AFRIQUE ET DEVELOPPEMENT
AFRICA DEVELOPMENT

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Gender Revisited / Le genre revisité

AFRICA DEVELOPMENT
AFRIQUE & DEVELOPPEMENT

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Ayesha Imam

Vol. XXII, No. 1, 1997

Africa Development is the quarterly bilingual journal of CODESRIA. It is a social science journal whose major focus is on issues which are central to the development of society. Its principal objective is to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among African scholars from a variety of intellectual persuasions and various disciplines. The journal also encourages other contributors working on Africa or those undertaking comparative analysis of Third World issues.

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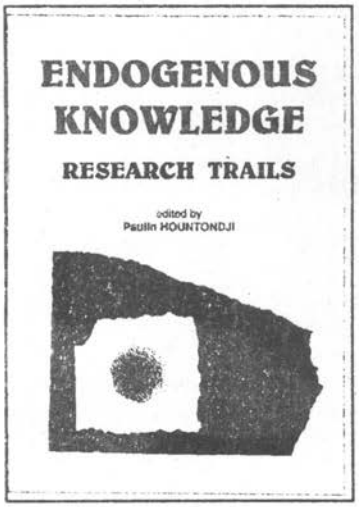

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Coordonnateur de cette étude, **Babacar Fall** est maître-assistant au département d'histoire et de géographie de l'Ecole normale supérieure de l'Université Cheikh Anta Diop. Coordonnateur du Groupe pour l'étude et l'enseignement de la population (GEEP), il dirige aussi une expérience pilote de promotion de l'éducation à la vie familiale dans les cycles moyen et secondaire des établissements sénégalais.

Auteur de nombreux articles, notamment dans le domaine du travail, de l'éducation et de la population, il est l'auteur de *Le travail forcé en Afrique occidentale française (1900 - 1946)* (Karthala, Paris, 1993).

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Introduction

Ayesha Imam*

AS IN THE FIRST SPECIAL ISSUE of *Africa Development* on gender, some of the articles included here were produced by scholars associated with CODESRIA's first Gender Institute in 1994. Others are the contributions of participants at other CODESRIA's activities such as the Governance Institute and the Academic Freedom programme. We have included all of these in this issue because they provide a picture of the range of work with CODESRIA that utilises gender analysis. While we believe that these constitute a beginning, they are presented as a promising beginning that can lead to the further development and utilisation of gender analysis and gendered studies in African social sciences.

The first paper by Sylvia Tamale and J. Oloka-Onyango is a contribution from the CODESRIA 1996 *State of Academic Freedom Report* (forthcoming). Tamale and Oloka-Onyango consider the nature and characteristics of formal structures of higher education whose myth and realities of gender parity and academic freedom in the African context they confront and expose. Their study laments the lack of comprehensive, gender-sensitive and holistic framework in which gender and academic freedom are clearly spelt out. This issue they note, is deeply rooted in the complex web of social, economic, political as well as conceptual problems. They contend that any viable solution should begin at the level of the family where education commences.

Ruth Otunga's article, on the other hand, considers access to formal schooling in Kenya by gender and the implications of this for occupational structure. Her careful empirical study demonstrates that from near gender parity at primary school level, girls' share in schooling falls to around 40 per cent at secondary level, and to under 30 per cent at tertiary level. Furthermore, it is not only that girls have fewer school places, but that the school places they occupy frequently have less resources allocated to them (as reflected in school facilities, prestige and government expenditure), as well as being restricted to certain areas of knowledge, by having fewer facilities, equipment and materials for science and technical subjects than do boys' school places. Thus, despite the government of

* WLUML - Region West Network, Lagos/Nigeria.

Kenya's commitment to equity of access to education, it is in practice both gender-blind in ignoring the specific circumstances of girls, and gender-biased in providing more and better schooling for boys than for girls.

Continuing with the theme of schooling and more broadly into intellectual endeavours generally, Christine Naré examines how it is to be an intellectual woman in Africa. She points that the division of labour by gender allocates to girls and women the everyday reproductive tasks of cooking, cleaning, and that these tasks are both less valued and biologised in ideologies about 'natural' roles. These ideologies, combined with the patriarchalism of both Christianity and Islam, as well as that of colonialists, continue to be reconstructed in the collective conscience. Thus, sexist attitudes make it difficult for girls to have access to formal education to begin with. Once in school, sexist stereotypes about females' intellectual and social inferiority to males and of suitable roles for women, combine to limit and constrain girls' potentialities. If married, women's interests are expected to be subordinated to those of their husbands. If single or divorced, they are viewed with social disapprobation.

Naré also points out that the division of labour also makes it physically difficult for girls and women to engage in intellectual pursuits. Girls and women spend much of their time and energy doing household tasks not only for themselves but also for men and boys who consequently have both more leisure and more time to engage in intellectual pursuits . Thus she calls for the creation of mechanisms that will permit women to be wife, mother and worker simultaneously, without being forced to do a double load, or, to prioritise one over the other. Further, both Naré and Otunga agree on the importance of changing sexist attitudes and prejudices in social and cultural community morés and beliefs. It is in this arena that Sophie Oluwole makes her contribution.

Oluwole compares the gender perspectives of a Yoruba world-view with a 'Western' world-view. Each, she argues, has its own particular form of sexism, which underpins social organisation. Using Yoruba oral literature, Oluwole demonstrates that despite overall male dominance, men were not considered to be necessarily superior to women. Rather there was a principle of relativity (s/he who knows this may not know that...) and context ('the norm in one place is anathema in another'). Yoruba culture recognised not only complementarity ('the axe cannot cut), but also that women may be as, or more, capable than men, including in roles associated with masculinity. Oluwole points out that there are complexities and contradictory aspects to culture, as well as that cultural world-views themselves change and are influenced by other world-views. She argues that total recuperation of the past world-views are neither alone' desirable nor possible, and agrees with Hountondji that what is necessary is a critical

evaluation of our cultural heritage. This Oluwole has done for Yoruba gender views. Hence she points out that contemporarily the conflation of biological differences into social differences should be avoided, while at the same time women can learn from past Yoruba practices — like women's organising into pressure groups against oppressive rules and governmental policies, from their participation in political governance, and from the notion of mutual respect and relativity of powers that existed.

Hajara Usman's article on reproductive rights in Nigeria also concludes that cultural contexts and notions of rights need to be carved out together. Usman focuses on the reproductive rights of Muslim Hausa women in northern Nigeria. She examines the historically generated cultural-community context of practices like women's seclusion, *gishiri* cuts (cuts to the vaginal walls), *kunya* (modesty), early marriage and so on, and how these relate to the exercise of women's reproductive rights. She also looks at how state policies affect women's reproductive health and rights via the provision (or lack of provision) of health services and population policies (including on family planning). Usman demonstrates that even the limited current statistics show that Nigerian women have poor reproductive health status in maternal morbidity and mortality, in some forms of genital mutilation, and in the prevalence of vesico-vaginal and vesico-rectal fistulae. Furthermore, women's reproductive rights are largely in abeyance due to socio-cultural attitudes and to state blindness, both of which ignore rape within marriage, fail to support women's control of their fertility (while attempting to lower population growth rates), and refuse to recognise and deal with child sexual abuse and violence against females/minors.

For Hannington Ochwada, just like Ruth Otunga, there exists a definite imbalance in gender relations in Kenya. Power relations largely favours masculinity rather than femininity. This is expressed in representation of both men and women in the decision-making process. For instance, between 1969 and 1974 women formed 0.56 and 8 per cent of the elected and nominated members of parliament respectively.

Various factors explain this situation. These include the dominant indigenous patriarchal ideology and colonial socialisation of individuals, whose effects are reproduced in contemporary social relations. Also, in this arrangement men are expected to be the breadwinners. This traditional expectation of men as household heads creates stress on men while invisibilising women, and paradoxically, reinforcing patriarchy.

In view of the above, Ochwada believes that, to enhance harmony in gender relations, it is imperative to empower women at the political and economic

levels. This, however, entails democratisation of the political system in Kenya to accommodate more women at the political decision-making level.

And still on the same track, Pat Williams takes on Politics, the State and Women as an issue of critical examination. Her thesis is that African States cannot behave in a manner different from the general characteristics of their society steeped in patriarchy and in a patrilineal stance despite the noises they make about democratising their societies. African States have not yet opened up the public sphere because it remains under the domain of the male members of the society. Meanwhile, African States give the impression that they are democratising the society while the men continue to control the political spaces into which women cannot always venture. For as long as this contradiction remains, so long would democracy remain an illusion in Africa or anywhere else this deceit is practiced and/or perpetuated.

Introduction

Ayesha Imam*

COMME DANS LE PREMIER NUMERO SPECIAL *d'Afrique et Développement* sur le genre, certains des articles contenus dans ce numéro ont été produits par des chercheurs ayant participé à l'Institut sur le genre du CODESRIA de 1994. Les autres sont des contributions de participants à d'autres activités du CODESRIA, comme l'Institut sur la gouvernance démocratique et le Programme sur la liberté académique. Nous avons inclus toutes ces contributions dans le présent numéro, car elles donnent une image de tout le travail effectué au CODESRIA qui fait appel à l'analyse de genre. Nous pensons que ces articles constituent un début prometteur, qui peut déboucher sur le développement et l'utilisation de l'analyse de genre et d'études en sciences sociales en Afrique qui tiennent compte du genre.

Le premier article est de Sylvia Tamale et de J. Oloka-Onyango. C'est une contribution tirée du Rapport sur les *Libertés intellectuelles en Afrique* (qui va bientôt paraître). Tamale et Oloka-Onyango examinent la nature et les caractéristiques des structures formelles de l'enseignement supérieur, en exposant le mythe et les réalités de la parité de genre et des libertés intellectuelles dans le contexte africain. Leur étude déplore l'absence d'un cadre d'ensemble sensible aux rapports sociaux de sexe, et holiste dans lequel seraient clairement définis le genre et les libertés intellectuelles. Cette question, font-ils remarquer, est profondément ancrée dans le tissu complexe des problèmes sociaux, économiques, politiques mais aussi conceptuels. Ils soutiennent que toute solution viable doit prendre comme point de départ, la famille, là où commence l'éducation.

D'autre part, l'article de Ruth Otunga examine l'accès à l'éducation formelle au Kenya selon le sexe et les implications qui en découlent pour la structure professionnelle. Son étude empirique qui est bien fouillée, démontre que de la parité de genre presque égale au niveau du primaire, le taux de scolarisation des filles tombe à environ 40 pour 100 au niveau du secondaire, et à 30 pour 100 au niveau du tertiaire. En outre, ce n'est pas seulement que les filles ont moins de

* WLUML - Region West Network, Lagos/Nigeria.

places à l'école, mais les places qu'elles occupent d'habitude reçoivent moins de ressources (comme le montrent les infrastructures scolaires, les dépenses de prestige et publiques), outre le fait qu'elles soient confinées dans certains domaines de connaissance, et bénéficient moins d'infrastructures, d'équipement et de matériels pour les matières scientifiques et techniques que les garçons. Ainsi, malgré son attachement à l'égalité d'accès à l'éducation, le gouvernement kenyan faisait preuve de cécité en matière de genre, en occultant les conditions spécifiques dans lesquelles se trouvent les filles, et de parti pris, en faisant bénéficier aux garçons plus qu'aux filles, une meilleure éducation.

Enchaînant avec le thème de la scolarisation, et abordant l'entreprise intellectuelle, d'une manière plus générale, Christine Naré examine la situation de la femme intellectuelle. Elle fait remarquer que la division du travail selon le sexe, assigne aux filles et aux femmes des tâches reproductives culinaires, et de nettoyage et qu'elles exécutent quotidiennement, et que ces tâches sont à la fois peu valorisées et «biologisées» dans des idéologies sur les «fonctions naturelles». De telles idéologies, combinées avec le caractère patriarcal aussi bien de l'Islam que du Christianisme, sans oublier celui des colonialistes, continuent de se reconstruire dans la conscience collective. Ainsi, l'accès des filles à l'enseignement conventionnel est rendu difficile par les attitudes sexistes, pour commencer. Une fois à l'école, des stéréotypes sexistes sur l'infériorité intellectuelle et sociale de la femme par rapport à l'homme, et sur les rôles qui conviennent à la femme, contribuent à limiter et à restreindre les potentialités féminines. Mariée, ses intérêts sont censés être subordonnés à ceux de son époux. Célibataire ou divorcée, elle est socialement mal tolérée.

Naré souligne, par ailleurs, le fait que la division du travail est telle que les filles et les femmes éprouvent des difficultés physiques à s'engager dans des activités intellectuelles. En effet, elles passent le plus clair de leur temps et dépensent toutes leurs énergies à faire des travaux domestiques, pour elles-mêmes, mais aussi pour les hommes et les garçons, lesquels, par conséquent, disposent de plus de temps et de loisirs pour s'engager dans des activités intellectuelles. Aussi, lance-t-elle un appel en faveur de la création de mécanismes qui permettront à la femme d'être épouse, mère, et travailleuse en même temps, sans être assujettie à une double charge, ou à établir une priorité de l'une sur l'autre. D'autre part, Naré et Otunga s'accordent sur l'importance de changer les attitudes sexistes et les préjugés dans les moeurs et croyances sociales et culturelles de la communauté. C'est dans ce domaine qu'intervient la contribution de Sophie Oluwole.

Oluwole compare les perspectives de genre d'une vision yoruba du monde, avec une vision «occidentale» du monde. Chacune, affirme-t-elle, ayant une

forme particulière de sexisme qui lui est propre, laquelle sous-tend son organisation sociale. Mettant à contribution la littérature orale yoruba, Oluwole démontre que malgré la domination masculine en général, les hommes ne passaient pas nécessairement pour supérieurs aux femmes. Au contraire, il y avait un principe de relativité (celui ou celle qui sait ceci, peut ne pas connaître cela...) et de contexte («la norme ici, c'est l'anathème ailleurs»). La culture yoruba reconnaît non seulement la complémentarité («la hache ne peut pas couper»), mais également que la femme peut être aussi, sinon plus capable que l'homme, y compris dans des rôles associés à la masculinité. Oluwole fait observer qu'il y a des complexités et des aspects contradictoires par rapport à la culture, et que les visions culturelles du monde elles-mêmes changent et sont influencées par d'autres visions du monde. Elle affirme que la récupération totale des visions passées du monde, n'est ni souhaitable, ni possible, et s'accorde avec Hountondji pour dire que ce qui est important, c'est une évaluation critique de notre héritage culturel. C'est ce que Oluwole a fait concernant la perception de genre des yoruba. Ainsi, elle insiste sur la nécessité d'éviter l'amalgame entre différences biologiques et différences sociales, et pense en même temps que les femmes peuvent tirer des enseignements des pratiques traditionnelles yoruba, comme par exemple, l'organisation des femmes en groupes de pression contre des régimes oppressifs et des politiques gouvernementales, de leur participation dans la gouvernance politique, et de la notion de respect mutuel et relativité des pouvoirs.

L'article de Hajara Usman sur les droits reproductifs au Nigeria en arrive également à la conclusion que les contextes culturels et les notions de droits doivent être définis en même temps. Usman s'attarde sur les droits reproductifs des femmes musulmanes haussa dans le Nord du Nigeria. Elle examine le contexte historique, culturel et communautaire des pratiques telles que l'enfermement des femmes, les excisions des *gishiri* (excision des parois vaginales), *kunya* (modestie), mariage précoce, etc., et la manière dont toutes ces pratiques sont liées aux droits reproductifs des femmes. Par ailleurs, elle jette un regard sur la façon dont les politiques gouvernementales influent sur la santé et les droits reproductifs des femmes, par le biais de l'offre (ou l'absence d'offre) de services de santé et des politiques de population (y compris de planification familiale). D'après Usman, même le peu de statistiques actuellement disponibles indique que l'état de la santé reproductive des femmes nigérianes est médiocre, en témoignent la morbidité et la mortalité maternelles, certaines formes de mutilation génitale, et la prévalence de fistules vésico-vaginales et vésico-rectales. Qui plus est, les droits reproductifs des femmes sont largement en suspens compte tenu des attitudes socioculturelles et de la myopie de l'Etat, celui-ci comme celles-là passent sous silence le viol dans le mariage, aident mal

les femmes à maîtriser leur fécondité (tout en s'employant à baisser les taux d'accroissement démographique), et refusent de reconnaître et de confronter l'abus sexuel des enfants et la violence faite aux femmes/mineurs.

Pour Hannington Ochwada, comme pour Ruth Otunga, il y a un déséquilibre criard dans les relations de genre au Kenya. Les rapports de force sont nettement plus favorables à la masculinité qu'à la féminité. En témoigne la représentation des hommes et des femmes dans le processus de prise de décisions. Par exemple, entre 1969 et 1974, les femmes comptaient pour 0,56 pour 100 et 8 pour 100 de l'effectif parlementaire respectivement élu et nommé.

Cette situation s'explique par de nombreux facteurs. Parmi lesquels, l'idéologie patriarcale autochtone et la socialisation coloniale des individus, dont les effets sont reproduits dans les rapports sociaux contemporains. Par ailleurs, dans cette situation, les hommes sont censés être les gagne-pain. Cette attente traditionnelle qui fait des hommes des chefs de ménage, crée chez eux du stress tout en rendant invisibles les femmes, renforçant du coup et paradoxalement, le patriarcat.

Au regard de ce qui précède, Ochwada pense que pour une plus grande harmonie dans les rapports sociaux de sexe, il est absolument indispensable de renforcer les capacités des femmes au double plan économique et politique. Ceci, toutefois, implique une démocratisation du système politique au Kenya afin d'accueillir un grand nombre de femmes au niveau de la prise de décisions politiques.

Dans la même foulée, Pat Williams aborde les enjeux politiques, l'Etat et la femme et en fait un examen critique. Sa thèse est que les Etats africains ne peuvent pas se conduire d'une manière qui soit différente de la caractéristique générale de leur société profondément ancrée dans le patriarcat et fortement patrilinéaire, malgré les bruits qu'ils font concernant la démocratisation de leurs sociétés. Les Etats africains n'ont pas encore ouvert la sphère publique parce que celle-ci reste sous l'autorité de la frange masculine de la société. Entre-temps, les Etats africains donnent l'impression qu'ils sont en train de démocratiser la société, au moment où les hommes continuent de contrôler les espaces politiques dans lesquels les femmes n'osent pas s'aventurer. Tant que cette contradiction demeure, la démocratie restera une illusion en Afrique ou dans n'importe quel autre endroit où cette duperie est pratiquée et/ou perpétuée.

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Bitches at the Academy: Gender and Academic Freedom at the African University

Sylvia Tamale* and J. Oloka-Onyango*

Introduction: Who are these Bitches?!?

THE TITLE TO THIS ESSAY is derived from an anonymous letter to one of the authors of this paper. Addressed to: 'You Bitch!!!!!', and castigating her for being a bad role model, the letter was clearly a response to several recent critiques of gender-insensitive articles in the local media: 'We don't need your views in the press or on the (sic!) radio', the nameless author wrote. The letter demanded that the author '... keep whatever nonsense you have in your head to yourself'. Such a dispatch reflects the stark reality of gender struggles that continue to pervade the intellectual arena even in a relatively gender-progressive society such as Uganda has recently become (Boyd 1991; Harries 1994; Tamale 1996). Although the language of the protagonists within the staid walls of academia may be somewhat more civil, the antagonism towards issues relating to gender parity and feminism still abounds.

Feminism, women-sensitive agendas and the struggle for gender-equality continue to meet a great deal of resistance and resentment from both within and outside the academy.[1] It is reflected in issues as specific as the choice and

* Makerere University, Uganda.

1 While free expression is a critical component of academic freedom, the media presents an ambivalent context for gender struggles. As Ruth Meena (1995:4-5) has observed:
'Women have been negatively portrayed in the media.... The mass media which is supposed to play a very instrumental role in linking the civil society and the state has been instrumental in undermining the dignity of women through negatively portraying them, or through making them invisible where visibility would have enhanced self confidence and assertive skill building. The media often fails to include the views of women in various forums, and as such the media has just managed to suppress women's democratic claims'.

structure of a particular curriculum (Phiri 1994);[2] in the underfunding of gender-related research (Imam and Mama 1994; Iweriebor 1990) and in the issue of affirmative action in faculty hiring (Mbilinyi and Mbughuni 1991). It extends to the question of academic promotions and the overall administration of the university (Hamad 1995:77). In an institution traditionally led and controlled by men — as the academy has and continues to be — it is of little surprise that such matters remain of paramount importance. Indeed, when combined with the globalized crisis presently afflicting the African university,[3] it is clear that the situation can only get worse. The strictures on the phenomenon also relate to what can and cannot be said about gender relations, the place of women and men in the articulation of viewpoints of such a nature, and the response of both the academy and society at large to the intellectual struggle to attain gender parity. By prefacing the discussion of the topic in this fashion, we seek to illustrate the problems of theory and praxis involved in dealing with the issue of gender and academic freedom in the contemporary African university.[4]

As a topic of intellectual discourse, the subject of academic freedom in Africa has attracted much recent attention (cf. Diouf and Mamdani 1994). However, few examinations of this important subject have incorporated a gender analysis of the phenomenon (Sow 1994:6).[5] A critical investigation of gender and

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2 Isabel Phiri points to the nature of the problem in this respect,
'Women experiences have been singled out as an important ingredient of a good curriculum because women comprise more than half of the population of the world. Yet for a long time our curriculum has been dominated by male perspectives. The bibliographies of many courses have shown that males have been the only thinkers. It is no wonder then that the decisions made by our graduates reflect a male bias and ignore the experiences of women' (Phiri 1994:2).

3 As recently pointed out by the African Association of Political Science, this crisis has assumed a two-fold dimension:
'For many lecturers the struggle for survival now takes precedence. Regrettably, also, under the wise counsel of the World Bank and the IMF governments no longer see the university as the vital agent for national development. Now the fashion is to regard university education as a luxury, expensive, and a privilege the cost of which has to be borne by those who use it. Hence the rapid decline of the university' (AAPS 1996:1).

4 The authors are aware that African universities are by no means homogenous institutions. The general term as used in the context of this essay symbolises African institutions of higher learning as they are similarly and generically affected by issues of gender, class, colonialism and decolonization.

5 Gender is distinguished from sex (the anatomical and hormonal distinctions between men and women); the concept of gender refers to the learned attitudes, values, behaviours and expectations that characterise individuals as being feminine or masculine (Gonzalez-Calvo 1993; Peterson and Runyan 1993).

academic freedom will reveal the relations of power, resources and personalities among men and women at the academy. To what extent can women freely exercise their academic skills in a context that emerges from sociocultural, political and religious systems which shape gender roles that subordinate women to men? How can women be deemed really free actors when the academy is itself riddled with prejudices that derive from the exercise of power in an institution that is traditionally authoritarian and isolationist?[6] Finally, have African academies moved out of the shadow of the colonial influences of their formative years — influences that dictated a divorce between the academy and society, between politics and practice, between theory and praxis? Many of the answers to these questions will illustrate the extent to which progress in the area is real or ephemeral.

We likewise need to be cautious about uncritically projecting the concept of gender which has mainly developed in Western feminist theory onto African culture and politics. This is because the nuances of gender relations manifest variable factors in different societies, informing gender discourse in distinct contexts. In particular, the dialectic relationship between gender, class, colonialism and decolonization is pertinent for an analysis of gender in the African context (Okeyo 1981; AAWORD 1982). While the university as we know it is a product of Western educational and institutional developments, its transplantation to the African context — as with the English Common Law — has produced an amalgam of the specific sociocultural conditions into which it was transplanted and the colonial dictates by which the system was informed. As we have stated elsewhere, in discerning to what extent the 'personal' constitutes the 'political' in an analysis of the question of gender, it is essential to always remember that, '... what in Africa appears to be a local political act is compounded by the frustrations and tensions set in motion by global forces' (Oloka-Onyango and Tamale 1995:702). At the same time, we must be sensitive to the continuing influences of global hegemony (particularly in the field of information) over present African reality. Just as modernisation theory in the late 1950s was hatched in American Social Science faculties and exported to their African counterparts to disastrous effect, the Women-in-Development (WID) phenomenon was conceived by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and rammed down the throats of loan-recipient governments and pliant educational

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6 The lecture method in vogue at most African universities evokes the Victorian schoolmaster pontificating on a topic about which he is the 'fountain' of all knowledge. The method is peremptory, non-participatory and dictatorial (cf. Friere 1972; Illich 1974).

institutions. Needless to say, it has left a dubious legacy that has proved wanting in achieving, '... the desired result of gender equity' (Etta 1994:58).

This paper considers the nature and character of formal structures of higher education in which both the myths and realities of gender parity and academic freedom in the African context are initially played out. It takes a broad purview of the topic attempting to illustrate the historical, sociocultural, political, economic, geopolitical and legal dimensions of the issue. Drawing mainly from theoretical and empirical studies in the area as well as the lived experience of both authors, the study considers both historical and contemporary dimensions of gender struggles and academic freedom.

The essay is divided into five sections. This introduction comprises the first. Section two examines the historical context commencing with an analysis of the colonial period and extending into the era of African independence. In particular we consider the broad relationship between freedom of expression, academic freedom and the expression of issues relating to gender in the African academy. The third section deals with the status of women/gender education in the academy. Considered herein are the contradictions between traditional gender roles and the basic principles of academic freedom in intellectual discourse as enshrined in the two main instruments on academic freedom on the continent—the *Dar es Salaam Declaration on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of Academics*, and the *Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility*. Of particular relevance is the question of popular mythology about women and their place in society as well as the political and social constructions that have taken place over time e.g., the character of women's education and its relation to the work women are traditionally supposed to perform.

In the fourth section we examine the place of the woman student in the academy and how this affects academic freedom in intellectual society. We analyse the specificities of the context in which women students operate. Of particular importance is the relationship between Faculty and student, intra- and inter-student gender relations and how these are played out in the sphere of student politics and leadership. The place of women students in the articulation of gender issues at the academy is also explored. The last section constitutes an examination of some of the legal dimensions of the phenomenon of gender and academic freedom by revisiting the main international and regional instruments of relevance to the issue. The essay ends with concrete suggestions on how to improve the articulation of gender issues in the context of academic freedom.

Gender and Academic Freedom

The Historical Context

'Academic Freedom' has been defined as 'the freedom of members of the academic community, individually or collectively, in the pursuit, development and transmission of knowledge, through research, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation, teaching, lecturing and writing'.[7] While the general perception of institutions of learning is that they are designed to propagate knowledge and stimulate inquiry, it is not always the case that those institutions are themselves free of serious structural and ideological impediments to achieving the objective of intellectual debate and progress. As Anthony Arblaster (1973:1) has pointed out in an early study of the concept of academic freedom in the context of England:

> Academic freedom and academic democracy go hand in hand. For the principal, though not the only, threats to freedom in education derive from the authoritarian structures of educational institutions. A society which constantly advertises itself as free and democratic manages to tolerate an extraordinary degree of authoritarianism within almost all its major institutions. This contradiction between pretensions and practice is unlikely to last indefinitely. Sooner or later a choice will have to be made between greater freedom and democracy, or less.

Consequently, academic freedom is posited both between the state and educational institutions, as well as within the latter. In particular, the concept of academic freedom itself has in general not been free of gender bias particularly in light of the fact that women have not only been discriminated against in the context of the issue of access to institutions of learning, but even with regard to what they can study and research about. The basis of such an insidious demarcation is deeply rooted in the colonial history of our continent.

Women in Africa (as is the case the world over) generally entered academia later than their male counter-parts. A systematic and deliberate colonial policy ensured that African women were excluded from the various 'Ivory Towers' that dotted the continent. Not only did missionary education disproportionately extend educational opportunities to males, but men's education was also accorded higher priority than that of women (Staudt 1981). A variety of factors, including the emphasis on domestic chores, generalised conditions of poverty[8]

7 The Dar es Salaam Declaration on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of Academics, 1990.

8 Kakwenzire (1996:298) argues that in a situation of inadequate resources, '... parents reserve resources for educating boys in preference to girls. This is because it was and it is

and the overarching influence of patriarchy, combined to make access to and entrance into academic institutions for women a mirage for much of the colonial period of our history.[9] Women were a rare commodity in the annals of academia, and were Africa's true 'drawers of water, and hewers of wood!'

But as if to confirm that the academy was not free of the gender-biases of the outer world, when women did obtain access, it was merely so as to secure a more sophisticated and simultaneously delocalized version of their original domestication and subordinate status. The educated housewife was viewed by the colonisers as a potential consumer who could motivate her husband's productivity:

> She must be educated to want a better home, better furnishings, better food, better water supplies, etc. and if she wants them she will want them for her children. In short, the sustained effort from the male will only come when the woman is educated to the stage when her wants are never satisfied (Roddan 1958, quoted in Staudt 1989:78)

Following the same tenor, a 1935 Commission on Higher Education in East Africa chaired by one de la Warr, for example, was paternalistic in the extreme (Oloka-Onyango 1992:50-51). In catering to 'the needs of the women' who would become the beneficiaries of the education on offer at the prestigious Makerere College, the Commission emphasised that women should be educated for 'home making!' (Lugumba and Ssekamwa 201-202). Such would obviously include Westernised versions of elite education — sewing, home economics and hygiene, domestic management, nursing and midwifery.[10] Neither the technical arena — engineering, the general, medical and animal sciences, or agriculture — nor the 'esoteric' arts, were opened up to gender parity.[11] It was a classic

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still believed that more economic returns and security were/are realised through educating boys and that girls education is less beneficial'.

9 Kakwenzire (1996:295) refers to these social roles as 'breeder-feeder-trainer'.

10 For an interesting treatment of the rise of women in the nursing profession in the United States, see, Paul Starr (1982:155), who argues that, 'The movement for reform (in the nursing profession) originated, not with doctors, but among upper-class women, who had taken on the role of guardians of a new hygienic order'.

11 Of course, this is not to say that the type of colonial education for men was substantially any better in terms of its transformative potential. Mamdani (1994:1) has pointed out that: 'The few universities set up in the colonial period were designed with a narrow focus on cost-effectiveness in terms of meeting the short-term needs of the colonial state and economy. Prior to World War II, this meant a near-exclusive emphasis on 'technical' education designed to train personnel for the colonial state and the small private sector. After the war, research was added as a necessary component of university education. Confronted by nationalist ferment, the colonial state discovered the practical usefulness of

instance of the transfer of perceptions and realities outside the classroom concerning the appropriate role of women in the family and rooted in male interpretations of 'culture'.[12] At the same time, it was also riddled with the desire to maintain male domination of the labour market, biological determinism, and gender-based divisions (cf. Hyde 1993:108).

Women, Education and Gender Discrimination

Obviously, the broad context of academic freedom for women is directly dependent upon the extent to which the conditions of their access to institutions of learning have become generalised and free of sex-based discrimination. In the words of Odaga and Heneveld (1995:1):

> Perhaps the most daunting challenge is that of promoting female education. This must be a central concern in efforts to improve learning achievements, school effectiveness, teacher motivation, education management, and issues of resource mobilisation and reallocation of expenditure. Such initiatives provide an important opportunity for creating an enabling environment where girls and other disadvantaged groups can participate fully.

Needless to say, the context in which such objectives are to be realised must be viewed against the background of freedom of expression generally. When former Ugandan president Idi Amin banned the Department of Political Science and the teaching of the subject at Makerere in the early 1970s, the move coincided with a massive assault against democratic rights in general and freedom of expression in particular. In a situation where the state not only monopolises the available avenues for expression through the print and broadcast media, but also unduly influences school and university curricula and the appointment of university administrators, it is inevitable that women in particular, and gender issues in general, will be adversely affected.

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funding research into African societies and movements'.
We may add that in any case, women were disproportionately marginalized from the ambit of even this warped form of education.

12 Florence Etta (1994:70) has stated that culture is the single most inclusive constraining factor in fighting the problems faced by women,
'The culture of female subjugation, the religious culture, social customs, traditions, the culture of the school, or the national culture of paying lip service to the issue of gender inequity in education. Biological/genetic differences account for sex differences but cultural factors explain differential role allocation on men and women with men commanding more power than women; power to make decisions, effect them and control events. Modernisation, commercialisation, marginalisation, and the feminisation of work roles or occupations reduced the value of reproduction and work that was perceived as genuine—usually meaning those preponderantly done by women'.

Freedom of expression and the right to education are simply two sides of the same coin, with academic freedom intrinsic to both. The right to education is especially important if the former is to be exercisable in any consistent and liberative fashion. Thus, the stark illiteracy and under-education of African women clearly affects their ability to articulate and express their interests in a wide variety of fields, ranging from politics to the economy. As Rebecca Cook (1995:267) has pointed out, realisation of the right to education serves the goal of individual and reproductive health. Access to contraception, knowledge about different mechanisms of child-spacing, health and welfare invariably mean that women are operating in a more liberated and aware context. Denied these benefits women in Africa face the blunt end of the oppressive element in the system.

But while female education in general has been on the rise in Africa, in some instances '...out of the few who are admitted in the university again fewer do complete their course' (Kakwenzire 1996:299).[13] This is essentially because women academics carry a dual burden that directly affects their freedom to operate and articulate issues in the academy. That burden is contained in the fact that women must pursue both their academic interests while meeting traditional obligations, for which they get little or no help from their male partners and spouses (even when those are academics!). So a woman academic is concerned with child-bearing and rearing, cooking, and domestic household chores or their supervision (Tamale 1996:319, 320). The male partner rarely participates in these duties, and yet the academy judges women at par with men when considering their output and competence. In general, the conditions of maternity and other related benefits and conditions of leave and employment are no better in the academy than they are in the traditional Civil Service. At the other end of the spectrum, male university practitioners are loath to include a gender dimension to their analyses. This is not only the case with outright gender bigots, but even among scholars who believe that they teach 'progressive' subjects.[14] As Imam and Mama (1994:96) point out:

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13 Kakwenzire's figures illustrate that over a seven-year period, the drop-out rate of women in a single class in a Ugandan primary school was 59.1 per cent. Over a ten-year period, the enrolment of women at Makerere University has gone from 18 per cent to 22 per cent.

14 Isabel Phiri (1994:1) offers some explanation of this phenomenon in reflecting on why students at Chancellor College in Malawi protested against a seminar on violence against women.

'One possible interpretation of the reaction of the few male students to the seminar could be that in some men's minds Human Right(s) issues exclude women. Although the whole

> The example of gender and women's studies is an alarming case where there is automatic, voluntary and even active self-censorship. The clear willingness of most social scientists in Africa to omit, ignore and deny the evidence that there is no such thing as 'gender neutral' science is worth exploring. Conformism is not even perceived as collusion with the dominant patriarchal order, despite the evidence that it produces biased and inaccurate data and contributes to the subordination and oppression of women.

At the same time, women academics are confronted by the sexual prejudices that abound among their male counterparts and the lack of a suitable framework within which they can articulate their concerns. To compound it all, within the context of IMF and World Bank structural adjustment programs (SAPs), women academics carry an increased total burden of work as they attempt to make ends meet in a context of decreased access to social services (cf. Kuenyhia 1994:434-435). Against such a background, it is important to examine the gender contradictions women at the academy face in greater detail.

Sex, Power and Academic Freedom: The Gender Contradictions

The forces of patriarchy which pervade the majority of African societies skew the balance of rights to academic freedom in favour of the male gender, vividly illustrating, in the words of Fatou Sow, that '...human rights are not gender neutral' (Sow 1994:7). This is illustrated in part by the fact that the architects of all the existing documents on Academic Freedom in Africa— including the Dar and Kampala Declarations — were almost exclusively men. It also explains why the declarations were more directly preoccupied with the state (another patriarchal institution) than they were with the more gender-related aspects of the concept of academic freedom. The declarations duplicate the international legal and human rights instruments and the highly sexist discourse about the 'generations' of human rights. Male (mainly Western) intellectuals who support the generational paradigm have given pride of place to civil and political rights because this is the arena within which men dominate to the broad exclusion of women. The so-called second generation of rights — health, shelter, education and social services in general — adversely affect women in greater proportion than they do men (cf. Chinkin and Wright 1993; Oloka-Onyango 1995). Is it of any surprise that when we get to the so-called third generation — rights to peace, a clean and pollution-free environment and the right to development—

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country was eagerly anticipating the birth of genuine democracy, for some of our students this did not include academic freedom for women to hold a seminar on a topic of their choice'.

the jurisprudes in the area are completely at sea? Without the appreciation that the roots of patriarchal oppression lie in the smallest unit of societal organisation which is the family, directing attention to the state alone can only achieve limited reform.

While making a significant contribution to the jurisprudence and politics of academic freedom on the continent (Shivji 1994), none of the African declarations addresses the root causes of inequities within academia based on the underlying gendered division of labour. They also omit a consideration of the overarching patriarchal order existing in most African states. Such a bias furthermore explains their inadequate attention to specific gender inequalities such as sexual harassment and gender violence,[15] the latter of which is believed to have no place in the academy, and is generally regarded as a 'domestic' matter. When the basic principles of academic freedom are juxtaposed to the principles of patriarchy, the contradictions between the two are glaring. Below, we draw from some of the basic postulates of the Dar and Kampala Declarations[16] of most relevance to the issue of gender and examine some of the salient features of academic freedom, analysing their efficacy *vis-à-vis* gender contradictions in African societies.

Access to Education Shall be Equal and Equitable

There is a considerable disparity between men's and women's access to education.[17] Sixty-four per cent of women in sub-Saharan Africa are illiterate compared to 40 per cent of the male population (UNESCO 1990). As one proceeds up the educational hierarchy, these gender disparities grow in magnitude i.e., the higher the level of education the greater the gender disparity (Ballara 1991). A cursory glance at the gender ratios of students and academic staff in African institutions of higher learning reveals the stark imbalance that favours men against women. For example, in Chad and the Central African Republic, women make up less than 10 per cent of the student population of tertiary institutions (Hyde 1993:100). At Khartoum University in the Sudan, the ratios of women to men academics in Political Science, Sociology, and Law are

15 We use the phrase 'gender violence' in a broad sense as does Nahid Toubia (1994:16-17) when she argues that such violence comprises not only a series of *commissions*, but also *omissions*, which amount to '[a] failure to recognise the existence of fundamental human rights...'.

