XI. Colonialism and Development

We live today in a global world based on complex political and economic relationships. There are few places that remain untouched by international markets, the mass media, geopolitics, or economic aid. However, the global world, particularly the global economy, is not a new phenomenon. It has its roots in the sixteenth century, when the powerful countries of western Europe began to colonize populations in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Part of this process involved the extraction of raw materials such as gold, sugar, rubber, and coffee and the exploitation of the labor of indigenous populations for the profit of the colonizing nations.

Although most of the colonized world achieved independence by the 1960s, the economic domination of the capitalist world system that was initiated during the colonial period has not been significantly altered. In the late twentieth century an imbalanced relationship between the countries of the industrial, or "developed," world and the developing, or Third World, remains. How have the men and women of the developing world experienced the continuing impact of the penetration of capitalism and the integration of their societies into the global economy?

This question has been addressed in particular with regard to women, and two opposing views have been formulated. Chaney and Schmink (1980), in a review of studies on women and modernization, describe a minority position suggesting that women in the Third World are downtrodden and that capitalist development can help them improve their situation. Those who hold this opinion emphasize that women's economic and social status can be enhanced by an increase in female labor force participation. Another perspective, stimulated by Ester Boserup's argument that in the course of economic development women experience a decline in their relative status within agriculture (1970:53), suggests that colonialism and development have introduced "a structure and ideology of male domination" (Leacock 1979:131). In many parts of the world, originally egalitarian gender relationships have been replaced by more hierarchical ones, and women have consequently been marginalized, removed from the positions of economic and political decision making that they held in the precolonial period.

Researchers have demonstrated the negative effects of colonialism and capitalist penetration in a number of different historical contexts. Silverblatt (1980:160), for example, portrays the Spanish conquest of the Andes as a "history of the struggle between colonial forces which attempted to break down indigenous social relations and reorient them toward a market economy and the resistance of the indigenous people to these disintegrating forces." Her focus is on the impact of this struggle on the lives of Andean women in particular.

In the pre-Inca and Inca periods Andean women had status and power that were manifested in their customary usufruct rights to land and in their ability to organize labor. After the conquest Spanish law came up against Andean custom with regard to the property rights of women. In addition, "the Spanish system . . . ignored the deeply embedded Andean conception of the household—embodying the necessary complementarity of male and female labor" (Silverblatt 1980:168). The result of Spanish colonialism in the Andes was the strengthening of patrilineal and patrilocal ties at the expense of matrilineal and matrilocal ties. Women became both politically and religiously disenfranchised. Indeed, women who continued to practice traditional religion were persecuted. Despite this persecution, the religious practices survived and became a very important mechanism of cultural resistance and defense (Silverblatt 1980:179).

The Spanish conquest of the Americas was a religious enterprise as much as a political and economic enterprise. In other parts of the world this religious dimension was also present. Grimshaw (in this book) presents a historical analysis of the efforts of Christian missionary wives to introduce native Hawaiian women to western notions of femininity, particularly the values of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity that were given new meaning with the rise of the "cult of true womanhood" in nineteenth-century America. Missionary wives were horrified by the lack of education and relaxed sexuality of their Hawaiian female counterparts and set out to teach them a set of new ideas about marriage, child care, family, and religion. All these were founded in the gendered division of labor and society that predominated in their own cultural tradition. In the process, in Grimshaw's view, they attacked several aspects of traditional Hawaiian culture that gave women some measure of autonomy.

The work of these missionary wives was by no means easy because they faced a kinship system that emphasized relationships among a wide network of kin rather than the exclusive relationship between husband and wife. Though the education that was provided to Hawaiian women helped them adjust to the world into which they were progressively integrated, Grimshaw notes that many other aspects of Hawaiian society—especially the notions of masculinity and femininity—were ultimately resistent to change in an economic system that could not be easily transformed into a carbon copy of that in the American continent. As she argues, "The male breadwinner, the independent artisan, the small farmer, the wage earner, supporting a wife and family in modest but independent comfort, was a dream that faded before it could emerge."

Van Allen (in this book) also deals with the impact of Christianity on native populations, in her discussion of Igbo gender relations in Nigeria, from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s. Here too an ideology of male domination was inculcated in mission schools. This ideology in turn sustained new economic and political structures that were introduced as part of the colonial system of government. In the traditional dual-sex political system of the Igbo, both men and women had access to political participation and public status, though the opportunities for wealth and power were always greater for men. For women group solidarity and associations provided a basis for their power and activity in what were clearly public decision-making processes. When the British arrived they immediately attempted to alter a system that was characterized by "diffuse authority, fluid and informal leadership, shared rights of enforcement, and a more or less stable balance of male and female power."

Operating with their own set of cultural as-

sumptions about the appropriate roles for men and women, the British established a political structure in which women could not easily participate. The ultimate result, says Van Allen, was a social system that concentrated national political power in the hands of a small, educated, wealthy male elite. This eventually culminated in the "Aba Riots" (in British terms) or "Women's War" (in the Igbo language) of 1929. In this action Igbo women were using a traditional mechanism to express their frustrations, but the British interpreted their actions as instigated by men and failed to recognize that the roots of the women's demonstration lay in Igbo political structures that gave equal voice to men and women.

While the Igbo were ultimately not very successful in their protest efforts, Etienne and Leacock (1980) suggest that in other historical contexts women resisted colonization and acted to defend themselves. This was true, for example, of Seneca women in Pennsylvania and New York who withstood the attempts of Quakers to put agricultural production in the hands of men, to individualize land tenure, and to deny them political participation (Rothenberg 1980). A similar resistance to change has been documented for several other North American Indian groups (Grumet 1980). According to Weiner (1980:43), the colonial period did not diminish the economic power of women in the Trobriand islands in Melanesia "because no one ever knew that banana leaves had economic value." Women's wealth withstood a number of western incursions and, as a result, "served to integrate new kinds of Western wealth, as well as individual economic growth, into the traditional system."

The impact of culture contact and colonialism on the lives of women in the developing world has not been uniform. Indeed, Silverblatt (1980) stresses class distinctions—elite Inca women had different experiences from peasant women. However, it is evident that one aspect of colonialism was the imposition of European and American ideas about the appropriate roles of men and women. Programs designed to stimulate economic development in Third World societies continue to perpetuate culturally rooted assumptions about gender and the division of labor, particularly the definition of men as breadwinners and women as homemakers (Charlton, this book).

Based on these assumptions, development planners, often with the support of local elites, direct their efforts at providing new skills and technology to men, even when women are the ones involved in subsistence production and trade (Chaney and Schmink 1980). As Schrijvers (1979:111–112) has observed, "If women got any attention, it was as mothers and housekeepers in family-planning projects and in training programs for home economics. . . . Male-centered development programs often resulted in new divisions of labor between the sexes, by which the dependency of women on men greatly increased." In Charlton's view this dependency is partly the result of the replacement of complementary and cooperative economic structures by those in which each individual is a unit of labor.

Greater female dependency on men has also resulted from the process of urbanization, from the shift from household to factory industry, and from the introduction of cash crops. In some societies women have lost their traditional rights to land (Okeyo 1980) and men, "though continuing to rely on women's traditional assistance, claim the entire income from the cash-producing export crops for themselves. . . . As for women, they keep their old domain, that of family food growing; but family food growing, deprived of all monetary prestige, becomes the negative pole of the family economy" (Bissilliat and Fieloux 1987:30). The result, as Charlton astutely notes, is the increased polarization of sex roles.

