements such as weddings, cooperatives give loans for commercial and industrial development.

There are two kinds of regulating bodies for market associations: the traditional structure with the Iyalode at the head and the modern structure supervised by local government officers; both bodies exist side by side. The Iyalode, presiding over a traditional market association, wields tremendous power derived from her individual capacity, personal resources, and the importance of the association she represents. Formally and informally, she is the link between market women, the Oba and the council. In small markets, she implements and supervises stall allocation, admits new members, maintains a limit on street traders and hawkers, regulates interaction with external suppliers, and oversees the internal administration of the market. In larger markets, the Iyalode has her own hierarchy of female chiefs which include the Otun

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102 Adegboy, p. 15.
103 Ibid., pp. 17 & 21.
104 Falola, p. 30.
Iyalode, Balogun, Osi, and Asipa, who oversee the day-to-day running of the market (see figure 2.1 below). The Iyalode’s host of female chiefs are elected by the women’s associations or appointed by the town’s political authority.

Figure 2.1 - Traditional Market Hierarchy (single sex)

In dual-sex markets, there is a female, as well as male, hierarchy of leaders. The Iyalaje/Babalaje (chief of traders) who in turn report to the Oba. Tradition however,

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105 Layonu, p. 22.
probably recognized the Babaloja as the overall chair.\textsuperscript{106} In single-sex hierarchies, men are appointed as honorary consuls and to functional positions such as secretary or treasurer to market women’s committees and subcommittees. These incorporated male members and others are expected to deliver crucial linkages to power, authority, resources, and external groups.\textsuperscript{107} In major urban markets, the right to participate has to be negotiated cleverly, and it is difficult to bypass market organizations.

Often, the competition for control of the marketplace by prominent market women becomes part of the complications of local politics and winning is generally determined by wealth, fame, charisma, and a host of other socio-cultural variables. A major source of strength for politically-oriented market women lies in their relationship with consumers. They transmit political messages, gather a loyal following for political aspirations, use their position to decry government policies concerning trade or other matters, or serve their communities. A trader’s political career could skyrocket or crash depending on her consumer base, the importance of the commodity she trades, and her interaction with her customers.\textsuperscript{108}

Market women, individually or in groups, have held key positions in all types in political parties, factional disputes, and ritual affairs. For example, in the political riots

\textsuperscript{106}Adegboye, p. 9.

\textsuperscript{107}Falola, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{108}Trader-consumer relations are characterized by face-to-face transactions, a high degree of product specialization, transfers in small units, and the use of short-term credit, all of which affect a trader’s political success. Remy, p. 126.
of 1929, 1965, and 1983, it was not unusual for groups of women to gather at markets or other rallying places and then march to destroy an opposition politician’s house or car.\textsuperscript{109}

In addition, the interwoven nature of politics and economics is particularly evident in the emergence of women traders in national politics since colonial times. Of such traders, two come to mind, Efunsetan Aniwura and Madam Tinubu who projected women’s interests into the limelight during the colonial era.

**Traditional Women Leaders - Efunsetan Aniwura**

Efunsetan Aniwura, through trade and large-scale farming, was able to rise to the leading position of *iyalode*. Efunsetan moved from war-torn unsettled Abeokuta to Ibadan in about 1860 in order to enhance her trade. She settled in Oja’ba, in the compound of her maternal relation, Oluyole. From Ibadan, her trading activities had four or five focal points - Ibadan and Abeokuta in the hinterland, and on the coast, Porto Novo, Badagry, and Lagos. She was able to widen the scope of her trading operations and extensively exploit the resources of the Yoruba country and environs by getting her products from actual sources and forming contacts along the way.\textsuperscript{110}

Along with co-traders, Efunsetan obtained goods from overseas traders. These included tobacco which came from Brazil, textiles of all types, velvet, shirting, wax

\textsuperscript{109}See Aronson, p. 135.

prints, salt, guns, and gunpowder which were the most important commodity during the period of Yoruba wars. Her extensive trading demanded a great deal of energy and a very efficient organization. Although Efunsetan was illiterate, she had a good memory in which she kept all her accounts and maintained a firm control over all her business operations and might even have employed clerks.\textsuperscript{111}

With time, Efunsetan became established as one of the leading traders of Ibadan, moving through the ranks of mini-retail to wholesale, where she was part of a reception center for goods coming into town and then as a distributor to the retailers. She also became a producer using her slaves to weave the strong \textit{Kijipa} cloth, which was in demand not only within the country but all the way to South America. She had mats woven for sale, produced cosmetics (henna and \textit{adi}), and food. Eventually, her position became primarily that of supervisor of a large trading empire which was now manned by her servants and domestic slaves.\textsuperscript{112}

Efunsetan’s tremendous success in trade brought her fame and recognition. She became the \textit{Mogaji} of her benefactor’s compound, then a role usually reserved for men then. Later, she became \textit{Iyalode} of Ibadan.\textsuperscript{113} As \textit{Iyalode}, she was the spokesperson for all women in Ibadan and sat in the council of chiefs. She had subordinate chiefs and was consulted on all affairs concerning women - whether pertaining to trade, making laws,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111}Ibid., pp. 62 and 64.
\item \textsuperscript{112}Ibid., pp. 63-4.
\item \textsuperscript{113}Efunsetan was only the second Iyalode of Ibadan, a city which developed from a war camp. Layonu, p. 25.
\end{itemize}
general welfare, or declaring war. Like other chiefs, she also conducted meetings at her Igbejo (court) where she settled disputes.\textsuperscript{114} Efunsetan became a very powerful, assertive leader and spokesperson for a dissident group within the assembly of chiefs. It was her association with this group that led to her clash with Are Latosa, Ibadan’s military dictator and eventually to her murder.\textsuperscript{115}

**Traditional Women Leaders - Madam Tinubu**

Unlike Efunsetan, Madam Tinubu her contemporary, epitomized women’s political struggle in the seat of colonial power - Lagos. She left her original base of Owu and settled in Badagry where she traded in salt, tobacco, and slaves. She acted as middleman to Brazilian traders.\textsuperscript{116} As her trade brought her immense wealth and fame, she became prominent in Lagos politics and actively participated in the attacks both on the Lagos government and on foreign merchants who monopolized the market.\textsuperscript{117} By 1846, Madam Tinubu became a prominent member of the commercial elite. She attached herself to Akintoye, the exiled king of Lagos to upgrade her political position. Thus, with her powerful economic position, she built up a faction which restored Akintoye to the throne and consolidated her power as king-maker. At his restoration in 1851, she

\textsuperscript{114}Awe, pp. 67-8.

\textsuperscript{115}Ibid., pp. 70-1.

\textsuperscript{116}Uchendu, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{117}Public Record Office (P. R. O.), “Campbell to Clarendon” cited by Falola, p. 33.
transferred her business from Badagry to Lagos, where she became the power behind the throne, a position substantially strengthened with Akintoye’s successor, Dosumu.\(^{118}\)

Tinubu appeared on the Lagos political scene in the decade of 1840 to 1850 when women had no opportunity to play appreciable roles in the sociopolitics of the town.\(^{119}\) As Iyalode, Madam Tinubu of Lagos, was said to have led several insurrections of market women of Lagos against colonists. She was relentless in her efforts to maintain women’s autonomy in commerce.\(^{120}\) However, her success and political influence was highly resented by a number of prominent Lagos chiefs who rebelled against her power. In 1956, Tinubu, known as the “terror of Lagos,” was forcibly expelled from Lagos to Egbaland by Consul Campbell.\(^{121}\)

In Egbaland, Tinubu joined forces with those who successfully organized the defense of Abeokuta against the Dahomian invasion of 1863. She stationed herself nearer the battle front where she and her associates served both as nurses to wounded soldiers and supplied the fighting soldiers with ammunition. The Egba people rewarded her ingenuity and service with the title of Iyalode.\(^{122}\) Following the war, Tinubu and her


\(^{119}\textit{Opo-Olu}, the \textit{Erelu} (traditional head of women) had been forced out of Lagos in 1836. See Yemitan, p. 34.

\(^{120}\)Acholonu, p. 47.

\(^{121}\)Public Record Office (P. R. O.), “Fraser to Malmesbury” cited by Falola, p. 33.

\(^{122}\)Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, \textit{Eminent Nigerians of the Nineteenth Century} cited by Uchendu, pp. 29-30.
associates waged a relentless battle to install Oyekan as Alake of Egbaland and on their success, she became, again, 'the power behind the throne.' To summarize, the political careers of Efunsetan and Tinubu bring into focus the salience of wealth in determining women's role in politics. Had they not been wealthy, it is unlikely that they would have played such prominent political roles.

Analysis

In post-independent Nigeria, Iyalodes to a lesser degree, are still key players in state politics. In the late 1980s, Humoani Alade, Iyalode of market women in Ibadan, successfully assisted the state government in finding a site and building a new market, thus preventing a clash over street trading. She also contributed to a number of women's causes ranging from internal market conflicts to government issues. A quiet mother-figure, Alade openly supported the Action Group in the first republic and the Unity Party of Nigeria in the second thereby combining both national with associational politics. Today, Alhaja Mogaji, a more boisterous personality and Iyalode of market women in Lagos State has emerged a major power broker in Lagos State. She has led market women in several clashes with the government and emerged relatively unscathed.

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123 Ibid., p. 31.
124 Falola, p. 33.
125 Layonu, p. 27.
Unfortunately, the traditional internal organization of market women’s associations is threatened by a traditional-modern dichotomy presented by the phenomena of the Local Government Area (LGA).\textsuperscript{126} The LGA, created by the federal government, derives legitimacy from the masses and is answerable to them. Its elected officers include: Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Councillors while appointed staff are supervisory councillors. LGAs are directly above markets and therefore coordinate and regulate the activities of market women.\textsuperscript{127} Like the colonial structure which undercut constituted female authority, the LGA appoints its own officials to oversee the running of the market thereby undermining the traditional female hierarchy. Hence, though both structures exist side by side, the overlap in responsibilities and roles creates blurred lines of authority and erodes the efficacy of political action. For example, who convenes market women when there is a grievance - the \textit{lyalode} or the local government chairperson?

Though market women’s associations are outstanding in wielding political clout from an economic base, their organizations do not carry the strength of men’s organizations.\textsuperscript{128} Besides an obvious gender bias, these associations are limited in their

\textsuperscript{126}The steady draining of traditional autonomy since colonial times has not affected women’s domain alone but has resulted in a larger problem of traditional leaders with no followers and titles without jurisdiction.


\textsuperscript{128}ECA/FAO/SIDA, “Women and Rural Institutions” cited by Snyder and Tadesse, p. 43.
effectiveness because of their isolation from mainstream development projects, lack of management training or capital capabilities, and the lack of sufficient linkages between groups.¹²⁹ Both military administrators and civilian politicians use the marketplace for propaganda and constituency building which suggests that market women are being manipulated.

For the military, the goal is to gain legitimacy to govern while political parties use the market to build machine solidarity and opposition mechanisms.¹³⁰ Some scholars suggest that women are mere pawns in the hands of these power brokers. As Nwosu argues, Nigerian women are being “used” by the ruling elite to either foster parochial interests or for propaganda purposes in national and international spheres.¹³¹ On the other hand, since politics is about influencing resource allocation, market women are justified in voting for the most promising or powerful. Or perhaps the election of women candidates reveals that market women play the politics of self-interest biased in favor of gender affiliation whereas, they vote for their kind.

Market women sometimes enlist state assistance to secure their share of the market and protect their trade in areas including: price control, licensing and restrictions, and near monopoly of internal markets. For example, market women’s associations often persuade authorities to limit permits for stalls in the market to members of the

¹²⁹April A. Gordon, p. 213.

¹³⁰Falola, p. 30.

¹³¹Nwosu, pp. 89-90.
association, and to decree that non-members or immigrants be allowed to trade only on
the outskirts while the central market is reserved for association members. On the
other hand, state interest in market women lies mainly in the collection of levies, dues,
and tolls.

However, state demands rarely meet compliance and cooperation from the
women. A common reaction is to ignore the state and disregard laws that are considered
stupid or injurious to their interests, for instance, most price control policies have failed
because market women refused to cooperate. Also, commodity rationing and hoarding is
routinely practiced in seasons of scarcity despite laws against such practices. For
example, during the oil boom preceding Udoji when demand grew faster than the
capacity of Nigerian ports and the Price Control Board to process goods, severe shortage
was experienced in the market. Traders obtained goods by keeping good contacts with
storekeepers in large firms and protected their supplies by hoarding and rationing their
sales.

132Author notes that immigrants are often restricted to certain types of
commodities or trade. Peter Bauer, West African Trade cited by Boserup, p. 94.

133Falola, p. 32.

134Wale Oyemakinde, “The Pullen Marketing Scheme: Trial in Food Price
Control, 1941-47” and Toyin Falola, “Salt is Gold: The Management of Salt Scarcity in
Nigeria During World War II” cited by Falola, p. 32.

135This period ushered in the “Cash Madam” who grew wealthy through her
contacts with top government officials who could provide access to scarce commodities
and contraband items. Eades, p. 82.
Rather than succumb to pressure, market women are known to close down their shops and bring economic activities to a halt. Sometimes, political action takes the form of an actual riot or a threatened symbolic march to the Oba or governor’s office.\(^{136}\) Usually, a government official dialogues with the protesters and a mutual agreement is reached. For example, in 1978, the Market Women’s Association at Dugbe market staged a demonstration against increase in school fees to the military governor, Brigadier David Jemibewon’ office. In this instance, the women’s action forced the government to rethink its decision.\(^{137}\) Unlike the aforementioned, the November, 1993 protest march to the House of Assembly against a proposed N50 levy, met with a belligerent administration.\(^{138}\)

On the whole, negative state-trader relations consist of minor skirmishes except during the fourth military regime from 1983 to 1984. Not only did the Muhammad Buhari administration revert to the overt policy of excluding women from participation in the political system, it launched an all-out attack against certain segments of women. Wives and mothers were accused of failing to devote time to their children thereby breeding delinquents; single women were viewed as sources of temptation to men; and

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\(^{136}\) Traditionally, the African woman could use her body for political action because it was revered as sacred. She could threaten to curse while touching her breasts or her reproductive parts. If she threatened to strip naked, government officials usually gave in. More recently, however, military governments do not give in, instead, they round up the women and jail them. Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, p. 212.


market women were labeled criminals for hoarding essential goods thereby causing scarcity and starvation and for creating congestion in urban centers. The War Against Indiscipline (WAI) program, launched by the administration gave licence to the tyrannical subjugation and abuse of market women by armed soldiers who periodically went to markets, forced wholesalers to open up their warehouses and sell their goods at lower prices and beat up innocent market women for the alleged crime of causing starvation.

It appears that factors determining the success or failure of market women’s protests include: the type of government (protests seem to work better under a civilian than a military regime), personality of the governor (pacificists tend to be more sympathetic to the women), and the gravity of the situation. Hence, the success of protests depend more on government disposition than on the manner of protest or the political power of market women. For example, during the Buhari regime when the police terrorized the marketplace, women could not protest or take their grievances to the same military government who gave the police free reign.

Outside of protest marches and riots, women attempt in various ways to improve their political-economy. Women in non-elective offices such as Madam Tinubu, Obas’ wives or mothers, and first ladies, present an interesting dynamism to the advancement of women’s issues. Prior to Maryam Babangida’s ascension to the position of first lady, the

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140 Unfortunately, retaliation was not an issue because of the callous brutality of the military structure. Ibid., p. 20.
office was non-political and the occupant was restricted to cutting tapes at opening ceremonies and greeting the first baby of the year.\textsuperscript{141} However, during her husband’s administration from 1985 to 1993, Mrs. Babangida established the BLP, NCW, and a host of other projects. She also put a lot of women on the boards of companies and other government agencies.\textsuperscript{142}

As expected, her pro-active attitude sparked controversy and provoked intense criticism. In March 1990, Gani Fawehinmi sued the first lady. In his claim, he sought an account of the public funds spent on BLP. Fawehinmi also demanded that the first couple declare their sources of funding, and proclaimed that Mrs. Babangida had no constitutional authority to implement BLP.\textsuperscript{143} Maryam Babangida’s aggressive use of the first lady’s office raises questions of whether the end justifies the means in terms of women using non-constitutional power to attain laudable ends. It also raises the issue of whether the dual-sex government of pre-colonial times can be transferred to a modern political-economy.

Indeed, if one argues that Babangida should not have appropriated government funds arbitrarily, BLP or later, NCW would not have been established. In fact, not only


\textsuperscript{142}Her patronage secured jobs which erstwhile women could only get by being girlfriends of ministers or board chairmen. Stella Ugboma cited by Ibid.

\textsuperscript{143}The case was thrown out of court, a typical practice under a dictatorial regime. Mrs. Abacha, is carrying on the tradition of pro-active first lady through her Family Support program. Ibid., p. 15.
was the financing of BLP suspect, the staff of the program consisted of non-
governmental personnel (governors wives), the modus operandi was based on
Babangida’s preferences, and the program was dependent on government benevolence
for transportation, security, and equipment. At another level, the establishment of the
women’s ministry raises the concern that it would marginalize gender issues and absolve
other ministries of their responsibility to work toward gender equity. Instead, a “total
package” would include a women’s ministry supported by gender desks in other
ministries.\footnote{144}

In leadership, the only woman in Nigerian history who successfully organized a
political party was Beatrice Adunni Oluwole of the Nigerian Commoner’s Liberal Party
(NCLP) formed in 1954.\footnote{145} The party had two aims: to oppose Nigerian independence in
1956 because Adunni believed the masses were not politically well-informed and to
defend the views of the common person.\footnote{146} Adunni was a colorful and charismatic

\footnote{144}{Amanda Kemp, Nozizwe Madlala, Asha Moodley, and Elaine Salo, “The Dawn
of a New Day: Redefining South African Feminism” in The Challenge of Local
Feminisms: Women’s Movements in Global Perspective ed. Amrita Basu with the
assistance of C. Elizabeth McGrory (Boulder, San Francisco & Oxford: Westview Press,
1995), pp. 156-7.}

\footnote{145}{The party was in existence from 1954 to 1957. See O. E. Odinamadu, “The
Role of Women in Our Community,” Lecture delivered in Awareness Forum Seminar,
cited by Uchendu, p. 47.}

\footnote{146}{In 1953, Anthony Enahoro of the Action Group moved the motion for Nigerian
independence in 1956, a motion which led to a crisis because of northerners were not
ready for self-government. See G. O. Olusanya, “Olaniwun Adunni Oluwole” in
Nigerian Women in Historical Perspective ed. Bolanle Awe (Lagos: Sankore Publishers
Ltd. and Ibadan: Bookcraft Ltd., 1992), p. 128.}
politician who played a significant role in the independence movement from 1945 when she became a public figure. A champion of workers' interests, Adunni emphasized that the commoner should be allowed to choose which form of government she preferred. She promised that her party would recognize the rights of Obas and opposed self-serving politicians.

As a party leader, Adunni was firm and successful. Her party was well-organized though it lacked adequate financial resources. Nevertheless, it won a seat in the Western Region through a male candidate. However, an analysis of Adunni's politics reveals a more ideological than pragmatic politician, though her opposition of Nigerian independence in 1956 could be deemed right on target in hindsight. While Adunni was a visionary who did not mind standing alone, like most ideologues, she failed to obtain the coveted price of election.