16 See especially, Chapter One of the Dar Declaration, entitled, 'Education for Human Emancipation', and Chapter One of the Kampala Declaration named, 'Fundamental Rights and Freedoms'.

17 See Principle No.2 of the Dar Declaration.

1:15, 3:18 and 1:12, respectively (Hamad 1995:77) Such inequitable proportions are not accidental. Instead, they reflect deep-rooted social and cultural norms which infiltrate the educational system right from the elementary level (see Mbilinyi and Mbughuni 1991).

When one examines the class-origins of the few women who make it to African universities either as students or faculty, one finds that the per centage with a peasant background is minuscule (Eisemon *et al.* 1993:39).[18] This is true despite the fact that over 80 per cent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa is made up of the peasantry. In the absence of state-supported primary and secondary schools in the greater part of the continent, few peasant children make it to the university. Thus, even within the purview of gender relations, the dynamics of inequality in African societies bestows privilege to a minority class of women. This implies that the disparities between the sexes with regard to accessibility to education invariably mesh with class distinctions within the different sexes. It is thus important to pay attention to the interrelationship of class and gender when addressing issues of academic freedom. In sum, the problem of disparities between the sexes is exacerbated for women by the fact that they constitute the majority of the economically impoverished class on the continent.

The legacy of unequal access to education primarily stems from obstacles resulting from the gendered division of labour. The traditional production and reproduction roles performed by most African women including domestic work, child rearing and agricultural and cultural activities, virtually leaves them with no time for educational pursuits. These obstacles are compounded by patriarchal structures of power which not only place greater value on boys' education than that of girls, but also discriminates against women in all spheres of social life. The same factors dictate women's submissiveness to male authority. Religion also plays a part in reinforcing gender disparities in education. As Ballara (1991:11) observes: 'Some religious traditions may restrict women's activities to domestic tasks, stressing their role as mothers, which limits their access to education'. This implies a much more comprehensive approach to the issue of

18 The question of class background was confirmed in a 1991 Makerere University survey of which a Review Team commented,
'A high proportion of students, particularly those enrolled in the most selective faculties, were from professional families .... To obtain admission to Makerere, many students repeat the A level examination to boost their scores and/or have private tutoring. Few economically disadvantaged families can afford to make these provisions for their children' (Eisemon *et al.* 1993:39).

gender parity, and a concerted assault against the barriers that stand in its way. Etta (1994:60) is right on the mark when she argues:

> Improving the status of women will therefore require a reorientation of development and development efforts, a redefinition of key concepts such as education and empowerment, and gender development planning to improve the range and quality of integrated gender responsive operations. A conceptual approach to gender issues in education is of immediate necessity to improve the gender sensitivity of educational provision and analysis and to offer an acceptable or common approach for addressing gender issues in education.

Obviously this is a long drawn-out struggle, but the essential elements thereof need to be put in place immediately. Such struggle must include a more intensive scrutiny of the phenomenon of schooling itself. In the absence of such a process, the issue of discrimination will continue to remain a significant impediment to the betterment of the condition of women. A review must incorporate both the microscopic elements of gender discrimination that emanate from within the family as well as the macroscopic factors that pervade society, the state and its structures and institutions.

Education Shall Prepare a Person to Strive for and Participate fully in the Emancipation of the Human Being and Society from Oppression and Subjugation

The educational environment in African schools[19] from the elementary level upwards — as is the case elsewhere in the world — is designed to ensure the maintenance of the status quo. In other words, the educational system in the main represents the institutionalisation of patriarchal consciousness and values.[20] As Sheila Ruth (1980:382) observes:

> In functioning both as trainer for participation in the wider society and as a reflection of that society, the schools transmit to their students the rather traditional views on sexual identity, and very early they convey, create, and reinforce in females and males the segregated conceptual systems of the sexes.

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19 See Principle No.3, Dar Declaration, and Article 22 of the Kampala Declaration.

20 Ivan Illich (1974:113) makes the point more succinctly— albeit absent a gender analysis — when he states:

> 'A society committed to the institutionalisation of values identifies the production of goods and services with the demand for such. Education which makes you need the product is included in the price of the product. School is the advertising agency which makes you believe that you need society as it is. In such a society marginal value has become constantly self-transcendent'.

Whether transmitted directly (for example, by encouraging girls to take 'soft' subjects such as Home Economics, stenography and Literature, and pushing boys in the direction of the 'hard' ones like science, business management and engineering), or subliminally (such as the gender distribution of the administrative hierarchy in the typical school or university which reflects masculine power), such messages hardly prepare the girl child to strive for the emancipation of her oppressed sistren (cf. Iweriebor 1990:18-21). For patriarchy to do otherwise would spell doom to its very existence.

Certain Western feminist scholars like Rhoda Howard (1995:310) have put forward the argument that it is more important for African women to study the humanities, social sciences and law because, she claims, for such subjects their '... primary objective of study is gender relations'. In this way, she believes that women will be empowered to emancipate themselves from male hegemony and be liberated. However, such an argument is predicated on two faulty presumptions. First, that in African universities the teaching of the disciplines she favours is at all sensitive to gender issues, or even bothers to integrate them into their curricula. Secondly, it ignores the fact that even in supposedly advanced contexts such as the US where women studies departments abound, there has not been a fundamental restructuring of gender relations broadly. This means, therefore, that there is a need for a more fundamental restructuring of the curricula which instead of de-emphasising one discipline at the expense of another, seeks their integration and an inter-disciplinary approach. Furthermore, and most fundamentally for our purposes, the question of gender equality must be a critical component of intellectual discourse and study at the African university. The solution Howard offers to this problem — the creation of more scholarship opportunities for African women to pursue courses of instruction on '...certain social issues key to the abolition of patriarchy — such as violence against women' ... is a thinly-disguised attempt at modern-day proselitisation.

This latter point relates to the whole question of the position of donors in relation to the quest for academic freedom. While Article 17 of the Kampala Declaration stipulates that 'states shall continuously ensure adequate funding for research institutions and higher education', the present reality of SAPs and misprioritisation in Africa means that the state is in serious breach of this provision. As a consequence, the international donor community has stepped in to fill the lacuna. Although neither the Dar nor Kampala declarations make reference to donors as a subject-matter of their analyses, nevertheless, the issue is of paramount importance. This was manifest in the Kampala symposium at which the latter declaration was promulgated. In the report of the conference, note was taken of the fact that:

> ...on the one hand the financial and material support extended by donors, who were generally considered to be of high moral standing, aided African grantees in universities and other institutions to protect themselves against the repression of the state. On the other hand, such protection comes with substantial power, leading to both intentional and unintentional constraints on research into the social sciences (Oloka-Onyango 1994:344).

The report was particularly concerned about the '... often obtrusive and undemocratic methods of work employed by donors, including the rejection of peer appraisal, sitting-in on the deliberations of scientific committees of African research organisations and dictating not only the form but the content of research undertaken (Oloka-Onyango 1994:344)'. There is little doubt that the area of research into gender is one of the current favourites of the donor community—a veritable 'flavour of the month'. This raises serious questions about the extent to which women and gender-sensitive academics in the African context are able to design and execute a truly liberative agenda in this arena. While this criticism is true of almost all areas of intellectual discipline that are being researched in Africa today, it is of special prominence in the context of gender and women studies. Of particular concern is the onslaught instituted by the IFIs, with the World Bank leading the way in this respect (Oloka-Onyango and Tamale 1995:728-730).

In what we have elsewhere described as 'Third Stage Colonialism', the World Bank has mapped out a gender-strategy that places the issues of research into women and the economy, law, politics and culture, at the centre of its concerns and agenda for the African continent. Aside from the fact that the Bank focuses on the effects of gender inequality (for example, WID), rather than its root causes, it also amounts to a case of giving with one hand what is taken away with the other. Through its programs of Structural Adjustment, the World Bank emasculates women scholars and intellectuals of much of their autonomous existence and economic livelihood and independence. In this way the basic tenets of their academic freedom are denied. It is thus surprising to hear the Bank charge that cost-sharing — the Bank's own brainchild — '... is especially likely to work against girl's education (Odaga and Heneveld 1995:15). The pretence of concern manifested by its new assault on women in this area is merely a smoke-screen over an insidious and debilitating agenda. The question must be asked: 'to what extent can a truly liberated research agenda on the issue of gender be developed independent of the dictates of donors?'

Education Shall Enable a Person to Overcome Prejudice Related to Gender

In the arena of neutralising the prejudices relating to gender, it is fairly obvious that there is yet a great distance to traverse. While numerous African institutions have established Gender or Women Studies departments, these remain outside the mainstream, confined to the particularities of their discipline.[21] There is no attempt to marry the quest for gender-neutralisation that takes place within such departments with a campus-wide assault on prejudice and domination. In essence, gender studies have become ghettoised, confined principally to women, and making only a limited impact on the overall struggle against gender bias. Furthermore, when the declarations on academic freedom address the issue of prejudice, they do so in the same fashion that is pursued in the dominant quest for racial harmony in racially-stratified societies like the United States. There, racism is defined merely as prejudice, but in fact racism comprises much more, namely, the dominance, power and hegemony of one race over another. Similarly, it is not simply gender prejudice that should be attacked and eradicated, but the power relations that underpin and foster such prejudice. Ultimately, it is in the interest of patriarchy that education is not geared towards conscientising society against gender prejudice and the power relations underguiding it. That is precisely why the 'bitches' at the academy who attempt to do this are subjected to threats and intimidation — the intellectual equivalent of the burning of a cross.

No African Intellectual Shall in any Way be Persecuted, Harassed Intimidated for Reasons only of his or her Intellectual Work, Opinions, Gender, etc.[22]

Few people would dispute the fact that gender is an extremely significant factor in African institutions of higher learning. A woman lecturer instructing university students as well as a woman intellectual relating to her male counterparts are generally perceived through lenses tainted by their sexuality. Not only are they considered less knowledgeable than their male colleagues, but they also have to work twice as hard in order to legitimise their positions and authority. This is because the environment at institutions of higher learning is dictated by patriarchal values and beliefs. Female intellectuals are the subject of

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21 Principle No.4 of the Dar Declaration.
22 Article No.3 of the Kampala Declaration.

sexual harassment,[23] exclusion from 'Old Boy' networks and almost never part of the hierarchy of Deans, Directors, Departmental heads, or university administrators (Hamad 1995:77).

The omnibus nature of the above principle is hardly an effective statement on the issue of sexual harassment and gender violence. Extra-academic factors and the sociocultural context in a country invariably affect the possibilities for women academics to exercise their rights to academic freedom. Despite the fact that Sudan has traditionally enjoyed academic freedom of a type that is rare elsewhere on the continent, the emergence of the Omar el Bashir regime has greatly affected the expression of women's human rights to academic freedom unfettered by harassment or intimidation. Women academics are forbidden from travelling in the absence of a *muhram* — a close male blood relative — to act as a guardian (*Africa Watch* 1991:94). Women students are coerced into wearing the veil, they have been systematically dismissed from public employment, and the government has detained many women professionals (WUS 1988:119). The situation of women in general and of women academics in particular is compounded by the fact that a March 1991 amendment to the Penal Code relegated women to the status of second-class citizen.

Academic Freedom and the Woman Student

Paulo Friere's classic critique of the mechanics of oppression behind the walls of the classroom — *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* — laid bare the manifestly authoritarian context within which the dissemination of knowledge largely takes place. Unfortunately Friere omitted a critical consideration of an extremely important aspect of that situation, *viz.*, the specifics of the oppression of the female student. Yet, as *African Rights* (1994:8) has noted, '... sexual abuse by teachers which exploits the trust of both students and parents is far more widespread than most institutions care to admit. That abuse ranges from sexual advances, threats of examination failure to outright rape (1994:8-11). Indeed, according to *African Rights*, '...the phenomenon of sexual harassment has been perceived to be so common that many women have come to regard it as 'normal'. At the same time, women students are often victimised at the expense

23 Of course, even women academics are not beyond the unwarranted sexual advances of their male students. *African Rights* (1994:12) quotes a former University of Liberia lecturer who stated:
'Some of the boys were coming on very strongly. They knew I was single and I suppose that encouraged them. They would come into my office, leave me presents, letters, etc... I put an end to it by naming them in class'.

of their male counterparts as in the instance of pregnancy (See Etta 1994:73), which often results in the automatic termination and/or curtailment of her educational privileges while not necessarily the same sanction is invoked with respect to the man.

The Dar Declaration was adopted on April 19, 1990 exactly 71 days following the tragic suicide of Levina Mukasa, a first year Education student at the University of Dar es Salaam. The reason for her suicide? Sexual harassment![24] Despite the wide publicity given to Levina's case and a general expose of the phenomenon of sexual harassment in Tanzanian institutions of higher learning by the local media, the omnibus reference to the issue of 'harassment' in the Declaration clearly failed to come to terms with the insidious nature of the issue. This omission was repeated in the later Kampala Declaration, Article 21 of which states: 'No one group of the intellectual community shall indulge in the harassment, domination or oppressive behaviour towards another group...' While recognising that the issue of harassment is a problem, neither the Dar nor Kampala declarations are explicit in their reference to this issue as one which has clear gender-based origins and manifestations. In other words, they presume an equality in harassment and of its intent and effects between the sexes.

The Dar University wall-magazine, *Punch*, which was a key player in Levina Mukasa's fate, is a particularly poisonous form of sexual harassment. Famous for its auspicious beginnings as the magazine of radical students at the campus,[25] today, *Punch* has deteriorated into a veritable punching-bag directed almost exclusively against female students at the campus where they are ridiculed and abused in the most virulent forms of language (Meena 1994; Che-Mponda 1990). There is no doubt that the incidence of rape too has become a particularly potent tool in the arsenal of gender-related assaults on women in the academy. Perhaps the most terrifying of incidents was the horrendous St. Kizito massacre, which occurred in a Kenyan high school in mid-1991. A total of 19 girls were killed and 71 reportedly raped by their cooed male colleagues. However, as *African Rights* pointed out, but for its scale, it was not '...an isolated event, neither in Kenya nor elsewhere on the continent' (*African Rights* 1994:3-4).

Following from the above experiences, our view is that there is a basic conceptual and practical problem in what Kaufman and Lindquist in a different

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24 For a detailed account of Levina's case see Che-Mponda C., 'Why Did Levina Kill Herself?' *Sauti Ya Siti* No. 8, January-March, 1990 at p.4.

25 Issa Shivji (1993:207) quotes one instance of *Punch*'s early days, when it was used as a debating-point for different views about contemporary social and political issues.

context have referred to as 'gender-neutral' language that can be found in many international treaties attempting to address inequalities between the sexes (see Kaufman and Lindquist 1995). That problem is replicated in the African documents on Academic freedom. The language used in these instruments assumes that with the formal acquisition of a right— in this instance the right to equal treatment and non-harassment — the problem has been solved. It omits an extremely important dimension to the question, namely that the two parties in this instance are far from equal in the first place. While, it is clear that there are women who harass men, the balance of the traffic is in the opposite direction, and yet the provision refers to *both* sexes. Because of the underlying imbalance in power between the sexes, any attempt to address the issue must treat the two sexes against the backdrop of the respective positions of influence and power they enjoy. It is clear that in the academy the question of sexual harassment disproportionately affects women over men. Images of a woman harassing a man, such as that depicted in the Michael Douglas/Demi Moore scenario in the recent movie *Disclosure,* are skewed as a social phenomenon simply because men out-number women in positions of power and dominance. Furthermore, because of the significance of power in gender relations, combined with the cultural and institutional socialisation that women have undergone, it is less likely that women who assume positions of power will manifest the same characteristics as their male counterparts. As Florence Etta (1994:71) has pointed out:

> Boys are generally socialised to be inquiring, adventurous or venture-some, to subdue, conquer or at the very least understand nature while girls are expected to be obedient, malleable, traditional preservers of nature. The tragedy in the situation is that women are themselves the chief agents of this socialisation which confers inequality on their kind. It is not so much the inequality as the effect of the socialisation which is inimical to educational attainment and achievement.

While we disagree with the insinuation that women exclusively bear the blame for their inequality, it is quite evident that the impact of socialisation has a significant influence on the ultimate evolution of gender-characteristics and relations.[26] Consequently, in relation to sexual harassment and several other issues specific to the female student, the employment of gender-neutral language simply masks and obscures the problem. It is our considered view that the use of such language serves to undermine the quest for a direct confrontation and elimination of the problem (cf. Kaufman and Lindquist 1995:115-116).

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26 Socialization theory has been criticised for disregarding structural and institutional factors (see, e.g. Randall 1987:84; Epstein 1988:137-140), but in spite of its inherent weaknesses, the socialisation paradigm occupies a prominent place in feminist discourse.

Gender-neutral language allows for the interpretation of such clauses in the subjective social realm, where the interpretation of the right or freedom in question is subjected to the dominant cultural paradigm, which largely omits consideration of women's lived experiences. In the process of interpretation of such clauses, the dominant approach will be from the perspective of a man.

Although the declarations on academic freedom do not have binding legal force (Busia 1996:13), they nevertheless have served an important role in both raising the political consciousness of academics about the issue of academic freedom in Africa, as well as a caution to States that they must be sensitive to the context in which academics operate. However, the failure to develop instruments that are genuinely gender-sensitive illustrates that there is still a considerable distance to cover. In our view, the insertion of the omnibus phrase on 'harassment' in the Dar and Kampala Declarations for example, is at best an expression of political correctness.

The incidents of sexual harassment we have cited above, are just a few examples of the widespread inattention to the woman student by human rights advocates in African tertiary institutions. Sexual harassment is often dismissed as an 'unAfrican' product of Western feminists mimicked by elitist African feminists. However, many female students and female faculty members at the academy can testify to several incidents where they have been victims of sexual harassment while their perpetrators are left unpunished. The prevailing point of view among males is that women like attention being drawn to their anatomical features, that they welcome unsolicited advances from their male colleagues and that in any case, every approach to a woman must in the first instance be resisted! The problem is compounded by the widespread absence of active women students' organisations to effectively deal with the issue. In addition, there is both a 'conspiracy of silence' and a dearth of sufficient mechanisms within school and university administrations designed to comprehensively address the problem. Thus most cases of sexual harassment and gender-based violence remain unreported for fear of a backlash or out of worry of being labelled or otherwise victimised (*African Rights* 1994:17). This implies the need to examine the legal framework which is of most relevance to this situation.

A Note on the Legal Framework

The legal regime governing women's rights in general is not wholly conducive to women academics and their expression of academic freedom. At the international level, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) addresses the issue of equality in education in Article 10. The article stipulates that states parties shall take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to

ensure them equal rights with men in the field of education. In particular, states parties must take measures to ensure non-discriminatory conditions of education and access; equal standards and quality of education; the elimination of stereotyped concepts of the roles of men and women; similar opportunities to benefit from scholarships and study grants; the same opportunities of access to continuing education programs; reducing the rate of female dropping out; equal opportunities for participation in sports and physical education, and finally, for women to have access to specific scientific information to help to ensure the health and well-being of their families.

CEDAW has the highest number of states parties of any international human rights instrument but is nevertheless plagued by a variety of problems. Despite having come into force in September 1981, the idea of an individual complaints mechanism whereby individual women could present their cases to the Committee established under the Convention has only of recent come into existence. This has meant that instances of individual rights violations are not the specific concern of the Committee. Instead through the mechanism of states parties reportage to the Committee, the issue of gender-based discrimination is addressed from a progressive and collective dimension. CEDAW also has the highest number of reservations with many states predicating their observance of the rights in the instrument upon respect for local 'culture'. Such reservations have had the effect of substantially undercutting the rights that the instrument sets out to guarantee in the first instance. The Committee which has charge of the implementation of the Convention is starved for funds and it meets only once every year. Furthermore, being mainly dependent upon state reports, positive advances in the system are primarily reliant upon the goodwill of states parties to the Convention. In sum, CEDAW is a limited tool in the general struggle for the liberation of women. Elsewhere we have stated that the promulgation of CEDAW,

> ... also produced a reverse (and perhaps unintended) consequence in which the strategy and profile of the international women's human rights movement were to some extent dictated by action under CEDAW. In short, the focus on CEDAW produced a paradox by successfully highlighting, but simultaneously ghettoising, women's human rights issues within the international legal and political arena (Oloka-Onyango and Tamale 1995:716).

In the final analysis, therefore, CEDAW is quite clearly inadequate as a mechanism for the realisation of the rights of women to academic freedom. Some recent advances have been made in particular respect to the promulgation of the Declaration Against Violence on Women, but since this instrument is not of binding effect, it remains to be seen whether it will dramatically add to the

struggle to tackle the problem of violence against women in its various dimensions.

Viewed from a different angle, the international level is also rather remote from the lives of African academics and consequently it is necessary to look closer to home. CEDAW did not spawn a duplication at the continental level in the same way as either the international Covenants or the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Indeed, the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights which came into force the same year as CEDAW, hardly addressed the issue of women's human rights. Article 18 of the Charter is the only reference-point for the rights of women in the instrument (Kois 1996). The article covers the family, describing it as the '... natural unit and basis of society' which must be protected and assisted by the State, as the '... custodian of morals and traditional values recognised by the community'. Already, there is potential for conflict as this provision can effectively operate as a bar to the recognition and enforcement of women's human rights.

Perhaps the most important of the provisions of Article 18 is sub-paragraph 3 which stipulates that the state shall ensure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions. Academic controversy and discussion abounds over the general relationship between women's human rights in the African context in general and Article 18 of the African Charter in particular (see, e.g., Beyani 1994; Oloka-Onyango and Tamale 1995 and Kois 1996). Whether one takes the view that the provision is a positive one that enhances respect for the rights of women and the family or in fact undermines them, the question of enforcement remains a practical issue of utmost importance in the struggle for the realisation of women's human rights particularly in the arena of academic freedom. There has not been a single petition regarding the violation of women's human rights that the African Commission has considered since its inception in 1988. The first female Commissioner out of eleven was appointed in 1992 and was only joined by a second in 1995. The receptivity to and publication of women's human rights by this body thus remains very low. It is compounded by the fact that there is a general weakness in the effectiveness of the Commission, namely the fact that it is ultimately responsible to, and dependent upon the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Assembly of Heads of State and Government. Few bodies are more undemocratic, sexist or discriminatory.

Concluding Remarks

What does the above analysis mean? Basically that there is a lack of a comprehensive, gender-sensitive, all-embracing normative framework in which the concerns of gender and academic freedom are clearly spelt out. In the

African context the essential first step must necessarily be the promulgation of a declaration or edict on gender and academic freedom to supplement and fortify the existing Dar and Kampala documents. Special attention in such an instrument would cover the essential issues of gender parity, sexual harassment, stereotypes, violence, discrimination and prejudice, among others. Secondly, there is an additional need for a continental legal mechanism building on the spirit of CEDAW and the Lima Declaration at the international level and the African Charter together with the Dar and Kampala declarations at the regional levels, which comprehensively addresses itself to the broad human rights of African women.

At the same time, the limitations of a purely legalistic approach to the problem must clearly be laid out. The problem is not a legal one *per se*. Rather, it is deeply rooted in a variegated web of social, economic, cultural, political and even conceptual problems. To overcome these factors, the strategies adopted must likewise be multifarious and cross-disciplinary. At the end of the day, the struggle for academic freedom for women, just as is the case with men, cannot be isolated from the broader struggle for democratic and human freedoms. As we have sought to illustrate in this essay, the lack of academic freedom within the context of the academy (the epitome of institutional learning) in fact has its roots in a much smaller microcosm of society — the family — the institution in which the process of learning commences. This implies, first and foremost, the democratisation of the family. Of course, in the context of state structures which are inimical to the democratic evolution of either the family or the academy, the quest for gender-sensitised academic freedom remains a distant hope. The opportunity to change this condition must be seized upon by progressive, dynamic and enlightened women and men in order to move towards a democratic, engendered, and participatory social framework for African humanity.

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School Participation by Gender: Implications for Occupational Activities in Kenya

Ruth N. Otunga*

Introduction

THIS PAPER EXAMINES participation in schooling and selected occupational activities by gender in Kenya. The major concern is equity of access to schooling by gender. 'Schooling' refers to the process of attending an institution of learning in the formal education system, that is, primary, secondary and tertiary, with the hope that the individual doing so is gaining something worthwhile. The gains of formal education are normally evident in the acquisition of necessary skills, attitudes and values that are fundamental to the existence of an individual. The author concluded that the issue of education of girls in Kenya particularly has to be redressed.

The first part of this paper gives an overview of the education system, examining the national population estimates and government expenditure on education in Kenya. This is followed by a discussion of participation at primary, secondary and tertiary levels by gender. Thereafter, the paper discusses participation by gender in selected activities namely, the civil service and other sectors of the economy. Efforts to alleviate gender disparities are also discussed. Conclusions are deduced, which culminate in suggestions towards redressing the issues raised and discussed throughout the paper.

The Education System: An Overview

Prior to 1985, the Kenyan system of education entailed 7 years of primary education, 4 years secondary education, 2 years of high school and 3 years of minimum university education. Currently, the system of education, referred to as the 8:4:4 system of education, involves 8 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education and 4 years of minimum university education. This was

* Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya.

implemented in January 1985, after the government accepted the recommendations of the Mackay Commission (1981). This Commission was required to make general recommendations regarding the implementation of government's decision to establish a second university in the country.

Presently, there are five public universities in Kenya: the University of Nairobi, Moi University, Kenyatta University, Egerton University and Jomo Kenyatta University. These universities do not meet all the admissions demands of qualified applicants. Consequently, those who do not gain access to public universities enrol in post-school education institutions, generally referred to as middle-level colleges. These colleges include: teacher training colleges; the Government Secretarial college; the Christian Industrial Training Centre; Institute of agriculture; the Animal Health and Industrial Training Institute; the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication; medical training schools; vocational training units; polytechnics and 'harambee' (self-help) institutes of technology. Most of the educational activities in the country are co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education.

Population and Government Expenditure

Table 1 shows the population distribution by gender in 1989. This trend has not drastically changed as most people still live in the rural areas, with women as the majority. On the other hand, the women form the smaller proportion of the population in urban areas.

The Government of Kenya attaches great importance to education and its expenditure policies have also favoured education (UNICEF 1989). It spends more money on education than any other social service ministry and this expenditure increases every subsequent year (Republic of Kenya 1993a). The Social Service Ministries take a large part of the government expenditure both recurrent and development. In 1988/89 for example, a total of K641.77 million shillings was allocated to social service ministries for both recurrent and development expenditure and the Ministry of Education alone consumed 76 per cent. While in 1991/92, of a total estimated amount of K887.94 million shillings spent by social service ministries on both recurrent and development expenditure, the Ministry of Education was allocated and spent 73.3 per cent (Republic of Kenya 1993a).

Table 1: Population Distribution by Gender 1989

	Male	Per Cent	Female	Per Cent	Total	Per Cent
Rural Dwellers	9,733,000	49.0	10,137,000	51.0	19,870,000	100
Urban Dwellers	1,993,000	54.7	1,650,000	45.3	3,643,000	100
	11,726,000	49.9	11,787,000	50.1	23,513,000	100

Source: Republic of Kenya (1992).

The most rational justification for the Government allocating and spending such huge amounts of money on education is to develop human resources. The development of human resources depends on the level and intensity of formal and non-formal education and training (Republic of Kenya 1992a). The guiding philosophy of education is that in general, 'the education system should aim at producing individuals who are properly socialised, who possess the necessary knowledge, skills attitudes and values to enable them to participate in nation-building' (Republic of Kenya 1988:210-211).

Besides, it is clearly articulated and documented that one of the key elements of Kenya's 'education policy is ensuring equity of access to schooling' (UNICEF 1989:16). Equity of access to schooling by gender is the concern of this paper. Essentially, the focus is on formal education which ranges from primary through high school to university.

Participation at Primary School Level by Gender

Primary school level is the foundation of education and officially starts at six years old. Table 2 shows the enrolment figures of both girls and boys at this level of education 1963 to 1992.

Table 2 shows that at independence (1963), the enrolment of girls in primary schools was much lower than that of the boys. That is, 34.2 per cent of the total school population were girls. Over the years the participation rate of girls steadily increased. Since 1978, the enrolment imbalances by gender were reduced considerably, to near parity. In recent times, there has been, in fact, no significant difference between the enrolment rate of boys compared to girls.

Table 2: Primary School Enrolment by Sex, 1963-1992 ('000)

Year	Total No. of Students	No. of Boys	No. of Girls	Percentage of Boys	Percentage of Girls
1963	891.5	586.7	308.8	65.8	34.2
1964	1,014.7	657.6	357.1	64.8	35.2
1965	1,010.9	631.5	379.4	62.5	37.5
1966	1,043.4	663.9	379.5	63.7	36.3
1968	1,209.7	725.0	484.7	59.9	40.1
1969	1,282.3	762.8	519.5	59.5	40.5
1970	1,427.6	836.3	391.3	58.6	51.4
1971	1,525.5	881.0	644.5	57.7	42.3
1972	1,675.9	956.6	719.3	57.1	42.9
1974	2,703.9	1,491.5	1,212.3	55.2	44.8
1975	2,881.2	1,561.5	1,319.7	54.2	45.8
1977	2,971.2	1,583.8	1,387.4	53.3	46.7
1978	2,995.0	1,500.5	1,494.5	50.2	49.8
1979	3,698.2	1,953.7	1,744.5	52.8	47.2
1989	5,389.3	2,766.0	2,623.3	51.3	48.7
1990	5,392.3	2,766.3	2,626.0	51.3	48.7
1991	5,456.1	2,797.1	2,659.0	51.3	48.7
1992	5,530.2	2,806.8	2,723.4	50.7	49.3

Source: Republic of Kenya (1993a:12).

It must be noted at this point that this is a very general picture at the national level. The situation is, however, different for specific regions in the country. In a study by Eshiwani (1985), it was found that girls were most represented in Central and Nairobi Provinces. However, there was very low enrolment of girls at this level of education in the arid and semi-arid areas and in poor agricultural regions. In these regions, populations are predominantly pastoralists and have strong cultural and religious norms and traditions that depress female enrolment. Various reasons account for the lagging behind of the enrolment of girls in these regions namely, a negative attitude towards the education of women, an early

age of marriage for girls, the withdrawal of girls from school to help in family chores and mistrust of school discipline (Republic of Kenya 1993a).

Regarding the primary school curriculum, the following subjects are studied: Mathematics, English, Kiswahili, GHC (Geography, History and Civics), Science and Agriculture, Business Education, Home Science, Art and Craft and Religious Education (Christian Religious Education and Islamic Religious Education). Apart from Religious Education, where learners have a choice between Christian and Islamic Religious Education, they all have to learn the rest of the subjects and are examinable in the KCPE (Kenya Certificate of Primary Education) examination. The next section focuses on the secondary school level of education.

Participation at Secondary School Level by Gender

Secondary education constitutes a consolidation and transition between elementary (primary) education and higher education and/or the world of work. Over the years secondary education has expanded almost two-fold. Secondary schools in the country are classified according to the district from which they draw their pupils.

Under this classification, students hope to gain access to national, provincial or district schools, depending on how they perform in the national examination, the KCPE. The national schools draw pupils from all over the Republic irrespective of the school's locations or home districts of the pupils. The status of these schools has remained high due to the high level of performance in public examinations required of pupils enrolling in them. They are given first priority in Form I selection and have a high level of supply of equipment and teaching aids. They also offer boarding facilities.

In total, there are eight national schools exclusively for boys and seven exclusively for girls. Three of these schools offer co-educational facilities. Of the total student population who attended national schools from 1987 up to completion of the secondary school cycle in 1990, 37.7 per cent were girls and 62.3 per cent were boys (Republic of Kenya 1993a). The girls' schools with an average of 128 girls per school tend to be smaller in size compared to the boys' school which have an average of 186 boys per school.

The competitive schools after the national schools are provincial schools. They draw 85 per cent of their Form I intake from their home districts, reserving the other 15 per cent for pupils from the rest of the province. These schools pick the best students in the province who have not been selected by national schools.

The district schools are usually the last to make Form I selections. Logically, therefore, they would be picking the students with the lowest KCPE performance. They are required to have a student population that is entirely from the home district of the pupils. On average, they tend to have poor educational facilities both with regard to physical development, teaching aids and sometimes teaching staff. These schools do not have any Government subsidy and, therefore, are comparatively more expensive than the national and provincial schools for individual students.

Table 3: Estimated School Places by Gender, 1990

Province	Boys only	Per Cent	Girls only	Per Cent	Mixed	Per Cent	Total	Per Cent
Central	46	9.1	56	11.1	404	97.8	506	100
Coast	16	17.8	10	11.1	64	71.1	90	100
Eastern	37	23.1	42	26.3	81	50.6	160	100
North Eastern	8	66.7	4	33.3	0	0	12	100
Nyanza	37	13.4	30	10.8	210	75.8	277	100
Rift Valley	71	23.4						
Western	35	12.2	49	17.1	202	70.6	286	100
Total	250	15.3	247	15.1	1137	69.6	1634	100

Source: Republic of Kenya (1993).

Table 3 shows the national estimated school places by gender. Nationally, there is no big difference in the school places for boys only and girls only. Co-education school places are quite substantial as they constitute approximately 70 per cent of the national places.

Table 4 shows that the enrolment of boys was usually higher than that of the girls. However, the total enrolment of girls had been steadily increasing, although at a lower rate. In 1989 the female enrolment dropped. This was the year when the first 8:4:4 secondary component sat for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) examination. It is possible that this was caused by preference for boys in enrolment, particularly in co-educational schools where both sexes compete for the same places.

Table 4: Enrolment in Secondary Schools, 1988-1992

Year	Male	Female	Total	Percentage Male	Percentage Female
1988	318,001	222,191	540,192	58.9	41.1
1989	383,135	257,600	640,735	59.8	40.2
1990	353,695	264,766	618,461	57.2	42.8
1991	345,788	268,373	614,161	56.3	43.7
1992	355,079	266,364	621,443	57.1	42.9

Source: Republic of Kenya (1993a:23).

The education policy in Kenya requires that pupils enrolling in Form I in the secondary schools be at least 14 years of age. Once enrolled, they are expected to undergo a 4 year course and sit for the KCSE examination. All things being equal, the same number of students that enrolled in Form I should sit for KCSE in Form IV. However, a number of factors affect a cohort's transition from Form I to Form IV. Some of these include:

1. (a) In-migration and out-migration from the country;
   (b) In-migration and out-migration from one district to another;
2. Repeating;
3. Dropping out of school due to lack of fees, teenage pregnancies, early marriages or for any other reason;
4. Joining school after a long period of absence; and
5. Mortality.

Source: Republic of Kenya (1993a: 52).

Of all these reasons, the high drop-out (wastage) rates for girls is an issue of concern. The more popular theory advanced for the high drop-out rates among the girls is that parents still see boys as fetching greater financial gain on successful completion of school since they are culturally entitled to family land and, therefore, remain in their birth homes. This assumption requires problematisation as general observation has shown that the level of family

support does not depend on gender and location of the person. On the other hand, since the girls marry off, they are assumed to have little need for academic qualifications as they are traditionally not supposed to work outside homes and should depend on their husbands. Even when they do work outside homes, they are more likely to benefit families into which they marry than their natal families. This assumption tends to be stronger in some ethnic groups than others. In the event of scarce funds, therefore, this theory contends that the parents prefer to pay fees for the boys than for girls.

In addition, most families in Kenya are poor, or at least do not have enough financial resources considering the recent implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). The great majority of households derive most of their income from farming and, therefore, demand the labour services of their children on the farm in order to be able to raise some money for school fees (Raju 1973). Those poor families which cannot afford to hire labour sometimes find it necessary to withdraw children from school to work on the family farm or look after cattle. Those withdrawn are mainly girls because they are seen as more able to help with work around the home than boys. Consequently, between the age of 15-16.3 years, the probability of female participation in the labour force has been found higher than that of males (Republic of Kenya 1993b).

Teenage girls also drop out of school because of pregnancies and/or forced early marriages in some communities. The problem of teenage pregnancies has been prevalent and causes public concern. Currently, some effort is being made to facilitate such girls rejoining the main-stream to avoid further damage to them. On the other hand, the problem of forced early marriages is not rampant nationally but affects those communities that have not yet properly appreciated the value of educating their children and specifically the girls. This is the case particularly among the pastoralists. However, where such cases have been known, the Government has intervened to save the girls involved.

The issue of repetition is more common among boys than girls. It may be, and to a large extent is true, that parents worry a lot about their daughters dropping out of school and so tend to push them through the school system as fast as possible. Secondly and finally, is that, since repetition of classes is meant to enhance the student's academic achievement, this phenomenon seems to reinforce the notion that society sets higher goals for boys and gives them more chances within which to achieve the goals than it does with the girls (Republic of Kenya 1993b).

Concerning the curriculum, the following subjects are offered: English, Kiswahili, History and Government, Geography, Mathematics, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Christian Religious

Education, Islamic Religious Education, Social Education and Ethics, Home Science, Art and Design, Agriculture, Woodwork, Building Construction, Power Mechanics, Electricity, Drawing and Design, French, German, Music, Accounting, Commerce, Economics, Typewriting with Office Practice. Apart from the first five, which are compulsory, the other subjects are electives which are offered in those schools that have the required facilities. For KCSE, eight or nine of these subjects (including the compulsory five) must be studied. It is worth noting that there are more science and technical places in boys' schools than in girls' schools. This arrangement tends to affirm the status quo, i.e. boys are given more chances to enrol for science and technical subjects than is the case for girls.

Moreover, the limited facilities, equipment and materials for science and technical subjects in girls' schools automatically excludes them from such subjects. Instead, they enrol in fields that are already over-subscribed, have low status, are less challenging, provide them with fewer chances of advancing professionally and consequently limit their opportunities to influence policies that affect their situation. All these tend to influence the girls' effective participation in school and consequent loss of benefits that go with schooling.

Participation at Tertiary Level by Gender

Tertiary level education includes education offered in all middle-level colleges and universities. This paper targets and focuses on university education.