Framed as a critique of international development programs for women that are directed toward non–income-producing skills, Wilson-Moore (in this book) explores the viability of homestead gardening as an economic strategy for women in developing countries. In Bangladesh both men and women are involved in gardening, but they use different methods and cultivate different crops. Women's gardens can be an effective foundation for the nutritional well-being of family members and do not necessarily have to compete with those of men. Development, in Wilson-Moore's view, is as much about feeding as it is about profit, and any program that is introduced should take into account the importance of subsistence as well as cash cropping in the context of the complementary gender roles in the local social system. Wilson-Moore and Charlton appear to concur that when the traditional roles of women are considered, development can have a positive impact on their lives.

In contrast, Arizpe and Aranda (in this book) argue that strawberry agribusiness, although a major employer for women in Zamora, Mexico, does not enhance women's status or create viable new opportunities for women. These researchers examine why women comprise such a high proportion of the employees in this business and cite cultural factors that constrain opportunities for women and continue to define women's work as temporary and supplementary. Employers take advantage of these constraints—it permits them to keep wages low and work schedules flexible. Arizpe and Aranda's conclusions support those of other researchers who point to a range of phenomena that make a female labor force attractive to multinational business and industry. "Women's socialization, training in needlework, embroidery and other domestic crafts, and supposedly 'natural' aptitude for detailed handiwork, gives them an advantage over men in tasks requiring high levels of manual dexterity and accuracy; women are also supposedly more passive—willing to accept authority and less likely to become involved in labour conflicts. Finally, women have the added advantage of 'natural disposability'—when they leave to get married or have children, a factory temporarily cutting back on production simply freezes their post" (Brydon and Chant 1988:172). Arizpe and Aranda do not view the strawberry agribusiness as a way for women to get ahead. Nor do they view it as a mechanism for regional development; it has certainly not solved the problem of male unemployment.

As with agribusiness, the internationalization of capitalist production has led to the relocation in developing countries of many labor-intensive and export-oriented manufacturing and processing plants owned by multinational corporations. Many of these have provided new opportunities for employment, primarily for women. For example, in some electronics factories in Southeast Asia, women make up 80% to 90% of the labor force (Brydon and Chant 1988). However, just as with the assessment of the impact of development schemes on the lives of women in the developing world, there are two opposing views about the effect of multinationals. Some emphasize the benefits of jobs that provide women with greater financial stability (Lim 1983), while others see multinationals perpetuating or even creating new forms of inequality as they introduce young women to a new set of individualist and consumerist values. The sexually segregated work force remains in place within paternalistic industrial contexts that encourage turnover and offer no opportunities for advancement (Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983). In a study of the assembly plants (called *maquiladoras)* that have been set up along the U.S.-Mexican border, Fernandez-Kelly (1983) describes companies that test women for pregnancy when they are recruited because they want to avoid paying for maternity leave.

In the final analysis, much of the work on women in development tends to support Leacock's (1979) rather pessimistic assessment. Real development, from her perspective, "would mean bringing an end to the system whereby the multinational corporations continue to 'underdevelop' Third World nations by consuming huge proportions of their resources and grossly underpaying their workers" (1979:131). For Arizpe and Aranda this will require a truly international effort. The gendered approach to colonialism and development has demonstrated the close relationship between capitalist penetration, patriarchal gender ideologies, and the sexual division of labor. This relationship has been present since the early days of the Spanish conquest and has been perpetuated by a global economy that has created an international division of labor often oppressing both men and women, but especially women. As Chaney and Schmink (1980:176) put it, development policies and programs frequently lead "not only to the degradation of the physical environment but also of the social environment, as various groups are systematically excluded from the tools of progress and their benefits."

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New England Missionary Wives, Hawaiian Women and 'The Cult of True Womanhood'

Patricia Grimshaw

One Sunday morning in early November 1825, Kaahumanu, awe-inspiring queen regent of the Hawaiian Islands, widow of the great warrior chief Kamehameha, was carried into the Christian mission chapel at Waimea for the morning service. The preacher was Samuel Whitney, his wife Mercy Partridge Whitney, New England Protestant missionaries supported by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The Whitneys had arrived with the first contingent of missionaries in 1820 and had laboured for four years, with their growing young family, on this unusual frontier. On this particular morning, Kaahumanu's bearers seated their chief's chair at the front of the chapel level with the preacher and, like him, facing the congregation (M. Whitney, Journal, 16 November 1825).

To the joy of the mission band, this powerful queen had already submitted to instruction in reading and writing and at a Honolulu school examination earlier in the year had written on her slate, 'This is my word and hand. I am making myself strong. I declare in the presence of God, I repent of my sin, and believe God to be our Father' (*Missionary Herald*, July 1825). This impressive matriarch, so enormous in size that Laura Judd, wife of the mission doctor, reported that 'she could hold any of us in her lap, as she would a little child, which she often takes the liberty of doing' (Carter 1899:26), had allotted tenancy rights for mission land and had expressed the encouraging belief that a ruler belonging to Christ's family should not only serve God personally but persuade her people to follow suit.

On this particular Sunday, however, Samuel and Mercy Whitney were not satisfied with Kaahumanu's behaviour. This proud chief had placed herself symbolically on the same level as the preacher, God's representative. Moreover, it was essential that the minister face the entire congregation if play and disturbance were to be avoided. The missionary pair chided the queen who, her haughty and disdainful airs apparently a thing of the past, responded in a humble fashion. Kaahumanu admitted her ignorance, and 'begged them to tell her how to conduct herself at home, at church, in the house, eating and drinking, lying down or rising up' (M. Whitney, Journal, 16 November 1825).

Mercy Whitney, who recorded this incident in her daily journal, expressed special approbation for Kaahumanu's clear perception of the degree of changed behaviour now required of her. For acceptance into the full favour of the American missionaries Hawaiians could not simply attend church and mission school faithfully. To be recognised as good Christians they needed not only to regulate public and private behaviour according to the new moral laws of the fledgling state, but must also mediate every single aspect of their daily habits, trivial though these changes might seem, but all of which were evidence of the new heart, the reformed consciousness, that genuine conversion to Christ entailed.

The missionary general meeting in 1832 spelled out some of the mission's aims:

From Margaret Jolly and Martha Macintyre (eds.), *Family and Gender in the Pacific: Domestic Contradictions and the Colonial Impact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 19–44. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.

> Resolved, that while it is our main business to publish the word of God, we will discountenance the use and cultivation of tobacco; encourage improvements in agriculture and manufacture; habits of industry in the nation; neatness in the habits and dress of the inhabitants; punctuality in all engagements, especially in the payment of debts; justice and temperance in the rulers in the execution of the law, and loyalty, order and peace among their subjects, in all the relations and duties of life. (Sandwich Islands Mission 1832:133–4)

The women of the mission took as their special portion of this ambitious brief the 'transformation' of Hawaiian notions of femininity. Kaahumanu had at least realised the magnitude of the task they undertook and clearly saw adherence to mission ways to be ultimately in her own best political interests. The majority of Hawaiian women remained ignorant of or baffled by the essentially changed order that the American women sought to create. The story of three decades of intercultural contact in Hawaii—one of frustration for the mission women, and evasion by the Hawaiians—was fraught with considerable tension and unhappiness for both groups of women. Neither side could triumph: by the late 1840s, stalemate was reached. . . .