The question then is, had she been more pragmatic in her outlook, would she have had better success? Or did gender predetermine her lack of success in a male-dominated arena? To a large extent, we can argue that gender did predetermine Adunni's lack of widespread success because it conditioned opponents reactions, voter response, and financing. Moreover, though Adunni's party holds the record for the most successful

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147 Ibid., p. 127.

148 Adunni had eloquence, flamboyance, irrepressible energy, and a sense of the dramatic which made her very popular. Already an aberration, she adopted the habit of dressing in sackcloth and riding a white charger through town. See Ibid., p. 128.

149 Ibid., pp. 129-30.
female-led party, it was not a feminist party. In other words, it did not espouse a feminist ideology nor did it seek to champion women’s causes. In fact, the only thing particularly feminine about the party was Adunni.

More recently, women’s attempts at party formation have centered around founding women-only groups organized by Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti in 1959, and Gambo Sawaba and Laila Dogonyaro in 1978. These parties failed for the obvious reason that while women constitute 51 percent of the population, they are only about a third of the voting population and did not constitute a voting bloc. Class stratification often disrupts women’s attempts at unification particularly in voting. Other reasons for their failure include: lack of adequate financing, male territoriality and intimidation, the chaotic nature of Nigerian politics, and the excessively streamlined nature of national politics which allows only two parties to compete.

Perhaps the unequal participation of women in Nigerian government has contributed to its illegitimacy in the eyes of the public, particularly since most traditional societies had a bisexual structure of government contrary to the unisexual system instituted following colonialism. Because women form a majority of the poor, their involvement in government will help bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, the urban and the rural populace, as well as between leadership and the polity. The inclusion

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150Gambo Sawaba is a veteran politician of the colonial and First Republic who ran unopposed in Sabon Gari, Zaria in the Third Republic. She is also a political activist and very outspoken on women’s issues since the pre-independence era. See Sunday Times (December 12, 1976); Nigerian Standard (September 26, 1978); and Daily Times (October 9, 1978) cited by Mba, 1989, pp. 76-79.
of women, enhances grassroots participation in politics and de-emphasizes the top-down approach to policy making by taking cognizance of the masses. Representation in government implies that decision makers will take into consideration the impact of policies on women, their families and the nation as a whole. Women in government may ensure that short and medium term policies do not impact their communities negatively but rather, are consistent with long-term objectives of equality in the society.

Women demonstrate perhaps more starkly than other social groups, the broad strokes of sociopolitical conflict in contemporary Africa: formal or informal, official or off-the-record, manipulative, agitative, or repressive, hegemonic or escapist.\textsuperscript{151} Perhaps, their vulnerability makes them better qualified to be more equitable leaders. Several women leaders even suggest that given the opportunity, women would make better leaders.

As Titi Ajanaku, first elected woman municipal council chairperson (elected in Abeokuta, Ogun State in 1988), stated, “women in politics have a greater sense of purpose and are by far less corrupt.”\textsuperscript{152} Echoing her sentiments, Margaret Ekpo notes, “men have been there since creation and what have we got other than bad economic management, poor political strategies, and the fanning of the embers of disunity.”\textsuperscript{153} However, others are more averse to female leadership. For example, the \textit{Amirah}, leader

\textsuperscript{151}Chazan, p. 185.

\textsuperscript{152}Usen, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{153}Ibid., p. 33.
of the Federation of Muslim Women’s Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), stated, "a woman should not be at the apex; a man should always be the head."\(^{154}\)

In sum, it appears that presently, women’s "political activity" or their efforts to influence the allocation of resources and values in their communities rely too heavily on appeals to leadership and their own participation in that leadership in order to secure favorable government policies.\(^{155}\) From the foregoing, Nigerian women’s political power appears to be primarily associational or power derived from associating with powerful men. For example, the titles "power behind the throne," first lady, or "cash madam" suggest women’s association with powerful men who may be kings, presidents, or government officials but, does not confer any real authority on women. Because of the male territoriality of Nigerian politics, women have to beg permission to enter this domain and they remain within defined areas.

Invariably, those women who do get into government are no better than their male counterparts and maintain the status quo. Variables which limit women’s effectiveness in government include: a high level of tokenism which produces a diffusion of power, male-dominated patronage, relational avenues of operation, and scapegoatism. Where women have sought power for themselves, they encounter extensive backlash and

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\(^{155}\) Mba, 1982, p. vii.
very little success. And intra-gender, women's political activity reveals class, religious, and socio-cultural stratification which may be a result of a lack of feminist collective or consciousness as will be discussed in chapter three.
CHAPTER III
AFRICAN WOMEN AND FEMINIST THEORY

Theoretical Overview

As stated in the preceding chapter, Nigerian women’s political activism is sometimes constrained by their lack of a female collectivity or feminist consciousness. This chapter will focus on an analysis of the status of market women vis-a-vis feminist theory. Specifically, we will examine the various theories explaining the status of African women and test theory against the reality of market women’s political-economy. This exercise will address the second objective of this study - to test and build Africana feminist theory.

The assertion that the subordination of women is alien to Africa is common among both male and female scholars who wish to deny the need for a feminist consciousness. These scholars contend that African women do not need feminist liberation because they have never been in bondage. For example, Catherine Acholonu argues that, western presentation of the African woman as oppressed and suppressed by male-dominated cultures in which she has no rights, no respect, and a status subordinate to that of the man, is a dangerous misrepresentation of the truth and a negation of the diversity and variety of issues surrounding her status.¹ Several scholars argue that the

¹Acholonu, p. 3.
real issue is imperialistic or neocolonial exploitation while others look everywhere but at patriarchy as the cause of women’s current disadvantaged status in Africa.

However, although the current image perpetuated by the western media, of the African woman as oppressed, victimized, marginalized, derided, and overtly enslaved, is false, the reality is far from tranquil. African women do suffer subordination as women, as members of impoverished and oppressed classes in which they constitute a majority, and as neocolonial/imperialist subjects.²

Despite the dissimilitude between propaganda and reality vis-a-vis the status of African women, an outright advocacy of feminism is problematic. Firstly, “feminism” as a terminology has been so politicized that it has become sour and therefore needs re-examination from the viewpoint of several African women scholars³ Within the context of African womanhood, the terms “feminist” or “feminism” is difficult to define or assimilate. Also, slogans like “emancipation,” and “liberation,” are foreign and unacceptable because they are so vaguely and broadly used to subsume too many issues.⁴ Feminist discourse is plagued with an inability to either arrive at a consensus of opinion about what feminism is or to accept definition(s) that could serve as points of unification. Hence, without agreed upon definition(s), there is a lack of a sound foundation on which

³Nwosu, p. viii.
⁴Ibid., p. 17.
to construct theory or engage in meaningful praxis, and there is an acute lack of credibility particularly at the people’s level.\(^5\)

Most African women are reluctant to advocate feminism because they are uncertain about the meaning of the term. Like other women from exploited and oppressed racial/ethnic groups, they dismiss the term because they do not wish to be perceived as supporting a racist movement. Further, large numbers of women see feminism as synonymous with lesbianism and their homophobia leads them to dissociate from any group identified as pro-lesbianism. Yet others fear the word “feminism” because they shun identification with any political movement, especially one perceived as radical.\(^6\)

Ethnocentrism, racism, and imperialism create deep divisions between white women in the West and women elsewhere.\(^7\) As a movement, the African woman was not considered a part of feminism because of her peculiarities, circumstances, and her place in the scheme of things past, present, and future. She was excluded and indeed never fitted into the gender-stereotyping battle which made the women’s movement famous.\(^8\) Because African women of color have different cultural experiences than middle-class white women who dominate feminist organizations; it is a major concern that their


\(^6\)Ibid., p. 23.


\(^8\)Nwosu, p. 10.
peculiarities and differences should not be ignored or rendered invisible, for this would deny the reality and validity of their identity.9 Also, many of the issues of the western liberation movement are of little relevance to the average Nigerian woman.10 For example, Nigerian women have been marginalized in ways different from Western women. Whether she is engaged in cottage industry from the confines of purdah, is a farmer, or a trader, she has some degree of financial independence from her husband.11

More so, liberal feminist discourse treats issues relating to African women with a high degree of prejudice whereby analyses of African women tend to be either oversimplified or over-generalized. As Shelby Lewis complains, it is either assumed that African women are oppressed, marginal, and backward or that African women are no worse off than women everywhere and therefore do not merit special recognition.12 Favorite themes include: the “Catch up” syndrome which focuses on the ways third world women lag behind men on all measures of social activity such as education and employment. Analysts assume that if women ‘caught up’ with men on western socioeconomic indicators, they would catch up in terms of political power.13 The second

9Donovan, p. 156.


12Lewis, pp. 36-40.

theme views third world women as dominating the private sphere but does not suggest how they could transfer their influence to the public.

The last theme deals with the urgency of taking cognizance of women’s work and integrating that knowledge into future thinking and planning of national and international policy. Few would deny women’s increased presence in international development and administration. At the international level, the last few years has witnessed a remarkable recognition of women within the United Nations system starting with the Women’s year and decade. The UN approved a resolution and then an international treaty outlawing discrimination against women. The International Training and Research Institute (INSTRAW) was established along with a voluntary fund for the Decade. In addition, the inclusion of women in World Bank, IMF, UN, and other international publications became commonplace. Large international conferences were held under UN auspices, Nairobi, Copenhagen and Beijing.

For African women, several OAU states ratified their constitutions to accommodate women’s needs in accordance with the Arusha Forward-looking Strategies


for the Advancement of African Women Beyond the United Nations Decade for
Women. Still, the inclusion of women as resources in development programs was
ingstrumental and did not have a great impact on the women’s status. Thus, during the
women’s decade, only an awareness of the status of women improved while their actual
status, declined.

Finally, it is poignant to note that a feminist discourse in Africa today may have
the effect of separating African feminists from Africans who think that race and class
issues are more important than gender issues. They argue that black men and women
need to unite against white hegemony and not divide over the issue of gender
oppression. As Catherine Acholonu cautions:

African feminism must...resist the ideology of gender warfare that has been
imposed upon it by the Eurocentrics. This is an unfortunate distraction that
removes attention from the real issues at stake, namely western imperialism,
racism, apartheid, the threat of global extinction, and the progressive
exploitation of all people of color especially in the Third World.

Either African feminism is neglected in favor of nationalist struggles or it is subsumed
within the greater struggles of race or class and treated as just another issue to be given

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16 TransAfrica Forum Seminar, “Development Policy: Black Female Perspective”
cited by April A. Gordon, p. 216.

17 Black, p. 280.

18 Hema Goonatilake, “Keynote Speech” in Proceedings Asahi International

19 Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, p. 207.

20 Acholonu, p. 102.
consideration. As Sekou Toure argues: "African women cannot possibly conduct their struggle in isolation from the struggle that our people wage for African liberation, African freedom, conversely, is not effective unless it brings about the liberation of African women."

Others, openly hostile to a feminist consciousness decry feminism as a movement of bored matriarchists, frustrated tomboys, and natural temagants. African women feminists are stigmatized as ‘angry or frustrated women’ and a woman who concerns herself with the negative conditions of African women and seeks social justice for them, reveals herself as being “angry about nothing” and secretly sexually frustrated. To proponents, the liberation of African women is not simply about sexual freedom as most men and some women think and fear, but about the larger problem of the redistribution of privilege, property, and power between the rich and poor, encompassing the smaller problem of the redistribution of privilege, property, and power between men and women.

In order to address some of the negative stereotypes about African women, several scholars have undertaken historical and theoretical analysis of African

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21 It is interesting to note that the same argument was proffered during the civil rights era and it did not produce positive results for women. See A. Sekou Toure, The Role of Women in the Revolution (Harlem, NY: Black Standard Publishing Company, N.Y.), p. 3.


23 Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, p. 28.

24 Ibid., p. 36.
womanhood. Their analyses, as following, have been grouped into three approaches: tradition v. modernism, autonomy thesis, and feminism as imperialism. The tradition versus modernism approach venerates traditional African society, views Islam and colonialism as disruptive forces, and seeks to reclaim lost traditional values in modern African society. Following the same lines, the autonomy thesis argues that traditional African women had a separate spheres of dominance which is evident not only in the dual-sex hierarchies of different societies, but in the acceptance of matriarchy in others. Finally, the feminism as imperialism approach sees western feminism as a variant of imperialism which should be shunned in favor of an African ‘pro-family’ consciousness. For any one of these approaches, proponents overlap and similar viewpoints are shared in different ways.

**Tradition v. Modernism Approach**

The early works of Mary Smith (1954) on the position of women in Hausa-Fulani society and Annie Leith-Ross (1939) on the sociopolitical activities of Igbo women during the colonial era brought new perspectives to the study of African women. In addition, the edited volume on pre-colonial African women’s status by Denise Paulme (1963), began to change the image of African women as "beasts of burden" and laid the foundation for the autonomy thesis, tradition versus modernism theory, and other postulations.25

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25 Simi Afonja, "Changing Patterns of Gender Stratification in West Africa" in *Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development*, ed. Irene Tinker (New York and
Prior to the aforementioned works, early anthropologists and evolutionists believed that primitive (non-western) women stood at the lowest end of the human scale, described no better than beasts and slaves, while the Victorian lady stood at the apex.\(^{26}\)

To these scholars, the postulation of separate, complementary, non-hierarchically related domains for African women and men, was invalid. They argued that women occupied the “private domain” and men the “public domain” and that, because power and authority were vested in the public domain, women had de facto lower status than men.\(^{27}\) It is therefore the propositions of those anthropologists that the tradition versus modernism approach seeks to refute. As stated earlier, the main theses of this approach is to recover the traditional practices of African societies that elevated the status of women to positions in which they played complementary roles to their male counterparts within the context of today’s society. Proponents include: Niara Sudarkasa, Catherine Acholonu, Filomina Chioma Steady, and Oriaku Nwosu.

Tradition versus modernism approach argues that traditional African societies lived under well-established systems of co-leadership, co-rulership, and co-governance between men and women who contributed collectively and individually to the well-being

\(^{26}\)Amadimume, p. 2.

of their people.²⁸ Political power was shared equally as evident in dual-sex leadership hierarchies with parallel chieftaincies in which one line was made up of males and the other of females. It was also observed in the prevalence of sex-stratified complementary associations. In addition, female leadership was not simply a situation in which women controlled other women, but it involved multifarious issues such as gerontocracy, age grade, class or status, and sociocultural environment.²⁹

Proponents argue that, patriarchy is an inappropriate term for describing the organization of the social systems of African peoples because several African societies reflect systems with ranging degrees of dual-sex hierarchies in which men and women exist in parallel and complementary positions and roles within the society.³⁰ For example, in Yoruba and Igbo societies, women and men existed in two separate but complementary hierarchies, organizing themselves into gendered cults, clubs, associations, and age grades. Infiltration of gendered associations, by a member of the opposite sex was taboo and therefore, disallowed.³¹

Tradition versus modernism argues that the traditional African woman was emancipated, liberated, and a co-leader who had the choice to change her destiny and those of her people. She was an achiever and counselor who had clearly defined,

²⁸ Nwosu, p. 8.

²⁹ Sudarkasa, p. 33.

³⁰ Patriarchy conjures up the image of a hierarchy or ranking which implies that an egalitarian relationship has been changed to a non-egalitarian one and this is definitely not the case. See Sudarkasa, p. 36.

³¹ Acholonu, p. 6.
respected, and noble roles in society; roles that were equal or complementary to those of men.\textsuperscript{32} She never competed with any gender for power or recognition and had no one to compete with but herself.\textsuperscript{33} She knew her rights and privileges under the traditional system. She was not subject to abuse or gender-stereotyping because the system had no room for major conflicts of roles.\textsuperscript{34} Traditional African women were highly respected and never abused because to abuse an African woman meant provoking the wrath of mother earth, life-giving water, and other symbolic elements related to womanhood. Cosmologically, the woman was seen as the source of life, a peacemaker endowed with supernatural powers which could change man’s fate.\textsuperscript{35}

Thus, according to Clifford Nwagu, African women were never singled out for marginalization, subjugation, or alienation.\textsuperscript{36} They suffered undue hardship only as a result of crisis and always alongside males. As Acholonu argues, it was not only female children that were subject to child marriage. Male children, between ages five and fifteen, often became victims of early marriage to grown-up women in families where the patrilineage was in danger of extinction due to the diminishing numbers of males.\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{32}Denise Paulme, Women of Tropical Africa cited by Nwosu, p. 1.
\item \textsuperscript{33}Ibid., p. 1 & 18; Sudarkasa, p. 33.
\item \textsuperscript{34}Nwosu, p. 14.
\item \textsuperscript{35}Ibid., pp. 1-2.
\item \textsuperscript{37}Acholonu, p. 55.
\end{itemize}
In traditional African society, the dual-sex principle behind social organization was mediated by a flexible gender system within traditional language and culture. Biological sex did not always correspond to ideological gender which meant that women could play roles usually monopolized by men, or be classified as ‘males’ in terms of power and authority over others. For example, the flexibility of Igbo gender construction reveals that gender was separate from biological sex. Daughters could become sons and consequently, male. Also, daughters and women in general could be husbands to wives and consequently males in relation to their wives.³⁸ Since public roles were not rigidly masculinized or feminized, no stigma was attached to breaking gender rules. Further, gender-neutrality in language, goddess worship, and female symbolism favored the acceptance of women in statuses and roles of authority and power.³⁹

Proponents argue that the “neutrality” of gender in many African languages was possibly related to a societal de-emphasis on gender as a designation for behavior. This neutrality is evident in the absence of gendered pronouns and the interchangeableness of first names among females and males.⁴⁰ For example, Yoruba names for twins, Taiwo and Kehinde, amongst others, are gender neutral; and the only way to distinguish between an older brother and an older sister is to add the pronoun, Okunrin (male) or Obinrin (female) to the designation, Egbon (older sibling).

³⁸Amadiume, p. 15.
³⁹Ibid., p. 185.
⁴⁰Sudarkasa, p. 36.
Further, while sexual stratification was de-emphasized in most of traditional Africa, status in intergender and intragender relations was influenced by factors such as age, seniority, economic power, titles, and other achievements. For example, the sociopolitical structure of the Yoruba was largely gerontocratic rather than gender-based. As Uchendu notes, youth were trained to respect their elders and the aged. An elderly person was highly respected and she could inflict punishment on younger ones whether she had personal relationship with them or not.