In the foregoing discussion, it was noted that the rate of participation of girls at secondary school level is lower than at primary school level. This rate is even lower at the university level. It is further complicated by the attitude that some disciplines like Engineering, Sciences, Law and Business are unsuitable for women. As a result, there are very low enrolment rates for women in some disciplines. Table 5 shows the enrolment differentials in various disciplines during the 1989/90 academic year.

Table 5 shows that most women enrolled in liberal arts. Nonetheless, their total enrolment was only 36.9 per cent of the total enrolment in these disciplines. In Law and Business (26.8 per cent), Science and Engineering (14.9 per cent) the situation was much worse. This can partially be accounted for by the fact that there are few science places in girls' secondary schools in the country and boys still compete with the girls in the remaining available places. As a result, therefore, at university level few girls end up in these fields that are already over-subscribed. On the whole, the women participation at this level of education is very low (29.4 per cent).

Table 5: 1988/90 Academic Year Enrolment in the Various Disciplines by Gender

Discipline	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Percentage Male	Percentage Female
Liberal Arts	12,743	8,040	4,703	63.1	36.9
Law & Business	2,312	1,693	619	73.2	26.8
Science & Engineering	8,170	6,951	1,219	85.1	14.9
Agriculture	2,237	1,483	754	66.3	33.7
Others	2,110	1,287	823	61.0	39.0
Total	27,572	19,454	8,118	70.6	29.4

Source: *Women's Bureau Newsletter* No. 2, 1990:3.

It was noted early in this paper that at primary school level, the participation of girls and boys was almost at parity. However, the gender disparity in school participation begins to emerge at secondary school level. This is even complicated by the curriculum arrangement where most boys are encouraged and facilitated to study the sciences and technical subjects while most girls are channelled into subjects that are thought to be 'suitable' for them. At university level, the disparity worsens. Firstly, the female participation is very low (29.4 per cent). Secondly, their participation in each of the selected disciplines was far below parity. This situation raises certain concerns for instance, how do women perform in occupational activities? Do they still lag behind? The next section focuses on these concerns.

Participation in Occupational Activities by Gender

The colonial legacy of schooling and employment was such that all those with a given level of education could be employed. This has since changed as more and more people have access to education. School leavers until recently have been employed in the civil service at all levels. Table 6 gives the information on the representation by gender in the civil service.

Table 6: Number of Civil Servants by Sex and Grade as at 31st March, 1991

Job Group	Male	Female	Total	Percentage Male	Percentage Female
A	41,477	12,060	53,537	77.5	22.5
B	9,235	2,815	12,050	76.6	23.4
C	18,257	6,004	24,261	75.3	24.7
D	24,885	10,457	35,342	70.4	29.6
E	15,122	3,318	18,440	82.0	18.0
F	62,470	14,296	76,766	81.4	18.6
G	18,249	4,595	22,844	79.6	20.1
H	9,931	2,344	12,275	80.9	19.1
J	5,460	823	5,948	84.4	15.6
K	5,032	916	5,948	84.6	15.4
L	2,748	472	3,220	85.3	14.7
M	1,203	163	1,366	88.1	11.9
N	603	47	650	92.8	7.2
P	280	15	295	94.9	5.1
Q	140	6	146	95.9	4.1
R	78	5	83	94.0	6.0
S	17	0	17	100.0	0.0
T	4	0	4	100.0	0.0
Total	215,191	58,336	273,192	78.8	21.4

Note: Job group is a classification category used for people of the same cadre in the civil service. Job group 'A' is the lowest (includes messengers, cleaners, etc.) while job group 'T' is the highest grade (Permanent Secretary, Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of Public Service). Most graduates enter the service at point 'H'.

Source: Republic of Kenya (1993b:28).

Table 6 shows that women are under-represented at all job groups and the situation worsens as one moves from the lowest job group 'A' to the highest (T). At all levels, the number of men employed exceeded that of women. The percentage of female representation becomes smaller and smaller and eventually falls to zero at job group 'S' and 'T'. The highest representation of females (29.6 per cent) is in job group 'D' (see appendix showing grading of posts in the civil service: Posts common to Ministries and Departments). Although this is the job group in which the female representation is highest, the males are still dominant (70.4 per cent).

As for the top two job groups 'S' and 'T' (not delineated in the appendix) the female representation is nil. Job group 'S' includes: Chair-Public Service Commission, Controller and Auditor-General, Auditor-General (Corporations), Permanent Secretary-Office of the Vice President and Ministry of Finance, etc. While job group 'T' includes Permanent Secretary. Secretary to the cabinet and Head of the Public Service Commission, Attorney General, etc. All these top jobs and others in the same calibre are acquired by Presidential appointment. No woman has held such jobs in the history of Kenya.

Women are also involved in the labour market in other sectors of the economy, ranging from professionals to labourers. They are generally underrepresented in professional, technical, administrative and managerial jobs (*Women's Bureau Newsletter* No. 2, 1990:8).

Agriculture is the principal area which uses female labour. Here women mainly do the back-breaking jobs of planting, weeding and harvesting while men operate mechanical equipment such as tractors, ploughs, harvesters and harrows. It is worth noting that in agriculture, industry and services, women are normally clustered in unskilled dead-end jobs with low pay and little potential for training and advancement (UNICEF 1989).

As highlighted earlier in this paper, more girls drop out of school than boys. This partly explains why more women are found in petty trading and provision of services. This may be so because they can not get employment in the formal sector. It is also possible that most women do not apply due to cultural inhibitions and/or are discriminated against in the formal sector. Women usually have to combine their earning role with that of wife and mother which includes domestic labour whereas husbands and fathers do not. It is also possible for them to carry out such jobs which have few overheads like provision of services. But the multiple responsibilities of women make it difficult for them to take time off for training in small business management (UNICEF 1989). All these factors facilitate the creation of a vicious circle of poverty in which women suffer continuous marginalisation.

Improvement Efforts

There have been deliberate efforts to improve the situation of girls and women in the country. This section examines the various attempts made to improve education generally, including that of girls, their limitations and affirmative action.

In 1985, the Government implemented the 8:4:4 system of education to strengthen the practical aspects of the school curriculum in order to make the students self-reliant and make the curriculum relevant to the needs of the society regardless of gender. However, boys are still channelled into scientific and technical subjects while most girls continue to learn the social sciences. Home Science, for example, is still a popular curriculum area for the girls while boys who enrol for this subject at secondary school level face disapproval from parents and their colleagues (Otunga 1993).

The Government has tried to establish primary boarding schools in the semi-arid and other parts of the country and to improve the selection of students from these areas to national schools, to improve the level of access and opportunity for all students from all areas. In reality, however, these schools are mainly filled by children of well-to-do parents from other regions of the country.

Primary education is considered a basic human right that should be provided to all Kenyans. Consequently, the Government abolished direct payment of fees in primary schools gradually from 1974, and this was fully achieved for all classes in 1985. However, the payment of development funds, the purchase of learning equipment, materials and uniforms are not less expensive as they amount to more than what was previously paid as school fees. This is due to the recurrent nature of some of these payments such as development funds with no definite amount set for all schools. This arrangement leaves parents still at the mercy of heads of institutions. As a result, poor parents still have to make a choice of which child should go to school. Due to the cultural orientations of most Kenyans, the girls are more likely to be disadvantaged.

By policy, students in secondary schools can choose and study any discipline so long as it is offered and the facilities are available. In practice, boys' secondary schools are better provided for in terms of equipment, materials and personnel, particularly for science and technical subjects. As a result, it is not practically possible that every student at this level of education can enrol and learn any subject, especially if she is a girl, or in a district school.

It has been suggested by Government officials that girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy could possibly be allowed to re-join the mainstream after some time. However, it has not been explicated exactly how this is to be

implemented and the victims are still disappearing from the school system except for those whose parents make individual efforts to facilitate their re-joining the school system.

At university level, there is the Joint Admission Board (JAB) which reduced the female entry cut-off points in order to offer more opportunities for women. This took effect starting in 1992/93 academic year. This affirmative action was welcome by people from many quarters as it targeted the improvement of female participation at this level of education. However, this move may also have negative implications as those girls who join university as a result of this action could be resented by the rest of the student community. This resentment may exert socio-psychological pressures on the girls concerned.

There is a giant 'Maendeleo ya Wanawake' (Women in Development) national body with sub-branches at provincial and district levels which concentrates mainly on women affairs and has the Government's support in their activities. This body has been highly politicised and does not appropriately focus on women's issues. Its past activities demonstrate that it is more concerned with promoting the status quo especially when it temporarily changed its name to 'Kanu Maendeleo ya Wanawake' during the campaign and election period in 1991-92. 'Kanu' being the ruling party in the country, it meant that this women's organisation was open to manipulation. It has since dropped the 'Kanu' tag but, its activities have remained partisan.

The Women's Bureau was established in 1976 in the Ministry of Culture and Social Services. Its goal is the formulation of policies and programmes designed to ensure that women's needs and interests are identified and taken care of. It is also concerned with research in gender issues. In 1993 for example, this Bureau carried out research and produced reports on gender analysis at primary and secondary levels of education, literacy and adult education. Hopefully the findings in these works will be used at education policy levels.

There have also been the establishment of women's sections in Government ministries and the appointment of women in key positions in Government and parastatals. It is hoped that efforts in this direction will continue as gender awareness and sensitivity education continue gaining ground.

By policy, women can work at any level of the economy so long as they qualify. From the data so far presented in this paper, this is not possible as women are categorically underrepresented right from school level. In practice, very few women are working at highly professional and decision-making levels.

Conclusion

It has been presented in this paper that the underrepresentation of female or girls in formal education can be attributed to a number of factors.. Among the most important are: the socio-cultural perspectives within society and the limited number of educational institutions for females compared to those of males. Women are also underrepresented in science and technical fields due to inadequate provision of necessary facilities, equipment and materials.

The education policy in Kenya has operated within the broad national framework laid down in the Government's Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965. The key features of this policy include, 'the need to be free from want, ignorance and disease' (UNICEF 1989:103). All these are supposed to be effected regardless of gender. However, the gender-neutral language of the State does not operate in the same way for both sexes. In practice, the state operations are gender-blind as they do not take into account the specific circumstances of the girls. In implementing this policy, the State is also gender-biased as there are more schools and/or science places for boys than for girls. In effect, women are not adequately represented at policy decision forums and their participation in nation-building is not properly appreciated and projected. Thus, it is here suggested that there is a need for gender awareness and sensitivity on the part of the Government machinery to take on board both sexes with a bias-free perspective.

Education influences women's economic participation and earning power, and also the number of children they have and the health their children will have. In fact, education develops human potential and it is vital for a fully productive role in life for women as well as men (Sivard 1985).

Women's economic contribution on a global basis, ranges from 10-58 per cent of full household income. Full household income, cash income, income in-kind, and the value of labour devoted to unpaid activities carried on by and for its members, which might be replaced by market goods and services (McGuire 1990). In fact, women engage in more total productive time than men. Although the amount of time in paid activities is less for women, sometimes considerably less, women spend a large amount of time in home production relative to men.

Apart from reproduction and healthcare, women are actively involved in food production, processing, purchasing and preparation. In effect, they are 'the major actors in human resource development.... assuring proper nutrition, health and cognitive development of children during their crucial pre-school years' (McGuire 1990).

From the foregoing facts, it is in order to assert at this point that the issue of education in general and the education of women in particular needs to be redressed in Kenya. Acknowledging that women play an important role in the development of the smallest social institution — the family, and also at the national and global levels, gender biases require problematisation. Consequent to this, more bold steps should be taken and strategically implemented to improve the participation rates of women at all levels of formal education. If anything, their participation rates should be highest considering their central position in human resource development.

Having problematised the participation in schooling and selected occupational activities by gender, the following would go a long way in alleviating the situation: provision of more schools for girls, provision of more science and technical subjects for girls, intensification of the guidance and counselling services in the school system to specifically focus on building deserving confidence in girls. There is also the need for gender sensitisation of all those at policy decision-making levels down to the grassroots.

More important, however, is the education and re-education of the masses through public lecturers, mass media, etc., to change their attitudes towards females. This is pertinent because those females who venture into non-traditional fields, for example, normally face an uphill task as all odds are stacked against them and they have to constantly prove themselves. Continuous gender sensitisation and education of the masses appear to provide a promising long-term solution in this direction.

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Appendix
Grading of Posts in the Kenyan Civil Service* (August 1990)
Posts Common to Ministries and Departments

Description	Job Group
Subordinate Staff II	A
Subordinate Staff I	B
Receptionist Assistant II	C
Data Machine Operator III	C
Grounds/Garden Assistant III	C
Plant Operator III	C
Driver III	C
Photographic Assistant III	C
Fireman III	C
Cinema Operator III	C
Housekeeping Assistant III	C
Cook III	C
Coxswain III	C
Security Warden III	C
Senior Subordinate Staff	C
Housekeeping Assistant IIB	D
Copy Typist II	D
Clerical Officer	D
Audit Examiner III	D
Storeman II	D
Receptionist Assistant IIB	D
Junior Survey Assistant IIB	D
Telephone Operator II	D

* Office of the President, Kenya

Description	Job Group
Plant Operator IIB	D
Driver II	D
Ground/Garden Assistant IIB	D
Cook II	D
Laundry Assistant IIB	D
Fingerprint Assistant (Trainee)	D
Social Welfare Assistant IIB	D
Coxswain IIB	D
Data Machine Operator II	D
Security Warden IIB	D
Fireman II	D
Tailor III	D
Laundry Assistant III	D
Carpenter III	D
Mechanic III	D
Mason III	D
Electrician III	D
Boiler Assistant III	D
Laboratory Technician (Trainee)	D
Junior Survey Assistant IIA	E
Higher Clerical Officer	E
Telephone Operator I	E
Storeman I	E
Driver I	E
Boiler Assistant I	E
Plant Operator IIA	E
Copy Typist I	E
Data Machine Operator I	E
Grounds Garden Assistant IIA	E
Photograph Assistant IIA	E

Description	Job Group
Fireman I	E
Cinema Operator IIA	E
Housekeeping Assistant IIA	E
Cook I	E
Laundry Assistant IIA	E
Fingerprint Assistant IIA	E
Technician II (Electronic)	E
Rigger II.	E
Security Warden I	E
Receptionist Assistant IIA	E
Social Welfare Assistant IIA	E
Coxswain IIA	E
Mechanic II	E
Electrician II	E
Carpenter II	E
Tailor II	E
Boiler Assistant II	E
Laboratory Technician IV	E
Library Assistant	F
Audit Examiner II	F
Statistical Assistant I	F
Senior Data Machine Operator	F
Ground/Gardens Assistant I	F
Assistant Draughtsman I	F
Plant Operator I	F
Social Welfare Assistant I	F
Photographic Assistant I	F
Audio Visual Assistant I	F
Cinema Operator I	F
Senior Clerical Officer	F
Senior Telephone Operator	F
Supplies Assistant II	F
Shorthand Typist II	F

Description	Job Group
Senior Copy Typist	F
Assistant Housekeeper	I F
Assistant Cateress I	F
Senior Cook	F
Laundry Assistant I	F
Laboratory Technician III	F
Fingerprint Assistant I	F
Senior Security Warden	F
Assistant Receptionist	F
Survey Assistant IV	F
Mechanic I	F
Electrician I	F
Carpenter I	F
Tailor I	F
Mason I	F
Technician II (Electronics)	F
Rigger I	F
Senior Boiler Assistant	F
Senior Fireman	F
Accounts Assistant	G
Personnel Assistant	G
Executive Assistant	G
Audit Examiner I	G
Supplies Assistant I	G
Senior Statistical Assistant	G
Draughtsman III	G
Social Welfare Officer III	G
Photographer III	G
Laboratory Technologist III	G
Inspector (Buildings)	G
Inspector (Mechanical)	G
Inspector (Electrical)	G

Description	Job Group
Inspector (Electronics)	G
Inspector (Rigging)	G
Foreman	G
Data Machine Supervisor III	G
Senior Plant Operator	G
Audo Visual Aids Officer III	G
Housekeeper III	G
Cateress III	G
Senior Fingerprint Assistant	G
Shorthand typist I	G
Receptionist III	G
Fire Officer III	G
Security Officer III	G
Survey Assistant III	G
Telephone Supervisor III	G
Assistant Superintendent of Gardens	G
Commercial Instructor	G
Chief Cook	G
Senior Library Assistant	G
Foreman	G
Laboratory Technician II	G
Chargehand	G
Assistant Secretary Cadet	H
Personal Secretary II	H
Executive Officer II	H
Senior Audit Examiner	H
Data Machine Supervisor II	H
Security Officer II	H
Draughtsman II	H
Social Welfare Officer II	H
Photographer II	H
Telephone Supervisor III	H

Description	Job Group
Housekeeper II	H
Fingerprint Officer II	H
Commercial Teacher II	H
Senior Inspector (Buildings)	H
Senior Inspector (Mechanical)	H
Senior Inspector (Electrical)	H
Senior Inspector (Electronics)	H
Senior Inspector (Rigging)	H
Librarian III	H
Receptionist II	H
Assistant Librarian	H
Sports Officer II	H
Audio Visual Aids Officer II	H
Fire Service Officer II	H
Laboratory Technologist II	H
Laboratory Technician	H
Assistant Secretary III	J
Executive Officer I	J
Statistical Officer I	J
Survey Assistant I	J
Draughtsman I	J
Social Welfare Officer I	J
Photographer I	J
Laboratory Technologist I	J
Security Officer I	J
Sports Officer I	J
Receptionist I	J
Personal Secretary I	J
Audio Visual Aids Officer I	J
Data Machine Supervisor I	J
Fingerprint Officer I	J
Housekeeper I	J
Telephone Supervisor II	J

Description	Job Group
Superintendent (Buildings)	J
Superintendent (Mechanical)	J
Superintendent (Electrical)	J
Superintendent (Electronics)	J
Superintendent (Rigging)	J
Fire Service Officer I	J
Accountant II	J
Auditor II	J
Personnel Officer II	J
Senior Laboratory Technician	J
Supplies Officer II	J
Statistical Officer II	J
Librarian II	J
Senior Personal Secretary	K
Senior Statistical Officer	K
Senior Executive Officer	K
Senior Housekeeper	K
Senior Survey Assistant	K
Assistant Secretary II	K
Senior Draughtsman	K
Senior Social Welfare Officer	K
Senior Photographer	K
Senior Laboratory Technologist	K
Senior Superintendent (Buildings)	K
Senior Superintendent (Mechanical)	K
Senior Superintendent (Electrical)	K
Senior Superintendent (Electronics)	K
Senior Superintendent (Rigging)	K
Senior Security Officer	K
Senior Data Machine Supervisor	K
Senior Fire Services Officer	K
Lecturer I (Training Institutions)	K
Economist II	K

Description	Job Group
Assistant Engineer	K
Staff Surveyor II	K
Biologist II	K
Telephone Supervisor I	K
Senior Catering Manager	K
Senior Fingerprint Officer	K
Accountant I	K
Personnel Officer I	K
Supplies Officer I	K
Librarian I	K
Auditor I	K
Senior Lecturer (Training Institutions)	L
Chief Executive Officer	L
Senior Librarian	L
Chief Laboratory Technologist	L
Chief Fire Service Officer	L
Chief Fingerprint Officer	L
Economist/Statistician I	L
Engineer	L
Staff Surveyor I	L
Biologist I	L
Assistant Secretary I	L
Chief Superintendent	L
Senior Accountant	L
Senior Personnel Officer	L
Senior Auditor	L
Senior Supplies Officer	L
Principal Auditor	M
Superintending Engineer	M
Senior Economist/Statistician	M
Senior Biologist	M
Senior Assistant Secretary	M

Description	Job Group
Chief Accountant	M
Chief Supplies Officer	M
Chief Personnel Officer	M
Principal Librarian	M
Under Secretary	N
Principal Economist	N
Assistant Director of Audit	N
Accounts Controller	N
Senior Superintending Engineer	N
Principal Personnel Officer	N
Deputy Secretary	P
Senior Principal Personnel Officer	P
Permanent Secretary	R

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Etre une femme intellectuelle en Afrique: de la persistance des stéréotypes culturels sexistes

Christine Zoé Naré*

Introduction

LA VASTE MOBILISATION INTERNATIONALE suscitée autour de la question des femmes a commencé avec la proclamation de l'année internationale de la femme en 1975 sous l'égide des Nations Unies. Elle s'est poursuivie depuis et a permis de montrer, entre autres, l'importance de la contribution des femmes à la vie économique; contribution longtemps sous-estimée et surtout dévalorisée au niveau de la conscience collective.

Le principal mérite de cette mobilisation aura été d'avoir suscité une prise de conscience des inégalités flagrantes qui caractérisent les rapports sociaux sur la base de la différence de sexe et dont les femmes sont les principales victimes.

C'est ce qui ressort des nombreux séminaires, conférences et réunions tenus sur la question de la femme. Ils ont tous insisté sur la nécessité de mener des actions en vue de corriger ces graves inégalités, notamment dans les deux domaines stratégiques que sont l'éducation et l'emploi.

En effet, dans le domaine de l'éducation, la Conférence panafricaine sur l'éducation des filles organisée par l'UNESCO et l'UNICEF du 28 mars au 1er avril 1993 à Ouagadougou (Burkina-Faso) a dressé un sombre tableau montrant que l'accès des filles à l'éducation demeure un problème préoccupant: 26 millions de filles en Afrique ne sont pas scolarisées, et beaucoup de celles qui le sont, obtiennent des résultats médiocres. Les taux bruts de scolarisation des filles sont inférieurs à ceux des garçons dans plus de 40 pays sur 46. En Afrique sub-saharienne par exemple, le taux d'analphabétisme est selon les estimations de 1990, de 41 pour 100 chez les hommes et de 64 pour 100 chez les femmes. Ces taux sont nettement plus élevés lorsque certains pays sont considérés individuellement: 82 pour 100 de femmes non scolarisées au Burkina-Faso,

* Anthropologue, Consultante en sciences sociales, Dakar Fann, Sénégal.

79 pour 100 en Sierra Leone, 77 pour 100 au Bénin et en Ethiopie, 76 pour 100 en Guinée (UNESCO 1993).

Cette préoccupation concerne également l'accès des filles à l'emploi. On constate ainsi que les filles sont moins nombreuses dans les filières comme la formation scientifique et technique, filières offrant une plus grande ouverture sur le marché de l'emploi. Un colloque organisé en 1987 par l'UNESCO, tirait la sonnette d'alarme sur les sombres perspectives d'emploi que posait une telle situation: «les emplois ouverts aux filles risquent ainsi d'être regroupés à plus ou moins long terme dans des domaines nécessitant des compétences moindres, où les salaires sont plus bas et la sécurité de l'emploi minimale; alors que la production globale des femmes»dans les secteurs structurés et non structurés dépassera celle des hommes d'ici à l'an 2000, la part des richesses et du revenu qui leur échoira sera inférieure à celle des hommes" (UNESCO 1987). Plusieurs études montrent que cette «prophétie» est en train de se réaliser.

Répondant aux nombreuses recommandations adoptées lors des rencontres nationales et internationales, les Etats et les agences internationales ont pris des mesures qui allaient de la création de structures officielles, au développement d'activités génératrices de revenus au bénéfice des femmes. De nombreuses recherches ont été également effectuées sur les femmes et ont permis entre autres de dénoncer les limites des mesures et interventions. Dans le domaine de l'éducation et de l'emploi, les mesures adoptées n'ont pas permis de consacrer l'égalité de chance entre filles et garçons, ni de garantir aux femmes le droit au travail et l'égalité de rémunération à travail égal avec les hommes, ni même d'encourager l'accès des femmes aux professions et métiers traditionnellement réservés aux hommes. Malgré les déclarations d'intention au niveau des Etats et malgré les pressions exercées par les féministes, l'écart persiste entre hommes et femmes en matière d'éducation et d'emploi.

Il semble donc exister des résistances et des freins à la promotion de la femme. Pour comprendre cette situation et proposer des solutions appropriées, il est nécessaire d'aborder le problème de l'éducation et de l'emploi sous l'angle de l'analyse des genres. Une telle analyse met en exergue les mécanismes et les idéologies permettant la domination des femmes en montrant comment les rapports sociaux de sexe reproduisent dans la réalité quotidienne, individuelle et collective, les préjugés tenaces fondés sur l'idée d'une infériorité naturelle de la femme et sur le principe d'une division sexuelle du travail, des rôles et statuts spécifiques à chaque sexe.

Ces préjugés trouvent leur fondement dans les images traditionnelles de la femme, véritables stéréotypes sexistes qui décrivent la femme en état d'infériorité constante par rapport à l'homme. Ces stéréotypes confèrent aux

rôles masculins une valeur supérieure et positive tandis que les rôles féminins sont négativement évalués. Au cours des siècles, ces stéréotypes ont été institutionnalisés, codifiés et intériorisés dans la conscience collective, et sont reproduits de manière plus ou moins consciente au niveau des pratiques quotidiennes.

Ces pratiques ont pour fonction de légitimer et de pérenniser la domination de l'homme sur la femme. C'est pourquoi, toute mesure tendant à remettre en cause cette domination est combattue par les membres de la société (hommes et femmes), qui pensent qu'il est de leur devoir de sauvegarder les valeurs traditionnelles. La société doit donc continuer à fonctionner sur la base d'une idéologie qui prône et favorise la supériorité des hommes sur les femmes. Ceci est particulièrement vrai lorsqu'on étudie les problèmes de l'éducation et de l'emploi, domaines qui, dans la société contemporaine, confèrent prestige et pouvoir à ceux qui y réussissent.

Aussi est-il primordial d'analyser les influences des stéréotypes sexistes dans ces domaines et de les combattre en vue de leur élimination, car ils constituent les fondements même des inégalités et des difficultés insurmontables que les femmes rencontrent dans leur cursus scolaire et universitaire ainsi que dans leur vie quotidienne et professionnelle.

Nous allons ainsi montrer comment être une femme intellectuelle c'est-à-dire, acquérir un niveau d'instruction élevé et prétendre arriver au sommet de la hiérarchie dans la vie professionnelle, devient une véritable gageure pour la femme africaine.

Les fondements des stéréotypes sexistes: rôles et statuts des individus

C'est au niveau des rôles et des statuts des individus dans les sociétés qu'on peut voir comment les rapports sociaux de genre se sont tissés à partir d'une idéologie prônant la supériorité de l'homme sur la femme.

Le statut des femmes et la valeur accordée à leurs fonctions ont évolué au cours des siècles et avaient des connotations différentes selon les cultures et les époques. Plusieurs études ont contribué à montrer que les rôles ne sont pas statiques et immuables. La répartition des tâches était essentiellement culturelle et construite à partir d'un ensemble complexe de rapports sociaux utilisant le prétexte d'une différenciation biologique pour légitimer l'idéologie de la supériorité naturelle des hommes sur les femmes, dans des sociétés faites par les hommes et pour les hommes. La distribution traditionnelle des rôles s'est faite sur la base d'une hiérarchisation normative et discriminante des tâches au détriment des femmes. Les tâches accomplies ou assignées aux hommes sont définies comme étant plus honorifiques et comprenant une attribution d'autorité.

«Les tâches de contrôle, de direction, de décision, c'est-à-dire les activités de haut niveau qui ne demandent aucune force — mais de l'autorité — sont des tâches masculines» car adaptées au caractère masculin. Les hommes se trouvent crédités de valeurs positives, de qualités viriles. C'est ainsi que le courage, l'intelligence, la compétence, l'efficacité et l'énergie, sont définis comme étant des caractères moraux propres à l'homme (Segalen 1981).

Cependant, la connotation attachée à un rôle et donc à un statut peut évoluer car elle n'obéit qu'à une seule logique, celle du système social dans lequel elle est définie.

Seule une analyse historique permettrait de présenter ces différentes conditions de la femme. Cette démarche est nécessaire car elle permet d'une part, d'éviter l'homogénéisation des différentes réalités sociales africaines, et d'autre part de ne pas faire la promotion de stéréotypes qui ignorent toute variation dans l'expérience historique, les structures économiques, les cultures et les mutations à travers le temps (Imam et Mama 1994).

L'exemple de la condition des femmes dans l'Afrique orientale précoloniale montre comment les changements du statut des hommes et des femmes, sont fonction de l'évolution politique. En effet «dans la mesure où les sociétés précoloniales avaient pour souci dominant d'assurer leurs subsistances» les femmes en tant que productrices de biens, «étaient en général protégées par des droits bien reconnus sur la terre et sur les autres moyens de subsistance». Mais «dans les cas où un Etat était déjà constitué, la différenciation sociale fondée sur la propriété des moyens de production aurait tendance à placer les femmes, en tant que groupe, dans une subordination économique» (Pala et Ly 1979).

Toujours dans l'Afrique précoloniale il existait des sociétés où les femmes ont été valorisées dans leurs fonctions. On peut notamment mentionner l'importance des femmes Maguzawa comme productrices et celle des femmes Yoruba en tant que commerçantes. C'est surtout le système patriarcal qui reproduit cette répartition normative des tâches et des biens en favorisant la suprématie des hommes sur les femmes. En Afrique Sub-Saharienne, les tâches et les biens, sont dans certains cas, l'objet d'une lutte, d'une négociation des rôles entre les genres «bargaining patriarchy», tandis que dans le patriarcat classique (sociétés musulmanes du Moyen-Orient) on assiste à une certaine passivité des femmes, une acceptation de leur subordination (Kandiyoti 1988).

La colonisation a contribué à renforcer les éléments de l'idéologie patriarcale à travers les missions catholiques, les églises, et l'éducation formelle. Durant cette période, la philosophie qui caractérisait l'époque victorienne était reproduite notamment à travers le système éducatif qui établissait la hiérarchie des rôles en référence au domaine privé ou public avec une supériorité du public

sur le privé. C'est ce qui explique pourquoi le travail domestique, les tâches ménagères ne sont pas valorisées et reconnues comme étant des activités économiques. Ainsi les femmes reléguées dans le domaine du privé devaient être enseignées pour former de futures mères, des ménagères. Tandis que les hommes devaient acquérir des aptitudes à travailler dans le domaine public. Le colonialisme a également contribué à l'affaiblissement ou à la disparition des sociétés matrilinéaires dans lesquelles les femmes jouissaient relativement de plus de pouvoir et de considérations.

La plupart des sociétés contemporaines reproduisent cette idéologie héritée du colonialisme. Les discours sur l'égalitarisme dans l'optique du genre, comprennent une reconstruction et une revalorisation des idéologies de la supériorité masculine. Dans la pratique, les femmes continuent de vivre cette discrimination à tous les niveaux (professionnel, administratif, religieux, familial):

- Dans la division sexuelle du travail, la hiérarchisation des tâches et fonctions, le contrôle du marché de l'emploi, et la rémunération, les femmes se retrouvent en état d'infériorité (nombres, positions, qualifications). Les idéologies rendent le travail des femmes et des hommes non équivalents en dévaluant celui des femmes, notamment en le rendant invisible et non économique (Imam 1994).
- Au niveau des structures administratives, par exemple le système fiscal (impôts sur le revenu) frappe lourdement les mères de famille salariées, en les considérant comme étant dénuées de toutes charges, parce que ces charges doivent selon les règles sociales, être assumées par le père. Cette disposition renforce l'idée de la dépendance des femmes aux hommes dans le cadre du mariage.
- Dans les structures et communautés religieuses, certaines fonctions importantes sont interdites aux femmes. Elles ne peuvent pas célébrer la messe dans la religion catholique, elles ne peuvent pas non plus diriger la prière du vendredi chez les musulmans.
- Au niveau du code de la nationalité, la femme se trouve dans un état de dépendance par rapport à l'homme. Elle peut ainsi bénéficier de la nationalité et du visa de résidence du pays de son conjoint sans difficulté.
- En matière de filiation, l'enfant est considéré comme étant la propriété exclusive du père. Ainsi, dans certains pays, une femme ne peut pas prendre l'avion avec son bébé ou un enfant en bas âge sans autorisation écrite du père. Le père peut se déplacer avec l'enfant sans qu'un avis de la mère ne soit requis.

Selon l'idéologie propre aux sociétés patriarcales, la subordination de la femme à l'homme ne devait pas seulement être économique, elle devait être également juridique, sociale, et psychologique, car l'image qu'on doit avoir de la femme est celle d'un être inférieur, qui ne pourrait être l'égale de l'homme, jouer les mêmes rôles et jouir du même statut. La femme ne doit donc être valorisée que dans ses fonctions de mère et d'épouse. Elle ne doit pas être poussée à la réussite dans les domaines qui sont les chasses gardées des hommes comme le domaine économique, public, les sphères du pouvoir. Toutes choses que la réussite dans le système éducatif contribuerait à rendre plus accessible.

Les représentations collectives ou stéréotypes de la femme tendaient toutes à reproduire cette image de la femme éternellement subordonnée ou au service de l'homme. Ces stéréotypes sexistes, images mentales, standardisées n'ont aucun fondement scientifique; ils procèdent d'une «généralisation abusive et d'une simplification controversée qui apportent une distorsion à la réalité» (Michel 1986).

Cependant ils influencent notre devenir de manière pernicieuse mais efficace car ils ont été intériorisés pour générer des comportements et attitudes constituant des obstacles importants à l'accès des filles et des femmes à l'éducation et à l'emploi.

Influences des stéréotypes sexistes dans l'acquisition du savoir

L'éducation est primordiale et constitue la base de toute entreprise visant à instaurer une justice sociale, et à mobiliser toutes les ressources humaines dont les sociétés ont besoin pour se développer. Elle peut être considérée comme «une des faveurs essentielles permettant d'assurer aux femmes l'égalité avec les hommes dans l'exercice de leurs droits et de leurs responsabilités dans la société. Elle peut contribuer à changer les mentalités» (UNESCO 1987).

Mais les résistances sont fortes et il existe des conceptions et pratiques qui tendent à perpétuer les disparités entre hommes et femmes dans l'accès à l'éducation. Les obstacles qui se dressent face à la réussite des filles sont à la fois d'ordre familial et institutionnel. En effet, aussi bien dans l'accès à l'éducation que dans le déroulement de la scolarisation, l'influence des stéréotypes culturels et de l'idéologie sexistes est importante. Tout le processus d'acquisition du savoir chez la fille va être discriminatoire accordant plus d'importance à la réussite scolaire du garçon.

C'est ainsi que dans l'accès au système d'éducation formelle, les contraintes économiques influencent différemment l'avenir des enfants selon leur sexe. Les filles seront inscrites à l'école seulement lorsque les moyens financiers permettent d'inscrire les garçons. D'autres types de contraintes liées à des

considérations du genre freinent l'accès à l'éducation des filles. Dans certaines sociétés islamisées, l'école est perçue comme un milieu qui détourne les filles de leur rôle. La scolarisation de la fille est vécue dans certaines sociétés comme une source d'angoisse. Angoisse parce que son détachement de la cellule familiale risque de lui faire adopter certains comportements ou modes de vie et de pensées qui ne feront pas d'elle une «bonne femme» c'est-à-dire une mère et une épouse dévouée et respectueuse des coutumes. D'autres facteurs comme l'éloignement des écoles du village n'encouragent pas les parents à y envoyer les filles car elles seraient soustraites de la surveillance familiale. L'inexistence de toilettes séparées pour les filles a également été identifiée comme raison avancée par certains parents pour ne pas envoyer leurs filles à l'école.

Pour les filles qui ont eu la chance d'accéder au système scolaire, tout un ensemble de facteurs psychologiques, culturels, et sociaux entachés de considérations du genre, vont contribuer à émousser toute volonté de réussite. Pour des raisons économiques, la fille déjà scolarisée et qui réussit bien sera retirée volontiers de l'école pour être remplacée par un jeune frère, si les parents n'ont pas la possibilité de supporter financièrement la scolarisation de tous leurs enfants. C'est le cas surtout en milieu rural et dans les familles défavorisées où les conditions matérielles précaires ne permettent pas de supporter le coût de l'éducation d'une progéniture souvent nombreuse.

La scolarisation du garçon est considérée comme un investissement. Durant toute sa scolarité, le garçon est encouragé à réussir, la famille compte sur lui et le supporte moralement dans cette voie. Dans les sociétés contemporaines où la réussite sociale dépend essentiellement du niveau d'instruction, l'échec scolaire du garçon est considéré comme une catastrophe.

L'instruction de la fille est considérée comme une activité marginale, à la limite contraignante; c'est pourquoi dans la pratique quotidienne, les conditions propices à une réussite des filles ne sont pas réunies. Sa future fonction étant d'être une mère et une épouse, elle doit alors être très tôt initiée aux tâches domestiques. Parallèlement à son instruction scolaire, la petite fille doit alors apprendre les multiples tâches qu'elle est appelée à accomplir dans l'avenir. Pendant que le garçon, de retour de l'école, s'amuse ou étudie, la jeune fille doit faire la vaisselle, la cuisine, aider sa mère. Elle apprendra ses leçons lorsqu'elle aura terminé ses travaux domestiques. Tout ceci contribue à expliquer le faible taux de réussite des filles et les abandons fréquents pour incapacité. Dans certaines sociétés, des filles abandonnent l'école suite à un retrait volontaire des parents. En effet dans les sociétés où les filles sont mariées à un âge précoce, celles-ci sont retirées de l'école lorsqu'on assume qu'elles sont aptes à procréer et que l'on cherche surtout à les préserver du risque de grossesse non désirée que

la fréquentation de l'école pourrait favoriser. Il existe également des cas où les filles sont retirées de l'école pour aider aux travaux ménagers, pour s'occuper des plus jeunes notamment en cas de maladie ou de décès de la mère.

En milieu urbain, l'existence de modèles de réussite de femmes a rendu la scolarisation de la fille aussi importante que celle du garçon. Mais là aussi, des contraintes économiques peuvent justifier le retrait de la fille de l'école au profit du garçon. D'une manière générale, les garçons sont «poussés» plus longtemps dans leurs études par rapport aux filles. En ville l'apprentissage des travaux domestiques est plus ou moins facultatif, surtout dans les familles aisées. Mais il arrive toujours une période, où la jeune adolescente devra y consacrer une partie de son temps. Même lorsque cet apprentissage ne peut pas perturber sa scolarité, il montre néanmoins que dans tous les cas, la réussite scolaire de la fille ne saurait constituer une fin en soi. La jeune fille qui ne réussit pas à l'école, pourra toujours faire un «bon mariage», ce qui n'est pas le cas pour le garçon. Celui-ci est encouragé à réussir pour améliorer ses propres conditions de vie, pour se prendre lui-même en charge. On éduque le garçon dans un esprit d'indépendance tandis que l'éducation de la fille ne se fait que pour l'intérêt de l'homme.