Mercy Whitney was one of the nearly eight women, predominantly from New England or the west of New York State, who left America for Hawaii (the 'Sandwich Islands') in the three decades from 1819 onwards. They were for the most part energetic, intelligent and well-educated women, daughters of farmers or small-business men, whose youthful ambition to serve on a mission field led them to marry departing missionaries. In the decades following the War of Independence, Protestant missionary outreach shifted from the native American Indians of their own west to encompass non-Christian peoples of the new lands opened to the imagination by explorers and travellers. Captain James Cook had visited and named the Sandwich Islands in 1778, on his third and last great Pacific expedition. Yankee traders had brought Hawaiian youths to New England port towns; some had displayed an interest in Christianity. The churches planned and prayed for the conversion of this 'interesting' people, and sent successive contingents of missionaries to accomplish this purpose (Andrew 1976).

It was no accident that young women were found to dedicate their lives to this missionary work. Women were centrally involved in the religious revivals which swept the northeast during the early decades of the century, the so-called 'second great awakening', which had provided metaphysical justification for a range of religious and charitable activity undertaken by women. Women were prominent in efforts to teach the young, reform slum dwellers, persuade men to temperance, rescue prostitutes and, increasingly, to free Southern slaves. To quit home and family in order to bring the strongly upheld benefits of Christian civilisation to non-believers on a distant, exotic frontier was an uncommon but nevertheless strongly valorised choice of reform endeavour (Grimshaw 1983). As Catherine Beecher wrote in her *Treatise on Domestic Economy* in 1842, 'To American women, more than to any others on earth, is committed the exalted privilege of extending over the world those blessed influences, which are to renovate degraded man, and "to clothe all climes with beauty"' (Hunter 1984:xiii).

Women's involvement in mission work was linked in an intricately complex fashion with the economic changes arising from early industrialisation in the northeast and a particular elaboration of notions of the family, and of femininity, that accompanied changes in material life. An appreciation of this social change makes more comprehensible the agenda which underwrote the mission women's activities in Hawaii. As the integrated household economy of small farms and independent artisanal industry began to break down with the introduction of mills and factories, a family structure involving the man as the sole breadwinner involved in paid, public employment, with the wife as the housekeeper removed from most productive labour, became dominant in growing urban areas. Married, middle-class women were portrayed in much prescriptive literature as the essential focus of an intimate, personal circle whose relationships contrasted radically with the alienated marketplace of male endeavour. Good family life would prove the catalyst for rejuvenation and reform in the fast-changing and potentially corrupt new social order. The articulation of proper femininity needed to fit women to their part in this haven of domesticity. Puritan traditions had sustained a significant role for women in the God-fearing family. The ante-bellum period saw an enhanced elaboration of 'the cult of true womenhood', in Barbara Welter's definition, involving piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity (Cott 1977; Ryan 1981; Welter 1966; Sklar 1973; Smith-Rosenberg 1971).

The elevation of women's nature inherent in these fresh definitions of femininity contained within it the seeds of change in women's social and political roles. Women's supposed moral and spiritual value was used to stress a new competency for women in the public arena, initially within the orbit of social reform. Hence arose the decision of this particular group of American women to Christianise and raise the status of Hawaiian women to their own presumed level. Emerging from their own small worlds, sustained by both religious and national enthusiasm, they were innocent of notions of cultural relativism and prepared to designate every deviance from their own moral values as sinful, abroad no less than at home. When they reached their Polynesian destination it was inevitable that they would interpret what they saw within the set of cultural beliefs so deeply a part of their own identities.

The various contingents of American missionaries established themselves first in the port towns and eventually spread to the most dense centres of population in the five main islands. The Hawaiian society on the fringes of which they lived was in the process of change as a result of decades of intercultural contact with explorers, traders, beachcombers and, finally, the missionaries. Some months before the first missionaries arrived the religious system, the *kapu* laws, had been overthrown on the initiative of powerful chiefs, the islands' political leaders. Much of the social organisation of traditional Hawaiian culture persisted, however, changing shape radically in some aspects, minimally in others, from 1820 to 1850. For most of this time a chiefly elite, the landowners, dominated much of the daily life of the commoners, the *maka'ainana*, in a style reminiscent of feudal society. Commoners laboured as tenants on the chiefs' land, and surrendered much of the fruits of their labour to their superiors. The labour of commoners was not usually especially onerous since the land and sea provided plentiful nutritious food, but at times the acquisitiveness of chiefs, impressed by Western skills and goods, could drive the population to sustained and often excessive stints of labour. It appeared that pockets of impoverishment, physical deterioration and the neglect of the care of the young were the result, exacerbated by the acceptability of alcohol and nicotine to men, women and children. European diseases, too, took their toll, particularly the venereal diseases that were all too often the undesired result of Hawaiian women's sexual relationships with foreign visitors and which caused suffering and sterility.

The social status of Hawaiian women was closely intertwined with their class position and their place in the life cycle. Chiefly women wielded enormous power. As one missionary observed of the *konohiki*, or headmen of his district, 'some, by the way, are women, for Paul's injunctions are not observed on the Sandwich Islands. Women often usurp the reigns of government over large districts'. Before the ending of *kapu* such women had been subject to definitions of the female sex as profane or dangerous which were inherent in the Polynesian dichotomy of male and female qualities, and which had kept the sexes separate in both religious ritual and in such mundane areas as eating meals (Hanson 1982). . . . Chiefly women now were freed from such restrictions.

The lot of non-chiefly women was similarly relieved by the ending of *kapu*, but they still shared with their menfolk restrictions on their autonomy arising from their inferior social status as a group. Subject to some extent

to male physical domination, their social position was not, however, noticeably inferior to that of non-chiefly men. Except when chiefs drove commoners to unaccustomed toil, women were if anything advantaged by the usual division of labour which persisted through the mission period. Men undertook the bulk of heavy labour in building, fishing and agriculture, and also cooked the meals. Women made mats and barkcloth, collected shellfish, and were more closely involved than men in the care of young children. Descent was traced through both the male and female lines, but although patrilocal residence was the norm, women's families of origin remained their significant point of reference. Sexual relations were little restrained in early youth, and marriages were easily terminated; chiefly men and women often had several spouses at the same time. Fertility was controlled by abortion and infanticide, and babies were often adopted among the extended kinship network which sustained significant material support systems (Goldman 1970; Sahlins 1958). Hawaiian women's share in productive labour, then, was not onerous; their sexuality was not heavily constrained; means of fertility control were normative; and the task of child socialisation was shared with kin.