In the economic sphere, more than in any other, traditionists find it easy to show that women’s activities were complementary to men’s and that female producers and traders were not subordinate to male farmers. The division of labor promoted reciprocity of effort - where men were farmers, women were traders. Also, women were able to engage in farming, fishing, cattle herding, commerce, and industrial labor such as pottery, cloth-making, and craft work, alongside men, and they had a right to keep the financial proceeds of their labor. Male and female symbols of wealth were similar, even though in some societies, women did not own land. Status was largely determined

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41 Acholonu, p. 50.
42 Uchendu, p. 19.
43 Sudarkasa, p. 35.
45 Amadiume, p. 31.
by economic power not gender. A rich, hardworking, enlightened, and outspoken woman would hardly be looked down upon by any member of society or her own immediate family. As such, rich and enterprising women are better placed on the social ladder than poor unenterprising men, without prejudice to the individual customs of African communities.46

The disruption of traditional African society is said to be a result of colonialism and to a lesser extent, Islam. Interpretations of the colonial impact of African women’s power rests on three assumptions: (a) what colonialism did for women, (b) what it did to women, and (c) what women did and do for women. The first interpretation analyzes the purported good colonialism brought to women; the second sums up and re-examines the impact of colonialism; and the third focuses on women’s responses to colonialism/imperialism and the changes they made. This includes analyses of women’s roles in anti-imperialist movements and revolutions as well as women’s efforts to improve their conditions of existence within these systems.47

Jadesola Akande argues that, the handicaps women face in their quest for empowerment and advancement owe their origins to colonialism and successors to colonial powers have reinforced them by creating more obstacles.48 The African woman

46 Acholonu, pp. 44-5.


experienced imperialism/racism in the denial of her traditional rights along with the following: (a) a denial of her otherwise prominent place in the sociopolitics of her nation; (b) relegation to complete domesticity through a withholding of opportunities for equal participation in public service; (c) denial of unhindered opportunity for education at all levels and in all disciplines; and (d) denial of participation in governance. Colonialism and modernization intensified the conflict and deepened the contradiction between women and men by weakening and destroying the more powerful and autonomous female roles while visibly improving the economic, social, and political opportunities and status of African men vis-a-vis women.

In structural terms, black women and men under conditions of domination, economic exploitation, and racial oppression, share an overall similar position of subordination in relation to the colonizers. Once colonies were established, the ascribed characteristic of race became solidified into caste distinctions - that is, opportunity and mobility were influenced primarily by race and then, by gender. Hence, within the colonial framework, whites became and remained the dominant class and others became subservient. Persons of mixed ancestry served as a buffer class between

49 For other items, see Acholonu, p. 77.

50 Some scholars contend that modernization has been a liberating force which has enhanced personal and social freedom, new possibilities of choice among various life styles, and wider opportunities for self-expression in public and private realms. The emphasis on mobility, achievement, and equality enhances possibilities of choice for women as well as men. Van Allen, p. 306; Lapidus, p. 244.

the dominant classes and indigenous persons, for example, the coloreds of east and southern Africa.52

Various conditions, including the development of private property and the market or exchange economy created conditions where female and male became increasingly defined as unitary positions that were hierarchically related to one another.53 African women became more marginalized in the production process following the introduction of cash crops and there developed, new economic arrangements between men and women and new attitudes of male social and economic superiority.54 Colonialism expanded the rights of ownership in a manner diminishing women’s effective access to land such that where customary law is still used, women’s use rights have been undermined by commercialization, competitive individualism, and geographical mobility.55

Hence, women ceased to be fully productive members of society whose status was determined by their economic productivity but became objects of conspicuous


53 Sudarkasa, p. 28.

54 Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, p. 29.

consumption, valued for expressive rather than instrumental contributions. Further, in
the international arena, the global processes of capital accumulation ensure that the
African woman, like other women, is unpaid for her labor in the reproductive, private
domain and is very poorly paid in the productive, public domain.

Colonialism also affected the legal structures of Africa through the introduction
of patriarchy which superseded the sexist tendencies of traditional African society.
Europeans imposed their own prejudices about the proper authority of men over women
by dealing only with male leaders and other males. Colonialism imposed European
forms of domestic relations where the husband was property owner, head of household,
and legal guardian of all jural minors within including his wife. Similarly, Islam
disrupted traditional societies politically and legally thereby creating new oppressed and
subjugated status and roles for women.

In addition, modernization brought about changes in the structure of the family
which have demeaned and impoverished traditional feminine roles without offering
meaningful new ones in their place. Where women once found status and authority in
mediating relationships within the extended family and where the management of
households required important economic and political skills, the breakup of the

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56Lapidus, p. 244.
58Cutrufeli, p. 205.
59Sacks, p. 9.
60Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, pp. 30-1.
traditional family has narrowed the scope of these women’s activities. On the other hand, women’s ‘new ‘pseudo-liberated’ roles create conflicts because men are not able to adapt to them, nor are they rid of old attitudes and expectations.

As a result of colonial and imperialist forces, women lost status both in public and private spheres and customs and institutions that had offered protection, turned traitor. For example, because the working class was reduced to extreme poverty, polygamy became yet another means of intensifying abhorrent economic and exploitative practices. For every woman, the threat of divorce became real because the slightest pretext was reason enough. Thus, even when a woman had been a source of joy and a faithful companion to her husband for thirty or forty years, she was in danger of being repudiated, parted from her children, or even forced to return the dowry and the value of jewels, garments, and other gifts offered to her as betrothal gifts.

Critique of Tradition v. Modernism Approach

If indeed, one argues that colonialism, modernization, and Islam were disruptive forces which created artificial barriers between the sexes, these barriers can and should be knocked down to enable men and women to return to their complementary roles which

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61 Lapidus, p. 244.


63 Toure, p. 9.

64 Author goes on to state that a dowry was meant as a symbol of friendship and union between two families linked in their descent. See Ibid., pp. 9-10.
had been traditional African legacy. However, such a return is impossible without acknowledging some of the basic faults of traditional Africa. April A. Gordon opines that the forms gender inequality take in Africa reflect indigenous pre-colonial as well as European colonial influences. That is, though European colonization undermined the sources of women's status, it also strengthened elements of indigenous male dominance or "patriarchy."\textsuperscript{65} By the time outright colonial domination of Africa began in the 1800s, African women must have already lost some autonomy. For instance, disease, warfare, and dislocations from slavery, put more pressure on women to reproduce and perform maternal functions in order to offset the population loss that was occurring.

There is also cause to question the theoretical validity of several of the assertions about traditional African women. Firstly, since in traditional African society the greater part of a woman's role is ascribed rather than achieved, we can assume that her status was affected by rules of residence as well as kinship. Sometimes, she is a person of rank and, like the Queen Mother in Asante, has special prerogatives and duties of great importance to society at large, but this happens to a select few. For the majority of women, their status was subordinate to men's. For instance, in ordinary, everyday life, there was generally a good deal of social distance between men and women and women were regarded as legal minors for the greater portion of their lives.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{65}April A. Gordon, p. 203.

\textsuperscript{66}Little, p. 6.
Secondly, though women had positions of influence and power, males typically had more formal authority positions than females, so male dominance existed. Finally these studies emphasize women’s autonomous roles in the public domain while overlooking the division of labor in biological and social reproduction and the resulting sexual stratification. For most women, power was (and still is) exercised indirectly and informally as sisters, mothers, and wives within the extended family system and was closely associated with economic wealth.

In the economic arena, emphasizing the functional complementarity between women’s and men’s work neglects to distinguish between who controls production and reproduction and who benefits from it unlike an analysis of traditional African households as a patriarchal economic unit. For example, no matter how wealthy a woman is, she could not become an Oba (King) or Balogun (war commander) in most towns or wield the highest title in many lineages. Power and reward were generally distributed by a male hierarchy, concerned with articulating its own interests. Further, biographies of powerful women in these societies reveal that they functioned in positions of authority in order to reinforce patriarchal or class interests. Tradition theory presents

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67 Afonja, p. 199.
68 April A. Gordon, p. 203.
69 Hay and Stichter, pp. ix-x.
70 Falola, p. 23.
a simplistic analysis of the role of class in determining the political-economic placement of women, excluding the impact of birth class, marriage class, and personal class (on account of polygamy and level of education or wealth acquisition).

Finally, nationalist feminism, or ‘false particularism’ in stressing differences from the west, homogenizes Africa and promotes stereotypes which ignore variations in historical experience, economic structures, cultures, and changes over time. This reaction has yielded the essentialist and historical myths of ‘the African family,’ a single ‘African culture’ or ‘African philosophy’ and ‘the Golden Age of Pre-colonial Africa.’

As Molara Ogundipe-Leslie protests:

there is no such thing as “the African woman.” She cannot be essentialised in that way; rather she has to be considered, analyzed and studied in the complexity of her existential reality; her classes, cultures, races, and ethnicities among other variables. African women are not a monolithic group of illiterate peasants sporting some twenty to thirty educated women who speak internationally and are discredited for being educated.

Female Autonomy/Power Approach

Taking off from the tradition versus modernism standpoint, autonomy thesis takes a closer look at women’s sphere of domination by exploring issues such as women exercising control over other women, female husbands, and matriarchies. Expatiating on the existence of an arena of female influence in traditional Africa, the autonomy/power thesis argues that women not only played complementary roles to men, but were leaders.

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in their own right. For instance, common to most African societies was the existence of an area of female autonomy - a sphere of life, usually centered around women's economic lives as farmers or traders - in which they governed themselves collectively, without male interference. Other areas of female autonomy include; lineage groups, gendered associations, and matriarchal units or whole societies.

The female autonomy approach contends that, women's sphere of domination - in economic, social, and political terms - was protected by various mechanisms of checks and balances and women's ability to utilize these mechanisms was an important aspect of their feminism. Throughout most of West Africa, women controlled their own worlds. For example, they had trade and craft guilds, spoke on matters of taxation and maintenance of public facilities, testified on their own behalf in court, and were consulted on most governmental affairs. Their participation in government through their spokespersons paralleled that of men through theirs.

As a person, the traditional African woman acted in seven different capacities - wife, daughter/sister, mother, queen/priestess, goddess, husband, and gendered individual. Motherhood provided the most intense and enduring power. By and large, all children born to a woman were required by tradition to hold their mother in high esteem, and in old age, to care for her. Mother was supreme and there was nothing

75 Sudarkasa, p. 34.
76 For more details, check Acholonu, p. 24; Nwosu, pp. 15-6.
beyond her except God. In fact, she was also God in physical manifestation.77 Female autonomists argue that, as a gendered individual, the adult woman belonged to the very strong association of initiated women whose societal roles the community respected. No woman was ever isolated but actively belonged to one of several groups.78 Women derived power and satisfaction from their separate roles and used women’s networks or kin groups to gain economic advantage or to ensure community survival. Also, their control over communication networks and ritual values was a source of power and influence.79

The autonomy approach offers interesting observations regarding the organization of African society and spiritual life. They argue that African societies tend to be largely patrifocal in sociopolitical organization but matrifocal in cosmology and metaphysics. While the presence of men, their roles and gender receive greater projection in society, they were viewed as figureheads of families, kindred, and village groups. On the other hand, women who were caretakers of the home, maintain positions of discreet power. Women’s inherent power, spiritual in nature, is reflected in the widespread worship of the earth and water goddesses in different parts of the continent.80 Also, some male secret societies, such as the Gelede among the Yoruba, capitalize on the reproductive power of women to affect cures for certain male-specific illnesses. Women’s procreation

77 Acholonu, p. 30.

78 Nwosu, pp. 15-6.

79 For numerous works focusing on issue, see Jaquette, p. 280.

80 Acholonu, p. 16.
abilities and their roles as healers made them awesome figures in a sex-oriented culture.\textsuperscript{81}

In addition, as part of an intricate system of checks and balances in some traditional African societies, women exercised the most effective sanction against misrule. They exerted power indirectly through withdrawal, calling on the supernatural, control over food, manipulating men, aligning with powerful men, or through collective action.\textsuperscript{82} Mothers operated at such a highly symbolic level that the very essence of female biology could be used to sanction men's behavior. For example, when a king became intolerable to his subjects, a procession of grandmothers may threaten to march naked to his palace as a sign of contempt and rejection. No ruler ever survived this final and dramatic repudiation by the mothers of his subjects hence, a threatened march was enough to bring erring and dictatorial leaders to heel.\textsuperscript{83}

More powerful than naked grandmothers are daughters of the lineage or village. They exert enormous influence on their families and societies. These daughters act in collaboration with their patrilineage men in the interests of their patrilineage. They act as a police force against lineage wives or as ritual specialists dealing with confessions of infidelity or adultery by wives, and cleansing the patrilineage of pollution and abominations.\textsuperscript{84} Among some groups, they exert such immense powers on wives that husbands report their wives to them for disciplinary action. For example, in the event of

\textsuperscript{81}Steady, 1989, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{82}Nafziger, pp. 124-5.

\textsuperscript{83}Chinweizu, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{84}Amadiume, p. 16.
death, the daughters of the lineage in Igboland descend on the widow with harsh penalties such as compelling the widow to drink water used in washing the dead husband’s body as proof of innocence.  

In Yoruba culture, daughters of the lineage are equally visible but less powerful. They comprise of a man’s female siblings and are referred to collectively as ‘husband.’ They hold rights which supersede a wife’s and could send a woman out of her matrimonial home. Hence, it can be argued that most cases of female abuse in traditional Africa were perpetrated by fellow women, whereas in their lineages women were collaborators with men and ‘preyed’ on other women.

The existence of woman-to-woman marriage in several African societies, supports a general de-emphasis on gender and an emphasis on seniority and personal standing in recruitment to positions of authority. Female husbands are first daughters, barren women, rich widows, wives of rich men, or successful female farmers and traders. The system, which actually supports patriarchy, comprises of women taking wives in order to reproduce offspring for fathers who have no male offspring or to show off their wealth. Wives of ‘women husbands’ are impregnated by whoever their

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85Nwagu, p. iii.


87Sudarkasa, p. 32.

88The African concept of female husband should not be confused with gay/lesbian relationships. See Amadume, p. 31.
husbands recommend and the ‘married’ woman is subject to her female husband and not to the man who impregnates her.89

Further, female autonomists contend that matriarchal forms of organization clearly show that there was no discrimination against women in Africa. In several African societies, matriarchy conferred upon women a paramount social and even political role that ensured that their participation in the economic, social, and cultural life was no less than men’s. In family life, every woman had full authority to care for the interests of her family and to educate her children.90 One can even say that polygamy did not call into question her equality, being at that time a social as well as an economic necessity. We should remember that in numerous African societies, where there was a matriarchy, women played leading social and political roles and in comparison to men, generally had an equal, if not superior share in social and cultural life.91 Yoruba society records several matriarchs such as Efunsetan and Tinubu (see chapter two), but because, the greater society was patriarchal, their influence was limited.

More critically, Chinweizu argues that, contrary to allegations that human societies are, and have been, patriarchies, matriarchies operate covertly behind a facade of patriarchy. Indeed, patriarchy is a facade, most soothing to the male ego, for wife rule.92 He states that if no “strictly matriarchal society” ever existed it does not imply

89Nwagu, p. iii.
90Toure, p. 4.
91Ibid., p. 9.
92Chinweizu, p. 69.
that female power does not exist. Authority is only one of the many types of power, and the wielding of authority is not necessary for the exercise of many types of power. Power without authority is neither unknown nor rare, as is recognized when it is said that someone is “the power behind the throne.” Women, he contends exercise tremendous power over men as manipulative mothers, demanding wives or concubines, or as petulant daughters.  

Critique of Female Autonomy/Power Approach

True, one finds traditional African women in different powerful positions and roles and this lends to the truth of the autonomy position but only one woman can be ‘the power behind the throne’ and not all the women in the community. Also, who is to say that this woman promotes issues concerning all women from her influential position. Contrary to claims of female superiority that female autonomists make, women as wives generally exhibit overt signs of deference to their husbands both in patrilineal and in matrilineal societies where the patterns may not be as pronounced. In other kinship roles, especially those of mother and senior consanguineal kinswomen, women are recipients of deference and the wielders of power and authority which suggests that age is a strong determinant of women’s power. In addition, the persistently low status of women in the

93 Ibid., pp. 10-1.
94 Sudarkasa, p. 31.
domestic domain and the disadvantaged position of all categories of women in spite of development, point to weakness in the autonomy thesis.\textsuperscript{95}

It can be argued that despite the historical specificity of social relations of gender, how is it that in differing socioeconomic formations, whether pre-capitalist, feudal, neo-colonial, capitalist, or socialist, so many common elements are present when the relations between men and women are examined. For instance, when the marriage bond is examined, it reveals men’s greater access to social resources - food, political positions, or land; their greater physical mobility; their lesser responsibilities in terms of self-maintenance or of care for the young and the old; their privileged position in terms of command of labor, particularly women’s labor; and their less confined sexuality.\textsuperscript{96} In addition, there are too many loopholes in the autonomy argument to justify wife battery, female circumcision (infibulation), and child bride. We find that proponents tend to play on words to justify their viewpoint for example, Toure states that an African woman ‘enjoyed full authority’ to care for her children. Here, ‘full authority’ is to be viewed as an advantage rather than a euphemism for the double work day!\textsuperscript{97}

Like traditionalists, autonomy proponents ascribe a fundamental power to African women. Both theories suggest that colonialism and western imperialism destroyed egalitarian African societies and thereby eroded women’s power and autonomy. Unlike

\textsuperscript{95}Afonja, p. 199.

\textsuperscript{96}Young, Wolkowitz, and McCullagh, p. viii.

\textsuperscript{97}Toure, p. 9.
the traditional approach, autonomy thesis confines women’s sphere of influence to their own associations and to lineage relationships. The latter does not suggest, as does the former that ancient African societies were non-hierarchical in terms of gender. Both theories overgeneralize in trying to capture all African societies within their framework and both reduce to trivia, major issues confronting women such as child care and household maintenance.

Feminism as Imperialism Approach

As stated earlier, European expansion into Africa both undermined sources of status and autonomy that women had and strengthened elements of indigenous male dominance or “patriarchy.” Through colonial imperialism, western gendered ideology and practices that promote male dominance and female dependency were superimposed on indigenous African practices such that women became subject to patriarchy. Therefore, imperialism and patriarchy are interwoven in the subjugation of African women.98 In addition, European influences transmitted through educational, political, religious, and other forms of imposed contact, spread perceptions of women as inferior, helpless, gullible, nurturing, emotional, nimble-fingered and men as superior, strong-willed, aggressive, adventuresome, and physically strong.99 Thus, alongside the theory


of Euro-American racial superiority over African/Blacks, was transmitted that of gender superiority/inferiority in African context.\textsuperscript{100}

Consequently, the feminism as imperialism approach argues that through colonialism came the concept of gender subjugation and with neocolonialism came feminism/gender warfare whereas the African woman who had no need to think of herself as being subjugated in traditional African society is now in need of feminist liberation. According to Catherine Acholonu, the notion that women are subordinate to men is the result of religious, political colonial, Western, and Arabic imperialism made possible by an organized system of miseducation to destabilize Africa.\textsuperscript{101} Hence, to understand who the African woman really is, one must be properly informed about her origin, her history, and get the truth from authentic sources. What the world has been fed in most cases is distorted and biased information garnered from uninformed, unscholarly, and mythical sources with no bearing on properly researched, documented, and historically-based scholarship.\textsuperscript{102}

According to Ifi Amadiume, it amazes African women that Western academics and feminists feel no apprehension or disrespectful trivialization at doing panoramic studies on all of Africa, or, indeed, all the Third World in one book! In contrast, African/Third World women who should know, tend to write about their particular ethnic

\textsuperscript{100}Nwagu, pp. I-ii.
\textsuperscript{101}Acholonu, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{102}Nwosu, p. 11.
group, a country or surrounding region. Also, the random citation and use of selected data which are only aspects of political, economic, and sociocultural factors, tend to be exploitative and to present a distorted picture of the conditions of Third World women. Further, Western feminists use their opinion on Third World data to make propositions for the West, as if the whole world was represented by the West, just as male anthropologists had done earlier.