La fille n'a pas suffisamment confiance en elle, elle ne se sent pas valorisée comme le garçon. Les raisons de la faible scolarisation et de la faible réussite des filles, sont ainsi multiples et diversifiées: attitudes négatives envers les filles scolarisées, mariages précoces, grossesses non désirées, retrait des filles pour aider aux travaux domestiques, manque de volonté à investir dans l'éducation des filles. Les filles sont ainsi les premières victimes des redoublements. Trop souvent, les filles échouent car elles n'ont guère appris à avoir confiance en elles, à prendre conscience de leurs capacités réelles (Lange 1994). Le fort taux d'échec scolaire des filles contribue de fait, à renforcer l'idée selon laquelle les filles sont moins intelligentes que les garçons. De même, par sa participation aux travaux ménagers, et face à des garçons qui eux, n'y sont pas soumis, la fille intériorise comme normal le fait que les hommes doivent être servis par les filles.

La société, à travers la famille et dans le processus de socialisation, met ainsi en oeuvre tout un ensemble de pratiques qui reproduisent l'idéologie de la supériorité des hommes sur les femmes, tout en veillant à préserver les conditions nécessaires à sa perpétuation.

Au niveau du secondaire, la sélection porte sur le nombre mais également sur la présence dans les filières scientifiques. Dans plusieurs pays de l'Afrique Sub-saharienne on note une faible implication des filles dans les filières scientifiques. En 1993, c'est par exemple le Mali qui réalise un bon score en agronomie, avec 18 pour 100 de filles inscrites dans cette filière, contre des taux

oscillant entre 0 et 5 pour 100 pour le Bénin, le Congo, le Niger, la République Centrafricaine (RCA), le Sénégal et le Togo (UNESCO, Annuaire statistique 1993). En sciences naturelles et ingénierie, le Bénin a un taux de 11.2 pour 100 et le Sénégal 14.4 pour 100. Les autres pays ont un taux de 2 à 5 pour 100 seulement (Bouya 1993).

Malgré les différents obstacles à leur réussite, certaines filles arrivent à obtenir leurs diplômes et à faire leur entrée à l'université. L'évolution comparée des effectifs garçons et filles montre la faible participation des filles à l'enseignement du 3^{e} degré (28 pour 100) (UNESCO Afrique 1991). Pourtant ce petit nombre d'élues devra faire également face à de multiples obstacles pour se maintenir dans le système universitaire. Là encore l'influence des stéréotypes sexistes va se faire sentir. Ainsi pendant que le garçon peut se consacrer en toute quiétude à ses études, l'étudiante fera l'objet de pressions sociales tendant à lui faire comprendre qu'elle ne doit pas oublier le rôle pour lequel elle a été créée: devenir épouse et mère. On lui brandira le spectre du célibat qui la guette; car non seulement elle sera âgée lorsqu'elle aura terminé ses études, mais en plus, les diplômes qu'elle aura obtenus éloigneront d'elle un bon nombre de prétendants possibles. Beaucoup d'hommes sont en effet complexés devant ces «vieilles filles» qui manifestent la prétention de traiter à égalité avec eux. C'est pourquoi la plupart des étudiantes choisissent de se marier avant la fin de leurs études; mariage qui signe très souvent l'arrêt momentané et généralement définitif de leur carrière universitaire. Car la vie d'épouse et de mère est difficilement compatible avec les exigences d'une carrière universitaire. Mais qu'advient-il lorsque l'étudiante arrive à obtenir un diplôme universitaire de haut niveau qui devrait en principe la soustraire à toutes ces contraintes sociales?

Conséquence de l'idéologie sexiste chez la femme intellectuelle

Nous définissons ici l'intellectuelle comme une femme hautement qualifiée, ayant atteint un niveau de culture générale supérieur à la moyenne. Elle détient un capital de compétence et exerce généralement une activité professionnelle qui lui permet de jouir d'une certaine aisance matérielle.

Voilà donc une femme, mariée ou célibataire, qui peut choisir en toute liberté la vie qu'elle veut mener. En effet elle a prouvé qu'elle peut réussir là où des hommes ont réussi, elle dispose de moyens intellectuels lui permettant de porter un jugement critique sur la réalité sociale. Elle connaît ses droits dans la société contemporaine et est en mesure de les défendre. L'influence des stéréotypes sexistes ne devrait pas, en principe, pouvoir l'ébranler.

Pourtant on constate que même une telle femme se trouve obligée de tenir compte des perceptions sociales de la femme et qu'elle subit la discrimination sexuelle de manière plus directe. Les stéréotypes sexistes présentent la femme

intellectuelle comme une prétentieuse, une «cérébrale», une contestataire. Cependant la société est tolérante envers les femmes intellectuelles qui n'ont pas oublié leurs devoirs et qui se marient; pourvu que leur vie professionnelle ne les empêche pas d'assumer les tâches domestiques, notamment les soins aux enfants et les «petits soins» au mari.

Les femmes célibataires et divorcées sont socialement mal acceptées. Les discours sur les femmes intellectuelles contiennent des expressions qui les dépeignent comme des «hommes ratés» ou des femmes asexuées. Les femmes vivent ainsi leur statut d'intellectuel dans un environnement socioculturel en conflit avec leur désir. Elles doivent faire face en permanence à une société frileuse et déterminée à conserver ses privilèges de genre. Contrairement à l'homme qui assume en toute quiétude son «intellectualisme», (statut qui devrait être l'apanage des hommes), très vite l'intellectuelle se trouve devant un dilemme: être femme ou être intellectuelle?

En effet dans la perception populaire, l'intellectuel est un homme. Une femme intellectuel ne peut être une femme tout à fait «normale». Dans le cadre du mariage, les intérêts de l'homme priment sur ceux de la femme. L'exemple le plus édifiant est celui de la femme qui doit quitter son emploi pour suivre son époux, afin de permettre à celui-ci de réaliser un plan de carrière que des considérations d'ordre familial ne sauraient troubler. Les femmes ne peuvent pas non plus saisir des opportunités de perfectionnement ou de développement d'un plan de carrière car il leur est difficile de laisser époux et enfants pour poursuivre des études dans un autre pays ou dans une autre ville. La législation en matière de droits conjugaux est elle-même entachée de sexisme, et contribue à accentuer la dépendance et la vulnérabilité des épouses. Lors du mariage civil, la loi des pays francophone est explicite sur la subordination et la soumission de la femme à son mari: le mari choisit le domicile conjugal, la résidence conjugale est celle de l'époux, la femme est tenue de suivre son mari, elle lui doit soumission et obéissance.

Face à ces différentes pressions et contraintes, l'intellectuelle est-elle à mesure de choisir en toute indépendance? Son esprit critique lui sera-t-il d'une grande utilité. Car, et c'est là que réside toute la force de l'idéologie et des pratiques sexistes, toutes les représentations collectives de la femme ont été intériorisées par les femmes elles-mêmes, et beaucoup plus par l'intellectuelle à qui ces stéréotypes ont été enseignés en plus à l'école. Dans ces stéréotypes, la femme n'était souvent idéalisée que dans sa fonction de procréation, elle se définissait essentiellement dans son rôle d'épouse et de mère. C'est ainsi que pour l'intellectuelle, le mariage constitue souvent un objectif primordial qu'il faut atteindre coûte que coûte. Deux raisons justifieront son choix; non seulement

dans la société on manifeste plus de respect aux femmes mariées, mais le célibat est mal vécu par la femme elle-même.

L'intellectuelle sait que le mariage et la procréation réduiraient considérablement ses chances de promotion mais elle finit par se marier. Ceci n'est pas une mauvaise chose en soi; pour la survie de l'humanité, il est nécessaire que les femmes aient des enfants et se marient lorsqu'elles le désirent. Ce qui est déplorable, c'est que le mariage permet à l'homme de parfaire sa réussite dans le domaine professionnel, intellectuel, familial souvent au détriment d'une femme qui aurait les mêmes capacités de réussite que lui. C'est là un des facteurs de la présence féminine insignifiante aux postes de responsabilité dans le monde du travail. Un autre facteur, et non des moindres, est l'intériorisation des images dévalorisées des femmes qui ont développé chez ces dernières un complexe d'infériorité, ainsi, «l'évaluation que les femmes portent sur leurs possibilités, leurs motivations, leurs compétences sont souvent réductrices à leurs potentialités réelles» (UNESCO 1987). Les stéréotypes sexistes ont ainsi «le redoutable pouvoir d'amener les filles à autocensurer leurs désirs et leurs potentialités, à restreindre leurs aspirations professionnelles» (Michel 1986), à sacrifier leurs ambitions afin d'être conformes à l'image de la femme telle que la société l'a conçue.

La femme intellectuelle qui surmontera les difficultés liées à sa condition sociale (épouse, mère ou célibataire) rencontrera des résistances lorsqu'elle voudra se confronter aux hommes dans ses activités professionnelles: elle se rendra compte que, bien que les constitutions et la réglementation qui régissent le monde du travail, reconnaissent le droit à l'égalité de rémunération pour un travail égal, dans la pratique cette égalité n'est pas respectée. En matière de promotion, le mouvement ascensionnel qui est normal pour les hommes, devient exceptionnel chez les femmes. L'idée que les femmes ne peuvent pas occuper des postes de responsabilité est tellement ancrée dans les esprits que leur progression dans la hiérarchie est beaucoup plus difficile en comparaison avec leurs collègues masculins «cet état d'esprit provoque souvent des découragements, des frustrations dont l'intensité est plus grande lorsqu'il s'agit de femmes conscientes de leur capacité intellectuelle, technique et professionnelle. Cette discrimination injuste joue à la fois au moment de l'embauche et au cours de la vie professionnelle» (Borcelle 1985).

En analysant par exemple l'espace universitaire, Imam et Mama montrent que l'effet le plus évident des procédures actuelles de recrutement et de promotion est l'exclusion continuelle des femmes. «Même après avoir constaté la discrimination à travers tout le système éducationnel qui fait que de moins en moins de femmes atteignent de hauts niveaux de qualification, la proportion de

femmes dans les universités reste extrêmement faible. L'image générale de subordination est reproduite à travers la domination par les hommes, des comités de sélection et de promotion» (Imam et Mama 1994).

La combinaison de ces différents facteurs explique donc l'absence notoire des femmes dans les sphères de décision; les difficultés qu'elles éprouvent «à accéder aux fonctions qui confèrent des responsabilités soulignent avec force le fait que l'égalité est une question d'ordre essentiellement politique et qu'elle est liée à des rapports de pouvoirs» (Michel 1987).

Conclusion

Deux idées principales se dégagent de notre étude. Les femmes subissent une discrimination dans l'accès au système scolaire et doivent surmonter des obstacles de plusieurs ordres pour y rester et y réussir. Certaines passent entre les mailles du filet, obtiennent un diplôme et deviennent des intellectuelles; mais, contrairement aux hommes, elles vivent leur situation dans un environnement socioculturel qui ne leur permet pas de se réaliser pleinement sur le plan personnel et professionnel.

Cette discrimination trouve son fondement dans l'idéologie, les stéréotypes et les pratiques sexistes qui continuent d'influencer la réalité quotidienne. Comprendre et reconnaître le handicap que constitue une telle situation pour l'épanouissement personnel des femmes et le développement de nos sociétés (qui ne pourrait se faire en ignorant ou en excluant délibérément la moitié de la population constituée par les femmes), c'est poser la nécessité de modifier les rapports sociaux afin de les rendre plus égalitaires.

Comment remédier à cette situation?

1) Par l'élimination des stéréotypes sexistes de la conscience collective. En dénonçant et en combattant les idéologies et les pratiques sexistes à l'intérieur des ménages, au niveau de la culture, de la religion, de l'Etat. Pour ce faire, il convient de poser comme préalable à toute action en faveur des femmes, la mise en oeuvre d'activités d'information et de sensibilisation à l'intention de l'ensemble de la collectivité; en insistant sur la valorisation de l'image des filles et des femmes dans la société mais surtout à l'intérieur du système scolaire. L'éducation informelle dans les familles ainsi que l'éducation formelle dans les écoles devraient tendre par exemple à préparer les filles comme les garçons, au partage des responsabilités domestiques et parentales.
2) Par la création de structures et la mise en oeuvre de mécanismes qui permettraient aux femmes d'être à la fois épouse, mère et travailleuse. Cet aspect est très important dans notre société car la femme qui travaille hors du

foyer, assume une grande partie des tâches domestiques. Elle porte ainsi un double fardeau qui constitue pour elle un véritable dilemme. L'obligation de devoir sacrifier un de ses rôles au profit de l'autre contribue à la pénaliser dans sa carrière professionnelle et à favoriser l'écart qui existe entre hommes et femmes dans les promotions. Il est donc nécessaire à cet égard, de prévoir des formes alternatives de soins aux enfants afin que la femme intellectuelle puisse s'épanouir dans ses rôles sociaux aussi bien que dans sa vie professionnelle. Les femmes devraient être éduquées dès leur jeune âge aux soins aux enfants, aux travaux domestiques. Les tâches ne doivent pas être catégorisées sur la base du sexe (féminines, masculines) mais partagées de manière à ce que chaque membre du couple puisse s'épanouir selon ses désirs.

3) Par un regroupement des femmes au sein d'associations afin de leur apprendre à exprimer leurs besoins sans complexe pour qu'elles puissent s'intégrer aux processus de décisions dans les différents niveaux de la société: famille, syndicats, entreprises, profession. Des actions intensives devraient être entreprises pour lever les inhibitions des femmes par rapport à la prise de parole en public et par rapport à l'écriture.

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Reproductive Health and Rights: The Case of Northern Nigerian Hausa Women

Hajara Usman*

THIS PAPER LOOKS at some of the socio-cultural and political factors that impact on women's reproductive health and rights and the context in which they can be exercised in Nigeria, with special emphasis on Northern Hausa women.

The United Nations defines reproductive health as: a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to reproductive system and to its functions and processes. Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.

Implicit in this definition is the right of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law, and the right of access to appropriate health care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and child birth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant (ICPD para. 7:2).

Bearing in mind the above definition, reproductive rights embrace certain human rights that are already recognised in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus documents. These rights rest on the recognition of the basic rights of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes the right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human rights documents (UN 1996:58-59).

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* Centre for Social and Economic Research, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

We find the definition of reproductive rights developed by the Women's Global Network on Reproductive Rights (WGNRR) quite apt:

> Reproductive Rights (RR) means women's rights to decide if and when and how to have children regardless of our nationality, class, race, age, religion, disability, sexuality or marital status (WGNRR).

We share the belief that reproductive rights encompass a number of rights: the right to control one's body and reproduction; and the right to information and access to a wide range of reproductive health care ranging from contraception, abortion, ante-natal care, postnatal care and other medical services; the right to adequate nutrition (throughout life); the right to maternity and family leave as well as the benefits of child care are also included. It is important to note that part of the rights of women to their bodily integrity encompasses the whole notion of the absence of violence against women, rape and all other forms of sexual abuse which are on the increase world-wide (Ilumoka 1992).

There is a dearth of information on the reproductive rights and health of women in Nigeria. Where information is available it is incomplete or dated and not disaggregated. This in itself points to the lack of importance accorded to women's reproductive health. Good data collection and collation for policy formulation are essential to programming successfully. We argue that this is one of the factors that has contributed to women's lack of attainment of their reproductive health rights. We feel that policies both locally and internationally have failed to take account of women's needs. The lack of proper information and correct data only serves to worsen the situation in terms of policy formulation, implementation evaluation and monitoring.

Nigeria, with a population of 88.5 million (1992 Census),[1] is a complex, multi-religious, multi-cultural society. The country is broadly divided into the Muslim North, the Christian South-East and the mixed South-West, although indigenous religions are practiced in all the states. Politically, the country is divided into 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (Abuja). Over 65 per cent of the population resides in the rural areas. Agriculture is the major occupation in rural communities while the informal sector is largest in urban areas. Ethnic, regional, gender and religious interests, as well as occupational affiliations, are important demarcations in Nigeria (Pearce 1992).

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1 The March 1992 census result figures is far below all projected figures that have been used nationally and internationally.

Overview

There are numerous social and cultural regulations which govern the lives of girls and women. Whereas the specific practices vary by region and ethnicity, generally socialisation patterns place enormous restrictions on girls, and demand from them a higher input of daily domestic labour than from boys. Moreover, females are frequently denied the same quantity and quality of food as their brothers. Given the well-known links between childhood deprivations and reproductive health, many health problems including stunting of the pelvic region, anaemia and susceptibility to infections can be traced to the lowered nutritional status of girls. Additionally, insufficient rest and other practices impact on girls reproductive health (Pearce 1992:14-15).

The situation of young girls in Nigeria cannot be fully understood without reference to the problem of early marriage. This occurs mostly in the North but also exists within some Muslim communities in the South. Young girls may be betrothed as early as the age of 11, and begin childbearing by the time they are 13 or 14 years old. The physical and psychological trauma is known to be immense and the problem of vesico-vaginal fistulae from prolonged obstructed labour remains critical in this situation. The maternal mortality rate of 21 per 1000 in the North is well above the national average and is partly related to the consequences of early marriages (Pearce 1992:16).

Hausa women in the rural areas are predominantly Muslim, have little or no formal education, and live in seclusion[2] (seclusion will be discussed in more detail below). They are also usually married before they attain menarche, which means child bearing starts even before a women is fully grown. Islam has exerted tremendous influence on their economic social and cultural life. Existing literature on the economic activities of Hausa women has shown that their participation in the household economy is fashioned by the influence of orthodox restrictive Muslim interpretations. In the rural communities of the Samaru environs a majority of the women are living in seclusion, hence all economic activities are performed within the confines of their homes. Anything that

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2 Seclusion is the practice that prohibits women from going outside their homes or domestic space. Seclusion ranges from forms where when a woman/girl is allowed out with her husband's permission to cases where she is not allowed out under any circumstances (for example, medical personnel are brought to the home when she is sick). Seclusion is widely practiced parts of northern Nigeria amongst the Hausa and a few communities among the Yoruba. See Imam 1994.

requires leaving the home is usually done by the children, such as hawking and marketing to purchase items (Imam 1992).

The gender division of labour is even more evident as the man provides most of the food, water, fuel-wood, some housekeeping money and shelter for the family. The woman is responsible for providing small amounts of food, labour for food preparation, child bearing and rearing as well as the care of the family in general. Once both husband and wife are able to fulfil their duties, the wife can, if permitted by the husband, pursue her own income generating activity (Longhurst 1985).

Existing social institutions like the family, religion, political and the legal system assign women an unequal position in society *vis-à-vis* men.

Community Culture

Early marriage is widely practiced in Hausaland. The usual explanation given for this is that it prevents promiscuity in young girls and as such a man has the right to marry off his ward or daughter to any man he thinks suitable without her consent (Muazu 1992). In many cases, the girl is too young to understand what is happening to her and is thus presented with an accomplished fact, even though there is religious injunction governing marriage. This Hadith[3] states:

> If a man gives his daughter in marriage in spite of her disagreement, such a marriage is invalid. A matron should not be given in marriage except after her consent and a virgin should not be given in marriage except after her consent (Hadith 5136 Chapter 42, Vol. VII, Sahih Al-Bukhari).

In northern Nigeria, which draws heavily on Maliki Law, a father is allowed to marry his daughter against her will. The argument is that she is too young to know her own mind, yet. Ironically she is not perceived as too young to bear and take care of children, a husband and a home.

In a typical scenario the young girl, between the ages of 10 and 15 years, is married off to a man old enough to be her father or grandfather who already has other wives. The man is allowed to use force when consummating the marriage: Some men even resort to incising, that is the cutting or puncturing of their young wives with a sharp object or blade to allow penetration. The forced penetration of the bride does enormous and lasting physical and psychological harm. The young girl is, in fact, usually raped. Although Nigerian law does not recognise marital rape it is still rape, but a man can do whatever he likes with a woman as

3 A Hadith is one of the religious texts of Muslims being a collection of the sayings of the Prophet or actions of his life.

long as they are married. Marriage is a legal cover under which a man may commit whatever atrocities he has a mind to, short of killing the woman.

There is documentary evidence that premature sexual intercourse is responsible for the high rate of carcinoma (cancer) of the cervix commonly seen in Hausa women, and it is believed that the number of cases would be reduced tremendously if sexual intercourse and pregnancy were delayed. There is a higher rate of anaemia, pre-eclampsia/eclampsia (acute blood poisoning with convulsive fits at time of child birth), and a high mortality and morbidity rate associated with teenage pregnancy (Ejembi 1990). These young girls, being children themselves, are physically and emotionally immature and unprepared for the stress of pregnancy and childbirth.

The 1982 Nigeria fertility survey (NFS) showed the mean age for marriage of women between 20-24 years of age to be 16.1 years. 24.3 per cent of the women surveyed were married before the age of 13; 37 per cent of them were 14 years old and over 50 per cent had reached the age of 15. If this figure is disaggregated, in northern Nigeria the average age for marriage is much lower. In a study conducted in Zaria, a predominantly Muslim Hausa/Fulani community, the prevalence of early marriage was confirmed. It was found that 83.4 per cent of the girls were married before the age of 14 years and 98.5 per cent before the age of 20 years (Ejembi *et al.* 1986).

These young girls who are neither fully physically nor psychologically developed end up pregnant but too small to allow the foetus to be delivered vaginally. Consequently, they suffer obstructed labour; labour which could last as long as two weeks. In the absence of surgical intervention the result is the death of the baby, and or vesico vagina fistulae (VVF), recto vagina fistulae (RVF), or both for the mother (Tahzib 1989:75).

There is also a high incidence of divorce among the Hausa, with women marrying more than once, sometimes thrice or more in their lives. This can be attributed to the fact that it is socially considered an abomination for a woman to die unmarried. We would like to argue that this is a method of coping with unbearable situation so as not to give the impression that women are passive. Contrary to this women have been known to do what is called *yaji* (which literally means pepper) where a women just gets up and leaves her matrimonial home for her parents home until, she is either divorced or her husband comes to do *biko* and ask her to come back.

The practice of seclusion or in Hausa *(Kulle)*,[4] in Hausaland, has come to be viewed as religious, although, there is evidence to show that female seclusion was a pre-Islamic custom elsewhere e.g. Persia. The practice of seclusion is associated with the spread and practice of Islam in northern Nigeria. Imam argues that there are three main positions on seclusion within Islam. The first, a more restrictive position, holds that women should not be allowed outside their homes. The second that women go out only if covered from head to ankles and wrist. The third, a more flexible type, women are allowed to go out as long as they are decently dressed, in this case the manner of dress is subject to place, time, and social context (Imam 1992:4-18). There is no clear Islamic injunction on female seclusion. In fact contrary to the general beliefs surrounding the practice women are allowed to pursue careers outside their home as illustrated in a Hadith where the Prophet said: *You have been allowed by Allah to go out for your needs (Hajah) (Bukhari 1976(7):120).*

Imam argues that the introduction of seclusion in Hausaland occurred around the fifteenth century. Seclusion was actually practiced by the *masu sauraita* or ruling class and upper class *mallami* (religious clerics) and later intensified during colonialism as a form of resistance to external domination (Imam 1994:200).

The Hausa culture of *Kunya* (modesty or shyness) ensures that girls are socialised to be shy and obedient. Therefore, issues relating to sex, sexuality and childbearing are considered taboo and not to be discussed. It is a Hausa custom for women to give birth at home in private, the traditional birth attendant (TBA) is called afterwards to cut the umbilical cord and clear up after the woman has had the child, except in the case of complications. Even when there are complications, generally nobody will dare to take the woman to the hospital, as a wife in seclusion cannot leave her matrimonial home under any circumstance without her husband's express permission. It is the men who are responsible for making the vital decision about seeking medical treatment or even hospitalisation for their wives and other members of their family. In a recent study conducted in Bassawa, 41 per cent of the respondents said their husbands would not allow them to attend ante-natal services; 38 per cent did not see the need for it, while the rest complained about the cost, quality of care and rudeness of hospital staff (Ejembi 1990).

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4 Seclusion is not a monolithic institution, it varies from community to community. It is also not synonymous with isolation (See Imam 1994 and others).

It is important to note that Hausa households, like other Nigerian households, are patrilineal and patrilocal: in essence there is largely unquestioned male dominance in the home. The main role assigned to the wife is that of reproduction and care of the family. A woman must submit herself to her husband whenever he desires to have sex as, according to the common Muslim belief in the area, if she denies her husband herself any time, God and all the angels will curse her. She is made to believe that, for her, paradise is under her husband's feet. In Nigeria male promiscuity is condoned, while a women must be a virgin at the time of marriage and remain faithful to her husband. Polygyny is the commonest form of marriage. In a survey of Zaria, 70.2 per cent of the women were found to be in polygynous unions. 42 per cent has two or more co-wives. The man who is *permitted*[5] up to four wives often still has sexual relations outside his matrimonial home and this exposes women to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), a major cause of infertility in both men and women. However, when a couple is childless the blame is automatically put on the woman. With the stigma around STDs women are not likely to seek medical attention, often until it is too late.

Another Nigerian cultural practice very common among many groups in Nigeria is *female circumcision*,[6] a form of female genital mutilation (FGM). This practice where a traditional healer cuts off part or whole of the female external genitalia. It may be performed anytime from the first few days of life to the seventh month of the first pregnancy. It is still widely practiced in some communities, for instance, the Igbo, Yoruba, Urhobo, Edo, and Efik while on the decrease in some Hausa communities. Among the Hausa communities the *Sunna* type of FGM is practiced. This is considered the mildest form, where the prepuce of the clitoris (or the hood) is amputated rather than infibulation which is the complete cutting of the external genitalia and suturing, which is found in, for instance, in parts of the Sudan.

Lightfoot (1983:356-60) argues that FGM is a result of men's desire to gain control over women's sexuality. By amputating the clitoris, sexual freedom in women would be curbed. Existing patriarchal systems dictate that a woman can only marry one man, while at the same time allowing men the right to have

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5 There are differing views on the practice of polygyny in Muslim law. While it is permitted in some countries like Nigeria, it is prohibited in Tunisia and restricted in Yemen and India.

6 The term female circumcision is a misnomer, in medical terms what is a mutilation of a healthy organ rather than circumcision (Dorkenoo 1995:4-5).

several women. This restriction of women is coupled with sanctions meted out to women who dare transgress, all in an effort to preserve the male lineage. Entrenched myths, and beliefs help perpetuate the practice. The most common myths are that circumcision prevents promiscuity, and safeguards virginity, cleanliness and health. In so far as families are anxious to have their daughters acceptable for marriage, women usually do not question the custom, even though they may have suffered some of the health consequences themselves. Thus, both mother and daughter suffer in silence.

The health effects of FGM range from death as a result of infections or haemorrhaging, to infertility and obstetric complications, to abscesses and fevers. FGM is often cited as evidence of the powerlessness of women: their health continues to be sacrificed to satisfy the interests of others. FGM also reveals the ways in which women of different generations within the family and community often maintain opposing interests.

Gishiri cuts, a form of FGM widely practiced among the Hausa, is a traditional surgical cut whereby incisions are made in the vagina with a blade. This is done usually by a traditional health practitioner or a TBA, and is a procedure used to treat a number of ailments including obstructed or prolonged labour, coital difficulties, infertility, and painful intercourse (dsyuria). This too is another harmful cultural practice, and also a cause of VVF and RVF with their harmful social side effects. Women with VVF or RVF are ostracised from society. This is because of the stigma attached to the condition. Even when a women has had the repairs done she is still considered to be suffering from the condition, and thus she is often divorced by her husbands who no longer desire her. A lot of VVF victims end up as prostitutes trying to earn enough to pay for the repairs (Tazhib 1992). At the Ahmadu Bello Teaching Hospital (ABUTH) Zaria, which is a government owned health facility and cheaper than most, if not all, other (privately owned) health facilities, the cost is not less than N6000.00 for a single repair operation. Some women require anything from two to ten operations, depending on the extent of the damage.[7]

Women's Reproductive Health

It has been conclusively established within Nigeria that during the reproductive years, those most likely to suffer disability or death are those who have children early, high parity (five or more births) and late pregnancy. The early, continuous and late pregnancy syndrome has made Nigeria one of the most problematic

7 From personal discussions with doctors at the ABUTH Zaria, 1996.

regions of the world in the area of reproductive health. The regional differences in total fertility rates observed in 1981/2 have persisted into the 1990s. Thus, fertility is higher in the North with women bearing children earlier and later than women in the South.

By 1988, the nation had officially accepted the safe motherhood concept as an important approach for tackling the problems associated with pregnancy and childbirth. Some of the objectives of safe motherhood were incorporated into the national Policy on Population, particularly the emphasis on discouraging childbirth before age 18 or after 35 years of age, and on health education for fertility regulation or 'responsible parenthood'. Other national activities on safe motherhood have included information campaign workshops, professional conferences and Family Life Education Programs.

Health Coverage

An important dimension of reproductive health, though transcending it, is the provision of adequate health and welfare facilities serving women. In Nigeria, as part of the colonial legacy, but persisting since independence there is a pronounced unequal distribution of health facilities. The rural population, which make up 65 per cent of the total populace has access to only 30 per cent of the health services. With much pressure from non-governmental organisations (NGO) and interested groups, governments in the past have made some attempts at redressing the situation, but with the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), the situation has worsened for the average Nigerian. The level of utilisation of health facilities is an indicator of health coverage. For 1989 there were 597 State and Local Government health institutions and 207 private ones in Kaduna State. In the 1989 Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) survey only 15.1 per cent of both urban and rural sample areas was within 1 km from a health facility. It must however be noted that there does exist an urban bias: 64.8 per cent of those in the urban areas had to travel 1-5 km, while 66.2 per cent of those in the rural areas had to travel over 10 km to the nearest health facility. At the same time it was found that a great majority of people residing in the rural areas (80.6 per cent) had not received any treatment for illness or injury within the last 14 days of the survey.

Kaduna State, like other states, has made attempts at implementing Primary Health Care (PHC), which is the provision of basic health care to all. Over the years it has set up a number of basic health centres aimed at bringing health care as close as possible to the community. Maternal Child Health (MCH) is a very important component of PHC. In 1985 54, 842 women received ante-natal care. In 1986 it had risen to 55,437. As of 1989 there were a total of 60 such health institutions in Kaduna State.

Table 1: Percentage of Distribution of Respondents by Distance from Health Facility, Who pay for Treatment and for Drugs, by Sector

	Urban Per Cent	Rural Per Cent
A. Distance from Health facility		
Less than 1 km	15.1	14.1
1 - 5 km	64.8	5.6
6 - 10 km	17.0	14.1
Over 10 km	3.1	66.2
	100.0 (358)	100.0 (234)
B. Whether pay for Treatment		
Yes	65.1	27.1
No	34.9	72.9
	100.0 (475)	100.0 (489)
C. Whether pay for Drugs		
Yes	68.6	29
No	31.4	71
	100.0 (490)	100.0 (460)

Source: UNICEF 1989:32

Maternal Mortality and Morbidity

The incidence of maternal mortality in Nigeria is reputedly one of the highest in Africa. Out every 100,000 women of childbearing age, 1,500 die from complications related to pregnancy. This comes to 70-80,000 Nigerian women in absolute numbers, which works out at about 1 women in absolute numbers, which works out at about 1 women dying every 10 minutes. In a study at ABUTH Zaria, 46 per cent of all deaths in 1987 were of women, while the

proportion was 44.2 per cent at the Kaduna branch of the hospital in the same year. Due to the lack of figures on live births it was impossible to determine the maternal death rate.

Statistics from the Kaduna State Health Management Board also showed that in 1986 women's death represented 53.4 per cent of total deaths, and in 1987 57.1 per cent. Similar to the situation in the ABUTH study, calculation of maternal death rate was not possible. Data from the Ministry of Finance does however show the rate of maternal mortality to be 7 per 1000 live births in 1986, and 2.6 in 1987 (see table 2). More recently ABUTH Kaduna and Zaria reported 10 maternal deaths each (7.34 per 1000 live births, and 6.8 per 1000 live births respectively) from July 1992 to June 1993 (see Table 3). Determining the exact cause of death was not possible because of the non-acceptance of *postmortem* examinations by the family of the deceased. However clinical conditions suggested sepsis and ruptured uterus with shock in Zaria and Kaduna respectively (ABUTH 1992, 1993). Information on the causes of maternal death round the state shows: *criminal* (i.e. Induced)[8] abortion, *ante partum* and *postpartum* haemorrhage and eclampsia as the major causes of death (UNICEF 1989).

Over 70 per cent of all deliveries are done under the supervision of TBAs. TBAs depend on skills passed down from generation to generation, practicing under unsanitary conditions which sometimes expose their clients to infections. Of 13,924 ante-natal bookings made at ABUTH Zaria from July 1991 to June 1992, only 1,456 delivered in the hospital. 23 per cent of these cases were emergency cases. From July 1992-June 1993 there was a total of 13,335 ante natal clinic bookings and a total of 1,472 deliveries: a slight increase from the previous year (ABUTH 1992, 1993). This shows a tendency for the hospitals to be used as a last resort, which can be partly attributed to the high cost of hospital fees. All this goes a long way in increasing the health risks for women within child bearing age.

8 Figures are not accurate as only a fraction of actual deaths are recorded. Many women die as a result of botched abortions and never make it to the hospital. More over, there is often no information on the several women who carry out abortions themselves, those who utilise private and smaller hospitals and those in rural areas (Population Council 1995:1).

Table 2: Maternal Mortality Ratio per 1000 Live Births, Kaduna State

Year	Total Live Births	Maternal Deaths	MMR
1985 a	114,382	804	7.0
1986	95,588	257	2.5

Source: UNICEF 1989: 61

Table 3: Maternal Mortality Rates from the ABUTHs Zaria and Kaduna, 1992-1993

Diagnosis	Zaria	Kaduna
Sepsis	5(50%)	-
Ruptured Uterus with Shock	-	4(40%)
Haemorrhage	2(20%)	-
Eclampsia	2(20%)	3(30%)
Anaemia	1(10%)	-
Post Partum Cardiac Failure	-	2(20%)
Obstructed Labour with Sepsis	-	1(10%)
Total	10(100%)	10(100%)

Source: Department of Obst. and Gyn., ABUTH, Zaria Annual Reports; 1992 and 1993

Fertility Regulation

The Hausa woman is expected to have as many children as 'God gives to her'. It is believed in some of these communities that a woman has a particular pre-ordained number of eggs which determines the number of children she has. In view of this, most women regard child-bearing as an obligation which they must fulfil to be complete. These women are unknowing of the numerous risks involved in constant child bearing some of them find out too late. Even when they are aware, they have no rights to complain under the watchful eyes of their husbands, parents and in-laws. It is considered sacrilegious for a woman to purposely prevent conception, after all God will provide. It is in line with this

dictate that a childless woman is regarded with pity and sometimes even contempt. Children, like the number of a man's wives, are a testimony of his wealth and capabilities, consequently, a lot of women who use contraception, do so secretly, without their husband's permission.

Male control of women's reproduction is reinforced by State policies. For instance, there are some State and Local Governments which insist on women coming with their husbands or that they must have written permission from husbands before they can receive any contraceptive device. There are however a number of health personnel (usually female) in hospitals and clinics in the urban areas who are sympathetic and willing to accept consent forms even when they know or suspect it is not from a woman's husband. It is not uncommon for women to get consent forms signed by people other than their husbands, all in an effort to control their own reproduction. At the same time these women are forced to use long-lasting contraceptives such as two or three monthly injectables like Deprovera, even when it was banned in the West, because these methods are not easily detected by their husbands. They use these methods often without knowledge or complete information about the side effects and possible long term complications (Usman 1991).

Table 4: Usage Rates for Family Planning in Nigeria (average prevalence) 1992

Zone	Use any Method		Use any Modern Method	
	June	September	June	September
Nigeria	16.3	20.2	8.7	10
Northeast	5.8	6.5	3.8	5.7
Northwest	12.8	11.6	6.3	5.4
Southeast	35.1	40.3	16.5	17.9
Southwest	19.6	19.4	10.7	10.9

Source: FOS (1992) Family Planning

While the utilisation level of modern contraceptive devices is quite low, women in Nigeria continue to use the age old autochtonous methods of contraception. As at September 1993, only 20 per cent of women of reproductive age used family-planning; 10.4 per cent used modern methods. The percentage of women who used modern methods was 5.7 per cent Northeast, and 5.4 per cent

Northwest. The majority of women rely on traditional methods. This can be explained by the fact that they have had control over the access of this knowledge.

Conclusion

The importance of a conceptual framework for women's reproductive health and rights, which views women in their totality can not be over emphasised. Women are burdened with domestic, economic and health-care roles through out their life cycle, all of which impact on their health. In addition, the low status of females within the household and beyond, leads to work overload, the neglect of personal health and the lack of appreciation of female contributions to the survival of others. Reproductive rights in whatever context must incorporate all women's economic, political, legal, educational, and general health concerns.

Nigerian women suffer a disproportionate lack of access to comprehensive reproductive health care. They face a number of socio-cultural and religious barriers as well as legal barriers in a patriarchal society, where male promiscuity is condoned. It is clear that for average Hausa women in northern Nigeria reproductive rights is one of the many basic human rights that they have been denied. Women's reproductive capacity and sexuality are not theirs to control but subject to family household authority extended (mother-in-law) and otherwise. It is also subject to political manipulation by those in authority. Policies aimed at improving gender and power relations are only palliative. Any discourse on reproductive health needs to question the stereotyping of motherhood and fatherhood and the gendered roles of men and women which places less values of the roles of women.

Issues like rape and other forms of sexual abuse are often swept under the carpet. This is a mere reflection of the way society views the arena of male and female relationships and their rights and responsibilities. This is further compounded by the lack of, or poor and enforcement of legislation in relation to sexual abuse and violence against female children/minors; for example, the practice of early marriage and female genital mutilation in Nigeria (SIDA 1994).