It was not a figment of the American imagination, however, that the lives of Hawaiian women were not idyllic in precontact times, nor without tensions in the decades after 1820. Nothing in the Hawaiians' situation, however, appeared even remotely acceptable to the self-appointed evangelists who saw Hawaiian women as their life-long cause. The men of the mission automatically undertook the dominant roles as preachers and teachers of men, delegating to women a share in the teaching of children and a special obligation to female adults. Hiram Bingham, the foremost missionary in Honolulu, explained the strategy in this way. Separating Hawaiian women for instruction gave the mission women a full opportunity to read scripture, pray and 'conveniently to give sisterly and maternal counsel to multitudes of their own sex'. (Conventionally, mission women would have had to cede priority to men in a mixed gathering.) The separation similarly gave more scope for 'the awakened native talent and zeal' of Hawaiian women as well as men in church work. The separate instruction also produced 'a more perfect system of mutual watchfulness over the different members, and a more feasible mode of discipline' (Bingham 1981:365). The American missionary women's active participation in direct mission work was, in practice, heavily curtailed by their decision to segregate their own children from Hawaiian influence, and at various stages of their life cycle they participated only peripherally in formal teaching (Grimshaw 1983). The mission women's influence, however, emerged from all the various ways in which they transmitted their cultural prescriptions.

Arriving as they did at a critical period of Hawaiian cultural change, the American missionaries made rapid headway in persuading chiefs to a sympathetic interest in their religious system, and the adherence of Kaahumanu and other chiefs to church attendance and support of the mission effected a swift conversion of the population, remarkable when compared with the situation facing missionaries in the east. Granted that Western incursion was already setting in motion great change, the Christian chiefs undoubtedly believed that by welcoming the new religion and becoming leaders in the fledgling church their own political hegemony would be best preserved (Howe 1984; Daws 1974). Commoners began attending church because the chiefs commanded them to do so. As the Hilo missionaries told the home mission board in 1833, church attendance had not been voluntary, but in obedience to the commands of their chiefs. Hawaiians had 'put on the profession of true religion and engaged in the performance of its external duties', but all that had been secured was 'a prompt though thoughtless, servile and sycophantic audience' (Dibble *et al.* to ABCFM, 14 October 1833). Hawaiians were listless at meetings, according to Mary Parker, and could be moved neither to fear or anger. 'They submit wholly to what you say, ever having been accustomed to it.' If a chief told them to go to meeting, they immediately complied, but they simply did not know enough to become Christians (Parker, Journal (A), [?] June 1833). Meanwhile, despite new laws governing theft, murder and adultery, old ways of living, condemned over and over again by the missionaries, persisted.

The problem of how to bring about the genuine, deep-seated change in the hearts, minds and consciences of Hawaiians preoccupied mission thinking. In the last analysis, their strategy for reform came to rest on that institution so stressed in their own culture: the family. Family relationships on Hawaii appeared chaotic so that neither children, the citizens of tomorrow, nor adults could find reinforcement for decent behaviour in the one place where, as the missionaries saw it, altruistic and uplifting relationships were essential. 'It is impossible to conjecture who are husbands and wives, parents and children from their appearance assembled on the sabbath or at any other time', one missionary wrote. 'Nothing of that courtesy and attention is shown to each other by persons most intimately related as in the Christian population' (Dibble [*c.* 1831]). 'Where', asked Fidelia Coan, 'were the dutiful sons, virtuous daughters, chaste wives and faithful husbands of home?' (*Mother's Magazine,* 1837). Here, said a missionary at Waimea, was 'none of that mother's fondness of her darling child and that child's attachment to its affectionate mother which is seen in enlightened America' (Lyons to ABCFM, 6 September 1833).

Rather than in state, church or school, a reform endeavour should be shaped around the family life of Hawaiians and it was the mission women who spearheaded this effort. Above all, the women singled out the Hawaiian wife and mother as the agent for 'regeneration'. Hawaiian women were presented with the model of American femininity, the full force of the American's material wealth, skills, and the missionaries' undeniable altruism and forceful personal attributes. Hawaiian women should be rendered genuinely pious, sexually pure, dutifully submissive and domestically oriented as housewives and mothers. Then, as the centre of a better-ordered family, their influence would ripple outwards, redeeming not only wayward children and errant husbands, but the whole kingdom for godly living.

The foremost goal of the American mission women was to convert Hawaiian women to a genuine piety, the mainspring as they saw it of all worthy moral behaviour. The Americans led Hawaiian women in sex-segregated prayer meetings, held classes for women after the Sunday Services, or made time available in their own homes to hear Hawaiians 'tell their thoughts' on religious matters. Charlotte Baldwin, for example, during a period of increased religious interest, set apart a room in her house where, 'when not engaged in personal conversation, she could resort with pious females for prayer; and when she was not able to be with them, they prayed there by themselves' (Alexander 1952:91). One newly arrived single missionary, Maria Patton (later Chamberlain), found the American women's efforts impressive. At Lahaina in 1828 she witnessed Clarissa Richards 'sitting in the midst of 200 females addressing them on divine truths', women who sat with solemn expressions and 'big tears stealing down their cheeks' (Patton to sister, 19 May 1828). A determined effort was mounted for the souls of Hawaiian women. The souls of the heathen, they often told themselves, were of 'incalculable worth'.

For Hawaiian women to reach a direct and vital relationship with their Maker, however, wider instruction was needed than the bare elements of the Christian faith. Hawaiian women needed a formal Western education so that they could read the Bible and other spiritually uplifting literature and attain the spiritual refinement of sensibility and understanding gained through a liberal education. Most of the American women themselves had felt the benefits of an education in the new female seminaries of the northeast in their youth, and some had fought hard to attain

this higher education. Hawaiian women, too, not just young children, would be offered the fruits of this learning.

And so, in daily or weekly sessions, the American mission women taught Hawaiians to read and write and count, and for the more forward scholars the curriculum included geography, geometry and philosophy. The Americans, devoid of customary teaching aids beyond the simple readers put out by the mission press, devised ingenious ways of matching the needs of the situation. Hawaiian women brought seeds to school for counting lessons, wrote on smooth sand with sticks and used home-made maps and globes which the mission women sat up at night to construct. Charlotte Baldwin at Waimea in the early 1830s daily held a school for female teachers (women who would in turn teach other Hawaiians), and on two days a week a school for three hundred women, as well as working with children (Baldwin, Report, 1832:2). Such onerous work loads were undertaken by brides until babies appeared, by the childless or by those whose children had been sent away to school.

Despite the distractions of infants in arms, Hawaiian women showed interest in acquiring basic literacy. Indeed they showed an aptitude which compared well with that of Americans in the opinion of Mercy Whitney, which was surprising considering 'their habits of sloth and indolence, being unaccustomed from infancy, to apply their minds to anything which required thought or the exercise of their mental faculties' (M. Whitney, Journal, 30 September 1834). The link between such pursuits and piety was frequently stressed. Sarah Joiner Lyman's attitudes in her educational work at Hilo was common. Many women in her school for females aged eight to sixty years might not be expected to make remarkable progress, but the school at least brought scholars more regularly under the means of grace (Lyman Journal, 24 January 1837).

When Maria Ogden first joined the mission station at Waimea in 1829, she wrote approvingly of the schoolroom for Hawaiian women. 'Their seats and writing tables are chiefly made of those boards, on which the natives used to spend much of their time, sporting in the surf' (Gulick to ABCFM, 27 April 1829). The use of surfboards in such an enterprise was both practical and symbolic. If women were to be pious they must be weaned away from pastimes that were far from moral and what better way to do so than by offering the substitute of education for their customary games and amusements? Hawaiians did not appear to the missionaries to have enough work to do, and some missionaries felt it valueless to urge them to greater labour while an autocratic government prevented the people from personal accumulation. Their free time was spent in swimming and surfing, in cardplaying, boxing matches, games, cockfights, hulas and other traditional games of skill or chance. Not only were these games seen as a useless waste of time, but they were inextricably mingled with such sins as gambling and with sexuality of an overt kind which appeared subversive of Christian morals.