In the international arena, this translates to the women’s movement defining and advocating changes within the confines of given institutions based on false conceptualization of the issues/problems. They propose reformist rather than radical policies and utilize problem-solving rather than confrontational approaches. As Jaquette notes, “while the UN women’s conferences and their mix of liberal and socialist feminists spend considerable time identifying and debating the source of women’s subordination, from male prejudice to capitalism, their solutions are limited to practical, incremental, bureaucratic reform, and women’s pressure activity.”

Implemented liberal reforms, in spite of their positive impact on women’s lives do not lead to the eradication of systems of domination. Nowhere in these demands is there an emphasis on eradicating the politics of domination, yet it would need to be

103Amadu, p. 8.

104Ibid., p. 5.

abolished if any of these demands are to be met. The lack of emphasis on domination is consistent with the liberal feminist belief that women can achieve equality with men of their class without challenging and changing the structural basis of group oppression.\textsuperscript{106}

Feminism as imperialism scholars contend that as in literature, the explosion of hi-tech news and advertising has enabled the media to project more western conceptions of womanhood on African populace. Products are increasingly marketed by exploiting female sexuality at the expense of other female attributes and women are portrayed as functions of their sexuality.\textsuperscript{107} Women’s body and beauty have never been so widely used for commercial purposes in the form of exploitative advertisements and beauty contests.\textsuperscript{108} Virtually all of the problems discussed on the women’s pages of the Nigerian media - which have embraced a depiction of western stereotyped notions of womanhood - are of little relevance to the average Nigerian woman.\textsuperscript{109}

Further, coverage of women in political life is usually limited to interviews with a few prominent women and such interviews generally focus on the question of how these women manage to play a double role - as wife and mother, and as a public figure. In response, these women invariably reply, “my husband is very understanding” omitting to

\textsuperscript{106} hooks, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{107} Obadina, p. 141.

\textsuperscript{108} Goonatilake, p. 19.

\textsuperscript{109} Author complains that the Nigerian media, especially on the women’s page of newspapers usually discuss such matters as “how to catch (or keep) a husband,” the “other woman,” or “how to be attractive to men,” - issues which perpetuate a stereotyped notion of women’s roles, and the idea that women only exist in relation to men. See Women in Nigeria, pp. 5-6.
mention the army of household servants, their relatives, and others whose support makes their “success” possible.\textsuperscript{110}

Within the feminism as imperialism approach, feminism is equated with western imperialism, thus African women who embrace western standards - of dress, career, and values, - are regarded as having been brainwashed. They are believed through ‘modernization,’ to have undergone a conscious process to block out both the good and the bad sides of African life and have replaced them with what was felt were better, more positive experiences. Unfortunately, this transformation led to a state of amnesia which eventually robbed the African woman of her birthright, her powerful role in society, and reduced her to a mere European/Oriental good and nurturing wife figure whose existence depends on her husband and his desires.\textsuperscript{111}

In addition to relinquishing her elevated position in society, the African feminist is also accused of perpetuating the ‘divide and conquer’ tactics of colonialism, only this time, along gender lines. Sijuwade Oladokun, former Oyo state commissioner for lands, housing, and survey contends that, though Nigerian women have come a long way in various spheres of life, their achievements are the source of disunity and wreckage in various homes because they have abandoned their traditional roles in search of recognition, while husbands are busy looking for money. Consequently, children are left

\textsuperscript{110}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{111}\textit{Nwosu}, p. 7.
without parental care. And a resounding ‘amen’ comes from another opponent who believes women’s campaign for gender equality is a rebellion against nature and culture.

Since feminism is presented as part and parcel of imperialism, the difficulty then, is how Africana feminists can separate their struggle or movement from the western movement without being perceived as conforming to imperialistic domination. Several pro-women scholars advocate critical thinking for African women in order to spur self-determination. They exclaim that African women should think for themselves, to take control of their lives, and be independent of external manipulation.

Critique of Feminism as Imperialism Approach

It is somewhat perplexing how critical thinking is possible outside of the interwoven influence of imperialism (race), class, gender, and other variables, on women’s lives. Further, the idea that feminism is western suggests that erstwhile, African women had been complacent and have not endeavored to struggle for gender equality or greater autonomy within their societies. Westernization/modernization did not create patriarchy and therefore cannot eradicate it. In every society, women suffer a subordinate status and the masculine form of gender is elevated more than the feminine;

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112 Akpan, p. 37.

113 Ibid., p. 37.

114 Donovan, p. 31.
a situation prevalent in pre-colonial Africa and exacerbated by foreign influence and domination. Thus, it can be assumed that women in traditional Africa struggled against patriarchy in much the same manner as women today. Finally, even if we equate feminism with imperialism in post-colonial Nigeria, market women represent the closest link to Africa’s traditional past and they are not doing better than ‘modernized’ women.

Like the preceding theories, imperialism approach focuses on an analysis of traditional African society although, it moves a step further by juxtaposing it with present day. Like the traditional approach, blame for African women’s lost status is lodged in western imperialism both past and present. Feminism as imperialism approach shares the nostalgia of the earlier approaches in seeking a return of African women’s traditional autonomy. Unfortunately, nostalgia cannot bring back lost ground or halt the progress of modernization. Finally, to submit that feminism is imperialism negates the struggles of indigenous African women who have and continue to fight patriarchal domination in their societies outside of a feminist framework. It also defeats any proposed sisterhood or solidarity between western and non-western women in spite of certain shared experiences.

**Africana Feminist Approach**

Because it is not sufficient to propose reforms which men would grant, there is a need for planning in feminist discourse. However, planning cannot begin without analysis which in this case, is a theoretical analysis of Africana feminism as a framework for understanding the existence of market women and for proposing gender egalitarian
reforms in society. As stated earlier, Africana feminism provides a useful tool for embracing the multiplicity of African women's existence, the variety of their experiences, and intra-gender differences. Because it is a multi-pronged approach, it readily accommodates variables needed to explain women's experiences. However, the extent and limitations of this framework will be examined below. We will analyze the contributions of race, class, and then gender toward explaining the reality of African's women's existence. We will then add a fourth dimension - sociocultural values - to the Africana feminist framework.

1. **Imperialism/Race**

   Race/imperialism informs us of women's current status in a marketplace governed by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) rules and imposition and perfected/implemented by a patriarchal, oppressive state. It informs us about the marginalization of African women in a capitalist system which appropriates their labor and gives little in return; a system in which women are forced to eke out a living while their cries of agony are ignored by a patriarchal state and an imperialist, capitalist system.

   In an analysis of race/imperialism, one is examining the manipulation of the state apparatus by external forces and the impact of this manipulation on women. We can examine the interaction between women and the state and the ways in which women

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respond to state repression. The concept of race, entrenched in the dynamics of neocolonialism, capitalism and imperialism, is a useful concept to explain the complexities of the structures that shape the subordination of African women.\textsuperscript{116} It uncovers third world female and male oppression to a large extent and it separates third world women from others, particularly western women.

Ogundipe-Leslie argues that, an African woman's race is important because the international economic order is divided along racial lines with the industrialized countries in the North of the North-South dialogue, notably White or approved White, like the Japanese.\textsuperscript{117} Race and racism buttress many international economic and political negotiations, policies, and programs that impact the lives of women in politically sovereign nations such as Nigeria.\textsuperscript{118}

As stated earlier, market women are impacted by the economic imperialism fueling the IFIs recommendations of SAPs for developing countries such as, Nigeria.\textsuperscript{119} Particularly if one understands the neoclassical thinking behind their recommendations, it reveals imperialist and patriarchal assumptions which invariably subjugate women.

Internally, market women are also impacted by neocolonial institutions and practices

\textsuperscript{116}Afshar, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{117}Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, p. 35.


\textsuperscript{119}The imperialist intent of SAPs and the general impact of conditionalities on women has been discussed extensively in chapter one.
which provide the infrastructure for an exploitative and oppressive state apparatus. The exploitative state, in turn, maintains a chasm between the people and the government which enables it to implement punitive economic policies with no regard for the people’s welfare.

Unfortunately, women’s resistance to autocratic policies and their fight for the redistribution of social values and resources along gender egalitarian lines are weak. In addition, powerless women’s groups are easy to ignore as is the cry for a redefinition of politics and power. The various professional women’s organizations and those which are units of political parties in Nigeria largely operate to further consolidate a system which opposes the interests of workers and peasants (men and women alike). Although there are radical reforms which can be proposed and implemented, these reforms will be resisted because they would set the stage for revolutionary transformation. Rather, society is more responsive to those “feminist” demands that are non-threatening and which sustain the status quo.\(^\text{120}\)

2. Class

Analysis of class examines divisions which manifest between the elite or state actors and the masses or non-state actors. The class variable sheds light on the international class structure wherein females and males in a peripheral country are regarded as working class whose labor should be exploited for the benefit of the core. At

\(^{120}\text{hooks, p. 21.}\)
the national level, it highlights the excessive power of a military or civilian elite over
working women. This is particularly evident in the nonchalance with which the current
Abacha administration is handling fuel scarcity, ban on imports, and the deplorable state
of trade in the country.

Further, class analysis uncovers stratification between women which might be a
result of socio-economic status - wealth, education, or birth/marriage class. It facilitates
an examination of the different class-based values and agendas within women’s
voluntary organizations. For example, class stratification is particularly evident in the
operation of elite organizations in contrast to lower class associations. The former work
principally to advance their own corporate interests and not that of women in general or
in abstraction.121 When they do work for the common good, they articulate narrow goals,
using grounds on which the institutions will be receptive. This results in building on
existing conceptions of men and women using arguments that advance the interests of
institutions and which may or may not conflict with women’s interests.

Also, their goals of more egalitarian policies are reformist, pluralist, and
incrementalist.122 For example, although the right to maternity leave was extended to
unmarried working mothers, it is without pay. Thus, a woman gets punished for having a
child outside of the recognized institution of marriage.123 While this is acceptable to elite

121 Bello, p. 27.

122 Kathleen Staudt, “Women’ Political and Capitalist Transformation in Sub-
Saharan Africa” cited by Kardam, p. 12.

123 Madunagu and Madunagu, pp. 32-3.
married women, it is not so for the unmarried but, there is too little unity and organization between the groups for them to fight together. In addition, the head of NCW, a ministry ostensibly formed to fight women’s battles, stated clearly that the ministry was not concerned with usurping authority but is asking men diplomatically, to ‘share’ power with women!  

However, like the elite, market women appear to strive only for incremental reforms concomitant with liberal feminist demands and are not actually interested in a radical restructuring of society. They protest against a new commodity tax or market levy, inability to participate in politics, or a threat against their ‘turf.’ Their protests do not yield tangible results or improve their status significantly, a situation which brings us to question how much real power women have.

Nigerian women live under the stress of a third world, neo-colonial nation ruled by an indifferent, oppressive, and wasteful bourgeoisie. However, beyond the general gender as class argument, there are real divisions amongst women. As bell hooks notes:

we cannot speak of all women as being oppressed, because to do that is to negate the reality that there is a difference in my life as a black woman intellectual who makes a good salary, who has no kids, no concrete unchosen responsibilities to anybody other than myself...and my mother, who never went to college, who never completed high school. To try to act like our social circumstance is the same would not make sense, even though we have both been victimized by men.  

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124 Akpan, p. 37.

125 Childers and hooks, p. 63.
Working class urban women insist on their right to work and tend to ignore the biological and emotional oppression they have to endure believing that men are incorrigibly polygamous and society is intractable while middle class women are preoccupied with getting affordable househelp in order to achieve their personal aspirations. Beyond the basic divisions, class for Nigerian women can be further divided into birth, marriage, and personal class.

Birth class comprises of parental status such that girls born to elite families typically have better opportunity to acquire a good education and prestigious career, though they are unlikely to achieve great political or economic power on their own. In addition, they are prime candidates for marriage to men who wield power and influence; a setup which contrasts dramatically with the modest or nonexistent prospects of their peasant or working class sisters. Birth class could change at marriage, if a woman marries a man of lower/higher social status.

However, being the wife of a rich man, or co-wife of a wealthy woman, is usually no guarantee of personal wealth; the individual woman has to be industrious and self-sufficient. Whatever she has amassed then becomes her property as well as those of her children. Whether personal or marriage, class is a major determinant of how

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127 April A. Gordon, p. 201.

128 Personal class is important in spite of marriage because in polygamous households especially, the wealth of the husband is not necessarily shared by the wife/ves. Amadiume, p. 49.
different groups of women react to different issues. For example, at a symposium organized by the Nigerian Association of University Women (NAUW) in 1974, market women of Ibadan revealed interest in problems patently different from middle-class ones. They were, in fact, contemptuous of some ‘middle-class problems,’ particularly of the resentment of polygyny.

The market women believed men could not be expected to be loyal to one woman while some claimed they needed co-wives to assist with housework. They sought younger wives to share or preferably take over, kitchen and bedroom tasks, so they could freely travel for business. In their opinion, the traditional system exists, works and is to be respected. Their only objection was the distortion of the older system of marriage whereas the older wife is relegated to the background and the younger wife would not keep her lower and deferent place within the system.

Indeed one could argue that these market women are victims of false consciousness and social brain-washing, but this would be a simplistic dismissal of a greater issue. The class system which divides society also divides women. While elite and privileged women suffer from gender-based oppression at the hands of men, they are, at the same time, in a position to exploit others, including women who work as underpaid household servants, as employees in business enterprises, or customers in the market.

129Personal Interview with Bolanle Awe cited Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, pp. 74-5.
130Ibid.
131Women in Nigeria, p. 7.
Even in pre-colonial times, women operated as members of specific classes and acted for the preservation or destruction of that system.\textsuperscript{132} Still, some women are outside the class system such as, foreign housegirls and child servants who fall outside the parameters of employment legislation and trade union organizations.\textsuperscript{133}

Consequently, while women everywhere are in need of liberation from gender stereotyped roles, male chauvinism, and patriarchal attitudes, majority of Nigerian women are in need of this and more. They need liberation from a social and economic system which exploits the labor of many for the benefit of a few. In this system, although both women and men are exploited, women suffer greater exploitation, thus they are subjected to a system of double oppression.\textsuperscript{134} Taking off from Chairman Mao’s quote about the Chinese peasant, Ogundipe-Leslie posits that, the African woman has six mountains on her back: one is oppression from outside (colonial and neocolonial), the second is from feudal traditional structures, the third is her backwardness (produced by neocolonialism), the fourth is man, the fifth is her color/race, and the sixth is herself and her tolerance for and protection of the status quo.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{132}Author recounts the histories of major empires such as Bornu, Benin, and Zaria, and how women who occupied high positions as members of the dominant classes, oppressed other women and were eventually overthrown. See Bello, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{133}These categories of women are excluded from statistical accounts of women’s work and neglected in the liberation movements. See Obadina, p. 141.

\textsuperscript{134}Women in Nigeria, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{135}Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, p. 28.
However, the aspirations and articulations of middle class women vary widely from those of market women and the challenges they face puts them miles apart and sometimes at opposite ends of issues. Thus, it is difficult to prescribe a “feminist consciousness” which will erase class differences and embrace all women. One must take into consideration class stratification and the inherent issues that divide.

3. Gender

Inter-gender analysis provides the opportunity to unearth male discrimination, patriarchal domination, and other biases against women. It allows us to analyze African women separately in order to focus more intensely on their basic issues. In addition, gender analysis facilitates an examination of female power relative to men. Chinweizu argues that if one claims that the essence of power is the ability to get what one wants, then women are far from powerless. He continues, “women do get, and always did get, what they want - be it riches, or thrones, or the head of John the Baptist, or routine exemption from hardships and risks which their menfolk are obliged to endure.”

However, because women operate by methods which differ from those available to men, it is difficult to determine their exercise of power. He goes on to state that, while male power is hard, aggressive, and boastful, female power is soft, passive, and self-

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136 He argues that, if however powerful a man is, his power is used to serve the women in his life, the notion that men are masters over women, is dubious. Because every man has as boss his wife, or his mother, or some other woman in his life, therefore, men may rule the world, but women rule the men who rule the world. See Chinweizu, pp. 11 & 22.
effacing. While male power is like a storm, full of motion, sound, and fury; female power is like the sun - steady, quiet and uncontestable. Against resistance, male power barks, commands, and pummels while female power whispers, manipulates, and erodes.\textsuperscript{137}

Firstly, it is simplistic to say women get what they want because that would imply that women desire the status quo wherein they are subordinate to men. Secondly, the definition of power as the ability to get what one wants excludes consideration of several factors such as authority, circumstances, time, and setting. For example, while it can be argued that traditionally market women had considerable power and several avenues through which they could influence laws, time has eroded such autonomy.

In today's society, they are more politically marginalized. While Tinubu or Efunsetan could have been the power behind the throne, there are very few such thrones left and power (particularly in policy making) is evenly distributed along a faceless bureaucracy or isolated within a dictatorial stronghold. We find the scenario played out whereby market women riot and invade the palaces of traditional rulers, who in today's society, have no real authority to address the grievances of these women. Consequently, having lost their traditional status, market women are limited in their ability to broker favorable trade policies.

For their professional sisters, the way to the top is paved with sacrifices beyond those of their male counterparts. Amudatu Beauty Amoda laments, "I do not think that a

\textsuperscript{137}Ibid., p. 22.
woman still being within child-bearing age should prevent her from being appointed to the same position as her male counterparts...if you find a woman rising rapidly in a profession, you will find that she is either unmarried or divorced. Unfortunately, the most successful women are either single, divorced, or separated and they share common interests and behaviors with their male counterparts. The foregoing provokes the question of how successful women can be in a patriarchal society? And how much ‘power’ can market women wield in a modern society in light of their stripped traditional autonomy?

Further, the socialization of African women, prevents us from questioning the patriarchal order, as do a lack of economic power, and the structure of the political institutions which form barriers against certain issues and interests. Even when progressive women raise objections, there are as many fundamentalists who want to maintain the status quo. In addition, the fact that certain resources are necessary for one to become a political representative, means that those who have an interest in challenging the existing distribution of resources do not have the opportunity to be elected in great numbers. Socialization is also evident in market women’s ties to the traditional structure of leadership and this situation is further confused by the fact that both

138Eze, p. 39.

139Uchendu, p. 88.

traditional and modern Africa reside side by side and affiliation to one or the other depends on whichever is more familiar. For veteran market women, the traditional is the more familiar though denigrated alternative.

Socioculturally, Nigerian women face great adversity resulting from discriminatory cultural practices and attitudes. There is a pervasive attitude of female inferiority whereas issues pertaining to women are either trivialized or vigorously attacked. For instance, when market women riot, they are often pacified by government officials and sent back to their shops without effecting any real changes in policy. Perhaps, the group that suffers most are women outside the prescribed roles of marriage and motherhood such as spinsters, divorcees, and widows. They are considered monstrosities and are often the butt of jokes, scandals, and the quarry of any passing man, married or unmarried. The unattached woman is often seen by males as an unclaimed and degenerating commodity to be freely exploited.