While advocating that there is a need to improve the over all status of women, policy aimed at improving the conditions of women through the lowering of fertility offers very little to women by way of support. In fact what tends to happen is the reinforcing of the already oppressive situation they are in. A genuine policy is one that empowers women, enables them take full control of their destiny, part of which is the direction of their sexuality and reproduction. Nigerian women and women in general, need to carve out a perspective that suits them in the context of their religious and culturally different societies. A

perspective which is distinct at the same time of one that fits within the global struggle defined by ourselves.

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Culture, Gender, and Development Theories in Africa

Sophie B. Oluwole*

PHILOSOPHERS ARE CONVENTIONALLY interested in developing different principles meant to guide human existence within a particular milieu and in specifying the basic assumptions that serve to put them in place. Philosophers thus set forth theories meant to create social realities while social scientists most often derive theories from the study of existing reality. This is not to suggest that scholars in either discipline can totally avoid the study of actuality, but that conventionally philosophers are seen to be more creators of utopias than social scientists, who make conscious efforts to remain within empirically determinable frameworks. This is why philosophical analysts usually concentrate on what thinkers within a particular culture say rather than what they or other members of their societies do. Philosophers, for instance, devote themselves to the study of what Plato, Russell, Confucius or Santayana each say. Many of them know next to nothing about the actual social contexts in which each of these philosophers lived. The fact that such knowledge can enhance the critic's understanding of Plato, etc. does not make the history of such events a branch of strict philosophy.

This paper starts with the discussion of two basically different but often compared cultural world-views, each with a distinctive ideology in terms of which one particular form of sexism is seen as a rationally justified social principle of social organisation. I have chosen to compare Western and Yoruba cultures for reasons that will become obvious as we proceed. The fundamental question which the paper raises and tries to answer is what philosophy contributes and can continue to contribute to the analysis of gender as an adequate tool within the formulation of developmental theories in contemporary Africa.

At the outset it is useful to remind ourselves that most existing world-renowned theories of state development were products of political philosophers.

* Philosophy Department, University of Lagos, Nigeria.

These have, from time to time, been analysed, criticised and reformulated both by philosophers and social critics. In doing so, it has always been essential for the critic to fall back on the particular world-view which underlies such theories. But because Africa has little or no written documents of her world-views, historians, theologians, ethnographers and other social scientists have been involved in the reconstruction of ancient African world-views through the study of peoples' cultural behaviours, religious rituals and social activities, which serve as clues to African political, social, economic and religious principles in organising precolonial societies.

Social and political philosophers interested in the analysis of ancient African social principles have more or less relied on such findings in their criticism of traditional African theories of state. This paper is an attempt to incorporate Mudimbe's proposal that we go back to actual 'texts' of oral tradition instead of relying entirely on the 'inventions' of social scientists. Indeed one of the trends in the search for an authentic African philosophy of development is the view that we must pay special attention to the African context rather than blindly copy the tradition of Western Philosophy. The recommendation is that we need to create a modern forum which has an adequate knowledge of its past without completely discarding it as irrelevant myth. The call therefore is for an African Renaissance, in a critical examination of African oral literature so as to discover and promote a reliable African intellectual atmosphere based on 'narratives presented in the truth of their language and authenticity' rather than a reality distorted in the modalities of non-African languages or 'results of theoretical manipulations'[1].

The Philosophical Origin of Sexism in Western Culture

Some of the earliest Greek thinkers traditionally acknowledged as precursors of Western thought had proposed among other things that nature is made up of purely materialistic elements whose relationships can be understood in rational terms. The development of science, most especially during the Renaissance, was based almost entirely on this vision of nature by the Greeks.[2] In fact, this view

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1 V. Y. Mudimbe, on whose ideas I heavily rely here, stresses the need for scholars to pay more serious attention to the actual meanings expressed in original texts expressed in African languages. For him, this provides a more reliable basis of unveiling paradigms out there in African thought rather than the common practice of accepting what he calls the 'invention' of African *gnosis* by Western scholars and ideologists.

2 **Pandora**: *The Greek Myth underlying the Whiteman's misogyny*. In the myth of the creation of the world, the woman is the least endowed of all creatures. When she protests or someone else does on her behalf, everybody felt bad about her case. Therefore, an attempt was made to contribute from each person's possession towards her own

became the predominant faith of nearly all intellectuals in Europe when nature came to be seen as an inexhaustible source of power waiting to be exploited through the combined use of brute force and an innate intellectual competence. These two were seen as the only effective tools needed to produce adequate technologies for the conversion of nature energy to the maximum benefit of man — a term supposedly meant to imply both male and female.

Colonialism, Imperialism, Slavery, Capitalism, etc. all of which have now come to be regarded as different forms of human oppression, were justified with reference to those two principles which were then regarded as scientific and rational laws of nature based on indisputable natural truths. In the course of time, might became identified with right and the accumulation of material wealth came to be seen and used as the two most viable canons for determining the dignity and social status of men and women within society. It was within this intellectual atmosphere that it became almost inevitable that levels of societal development are assessed in terms of how much a nation owns and what amount of power it possesses. These, of course, are the two main criteria still used today in determining super powers, as well as developed and underdeveloped nations of the world.

Implicit in this understanding of nature and appropriate tools of exploiting it, is a social ideal: the more brute force and intellectual ability a human being possesses, the more valuable such a person becomes to society. The example of the great explorers is worthy of note here. But then it is desirable if not totally imperative that society puts in place adequate processes of establishing the amount of power and intellectual competence of every individual member of society. In contemporary times, one of the best ways of doing this would be to test the IQ (intelligence quotient) of every member of a society as well as measuring their energy in terms of horse power or whatever.

From the Middle Ages down to the time of the Renaissance, Western philosophers, theologians and men (sic) in the literary arts, including self-styled scientists, went on gleefully to give reasons and justifications of the view that the entirety of the female members of the species are physically and intellectually inferior to the entirety of the male members of the species. This was how sexism was born in the West and later became the principle of social

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endowment. What she gets in the end amount to little bits of different objects or qualities that are kept in her wallet (the Pandora's box). Ironically, when she decided to open it for inspection, all the little trivial things fly out into her face and spoil the general atmosphere for other people.

organisation within that culture. Different forms of international oppressions listed above were mere applications of this to other realms of human relationship.

Earlier on, Aristotle had laid the philosophical basis for this tradition when he defined justice as treating equals equally, and unequals unequally. What later intellectuals did was to claim that they had rationally and scientifically established the existence of permanent inequalities between male and female. Society is therefore justified in applying a principle which recognises this 'fact' in the organisation of social institutions, and the determining of male-female relationships in terms of these natural sexual differences.

The history of different forms of social degradation and oppression of women that resulted from the faithful applications of these two related social and evaluative principles within Western culture is so well known and adequately documented that an excursion into them here would be pedestrian. I only want to mention in passing that this traditional view of the woman in Europe and later in America, is far from being just a matter of history.

Britain for instance, is yet to have a House of Ladies as a counterpart of the House of Lords. A woman is a lady by virtue of her husband being a lord. And of the 100 members of the American Senate at the time of writing, only 6 are women. Finally, a British clergyman said recently, when the Church of England ordained 32 women as priests, 'If I have my way, those women would be burnt on the stakes because they are witches'. Needless to say, he reminds us of his predecessors in the Age of Joan of Arc and other unfortunate women under the tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church. Economic manipulation, sexual exploitation, and the religious and political marginalisation of women are still very much around in many spheres of the social setting both in Europe and in America despite the fact that many former atrocities against women are now on the decline.

Sexism in African (Yoruba) Cultural Experience

One of the fundamental problems of studying ancient African world-views and the principles that once determined institutionalised relationships between men and women within each social group is that there is hardly any written records of them. This is why social scientists have to reconstruct the African past from fables, legends, religious, and social activities, and indeed from folklore in general, including oral records of historical events. This, in the recent past, is where the interests of the social scientist and the philosopher seem to cross without actually merging.

The denial of the existence of African Philosophy, for instance, has led many philosophers in the study of ancient African thoughts on different aspects and social principles of society. Hence, apart from the relying on the reports of social scientists and historians, many philosophers have, for some time now, directly engaged themselves in the study, analysis and explication of their own indigenous cultural views and at times in those of others. And the results have been quite intriguing. But one fundamental problem has been the explicit claims of unsustainable generalisations despite the existence of several diverse cultures in Africa.

My analysis is of the Yoruba world-view and principles of social experience. This is not because I regard the Yoruba as representative of African views on the subject, but because it is the oral literature available to me as specimen of an African people's thought. Actual texts occurring in a people's language, seem to me to offer a more direct access to understanding social principles than those inferred from social norms and/or religious behaviours.

Following are a few illustrations from the several aspects of Yoruba oral literature, which I started studying about eight years ago. The project itself, which is on African philosophy in general but which touches on gender issues as these are related to an adequate understanding of social and political principles of existence, is far from being complete. The findings here presented are therefore neither exhaustive nor conclusive. I regard the entire study as an exercise in African philosophy, but not in the ethno-philosophical sense of formulating one metaphysico-epistemological theory commonly shared by all Africans. As a particular philosophical position in Yoruba thought it is African, but it should be noted that it is one of several possible philosophies that existed in pre-colonial Africa, just as any particular philosophical position may be labelled British, German or Greek, even though there are other philosophical positions in each of these countries, and each of these is also European.

It is important to state that apart from my own direct study of Yoruba oral literature through reading and interviews, I also rely on the works of historians, ethnologists, and social scientists in testing the hypotheses I propose.

The mainstream of Yoruba oral literature is the *Ifá* Corpus which is made up of an initial 256 *Odù* (Chapters) each of which can be interpolated with others in such as way that *Ifá* actually constitutes an open ended system. Although it is generally regarded as the religious book of the Yoruba, others see it as the encyclopaedia of ancient Yoruba thought and wisdom. To some philosophers *Ifá* is comparable to the Midrash — an autochthonous theoretical consciousness with commentaries on proverbs, stories and tales used within it as illustrations of social, political and religious, as well as moral themes and principles on which

different private and institutional arrangements in the society are made and the applications and dramatisations of which are directly or indirectly observable in the social behaviours and relationships of members of the society (Eze 1993).

I shall therefore present here some of those themes and principles which, to my mind, are useful in analysing and explaining the male-female relationship in different spheres of Yoruba society. In doing this I shall rely heavily on Yoruba proverbs and aphorisms, for as the people themselves say:

'Òwe l'esin òrò, bí òrò bá sonú, òwe l' a fi n wà a'
(Proverbs are the analytic tools of thought, when thought is lost, it is proverbs that are used to search for it)

Yoruba Understanding of Nature

There are many stories and aphorisms in *Ifá* oral literature expressed in proverbial forms. I shall quote only a few.

(i) *Láko lábo ni Olórun dá gbogbo nnkan.*
(Every natural existence occurs in male-female anti-thesis)

(ii) *T'ibi t'ire l'òjò n rin*
(The good and the bad are bound inseparably together)

(iii) *Eye ò lè e fi apá kan fò.*
(The bird cannot fly with a single wing)

(iv) *Àjèjé owó kan ò gb'érù d'órí*
(One hand does not lift a load to the head)

Each of these proverbs points to the belief that nature or reality is not monistic. The popular view is that every existence occurs in a complementary union with another existence. Several students of Yoruba culture have reported that even in their numerals, everything is arranged in even numbers. *Ifa* for example, has sixteen major *Odu* and two hundred and twenty four minor ones giving a total of 256. But the names of each *Odu* (Chapter) is expressed as dual in nature: *Òyèkú Méji*, *Òkanràn Méji*, etc., (*'méji* means two). What this means is that each of the *Odù* includes both the male and the female principle (McGee 1983).

Again, the number of Yoruba deities is either given as 201 or, at other times as 401. The odd number represents *Olódùmarè* the supreme Being. The number of Òrìsà, the panopoly of deities who are not gods, is therefore either 200 or 400. However, Yoruba mythology and oral literature have it that *Olódùmarè* is sometimes regarded as male and at other times as female. A decisive declaration of the Supreme Being as male is difficult to make because the third person singular pronoun 'oun' is gender-neutral. What seems to be the truth is that

different sub-societies within Yoruba culture view *Olódùmarè* differently. This is testified to by a contemporary Yoruba poet when he declared:

Baba enìkan kò r'Èlédùmarè rí,
Ló d'Ifá f'èni m bèrè Òòduà ako - mbábo.
Won ní Ifè lò j'áko, Adó ló j'ábo
Ní gbogbo ilè Èwí o, Òòdúa j'ábo.

Nobody's father has ever seen *Èlédùmarè*
Is the oracular answer to anyone who asks
If God is male or female
It is said that at Ife God is male,
But at *Adó*, God is female.
In all the Kingdom of *Èwí*, (the ruler of *Adó*),
Òòdúa is female*

* (*Òòdúa* is sometimes used as another name for *Olodumare*)

This, of course, is not to say that if one interviews Yoruba sages today, most of them will not try to convince the researcher that *Olódùmarè* in traditional thought was generally characterised as male. This most probably shows the influence of both Christianity and Islam wherein God is conceived as male: a pointer to the fact that many living traditionalists confuse authentic African beliefs with imported ones. My interest is how some ancient Yoruba thinkers actually conceptualised some of their deities.

Yoruba Symbolism of the Deities

Here we have clear distinctions made between the male and the female. *Ògún*, the deity of iron for instance, is male. So also is *Sàngo* the fire-eating deity of thunder. But *Òsun* is the deity of fertility, while *Olókun* is the deity of wealth and prosperity. (The latter has an only daughter *Ajé* — Money). Both of these deities are female. The place of abode of *Òsun* is the river while *Olókun's* home is the Ocean which she also rules. *Orúnmilà*, the deity of knowledge and wisdom, is male and the divination system generally known as *Ifá* is generally associated with him. The popular view is that the system is not supposed to be practised by women. For as the saying goes *'Obìrin kì í kó'fá'* (A woman is never ordained as an *Ifá* priest). Yet I have been reliably told by several informants that this proverb does not imply this. The meaning it conveys is that female practitioners of *Ifá* were originally not permitted to see the *Igbá Odù* — the calabash in which *Ifá* objects are kept.

However, there are women who actually practice *Ifa.* They are known as *yánífá* while their male counterparts are called *Babalawo.* But even then, of the various instruments used within the system, some are associated more with women than with men. *Ikín, Agbigba* and *Òpèlè* are used more by men than by women while *Isa* or *Èèrìndínlógún* is used more by women. This is why we have the saying: *Òle okùnrin ló dá'sà'* (Only a lazy man can divine with *Isà*). The implication is that *Isà* is simpler. But in actual fact different women use different instruments for divination. Yet one cannot ignore the implicit suggestion that most women opt for *Isà* because it is simpler — the same reason why lazy men also use it. Furthermore there is also the claim that *Ifá* oral literature, when accessed through the use of *Ikin,* is fuller and more difficult to interpret. Again, the belief is that only a few women can use it.

Yoruba Cultural Views on Knowledge

Here we have several proverbs, stories and aphorisms which make every clear statements about Yoruba belief that knowledge, like wisdom, is relative in nature. Each can therefore vary in terms of time and space as well as between persons of different sexes and ages. Here are some of them:

(i) *Ogbón odùn ní wèrè èèmí ì,*
(Wisdom this year may be folly next time).

(ii) *Báyì í là nse n'íbí, èèwò ibò mi i*
(The norm in one place is anathema in another).

(iii) *Enìkan kì í nìkan gbó tán.*
(No one is all wise).

(iv) *Obìnrin kì í fó ni l'ójú*
(Being a woman does not make a person blind)

(v) *Omodé gbón, àgbà gbón,*
Ni a 'fi d'alè Ifè
(Children are wise, elders too are wise)
[This is the primordial principle of Yoruba Society].

(vi) *Eni mò yí, kò mo t'òhùn*
Ló d'Ifá fún Òrúnmilà.
Tí yio kó Ifá lówó Ámósùn omo rè.
(She/he who knows this may not know that.
This was the oracular principle applicable to Òrúnmilà
(the deity of wisdom and knowledge),
Who had to learn *Ifa* wisdom from Amosun, his offspring).

I will now add an aphorism also from the *Ifa* literary corpus:

Omilengbe ò lákàmoye,
Ìyèrúndù ò lómúkàkà,
Mo gbón tán, mo mò tán,
Àra re nìkan ló tàn je.
Àìfòròloni,
Awo ílú àwon wèrè
Ló d'ífá fún Òrúnmìlà.
Nígbàtí baba mbe nínú àkámó.

Water is uncountable.
Powdery stuff cannot be counted
I am all wise,
I am all knowing,
Deceives no one but him/herself.
A self-conceited person,
Is regarded as a sage only among fools.
This was the operative principle applicable to *Orunmila*
When he was caught up in the midst of enemies.

Like in most *Odù Ifá*, this aphorism is followed by the story of how *Òrúnmìlà* asked his followers who were also his pupils why they made no effort to help him when he was confronted by his antagonists. The answer was that since he was the one to whom they run in times of difficulties, they believed they were incapable of helping him out. *Òrúnmìlà* then asked them: 'Why then did I teach you wisdom?' It was the disciples who in the end got him out of the problem!

In other chapters of *Ifá*, it is clearly demonstrated that even *Olódùmarè*, the Supreme (but never absolute) Being is not all knowing. She/he asks questions and acknowledges having learnt from experience. For instance, *Olódùmarè* explicitly stated this in *Odù Òyèkú Méjì* (Abimbola 1977). There are therefore the following sayings:

Olórun pàápàá ò gbón tó
(Even God is wise enough)

Ìgbàgbé se Olódùmáre,
Kò la esè pépéye
(It was *Olódùmarè's* forgetfulness
That accounts for the separation of the duck's claws)

Of course there is nothing specifically blasphemous in this since it is also said in the Bible that God regretted creating humanity. However, the Yoruba do not see God as epistemologically limited in exactly the same way as humanity is. Her/His superior capacity is illustrated in the following short aphorism:

Amóòkùn s'olè,
Bí ojú oba ayé kò rí o,
Ti oba òkè n wò ó

(You who steal under the cover of darkness
If the eyes of the earthly king do not see you,
Those of the heavenly ruler are watching).

Yoruba Conceptions of Male and Female

One strange difficulty here is the scarcity of proverbs which characterise the male, apart from a few about his official or semi-official role as father. Yet this is in no way comparable with the almost innumerable proverbs that characterise women as a particular group, and others which touch on their roles as mother, wife, daughter and concubine. One possible explanation is the claim that over 80 per cent of Yoruba proverbs and aphorisms are to be found in the *Ifá* corpus which is to a large extent dominated by men. Yet this view is faulted on the note that both men and women do practice *Ifá* divination. Therefore it is difficult to make clear a distinction between oral texts accessed through the use of different means except the claim that *ÍKín* is said to be fuller than the others. Be that as it may, I start with some proverbs and aphorisms which express Yoruba views about the woman and her various functions in the family and in society.

(i) *Bí okùnrin r'éjò tí obìnrin pa á,*
Kí ejò ó má sá a ti lo,
(If a man sights a snake and a woman kills it,
Its well so long as the snake does not escape).

(ii) *Obìnrin ò se é f'imú hàn.*
(Women cannot keep secrets).

(iii) *Obìnrin ò m'oore*
(Women are ingrates).

(iv) *Òrìsà bí ìyà kò sí,*
Ìyá l'à bá má a bo.
(There is no deity like mother,
She is the only one worthy of adoration).

(v) *Ìya nì wúrà, baba ni dígí,*
(Mother is gold, father is glass).

(vi) *Omokùnrin àrólé,*
Omobìnrin agbára.
(A male child is the pillar of the family,
A female one is a seasonal stream).

However there are a few negative proverbs about men too. We have the following:

(vii) *Okùnrin ò l'órun*
(Men have no place in heaven).

(viii) *Oko mi o súnwòn,*
Omo kan l'ó ye è
(A bad husband should be left after the first child)

(ix) *Omo eni l'oko eni*
Òtútù ni kò mo ìyà
Tí a fi nfi oko s'ejo ara
Omo eni l'oko eni
(A woman's child is her true husband
It is only because cold is unbearable
That is why you have a husband to keep you warm
A child is the true husband of her mother)

(x) *Gbédè bí ògún ìyá,*
Ogún Bàbá ní n ni omo lára.
(Peaceful as a mother's inheritance,
It is a father's legacy that creates problems for the progeny)

Ironically there is an *Ifa* aphorism which suggests that all human beings are born equal:

Erú kú n'ilé, won lo sin s'óko
Omo kú l'óko, won wá sin s.'ilé
Ìbí ó ju ìbí
Bí a se b'érú
L'ase b'ómo.
Erú ní bàbá,
Òrà lò jìn.
Má f'ìyà je mí
Nítorí mo jé àlejò,

Bí ìwo ná à bá dé ibò míràn
Àlejò nì wo ná à yí ò jé

(When a slave dies at home, she is buried at the farmstead
When the true born dies in the farm, she is brought home for burial
Yet one birth is not greater than the other
The way the slave's child is born
Is the same as the master's child is born,
The slave has a father,
Only he is far away.
Do not oppress me,
Because I am a stranger,
If you get to another country,
You too will be a stranger.

These proverbs show that the Yoruba traditionally regarded motherhood as an important social responsibility which was evaluated higher than that of fatherhood. Matrilineal relationships are also deeper and stronger than patrilineal ones even today. But perhaps the most intriguing aspect of ancient Yoruba thought is their recognition of the male and the female as partners in progress. This male-female principle is seen as so fundamental that it is nowhere denied in the organisation of society. The inseparableness of the male-female compendium forms the first axiom of understanding and of theories of society. This is beautifully recorded in a riddle among the Yoruba speaking community of *Poro* in Northern Ivory Coast. Asked how many people are in the village, the answer was: 'Two, man and woman'. The implication is, of course, a recognition that society must pay due recognition to both and not just one of the two sexes.

Yet the fundamental insight that femaleness cannot be totally ignored in the formulation of ideal principles of organising society which the Yoruba and this Ivorian people so much stress, was never a basic element of social theories in the West nor did it form the only basic axiom which Yoruba society relied upon. The first proverb in this subsection which clearly shows an acknowledgement of the empirical fact that while men may be cowards, women may be villains. But even then, the Yoruba still express preference for male children and at times makes derogatory remarks about women.

This is more explicit in principles which define the relationship between husband and wife. For example, we have the following sayings:

(i) *Oko l' olórí*
(The husband is the leader of the wife)

(ii) *Obìnrin s'òwà nù,*
Ó ní òun ò l'órí oko.
(A woman who lacks good character,
Always blames her marital problems on ill luck)

(iii) *Òkan soso pòrò l'obìnrin dùn mo*
L ówó oko
B'ó bá di méjì á òfófó
B'ó bá dí méta á di pamínkú etc.
(Monogamy is the only enjoyable material relationship
For a husband,
When (wives) are two, they become jealous,
When three, it becomes a problem of
'you must kill me today', etc.)

(iv) *Ò'òsà jé n n'éni kéjì obìnrin ò d'énú.*
(A woman's prayer for a second wife is never sincere)

(v) *Àìlóbìnrin ò se dáké,*
Bí a d'áké enu ní fi í soni.
Níní ejó àìní òràn,
Èèyàn tí ò l'óbìnrin,
Ò tó ko ká'wó l'érí,
K'ó sunkún gb' ònà ojà lo!
The wifeless cannot keep his peace,
If he does, he exposes himself to different stigmas,
Yet having one is as problematic as having none,
A wifeless man should hold his head,
And go weeping to the market place.

Now let's consider another aphorism from *Odù Ifá*:

Orí burúkú kì í wu tuulu,
A kì í da esè asiwèrè mó l'ónà,
A kì í m'orí olójà l'áwùjo,
A dí á fún Mobówú
Tí í se obìnrin Ògún.
Orí tí ó j'oba l'óla,
Enìkan kò mò.
Kí tokotaya ó mò pe'ra won

Ní wèrè mó,
Orí tí o j'oba l'óla,
Enìkan kò mò.

(Bad luck does not mean having a migraine,
No one can identify the footsteps
of the madman on the road:
You can not know the head that will wear
a crown among the multitude.
This was the oracular message to *Mobówú*
The wife of *Ògún* (the deity of iron).
Who will be made the king tomorrow,
Nobody knows.
Let not the husband or the wife call each other,
Mad or unsuccessful anymore,
The head that will wear a crown tomorrow,
Nobody knows.

Now, as the late Okot p'Bitek beautifully put it, for the Yoruba, like most other Africans, the social ideal was for a young man and woman to get marry at a ripe age, have children and settle down to a good life. It was only within Western culture that husbandlessness, wifelessness, childlessness and homelessness became virtues (p'Bitek 1983). The man as the head of the house has social responsibilities to the wife whose position was subservient to that of the husband. A woman who changes husbands from time to time should not blame it on bad luck but on her bad character. An adult male who remains unmarried is a social deviant who attracts to himself different derogatory comments: *'ọkọ́bó'* (an impotent); *'olè'* (a lazy person); *'olóríburúkú'* (a never-do-well). The only thing that befits such a man is to publicly declare himself a total failure.

However, contrary to the contemporary claim by Yoruba men that polygamy or even polygyny is a culturally accepted norm, many verses in *Ifa* oral literature clearly state that if a man wishes to have a happy home, the ideal is to have only *one* wife. The unhappy consequences of every additional wife is listed. Hence a distinction has to be made between the practice of polygyny and the claim that Yoruba thinkers see it as an ideal. The aphorism about having many wives may be seen as blaming the woman for the problems of polygyny, but it is equally possible that these were recognised as realistic practical problems of having more than *one* wife. One of the aphorisms above expresses the empirical fact that having a wife is almost as problematic as remaining a bachelor. The same apparently goes for the woman who has no husband. The final advice therefore is that since society sees marriage as inevitable, husbands and wives should

never see each other as a failure. Rather both should make concerted efforts to keep a marriage healthy.

The Place of Women in Yoruba Political, Economic and Religious Systems

Several historians, ethnologists, sociologists, anthropologists as well as other students of Yoruba culture, have testified that Yoruba women played some crucial political and economic roles in the traditional setting. There are oral records of female rulers in many of the towns and villages and the phenomenon of female chiefs is still very much around. Women held some powerful positions in the palace of *Alaàfin* — the ancient ruler of the old *Òyó* Empire.

For example, the *Alaàfin's* official mother was the feudal head of *Basorun*, the *Oyó* Generalisimo, while the *Ìyá Kéré* (the junior official mother) was the King's treasurer. She was also in charge of the royal insignia and all the paraphernalia used on state occasions. She had the power of withholding them, thus preventing any state reception, to mark her displeasure with the King when she was offended. She was the person entitled to place the crown on the King's head. She was the mother of all the *Ìlàrí* — the male and female courtiers who constitute one third of the household officials of the court. Indeed, Rev. Johnson (1921), who recorded this history, noted that although the *Íyá Kéré* comes next in rank to the official mother of the King, she wielded the greatest power in the palace. The King's pharmacist who was the one who meted punishment to erring chiefs was also a woman.

It is however interesting to note that in the economic sphere, women were in the lead in most Yoruba cultural societies. It was women who sold their husband's products. But since the woman usually practiced one or more occupations and professions in her own right, she also sold her own wares. This apparently not only gave her the advantage of owning property, but the wonderful opportunity of developing business skills. Yoruba men by tradition, do not engage in selling farm products in the market or cooked food elsewhere in the village. A recognition of the economic contribution of the woman seems to be the basis for the following aphorism:

Alanise obìnrin Òy' eni.
Obínrin tí kò ní' Se,
Aro rè ni ó tà jeun.
Ákun ojú á kun enu,
À s'àgbèrè l'ónà ojà.
(A woman without work does no honour to anybody,
A jobless woman,

Will sell herself for food.
She will paint the face, and the mouth,
And resort to prostitution on the way to the market).

The hardworking woman is therefore seen as a role model. Yoruba women were, and are still market leaders in all parts of the society today and are well known all over west and central Africa for their shrewdness in business. Again contrary to popular belief, women were involved in all the secret societies — at least there was always a female representative in each. For instance, the *Orò* cult which women are publicly forbidden to see, actually starts its nocturnal outing only after a woman has waved the whistling calabash. The *Òsugbó* society, which was the legal arm of government among the *Ègbá* and *Ìjèbú* Yoruba, had only one female representative. But she was vested with great powers as recorded in the following aphorism:

Dá 'gi ké, Dá 'gi ké,
Àáké kan ò lè e dá 'gi ké;
Dá 'gi là, Dá 'gi là,
Èè là kan ò le e dá 'gi là;
Bí Kò s'Érelú,
Òsùgbó kan ò lé e dá 'wo se
(Cutting alone, cutting alone,
The axe cannot cut alone,
Splitting alone, splitting alone;
The wedge cannot split alone;
Without the *Erelú*, (the female representative)
The *Òsùgbo* cannot operate).

But even so, one can still question to taboo that forbids the generality of women from seeing the *Orò*.

Within religion proper, female priests were commonplace. Most of those who managed the shrines, led ritual celebrations and carried out different initiations were women, even though such religious groups had many male members. The suggestion that women were given these posts because they were associated with supernatural powers cannot be dismissed with a wave of the hand. The *babaláwo* (Father of the secrets) and the *Onísègìn* (the herbalist) all pay homage to *Àwon ìyá mi Òsòrònga t'ó so ilé ayé ró* (Great Mothers who hold the pillars of the universe). Also the majority of the traditional pharmacists and birth attendants, even to date, are women.

Paradoxes and Apparent Contradictions in Yoruba Principles of Gender Relations

From the scanty information given above two contradictory principles of gender relations in ancient Yoruba society can be observed. The Yoruba understanding of nature as always made up of two inseparable characters when combined with their epistemological insight that knowledge and wisdom cannot be absolute suggest an appreciation of a natural but non-derogatory dichotomy between the male and the female. Hence there is nothing in these views which supports misogyny. The first proverb on our list explicitly denies this. Yet in their symbolism of the deities, this unsupported principle of an apparent sexual inferiority of women seems to appear. This shows that Patriarchy was in practice when men saw themselves as leaders rather than as oppressors of women.

Again in the distribution of scientific functions, men play the dominant roles. Men are the doctors while women are pharmacists and medical practitioners. This is a contemporary situation which historians may need to look into. Was there an earlier appreciation of these practitioners whether or not they were men? Or was the woman socially compelled to go into this profession because man, at a particular stage, were so engrossed in slave raiding that they had little or no time to devote to medicine? It could also be suggested that the fundamental difference in more men becoming doctors today than women was the influence of British patriarchal colonists who believed that women did not have the capacity to study medicine — a belief that was in practice then in their own educational system.

Equally, the Yoruba might have granted that women can be wise but still believed that women's wisdom as obtained through the use of *Isà* is subservient to that gained from the use of *Ikin*. This assumption, however, did not destroy the Yoruba recognition that a few women may excel in any area of study or social institution. The point is that the majority of women were seen as playing more subservient roles than those played by most men. However, the ancient Yoruba never lost sight of the possibility that a few women may be 'masculine' in achievement.

How are we then to explain the Yoruba fundamental principle that women can be as capable as men with the markedly subordinate roles assigned them — including their imbalanced representation in politics? Or, how is it possible to reconcile the subservient view of the woman and the assertive powerful roles she was allowed to play as ruler, chief and as organiser and controller of economy and extensive systems of trade? Is this not a paradox or even an involvement in self-contradiction? What becomes of their awareness that maleness and femaleness are by nature complementary?

One of the objectives of this paper is to analyse the nature of the Yoruba ideology which apparently recognised the anatomy of female power, (of course, not in the sense of Chinweizu's book with the same title!) What seems to be at the back of the mind of some Yoruba thinkers is that since natural differences between the male and female cannot be denied, nature does not by itself justify male-female absolute equality. But neither are these differences synonymous with women's total inferiority. Most apparently equality in Yoruba cultural thought is regarded as a relative principle which cannot be used as an absolute canon.

We are all too familiar with this principle in modern theories of democracy but perhaps more solidly in legal systems. Everybody, we are told, is equal before the law; yet we know that this axiom, even in cases where there are no justifiable exceptions, is hardly ever fully implemented. Equality in democratic terms exemplifies the mathematical dictum that one person cannot be equal to two persons no matter how highly placed. So every adult member of society has only one vote and also the right to vote and be voted for (under specifically laid down procedures). Beyond these theoretical realms, the common practice of a graduated salary structure in a society is enough to reduce to minimal importance the economic equality of all human beings in the same society.

May be Aristotle was right after all when he defined justice as treating equals equally, and unequals unequally. Or rather, perhaps equality should be formulated as 'treating like cases alike and unlike cases differently'. Some feminists now argue that the quest for equality has been misconceived as treating women like men. But egalitarianism, they say, demands the recognition that women have different situations from men and therefore it is necessary to cater for women's needs. For example, it is not enough to give equal job access to men and women, since women are responsible for childcare. Egalitarianism, when adequately conceived, could mean allowing mothers to start work later in the morning and finish work earlier in the day but for the same pay. The justice in this type of arrangement lies in the fact that childcare is a social function from which society as a whole benefits. The relevant issue here is how to determine appropriate areas where necessary distinctions are to be drawn between like and unlike, while at the same time putting in place adequate criteria for doing so.

The Yoruba dilemma seems to arise from the inevitable paradox in the failure to totally avoid using male-female biological differences as the criterion for determining male-female social relationships. Yoruba ancient philosophers appreciated the fact that two partners in progress may need to appoint a leader even if both of them are male or female. The only obnoxious thing to do is to determine who leads solely on the basis of sex and worse still to presuppose that

the females are by nature designed to be followers in all spheres of such a partnership while men monopolise power at all costs in all situations. The crucial point therefore is how to recognise gender differences without converting the same to a universal law of the functional classification of either of the sexes. And of course, the Yoruba, to my mind, were far ahead of Western philosophers and social scientists within this realm of thought, even though many practical experiences within Yoruba society fell short of the ideals set by the thinkers. I will try to explain what exactly I mean here.

Now, sexism according to Professor Ali Mazrui can occur at least on three different levels: benevolent, benign and malignant. The first, is a programme of giving special considerations to women with the chief purpose of improving their political, economic and consequently social conditions. Benign sexism, on the other hand, involves different acts of being nice to women primarily as members of a biologically disadvantaged group. But malignant sexism is the total condemnation of women not only as inferior in all things but also as outrightly evil (Sawere 1992).

The proverbs, aphorisms and stories discussed earlier here reveal that malignant sexism was repugnant to Yoruba thinkers; at least the first proverb clearly shows this. The Western view that women are of no use in any sphere of social organisation must have struck the ears of many Yoruba philosophers as crazy. The point then is that the Yoruba factual awareness that women are not the same as men in all things, did not prevent them from realising that several women were better than many men in many spheres of life. The theoretical problem was how to distinguish biological differences from functional inequalities. But Yoruba thinkers never used the former as an absolute canon for determining the latter. This is explicitly stated in one of their proverbs: *Nínú ìkòkò dúdú l'èko funfun ti jáde'* (From the black pot comes the white pap). Whereas blackness, in Western understanding, is always a symbol of negative qualities! The Yoruba social structure practically applied the principle that some women could excel in areas where many men could fail. In strict faithfulness to their belief in this and consequently in the principle of epistemological relativity, it is difficult to find areas of social life from which women were completely barred — not even in warfare.

The two most problematic areas appear to be those of the token role women were made to play in politics and the subservient position of the wife to that of the husband. Which aspects of Yoruba world-views justify these principles? It appears that within the Yoruba system of thought, the secondary role assigned the woman does not logically entail a claim of their sex's inferiority. The absolute pigeonholing commonly found in Western thought has no place within

Yoruba epistemological relativity. There is therefore a recognition of the justification for male and female claims to power even though there is oftentimes an unjustifiable tilt in favour of men. Both men and women are expected to marry and have children. Mutual respect is expected to be their guiding principle. The relationship between the husband and the wife was seen as one between a leader and the led rather than one between the boss and the servant.

This, of course, is not meant to deny that society still gives an edge to the husband over the wife, nor that men did not in actual practice see themselves as masters; or that women explicitly refused to accept their role which in many ways was sometimes close to slavery. Many have argued that women's failure to do this in many societies of the world was the result of an established process of cultural indoctrination. Indeed the housewife is still jokingly referred to today in her husband's family circle as 'our slave'. She is still expected to serve relations of her husband no matter her social status.

However, nothing in Yoruba world-view actually justifies this as the ideal relationship that should exist between husband and wife. The point is that Yoruba thinkers were by and large victims of the social milieu in which they operated. Like most of their counterparts in other parts of the world, they failed to see this leader-follower policy as a way of oppressing the female population and did not regard the abuse of brute force by men on women as unnatural. This complexity has always been a crucial one in social studies, both ancient and modern. Conscious efforts are usually necessary to draw clear distinctions between the biological differences that occur between the two sexes and the social principles which define the roles of both men and women in a society.

The Yoruba social ideal and the fundamental principles on which they are based clearly show deep philosophical considerations of these two conflicting aspects of human experience. No one can deny the natural differences between the male and the female, yet the notions of justice and equality do not justify sex elevation or condemnation. The crux of the matter is that women and men are *not*, scientifically speaking, different species. This is why many modern researchers justifiably see the fundamental problem of sexual evaluation as identical with the basic problems and origins of racism, ethnicity, religious persecution, etc.

Many critics have drawn specific attention to the inadequate representation of women in the ancient Yoruba political system. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the National Council of Women Societies in Nigeria (NCWS) now makes a demand that women must constitute at least one-third of members of all political institutions. If one studies the history of the political marginalisation of women in colonial and post-colonial periods in Nigeria, the achievement of this demand

will indeed mark a giant stride by Nigerian women, more so, if one accepts the official Western definition of democracy as a game of numbers. But even within this Western conception of politics, a female population of at least 50 per cent of the nation asking for only one-third representation inadvertently accepts that 50 per cent women (reduced to 33 1/3 per cent) is inferior to 50 per cent men. If our goal is to set up an ideal political structure, then women cannot ask for anything less than 50 per cent representation since they know too well that they will never get the ideal on first demand. However, they may get 35 per cent if their demand is for 50 per cent and still continue to ask for more. But if the demand is only for one-third the possibility of getting 35 per cent is very remote. This conclusion might have been the reason why Women in Nigeria (WIN) has been demanding 50 per cent for women since 1986.