The women, whose labour appeared even less onerous than the men's, seemed particularly in need of those alternative pursuits which Christian education could offer: Bible-reading groups, church meetings, school examinations, Sunday school picnics and tea meetings, as well as formal classroom instruction. Choir work in particular attracted the American women's interest, since they so much missed the good music of their home congregations. Maria Patton described such a choir rehearsal at Lahaina where 'twenty-four genteely dressed Hawaiian ladies sat opposite the same number of gentlemen with an elegant table sporting three glass lamps placed between them' (Patton to sister, 20 August 1828).

With choirs, as in so many pursuits, American hopes were often thwarted. Mary Parker told a friend that she could hardly keep herself from laughing sometimes, the Hawaiians sang so laboriously. 'Nature seems not to have designed them for the best of singers' (M. Parker to Mrs Frisbie, April 1836). Her reaction to singing mirrored a deep-seated skepticism about the depth of genuine piety

that the mission women's activity had really achieved. Newly arrived women could be impressed at the sight of a large group of Hawaiian women led in prayer by one of their number in a style not too far removed from expected forms. Those American women who had been years in the field however felt increasingly that the manifestation of piety was superficial. When a religious revival which swept the largest island and rapidly increased church membership (as opposed to mere attendance), many mission women were unmoved by the local missionaries' elation. 'We tremble, yet know not what to say, nor scarcely what to think', Sybil Bingham told a mission friend, musing on the 'fickleness' of the Hawaiian character (S. Bingham to N. Ruggles, 16 August 1838).

The essential thrust of the American women's strategy was to substitute piety for the sexuality which seemed to be the dominant drive in Hawaiian women's activities. The effort to induce notions of sexual purity extended far beyond prohibitions on 'promiscuous' bathing and sexually suggestive dances. While the American women saw monogamous marriage as the sole legitimate avenue for the expression of physical sex, their own notions of purity clearly accepted such sexuality in a relatively positive way. However to be confronted with a society in which matters concerning the body were explicitly, publicly and unselfconsciously presented was shocking. Nudity, urination, defecation and, above all, intimate sexual relations appeared scarcely subject to even minimal regulation, insensitive as they were to the cultural bases of Hawaiian sexual behaviour.

The Kailua missionaries complained in 1831 that 'the sin of uncleanness' clung to Hawaiians like leprosy, even to church members, despite the two-year probation period the ministers imposed. There was little concern or watchfulness over one another. Hawaiians congregated together in the same small house, and slept together on the one mat. Missionaries blamed 'the unceremonious manner of intercourse between the sexes, without any forms of reserve or any delicacy of thought and conversation—The idle habits of all, especially the women, and their fondness for visiting from home at night—and the force of long established habits' (*Missionary Herald*, July 1832). 'The degradation of the *females* in this spot deeply affects my heart', wrote Clarissa Richards. 'On this subject I could *write* much—but delicacy forbids' (C. Richards, Journal, 1822–3:40). The missionaries sought to establish and sustain monogamous marriage, acting wherever possible to stamp out premarital and extramarital sexuality and encouraging Hawaiians to cover nude bodies with decent clothing in Western style.

Instruction on the married state was spelled out clearly in a pamphlet *A Word Relating to Marriage*, prepared for mission purposes. Marriage meant one partner, in a relationship lasting for life. Prostitution, adultery and 'male and female impersonations' were sins of the flesh. Marriages forbidden by God, such as those between close blood relatives, were prohibited. Couples should not marry too young, but wait until their bodies grew stronger and their characters more developed. Partners should be close in age so that they shared many interests; they should know each other well, understand each other's commitments and love each other. They should have joint residence, and own all property together (Clark 1844). Divorce was sanctioned only in the case of adultery or wilful desertion where mediation had failed.

Missionaries did not require couples married Hawaiian style to submit to a Christian service lest every married person in the islands should feel perfectly free to consider their current relationships null and void, and to swap partners at will, but they insisted that all future liaisons be blessed by the church. Female and male chiefs, however, who had more than one spouse, were to choose one and relinquish the rest. One chiefly woman of Kailua claimed to have had no fewer than forty spouses, usually several at the same time (*Missionary Herald*, October 1829), and a male chief seven. Samuel Whitney asked him whether so many wives did not give rise to some anxiety. 'Yes, much', replied the chief. 'I

can not sleep for fear some other man will get them!' (S. Whitney, Journal, 30 April 1826). Such irregularities were insupportable in the political leaders of the country. They were encouraged to introduce stringent punishments for bigamy and adultery; by the late 1820s in Lahaina, errant subjects were being forced to pay for their sins by making roads (men), or confinement in irons (women) (*Missionary Herald*, February 1829).

'Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge', thundered preachers from a favourite Hebrew text. It was easier to get Hawaiians to the altar, alas, than to restrain 'whoremongers and adulterers' thereafter. The most clearcut case of irregularity that the mission could bring under some degree of surveillance was the sexual trafficking between Hawaiian women and foreign sailors off visiting ships. Initially such exchange of sexual favours for material goods was welcomed by Hawaiian girls, who may even have hoped to absorb *mana* (sanctity or divine strength) from the god-like white men (Sahlins 1981b:40). As well as material goods, however, the exchange often entailed unwanted pregnancies, uncontrollable venereal disease, jealous male violence and, where a Hawaiian woman had been abandoned after several months of cohabitation, penury. Whatever the subtleties of sexual politics in this interchange, the mission women viewed it within the model of their own society as sheer exploitative prostitution. They wept when, a fresh ship in port, their young female scholars turned a deaf ear to instruction and went off in the boats with pleasurable excitement (Ogden to M. Chamberlain, n.d.). They were in the forefront of pressure on chiefs to try to prevent this trade, with an anger made more intense by their daily contact with girls whose bodies were covered with syphilitic sores and with women rendered sterile from venereal disease.

Hawaiian brides decked themselves out with clothes for weddings and prayer meetings. The rule that the body, particularly the breasts, ought to be clothed at all times, was one held without conviction, while the myriad rules governing appropriate dress to match various occasions was hardly won. One of Maria Chamberlain's first actions after acquiring some of the Hawaiian language was to exhort women at Waikiki, in faltering tongue, 'to be modest, to tell their neighbours it was a shame to go exposed and without kapa as we had recently seen some of them' (M. Chamberlain, Journal, 8 December 1829). Mary Parker's first sight of Hawaiians inspired a chill of disappointment: 'naked, rude and disgusting to every feeling' (M. Parker, Journal (A), 31 March 1833). The American women pressed clothes on to their parishioners, sewing early and late for chiefs and teaching the skill to as many women as would heed them. Their first success was to persuade women, at least in the sight of Westerners, to wear a cotton shift with a skirt of Hawaiian cloth wound around their waists, and eventually a style of dress patterned on their own nightgowns became common usage. Frequently clothes were removed for work or for bathing, and women would sit wet through in church services if they had been caught in rain, although they customarily removed wet clothing when they were outside.