Within marriage, the oppression of women takes various forms. First, the woman loses status by being married because in the traditional system, which is still at the base of society, a woman as daughter or sister has greater status and more rights within her lineage than as a wife within another lineage. With marriage, she becomes a client or possession, voiceless and often rightless in her husband’s family except, in some groups,

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141 We find that market women are more attached to traditional values and attitudes; perhaps because the market structure is built on tradition, or because it is a more accessible institution than the modern one.

what accrues to her through her children.\textsuperscript{143} Further, most women live in polygamous households which enjoy constitutional validity, but deny women the legal matrimonial rights possessed by women in one-man, one-wife relationships.\textsuperscript{144} In either relationship, men do no housework or child care so women struggle on two fronts - in the home and the workplace. As a result, middle class women find that a major problem is securing adequate househelp while lower class women are limited to professions which allow on-premise child care and flexible hours for housework.\textsuperscript{145}

\textbf{Analysis - Adding a Sociocultural Variable}

From the foregoing, it is apparent that Africana feminism as a framework for theorizing the political economy of market women, requires modification. The modification suggested in this study is the inclusion of a sociocultural variable as an integral part of Africana feminist framework. The dominance of sociocultural factors such as polygamy; attachment to traditional values and practices; cultural differences in definitions of variables such as matriarchy, male/female sex, women's work; gender neutrality in language; and flexibility in gender ideology, suggest that sociocultural phenomena impact market women's lives beyond the nexus of race, class, and gender.

\textsuperscript{143}Ibid., p. 75.

\textsuperscript{144}Obadina, p. 142.

\textsuperscript{145}Particularly for middle class women, a major setback is the breakdown of traditional forms of support such as grandmothers, siblings, younger relatives, and co-wives. See Ogundipe-Leslie, 1985, p. 125.
Ifi Amadiume as well as Oriaku Nwosu suggest several questions which should be asked in any analysis of African women. These include:

1. What was woman’s political, economic, and social status within society as an authentic, traditional, African female prior to all external forces of imposed change - negative or positive? And what is her status as an African female after undergoing physical, mental, and even spiritual transformation?

2. To what extent are the customs of any particular African society indigenous or traditional? This question requires analysis of appropriate historical periods, taking into consideration, alien factors such as colonialism, islamization, racism, and imperialism.\(^{46}\)

3. What are the character and ideology of women’s urban or rural organizations today and do these work to women’s advantage or detriment?

4. To what extent are gender rules reflected in the sociopolitical organizations of the society and its cultural systems?\(^{47}\) What was the gender representation of deities and spirits in the indigenous religion?

5. What is the degree of female autonomy in household and family structures and in relations of production? What are the gender dynamics of power and authority?

6. How autonomous are women’s social, economic and political customs and activities? Is there a strong evidence of patriarchal control? Is it possible from

\(^{46}\)Nwosu, p. 12; Amadiume, pp. 191-2.

\(^{47}\)Amadiume, pp. 191-2.
oral traditional records, to date the existence or intrusion of patriarchy on the people? What is the woman’s status as a fighter for survival in the midst of deprivations: poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and discrimination?  

7. Contrast old polygynous systems with present-day monogamy from the point of view of women: constraints, mobility, supportive systems in the areas of child care, and maternity, autonomy in sexuality, and benefits.  

While some of the concerns highlighted in the preceding, could be addressed under race/imperialism, class, or gender, a better understanding can be gained from analyzing sociocultural variables as part of the nexus that analyzes the status of market women. In fact, for our population sample, socio-cultural values feature more prominently in analysis. To a large extent, Africana feminism acknowledges sociocultural variables such as, customs, marriage structure, and ideology but does not integrate them into its framework of analysis. 

The framework treats market women’s status basically as a function of western-influenced concepts of race, class, and gender. Therefore, our recommendation is to add a sociocultural component to the theory. However, the inclusion of a sociocultural variable which highlights the peculiarities of groups or subgroups of women, raises the question of whether study findings can be generalized in a manner that encompasses all women. It also raises concerns about the validity of cross-sectional research which focus

148 Nwosu, p. 12; Amadiume, pp. 192-4.

149 Amadiume, pp. 192-4.
on similarities between groups of women without acknowledging socio-cultural differences. In spite of several concerns, the socio-cultural variable adds value to Africana feminist framework in the following ways:

1. It allows us to understand the traditional underpinnings of women’s political-economy in Nigeria. It provides a forum for acknowledging the market as female turf and for analyzing market hierarchy and processes. It also sheds light on societal organization and the place of women in society. Socio-cultural analysis defines values, traditions, beliefs, outlook on life, and so on. It is fundamental when examining African women’s reality because it provides foundational material regarding their existence before the imposition of foreign/modern elements. It also provides better illumination on the interaction between historical and present reality.

2. Allows inclusion of variables not easily accommodated within a rigid feminist framework, for example, flexible definitions of gender and gendered attributes.

3. Permits an in-depth analysis of subsets of women without over-generalization of traits or patterns of existence prevalent within study group. For example, we can engage in a broader analysis of market women within their everyday reality. It is not enough to state that race/imperialism (SAPs), class (working/lower), and gender (patriarchal domination and discrimination), affects the lives of these women. For market women, the primary influence on their lives is socio-cultural and come in the form of traditions, cultural values, and beliefs. For example, the fact that the marketplace is dominated by women is in itself, of cultural relevance.
as are market association hierarchy, conduct of business, and the exercise of influence.

4. Allows researcher to gain a more balanced and authentic insight into the variables that determine women’s existence. For example, looking at the lives of Moslem women living in seclusion will be superficial at best within a framework of race, class, and gender without adding a socio-cultural dimension which will lay the foundation for understanding their existence and provide valuable insight into historical and current issues confronting them. Finally, the socio-cultural variable presents a transitional framework which diagnoses past experiences or values and utilizes it as base for present reality in order to effectively contextualize women’s lives.

Because Africana feminism appreciates African culture, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and wants of Africana women. Beyond the theory providing a framework for understanding the issues on the ground, it also presents us with a lens through which we can view the struggles of market women. Unlike other strands of feminism, Africana provides us with a useful tool to conceptualize women’s efforts to protect their turf. Arguably, market women’s issues and protests may not be readily admissible as feminist activity, nevertheless, isolating certain issues as feminist and others as not, is alienating.\(^{150}\)

\(^{150}\)Kemp et al, p. 131.
Hence, Africana feminism captures, within a feminist framework, market women’s right to work, make a profit, feed their families, and to trade in an environment conducive to profit making. As Kemp et al note about the women’s movement in South Africa, women in Nigeria have not formed a monolithic or homogenous movement. Rather, there are groups and subgroups of women throughout the country who are organizing and mobilizing their various sectors around issues that concern them. In small ways, they challenge the patriarchal state and its assumptions.151

From chapter two, we recall that the different struggles women undertook, for example, Aba women’s riot, was undertaken by groups of market women not the entire women population in eastern Nigeria. In addition, individual women who become activists against patriarchal male and female opposition, do so at individual risk. However, the lack of cohesiveness beyond the subgroup or group levels does not imply a lack of feminist consciousness. Traders are the most cohesive and readily mobilized group of Nigerian women although the dominance of LGA leadership is threatening to break their ranks. As activists, they develop fluid alliances and linkages with men and upper class women when required in order to achieve their goals. In addition, they frequently adapt their manner of protest to fit the current government administrative structure whereas they either dialogue or march as necessary.

Kemp et al emphasize that black women fighting for national liberation, the right to work in a safe environment, living wages, right to profit from their own trade, or to

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151Ibid.
clean accessible water, engage multiple systems of domination simultaneously. From this premise, we are able to analyze market women's protest activities as evidence of their feminist consciousness. Their struggles can be viewed as their attempts to prevail over patriarchal institutions that circumscribe their existence. They struggle to confront patriarchy in traditional and customary laws, an inept government administration, and economic domination in modern institutions.

In light of the foregoing, we can determine that market women's feminist consciousness goes beyond defining their reality within the confines of just being women. It involves a consciousness of their womanhood as encompassing sociocultural values, race, class, and gender. As Chandra Mohanty states:

To define feminism purely in gendered terms assumes that our consciousness of being “women” has nothing to do with race, class, nation, or sexuality, just with gender. But no one “becomes a woman” (in Simone de Beauvoir’s sense) purely because she is female. Ideologies of womanhood have as much to do with class and race as they have to do with sex.153

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152Ibid., p. 142.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS, OBSERVATIONS, AND ANALYSES

This chapter will focus on an evaluation of the questionnaire design, descriptive characteristics of the sample, and the results and observation generated from the study. Two questionnaires were administered in this study: the first to a random sample of market women and the second, to a select sample of market association heads. For the general survey, 216 general questionnaires were administered to women in five markets - Aleshinloye, Balogun, Bodija, Tejuoso, and Olufi. The sample strata cut across age, social status, education, and class (income level). Respondents were chosen by random sampling and also by their cooperation in answering questions. An attempt was made to distribute questionnaires evenly amongst the markets but due to varied responses, the resulting data distribution was 52 in Aleshinloye, 25 in Balogun, 48 in Bodija, 40 in Tejuoso, and 51 in Olufi markets.

The basic questionnaire consisted of 18 open-ended and 12 close-ended questions making a total of Thirty (see appendix 4.1). The questions covered various issues and addressed the outlined objectives of this study. Questions focused on three major areas: (1) the impact of Udoji and SAPs on women’s trade, (2) the effect of market women’s political activity on policy/decision making, and (3) proposed solutions for improving market trade. Variables measured were: utilization of credit facilities, mode of trading,
political/associational participation, level of market profit (income), and working environment/market infrastructure.

Some questions were designed along the same lines in order to verify responses and elicit more information on salient issues, for example, 18a, b, c, and 22c question the impact of SAPs on respondents trade. During the review of the survey, other questions were generated and hypotheses tested such as the correlation between education and utilization of institutional credit facilities. Questionnaires were either filled out by literate respondents or by research assistants who translated, for illiterate respondents, questions and responses from English to Yoruba and vice versa.

The second questionnaire was administered to 16 market association heads in an interview manner during which time the researcher filled out the questionnaire based on their responses. The questionnaire consisted of 12 open-ended and 6 close-ended questions (see appendix 4.2). The discussions from the interviews were infused into our findings. The main focus of this part of the survey was to collect pertinent information about the political activity of market associations and their interaction with the government.

A third instrument utilized in this study consisted of a videotape which was used to film the market locations in the survey. The tape survey was used to authenticate the findings of the questionnaire and interview surveys and to bring up situations that were omitted. All findings were verified using available secondary data, particularly a similar
study carried out in Ghana by Gracia Clark and Takyiwaa Manuh titled, “Women Traders in Ghana and the Structural Adjustment Program.”

General information

The markets surveyed in this study consisted of four urban markets in Lagos and Oyo states and one rural market, Olufi in Osun state. Both women and men of different ethnic groups, ages, and class, trade in the market selling different wares. Traders ages range from 5 year olds hawking cold water to the octogenarians who sit in the wholesale shops overseeing business. The questionnaire also captured a cross-section of women between the ages of 14 and 90. Ethnically, Ibos are more involved in trading secondhand shoes, bags, and hair pieces, while Yorubas sell baby care products, kitchenware, ankara, and adire. The few Hausas found in the market sell onions and kolanuts wholesale, and rice, potatoes, and sugar cane in wheel barrows.

Traders incomes on average range between N20 and N50,000 per day with the mean income being N1000. Only 25% of respondents shared information about their income. This might be as a result of superstitious beliefs or caution to protect themselves from robbers. Rents range from N120.00 for open stalls to N5,000.00 for lock-up shops per month. The stalls were rented on a monthly basis and were subject to reallocation while the lock-up shops were rented annually and provide some permanence. Legal street traders with makeshift tables were also charged rent on a daily/weekly basis.

\(^1\)Clark and Manuh, 1991.
Before administering the questionnaires, we assumed traders would easily and forthrightly provide information because many traders claimed to have some level of education. However, many did not respond adequately to questionnaires. Some bluntly refused or asked for tokens, while others answered questions only on the premise that the interviewer purchased some of their products. They all complained that low sales due to the apparent economic depression, harassment from local government officials, and the rains were their main reasons for being hostile or disinterested. Those who agreed to answer questions were unwilling to be specific on certain questions such as how much money they make on an average day. They were also reluctant to answer questions on the impact of political changes on them.

Many respondents were critical of local government officials who occasionally would enforce the ban on hawking and street trading. They felt, markets were better managed by the marketing board which had now been replaced by the LGAs. Many gave the impression that they would rather be doing more profitable businesses than their current ones. Interestingly, several male traders requested to be interviewed alongside the women. The men believed they could contribute to our data by sharing their views on trade and government policies, however, survey was limited to women.

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2Created by the colonial administration to generate surpluses for wartime efforts, marketing boards survived well into the post-independence period. Basically, marketing boards fix producer sale prices and rates for regional produce. They continue to regulate the sale of cash crops and to control foreign exchange earnings. However, farmers can also export their crops directly. See Rimmer, pp. 18-9 & 26-7.
Aleshinloye market, Oyo state

Aleshinloye is the newest of relocated markets in Ibadan. It was moved from Dugbe in 1990 and relocated to Iyaganku area not far from the original market. It consists of about 600 lock-up shops and twice as many open-front stalls (see appendix 4.3). The stalls and shops are numbered and well-arranged in a face-to-face manner. At survey time, only about one third of the market was occupied. Perhaps because of this, there was a lack of arrangement (by commodities) and organization (few market associations and no hierarchy). Traders placed their goods everywhere, the dominant goods being foodstuff, canned products (provision), and clothing. Although the stalls were neatly arranged, sanitary facilities had not been fully installed and several roofs leaked during rains.

The transition from Dugbe to Aleshinloye was not a smooth or even a complete one. When the Oyo state government decided to relocate Dugbe in order to reduce congestion in the center of town, many traders complied with the moving orders, some moved to other markets, but others waited until government fervor had died down before returning to their Dugbe stalls. The last group hindered the transition of customers to the new site because they could continue shopping at Dugbe without acknowledging the traders who had moved to Aleshinloye. Hence, in the new market, there was such a dearth of customers, that traders scramble for sales. Traders complained of a lack of adequate storage facilities which if provided, would ensure the safety of their products in the market place.
Balogun Market, Lagos state

Balogun market, one of the oldest in Lagos, is situated on the Island within the central business district, close to the lagoon (see appendix 4.4). It has existed for at least 25 years. The market has sprawled from its original location and does not have clearly defined boundaries. It is bounded by Ereko, Dosunmu, Idumota, and Oke Arin markets, all on the island and none with specific demarcations. Balogun market comprised of proper shops in high rise buildings, street-side shops, stalls, and mobile shelves and tables (called counters). Goods traded include: household utensils, textiles, shoes, bags, and cosmetics. Sections of the market displayed particular commodities with only a minimal presence of other commodities. Clearly defined commodity sections include: ankara, hair pieces, jewelry, adire, and underwear.

Most traders lived on the island while others came from the neighboring towns of Badagry, Akowonjo, Abeokuta, and Ikorodu to trade in Balogun. There appeared to be more street traders and hawkers who carried their products in trays, strapped to their bodies or in wheelbarrows, than actual stall or shop owners. Traders made from as little as N60.00 per day selling cold water to as much as N500,000.00 selling bales of textile. Balogun market did not specifically have an overall market head, thus the local government council retains full control. Most street shops and stalls were owned by the Lagos Island local government which also controlled parking spaces in empty office fronts, side streets, and car parks.

Rents for shops and stalls varied depending on size and the street it faced. For example, shops facing major market roads cost more than those facing side roads. Rents
ranged between N120.00 for open stalls to N5,000.00 per month for lock-up shops. The stalls were rented on a monthly basis and were subject to reallocation while lock-up shops rented annually. In August, 1996, local government officials collected a fee of N20.00 per vehicle to park and N10.00 from each public transportation vehicle that operated on market roads.

**Bodija market, Oyo state**

Like Aleshinloye, Bodija market was relocated to cater to the middle class neighborhoods of Bodija, Kongi, and University of Ibadan (see appendix 4.5). Established in 1989, it was relocated from two congested inner-city markets in order to create more market space and improve profits. Bodija consisted of about 800 shops arranged in rows of ten adjacent to each other. The stalls were small and included several lock-up shops, open-front shops, and mere counter tops or tables from where traders sold their wares, particularly foodstuff and retail items. The roads leading into the market off the Bodija-University of Ibadan dual carriage road, were un-tared, muddy, and un-motor able when it rained.

The market primarily deals in cattle and meat products and a large section of the open shops sold only meat which was butchered in particular shops and distributed wholesale to retailers around the market. Other sections include wholesale onions and kolanuts brought by Hausa traders from the north. Local foodstuff were also sold both in wholesale and in retail. Parking facilities were located within the market. Bodija
appeared crowded and dirty. The market had no electricity or adequate sanitation facilities. In addition, traders complained about the infrastructural decay.

Tejuoso Model Market, Lagos State

Tejuoso model market was established to cater for the middle class who live on Lagos mainland (see appendix 4.6). The market is situated along Ojuelegba road in Yaba. At survey time, it comprised of its original story building of about 1050 lock-up shops, a new extension, and stalls all along its walls, fence, and every available space. Most of the wholesale shops had a retail outlet in the market and their warehouses in buildings opposite the market. The main building was closed on Sundays and only the secondhand clothing and foodstuff sections were opened for loading new goods. Open-front stalls rented for N80.00 per month, while the lock-up shops cost between N2,000 and N3,500 per month. Tejuoso was congested and spreading to the streets, unto the railway tracks, and onto the parking garage. It was stratified by commodity sections although there were women who traded outside their commodity sections.

A sizeable portion of the market was allocated to textiles, garments, and linen traders, who sold jersey, cloth fabrics, ready-made clothes, bed sheets, curtain materials, and secondhand goods. Other sections showcased foodstuff, hair products, salons, and provision shops. The textile and garment sections belonged mostly to Ibos while other sections had a greater ethnic mix. The shoes and bags sections as well as secondhand clothing, were heavily dependent on imports.
An electricity generating plant, toilets, parking space, and security office were evident on site. Erstwhile controlled by the marketing board, the Lagos mainland local government council managed the shops, stalls, and parking spaces. Restrooms were leased out to managers who collected a fee for use (between N5 and N10.00) and also sold toilet roll but never had enough water. Parking within and along the market walls and streets attracted a fee of N10.00 per day. Sanitation was enforced on Thursday mornings before 10:00 a.m. as in other Lagos state markets; during which time, no trading was allowed. Following sanitation, market groups met till about noon on the same day.

**Olufi market, Osun state**

Olufi market is a periodic market which opens every fifth day, i.e Monday, Friday, Tuesday, Saturday, and Wednesday. The market, which was relocated to Odo Ona, used to be directly across from the Oba’s palace. Like other periodic markets which characterize rural settings, Olufi is part of a ring of markets in the Ayedaade local government area. Market days are held one after the other as the indigenes of the different towns and villages agree. Olufi goes first, then Obada market at Ode Omu, six kilometers from Olufi, holds the following market day. Obada is then followed by Majeroku then Araromi Owu and back to Olufi and the circle continues. Although the markets differ in size, accessibility, and facilities, similar commodities (mostly farm produce) are sold.