The Yoruba understanding of democracy appears, on many grounds, to be at variance with Western characterisation of it. First, in the traditional setting, women's participation was a matter of right and hence was never ignored, unlike in England or Germany where women were denied even the nominal right of voting until 1928 and 1948 respectively. Since in ancient Yoruba thought politics was a game of power, which she often used to stop men from implementing unacceptable social policies. In actual fact, this power which is similar to that of the super powers at the United Nations, is used in consultation with women's organisations and councils within the Yoruba society. Yoruba political institutions were therefore more like committee set-ups than 'Houses of Representatives'. This, nonetheless, does not justify unequal male-female representation at all levels. I am only trying to find out their own possible rationalisation of some apparently unjustified policies and women's reasons for not raising objections against them.

Of course, there is abundance evidence of women organised demonstrations against men as a group. For instance, if an autocratic ruler or political institution tried to override the voice of the female member, there is usually what was known as '*Igbo sisi*', when women go out half-naked to protest against such acts of oppression. And as the popular saying goes, Yoruba men know too well that '*Ogun obìnrin sòro ójà*'. (Women's war is very difficult to fight). There is no doubt what-so-ever that the ideals of the Yoruba society were far from being perfect. Yet on the particular issue of one powerful female representative at all levels of social institution, the Yoruba social experience should catch the fancy of many Western and Eastern European scholars in whose societies women are not yet represented either at the highest ruling level or in many lower ones on an institutional basis. Policy conditions in many international and governmental establishments in contemporary time stress this ideal but its actual implementation is far from being achieved. The political story in many African

countries today is that women are not at all or very poorly represented at the highest arms of government, especially under the unique autocratic military rule.

I wish to end this section by referring to another Yoruba aphorism which seems to summarise principles which they believe should guide all political activities in society and the consequences of flouting them. Again I quote from *Ifa* oral literature.

Àjùwá Àjùwá *
Àpó eran ò jùko,
Ó un ló d'ífá Aláko léjú,
Tí ó ko won je n'ÍFE Oòdáyé.
Wón ní kí ó só 'gbó ità d' ode,
Wón ní kí ó má igbó ìgbàlè d' òjé,
Wón ní kí ó má f'igbó Osun sé'de
Njè Alákoléjú ò gbó,
Njè Alákoléjú ò gbà,
A ò fé o n ílè yí mó,
Má a lo!

(He is greater than us, he is more important than everybody else.
In him public mismanagement is not easily discoverable.
These were the principles of state management
which the greedy operated upon,
When she/he cheated in primordial Yoruba society,
S/he was told not to deal with the public as
if hunting for games in the forest.
S/he was warned against turning a political association
into a cult for deceiving the people.
S/he was cautioned against converting public funds
into private use.
But the greedy did not listen,
The greedy did not yield.
We don't want you in this society any more,
(the people say), Go away.)

(* The Word *Àjùwá* is so archaic that many *Ifá* priests are unable to translate or explain what exactly it means. However, most of them gave similar interpretations of it within the context of the entire piece).

Conclusion

What implications can this analysis have for scholars interested in formulating a culture-based developmental theory for the Yoruba society in contemporary times? The distinction between a recognition of the natural differences between the two sexes and the error of regarding this difference as a justification for seeing women as constituting a biologically disadvantaged category is a crucial conceptual classification which was absent in ancient Yoruba formulations of gender-related social principles. The recognition that male-female complementarity cannot be ignored in creating a healthy civil society is a step in the right direction. Allowing the possibility of the economic freedom of the woman (which was perhaps not intended as a way of promoting women's interests but was never officially proscribed as was done in the West) may offer some good lessons against the promotion of male domination of women which occurred during and after colonialism in Nigeria and in many other countries of the world today.

More directly relevant to women's interest perhaps is the obvious fact that there is always a wide gap between policies or the setting up of ideals and the practical implementation of them. There can be no argument that despite and in spite of these lofty ideal conceptions of femaleness, their allowance for women's economic and political freedom (ideals which were apparently formulated by some ancient Yoruba thinkers who were social critics of their societies), there were still many ways in which the woman was socially oppressed and physically brutalised. Listen to the testimony of this proverb: '*Òpá tí a fi na ìyáálé, para l ó wà tí a o fi na ìyàwó.*' (The cane with which the first wife was beaten is still in the keeping for the new wife). The problem of reconciling theory with practice in formulating developmental theories as utopias is still very much with us.

The next aspect of Yoruba traditional views about gender which I think feminist scholars can also consider for possible modification and application is Yoruba women's ability to organise themselves into pressure groups against oppressive rulers and governmental policies. What is most intriguing here is the fact that this power was actually used to fight not only for women's rights, but on many occasions these groups turned into human rights organisations which demanded the implementation of democratic principles affecting both men and women. Political cringing by individual women were frowned at and nobody was exempted once a social policy affecting women as a whole was made by such women's organisations. A relatively recent incident suffices to demonstrate this point.

In the early 1960s, women in Ede, a Yoruba town, met and decided to boycott the grinding mills because the charges were seen as exorbitant. Some days later, the wives of Timi, the traditional ruler of the town, were found coming from the mill with grated cassava. These wives were beaten up and their cassava thrown away. The ruler himself judged his wives guilty on one simple point: Are the ruler's wives no longer women just because they are relatives of a superman?[3]

The charge by many contemporary philosophers and social scientists is that the call for a return to African cultural philosophical and social views is retrogressive in nature. This wrong inference has its origin in what most advocates of cultural revivalism themselves say: 'Let us go back to traditional African communalism and humanism', most of them have proclaimed. This, of course, is a blanket proposal which offers almost an impossible option because it provides inadequate solutions to contemporary African problems of development. Every social, economic and political theory is a human construct. Those that have worked in most societies of the world are those in which conscious efforts were made to correct errors in existing orders. Plato's *Republic* is a good example.

The need to look back into traditional African philosophical ideals and the ways these affected their principles of organising society will be misplaced and consequently misleading if it is meant to be a call for a wholesale acceptance of all or even particular philosophies and cultural paradigms in ancient African societies. The need to look back is, to me, necessary so that contemporary African scholars do not, without adequate scrutiny of their own intellectual heritage, continue to accept without question the superior wisdom of Western scholars who are basically ignorant of our existing social orders which they intend to change. The renowned Nigerian economist, Dr. Pius Okigbo (1992), once warned against this danger in a public lecture. Professor Paulin J. Hountondji (1983) succinctly explains the need to revitalise African views in the following words:

> What we need is a free, rational, critical evaluation and initiative of our living heritage and not a close up of our tradition into the past as if it were something dead, esoteric or inferior.

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3 **Ede:** This story was told to me during my visit to *Iwalewa Haus* in Bayeruth, Germany, in 1993, by Professor Ulli Beier who personally witnessed this event during his stay of over 10 years in Osogbo, a distance of less than 20 kilometres from Ede.

There is today in the works of many Africanists and social scientists abundant evidence to support the fact that colonialism actually worsened the position of the African woman in many societies. The Yoruba case is undeniable. This, of course, does not imply that the entire condition of the Yoruba woman was perfectly satisfactory before the advent of colonialism. But that it went from bad to worse is a matter well established today. There is therefore no denying the fact that the awareness of gender as an important social principle in some ancient African societies was much sharper than in some ancient and even contemporary Western societies. If, for example, we adopt the popular view that,

> one of the best ways to understand the spirit of a civilisation, to appreciate its excellence and also to realise its limitations is to study the history of the position of and status of women in it (Janaki 1985),

then the inevitable conclusion we will reach is that precolonial Yoruba society was on a higher level of civilisation than most Western examples. Women in those societies have definitely come a long way in the present century. Yet there is the need to identify those positive aspects of many African cultural views which placed their thinkers higher than many European scholars as at that time. Both groups of intellectuals can, of course, learn a few things from each other even though the authentic African alternative has now been greatly polluted by Western views. However, there are still many ways in which women's liberation movements in Africa can benefit from their own cultural heritage as well as from modern Western feminist organisations and developmental theories and programmes.

Let me therefore conclude by stating the spirit in which this paper was conceived. Many African and Western philosophers who have hitherto directly or indirectly denied the existence of 'strict' philosophy in Africa before the advent of colonialism are today changing their tune. The current demand is for specimens of literary pieces which can pass muster in academic philosophy. The study here is of Yoruba views about gender relations within a stable polity. A detailed philosophical analysis of the proverbs, stories and aphorisms here presented need to be set in language familiar to the practitioners of that discipline. But that, to a very large extent, is beyond the scope of this paper. The primary concern here is to identify, explain and critically understand some of the basic principles of Yoruba autochthonous socio-political culture in the traditional setting.

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Politics and Gender Relations in Kenya: A Historical Perspective

Hannington Ochwada*

Introduction

SECTION 2A OF KENYA'S Constitution allowing for multi-partism was repealed in 1991. About 5 years have gone since this important constitutional amendment in Kenya. Yet there is still disparity in the social history of gender relations in Kenya. The distribution of power in gender relations have tended to favour masculinity rather than femininity, making the decision-making process largely a male-dominated one despite the androncentric claim of the practice in the social, economic, political and religious institutions in the country. Indeed, this realisation calls for an examination into the reasons giving rise to the persistent imbalance in the political relations, in spite of the promise and drive towards building democratic institutions in the country.

That women have not participated fully in the political decision-making process of various world governments cannot be overstated. Consequently, they have not effectively influenced policies in the process of development of their societies. The problem of women's invisibility in the global social, economic and political relations explains the hitherto existing gender imbalances. Indeed, in conventional ethnological and colonial anthropological literature women's contribution to the production of goods and technologies, knowledge and the general social values, were largely viewed as incidental. Women's description in such literature revolved essentially, around their reproductive role as mothers and spouses complementing that of men whose political, economic, technological activities are the only ones which are acknowledged (Sow 1994:6).

Given the above conceptualisation of gender relations, men were and are still seen as the agents of change who made and continue to make most decisions affecting society in general. This has had far-reaching implications for social relations and the process of power distribution. Studies conducted in the global political relations indicate that women parliamentary representation, for instance,

* Department of History, Kenyatta University, Nairobi/Kenya.

in most countries, is less than 10 per cent with the exception, perhaps, of Sweden and Norway which have 38 and 36 per cent respectively. Even some of the world's largest democracies at the end of 1991 such as the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK), could boast of only 5.8 per cent and 6.4 per cent of the women's participation in political decision-making positions respectively (Nzomo 1993:9). This is a grim picture of gender relations obtaining, globally.

Hitherto, in Africa, the situation is no better— there has been no woman head of state in any of the African countries. The highest position a woman has ascended to in the last three decades of Africa's independence is the office of the Vice-President. In this case, Uganda seems to be exemplary by African standards considering that even during the regime of the infamous Idi Amin in the early 1970s, a woman was appointed to a ministerial position. In other African countries such as Senegal, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Zambia only a handful of women have been appointed to the cabinet.

Yet in the constitutions of most African countries, women and men have the full political rights — the rights to vote and to hold offices at all levels in the decision — making process. There are various explanations for women's under-representation in the political process. The deep-rooted patriarchal ideology defines gender relations at all levels of the political economy. For example, socio-cultural systems and the legal system all impinge on social relations.

It is, in fact, ironical that despite the claim of constitutional equality of all citizens in African countries, and the participation of individuals in the political economy, gender imbalances, continue unabated. Indeed, while discussing gender relations in the Senegalese political process, Fatou Sow (1989:35) bemoans this unfortunate development asserting that:

> In 1983, (only) three women held cabinet-level posts, posts deemed to be particularly suited to women's sensibilities (Health, Women's and Social Affairs, etc.). No woman has run one of the 'high powered' ministries overseeing economics, finance, foreign affairs, or justice. In 1978, eight out of 100 parliamentarians were women. The first woman mayor was elected in 1984. The political parties are models of patriarchal hierarchy; women serve on committees and within party organisations. Women in the opposition parties (either as wives or as *camdrades*) do not fare any better.

The above observation applies virtually to all African countries. There is a gender imbalance in political relations of Africa in which men are preponderantly dominant. That men, therefore, have controlled indigenous, colonial and even modern forms of governance of the state in Africa cannot be gainsaid. In fact, their control has translated into laws, policies, and spending

patterns which coincidentally benefit men mostly. It is apparent that women's seemingly personal, everyday experiences are structured by policies which make a claim to 'gender — neutrality'. Yet these policies are, to say the least, experienced differently by men and women thus rendering it inadmissible to talk of gender — neutrality in the political process of Africa (Parpart and Staudt 1990:1). This is because the policies are gender blind.

This paper postulates that prevailing analyses of the political processes in Africa and Kenya in particular, presented the processes affecting women and men on the continent in similar ways. They did not considered the possibility that these processes might not be gender — neutral, given that patriarchy pervades the entire spectrum of human relations in history. Moreover, they overlook the fact that there might be differences in the ways in which women and men experienced them. As a result, men's experiences and understandings of the political processes have become, perhaps, the authentic ones. This kind of thinking has come to increasingly deny the validity of women's experiences which might not fit into the dominant patriarchal world-view of most societies (Lovett 1989:23). While this paper rejects such an exclusivist approach to the process of governance biased against women, it also discusses how positive gender relations can be enhanced in Kenya's new democratic project.

By the term Kenya's new democratic project, the author means the pluralist politics of governance adopted in the country after the repeal of Section 2A of the Constitution of Kenya in December of 1991. This section of the constitution had confined Kenyans to a single party political space which did not allow for an alternative since 1982 when the country became a one party state by law. The new dispensation in the early 1990s allowed Kenyans to form political parties of their own choice as an alternative system of governance to the only and ruling party in existence then, the Kenya African National Union's (KANU). There is not doubt, pluralism enabled Kenyans to embark on politics of change in the country to include hitherto suppressed voices. However, the main question is whether positive gender relations have been enhanced despite the expansion of political space for greater participation of the citizens of Kenya in the political process and the respect for human rights.

Gender Relations in Precolonial and Colonial Societies

The root cause of gender discrimination and biases in Kenya as in other African countries can be explained variously. These includes cultural prejudices and stereotypes seen, especially, to be against women's empowerment. In most Kenyan communities social, political and economic roles have been apportioned to both men and women, in the process, defining relationships and status of individuals within society. For instance, it is common to hear the claim that

women should naturally know 'their place' in society. In this regard, women are expected to accept the 'obvious' assumption that men are 'thinkers', 'philosophers', 'scientists', 'politicians', breadwinners and even 'spiritual leaders' *par excellence*. Conversely, women are said to be 'homemakers', they are 'led', are 'submissive', are 'workers', are 'dependants' and play the role of mothers of the nation (Mukabi-Kabira, 1993:26). The above characterisations obtain from the perception of African women in colonial historiography as:

> ... Keepers of the homestead ... urban prostitutes or costly dependent wives of wage labourers in sociological work. (In fact), a false picture was presented by African male chiefs and elders and was happily reproduced by European social scientists (Mbilinyi 1985:130).

These together with cultural division of roles in society have over the years, been reinforced by the so-called wise sayings. Some of these 'wise' sayings have been created out of long experiences from which bodies of knowledge and 'wisdom' have emerged.

Thus, these sayings have authority of 'tradition'. Traditions have come to constitute the ideology of most societies in Kenya. It should be emphasised that ideology, as is the case with myth, has a basic function which is to give an event a historical intention, a natural justification— a system of justification which is in itself a message. Both ideology and myth, in fact, make things and events to look innocent and innocuous in the way events and situations are presented. Yet in essence, they tend to prop up the *status quo* in social relations. Mukabi-Kabira (1994:4) notes how tradition has affected gender relations in general in the following words:

> These cultural forms influence the way men and women behave at home, women apologise in different ways for their education. They play down their expertise and leadership qualities. They insist they have to know and practice more before they take leadership roles. Others buy peace on a daily basis. They tell their husbands how great they are. Elite women, for instance take loans to buy their husbands cars while they go to work by bus. They make their husbands believe that their (women's) ideas are theirs (husband's ideas). They take loans to buy houses in their husbands names ... They always seek approval.

The above presented picture is reproduced at different levels of gender relations in Africa. Gender differentiation and its biases against women start at birth. From the time babies are born the community treats boys and girls differently. In fact, some African traditional cultures have special ways of announcing the sex of the new-born baby. In the Kikuyu indigenous system, for instance, if a boy was born his birth was announced by the birth attendant with five ululations and a girl they would be four. In the Luyia and Luo communities of western Kenya when a man died his burial rites took four days to be performed, whereas a

woman's burial rites were performed in three days. These cultural practices has significant implications for gender relations and the distribution of power, especially during colonialism which placed women in a second class position socially. The customs of Kenyan communities reinforced and reproduced the patriarchal ideology which permeated the entire spectrum of their social, political and economic activities.

This explains why in most precolonial and colonial societies of Kenya women did not hold significant positions in the political decision-making process. Save for a few cases in the Luo, Kikuyu, Gusii, Giriama and Meru communities. In these communities some women leaders played significant roles in the leadership aspects of their people. These leaders included, chief Mang'ana of Kadem (Luo), Wangu Wa Makeri (Kikuyu), Moraa Moka Ngiti (Gusii), Mekatilili (Giriama) and Ciokalaine - 0 - M'barungu (Meru).Their participation in governance at the highest level of the political hierarchy, notwithstanding, the main actors and custodians of real power of these societies were men. Moreover, even in the economic sphere, men dominated and were the ultimate decision makers. For instance, they adviced on how agricultural surplus from households was used by its members, thus, disempowering women, generally. Basing on this postulation, radical feminism concludes women were subordinate to men in indigenous societies (Nzomo 1995a).

However, African scholars of the nationalist perspective have postulated that the oppressive gender relations in Africa are not a function of conditions in pre-colonial Africa, but a creation of colonialism. In fact, they argue that the stability of African institutions:

> ... was disrupted with the onset of colonialism. The colonialists, ignored the political role of women played in traditional cultures and confined them to the stereotyped roles that characterised their own women in the Western World. African women now found themselves systematically excluded from participation in the new set-up (Oduol 1993:25).

True, as Mudimbe (1988) has argued in his powerful discourse on the *Invention of Africa*, colonialism tended to organise and transform non-European areas into fundamentally European constructs. But, was all well as regards gender and power relations in Africa prior to the coming of the Europeans? Colonialism might have exacerbated bias in gender relations but, it certainly, did not create the inequalities. Gender inequalities existed, however, they may have been so sharply as they came to be characterised during colonialism and in the independence era.

In the process of resisting the cultural imperialism of the West, nationalist scholars perpetuated the invisibilisation and subordination of women. In their characterisation, for instance, an ideal woman was seen as one who was submissive, married, rural-based, faithful and loyal to a spouse and parents. Well, these are acceptable attributes, only when policies at the household and state levels encouraged equity in social relations. They however, became detestable when the aggressive urban and independent-minded women are considered as vicious, manipulative and immoral (Meena 1992:9-10). The changing relations of production in the global economy demand that gender relations were re-examined in the light of contemporary needs and exigencies.

In retrospect, colonialism enacted laws in Kenya to facilitate colonial domination and the exploitation of the Africans. The educational system was also reformulated to meet colonial interests and goals. The colonialists approached issues of social, political and economic concern with extreme ethnocentricism. They interpreted African institutions in the light of Western cultural values. Thus, in the colonialists' conception of gender relations, real power was vested in men. Power was concentrated in men, a tendency which they reinforced for enhanced economic gains to the colonial capitalists. For instance, labour laws, taxes, laws pertaining to the movement of people and the land tenure system were enacted. These laws facilitated the marginalisation and disempowerment of women in gender relations as there were no provision for women to own land. Moreover, women were restricted to rural areas as men were required to work for the colonial state, on European settler farms and industries.

The colonial state in Kenya served as an instrument of primitive accumulation by further introducing marketing and financial structures. It also appropriated land and livestock from Africans, instituted forced labour and built port facilities and railways. All these measures exploited and dehumanised Africans, impinging fundamentally, on gender relations in general. For instance, women became over-burdened with community work on top of their traditional-defined domestic roles in the household.

Additionally, on matters relating to marriage, colonialism came to recognise four systems namely: Customary Law, Moslem Law, Hindu Law and Civil Law which embodies the English philosophy of life and Christian ethos. However, of the two systems (Civil Law and Hindu) are the only ones to date which recognise monogamous marriages while the remaining two (Customary and Moslem Laws) give credence to polygamous unions as well (Kameri-Mbote 1995:16). On the hand, separation and divorce seem to be considered within the

defining ideology of patriarchy. Men, apparently, have more rights to property than women within the marriage institution.

In most indigenous African societies male offsprings are preferred to female children. They are, particularly valued for the continuity in the family name. It is assumed that males unlike females, will more often than not, change their names as is the case in traditional sedentary agricultural societies. Therefore, they are far less likely to relocate on marriage because of patrilocal marriage customs (Etta 1994:71). Having found this arrangement in place in indigenous African societies, the colonialists encouraged parents in Kenya to send more boys instead of girls to schools which had been established by the missionaries and the colonial state. In this context, therefore, formal Western education denied girls an equal opportunity as that of the boys to education. This explains why girls have not been able to develop fully their capabilities to compete favourably for employment opportunities with boys to date. This has led to the marginalisation and disempowerment of women in Kenya in general.

Given that women have not had equal educational opportunities as men, they have been treated as inferior to men in terms of possession of skills as it relates to job market. Conversely, they have not been able to participate in top-level decision-making process. This has effected their participation in political and economic activities. Indeed, lack of adequate of education of girls has contributed to women subordination in gender relations. Drawing from these realities, the feminist movement in Kenya took advantage of the political space expanded in 1991 to agitate for positive enhancement of gender relations. In fact, it has gone to the extent of agitating for the formation of a women led political party.

Toward Enhanced Gender Relations

In the foregoing section, gender relations and the distribution of power in indigenous African societies and during colonialism were discussed. It was observed that both dispensations impinged upon social, political and economic relations of individuals. Gender imbalances existed although, variedly, during the two periods. This is not to say that on attainment of Kenya's political independence in 1963, the situation changed to ensure there was equity in political, social and economic relations. This is far from it.

During the nationalist struggle women overcame the stereotyped roles which confined them to the domestic domain and instead actively participated in the process of decolonisation of Kenya. That women felt that weight of colonialism in much the same way as men, has been vigorously debated in decolonisation literature (Presely 1992). The advent of colonialism had far-reaching implications on Kenyan peoples. For instance, the Kikuyu, Maasai and Kalenjin

communities lost vast tracts of their land. Taxation and forced labour were introduced drastically affecting numerous Kenyan societies. These impacted on the social and economic relations of both men and women countrywide. That explains why by the 1930s women's roles in society had been drastically transformed — they had become wage labourers and suffered as a consequence of British colonialism. In fact, some women in Kenya had already established themselves into powerful guilds of sex workers by the late 1930s. Three distinct categories of sex workers namely; *watembezi* (street walkers), *malaya* (those who stayed in their rooms waiting for clients) and *wazi-wazi* (open)[1] had evolved during colonialism. Women like men had to seek employment to make ends meet.

As a result of the conditions created by colonialism, women in Kenya were compelled to force changes in the African indigenous social contract. The Kikuyu women, for example, became directly and actively involved in African nationalism alongside men. However, when men did not recognise their role in the decision-making process and relegated them to their stereotypical domestic roles, they disagreed and women formed the Mumbi Central Association (MCA) in 1930 to fight for their rights and freedom from colonialism. Thereafter, Kenyan women continued to demand inclusion in the political mainstream.

In due course, men came to perceive women as their allies in the nationalist struggle. Women, for instance, were involved in the *Mau Mau* independence struggle movement, fighting on the battle fields, making political decisions and even administering oaths which was a preserve of men in the Kikuyu society (see Kanogo 1987; Presley 1992). This marked the beginning of transformation of gender roles within the Kikuyu society as was the case with other Kenyan societies. Indeed, during Kenya's struggle for independence women became increasing active in the public domain. But did women continue to enjoy their new-found rights and freedom after attainment of independence?

Whereas the nationalist fervour had mobilised both women and men in the struggle for independence (*Uhuru*). Power was essentially, transferred to a few men who inherited the colonial administrative apparatus. Power was transferred to a handful of men whose major preoccupation was to re-invent the African

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1 *Watembezi* is the oldest form of sex workers in Nairobi, existing as early as 1899. Literary *Watembezi* comes from *kutembea*, a Kiswahili word meaning to walk — these are street sex workers. *Malaya* is the second form of sex workers emerging in Nairobi about 1922 or 1923. These sex workers stayed inside their residence waiting for clients. *Wazi-Wazi* is the third form of sex workers who made their contacts while sitting outside their residence.

masculinity (Meena 1992:9). This was with total disregard of the fact that women also had contributed fundamentally to the country's decolonisation and, therefore, had a right to enjoy the 'fruits of *uhuru*' like men. It is against this background that the biased gender relations and the need to correct the imbalance should be understood. The democratisation project in Kenya has included as its agenda, the need for equity in gender relations.

At independence, nationalist leaders made a promise to safeguard human rights and equality. This also meant that women would be integrated into the process of governance of Kenya. The Government's Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on *African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya* clearly indicated that political participation by men and women in Kenya would be on equal terms, including standing for elective office as guaranteed in the independence constitution of Kenya. Yet as Oduol (1993:28) correctly observes:

> ... Women soon realised that just as their contributions had been ignored during the colonial era, independence would not bring any remarkable changes to their lot. The government failed to involve them on an equal basis with their men in the country's economic, political and social institutions ... The early years of independence up to 1971, therefore indicate no major landmarks of women's involvement in politics.

It is ironical, also to note that while under the colonial political governance women held one or two of specially elected seats, but when the opposition parties of independent Kenya introduced the motion to preserve this practice in July 1963, it was defeated in the National Assembly (*Ibid*). Indeed, it is evident that throughout the 1960s and the early 1970s, the post-colonial state in Kenya acted and behaved as if the question of gender equity in the policies of the country was irrelevant in Kenya. In fact, in the National development plans and major policy documents the critical role women played in the national political economy was considered as inconsequential (Nzomo 1989:9). Maria Nzomo (1995b:39) argues, for instance, that:

> ... between 1978 and 1982, the government allocated to women programmes the equivalent of 0.1 per cent of total government expenditure for that period. Government grants to women's groups dropped significantly from 3.3 million Kenyan shillings in 1986, to 2.6 million in 1987 ... By 1991, the token government contribution further dropped to about 60.5 per cent, to less than a quarter million (KShs.206,000) Kenya shillings in 1992.

The subordination of women goes on despite the fact that women in Kenya from 52 per cent and men 49 per cent of the population. This calls for positive enhancement of gender relations toward equity. But is this the case?

In the post-independence Kenya the under-representation of women in the public decision-making domain is disquieting, betraying the gender bias in the

political relations of the country. For instance, between 1963 and 1969 there was no woman elected or nominated to Kenya's National Assembly (Parliament). However, between 1969 and 1974 the situation improved slightly when women formed 0.56 and 8 per cent of the elected and nominated members of Parliament respectively. By the late 1980s there were 5 women elected and 2 nominated members of Parliament in Kenya. The picture has remained relatively the same even after the re-introduction of multi-party politics of governance in the country in 1991. The pluralist political dispensation which promised to open the gates for popular participation in the democratic process has not lived up to its word. Nevertheless, there has been a slight increase in women representation in Parliament.

In a Parliament of 200, there are only 6 elected and 1 nominated woman member. Of these only 1 is cabinet minister despite the election promises by the various political parties that they would have more women representation in the august house. Moreover, it would be argued that the ministry of culture and social services which the only woman leads, is less powerful compared to ministries like those of finance, defence, economic planning and education.

Whereas the Government of Kenya recognises the need for equity in the employment sector, men are still dominant. For example, by 1987 women constituted only 21 per cent of all formally employed people. Moreover, only 1 per cent of those holding top-level positions in the civil service are women. The first woman Permanent Secretary in independent Kenya was appointed in 1987 — twenty four years after independence! The same story can be told of the private employment sector. By 1992, only 9 per cent of those holding executive and managerial positions were women.

To illustrate further, the disheartening gender imbalances in Kenya's political economy Table 1 will suffice.

In Kenya's public service sector job groups are categorised from A to T. A is the lowest category an employee can fall in. In Job group A to G are categorised cleaners, messengers, copy typists and secretaries. Starting from Job group H, the entry point is a university degree. Top-level management job groups are S and T. Indeed, Table 2 shows that by average in 1991 women accounted a paltry 20 per cent of total employees in the public sector. Moreover, they were concentrated in lower cadres — Job Group A to G. As we descend along the table, the number of women declines rapidly such that at Job Groups S and T women are not to be found (see Table 2).

That equal representation of men and women in social, political and economic spheres would promote the interests of women and men, and enhanced gender relations cannot be overstated. A democratic system of governance, therefore, depends on women and men, together participating in the political, social and economic processes of any given country. Moreover, it depends:

> ... on the accountability of the rulers to those they rule. Power is shared. Such a government is not forced on the people. It is established with their agreement and voluntary support (Amisi 1992:1).

Table 1: Female Participation in the Labour Force: 1970 to 1989

Year	Female Participation as Percentage of Total			
	Private Sector	Public Sector	Self Employment	Total
1970	14.2	14.5	14.55	14.4
1975	14.7	17.5	16.8	16.3
1983	17.2	18.4	29.4	29.4
1984	17.85	19.6	30.8	30.8
1985	18.5	20.7	35	35
1986	18.3	22.5	38.6	38.6
1987	21.5	22.1	36	36
1988	22.6	21.6	37	37
1989	21.2	20.9	36.3	36

Source: Nzomo 1995a:21

It has be emphasised that various factors contribute to the gender imbalance in Kenya's social, political and economic relations. Indeed, this paper has already explained in the foregoing pages how the process of law, the educational system, the political set-up and the economic system tend to favour males rather than females in gender relations. Considering all these factors, it is imperative that women and men alike are empowered on more equitable terms in order to change the society's arrangement that invisibilises women, creating stress on men at the same time.

Table 2: Distribution of Employment by Job Group in 1991

Job Group	Male	Cumulative Female	Total	Percentage Female
A	41,477	12,060	53,537	22.3
B	9,235	2,815	12,050	23.4
C	18,257	6,004	24,261	24.6
D	24,885	10,547	35,345	29.6
E	15,122	3,318	8,440	18.0
F	62,470	14,296	76,266	18.4
G	18,247	4,575	22,844	20.1
H	9,931	2,344	12,275	19.1
I	5,460	823	5,283	15.6
J	5,032	916	5,948	15.4
K	2,748	472	3,220	14.7
L	1,203	163	1,356	12.0
M	603	47	650	7.2
N	280	15	295	5.1
O	140	6	140	4.1
P	78	5	83	6.0
Q	17	0	17	0.0
R	4	0	4	0.0
	215,191	58,336	273,527	

Source: Nzomo 1995a: 23.

But how do the above mentioned factors impinge upon gender relations in post-independent Kenya? The fundamental human rights and freedom of the individual are contained in Chapter 5 of the Kenya constitution. This chapter guarantees to every person in Kenya under Section 70, irrespective of her/his race, tribe, place of origin or residence or other local connection, political

opinions, colour, creed or sex human rights. Moreover, section 82, prohibits enactment of any law that is discriminatory. Discrimination, however, is defined in all other contexts except that based on gender. This is a significant omission in the constitution and legal process. Indeed, legal experts have taken advantage of this anomaly, because no law exists capable of challenging it (Muli 1992:37). Any attempt to remove discriminatory laws from the constitution in Kenya has proved problematic. For example, in both 1976 and 1979, a male-dominated parliament rejected the Marriage Bill which intended to provide women equal status with men in matters relating to marriage and divorce as well as the rights to property ownership. In 1996 Kenyan legislators refused to pass a bill in parliament outlawing female circumcision.

Furthermore, the practicalities of the legal process demonstrated, for instance, in May 1987, how the legal system tended discriminate against women by its inability to recognise the rights of Mrs. Wambui Otieno to bury the remains of her dead husband (S.M. Otieno) at a place of her choice as his widow. Wambui was engaged in a legal tussle with her late husband's Umira Kager clan over whether she had the final say in the burial place of the body. A Nairobi court ruled that Otieno be buried according to the cultural practices of his Luo community. In this case, patriarchy won the day. The case was significant in explaining gender relations in Kenya (see *The Weekly Review*, No. 620, 1987).

Perhaps the other most powerful factor shaping the current process of power distribution and gender imbalances is the educational system. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and also the Abuja Declaration on Participatory development (1989), everyone should have a right to education. However, although educational opportunities for all Kenyans have increased tremendously since 1963, substantial gains towards equality between the sexes have been evident only in the lower levels of the educational system — the first years of schooling. For instance, in 1963 there were a total of 892,000 pupils in primary schools, 34 per cent of whom were girls. In 1993 there were 5.43 million pupils in primary schools with girls constituting 49.1 per cent of the total enrolment in Kenya (Kibera 1995:6). Whereas the increase of enrolment of girls at this level of education is encouraging, only 34 per cent of the girls who enrol actually complete primary school education as compared to 48 per cent of the boys. The reason for the higher drop-out rate for girls is related to socio-economic factors in society and biological attribute of the girls, resulting in early pregnancies. The perception of parents of their children has a bearing on attrition rates. Most parents consider male children as a better 'investment' option. They regard education for their male children as a form of insurance in their old age, saying that female children will get married and benefit the families of their husbands. Consequently, when families cannot afford to send

both sons and daughters to school, they opt to provide fees for their sons instead of girls. Girls, as a result, are denied education.

As regards secondary school enrolment, there has been a remarkable rise in the enrolment of girls. In 1963, for instance, girls' enrolment formed 32 per cent of total of Kenyan secondary going students and had risen to 44.3 per cent in 1993. Nevertheless, the gap between boys and girls seems widens as they move up the ladder of the educational system. The average enrolment of women in Kenyan universities is about 29 per cent of the total student population at that level of education.

The disparity in student enrolment in educational institutions where males outstrip females has had significant implications for gender equity in Kenya's political economy. Generally, the high status occupations are awarded to those with better educational qualifications. This explains why men occupy high-level positions in the decision-making process and employment in general (Table 2). Given the less formal education females have, most women are automatically excluded from lucrative as well as influential jobs. Furthermore, employment of women is confined to the industries and service jobs such as education and agriculture which do not require very high educational qualifications.

To enhance positive gender relations in the politics of change in Africa as is the case with Kenya, it is imperative that women and men are empowered equally. Here, society must accept two fundamental assumptions. First that, sex differences are not necessarily gender differences. Second, that whatever differences and similarities exist between genders, social, political and economic subordination is a cultural rather than a biological attribute, and, hence has to be considered within that context and changed (Tadria 1989:41).

In the current patriachal-defined social and economic relations of individuals, males are expected to be the breadwinners. This 'traditional' expectation of men as household heads creates stress on men and, conversely, reinforces the patriarchal ideology. This practice has a devastating effect on men given as it identifies their sense of worth in the work they do. In fact, the power derived from men's breadwinning role in which they are socialised into accepting and fulfilling oppresses them on the other hand (Gaciabu 1995:3). Most women, as a result, look upon men to make decisions in the household, an attitude that is eventually reproduced at the higher levels of political and economic participation of individuals. Thus, women are marginalised and subordinated by the patriarchal ideology.

Conclusion

This paper has acknowledged the imbalance in gender relations and the distribution of power in Kenya. To minimise and, perhaps, eradicate gender inequalities in Kenya's social, political and economic relations, women and men should be given equal opportunities to pursue education. But considering that already women are disadvantaged, more opportunities should be provided to them than men following the principle of affirmative action. There is a need to build more educational institutions for females and to change attitudes of parents towards the education of females. In Kenya there is an on-going debate about whether to introduce the quota system of admission for girls to educational institutions or not. It is being argued that considering cultural prejudices and domestic obligations of girls, the entry point of girls in educational institutions at all levels should be lower than that of boys. This should be enforced until such a time that equity will be realised.

On the hand, laws which tend to marginalise women should be reviewed with the view of erasing or making them gender-sensitive. In Kenya, a Law Reform Commission charged with the responsibility of examining and evaluating laws relating to women and society was set up in 1994. It is hoped that when a bill is drafted by the Attorney General based on its findings and presented to Parliament, the august house would discuss it fully. It should re-examine and obliterate gender discriminative laws from the Constitution of Kenya.

Above all, the road to empowerment of women and the enhancement of gender harmony in Kenya's politics of change, presupposes that more women be involved in the process of public decision-making. It is not enough to be content with constitutional provision of rights and freedoms of all individuals while in practice gender discrimination continues unabated.

Commendable efforts, however, have been made and progress registered by the women's movement in Kenya towards gender equity. The organisations involved include, African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD), The National Committee on the Status of Women (NCSW), Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation (MYWO) and the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK). But to realise equity in social relations of Kenya, women and men will be required to be debate pertinent issues impinging on achievement of equity in gender relations. A dialogue, certainly, is necessary. In this regard, women organisations should also increasingly incorporate men into their programmes for change. Moreover, the existing and new political parties in Kenya will be required to formulate programmes which are less gender-biased.

Above all, women should be encouraged to vie for high offices in the political process in order to influence policies that affect their lot and society in general.

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State, Women and Democratisation in Africa: The Nigerian Experience (1987-1993)

Pat Williams*

Preliminaries

FOR SOME PEOPLE, it is presumptuous or, to be mildly put, too ambitious for one study to attempt to examine the position of African women in the on-going democratisation processes in the continent. To some extent, one could agree with the above observation given the vastness of the continent. But in terms of the actual recording of events, one would not be taking on too much once the general pattern of 'non-event' within the continent with regard to women's empowerment has been established. Hence, one dares say without any fear of contradiction, that having observed the chain of events unfold in one state, one could claim to have seen it all and therefore, one could safely employ the data used to discuss a few states to discuss the rest of the states in Africa.