At times success seemed imminent. At a school examination at Waimea in 1829, the women decked themselves out in silk gowns, black with white headdresses or green with yellow headdresses (Guilick to ABCFM, 27 April 1829). The high chief Kapiolani, defier of the goddess Pele, won acclaim, as was described by a mission daughter in this way:

> Her hair was becomingly arranged with side puffs, and a high tortoise shell comb, which was the admiration of our childish eyes. Her feet were always clad in stockings and shoes . . . on public occasions, or when visiting away from home, she wore a tight fitting dress, not even adopting the '*holuku*' (or 'Mother Hubbard') which afterwards became the national style. Silk and satin of the gayest colors were the chosen dress of the chiefs, but she preferred grave and quiet shades. (Taylor 1897:6)

Yet for the most part the women were pained at the sight of inappropriate dress, even among the chiefs: rich satin dresses with bare feet, expensive mantles over cotton shifts. Other Hawaiian women showed a tendency to see clothes as ornamentation rather than to cover nakedness. When straw hats were introduced to replace flower wreaths, women loaded them with bows of dyed kapa ribbon and extended the brims to enormous proportions. Leg of mutton sleeves, padded with cloth, ballooned out voluminously.

The proper balance in dress was a rare achievement indeed, as rare as the reordering of sexuality they had tried to impose. Marriage was no security against the sin of adultery, mourned Clarissa Armstrong in 1838. No less than nine quite young girls who attended meetings regularly and heard religious instruction every day had been guilty of adultery (Armstrong, Journal, 4 February 1838). Unless some honest way was laid out 'for the people to supply their new and clamorous wants', wrote Laura Judd from Honolulu in 1841, 'wives and daughters will continue to barter virtue for gain' just as the other sex resorted to extortion and theft (L. Judd to Mrs. R. Anderson, August 1841).

The American missionaries always looked askance at the marriage of Christian believers and non-believers, but particularly so when the non-believer was the wife. The problem involved in this case was the proper submission that a wife owed to husbandly authority: 'in the marriage contract', the mission asserted, 'the woman surrenders herself to the authority and control of the husband in a sense materially different from the surrender of the husband to the wife (though the husband's authority cannot contravene the authority of Christ which is always paramount)' (Sandwich Islands Mission 1837:13–14). It was this consideration that led them also to oppose older chiefly women's marriages to youths where there was a great disparity in rank, age or influence, 'for the wife would probably surrender her superiority reluctantly if at all; or the youth might exercise his authority in an unseemly manner'. If the older partner were a male chief, the tension would not be as severe. 'There is not the same danger of unwelcome usurpation, or competition for supremacy', as there was of discontent and unfaithfulness (*ibid.*).

The concept of submissiveness as a feature of feminine behaviour and personality was not unproblematic for the mission women themselves, as the reminder that the Christian conscience was the ultimate arbiter of authority hinted. Most certainly the women did not equate 'submission' with any notion of passivity, weakness or ineffectualness. Courage, determination in a rightful cause, moderate assertiveness, were all qualities the American women often displayed and certainly valorised. Indeed such attributes were essential if women were to engage, as seemed essential, in charitable and religious concerns in the community. As daughters they had shown deference to their parents' opinions, and as wives they were undoubtedly prepared, should an irreconcilable difference arise, to yield to a husband's judgment, just as they assumed that a husband's interests preceded their own. Yet, partly because the gender division of labour was clearly spelt out in the marriage, and partly because much of their activism was conducted in a sex-segregated style, submissive behaviour in the conventional sense seemed rarely to be called for. The notion of women's moral leadership in the marriage offered in any case a countervailing source of power to that given the man by right.

The mission treatise on marriage instructed Hawaiians that the husband was head of the wife and should love, nurture and care for her. Wives, in turn, should reside in proper conduct under their husbands, and, through the fine example they set in living without sin and in the fear of the Lord, would influence their husbands to the good (Clark 1844:4). One reason that the mission women waged their campaign against Hawaiian women's customary amusements was the need to encourage those personal qualities of gentility that matched the submissive wife's role. 'The females, too, at the other end of the village are assembled for female fights, that is, *pulling hair, scratching* and *biting*', wrote two missionaries about the boxing craze among their community (Spaulding and Richards 1831). Women used alcohol and smoked to excess, in both cases inducing indelicate, hoydenish behaviour. Involving women in the organisational and educational work of the church—teaching, leading prayer groups,

preparing parish functions—not only offered women alternative occupations but pointed them in the path of an effective community activism which could be reconciled with deference to the dominant sex.

Hawaiian women were begged to change their ways, and in particular wives were urged to combine their interests more closely with their husbands. 'The property of a husband and wife are perfectly separate', one missionary complained. '*Hoapili* [a chief] and his wife have two perfectly distinct establishments, they rarely eat together. No man ever uses his wife's book and vice versa and so of a slate and other property, each must have one of his own' (Andrews to ABCFM, 2 December 1835). When Hukona, one of Clarissa Richard's servants, was guilty of 'delinquency' while assisting Fanny Gulick, another mission wife, Clarissa insisted that the woman should remain with Fanny 'and that she live quietly with her husband and submit herself cheerfully to his authority and theirs'. She could return to visit the Armstrongs and her relations after Fanny's confinement, but Clarissa did not want Hukona to feel that her services were indispensable, 'if she does not love her husband, nobody wants her' (C. Richards to F. Gulick, April [1834]).

It was the kinship network, the 'relations', that many missionaries realised was the stumbling block to much submissive wifely behaviour. Their own culture upheld dutiful deference of young unmarried daughters to the authority of parents. Hawaiian women, however, sustained links with their family of origin which superseded their ties with their husbands throughout their lives. Their roles as sisters, daughters, nieces took precedence over the marriage bond and represented the reference point for status. American women expected a married woman to have status conferred by the husband. Hawaiian women were involved in strong bonds of reciprocity with their kin for material, emotional and physical support, and such demands frequently drew wives from the marital home. Increasingly, as European diseases ravaged the population, they were called upon to nurse sick relatives some distance from their homes. Maria Chamberlain articulated common exasperation with the strength of kinship ties. 'If we should give the natives in our family a whole hog or goat they would boil it up and share it with their friends and then perhaps go without any meat for 2 or 3 days' (M. Chamberlain to sister, 11 March 1830). The functional value of such behaviour escaped the missionaries.

However it was not merely the force of the kinship network which the Americans saw as undermining proper lines of authority. They abhorred the continuing power of the chiefs over the lives of individual members of the family except where this influence was exercised on behalf of the church. Mary Ives described such an incident that epitomised chiefly tyranny at Hana. A young girl had brought Mary two eggs to exchange for a needle. A chief, observing the transaction, seized the eggs and angrily told the girl she had no right to sell eggs without asking him. As the girl fled in shame, Mary recalled her, gave her a needle and remonstrated with the chief—who did not take her advice in good spirit (M. Ives to aunt, 21 January 1838). If a chief detained a Hawaiian in some place distant from his home and family, wrote Sarah Lyman, the man did not even express a wish to return, even if he was detained six months or a year. 'Such veneration they still have for chiefs' (Lyman, Journal, 4 January 1835). For women to be dutiful wives, continuity in cohabitation and regularity in material subsistence was essential, and the Americans looked forward to the time when the despotism of chiefs would be ended, while they expressed regret at individual chiefly acts in the meantime.