At survey time, Olufi was the largest market in Ayedaade local government area and consists of about 50 open stalls which are the standing structures left on site after
market day (see appendix 4.7). On market days, traders and goods were brought into town in buses from which traders set up and trade. At the close of market in the evening, they left for the next market in the ring. Commodities for sale were scattered on sacks or mats spread on bare ground. Because goods traded consisted mainly of perishable foodstuff, the market appeared dirty and rowdy. Traders were particularly impacted by increased farmgate prices and though there were many customers from villages and towns served by the ring, transactions did not generate much income.

Demographics

The first six questions focused on obtaining demographic information from respondents including: age (see table 4.1), number of dependents (table 4.2), level of education (table 4.3), distribution of goods traded (tables 4.4a & b), and number of years in trading (table 4.5).

<p>| Table 4.1 - Age Distribution |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 29</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 49</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 69</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 - Above</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The youngest trader we surveyed was 14 and the oldest, 90. The mean age group was between 30 and 49. A sizeable portion of the population was between 30 and 49 years old which implies that a significant percentage of working women were trading. It also implies that this age group had been displaced from the formal sector and/or would never
be assimilated into the formal sector because of their age disadvantage and the problems associated with training or retraining.

Table 4.2. Level of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Level of Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleshinloye</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balogun</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodija</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olufi</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tejuoso</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The level of educational distribution was particularly surprising because earlier studies described market women as illiterate with little or no education, a pattern which is no longer consistent with current evidence. This high visibility of educated women in the market is itself a product of SAPs as will be discussed in greater detail later.

Table 4.3a. Levels of Commodities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>Yams</td>
<td>Provisions/canned foods</td>
<td>Plastic products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matches</td>
<td>Cowlegs</td>
<td>Plaintain</td>
<td>Secondhand clothing</td>
<td>Shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fruits</td>
<td>Sorghum</td>
<td>Toiletries</td>
<td>Bags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>Underwear</td>
<td>Cattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crayfish</td>
<td>Baking products</td>
<td>Lace trimmings</td>
<td>Baby/children's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>Oil Palm</td>
<td>Gift items</td>
<td>clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>Local soaps</td>
<td>Hair accessories</td>
<td>Men, Women's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolanuts</td>
<td>cooked/processed food</td>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
<td>wear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fresh fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dried meat (Tinko)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adire/local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wrist-watches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interestingly, our data indicates that more educated women sold a more upscale and wider variety of goods. This is perhaps a function of better relationship with suppliers, knowing the tastes of the clientele they cater to, ability to deal with import regulations, and urban location. There was also a disparity between goods sold in urban and those sold in rural markets. In urban markets goods on sale included, processed foods, imported items, textiles, household items, and other related products while rural markets predominantly sold food items.

Table 4.3b. Distribution of Commodities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Respondents by Market</th>
<th>Distribution of Commodities traded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aleshinloye</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balogun</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodija</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olufi</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tejuoso</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across the board, we had respondents from all levels of retail trade. However, we did not make a conscious effort to evenly distribute questionnaires among the different levels.

Table 4.4. Number of Years in Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 10</td>
<td>60.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 - 20</td>
<td>21.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - Above</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The highest number of years in trade was 87, the lowest was 2 months and the mean was 10 years. Majority of traders were satisfied with their trade and only 15.9% planned to switch to more lucrative businesses. For most traders, goods traded were readily available and only a small percentage indicated they suffered seasonal scarcity.

Responses to Study Questions

Q1. What is the role of market women in the economy of their communities and the nation?

In order to establish the salience of women's trade to their families, communities, and to the country at large, information gathered focused on the number of dependents, and groups traders identified as beneficiaries of their trade. Dependents ranged from 0 to 30 with a mean range from 4 to 6 as demonstrated in table 4.5 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Dependents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 3</td>
<td>31.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 6</td>
<td>43.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 10</td>
<td>18.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - Above</td>
<td>6.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked who benefited most from their trade, 72.3% of 112 respondents, believed that the public benefited most. About 25.8% believed that their families benefited most.

3Although, we noticed that respondents tended to round up the number of years they had been trading in multiples of 5; the fact that more traders rounded up to 10 years suggests that they started trading about the time SAPs were initiated in Nigeria.
and 1.8% thought they benefited most. From this result, we infer that market women believe that they provide an immense service to society and constitute an important part of the country's distributive network. Further, women's economic power or ability to provide for themselves and dependents is indicative of the economic vitality of their communities. Therefore, the impact of economic policies on women have a reverberating effect on their dependents and communities at large.

In the open market, it is characteristic that goods and services are dictated by purchasing power at the wholesale, retail, and consumer levels. When wholesalers or retailers cannot afford to pay supplier prices, they do not receive goods and these goods are priced out of the market. Within this system, the consumer has no say in what goods are sold because her purchasing power determines what she is able to afford and not what is placed on sale in the market. Hence, the needs of majority of the masses are neglected due to their inability to translate their needs into demand via purchasing power.4 Relegated to the subsistence network, market women provide invaluable service to this group who would otherwise be cut off from the distribution of goods. Located in both urban and rural settings, markets are intricately linked to ensure the penetration of goods from the coast and urban areas to even the most remote of rural markets. Thus, market women are a crucial link in the internal distribution system of Nigeria.

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Q2a. What factors determine the status of women in the market arena:

Two of the survey questions asked how women determined whether or not to trade and how they start trading. Of our respondents, 36% reported that they started trading small scale or as apprentices and gradually moved up to more profitable levels of trade. Most women were influenced by their mothers, a fact which supports prior observation that women passed on trade to their daughters. A surprising finding is that several respondents stated that their husbands encouraged them to trade. This suggests a new dynamic in household production and an indicator of household economic hardship.

Though most Nigerian women work outside the home, the impetus to trade is usually made by the woman or in the case of inheritance, handed down to her by her mother. Hence, where the husband plays a role, he usually supports but does not determine the woman’s decision to trade. The peculiarity of this situation is made more obvious by respondents who indicated that they needed to switch their occupations to trade because of SAP-generated economic hardship. Other factors which attracted women to trade are related to culture, societal values, economics, and employment opportunities. For some women, the market is female turf and trade is a socially acceptable occupation for women. Others enter the trading sector as a way of making a living. Still others become traders because of illiteracy, lack of occupational mobility, and a lack of more lucrative avenues of employment.

5See Robertson, 1984; Eades, 1980.
Q2b. To what extent do market women utilize institutional credit particularly banks and credit unions?

An overwhelming majority of market women (85.4%) managed a sole trading arrangement wherein they made all decisions concerning their trade and single-handedly managed their financial transactions (see table 4.6). This raises some concerns because the survival of a sole trading arrangement is dependent on capital generation and the periodic infusion of funds, and is vulnerable to the vagaries of the market. It is also confined in terms of expansion or diversification. A sole trader is more susceptible to bankruptcy or downgrading her trade when the market gets tough, hence the position of these market women is deeply affected by the economic depression precipitated by SAPs.

As will be discussed later in question 3b, our data indicates that several women were forced to trade in a cheaper assortment of goods as a result of lack of capital or supplies. In a SAPs environment, soaring prices continually raise capital requirements in local currency that few traders could match. Traders struggling to survive are vulnerable to bankruptcy from minor personal or business crises they would previously have weathered with relative ease. Eventually, the capital squeeze forces middle-level traders to withdraw into less profitable operations, widening the gap between rich and poor and closing off avenues of upward mobility.6

6Clark and Manuh, p. 227.
Our data revealed that transactions were predominantly carried out on a cash and carry basis or using a combination of cash and credit (see table 4.7). Trading arrangements were supported by children and relatives who tended shops, and husbands who provided financial backing and advice. On a cash and carry basis, trade does not yield much revenue in a distressed economy because people will buy only what they can afford or need. Hence, traders of foodstuff items sell more than those who trade in luxury items. On the other hand, credit presents a high risk of nonpayment.

### Table 4.6. Trading Pattern (213 respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trading Pattern</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sole</td>
<td>85.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership (2 or more)</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When limited capital is taken into consideration, lack of institutional credit becomes a real issue. Our initial hypothesis was that better educated traders utilized institutional credit facilities more than less educated traders. However, we found that while a higher
percentage of uneducated market women (64.3%) self banked than did educated women, 46.6% of our educated respondents also self-banked. In addition, the data shows that 33.5% of uneducated traders used credit facilities while 40.2% of educated traders did. This percentages show that the margin between educated and uneducated use is only about 6% (see table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Education and Utilization of Banks and Credit Unions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Credit</th>
<th>Educated</th>
<th>Uneducated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Union</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (family, friends, etc.)</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is very disturbing that overall (both educated and uneducated traders), 52% of our respondents relied on their own funds. This situation in itself could be a product of inaccessibility of institutional credit, distrust of banks or credit unions, discrimination by credit facilities, or greater comfort/familiarity with alternative credit avenues such as market associations and family. As demonstrated in table 4.9, the major sources of credit for our sample population were: relatives, associational contributions, wholesalers, money lenders, and other traders. At the institutional level, bias against market women is evident in bank and credit union preference for land as collateral, requirement of a male guarantor, or the insistence on detailed records of transactions. In contrast, men traders do not face as many demands or restrictions when requesting loan services.

7 Osoba, p. 13.
Problems that arise from self banking include: the non-separation of personal from business accounts, lack of familiarity with banks and inability to negotiate for loans, and the limit of credit options and funds. The situation is further compounded by higher prices of supplies which increase demand for working capital in a period when the credit squeeze makes expanding capital very difficult. Thus, smaller autonomous traders either become hired agents or employees or reduce the size of their trade.  

Further, SAPs exacerbate the credit situation because the scarcity of money in circulation makes it difficult for relatives to lend to traders since they are themselves suffering from a lack of cash flow. In addition, foreign exchange is difficult to come by for traders of imported items because of devaluation, capital squeeze, and low cash flow. So, we have a vicious circle of low capital --> high prices on goods (in a bid to generate funds) --> no sales --> no capital --> no new supplies --> market stagnation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Credit</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Friends</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Association</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Banks</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Credit Union</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, &amp; 3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2, 3, &amp; 5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clark and Manuh, p. 232.
Q3a. What is the impact of Udoji on market women’s trade?

While Udoji was used as a backdrop to study the effects of SAPs on market women’s trade, only 22.7% of the respondents were trading during Udoji and recognized its impact on their trade. Of these, 59.2% stated it was beneficial to their trade by increasing sales, while 12.2% stated that it was detrimental. Another 10.2% stated that Udoji was beneficial at first then detrimental (a function of inflation which sent the prices of goods skyrocketing and demand, nosediving). In addition, as suggested in table 4.10, traders became increasingly unable to procure supplies at the higher prices.

Immediately following the Udoji increases, there was an increase in demand for goods due to the influx of money into family economies. The increase in demand in turn fueled an increase in prices, which in turn, led to a decrease in demand. As highlighted in the literature, inflation was a major component of Udoji. However, the number of respondents who supplied information on Udoji were too few to produce an adequate comparison but their responses were useful as a platform from which to springboard into an analysis of SAPs.

Table 4.10. Impact of Udoji on Market Women’s Trade (49 respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of Udoji</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boosted sales</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No effect</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced sales</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initially good, then bad</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q3b. What is the impact of SAPs on market women’s trade?

Our assumption at the beginning of this study was that the impact of economic policies such as Udoji and SAPs are not gender-neutral. However, because our sample population consisted solely of women, we were unable to make adequate comparison between women vis-a-vis men. Instead, we relied on the research of scholars, particularly the works of Diane Elson, Jean M. Due, Christina Gladwin, and Patience Elabor-Idemudia. The findings of these and other researchers have substantiated the gender-differentiated impact of SAPs. Their arguments focus on the fact that women not only bear the brunt of adjustment in their public lives but also in private. These researchers cover the impact of SAPs on women’s health, agricultural work, social lives, and community development. It is from their findings that we developed our argument in this study.

To the body of research on SAPs, this study has contributed an analysis of its impact of women in a non-regulated market arena. As stated earlier, the findings of this study were juxtaposed against the research of Clark and Manuh on Ghana. Some of the findings were similar in both studies which demonstrates the generalizability of the results however, there were also marked differences. Our assessment of the impact of SAPs was constructed in two parts: the impact of federal policies and the impact of state/local policies on women’s trade. The results were merged to create table 4.11. Concerning the impact resulting from federal policies, respondents gave four major comments: SAPs caused a decrease in sales, an increase in prices, a fluctuation in economic policies, and a ban on imports.
Table 4.11. Impact of SAPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of SAP</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduced sales (due to poor economic state, no money, lack of payment of workers' salary, devaluation of the naira)</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price increases (due to inflation, scarcity)</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluctuation in policies (due to frequent changes in leadership)</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban on imports</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive impact</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Traders complained that sometimes they came to the market and 'made no money.' Reasons they gave for such dismal sales included: the devaluation of the naira, lack of money in circulation, and non-payment of workers' salaries by the government. Arguably, the most significant impact of SAPs has come through devaluations and deregulated pricing which have brought worsening terms of trade and higher prices for both locally produced and imported items.

Several interlinking assumptions and assertions underpinned the devaluation of the naira as articulated earlier. The naira, which is central to an exchange rate-led economic recovery strategy, was devalued to curtail the huge Nigerian appetite for imports (raw materials, spare parts, machinery, and consumer goods). Industry would be encouraged to source its inputs locally and local value-added tax would be raised. Also, devaluation was expected to lead to a resurgence in agricultural produce through higher incomes for farmers. Increased agricultural production would in turn assist Nigeria to diversify its export base and reduce the country's food import bill and near total reliance...
on oil as its chief foreign exchange earner. Instead, the outcome of the naira devaluation challenge these forecasts. Devaluation created a shortage of foreign exchange which together with the ban on imports, instigated a reduction in the growth of the cottage industry and overcrowding in sectors independent of imports.

Traders attributed high prices to devaluation, directly in the case of imports or manufactures and indirectly in the case local foodstuff. They said farmers charged higher prices because of more expensive farm inputs and higher wages for workers. However, because of supplies being out of their purchasing power, many traders became agents of wealthier colleagues or moved to lower levels of trading. For example, a woman who had traded at Level 4 would switch to Level 2 or 3, which required less capital inputs.

Although the demand for imports has not reduced substantially, higher prices for goods and services and charges for social services, lower wage increases, and limited cash flow have led to lower consumption levels and a reduction in sales. In turn, because of a lack of sales and higher prices in the purchase of goods, market women placed higher prices on their goods, thereby further reducing demand and creating market stagnation. In addition, respondents stated that price increases were due to inflation and

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10Finding consistent with our study. See Clark and Manuh, p. 227.

11Ibid., p. 231.
were similar to their experiences during the *Udoji* period. They believed that federal tampering with the economy had produced a downturn.

Perhaps, the increase in prices was most keenly felt by traders who sold imported items or needed imported components for their goods. Supplies were more expensive because of devaluation which made foreign exchange more expensive to obtain, scarcity of money, and the restriction on imports. The ban on imports, intended to be an incentive for indigenous industrial growth has terminated some traders access to goods particularly those who sell imported canned goods, baby wear, and ladies and men’s wear. Because their trade is heavily dependent on the availability of imports, they were negatively impacted by the ban. On the other hand, traders who sold *adire* or local clothing materials are positively impacted by the ban and the popularity of local cloth promoted by the Better Life and Family Support programs. However, even these traders were threatened by stiff competition, rising cost of materials, and decrease in patronage.\(^{12}\) In addition, *adire* traders were faced with the continuous rise in prices of clothing and chemicals, lack of finance, and market overcrowding.

On a wider scale, market overcrowding was caused by SAPs externalities which deprived professional and para-professional women of jobs through retrenchment, and compelled housewives to join the labor force by creating a reduction in household income. The retrenchment of workers in the public and large-scale private sector without

\(^{12}\) Tie and dye trade which had erstwhile been regarded as the exclusive turf of Egb"a women, has now become commercialized due to advanced technological capacity. See Charles Coffie Gyamfi, “Hard Times: Egb"a’s Age Old Trade in Trouble,” *The Guardian*, 1996: 11.
organized "redéployment," sent large numbers of would-be traders into the market. Non-trade and small scale manufacturing sectors apparently favored by SAPs were unable to sufficiently respond with increased production or income to compensate appreciably for shrinking sectors.\textsuperscript{13}

In our study sample, out of 132 respondents who switched from other occupations to trading, 32.6\% were housewives, traders of lower level items, and farmers, 29.2\% were civil servants and teachers, while 18.9\% were students. When asked why they turned to full-time trade, 27.6\% stated, 'no market' or decreased business (particularly for those in service occupations such as tailoring), 26.4\% stated, 'no money' or low income, and 6.8\% stated job termination or retrenchment. There was also the issue of nonpayment of salaries in various segments of civil service which sometimes lasted up to 8 months! In order to verify the changing demographics of market women, we conducted an SAS analysis using education and length of years trading as variables (see table 4.12 below).\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13}Clark and Manuh, p. 232.

Table 4.12. SAS Analysis of Education v. Women’s Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Row Pct</th>
<th>Col Pct</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>10.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14.12</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>45.88</td>
<td>24.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>30.23</td>
<td>59.09</td>
<td>58.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td></td>
<td>37</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>7.18</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.51</td>
<td>24.32</td>
<td>37.84</td>
<td>24.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>20.93</td>
<td>21.21</td>
<td>25.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.15</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29.27</td>
<td>31.71</td>
<td>26.83</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>30.23</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>13.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.77</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65.63</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42.00</td>
<td>18.60</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.64</td>
<td>22.05</td>
<td>33.85</td>
<td>18.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our analysis reflected that from 10 years ago (right about when SAPs were implemented in 1987), there was an increase in educated females in the market. While this could mean that more Nigerian women became educated, the influx of these educated women into trade can only be explained as a product of a lack of better opportunities. As alluded to earlier, a greater number of women turned to trade because of low income, fewer opportunities, need for an additional family income, and retrenchment from other sectors of the economy - all conditions precipitated by SAPs.
To buttress our point, studies show that the industrial sector is characterized by decline and under-utilization of capacity particularly in import-dependent firms. Even among those firms which obtain their raw materials locally, capacity utilization is still very low in part because rigid fiscal policies associated with SAPs have drastically reduced mass purchasing power thereby creating a serious problem of industry realization.\textsuperscript{15} As producers, women were affected by job cuts and retrenchment in the public sector where they had gained a foothold and in the agrarian sector, by declining terms of trade. In addition, the reallocation of investible funds from the food crop to the export and cash crop sectors affected them negatively because they were dominant in those areas.\textsuperscript{16} For example, Olukoshi and Olukoshi in their study of the textile industry, found that women were more likely than their male counterparts, to be laid off as a result of SAP-induced cutbacks and retrenchment.\textsuperscript{17}

Socioculturally, SAPs (economic hardship) have altered the traditional structure of the market whereas there is a greater male presence in the market than any of the earlier studies on Yoruba markets, suggested.\textsuperscript{18} Table 4.13 below describes in some detail, jobs performed by men in the marketplace. Out of 167 respondents to questions

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15}Olukoshi and Olukoshi, pp. 40-1.
\item \textsuperscript{17}Their survey of 11 textile mills also found that women were more likely to be retrenched than their male counterparts. See Olukoshi and Olukoshi, p. 47.
\item \textsuperscript{18}See Little, 1973; Aronson, 1978.
\end{itemize}
concerning male-female relations, the study determined that 12.6% of women recognized men as co-traders; a fact evident in the domination of secondhand clothing trade by younger Ibo men, and cattle and onions, by Hausa men. This situation presented stiff competition for space and inadequate resources, exacerbating the inequities of the market arena. SAPs introduced uncharacteristic and excessive competition into women’s trade thereby making the environment unconducive and oppressive, however, because there are no legal alternatives, those who cannot turn to prostitution, drug trafficking or other illegal activities, stick to trade no matter how unprofitable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Roles</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suppliers/wholesalers</td>
<td>22.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customers</td>
<td>19.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transporters/loaders</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-traders/support</td>
<td>12.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (security, negotiators, leaders)</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We must remember that starting a trade requires no formal qualifications and there is no screening process. A potential trader needs to obtain some capital (the size of which will determine her trade), to purchase goods to trade, and rent space or walk around in a desired location. Thus, for illiterate women and those kicked out of the formal sector, trade presents the most viable alternative. In political-economic terms, falling demand and the influx of new traders create chaos and exacerbate the decreasing relative power of traders and other disenfranchised groups. This situation is in turn,
reflected in traders lack of bargaining power and inability to produce favorable outcomes in negotiations with the government concerning market location or taxes, and rents or levies as would be later discussed.