From findings, African women have been playing the role they have always played from time in memorial, whether it was in the case of countries like Ghana and Nigeria which got 'flag' independence on a platter of gold, or those like Algeria and Kenya which won theirs through sweat and blood, they are the producers and reproducers of the society. The out-come for women remains the same (Arnfred 1988; Urdang 1984; Rudebeck 1988). In times of dire need such as in independence, women are allowed to participate in public matters. However, as soon as the objectives have been achieved, women were discarded like a bad penny.

Three decades after the scenario described above, the position of women has not changed conspicuously and yet, African States would like to claim that they are democratising. The noticeable thing is that that ideological bent of the states is irrelevant in the consistent manner in which women are marginalised. Anyway, with *Perestoika* and *Glasnost*, all pretence at radicalism ended,

* Department of Political Science, Ogun State University Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State.

although Nzouankeu (1991:374) among others, would have us believe that democracy has been embarked upon prior to the events in Eastern Europe. That argument is neither here nor there as the so-called progressive development has not been reflected in the position of women of Africa. Thus the wall of patriarchy and masculine hegemony remains as thick as ever. Even while some women may bemoan the fate that they have lost out, a close scrutiny of the multiple events in the terrain of democratisation show clearly that women are not only the losers but that democracy itself is yet to make the required impact in Africa and so not every one is yet to benefit from its impact and least of all, women. Sorensen (1993) shows clearly that incumbent political actors are too busy trying to ride with the waves of democratic change instead of being swept aside by time (1993). The terrain within which democratisation is supposed to be taking place is as hostile as ever. Everything is up for grabs under the privatisation scheme as a result of the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), internally or externally imposed. As the shouts for democratisation gained momentum, the economies of the various African States continue to take nose dives. Some non-governmental or voluntary organisations (also perceived as part of the 'civil society') make some weak protests but to no avail. The situation has not changed overly as old dictators find ways of retaining their seats either by allowing multi-parties systems to be instituted, or camouflaging their influence by replacing themselves with their protégés. Meanwhile the West waiting in the sidelines applauds the sham and speaks glibly of the successful democratisation processes going on in Africa. Concomitantly meanwhile, the economies of state which should guarantee 'real' democracy remain in shambles and have invariably become instruments of oppression of the masses.

The African State which has been variously described as weak, soft, decayed, over-swollen, prebendalistic, etc., is still the only viable existing institution. It is in debt and tele-guided, yet the state in Africa remains largely unchallenged in the absence of independent organisations outside the control of the state or external institutions. One wonders if there are such bodies, whether in terms of existing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or human rights organisations? Given the state of the economy in Africa, none of these bodies are really self-sufficient. Hence from our findings, we note the absence of a viable civil society in Africa. Nonetheless one scholar, Shaheen Mozaffar, believes that all hope is not lost as he opines that Africa has a better chance of evolving a viable civil society.

If indeed in Africa, there are abstractly these two component parts: state and the civil society, where one is weak or/and the other almost non existent, what would be a meaningful role for women in this depressing situation? It is a

fore-gone conclusion that there cannot be any miraculous event that would change the position of women overnight as it were. The idea of democratisation should include the empowerment of women or the promotion of a sufficient number among them into the political class. If their empowerment is impossible presently, given their poor performances at the various elections held so far, what are the chances that women's consciousness will deliberately be awakened as a form of policy in order to improve their standard of living, education, better economic status, and the obliteration of the general impression that women are less than full citizens of their states?

The study begins with a brief conceptualisation of three terms, namely: state/civil society, democratisation, and women; it states the thesis of the study; objectives; framework of analysis and the methodology. The thesis is that African States cannot behave in a manner different from the general characteristics of their society steeped in patriarchy and in a patrilineal stance despite the noises they make about democratising their societies. African states have not yet opened up the public sphere because it remains under the domain of the male members of the society. Meanwhile, African states give the impression that they are democratising the society while the men continue to control the political spaces into which women cannot always venture. For as long as this contradiction remains, so long would democracy remain an illusion in Africa or anywhere else where this deceit is practiced and/or perpetuated. The objectives of the study are:

1) To critically examine extant theoretical perspectives and expose their inadequacies in the light of recent trends in the position of women universally and Nigeria in particular;

2) Using Nigeria as a case study, to compare the position of women in African states in relation to the current theories and indicate the useful lessons gathered therefrom;

3) To examine the position of women in the democratisation process in African states and account for their inability to be favourably affected;

4) To project the possible outcomes if women are allowed to be democratically elected into the decision-making sectors;

5) To note other areas where women can serve other than the public decision-making areas i.e. non political sphere.

Framework of Analysis

The study is situated within the feminist political economy approach because women's economic status must be such that would give them the clout which would allow them venture into the arena of governance in the first place, or at least give them a satisfactory say in or influence on government. According to Stamp (1989:15-18), the feminist political economy approach is an improvement on the previous approaches, namely: liberal feminism, radical feminism, traditional marxism, and socialist feminism. Each of these approaches will be briefly explained.

Liberal Feminism is rooted in the 16th and 17th centuries social contract theories 'with their ideals of liberty and equality based on man's rationality and on the premise of a sharp demarcation between public and private spheres' (Stamp 1989:15). This approach, however, failed to question the inequalities of wealth and power embedded in the society. It did not address the various structures of oppression which then created 'sexist ideologies and inegalitarian laws and practices'. Primarily of course, the main object of liberalism is the individual and groups are only collectives of individuals and therefore, 'the notion of contradiction within a wider societal structure is usually absent' (Stamp 1989:15). Liberal Feminism, nonetheless, remained popular even to this day because among other things, it serves as a strong force for legal reform and women's political participation. Its reformist vision influenced the struggles of many developing countries feminist politicians, jurists, and academics. However, 'because it did not challenge underlying assumptions regarding the structural causes of gender relations, it has proved an acceptable basis for reform in many Third World countries' (Stamp 1989:15). A fall out from this is the United Nations' document titled: *Forward-Looking Strategies* which calls upon governments to improve the conditions/position of women in their societies.

Radical feminism was established as a reaction 'against the sexism of the 1960s radical movements'. Fundamentally ideological in its thrust, this approach has no coherent theory. It is eclectic as it borrows concepts and language from several traditions. As illustration, radical feminism employs Marxist language analogically in relations to women's oppression. For Stamp (1989:16), this is confusing: 'a theory explaining women as an 'oppressed class' appears Marxist but, in a rigorous sense, it is not Marxist'. Also, she observes that it allows for an 'a-historical approach to women's oppression' and specifically submits that

> the premise that patriarchy is universal, preceding and superseding all other forms of oppression, obscures the cultural diversity and historical specificity of human societies... like conservatism, radical feminism reduces gender relations to natural division based on biology. Yet the notion of global patriarchy has a powerful

> appeal to feminists and continues to compete for scholarly allegiance. As such, it impedes feminist progress in understanding and acting upon the oppression of women, particularly in Third World (Stamp 1989:16).

It is because of this standpoint that Western feminism have been accused of ethnocentrism. For instance in 1980 at the Copenhagen mid-decade conference, African women staged a walk-out because Western feminists presumed to lecture them on clitoridectomy as a 'barbaric patriarchal custom' (Stamp 1989:16). In terms of the Western society, and by extension other societies, radical feminism has made valuable contribution by employing its ideological standpoint to criticise sexual violence and pornography vented on women and their bodies by men. Significantly also, radical feminism made the point that 'the personal is political', thus building the political space 'within which gender relations could become a legitimate subject of analysis' (Stamp 1989:16).

Traditional Marxism rejected the idea of a biological basis to gender differences. Scholars interested in social revolution and not in Western liberal struggles, argued that women's oppression is a function of class oppression which according to them supersedes all other forms of oppression (Urdang 1984). For Stamp, this approach flaws fatally in reductionalism, for gender relations are reduced to relations of production. Other critics came up with the submission that Marxist theory is 'sex blind' and therefore, is not capable of theorising 'the autonomy of gender relations in human society'. Nonetheless, the contribution of this approach is its persistence that there be a deviation from the concentration on the individual to the structures of oppression, namely: state, family, and class. Incidentally, traditional Marxism provides the framework of the next approach.

Socialist Feminism for Stamp, is the most theoretically fruitful of the feminist frameworks. Its worth is its synthesising method. Socialist Feminism according to Stamp (1989:17), 'combines the rigorous, historical, materialist method of Marx and Engels with the radical feminists insights that "the personal is political" and that gender oppression cuts across class lines'. Through synthesis, Marxist concepts are expanded to take account of the specificity of gender relations, and the biological reductionism of radical feminism is transcended. Also for Stamp, it is the most theoretical fruitful approach that views the problem of women's oppression differently. A contemporary individual's life experience is shaped by her sex and gender assignment from birth to death. It is also shaped by her class, race, and nationality. The problem for the protagonists of this is that there is need to develop a theory that would take into cognisance all these oppressions and their relationships so that a solution could be found that would ensure their eradication.

To achieve this objective, socialist feminism searches the underlying causes for women's subordination in human praxis, and in the way that people in each society organise to produce and distribute the basic needs of life. Thus like marxists, socialist feminists argue that politics cannot be separated from economics. Hence the objective is to construct a political economy of women's subordination (Jagger 1983:134, cited in Stamp 1989:17). The framework however, refused to commit itself to either the position of the traditional marxists or to the radical feminists. Thus it does not submit to the position that economic oppression is more basic than gender oppression or give priority to gender oppression. The approach 'draws widely from cross-cultural and historical studies, which provide the empirical raw material for a rigorous theorisation of gender relations' (Stamp 1989:17).

However, this typology of Jaggar in the opinion of Stamp, still cannot explain the oppression of women in non-western societies. This is because of the difference in political context. The developing countries as a whole suffer from the oppression of international economy and political forces. Thus using approaches such as liberalism, which is blind to the inequalities of wealth and power within the developing countries, would not address the problem. Stamp (1989:18) opines that many studies of scholars from the developing areas go beyond these limitations 'because the subject matter demands a more critical stance'. These scholars identified and challenged the structures of oppression and inequity more than Western liberal feminist scholars. These non-Western scholars did not employ sophisticated theories grounded in historical materialism but conducted their studies

> on the basis of their subtle and detailed empirical knowledge of the Third World gender oppression and their understanding that this oppression is rooted in wider exploitative structures and practices...the 'evidence of their own eyes' demands that they challenge liberal assumptions... [and] does not devalue the political importance of their assertions.

Reviewing all these studies which fall into no camp as it were, Stamp submits that they were not satisfied with the simplistic universal explanations which put all problems at the door of 'patriarchy'. She gathers that there is a 'complexity of gender relations and of women's positions' which contradicts 'the simplistic sex-class division of radical feminism. Hence she suggests that the concept of liberal feminism be refined. A distinction has to be made between critical liberal analyses and the uncritical ones of Western liberal thinking. Hence, she designs her own framework that encompasses both socialist feminist writing and critical liberal scholarship and calls it 'feminist political economy'.

Feminist political economy 'specifies the pluralistic framework within which rigorous attempt at theorising African gender relations have been made' (Stamp 1989:19). The approach attempts to show that the centrality of gender relations to relations of production in both pre-capitalist and capitalist societies. It includes also those rigorously analysed studies of non-Western societies which have corrected some of the biases and limitations of Western feminist thinking whether it is either socialist feminist or traditional Marxism. According to Stamp (1989:19), the analyses which note the intricate inter-working of economic, political, and ideological features of society rather than merely perceiving economic features as sole determinant of all cases, may be more pertinent for the study of women in Africa. For instance, the ideology of kinship and the practice of kin relations in precolonial Africa are central to the shaping of production relations rather than being merely the superstructure of production. 'Hence, economic work and fulfilment of kin obligations were inseparable both conceptually and in practice'.

There are a number of conceptual problems in the theories of Western feminists with regard to their approach to the study of women in Africa. First, there is the belief in a dichotomy between public and private realms. Both feminist and non feminist approaches accept this division as basic. This is an impression whereby, men occupy public sphere while women are secluded to the private sphere which is seen as being close to nature. According to Stamp (1989:19-20) there are 'gender-sensitive' studies which have debunked the theory of dichotomy within African societies whether in the past or present (Oyewunmi 1993). Secondly, there is the erroneous belief that the words: 'family' and 'household,' convey the same meaning they carry in Western societies. Rather than the undifferentiated 'household' unit without internal contradictions or struggles typical of the Western form within the African household, there are different, competing interests in relation to family and community resources. Hence, because of an improper conceptualisation of words, Western feminist writers attributed African women's problems solely to 'male domination' and this Stamp (1989:20) calls 'a vague a-historical notion without much explanatory power'.

Stamp (1989:20) observes that through this analysis, 'a valuable contribution to the elucidation of African women's organisation for collective production' and she was also able to show 'how traditional practices are an important means by which women combat both gender oppression and economic exploitation in the present' (Cutrufelli 1983; Urdang 1984; Arnfred 1988).

Thus by introducing this approach, Stamp (1989:22) wishes 'to identify a field of inquiry' which gives 'the opportunity for the development of a coherent

framework, both in terms of the necessary empirical basis for developing those points'. Feminist Political economy according to its protagonist, rescues history as well as has implications for action. If the centrality and the relative autonomy of African women in most precolonial and precapitalist societies can be demonstrated, then 'the negative image that has been given to many African women' would be removed and it could 'engender optimism for the future' (Stamp 1989:23).

In summary then, though the patriarchal explanation of the African societies cannot be completely dismissed, the feminist political economy approach seeks to establish the kernel of gender relations to relations of production in both precolonial/precapitalist and capitalist/postcolonial societies which most African states are heading toward, what — with the various external prodding and the present democratisation drive. Other good points of the approach are that it provides grounds for understanding 'the centrality of women's organisations to African community life and the gender ideology that empowered women politically can be understood in their historical complexity' (Stamp 1989:74).

Methodology

The data for the study were mainly library derived since the study is theoretically based. The two months spent in the Summer Institute gave me the opportunity to revise my views on the extant literature/theories on women and their position in societies. Also the various conferences and seminars on women and gender which I was fortunate to attend in Nigeria, Acapulco in Mexico, and the US have enabled me not only to interact with other scholars and compare notes but to also have first hand information of the real position of women in the various democratisation efforts taking place in the various African states. The intention of the study is to strengthen the theoretical base of the study of women's involvement in not just only the democratisation process which in itself is dicey but also in their public or political participation generally. The democratisation process is seen thus because all principles of building institutions and culture have not been obeyed. For instance, take Nigeria, the political actors have embarked on elaborate democratisation exercise without ensuring that 'contestation', 'participation', and 'Political Liberties' are in place.

Aspects of the Literature

Since 1989, there has been an overtly determined drive towards democratisation in Africa. One would not be guilty of over emphasising the point if one says that virtually every state in Africa has been affected by this fervour of 'democratic' changes and processes (Caron *et. al.*, 1992; CODESRIA 7th General Assembly 1992). In tandem partly with the world-wide resurgence of democratisation and

democratic push resulting from the policies of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* in the former Soviet Union and their effects on the erstwhile socialist states, and the West with its financial institutions insisting on democratisation drives, African states almost without exception, have indeed moved into the path of democratisation. With varying degree of successes, some have already accomplished the formal ritual of the democratic processes, while others are still bogged down by the pangs of democratisation (Caron *et. al.* 1992). For instance, there are the following cases: Soglo's Benin, Eyadema's Togo, Chilembwe's Zambia, Moi's Kenya multipartism and Mobutu's Zaire 'democratic' charades, etc. Whether it is those who pride themselves as having achieved their 'democratic ambition', or those who are still in the throes of full democratisation, or even those who are undecided on whether or not to join the democratisation band-wagon but who are relentlessly plagued with demands for democratisation the irreducible fact is that Africa is experiencing a 'refreshing' run of the push for democracy.

Yet, studies abound which are skeptical of the possibility of instituting democracy — liberal or popular — in the states in Africa given the perennial authoritarianism, militarism and repressions rampant on the continent (Beckman 1989; Pittin 1984; ROAPE 1984, 1989; Mamdani 1992; Anyang' Nyong'o 1992). Nonetheless, the states in Africa have been democratising. What is democracy? Is it as Beckman observes, just the capturing of state power for democracy to survive? Does it mean multipartism? Does popular democracy include women? Are women being democratised in a manner concomitant with their population.

The term democracy, which in the Greek city states meant the right of the citizens to participate directly in the act of government, has long been out-dated. Even then, women were not included in the 'people' who directly decided their fate in the Greek societies. Could we then accept Rousseau's pessimism that 'there never has been a real democracy and never will be? 'It is against the natural order for the many to govern and the few to be governed...' (Rodee *et al.* 1983:44). The view of Rousseau that people should participate directly in governance has been criticised as irrelevant in a modern state. Nonetheless, he has made some disciples. C.B. Macpherson and Carole Pateman argue that Rousseau's ideas are compatible with the modern state. Representative government can be and should be combined with elements of direct participation if real democracy is to be achieved (cited in Sorensen 1993:8). Joseph Schumpeter (1972:260) limits his understanding of democracy to a political method. Thus he says:

> The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote.

This definition in the opinion of Sorensen is narrow in perspective and so we shall look at Held's (1987:271) definition which takes into consideration both the liberal and radical view-points on democracy which support a basic principle of autonomy:

> Individuals should be free and equal in the determination of the conditions of their own lives; that is, they should enjoy equal rights (and, accordingly, equal obligations) in the specification of the framework which generates and limits the opportunities available to them, so long as they do not deploy this framework to negate the rights of others.

For the enactment of Held's democratic autonomy, 'there is the necessity for a high degree of accountability of the state and a democratic reordering of the civil society'. Also, there must be a meaningful and direct participation of the people from the grassroots level and this should not stop at the mere casting of votes at periodical elections. Social and economic rights alongside other rights as indicated in the Bill of Rights, must be in existence for there to be adequate resources for democratic autonomy. In between these two extreme views are many more of what should constitute democracy. Democracy really then, is a dynamic term which does not lend itself to easy conceptualisation. Nonetheless, conditions in many developing countries have made it imperative to interpret democracy along the viewpoints of Held. The absence of basic economic rights, equal opportunities for participation and extreme poverty in these states make democracy difficult to achieve if not impossible in the Held's way. In spite of the limitations of Schumpeter's definition it approximates to what occurs in African states.

The current democratisation moves in Africa, apart from springing out of the world-wide democratic resurgence alluded to earlier, are considered strong positive plank for grappling with the enormous developmental and structural problems confronting most African countries (Anyang' Nyong'o 1987:14-25). African countries are daily faced with acute economic, political and social problems requiring fresh strategies and tactics of combat if the countries are not to disintegrate in the face of these problems. For instance, it has been asserted that 'we are witnessing in Africa a self-perpetuating cycle of change in which weak states engender anaemic economies which poor performance in turn further undermines the capacity of the states apparatus' (Bratton 1989:409). In this context, the acute condition of African economies is accompanied by the existence of what Ayoade (1988:100-101) calls a 'Bed-ridden' if not 'expired'

state structures, that are not in a position to embark on a rejuvenation mission. Hence, there is a paradox.

A strong state structure is essential to combating the problem of the economy and mobilising the people for developmental tasks and a good economy is imperative to redressing the declining fortunes of the state. Left in this quandary, the atmosphere of democratic change in the world provides a unique opportunity for African states to attempt to get out of the vicious cycle as democratisation can be employed both negatively and positively; to empower the civil society by bringing it to be reckoned with in state matters. Simultaneously employing democratisation can mobilise the masses as well as exploit them under this effort to address economic problems. In spite of this possibility addressing the democracy question provides one concrete avenue for grappling with the complex problems facing African state.

The attempt to address the democracy question brings into focus the marginalisation of the civil society and its domination by the state. It also provides the opportunity to redress other cases of marginalisation which exist within society. Put more clearly, the attempt to empower the civil society should also lead to the empowerment of hitherto marginalised segments of the civil society if it is to be genuine. It is only then, that democratisation would be complete and real and not mere half measures designed to benefit only a few. One cannot speak of real democratisation when marginalisation and domination persist within the realms of the state and the civil society. Hence, a marginalised group such as women (O'Neill 1990), ought to be de-marginalised through the democratisation process as they significantly constitute a large percentage of the civil society for which attention is being sought for empowerment.

Undoubtedly democratisation should indeed address the 'woman question' within the context of the 'democracy question' if it is to be meaningful. It is to the extent that the 'woman question' is addressed within this context that it can be claimed that a concrete grappling with the 'democracy question' is occurring. In reviewing the current democratisation process, the study explores and theoretically situates the yawning gap between the state and the civil society in Africa and the way and manner the process is attempting to redress not only the general non-empowerment of civil society but also the particular marginalised position of women. The right of women is discussed powerfully by Howard (1986:184-212), however the full right granted to women in Africa remains very much in the realm of rhetoric. Howard traces the subordination of women to the indigenous social structures which rendered women unequal in family, lineage, and state matters. The colonialists and the postcolonial leaders only further elaborated on these by building on more concretely the legal, social, and material

inequalities between men and women through economic competition and social stratification. Thus African women do need real democracy to have their problems clearly addressed.

State and Civil Society in Africa

The state, to paraphrase Keane (1988:85), is a sphere of compulsory, hierarchical institution necessary for the efficient and effective servicing and coordination of the civil society. Similarly for Ken Post, the term state is problematic because it is not an homogeneous entity. It also involves a series of features that cannot be easily differentiated and sometimes, it is anthromorphized so that it is related to as if it is a person that is directly relating to the society. Hence the state is spoken of as a sovereign entity engaged in international relations and which, as Keane alluded to earlier, creates the boundaries of the civil society. Also, for those with a Marxist bend, the state is the constellation of apparatuses that regulate and direct the affairs of the society, perhaps in favour of certain classes or groups. In addition, the institutions of the state serve as an avenue where praxis occur between the various interests and apparatuses in order to secure dominant influence. Lastly, for Post (1991:36-37), the state 'represents a concentration of resources (material and ideological) and hence of power for those who can control the apparatuses.

Apart from the well known adjectives formerly employed by radical scholars but now, similarly utilised by all and sundry to describe the African states, two more have been added to my repertoire of expressions with regard to the state in Africa. These are the 'irrationality' of the state in Africa, and the 'theatricality' of the state in Africa. Though the state is variously defined (Williams 1989), it is seen in this study as 'the organ of public coercive force that organises the political domination of the ruling class and disarticulates the unity of subordinate classes' (Poulantzas cited in Fatton 1993:2).

The state in Africa originated in the context of domination constructed by the colonial presence in the continent. In its colonial origin, the state evolved as a recognition of the need to have administrative and organisational control over territories that had been brought under the exploitation and control of colonialism. This meant that the state was established with domination of the society over which it superintended as its *raison d'être* (Onimode 1988). The situation in which the state perceives its underlying society as one to be conquered and dominated was the most important characteristic distinguishing the colonial state from the state in the West (the metropole or the former colonial hegemonic entity), which at that time had become fully institutionalised with its 'modern structural and behavioural characteristics' (Mozaffar 1987:5). Whereas the colonial state did not evolve organically from its underlying society,

the state in Europe derived the impetus for its emergence and existence from its society such that 'state-limiting doctrines of constitutionalism, civil liberties, and liberalism which... curbed the arbitrary exercise of state power in Europe. These state-limiting doctrines, logically and evidently, could not be made part of the state in Africa since the colonial state had a mission which differed from that of working in collaboration with the society as the state in Europe. Thus, the state in Africa was presented as a *force majeure*, relying on force and violence to get any wish and act accomplished in utter disregard of the wishes and dispositions of the underlying society.

This situation portends a given contradiction between the state and civil society as their relationship was characterised by antagonism as rapprochement and mutual disrespect because the state exists as a dominating force over society. Instead of a mutually accommodating and satisfying relationship, state-society relationship was characterised more by mutual antagonism and a predatory instinct as the two relate only in terms of antagonism and mutual exploitation. Concomitantly, the civil society internalised the need to respond to the predatory disposition of the state. Fatton (1993:3) puts across clearly the domineering position of the state *vis-à-vis* other groups within the polity:

> While the state serves the interests of the ruling class, it claims to embody the general interest, expressing particular corporate concerns as if they represent universal ones... the state is firmly grounded in society and reflect necessarily society's class relationships.

Peter Ekeh (1975) perceives this antagonism in terms of two public realms within the African state context — the primordial public governed by the morality of the society and the civic public governed by *amorality* as the society did not relate to the state in terms of its (the society) moral code. The contradiction between the state and the civil society is not one restricted to the colonial period as the decolonisation process, in spite of its grand promises, has not succeeded in changing the illegitimate nature of the state. While the nationalist leaders campaigned for independence on the basis of the need to make the state more relevant to the welfare and other needs of the people, the leaders who emerged at independence were those 'whose structural roots were embedded not in the underlying socio-economic foundation of African societies but in the relations of political power centred around the bureaucratic procedures of the ... state' (Mozaffar 1987:18). These leaders therefore lacked the requisite economic basis and saw the inheritance of the enormous authoritarian structures of the colonial state as an important and useful instrument in appropriating economic gains to offset their economic deficiencies. Inevitably then, the resources of the state were committed to personal aggrandisement of the leaders instead of welfare concern of the mass of the people. Consequently, there is

persistence of the contradiction between the state and the society. Hence Bratton submits (1989:410):

> ... since the leaders of the postcolonial state claimed their right to rule on the basis of promises of improved material welfare, a loss of distributive capacity (by the state) is, predictably, met with a reduction to popular legitimacy. In many African countries, ordinary people are ceasing to regard the state their own and are refusing to comply with official injunctions.

The state in Africa has thus remained its old illegitimate self relating to the society only in terms of domination and control. The state in Africa is depicted in this context as an 'overdeveloped state' (Alavi 1979), relating in a domineering sense to the underlying society. Hence Bratton observes (1989:410-411):

> The African state is weak by any conventional measure of institutional capacity, yet it remains the most prominent landmark on the African institutional landscape.... In Africa, the state projects upwards from its surrounding like a veritable Kilimanjaro, in large part because the open plains of domestic society appear to be thinly populated with alternative institutions. At first glance, African societies seem to possess few intermediate organisations to occupy political space between the family... and the state. Those civic structures that do exist are usually small in scale and local in orientation. In this lilliputian environment, even a weak state can seem to be strong.

A state in this mould evidently cannot lay claim to any domestic process. Indeed, as contended by Kunle Amuwo (1992), a state like this is decidedly autocratic since it relies on force and violence in relating to the society. It means then that a good measure of a change from this autocratic trend to democracy is best measured in terms of the democratic nature of the state's relationship to the society. But what is the civil society itself? Civil society 'is the private sphere of material, cultural, and political activities resisting the incursions of the state' (Gramsci in Fatton 1993:5). In the most abstract sense, Keane (1988:14) conceives civil society

> as an aggregate of institutions whose members are engaged in a complex of non-state activities — economic and cultural production, household life and voluntary associations — and who in this way preserve and transform their identity by exercising all sorts of pressures or controls upon state institutions.

However, Keane observes that civil society can 'only be synonymous with a non-state, legally guaranteed sphere dominated by capitalist corporation and patriarchal families'. It is in this sense that civil society is real, particularly in the West. But contrary to neo-conservative thinking, civil society has no natural innocence and no single or eternally fixed form. Keane (1988:14) makes this distinction when he describes the civil society as a non-state sphere which

comprise a plurality of public spheres — productive units, households, voluntary organisations and community — based services which are legally guaranteed and self-organising (1988:14).

The view of Keane expressed above have been criticised by Ken Post as untenable particularly his definition of the civil society because it applies to the Western capitalist societies and therefore, restrictive. Besides, the term 'social activities' is vague and tautologous. For civil society to equal to social activities — 'What other kind could it represent?' He asks. Therefore, Post (1991:38) suggests his own explanation:

> ... civil society is basically an organisational concept and includes the whole web of organisations, defined as coordination of actions with common end that can be reproduced over time and thus including both 'formal' and 'informal' instances. Basically, therefore, we are talking about kinship structures, economic, cultural, and ideological organisations (including religious ones), and political organisations seen as interest aggregations for the purpose of gaining access to the state apparatuses.

The above debate illustrates the polemics which surround the term civil society. It is like the proverbial elephant described by the blind men, each man giving his own perception of the elephant. Meanwhile, Chazan (1989:123) dichotomizes the state and society when she submits that they are 'two intersecting and potentially independent variables with political process as the dependent variable'. The civil society should not be idealised, Keane (1988:14-15) warns since it is now customary to see it as the great antagonist of the state, the demon:

> Without the protective, redistributive and conflict-mediating function of the state, struggles to transform civil society will become ghettoised, divided and stagnant, or will spawn their own, new forms of inequality and unfreedom.

A democratic change within the context of the existence of the state in Africa should necessarily entail a positive change in the autocratic relationship of the state to the society (Post 1991:44-45). Attempting to draw a relationship between the state, civil society, and democracy in Africa, Post submits that civil society will become more evident and vibrant if the organisations are not completely dependent on the state. In a democratic setting, civil society in Africa should constitute the backbone of governance, determining the limits of state action and ensuring that actions are carried out within specified procedures and regulations. This submission is similar to Mozaffar's (1992) hopes for the vibrancy of civil society in the future.

Ultimately then, the need for democratisation in Africa is really about the need for more involvement of the civil society in state affairs. This submission is pit against the present superordination/subordination relationship existing between them in such a way that the state and society are seen really working as

partners and not as entities existing in an equation where the state dominates and controls the society.

However, Imam (1991) argued that it is not enough to demand a democratic context for the state in its relationship to the civil society without also inquiring into the democratic nature of the civil society itself. This is mainly because the sustenance of a democratic state structure ultimately rests on a democratic society. This argument, long recognised by Sabine (1973), assumes that behind a democratic government is a democratic society. It is logical as well as understandable to say as Imam (1989:6) does that the survival of democracy in any state depends on the extent to which the democratic norms permeates 'the minutiae of daily life' in the civil society. It is within this context, as earlier indicated, that it becomes absolutely necessary to place in clear perspective the situation and place of women, as a group, in the society and what condition their placement within the structure of the state. We have alluded to the universal acknowledgement that women are marginalised within the processes of both the state and society because of, among other things, the patriarchal nature of the world communities (Mazrui 1991). In terms of sheer number, women, even though demographically seen generally as constituting more than half the population of the world, are under-represented at the top echelon of the political and economic structure as against the massive presence of men in this regard. This is not as a result of any inherent deficiency on the part of women but largely due to the way the society is structured. At the perception level, within the patriarchal setting of the society, the woman is perceived as emotional, passive and inactive as against the rational, strong, and active mould of the man, (Carter 1988), and hence seen as unfit for leadership position in the society (Olaitan 1993).

Because of the pervasiveness of this perception and its internalisation through socialisation most women generally found it difficult to aspire to decision making positions. They usually tailor their aspirations in line with societal expectations and are therefore found perpetually at the bottom of the societal ladder. While the perceptual marginalisation of women is almost universal, the African woman, because of the context of poverty, illiteracy and ignorance in which she finds herself, bears more burden than many of her peers in other parts of the world. Whereas the liberating influence of education is seeing to a positive change even in the existing perceptual marginalisation of women in other lands and climes, the pervasive illiteracy in Africa reinforces this marginalisation and adds more debilitating blocks on the path of the women.

As an illustration, the fact that the African continent is still largely illiterate makes education a highly-demanded factor and a commodity requiring family

financial commitments in order to attain a status in society. This high demand for literacy coupled with the legendary poverty of the average African family is such that it is impossible, most times, for all siblings to have equal educational opportunities. More often than not therefore, the family has to make a decision as to who should benefit from this family sacrifice among competing siblings. This decision is usually made to the disadvantage of girls. When girls were lucky to be given the opportunity to be educated, they were restricted in the kind of professions they should pursue (Mazrui 1991). This restriction in the choice of profession invariably consigned most women to the informal sector where they either farm or trade or both. Because of the socialisation process, it was assumed that women have 'natural' disposition to carry the burden of catering for the family by over working and over stretching themselves. The females, women and girls, constantly work either on the farms or in the markets in order to pay for the education of the boys or/and for the up keep of their family. In the end, the males who have the advantage of education get to the top on the societal ladder while the females are left to cope with the drudgery of their narrow world.

Obviously, the fact that many men are in the top hierarchy of the society and state given their relative well-placement in a patriarchal order would mean that the men would work for the perpetuation of this inequitable order. It does not then come as a surprise that in most of the African countries, women are legally treated as second-class citizens. For instance, it is widely held in Nigeria that women(this has no legal justification), because they have no worthwhile possessions, since in the perception of the average policeman, they are themselves possessions of men, they cannot bail offenders out of police or court custody. This is a task that is strictly reserved for the more rational beings— the men of the society — who are unlikely to misuse such opportunity since they have credibility and not given to emotions (Kuye 1992:71)!!

The reality of the marginalisation of women in Africa is definitely beyond contention as in all facets of social life this is manifested. The question which follows are: What can be said for the democratic nature and essence of a society that treats the majority of its population as second-class citizens? What implication does this situation have for the current democratisation process in Africa? Is it possible to have concrete democratisation without a redress of the marginalisation of women? Is the de-marginalisation of women not a positive proof of the concreteness or otherwise of the democratisation process? How far has the current democratisation process in Africa tackled and addressed the woman question within its context? These and other questions relating to the place of women within any genuine democratic setting are worthy of note if we

are to place the current democratisation process in Africa in a proper perspective.

Categorisation of Women

In discussing women and the woman's question researchers fail in many cases to explain that the term 'woman' can be omnibus. This study wishes to correct that anomaly. Women should not be perceived as a homogeneous entity and should therefore not be referred to or related to from such perception. Kazembe (1986:378) makes the point that women, whatever their status, 'do not enjoy the same privileges as the men in the same class, they are discriminated against'. African women are of several categories: the elite or the petty bourgeois; the rural elite and the urban elite; the peasant and proletarian; there are the conservative women who can be found both in the urban and rural areas; progressive women, both rural and urban; there are also literate women and non-literate ones. All these receive and wield influence in the society, as the case may be. Invariably, these women have formed or found themselves in organisations which reflect their way of perceiving issues. Thus there are women's organisations which are elitist and/or professional e.g. the various women's organisations which emerged with Independence; there are women's organisations which attempt to address the ills of the society but from a western perspective, e.g. *Zonta International*, there were the various market women's and peasant groups who supported many of the nationalist movements in Africa (Feierman 1990:220). Some of these groups became integrated into the ruling parties thereby wielding some clout in the political system.

But then, their power fizzled out as these parties went into oblivion. Some women groups did not fuse into the existing political parties and so continued to wield some powers on the side lines as in the case of the various market women associations in Nigeria demonstrated and so were able to put pressure on the political actors now and again.

Interestingly, in the democratisation process, while some political actors sought the assistance of women by forming women's organisations although not with expressed desire to boost their chances e.g. Ghana's 31st December Women's Movement, (Tsikata 1989:84-87). Women organisations in Nigeria have been banned from being involved in politics outside the two government created parties. Even though various women's organisations attempt to educate them with regards to their power as voters or candidates, women make their political decisions on individual basis. Thus, there is no threat of collective bargaining over the heads of successful candidates.

Women in the Context of State and Society in Nigeria: A Case Study

In a study of this nature, it is important to highlight some of the extant literature which would help to bring to the fore more vividly the yawning gap of the place of women in the current democratisation efforts in Africa. Undoubtedly, women studies are growing phenomena in scholarship. Hitherto, women studies were a by-product of materialist, class, or political analysis (Baran 1968; Amin 1972). Hutchful (1991:4) strongly criticised this lack of interest in women's issue by African radicals and marxists. As far as they are concerned it is 'the latest diversionary approach'. But with increased women activism in the 1960s and 1970s, coupled with the ideological impetus provided by the civil rights, anti-war movements and liberation struggles, there were more investigations into women's oppression.

Thus two groups emerged: One, there were women activists who contributed the first spate of feminist writings which 'were popular, enthusiastic and from the guts; some of them were wildly radical' (Stamp 1989:11); and two, there was the emergence of academics who devoted their studies to preliminary investigation on women. The United Nations Organisation's (UNO) declarations of 1975, the International year of Women in 1976, and a decade (1976-1985), as the Decade for women, respectively, were additional impetuses as they brought the two groups of activists and academics together. Generally, extant literature shows that women though considered to be in the majority population wise, are very much invisible in terms of their evident participation in public life. Women, without belabouring the issue, are the underdogs of the society. Yet, they inevitably are necessary. Women ensure that the society survives and continues through reproduction and by virtue of working their hands to the bones in subsistence existence. To underscore the lowly position of women, Pateman cites as illustration the situation in Welfare States where women are the majority of recipients of many welfare benefits. A major reason for this is that women are, more likely than men, to be poor.

In Nigeria, market women rallied round the standards of Herbert Macaulay, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Aminu Kano that one can safely submit that without the contribution of women and their leaders, many of the parties led by these men could not have been successful. Similarly, there were women who were politically conscious enough to stir other women to be aware of their rights in their environments. There were women such as Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome Kuti and her sister, Mrs. Eniola Soyinka. Both of them led Abeokuta Women's Union (AWU) against the payment of poll tax in 1948, protested the sole Native Authority (NA) system of colonial rule in the Western Provinces as

represented by the paramount ruler, Alake of Abeokuta and demanded the participation of women in the colonial administration (Mba 1982). Between the late 1920s and 1930s, Igbo and Ibibio women of Eastern Nigeria protested against their taxation and the mechanisation of the palm products. This was the environment within which Mrs. Margaret Ekpo made her contributions. In Northern Nigeria, there was Hajia Gambo Sawaba who was imprisoned nineteen times for her radicalism and political views.

Women and the Nigerian State/Society: Democratisation in the Babangida Years

Since it is impossible, given the time and materials at my disposal, to do a detailed study on every African state, I have decided to focus on a closer study of the 'Woman Question' in Nigeria with the hope that the lessons gained could be applicable to the other African countries. This section therefore has two parts. The first part deals with the position of women before 1985 when major changes began to occur in the favour of women. The second part focuses on the position of women since the Babangida government began to take more interest in women's affairs.