The teaching of submissiveness, then, was intimately related to the encouragement of women to lead a domestic-oriented existence based on a gender division of labour in the American mode. Mission teaching was explicit on this point. 'It is the husband's role to work out-doors—he farms and builds the home and prepares that which concerns the welfare of the body. The role of the wife is to maintain the house and all that is within. It is her responsibility to look after the husband's clothing and the food—the household chores—setting in place the sleeping quarters and all else that is within' (Clark 1844). The wife was advised against deficiency in this area. 'It is wrong to neglect work and to leave the husband to keep the household. It is right to remain within the house and to work without daydreaming, providing food, clothing and all that is essential for life together' (*ibid.*, 5). And by such domestic devotion, the wife would foster the husband's love for the children. The married couple should guide children, as Solomon said, on the correct path. If husband and wife loved each other, their love for their children would be great and the children would not abandon their parents in later life.

The reality of Hawaiian domestic life was far from the ideal projected by the Americans. When Abigail Smith arrived at Kaluaaha in 1833, she was driven to distraction by Hawaiian women coming to observe her performance of domestic chores. She begged them to go home to their household duties and the care of their children so she could get on with her own tasks undisturbed. They asserted cheerfully that they had no duties, and continued unabashed to occupy her yard and doorway (Frear 1934:71). On several occasions when Hawaiian women saw the Americans ironing they said, with heartfelt sympathy, 'I pity you'.

The simply constructed Hawaiian houses with their sparse furnishings, together with the plainness of diet and dress, militated against the mission plan. The Waimea missionaries tried to persuade the people 'to live like human beings', Lyons said, to put away dogs, give up tobacco, build better houses, make tables, seats, use separate dishes and eating utensils, make fences around their houses and cultivate the soil more extensively (Lyons, Report on Waimea Station, 1837:1). The chiefs built Western-style houses, and eventually a few of the better-off church families lived in Western style with thatched mud-walled cottages sporting separate sleeping places for children, a shelf of books, an engraved map on the wall, home-built furniture and wooden bowls and spoons (*Mother's Magazine*, February 1839). But for the most part the Americans considered the Hawaiians' homes and diet totally unconducive to the performance of a day's domestic work by Hawaiian women. When the mission women went house-to-house visiting it was usually only the sick, the lame, the blind, the maimed or the old that they found at home—not a busy and welcoming Hawaiian housewife.

It seemed to the Americans that vast material improvement among commoners was dependent on breaking the hegemony of the chiefs. In the meantime, as they sought a cash crop which might give Hawaiian men employment and livelihood, they also looked for an avenue of household production for the women. One proposal was to induce Hawaiian women to spend more time sewing and knitting, since this not only afforded domestic occupation but provided the clothing so sorely needed by the whole population, and the clothes would generate occupation in mending, laundering, ironing and storing. The most concerted effort was the attempt to initiate clothmaking in the homes, that old skill of American women which was swiftly being overtaken by factory production back home. In 1834 a middle-aged spinster, Miss Lydia Brown, was sent to the islands to spearhead this enterprise. The mission board justified the appointment of Lydia, 'a woman of superior mind and character', in these terms. 'It is certainly of the utmost importance to make employment, and to create a necessity for it, for the people of the Islands. And it is very desirable to exert every influence on them that will be likely to produce among them industrious, orderly families.' The Hawaiians, therefore, should be trained in the domestic manufacture of cloth (Wisner to Missionaries, 23 June 1834). A number of Hawaiian women were intrigued by the process and keen to try it until they saw how coarse was the cloth of their own manufacture, and until more and more imported cottons made home spinning and weaving superfluous for the same reason as in America.

Persuading Hawaiian women to devote more time to childcare was similarly a frustrating task. 'In our opinion', stated the

Lahaina mission report in 1833, 'all that ever has been written on the subject of a mother's influence, has come far short of giving it the high rank which it really holds. Could the influence of a pious mother be brought to bear upon the children of Hawaii, then these islands might be transformed . . . Otherwise it will be the work of ages to change the character of the nation's children' (*Missionary Herald*, September 1834). The children, all the missionaries agree, were growing up like wild goats in the field. The only way to get them to school was to seek them out and bribe them with books in exchange for attendance. To keep them in school, the teachers had to sustain the children's interest constantly, no small task considering that the knowledge which Hawaiian children attained appeared to bear no relevance for their future employment. If made the objects of anger or corporal punishment, the children deserted in decisive fashion. One missionary described their activities. 'From morning to night, ungoverned by their parents, almost naked, ranging the fields in companies of both sexes, sporting on the sand-beach, bathing promiscuously in the surf, or following the wake of some drunken sailors' (Dibble 1909:267). Something had to be done.

That something involved the formation of Maternal Associations on each station devoted to the task of explaining to Hawaiian women the serious business of rearing godly children. On occasions, with caution, a mission wife brought in one of her own offspring for brief display.

Instruction began with a sharp and anguished attack on abortion and infanticide. Abortions, 'base and inhuman practices' (Lyons to ABCFM, n.d. [*c.* 1836]), were suspected to be common but difficult to detect. Mercy Whitney, reporting that she had seen a child with an eye put out by his mother 'in endeavouring to kill him' before his birth, commented also on the common practice of former years, infanticide: 'They seemed to think but little more of killing a child, than they would an animal' (M. Whitney, Journal, 24 October 1828). Most mission women reported that the incidence of infanticide declined swiftly, however. This was very likely due to the high infant mortality rate from introduced diseases if for no other reason.

The mission publication *A Few Words of Advice for Parents* (Sandwich Islands Mission 1842) cautioned mothers against leaving their infants to cry in another's care while they went off wherever they wished. Infants should be fed only breast milk, not fish, or *poi*, or sugarcane juice. But beyond everything else, infants should not be given away to relatives, but reared by their biological parents in the one home. This common practice was seen not just as the chief cause of the high infant mortality, but the reason for the entire lack of discipline over older children. Sarah Lyman expressed the usual exasperation at this practice when, at a Maternal Association meeting at Hilo, she failed dismally to compile a neat list of mothers and children. Thirty women attended, but it proved impossible to discover exactly how many children they had as 'their *real* mother, grandmother, aunt, nurse and perhaps someone else' would all claim the one child (Lyman, Journal, 17 January 1837).

Consequently, as the children grew more independent, it proved impossible for parents to exert strong control over them. As one Hawaiian mother after another explained, if they were nasty to their children, the children simply rolled up their mats under their arms and moved on to be welcomed by a related household. One Hawaiian mother described how she had tried to hit her disobedient child with the rod—the child spat in her face, bit and scratched her, tore her clothes, and then ran away for several days (*Mother's Magazine*, October 1837). If Hawaiian mothers had been accustomed to govern their children instead of being governed by them, it might have been a simple matter to substitute alternative advice. But, said Fidelia Coan, 'The most simple directions we can give, presuppose, in many cases, more knowledge, more skill, more advancement in the art of governing a family than they have attained' (*ibid.*).