At the state/local government level, 51.2% of respondents viewed state/local circumstances as an extension of federal instability. They complained about fluctuation in policies due to frequent changes in leadership, inconsistency in administrative procedures, and arbitrary enforcement of actual policies. Both military regimes of Babangida and Abacha, in order to maintain a tight grip on power, frequently transfer state governors and local officials from one post to another. For market women, this lack of consistency, disrupts trade because each new set of officials come in with new policies to show their mettle. The women were unable to keep up with the changes in policy and complained about the arbitrary use of power by government officials and impostors imitating government administrators. As an association head from Olufi market noted, local government officials disrupt their trade, receive levies, rent, and other arbitrary fees without warrant. There is a lack of accountability and there are inadequate avenues to seek redress. Table 4:14 below rates the responses of seventy-three survey participants.

Table 4.14. Impact of State/Local Policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of State/Local Policies</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extension of Federal Policies</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High levies/rent</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruption in trade (e.g. caused by disbanding street traders and hawkers)</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Traders struggle to survive a barrage of fees which range from shop rent to
‘courtesy’ fees in spite of the economically depressed state of the market. On their part,
the levies and fees stem from LGAs struggling to widen their tax net and to generate
funds separate from their federal allocation which has been reduced due to the divestiture
and decentralization conditionalities of SAPs. Thus, LGAs are forced to rely on their
ingenuity to generate income in order to finance the state apparatus.

In addition, traders suffer disruption resulting from attempts made by state/local
governments to standardize market measures, procedures, and structure. New markets
are built and old ones relocated in order to modernize the market place or to better fit it
within the context of a growing city. For example, Aleshinloye was relocated from
Dugbe market as was Bodija from older interior markets. Unlike the findings of Clark
and Manuh, market women in western Nigeria were subject to greater police harassment
compounded by constant pillaging perpetrated by petty thieves and hoodlums, particularly
in Lagos markets where women had to pay off ‘area boys’ in order to conduct their trade
in peace and safety. The police, in a controversial attempt to maintain ‘order,’ harass
hawkers, street traders, and traders suspected of hoarding.

Extra levies are charged at will on all the shops, both private and government-
owned for reasons of security, sanitation, courtesy visits, and ‘settlement for area boys’
(i.e. ‘paying off’ hoodlums). These levies come at random and may be as little as N5.00
per head to as much as N500.00 per shop. Local government officials were also known
to disagree with private shop owners and landlords of office buildings within the market
over right of lease of space and how much was due to the government as taxes or
revenue. The disagreements have led to the disruption of sales and sometimes in extreme cases, to the closure of shops. Yet, the monies being levied are not easily accounted for and do not result in better transportation, safer facilities, or an improved market infrastructure.

A related question arising from our examination of SAP attempted to determine what effect government initiated programs such as the BLP and Family Support have on women’s trade. As stated earlier in chapter two, BLP was initiated by the Babangida administration presumably to boost the standard of living of rural dwellers. Its primary focus however was women farmers (or farmers turned traders). The program involved transporting rural farmers and traders from villages and towns to cities to sell their farm produce, crafts, and other goods. Since a large percentage of our sample population was urban, it was not surprising that the dominant answer to the question about the impact of these programs on their trade was, “no effect.” Interestingly though, this same answer was obtained in Olufi, our sample rural market.

Several women who indicated an increase in sales due to BLP, sold local cloth materials which became popular because it was the favored ‘uniform’ of the governors wives who ran BLP campaigns. Family Support Program, the newer successor to BLP, appears to focus more on birth control and family planning as evident from the women’s responses. Traders who recognized the program highlighted the fact that it taught women not to have more children than they could successfully raise. Thus, from our data, we find that these institutional organizations have a negligible impact on the lives of women traders as revealed in table 4.15 following.
Table 4.15. Effects of BLP and Family Support Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Better Life Program</th>
<th>Family Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No effect</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in sales</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in sales</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Control/Immunization</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q4. How does market women's political activity affect policy/decision making concerning trade?

Our initial hypothesis about participation in market associations was that uneducated market women participate more in the associations than educated women. The hypothesis tested positive in our finding that 71.6% of uneducated women participate in market associations while only 43.4% of educated women do. Overall, 86.1% respondents participate in market associations, of which 19.6% belong to religious organizations and social clubs. Out of 96 respondents who commented on what gains they derived from these associations, 43.2% received credit, 25.9% benefited from group buying, bulk purchasing, and price regulation, and 23.4% enjoyed advisement, social activities, and market sanitation.

Market associations constituted a cohesive interest group and association heads provided leadership in conflict resolution and in negotiations with the government. As demonstrated in table 4.16 below, they also played a major role in the maintenance of peace and coordination of market activities. Interviews with association heads revealed that many had interacted with the local authorities in one manner or the other but few felt
satisfied with the current state of the market. This situation of dissatisfaction is itself indicative of low bargaining power of the associations and a more recent development, the rise of a predatory state in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{19}

Table 4.16. Interviews with Heads of Market Associations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associations by Market</th>
<th>Roles played and Interaction with Government</th>
<th>Current Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aleshinloye</strong></td>
<td>Conflict resolution. Government relocated the market from Dugbe. The council chairman (Southwest local government) wanted to introduce one-way traffic which would affect trade activities in the market. He also proposed increases in shop rents. Association heads were currently negotiating to avert a likely crisis which may follow the implementation of proposed policies.</td>
<td>Infiltration of non-members into market trade, poor sanitation, bad roads and poor road network. In addition, Aleshinloye suffered poor patronage because the original Dugbe market still existed due to lack of government enforcement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iyaloja (overall head)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Sellers Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth Sellers Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Balogun</strong></td>
<td>Association gave loans, provided forum for dialogue and settlement of conflicts between traders and between traders and the government. Oke-Arin was the umbrella association and the head had to deal with fake local government staff who were making demands on traders.</td>
<td>Needed money to run the association Suffered congestion, predation by ‘area boys’ whom they had to pay off in order to ensure security, and indiscriminate collection of levies by LGA officials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olowogbowo Club Oredegbe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oke-Arin Market Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bodija</strong></td>
<td>Head received audience with government officials from time to time. Association fostered cooperation between traders.</td>
<td>Lack credit and loan facilities; market needed renovation, better roads, security, water, and sanitary facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butchers &amp; Cattle Traders Association Vegetable Oil Sellers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{19}As stated in our assumptions, women’s participation in decision making concerning resource allocation is critical to assuring access to resources particularly in Nigeria where ethnic and other divisions feature prominently in resource allocation.
Across the board, the post-independent African state, emerged as a result of popular struggle for self-determination. Thus, the general populace expected that it would play a liberating role which included not only national independence but also freeing all citizens from poverty, disease, hunger, and illiteracy. On the other hand, SAP-initiated decentralization aims at reducing government participation in socioeconomic development, an approach opposite that which gives an African state legitimation.

The resulting effects of SAPs on African state and society include: the delegitimization of the state, rampant political violence, riots, and regime turnover, severe economic dislocation and deterioration, and increased alienation of the people from the agents and agencies of the state. SAPs have intensified class contradictions and struggles, proletarianized the middle-class and further impoverished the masses; and promoted

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20 See Mengisteab, p. 163.
social decay, cynicism and uncertainty, petty crime, prostitution, armed robbery, drug-abuse and trafficking, corruption, money laundering, and the other crimes.\textsuperscript{21}

Julius Ihonvbere continues:

SAP has fostered the intensification of repression, political intolerance, and human rights abuses in the effort to convince investors that the state was "really in charge" and had popular forces under control and in the effort to force orthodox adjustment policies on the people, their organizations, and society without mechanisms for equitably redistributing power, resources, or the pains and gains of restructuring.\textsuperscript{22}

Market women are plagued by hoodlums on one hand and by a unresponsive, oppressive state on the other. At the mercy of a non-regulated market arena, they are unable to seek redress with state agencies and unable to adequately protect themselves.

\textbf{Q5.} What mechanisms can be put in place to generate growth in women’s trade?

Finally, in order to produce policy recommendations, our last question focused on what market women felt were key problem areas. These are highlighted in table 4.17.


\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 135.
Table 4.17. Problems Highlighted by Market Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Areas Highlighted</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure (improve roads, transportation, sanitation, water supply)</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy (money value, high currency bills)</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban on Imports</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (ban hawking, increase salaries, build hospitals and clinics)</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the problems highlighted, a couple of solutions readily come to mind. The government particularly at the LGA level, needs to improve market infrastructure which encompass roads, sanitation, water supply, and stall or shop management. While one could argue that market overcrowding creates unmitigated wear and tear on the infrastructure, the level of disintegration is as much a product of government disregard as it is of overcrowding. Market women contribute revenue to the economy of LGAs and states and should be considered a vital part of society during revenue allocation and not simply as an arena to over-exploit women giving little account for taxes or levies collected.

Though its income-generating capacity is severely restricted by some of the same conditions hampering the formal sector, planners take for granted, the ability of displaced workers to find minimal subsistence in the informal sector without inputting additional resources.23 Traders complained that the flood of desperate new competitors further divided limited earnings and some opined that the illegal (hawkers and street traders)

23Similar findings were recorded in Ghana. See Clark and Manuh, p. 233.
should be banned as well as those who continue to trade on the former sites of relocated markets which divert customer interests. As a result of SAPs, young Ibo men dominate secondhand clothing and others have infiltrated both gender-integrated commodities and female-dominated sections thereby creating gender tensions.\(^{24}\) Besides, market trade would become more profitable for genuine traders if other avenues of entrepreneurship opened to accommodate those trading as a result of retrenchment, privatization, decentralization of the economy, and other SAP-instigated hardship.

Too few programs, with the exception of the People's Bank, concentrate on lending money to market women who are regarded as credit risks. More importantly, the lack of money in circulation affects availability of credit and reduces non-institutional avenues for capital generation. Although a direct-intended result of SAPs is reduction in consumer demand, this has had a negative effect on women's trade particularly those more dependent on consumer income surpluses.\(^{25}\) There is also need to review the ban on imports and perhaps allow the importation of inputs to support local manufacturing and import-dependent cottage industries. The ban, which was supposed to generate a growth in the local industry has not successfully done this because of the aforementioned limited money in circulation and also an oversaturation of independent segments of the informal economy such as local cloth or \textit{adire} making.

\(^{24}\)Ibid., p. 228.

\(^{25}\)Ibid., p. 227.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It will be repetitive to elaborate in this concluding chapter, the grounds already covered in this study. Rather, we will tie lose ends, recapitulate quite briefly, the thrust of our examination, and offer suggestions. In this study, we set out to investigate the political-economy of market women in light of structural adjustment policies utilizing the Udoji salary increment awards as a backdrop. Our analysis focussed on: (1) the impact of Udoji and SAPs on women’s trade, (2) the effect of market women’s political activity on government policy/decision making, and (3) proposals for improving market trade.

Contexts examined include: trader-state relations, inter-trader or associational relations, male-female relations within the market, utilization of credit facilities, mode of trading, and market infrastructure or work environment.

In chapter one, we lay the foundation for the study. We described both the historical and current status of market women in western Nigeria where we selected four urban and one rural market. In our conceptual framework, we began groundwork for the theoretical analysis which was expanded in greater detail, in chapter three. Because this was a gendered research, special cognizance was given to women’s pro-active behavior.

The study sought, not to present women as victims of an oppressive capitalist state rather,
our presentation of market women revealed not only the economic aspects of their enterprise but the sociopolitical and cultural aspects as well.

The assumptions carried into this study were that: (1) women experienced economic policies such as *Udoji* and SAPs differently from men; (2) SAPs have had a significant impact on women’s trading activities; and (3) women’s economic status is indicative of the economic vitality of their dependents and consequently, of their communities. We found our assumptions reinforced in both the primary and secondary data. Because of women’s specific socio-cultural roles, they are impacted by economic policies both in the private and public spheres differently from men. For example, when there is scarcity in the private sphere, women are forced to conserve sources of food, energy, and livelihood.

In addition, they must seek new avenues to generate resources or to stretch available resources. Also, our findings reveal that SAPs have indeed had a significant impact on women’s trade as discussed later in this chapter. Finally, women’s economic status dictates those of their dependents and communities because they are often heads of subdivisions of households or de facto heads of households. Also, women tend to spend their earnings primarily on their families while men tend to spend theirs on a wide variety of things including their families.

In chapter two, we began an examination of Nigerian women’s political-economic activism. We discovered that trade, along with restaurants and hotels is the third largest sector of the Nigerian labor economy and the foremost employer of women. We laid the groundwork for answering the question whether or not market women were ‘in-between’
politics as argued by Judith Van Allen. If numbers signify progress, the number of women in government and the showing of women in the 1992 elections is definitely progressive. However, our findings reveal that women indeed are marginalized in the politics of today. In spite of the ‘one out of every four government officials’ rule,’ women barely operate at the local government level. At the state level, the women in politics are relegated to ‘ghetto’ ministries such as Youth, Sports, and Culture. And at the national level, they are barely represented.

Further, because of their minimal numbers, they are unwilling or unable to lobby for ‘women-friendly’ policies. At the national level, there are no women partly because of the rigidity of the military hierarchy and the impenetrable male-domination of party politics. In addition, the women’s ministry is not likely to make any profound changes in women’s day-to-day existence because it is structured with no clear cut jurisdiction, allows other ministries to shirk their responsibilities towards women, and is organized toward maintaining the status quo.

Beyond office holders, women as members of society are indeed between politics. They suffer many constraints in their political participation. Perhaps the most adversely affected group of women are farmers and market women who, removed from the traditional system, find it difficult to penetrate the modern political arena as participants or power brokers. They are often unable to wield sufficient clout to change or influence public policy in their favor. Market women have lost their traditional autonomy to a faceless state apparatus which does not adequately respond to their problems. Further,
the individual female characters who are let in, achieve honorary male status and become a part of the establishment thereby, are totally useless to the masses.

Perhaps most grievous to women's political participation is the stranglehold the military currently has on Nigerian politics; a situation which also adversely affects the feasibility of policy recommendations. Military tyranny limits participation and prohibits protests from the masses. Even the LGAs which supposedly serve the masses, are not receptive to market women's input concerning the marketplace. Rather, they are revenue-generating units of the local and state governments. In 1996, Nigeria became a "pariah state" following the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others over the Ogoni situation. It has subsequently been suspended from the Commonwealth of Nations and condemned by the international community for its human rights abuses and citizen repression. The country's status in the international arena, not only affects women traders within the country but also those outside who are stigmatized because of the nation's bad reputation. This deplorable situation reinforces the impact of the state on women's activities particularly women traders whose import-export trade is curtailed because of Nigerian reputation abroad.

Beyond the current military dictatorship, there are those that argue that the Nigerian system is inherently corrupt and therefore innately oppressive to the working class. As evidence of intractable corruption, they point to the self-aggrandizing and

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nefarious antics of both military and civilian administrations, the rate of bribery, fraud, and other 'white-collar' crimes in government, and the general state of venality in the country. As The Economist opines:

> Corruption in Nigeria is not about a few individuals who pilfer from the public purse, it is the system. The problem is neither economic nor even political, it is moral. Beyond an inflated sense of Nigeria's place in the world, there is no common concept of the precepts that hold society together, justice and equality.²

In light of the above, institutionalizing women's issues does not offer much hope nor does integrating women into politics and government. Subsequently, in order not to merely integrate women into a corrupt government administration without making any changes, there is a need to generate a feminist consciousness which cuts across class and socio-cultural lines. Women's organizations must imbue a feminist consciousness and edge that strives for a more accountable and gender egalitarian society.

Before women can reconstruct society however, we must reject the notion that obtaining power within the existing social structure will necessarily advance feminist struggle to end sexist oppression. It may allow numbers of women to gain greater access to material privilege, control over their destiny, and the destiny of others, all of which are important goals but, will not end male domination as a system.³

It is not enough to say that women should regain lost ground because it would involve asking those who have claimed the turf, to let go. Instead, there is a need to

² "Going on Down," The Economist, 339 (June 8, 1996): 47.
³ hooks, p. 90.
change the rules of the game and restructure the system to naturally accommodate both gender, all classes and socio-cultural backgrounds. Our feminist discourse must be fluid enough to accommodate the existence of all categories of women but rigid enough not to sacrifice the empowerment of any. Indeed, our conceptualization of the problem must shift focus from simply gender discrimination to embrace all the manifestations of oppressions threatening the lives of third world women. As Cheryl Johnson-Odim puts it, “in “underdeveloped” societies, it is not just a question of generation and control; not just equal opportunity between men and women, but the creation of opportunity itself; not only the position of women in society, but the position of the societies in which third world women find themselves.”

African or indeed, Nigerian feminist theory and practice must de-emphasize the rigid separation between men and women as well as empower women so that both sexes can work towards the betterment of society. Because we can argue that the fundamental issue for third world women is what the agenda of feminism is, we can define our own agenda to match our struggles to create a world in which all women are not oppressed.

Marie Angelique Sarane, president of the Association of African Women Organized for Research and Development (AAWORD), wrote:

for although the oppression of women is universal in nature…it is time to move beyond the simple truisms about the situation of women to a more


5Ibid., p. 319.
profound analysis of the mechanisms perpetrating the subordination of women in society... In the third world, women's demands have been explicitly political, with work, education, and health as major issues per se and not so linked to their specific impact on women. In addition, women of the third world perceive imperialism as the main enemy of their continents and especially of women.\(^6\)

### Summary of Findings

From our examination of the data, both primary and secondary, it is evident that market women are adversely impacted by SAPs conditionalities. Olukoshi and Olukoshi argue that:

> The crisis has resulted in the sharp decline of agricultural and industrial production, an ever-rising rate of inflation, the mass retrenchment of workers, the collapse of consumer purchasing power, a massive external debt burden, persistent balance-of-payment difficulties, chronic deficits in the annual federal budget, and the decay of physical and social infrastructure, among other consequences.\(^7\)

For market women, the economic crisis has had extremely deleterious effects on their trade. It created a vicious web of exorbitant prices of supplies, the need to place high prices on goods, no sales, and market stagnation. Traders complained about dismal sales akin to what some experienced after the initial boom of *Udoji*. Reasons for traders economic downturn include: the devaluation of the naira, lack of money in circulation, ban on imports, high maintenance fees for market space, and non-payment of workers salaries by the government which aggravated consumer buying power. In addition, mass retrenchment has brought women and men into the market who would normally not

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\(^6\)Marie Angélique Sarane cited by Ibid., pp. 319-20.