The point of departure for the first part is the colonial period and its legacy on the woman question in Nigeria. The argument here is that British hegemony deliberately weakened the position of women in the Nigerian society through their introduction and administration of the modern state. Taking a practice favourable in one segment of the country, they applied it to the whole country. The seclusion of muslim women in the purdah was seen as the natural exclusion of women from the public sector and the total reliance of women on men. This was a wrong conception of the position of all women in Nigeria. First of all because seclusion is not a general practice, and also because the Hausa/Fulani women still participate actively in economic matter. Secondly, it was only wealthy muslim men who could afford to put their women in seclusion. Mack and Schidkrout show the differences between the easy life of the royal woman and the poor woman who survived by engaging in *talla* (street hawking) (in Romero 1988). In spite of the easy life of a 'queen', Hajiya Ma'daki was involved in several public engagements. Thirdly, there were millions of non-muslim women (e.g. the Maguzawa) who went about their economic, religious, and social duties unrestricted.

Undoubtedly, women were excluded from some traditional matters which might necessitate some rituals/discussion from such secret societies/cults as the *Oro* or *Ogboni* in Yorubaland. But then, to arrive at the final decision and implementation, women cannot be excluded or, whatever decision solely made by men would fail (Afonja 1986). However, the colonialists not knowing the

political culture prevalent in the Yoruba society excluded women from all public affairs and invested totally in the men all vestiges of rulership. In a way it should be understandable, since they themselves came from a culture steeped in patriarchy and Victorian norms which did not allow women to participate in public affairs. In retrospect, the British colonisers did not interfere with any of the cultural restrictions traditionally placed on women. As a matter of fact the introduction of the British common laws could be seen as additional constraints on women.

Because of the ambiguity which the Christian/Islamic and common laws imposed on the people generally women became less than full citizens. Women were treated as things to be acquired and disposed of at will. Hitherto, they could have redress under traditional law depending on the hat she was wearing: mother or wife. As a wife all the injustices can be heaped on her. But as a mother, Kuye (1992:73) explains, 'she is not considered as inferior, she is worshipped in all African cultures. A wife is a property of a man and his extended family. She does all the chores of the household as well as bears and rears children. As the property of the man she has no earnings without the expressed permission of the husband. As the property of the man, more 'properties' can be acquired without the consent of, or notification to the first wife. Women as properties can be beaten, maimed, killed, discarded and/or inherited.

Since Independence, Nigerian laws have been deliberately misinterpreted and manipulated to suit the male ego. Over the years certain myths have been perpetuated on the limitations of the female in legal matters. Perceived and treated as minors, the Nigerian woman whatever her status cannot bail people out of court or police custody. Married women cannot obtain Nigerian passports on their own recognition without a written permission from their husbands. Women cannot insert the names of their children in their passports without the expressed consent of the father of the children. There were differentials in the benefits women enjoyed in the public service with regard to men's, even if they occupied similar positions. If a husband died intestate, his property which includes the wife will be inherited by the family.

However since 1985, the Babangida administration had made some overtures to women by removing some of the discriminatory policies. For instance, women enjoy the same benefits as men if they occupy similar positions. Recently, no man can enjoy tax rebate on wife and children. Women can now bail people. The former constraints have been pronounced illegal. There was also a convention that in every state cabinet, one commissioner or more must be a woman. In the dying days of the Babangida administration, two women were

appointed junior Secretaries (the equivalence of junior Ministers). That democratisation process also produced a female senator, two Deputy Governors, two Secretaries to the government at the state level; a few female members in the House of Representatives, State Assemblies and Local Government Councils and few Local Government Chairpersons.

In order to embark on the democratisation process, the following institutions were set up namely: The Political Bureau; The Directorate of Mass Mobilisation for Self-Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER); The Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFFRI); Better Life Program (BLP) for rural and urban women (BLP); The People's Bank; and the National Women's Commission (NWC). Although tangentially, each of these institutions touched on the woman issue. For instance women have their representatives on the bodies, but beyond this, they ran merely people oriented programs and therefore were not often positive, toward women's issues. However, the BLP, the People's Bank and NWC were directly established for women's benefits.

The BLP was established by the wife of the President, Mrs Maryam Babangida in September 1987 because DFFRI could not meet the needs of the rural women (Williams 1992:86). The BLP aimed to improve the living conditions of women and uplift their socio-economic status. It was said that to a large extent it had been able to achieve this. Women farmers and other women in various economic ventures were trained at the federal and state multi-purpose centres in their relevant fields in order to become self-sufficient. Also, BLP had a huge network which linked the various levels of government from the national level down to the village level so that women at various levels were in contact with themselves and help to solve their problems.

One of the problems also attacked successfully was health problems of women and their children. For instance, Expanded Program on Immunisation (EPI) and Oral Rehydration Therapy (OTR) and Family Planning were quite popular. BLP also attempted to enlighten women on the danger of early marriages and Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF), a disease rampant where child marriages are common. Finally, traditional midwives and birth attendants were trained while more women had become exposed to the knowledge of nutrition and hygiene.

BLP intensified adult literacy programs and encouraged the establishment of cooperatives in order to ease the financial burden of women. Through these cooperatives, BLP ensured greater access to women credit facilities. Lastly, the BLP was an avenue to mobilise women on voting behaviours. More women than men came out to register as party members of the two political parties in Nigeria

and to vote at the various elections. It was ironical that in spite of all this, many women did not emerge winners at the various elections. However, a major achievement of the BLP was the establishment of the NCW by the Federal Government of Decree 30 of 1989. As part of the structures of this new body, the BLP became an arm of it.

Perhaps as a sign of the commitment of the government, the NCW was situated in the Presidency. Its objectives are eight: To promote the welfare of women; to promote the full utilisation of women; to promote responsible motherhood and maternal health of women; to stimulate actions to improve women's civic, political, cultural, social, and economic education; to support the work of non-governmental organisations and coordinate government and women's organisations; to encourage the sense and essence of cooperative societies; to formulate and propagate moral values within the family units; and to work towards the total elimination of all social and cultural practices which discriminate against and dehumanise womanhood (*African Notes* 1990:61). Its functions were along the lines of the stated objectives. Organisationally, the NCW was governed by a Board appointed by the President. It was made up of the Chairperson, and then members whose appointment was part-time. There was an Executive Secretary who ran the commission with the help of a Secretariat. NCW had three departments: Planning, Research and Statistics; Better Life Program; and Personnel Management, Finance and Supplies.

However, NCW lived in the shadows of its creator and was not very visible in spite of its being situated in the Presidency. Hence, there was a reorganisation which made the wife of the President the chairperson of the Advisory Board of the NCW. This for a while alleviated the rivalry between the First Lady as the head of the BLP and the Chairperson of the NCW. But then it had a negative result of cooling down the tempo of the activities of the NCW. From inception, the NCW was starved of funds and handicapped by excessive officialdom. The creation of the Advisory Board further constrained the growth of NCW as the activities of the BLP took precedence over it as the First Lady assumed direct control over both.

Part of the efforts of the Federal Government to bring access to banking and financial services to the masses was the creation of the People's Bank on October 3, 1989. If one realises that when speaking of the poor, women are in the majority, then the establishment of the People's Bank was another overture to women by the government. The argument advanced was that if the poor were provided with credit, they would be able to generate production and engage in self-employment with no external assistance. With the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), many poorer people living at the subsistence level were created.

The People's Bank was established to cushion the effects of SAP. Therefore, the clientele of the bank are the urban and rural poor whose total assets: movable and unmovable, remain below the poverty level. Briefly, the aims and objectives of the bank *inter alia*: are to extend credit facilities to the less privileged members of the society who cannot benefit from the services of conventional banks; to provide opportunities for self employment for the vast utilised and under utilised manpower resources; to inculcate banking habits at the grassroots level and to cushion the painful effects of SAP on the poor.

The People's Bank was supposed to have been established in every ward. Thus in sense, it has gone to the doorsteps of the people. The loan which initially ranged between 200 and 2000 Naira was payable within twelve months. As should be expected, the bank's greatest customers were women. They utilised the loan obtained to run established petty trading, *bukataria* (a kind of eating place), sewing centres, hair dressing salons, farming and other agro allied processing, nursery and day care centres and secretarial institutes, etc.

From the foregoing, it would seem as if woman's question has become a household word. Definitely, women have become evident.— they were perpetually seen on Nigerian television screens, and heard consistently on radio. Thus women might prematurely attribute success to these cosmetic changes.

Attempts have been made here to show that the Babangida administration has consciously endeavoured to woo Nigerian women. But to what end? The reality is a different matter. Whatever the motivation given by the democratisation process of the Babangida administration, and the move by women to meet the expectations of the UN Decade for Women, the investment did not translate into women occupying worthwhile political posts in the number that would give credence to their population in Nigeria.

Nonetheless, Nigerian women have become aware of their potentials even if this has not been reflected in their position in the political arena. Available statistics show that more women had ventured into politics in this period than ever before. According to Williams (1992) a very significant thing was that more women contested for political posts than ever before and they were indifferent to their failures at the polls. A woman who repeatedly contested for the post of the president was Sarah Jubril. But why can women not translate their number into the winning of political posts?

Nigeria has many women organisations. They are either elite or non-elite, urban or rural; professional or associational; christian or muslim or of African traditional religion. The point is that there were as many organisations/groups as there were women which reflected certain interests. But the government neither permitted any women wing within the two official political parties, nor allowed

the formation of any new political parties apart from these. Furthermore, the existence of so many women organisations were themselves obstacles. If the NCW was created at the time BLP was created perhaps it would probably had been able to mobilise the women better. From the time of its creation in 1989, the NCW remained a toothless bull dog because it was financially starved and bureaucratically crippled. Government attention was on BLP which was not initially equipped to mobilise women politically. Thus, NCW could not coordinate other women organisations which were divided mostly along class and religious lines. A brief mention of some of them would serve as illustrations.

The National Council of Women Society (NCWS) was founded in 1958. It was created in order that women could have a united front and speak with one voice either to the government or at international fora. It has 39 members at the national level and branches in almost all local government areas. A run down of the activities of the NCWS will further show why women performed so poorly at the polls. The NCWS conducts celebrations of International Women's Day and Family Day; trains women in civic responsibility; conducts leadership training courses; runs health and adult educational and vocational programs with emphasis on hygiene and sanitation in markets and homes; awards scholarships, gives welfare services in hospitals and prisons; initiates improvement in social services; exchanges visits with other women in other countries; establishes day nurseries and centres for the disabled; promotes women's handicrafts on economic scale and community rural development; promotes and administers cooperatives; creates an awareness on the causes, consequences and treatment of Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF) and provides VVF Theatres Rehabilitation Centres for the patients.

According to its former President, Mrs Emily Aig-Imoukhuede (1992:4), the NCWS maintains a non-partisan profile but 'has co-operated in efforts to mobilise women to perform their civic rights as citizens of the country', i.e.— the voting rights. As far as she was concerned, women had done very well under the Babangida administration and praised the establishment of the NCW with its 30 Director-Generals and 99 Directors. It was also a personal achievement for Mrs Babangida whom she described as a 'one-woman catalyst squad' (Aig-Imoukhuede 1992:6). Perhaps it is also noteworthy that Mrs Aig-Imoukhuede was later one of the female Secretaries in the Ernest Shonekan government between 1993 and 1994.

Women in Nigeria (WIN) (1992) is an organisation ideologically different from NCWS. It was founded in 1982 after the First Annual Women In Nigeria Conference. Its founders were a group of women and men from all over Nigeria who were committed 'to the task of establishing an organisation which would

work ceaselessly for an improvement in the condition of Nigerian women'. WIN believes that 'the liberation of women cannot be fully achieved outside the context of the liberation of the oppressed and the poor majority of the people of Nigeria... these are aspects of women's oppression' which must be alleviated (1992). Therefore, WIN urges women to fight for all their rights: in the family, in the place of work, everywhere, in the Nigerian society.

Since its formation, WIN has taken concrete steps to enlighten women and other members of the society about their rights. WIN constantly reminds oppressed men and women that they must ally to fight injustice and oppression. Men must also overcome the tendency of their age old prejudices. They must recognise in full the equal rights of all human beings regardless of gender. Thus on the specific political position of women, WIN demands that 50 per cent of all places in the legislature and the executive bodies be reserved for women who constitute half of the Nigerian population. Women should have the right to confer privileges, rights and duties on their spouses and children just as men do. Finally, that all disabilities which prevent women from having access to the ownership of land should be removed (WIN 1992). WIN has had limited successes, however, partly because of its radicalism and partly because of its socio-economic problems.

These two organisations discussed are elitist and they, as well as others like them (the University Women Association, Armed Forces and Officers' Wives Association) do not necessarily meet the needs of the women who are not in their class. It is therefore necessary to state that there are Women's associations which cater for the needs of these non elite women. Very popular are the market women associations which can be found wherever a market exists although they are not coordinated. In Yorubaland historically, *Iyalaje* and *Iyalode* are market women leaders who represent women in the chief's court. In contemporary period, however, these women have become political power wielders and they give their support and that of their associations to whom they please. These women were not usually Western educated, yet, in the politics of the First and Second Republics they were actively involved and in return they too benefited from the spoils of office. For instance, Alhaja Humani Alaga had a street named after her in an exclusive area. This could be in recognition of her role in the Action Group, a ruling party in the West during the First Republic. Similarly Alhaja Aminat won the contract to supply food items to all prisons in Nigeria. Aminat was a faithful National Party of Nigeria stalwart. Similarly Alhaja Humani Alaga as *Iyalaje* held her own in the politics of Oyo State. Thus, during partisan politics, women's groups as informal as they were, were penetrated by the various political parties. Alongside the informal penetration of these women associations, the Babangida government first backed strongly the BLP and then

established the NCW. But then it did not bargain for the independent posture of the NCW Board headed at that time by Professor Bolanle Awe. That obstacle was however removed with the creation of the Advisory Board to the NCW and the wife of the President becoming its chairperson.

Before the formation of the modern women bodies such as NCWS, BLP and NCW which have itemised as some of their achievements the formation of cooperatives, Nigerian women have always had their own cooperatives. In some parts of Igboland, there are the *Itili-Abali* groups and the *Ohuba* women association. In Agbor, Delta State, there is the *Otu Umundiomu* group comprising married women who share among themselves the needs of their members thereby bringing relief to those in need. These women also have a 'people's bank' of their own thus their operation of the *Ajo* or *Esusu* (in Yoruba) (WIN 1992:40). Given the attractions of the People's Bank and the BLP, women's associations however remote have become influenced by government. To benefit from them the women associations in need of financial help must submit to the bank or BLP the membership list.

In terms of organisation of either the BLP or the NCW the federal government was actively involved. The President appointed the board at the federal level while the governor or the local government chairman did likewise at other levels. Thus it was politicised. For non-governmental women associations overtly they chose their officers according to stipulated rules or norms. But then, he who pays the piper dictates the tune. Thus, it was not uncommon to hear some women praise the First Lady and the BLP. In fact in their perception it was more meaningful than any other women's group. Women therefore tended to be philosophical about the poor performance of women at the polls. While some of them believed that it was too soon to expect dramatic changes whereby women could occupy important political posts, others believed that women had no business in the public sector. It was sufficient that their economic status had been enhanced by the activities of BLP/NCW.

The Phenomenon of First Lady In Nigeria

More than any period before, the First Lady syndrome has become pronounced during the Babangida administration. Right from the inception of this administration, Mrs Maryam Babangida refused to be obscured. This is a novelty in the history of First Ladies in Nigeria and there were seven before her. They were 'all ... respected mostly in absentia' (*Gentle Strokes* n.d:6). Some were seen presiding over tea parties while others were never heard of. Maryam insisted that her place is beside her husband, Nigeria's military President. As president of the Nigerian Army Officers' Wives Association (NAOWA), she was quite assertive and galvanised the association into embarking on self-help

programmes. When she became Nigeria's first lady, she transformed an erstwhile mainly ceremonial position into a movement for the improvement of women both at rural and urban areas. Mrs. Babangida was said to have 'an implicit philosophy that informs every activity, every involvement and every programme for women in development' (*Gentle Strokes* n.d.:4). She distinguished between elite women groups and masses groups and perceived that the latter was the less privileged of the two and therefore her primary task was to create a useful setting for their 'self-development and self-esteem'. Using her position as the First Lady, she advocated along side Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), that the Nigerian rural women be integrated into specific development programmes than being lumped with the disabled.

Today in Nigeria, the 'Office of the First Lady' is officially recognised. Since Maryam was not a feminist or a 'women libber', she ensured that her office was complementary to that of the President's and its programmes for the improvement of the lot of Nigerians. Nonetheless, she was the leader of the pressure group for women's progress. Thus, in this period of democratisation, Mrs. Babangida was able to cut a niche for herself in the public arena and laid 'a precedence difficult to find in any of the developed or developing countries' (*Gentle Strokes* n.d:8). We have noted her efforts to improve the lot of women socially, morally and economically through the establishment of the BLP and NCW she also popularised and made more glamorous the office of the first lady. From all over Africa, other First Ladies made 'pilgrimages' to Lagos and later Abuja, as it were, to learn the secret of making the position of the first lady less ceremonious and more meaningful (*Gentle Strokes* n.d:19). Probably taking a cue from her, the First Ladies of some African countries have become more vivid in their respective countries. The ladies which come easily to mind are Mrs. Diouf of Senegal, Mrs. Nana Rawlings of Ghana, and late Mrs. Sally Mugabe of Zimbabwe. These ladies have been mobilising women in their countries along the lines of BLP. These efforts have been very rewarding as their various incumbent husbands have been able to retain their governments with the votes of women.

The State, Women and Democratisation in Africa: What future?

In this section, a brief overview will be attempted. Specifically, the focus is: why women have failed to impact more on the political sphere. Democracy for the African women has not gone beyond Schumpeter's definition and therefore, democratising women means getting them to come out *en masse* to vote for the men put forward by the various political parties. The outcome of the various elections so far gives credence to Ama Biney's fear that if care is not taken by African women that marginalisation will be given a 'democratic veneer' (*African*

Woman 1991:29). Citing Thomas Sankara the late Head of State of Burkina Faso, Biney observes that:

> genuine emancipation of women is that which entrusts responsibilities to them and involves them in productive activity and in the different struggles that the people face. Women's genuine emancipation is one that exacts men's respect and consideration. Emancipation, like freedom, is not granted but conquered. It is for women themselves to put forward their demands and mobilise to win them (*Sankara Speaks*, Oct. 2 1983 cited in 'Perspectives', *African Woman* 1991).

Democratisation processes are on in African countries. Even though that is recognised, the type of democracy envisaged is liberal and does not definitely leave room for women's participation without a struggle. Thus the democracy debated is male dominated. The effects of SAP fall heavily on women and this has the attendant effect from keeping them from political aspirations. For instance in Nigeria, colossal sums were needed to contest the various elections. Thus very few women could participate. The situation was such that as the stakes became bigger, the fatter the amount needed to fight the elections. The presidential elections were attempted three times. Each time, billions of Naira was spent. Certainly in such situation, only very few women could contest alongside men. Even the appeal by the First Lady that concessions be given women made no impression on the political actors who were bent on out-spending their opponents.

This thus brings into sharp focus the real purpose of the women leaders and their organisations. Take the BLP for instance, the idea was very good and it brought to its support some women with progressive ideas. However in terms of implementation it was not very successful because it failed to bring relief to the suffering of the less privileged women whether urban or rural. The way it was operated, it perpetuated the oppression of women but now sadly by women. Certainly, the First Lady and other first ladies at the other levels became better known as their faces appeared ever so often on television and at political rallies. But in terms of delivering the goods, there were a lot left undone. Therefore without the fear of contradiction, one can easily say that the life of poor women specifically became worse than it was prior the establishment of BLP in 1987. Indeed farm produce attracted more money but the difference ended up in the pockets of the middle-people. Thus one agrees with Ama Biney that in spite of heralded activities of African First Ladies,

> these women have used such organisations as smokescreens to empower themselves and their class of women with further privileges at the expense of poor women (*African Woman* 1991: see also the views of Fola Ignodalo in Williams 1992; Pittin 1991:38-53).

The other constraints on women are patriarchal and cultural. While men are not ready to shift so that women could also come into the political limelight, women themselves feel inadequate to occupy such posts. Closely related to this is the religious factor. Both Christianity and Islam have their reservations about women occupying political posts, particularly the 'born-again' christians and muslim 'fundamentalists'. Patriarchy, culture, religion, economic situations all combined when a decision such as: which gender gets good education in a family. Of course, the advantage of a good education is indisputable. It is an important determinant on who occupies decision-making position in the public sphere later in life. The hurried dissemination of education to women at an advanced age under the auspices of BLP, or NCW, for instance cannot certainly be a march for those who benefited from proper education from childhood. From such exposure, they might become aware of their rights but they will still need the articulation of the better educated ones in order to redress injustices of the society to women. This is where the various women's organisations genuinely interested in the plight of less privileged women would have been of great assistance.

The civil society which would and should be a great asset to this type of development is in itself still evolving. Women should not allow their own organisations to be relegated to the background. The tendency for financially starved associations is to look for assistance from solvent bodies such as government but the danger is that they can then no longer be critical of the government/the state. The state takes control completely in such a situation. A strong civil society must be somewhat independent of the state for it to earn some respect from the state. Women and their organisations have not been able to muster such clout in spite of the democratisation processes. Right now the big and popular women organisations have been seized and controlled by political actors and their spouses while others have to follow suit or else fizzle out. This situation has made imperative the need to focus on the legal/constitutional provision for women in Africa. It should be observed here that women are not regarded as full citizens even in law. They are treated as minors or as second class people. Usually, there is a big disparity between the position of men and that of the women in the society and there are variations in terms of their severity among the different African societies. These variations I have attempted to highlight in this section.

First, it is argued that constitutional provision for women is dependent on the political culture of the country and its colonial history. Thus, there is certainly a disparity between the Francophone states and the Anglophone states. Also, there is disparity between these states and the Lusophone states. Further disparity exist

between states who got their independence through negotiations and those who fought their way to the negotiation table.

Second, it is noted that virtually all independent states in Africa have included in their various constitutions a section on Fundamental Human Rights which elaborately listed the rights of their citizens. But since women are less than full citizens these rights are discriminately applied to them. Cultural, societal, and religious norms and tenets have a way of ensuring that women do not benefit fully from the stipulated constitutional rights. For instance, Article 18 of the African Charter specifies both that 'the family shall be the natural unit and basis of society' and that 'the State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women'. Similarly, Article 17(3) says: 'the promotion and protection of morals and traditional values recognised by the community shall be the duty of the State'. Commenting on this provision Howard (1986) observes that:

> while the rights of women are thus specifically protected, their inclusion with the protection of the family could result in ambiguities when the individual woman comes into conflict with family norms or with her husband's wishes (cf. Kazembe 1986:379-386).

Third, the gendered tone of virtually all the constitutions of the states in Africa is hereby noted. The masculine terms of 'he', 'man' are employed in the constitutions. Usually these terms are said to refer to both men and women. But in terms of benefits, men get them first before women. Because of this, 'many rights for women have been specifically codified in international and African human rights instruments', but as Howard (1986:184) rightly observed, very few have been implemented in Africa.

When compared with women in other places, African women became enfranchised much more easily than their counterparts in Europe and the United States of America. Usually, this comes with the granting of Independence except in the case of Northern Nigeria where women were not enfranchised at independence along with their southern counterparts. This disparity was largely as a result of Islam. The muslim political leaders employed the *Sharia* (muslim law) to regulate the involvement of women in politics. The women's acquiescence could be due to mass illiteracy and their wish to comply with religious and customary norms. But even where women could claim that they had the vote as was the case in Southern Nigeria, it can be said that that was all there was to it. As we have indicated earlier, women were not given the attendant rights nor were their interests considered national issues. The UNO's Women's Year and the Decade for Women have helped to enlighten Africans and their leaders but it is only minimally. Patriarchy and the patrilineal order of things have helped to slow down such progressive moves. Below we shall

highlight further, areas of discrimination in spite of the existing national and international rights for women.

Women suffer a number of discriminations. One such discrimination is the right to confer nationality on their spouse. For instance the 1979 Ghanaian Constitution confers Ghanaian nationality on a woman upon her marriage to a Ghanaian man but she loses it should she divorce but this is not so for men particularly, if the marriage lasted five years. In Nigeria, a woman cannot confer through marriage citizenship on her husband, no matter the length of the marriage. Similarly, women can be discriminated against even in the case of inter-ethnic marriages as events in Nigeria show at the creation of more states in 1991. Thus, 'discrimination with regard to citizenship can adversely affect women, insofar as it affects their right to either become and remain citizens of the countries of which their husbands are' (Howard 1986:186). It is from such a right that other rights as citizens subsequently flow. Even though, women as we indicated earlier, were variously and differently enfranchised, whereupon they wielded political rights, those rights were usually exercised at the behest of the male. The indigenous tendency of the male occupying formal political office coupled with the colonial reinforcement of this cultural practice had consequently generated few female politicians even in the contemporary period.

In essence then, one agrees with Howard (1986:186) that though women have acquired more rights over time, they are not necessarily better than they could have been had there been no colonial interlude. Oyeronke Oyewumi demonstrates that Yoruba women occupied specific and important political, economic, social, and religious spaces (1993). In Igboland, where some kind of egalitarian system exists, women wielded political power based on solidarity of women which was expressed through their own political institutions known as *mikiri* or *mitiri*; market networks, kinship groups, strikes, boycotts, and force. Elsewhere in Africa, women founded and headed city states and received tributes from other chiefs. Some of the well known names were Queen Amina of Katsina, Queen Yamacouba of Sherbo, Sierra Leone, and royal women of the Wolof state of Waalo (Senegal); while, Mampoing, Wenchi and Juaben in Ghana were founded by women (Howard 1986:185; Hoffer 1972:154; Mickell and Skinner 1989:1; van Allen 1972:171). Thus, in the precolonial period, though the position of women in the kinship system might not be superior to the men's, it was not inferior to that of the men in all cases (see Kazembe (1986) for the discussion of some of these exceptions in the case of the Shona and Ndebele women of Zimbabwe). Nonetheless, the fact that women were not inferior to men was ignored during the colonial period. Hence Howard's submission that 'as a result of the contact with the West, its ideology, and adoption of its method of nation-state, African women have been deprived of the political influence

which they held in the various societies'. The current legislated rights have not addressed the situation adequately.

However, here and there on the continent of Africa there are flashes of 'democratic generosity' from political actors. A case in point was the government of Sekou Toure who was derided for his overtures to women in the 1960s. Among his peers, he was the first to appoint women as cabinet ministers. He had five of them in his government. He outlawed polygamy in 1968 and between 1968 and 1978, Sekou Toure declared the period a decade for women's education. It is said that the Guinean Universities had equal enrolment of both men and women. All these suffered reversion after Sekou Toure's death in 1984, even though today the Mayor of Conakry, is a woman. In the opinion of Professor Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui a Guinean who now resides in the US, women fared badly after the death of Sekou Toure because they depended wholly on the President and the ruling party (May 27, 1993). Some Guinean women recently have become vocal when the government of President Lansana Conte continued to drag its feet on effecting democratisation in Guinea. About 200 women of the National Democratic Forum (NDF) held a rally and called for 'transparent elections' before May 1993. They called on Guinean women to unite for democracy and freedom (FB 15 -AFR-93- 045, March 10, 1993).

It is noteworthy that Zimbabwe since Independence has tried to remove some of the dehumanising laws against women so that they become less of a minor; but then it needs proper socialisation process in order to get the parties involved and the laws implemented. Few Zimbabweans are prepared for the changes and so they act as stumbling block to their implementation. Thus on paper, Zimbabwean have accepted equality with women constitutionally. Women can vote and be voted for and the few women who occupy public posts have equal pay for doing the same job with men. Pieces of legislation: such as the Age of Majority Act and laws governing marriage and property, have in a way, given women equal status with men. Thus, there are women ministers and women pilots and engineers, etc. (Maseko 1989:27). Recently, under the guise of democracy and multipartyism, a woman, Isabel Kasauki has formed her own political party: The Zimbabwe People's Democratic Party (*Daily Report*, Feb. 19, 1993:5).

Ghanaian women's position in the society has become assertive with the development of cash crop in the twentieth century. Women were gainfully employed albeit in the traditional areas of the economy namely, farming, forestry, fishing, as well as petty trading. With Christianity came Western education and so emerged teachers, nurses, administrative personnel, lawyers, doctors as well as business women. There was no discrimination between the

sexes since the Nkrumah's government came into power in 1951. Accra market women supported the Convention People's Party (CPP). To keep up the tempo, the National Council of Ghanaian Women (NCGW) became a part of the CPP. Through the NCGW, many went into active politics. For instance, twelve women entered the Parliament through special enactment while a woman was appointed minister. Since the advent of military rule and subsequently, women have not had it so good. Although the formation of Women's organisations continued, this was not to the advantage of the ordinary women. For instance, the 31st December Women's Movement 'has not shown concern about the deteriorating conditions of working class peasant and petty-trader women' (Tsikata 1989: 89,81-90). President Rawlings has also appointed two women as Cabinet Ministers in his government while two more were in the Parliament of 200 (Greenstreet, 1972; 351-354; *Daily Report*, Jan. 28, 1993).

In Uganda the National Resistance Movement (NRM), allowed the election of one woman in each district by its counsellors which ironically, were predominantly male. But as Mamdani (1990:370) rightly observed, since this is a gift from the powers that be, one cannot expect them to be representatives of women but that of the power that allowed their election into office.

Women, therefore, are emerging politically, but not in a manner that would ensure any dramatic change in their favour. Why is this still the case? Without belabouring the issue, it will be foolhardiness to suggest that women situation has improved dramatically because of the democratisation process going on in African states. The reality is that their situation has not changed significantly. This has been highlighted above. But for emphasis, there is an erroneous expectation on the part of feminists that since African states have been pressurised to democratising then *ipso facto* that means throwing open the political arena to women. Apart from the fact that politics is a struggle, democracy is conflictual and antagonistic and the civil society is weak and ineffective. Yet in its weakness it is very much strong and hostile to a segment of it — women. Thus to have a worthwhile impact on women of the democratisation process, certain definite and positive steps must be taken on the Woman's Question:

> A democratising state must articulate the position/role of women both within itself and the civil society. Thus both the laws and norms of the land and society must be geared towards the elimination of the subordinate status of the female;
>
> Hence, women recognised as full citizens of the land can live a full life, make legitimate demands on both the state and society without a feeling of subordinate/superordinate and be assured of equitable response from both these two overarching bodies;

> A democratic government and society must be able and willing to identify the contributions of both sexes to the development of the society and equitably and adequately reward them.

If for a start the steps above are effected, the pervading injustices presently evident in African societies will be eliminated. Presently also, there is the overwhelming ideology which perceives women as mere producers and reproducers: of subsistence living and nurturer of human beings. Yet these duties are not adequately quantified and rewarded. Clearly then, in spite of the decade devoted to women's development, the development programs embarked upon by African states were cosmetic. There are therefore huge gaps which are impediments to women's progress. To have progress, there must be gender equality in theory and practice.

Conclusion

Attempts were made in this study to examine the impact of the current democratisation exercise on women and their organisations in Nigeria in particular and in Africa in general. Without any doubt democratisation is going on although with varying successes. From extant literature, women have been used for political gains by unscrupulous political actors all over Africa except in very few cases. Democratisation is on again and women as usual have jumped onto the band-wagon without again stopping to ask: what is there for them. Democratisation for some women given their number, still meant easy dislodgement of men from their high and mighty positions in the state while at the societal level, women remain subordinate to the men. Yet, in reality, both in the state and civil society, women could hardly dislodge their oppressors. Besides, the backers of the present democratisation drive have no history of their own culture which allow women access into the public sector without a struggle. Thus, it is not too much of smart thinking on the part of the women, to believe that democratisation process would automatically include them in the public sector in the number that they considered meaningful without a struggle. Women might still have to make do with 'tokenism' in the public sector for a long time to come. To change that projection, women have to struggle.

The struggle for success here cannot be magically achieved. It is a struggle which needs a long time planning and doggedness which only women can impose on themselves. Democracy is a battle which is fought every inch of the way. As Ama Biney says, it is the responsibility of progressive forces (women and men) to find the method of 'seizing political initiative' in order to gain the support of ordinary people so that a just and egalitarian society will develop. A first step is education.

Progressive women's organisation must insist on the education of women because it is only then that women can take cognisance of their subordination in the society and thereby take concrete steps to remove this. As it is now, the BLP and the 31st December Women's Movement for instance, have got some women so enamoured with their organisations that they cannot think that the world can be better than what it is presently. Hence for the advocated expansion of the democratic space to be meaningful to women they have to participate fully in the democratic processes opening up. The cultural and religious constraints have to be done away with. This can only be done if women are enlightened and they can work and compete without any feeling of inferiority.

Women are not a voice, they are many voices. These voices must be given a chance to express the diversity of opinions. African women worked very hard all their lives but this is not reflected in their economic status particularly in the private sector. In the public sector most African states have equalised the remuneration of both women and men unlike in the West. But apart from this, not enough women are occupying all the choice economic positions in the state, thus discrimination remains in this sector, and this is where power is wielded. True, individual women do surface now and then, but these are flashes in the pan. That does not make it the rule. Hence, majority of women remain and do feel put down socially, culturally and economically. The inheritance and land issues are cases in point which demonstrate the suppression and oppression of women. The key to the eventual removal of such entrenched discriminations is the training given to both girls and boys from childhood. This is in the purview of women and they should take advantage of that. Women must learn to be strong — self sufficient persons who should not allow themselves to be constrained within the spaces so indicated by the patriarchal setting.

The improvement of women does not mean suppression of men. It is important to stress that both women and men must be empowered. It is then that democratic rights will be ensured. Rights should not be left in the hands of those Biney calls 'sexist political machines'. Democracy, she insists 'cannot be the monopoly of political leaders and their patriarchal machines' (*Africa Woman* 1991:30). The current democratisation is just the beginning of a long journey. Women should note that they cannot achieve democracy without economic buoyancy, educational soundness and religious and cultural emancipation.

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Africa Development, Vol. XXII, No. 1, 1997

Book Reviews

Rose W. Gaciabu, *De-feminization of Poverty in Africa: Are We Keeping the Promise?* Nairobi, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, 1996, 43p.

Hannington Ochwada *

THE TITLE OF THE TEXT, *De-Feminization of Poverty in Africa*, suggests that poverty has been associated with femininity in the economic relations of individuals. Consequently, the condition should be reversed if equity is to be ensured in gender relations.

To an ordinary reader the concept, 'feminization of poverty' is ambiguous. Therefore, clarification of the concept entails the identification of the intensity of economic exploitation based on gender, the outcome of which is the marginalisation and perceived subordination of women. This situation is manifest at the household and global levels where, also, the division of labour is based on biological attributes of individuals. The economic disempowerment of women leads to feminization of poverty.

Divided into three broad chapters, this small book attempts to explain the process of feminization of poverty and how it can be deconstructed. This is as it should be, given the need to enhance positive gender relations in the global political economy. The author introduces the reader to the debate, utilising the introduction to problematize the tilted gender relations world-wide. She explores issues in the debate historically, quoting extensively the *Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women* (1995). However, the author does not discuss the role of the church in the process of feminization of poverty. Indeed, most secular literature of radical feminists posits the view that the dominant world religions among them Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, have a tendency to marginalise women. Man is the mode of reference whose world-view predominates.

The second chapter examines the patriarchal development nexus. It is generally recognised that patriarchy defines the social and economic relations of individuals. However, the degree and nature of male domination has varied considerably. The author asserts that changes in modes of production and their

* Department of History, Kenyatta University, Nairobi/Kenya.

effects on the institution of the family (household) led to the contrary tendencies affecting position of women. The spilt between the home and work place helped foster an association between women and domesticity (p. 5). But, the idea that the place of the woman is in the home is contested, considering that the affluent ones enjoy the services of maids, nurses and servants.

Chapter Two, entitled 'Cultural practices and feminine poverty' examines African culture and tradition and how they have generally exacerbated poverty among women. The emphasis is on the excesses of patriarch. The assertion is that in indigenous African societies women were brutalised — wives were battered by husbands. Also dealt with in this chapter is the issue forced marriage, clitoridectomy and polygamy. However, the author emphasises polygamy. This issue is extensively discussed with citations from various writers in Africa. In a polygamous union, avers Gaciabu, the first wife is deprived the essential emotional support to meet her children's emotional needs, a threatened livelihood, a decline in provision of food to the children, medicine and other products for self-sufficiency (p.18).

Feminization of poverty is also brought about by the inequality in the provision of educational opportunities to children continentally. Whereas at lower levels of the educational system parity seems to prevail between boys and girls, the situation changes as they move up the educational ladder. According to studies conducted by the World Bank, for instance, females generally account for 44 per cent of primary enrolment in Africa, only 34 per cent in secondary schools decreasing to a mere 21 per cent in tertiary institutions.

In fact, repetition and wastage rates are somewhat higher for females than males. It should be noted, however, that the most critical attrition are as a result of the decision made at the individual family level. It is considered economically viable to educate sons than daughters, because in the patrilineal set-up, parents eventually have greater claim in their sons income than daughters (p. 27). Daughters, it is presumed, would be married of.

Furthermore, within the educational system itself subjects in the curriculum are either feminized or masculinized. For example, the arts are considered womanly subjects while the sciences are manly.

In the conclusion, the author advocates the de-feminization of poverty by examining the existing cultural practices and discarding the redundant ones. Moreover, discriminative legislative provisions in the social, economic and political spheres should be re-examined with the view of making them gender-sensitive.

The text has underscored a very important point, being that feminization has equally a devastating effect on men in the extent to which men identify their

sense of worth in the work they do. Stress is created on them stemming from the power derived from the 'breadwinning' role they are socialised into accepting and fulfilling.

This is a very analytical study which should have been developed into a larger work to fully grapple with the issues there-in. Although it is pedantic, it nevertheless constitutes an important text in the historiography of gender.

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> It is interesting to note that... the word for "tribe" does not exist in indigenous languages of South Africa (Mafeje 1971:254).

N.B.: It is essential that the bibliography lists every work cited by you in the text.

An abstract of 150 to 200 words stating the main research problem, major findings and conclusions should be sent with the articles for translation into English or French. Articles that do not follow this format will have their processing delayed.

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> Il est intéressant de noter que... le mot pour «tribu» n'existe pas dans les langues indigènes d'Afrique du Sud (Mafeje 1971:254).

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