\(^7\)Olukoshi and Olukoshi, p. 39.
consider trade as an occupation. This situation in turn creates a reduction in individual sales, excessive competition for customers, and market overcrowding.

Further, the collapse of consumer buying power coupled with the reduction of money in circulation, creates a major glut in market trade. Where salaries are not paid and there is limited money exchanging hands, there are no sales. Thus, women in trade sit hours on end to make one or two sales. This situation is particularly critical in the relocated markets where consumers either are not accustomed to or cannot be bothered with traveling to a different location to purchase their needs. In addition, consumer buying in general is rigidly restricted to the purchase of necessities, thereby cutting off traders who sell luxury items.

At the micro level, the ban on imports reduces goods in circulation because it has not catalyzed a boom of small-scale manufacturing as projected. Instead, nobody makes money from imports because of the ban and less from a lack of imports particularly in sectors dependent on foreign inputs or goods for sale. The ban also created scarcity of essential drugs and goods, slowed growth in several industries, compounded unemployment, and caused severe economic dislocation. As stated earlier, although the demand for imports has not reduced appreciably, higher prices for goods and services, lower relative wages, and limited cash flow, have resulted in lower consumption levels. This, in turn has produced a reduction in sales. The combined effect of SAPs conditionalities is indeed damaging to market trade. For example, devaluation has

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8 Olukoshi and Olukoshi, p. 39; Ihonvbere, p. 134.

9 Ibid., p. 231.
created a shortage of foreign exchange, which together with the ban on imports, provoked a reduction in the growth of the cottage industry and a glut in industries independent of imports.

Coupled with economic decline, the current political instability in Nigeria has created a hostile environment for market trade. Fluctuation in leadership, inconsistent and arbitrary enforcement of policies, and police harassment have forced market women to assume a reactionary posture whereby they either ignore state policies, dialogue with government officials, or stage marches and riots in order to demonstrate their dissatisfaction. The lack of consistency in government leadership not only disrupts trade in terms of new laws being enacted, it reinforces a lack of government accountability.

Because market women do not know which official or agency should be held accountable for specific policies, they are subject to government without representation or accountability. Hence, it can be argued that SAPs have widened the distance between government and the people because it grants superordinate power to the government which the later uses to tyrannize the populace. Equally as important, the alienation of the people from the agents and agencies of the state has impoverished civil society particularly, the working class. Consequently, there is a general distance and distaste for all levels of government administration among the masses.

SAPs have entrenched the disarticulation of market women as a subset of working class women. This disarticulation is a result of an oppressive, unresponsive military dictatorship as well as the dissolution of women’s monopoly on retail trade. With more

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10Thonvbere, p. 134.
men starting to trade, they create excessive competition and de-classify market trade as women's exclusive domain. In addition, Yoruba women traders appear to have lost the autonomy ascribed to them in the marketplace, the symbolic power of trader associations, and their cohesiveness of purpose. As stated earlier, the establishment of LGA authority over women's trade has caused a marginalization of the traditional hierarchy and a dissociation from it by smaller market groups.

Therefore, attacks against SAPs have arisen not from opposition to the need for change, but from a recognition of the negative political, economic, and social contradictions and conflicts which the program has generated or accentuated. For market women, reaction to these contradictions and conflict come in the form of dialoguing with government officials, riots and marches. Increasingly, these methods, as with most reactionary activity, yield little result and there is limited avenue for recourse.

Mengisteab contends that under conditions where both the market and the state fail, the failure of the state is more detrimental than that of the market because the market's failure is primarily in terms of coordinating available resources with social needs. However, when state intervention fails, efficiency deteriorates as well as state ability to coordinate resources with social needs. For example, falling demand and the

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11Ibid., p. 136.

12Mengisteab, p. 175. In addition, capitalism informs what will happen in the market which is expected to experience slumps but, does not directly dictate what would happen to the state apparatus. Thus, while the state can salvage a slump in the economy, its ability to do so is impaired under structural adjustment which also produces a failure of state processes.
influx of new traders create chaos and exacerbate the decreasing relative power of traders and other disenfranchised groups. This situation is, in turn, reflected in traders lack of bargaining power and inability to produce favorable outcomes in negotiations with the government concerning market location, taxes, rents or levies.

Where Efunsetan and Tinubu rose to regional and national fame respectively, heads of market associations today have less 'star' power. They have become background political figures who are referred to mainly in the context of market politics. Of course, individual personality plays a role in aspiration for power. However, while the national political scene appears to have opened up to more female participation, the women able to integrate into the system are more educated, of middle or upper class background, and are more like their male counterparts. In fact, it not uncommon to find women politicians donning male attire to symbolize their sociopolitical status as males.

An indirect impact of SAPs not addressed in this study is deterioration in standard of living. As cited by Jean M. Due, Patience Elabor-Idemudia, and other researchers, expenditure cuts on social services or subsidies intensifies women’s workload, both paid and unpaid. Because of the high number of dependents market women have, they need to spend more time outside the home in income-generating activities as well as inside the home taking care of children, the sick, and elderly in order to avoid high hospital or other welfare costs. The result of such stress is that they suffer early burnout and high

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13 Due, p. 103; Elabor-Idemudia, p. 141.
morbidity and mortality rates as reported by World Health Organization (WHO) and other international agencies.

Theoretical Findings

As stated in the objectives, a segment of this analysis was devoted to theoretical inquiry which focused on theorizing the lives of market women using Africana feminism as a tool. As laid out in chapter three, our analysis revealed the need for a socio-cultural construct to be added to race, class, and gender within Africana feminism in order to make it a viable framework to discuss market women. This is particularly salient because while market women are impacted by many variables, their primary constraint is socio-cultural in nature. Therefore, in our study, the focal point of theory was the socio-cultural variable which lay the foundation to discuss market women’s reality.

The socio-cultural variable allows us to understand the traditional underpinnings of women’s political-economy in Nigeria. It provides a forum for understanding the market as female turf, for analyzing market hierarchy and processes, and for determining the impact of modernization on women’s traditional position in the market. It also sheds light on societal organization and the place of women in light of the intertwined variables of race, class, gender.

The traditional role of women in the market is supported by socio-cultural values which ascribe autonomy in the marketplace to women. Other socio-cultural variables which impact market women’s lives include: family structure (poly- or monogamous,
extended or nuclear), sociopolitical and cosmological hierarchy, and male-female relationships. Regarding the family structure, a polygamous structure is viewed as being more conducive to trade because the higher the rank of a woman, the greater the time she has to devote to her trade. In other words, a senior wife is free from domestic obligations and child rearing which become the duties of younger wives hence, she can trade extensively. In addition, sociopolitical and cosmological organization is reflected in the worship of *Aje*, the deity of the market whereby her chief priestess and traders worship her to ensure prosperity and upward mobility in trade. Also evident are the sociopolitical support systems a.k.a. market women’s associations to which women belong to enhance their trade and provide peer support for one another.

While there is an overarching patriarchal supervision of the market, it is not so obvious at eye-level as to attract critical attention. Women appear to dominate market activities and to determine the course of events. However, without viewing the situation through a feminist paradigm, it is near impossible to adequately explain the status of market women in the economy. Further, literature tends to over-emphasize the success and fame of Tinubu, Efunsetan, or Pelewura while neglecting the thousands of women traders past and present who never reach such heights.

Socio-cultural values also explain why market women do not share similar views on patriarchy, polygamy, or neocolonial imperialism with university or middle class women. While we could use class to attempt an explanation of the difference of opinion, appreciation of polygamy is better explained as a function of socio-cultural values rather than a function of class. Thus, a socio-cultural analysis within a feminist framework
provides a useful tool for theorizing the lives of women such as market women. The conclusion that subgroups of women view issues differently is of particular importance to policy makers and international NGOs who tend to diagnose problems in isolation and immediately implement policy or establish programs without taking into consideration what the target population wants. Even the perception of problem areas and solutions are subject to a target population's socio-cultural environment.

Beyond Africana feminist theory providing a framework for understanding the issues on the ground, it also gives us a lens through which we can view the struggles of market women. Understandably, their riots and dialogue would not be immediately admissible as feminist activism. However, Africana feminism provides the tool with which we can conceptualize market women's struggles to protect their turf, right to work, make a profit, feed their family, and work in an environment conducive to profit making, as feminist activity. Because Africana feminism appreciates African culture, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and wants of African women and it contextualizes the lives of African women within a feminist framework.

Policy Recommendations

As Ihonvbere notes, "there is now almost unanimous agreement among intellectuals and policy-makers in and outside the African continent that orthodox adjustment programs as devised and supervised by the IMF and the World Bank are not
Having identified the deleterious effects of SAPs, it is imperative to present policy proposals to mitigate its effects as well as improve market women's political economy:

1. Our surveys found that market trade, a major source of revenue for women with limited education has become a last-resort employer for all women and men who have been forced out or into the workforce. Because it is within the informal sector, trade has proved to be a thriving outlet for those in need of immediate employment. Unfortunately, the easy accessibility of trade as an occupation precipitated market saturation as seen in our five survey markets. Hence, the inadequacy of trade to absorb the influx needs to be addressed and measures put in place to rectify the situation. Because trade is a last resort, other avenues should be opened through investment in order to unsaturate the market.

2. In addition to effectively redeploying "SAPs traders," the government needs to invest in market infrastructure. Government neglect of trade is evident in the unorganized management of the marketplace, the unkempt appearance of most markets, and the lack of incentives for women who trade in designated market areas. Respondents complained of lack of storage and sanitary facilities, leaking roofs, bad roads, and inadequate maintenance. Association heads expressed

dissatisfaction with the state of affairs particularly in relation to their petition of state authorities and the latter’s inadequate response to problems.

There is a lack of coordinated action to take care of the market and this results in arbitrary abuse or neglect of market trade and traders. While the researcher is not advocating a return to the marketing board, the LGAs need to produce better administration or designate a government office solely to take care of market trade. This would ensure the uniformity of measures, levies, and rents and stop the arbitrary imposition of laws on women traders.

3. It is suggested that the government establish support organizations focussed on women’s empowerment. Data from responses about BLP and Family Support Services revealed that they do not reach a cross-section of women, even those for which they were ostensibly established to support. Further, even when we say women are in powerful positions, it is no guarantee that the policies they enact would be favorable to all women. Participation of the disarticulated classes is more likely to yield better results. If this is the case, market women need institutional avenues of redress, not the occasional riot or march to the governor’s office or home to air grievances or the struggle with local government officials over market regulations and autonomy.

4. Because ability to influence government policy is directly related to resource allocation in Nigeria, market women should seek membership in the labor union. The current central body is the Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC). As members of the central union, market women are assured support of other union members,
have an institutional forum to air their grievances, and receive a share of government allocation to labor unions.

5. Our data does not sustain views that market women have easy access to credit facilities in spite of federal government initiatives such as the People’s Bank. Thus, the federal government should channel resources into women’s trade and eliminate institutional bias against women borrowers.

6. Most studies on SAPs do not concentrate on the loss of sociocultural identity but our data suggests that it is an issue worthy of concern. There is a sense of lost autonomy mainly because the market has turned to a super-competitive arena where everyone scavenges for a living. Market trade needs to be treated as a legitimate sociopolitical unit of society whereby the deification of the marketplace is left intact in spite of the building of modern market structures or the unceremonious relocation of old markets. Ismail Serageldin argues that the development paradigm needs to focus on two intertwined sectors of change: promotion of a cultural identity and empowerment of the people because the absence of a viable cultural framework promotes an absence of national self-confidence and the social fragmentation of westernized elites and alienated majorities.¹⁵

Though the market has historically been women's turf, it has become an avenue to increase the marginalization and subjugation of women. It has lost its socio-cultural prominence and is fast losing its political significance as traders are being turned into faceless masses by the government bureaucracy. Hence, the government must promote social policies that will free women from degradation and depersonalization, a policy which will rehabilitate the social classes which were considered "inferior," and wipe out any discrimination and injustice.¹⁶

Finally, it is suggested that market women promote stronger linkages between their associations and encourage full participation of all traders. The linkages formed should be used to generate capital for credit, infrastructural improvement, security, and other problems they currently face as traders.

Recommendations for further study

Based on the findings of both the theoretical and analytical sections of this study, the researcher recommends the following as subjects for a follow-up study:

1. There is a need to research women's sociocultural existence both within and outside the parameters currently defined by feminist theories in order to more accurately capture the essence of women's lives. This would require a de-emphasis on the construct of gender and flexibility in assimilating new concepts into the framework. The feminist framework employed must not be too general to

¹⁶Toure, p. 15.
encompass everyone nor too specific to leave out important issues concerning the segment of women under study.

2. An in-depth analysis of avenues to diversify women’s trade as a mechanism for empowerment such as expanding avenues for internationalizing women’s trade. Issues may include: internationalizing women’s trade, expanding formal markets for example, trade in diamonds and lace, and legitimizing other forms of trade currently classified as smuggling.
APPENDIX
Appendix 1.1

Map of Western Nigeria
Appendix 2.1

Level of Women's Participation in Military Administration

Federal Executive Council
   Chairman
   Vice Chairman
Federal Executive Councillors
   Ministers of State
   State Governors
   Deputy Governors
   Commissioners (Yes)
   Judiciary (Yes)
Local Government (Yes)
   Councillors (Yes)
Appendix 2.2

Level of Women's Participation in Civilian Administration

- President
- Vice President
  - Senate
  - House of Representatives 4/475 (1979)
  - Council of Ministers 3 appointed (1979)
  - State Government
    - 2 Deputy Governors (1992?)
    - House of Assembly (Yes)
    - House of Representatives (Yes)
    - State Judiciary (Yes)
  - Local Government
    - Chair 4 (1992?)
    - Councillors (Yes)
Appendix 4:1

THE POLITICAL-ECONOMY OF WOMEN TRADERS IN WESTERN NIGERIA
GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Characteristics

1. Date __________________
2. Location and name of market __________________
3. Age (estimate) ________________
4. Educational status: Primary ______
   Secondary ______
   Tertiary ______
   No formal education ______
5. Number of dependents ________________
6. Market arrangement is according to
   a. Market associations ______
   b. Commodities for trade ______
   c. Ethnic groups ______
   d. Stall allocation ______
   e. None of the above ______
7. How long have you been trading? ________________
8. What do you sell? 1. __________________
   2. __________________
   3. __________________
   4. __________________
9. How did you start trading? __________________
10. Who influenced you to trade?
    a. Parents ______
    b. Friends ______
    c. Relations ______
    d. Husband ______
    e. Others ______
11. Your past occupation(s) |
    State reasons for change
    1. __________________ |
    2. __________________ |
    3. __________________ |
    4. __________________ |
    5. __________________ |
12. Are you planning to change your trade? ______ no, ______ yes, state to what
13. Trading Pattern
   a. Sole trading arrangement
   b. Partnership arrangement
   c. Group arrangement

14. Who benefits from your trade?

15. How readily available are the goods to you in this trade?
   a. Nearly always available
   b. Rarely available
   c. Readily available
   d. Seasonal

16. Your trade is generally not profitable
   a. Not profitable
   b. Profitable
   c. Very profitable

17. In what ways are citizens income affecting your trade?
   a. Increase in wages, more sales
   b. Inflation over the years, less sales
   c. Despite changes in income, sales constant

18. Political Changes
   a. Are you affected by changing government at National level?
      Yes/No
      How?
   b. Is your trade affected more by changes at the state level?
   c. Are changes at the local government level affecting your trade?

19. Socio-economic Issues
   a. Are you a member of any association?
   b. What is the name?
   c. Do you participate in the activities?
   d. What are the benefits you derive from this association?

20. a. Who manages your accounts? Self _______ Bank _______
      Credit Union _______ Other _______
   b. Where do you keep your earnings? Home _______ Bank _______ Credit Union _______
      Other _______

21. What are your sources of credit/loan?
   a. Family _______
   b. Friends _______
   c. Association _______
   d. Bank _______
   e. Credit Union _______

22. a. How did 1974 Udoji wage increases affect your trade?
   b. Where were you then?
c. How has SAP affected your trade?

23. a. State how the Better Life Program has helped your trade?

b. State how the Family Support Program has helped your trade?

Decisions on Market Transactions

24. Who makes decisions on your trade?
   a. Sole decision (by yourself) ______
   b. In collaboration with partner ______, # of partners ______
   c. Group ______, Number in group ______
   d. Other ______

25. Mode of selling
   a. Cash and carry ______
   b. Credit ______
   c. Sale on return ______

26. Which of the following play key roles in market transactions?
   a. State laws on street trading ______
   b. Ban on importation ______
   c. Local government edicts on levies/taxes/rent ______
   d. Market association bylaws on Union fees ______
   e. Market days ______
   f. Security ______
   g. Sanitation ______

Gender relations in the Market

27. a. What roles do men play in your market? __________________________
    b. What roles do women play? __________________________

28. Which of the following play a role/contribute to success in your trade?
   a. Relations ______
   b. Children ______
   c. Husband ______
   d. Association Members ______
   e. Market associates/customers ______
   f. Male head (Baba l’oja) ______
   g. Female head (Iya l’oja) ______
   h. Others __________________________

29. How can the market be improved upon generally?

___________________________________________
___________________________________________
___________________________________________
30. **General observations**
   a. Market environment (sanitation)
   b. Average daily income
   c. State of market transactions/patronage
   d. Market associations
### THE POLITICAL-ECONOMY OF WOMEN TRADERS IN WESTERN NIGERIA

#### SURVEY QUESTIONS (Heads of Market Associations)

**Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the name of your association?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of market and location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When was the market established?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who founded the market?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When did you become head of market women’s association?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you been trading in this market?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Political**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What have you done to improve the situation of women traders?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How good is your association’s relationship with the government?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good _____ Fair _____ Bad _____</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What special roles do you play as head of association?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you link your association with similar ones in other markets?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What has the government been doing for women traders? What more do you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>think should be done?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you rate your knowledge of market values, norms, and processes?</td>
<td>Poor _____ Fair _____ Good _____ Excellent _____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women play an important role in the politics of Nigeria: Yes _____ No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women play an important role in the economics of Nigeria: Yes _____ No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The political power of Nigerian women is directly related to their economic power: Yes _____ No _____</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the problems currently facing the market?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the problems currently facing your association?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your methods of solving the problems?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name some of the other associations in the market?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are new associations formed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4.6

Diagram of Tejuoso Market
Diagram of Olufi Market

OLUFII MARKET GBONGAN

Open Shops

Locked Shops

From Ibadan

Goat Stalls

Wooden Stands/Tables

Trading on bare ground

To Ile
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Ugwu, Emmanuel. "Let’s Be Heard." Newswatch, 1 April 1996, 15.