It was arguable, from observing non-Christian mothers, that good church members were a little less likely to give up their infants for adoption and attempted to control their children a little more firmly. Certainly where the wife was an unbeliever, and a Christian father exerted parental authority, his efforts were clearly undermined; the wife would intervene if he tried to whip a child and set up a fearful wailing. 'It is true here, as in civilized lands', wrote one missionary, 'that the female fills an important sphere and may be the means of doing *much* mischief or *much* good' (Forbes to ABCFM, 23 July 1836). For the most part, however, even Christian women resigned themselves to a continuation of usual practices. We hear your advice, but we forget it quickly, Hawaiians goodnaturedly told the mission wives. Anyway, they were convinced that American children were born different: it was inconceivable that Hawaiian children could be so well-behaved.

On occasions Hawaiian women could express gratitude to American wives for their unswerving reform efforts. Maria Chamberlain had that experience one pleasant day in May, 1831. As an Hawaiian woman sat by Maria's baby's cradle brushing the flies off his face, she said to Maria that Hawaiians were fortunate that the missionaries had come with wives to the islands. Formerly, she said, Hawaiians had known nothing of taking care of children; gave newborn babies to others; knew nothing of domestic happiness. 'Husbands and wives quarrelled, committed adultery, drank, lied, stole . . . Now we wish to obey the word of God, to live together with love, to take care of our children and have them wear clothes as the children of the missionaries' (M. Chamberlain, Journal, 11 May 1831). Such praise was a rare treat and one which the mission women in any case came to regard with some skepticism. Penetrating the Hawaiian mind was a baffling task. 'It is exceedingly difficult to ascertain the true character of this people', wrote Nancy Ruggles after thirteen years in the islands. 'The expression of the lips merely, is no sure indication of the state of the heart' (N. Ruggles to Rev. and Mrs. S. Bartlett, 27 June 1833). Another missionary spelled out one of the major problems of communication. 'Unless every trifling particular is named they rarely have the judgement to carry out the principle themselves. They suppose they have complied when they observe the particular act forbidden' (Forbes to ABCFM, 10 October 1836). Scholars in the schools learned to pronounce the words, but that was all. They did not understand the essential *meaning*.

By the time the second decade of mission work was nearing its end without the reformation they craved becoming visible, many missionary women began to express the discouragement that had never, in any case, been far beneath the surface. They had God on their side; they had sacrificed a good deal to come to Hawaii; they felt exhausted in the cause; the population was ostensibly Christian and some change in women's behaviour had taken place. All Hawaiian women, however, fell far short of the desired model of true womanhood that they had tried so hard to impose. 'What in me hinders their salvation?' Lucia Smith plaintively asked her friend Juliette Cooke, as she watched women drift away from her instruction (L. Smith to J. Cooke, 5 May [1838]). Many another mission sister echoed her painful self-assessment.

Forceful and efficient fresh male missionaries who arrived in Hawaii in the 1830s were horrified by what they saw as the slow progress of the mission's work and began to question the decision of earlier missionaries to devote so much of the effort to the reformation of adults. Many felt a renewed onslaught should be made on the character formation of Hawaiian children. Lorrin Andrews, principal of the Lahainaluna Seminary which was founded on Maui in 1831 to offer advanced education to young Hawaiian men, was one who came to this opinion. '*We must begin with* children or the *most* of our labour must be lost as far as civilization and mental improvement are concerned', he told fellow missionaries with some vehemence (Andrews to ABCFM, 2 December 1835). He and his co-workers became disillusioned with their work with young men when they encountered sexual immorality both within the Seminary and among some graduate teachers in the community who used their new status to gain sexual favours from female pupils (Andrews *et al.* to ABCFM, 1836–37).

While others agreed about renewed em-

phasis on children, the teachers of day schools felt their task an impossible one. Children, said one missionary, lost the salutary effects of religious instruction by 'mingling with their vicious parents and others and observing all their heathenish and polluting habits and practices' (L. Lyons to ABCFM, Report, 1836). No sooner, reiterated another, did one alert children to their 'filthy and indecent appearance' and to the evils of quarrelling and lying than they returned to the 'beastly indifference' to the conventions of good behaviour, or even the sneers, of those with whom they associated back home. The solution seemed difficult, but obvious. The mission must educate children, but in sex-segregated boarding schools where they could be removed from their parents' influence (Hitchcock to ABCFM, April 1836). The missionaries on Hawaii knew that their fellow missionaries in Ceylon were finding this a constructive approach. The graduates of the girls' and boys' boarding schools in Ceylon were marrying and then re-entering their former communities as Christian leaders (Wisner to missionaries, 23 June 1834). A beginning on this policy was made. Lahainaluna was converted to a high school for young boys in 1837, and the Wailuku Girls' Seminary, for girls aged six to ten years, was opened at a discreet geographical distance.

At Wailuku, under the principal Miss Maria Ogden, Hawaiian girls received the training in true womanhood that the female missionaries had tried to offer adult women. Their daily schedule revealed much. Girls rose before dawn for prayers, set the tables, cleaned their rooms, washed, combed their hair and came down to breakfast at the sound of the bell. Some girls were rostered to wait at each meal. The girls sewed from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., studied till midday, and again after lunch from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Another hour's sewing preceded supper at 5:00 p.m., followed by a scripture reading and prayer. On Saturdays the scholars scoured the dining room, schoolroom, tables, basins, aprons, plates, knives and forks; they washed and ironed their clothes, neat uniforms of sensible cottons. They learned at the school the basic elements of a formal education combined with an apprenticeship in female arts and crafts (Ogden to M. Chamberlain 27 June [?1837]). By 1839, however, Dr. Judd recommended some improvement not only in the quality of their diet but in the time allotted for physical exercise, when serious illness, resulting in deaths, occurred at the school. It seemed impossible, the missionaries concluded, 'to restrain them from rude and romping behaviour, and to confine them to those exercises deemed more proper for females without serious injury to health' (Dibble 1909:284; Judd 1960:95).

The 1840s saw a slow period of disengagement in active involvement in the mission by many missionary wives, which they lamented in an increasingly hopeless fashion. It was impracticable for most children to be confined for years in boarding schools—the one area where a small group of women remained involved. Their efforts with the Hawaiian women appeared to bear little fruit, and the Americans faced the gloomy experience of watching many of their most precious converts dying prematurely during the epidemics which swept the islands. 'Surely this people are melting away like dew . . . What we do for them must be done quickly', wrote Sarah Lyman (Lyman, Journal, 22 January 1838). Another missionary wrote, 'We bless the Lord and take courage but, oh, what a dying people this is. They drop down on all sides of us and it seems that the nation must speedily become extinct' (Gulick 1918:159). The mission women's nursing skills seemed more in demand than any other offering they could make. By the 1850s, there was often little to distinguish the mission women's daily round and preoccupations from many of their sisters' lives back home, the exotic character of their environment notwithstanding.

A young American, staying in the Hawaiian islands for his health in the 1830s, described his missionary aunt's activities, and the Hawaiian response, in an ironical yet sympathetic fashion:

> My aunt could work, scold, preach, wash, bake, pray, catechize, make dresses, plant, pluck, drive stray pigs out the garden. There was nothing useful in this wilderness which she could not do. She exercised an influence from her energy and practical virtue which bordered on absolute authority. As I walked with her through the village, her presence operated as a civilizing tonic. True, the effect in many cases was transient. But the natives knew what she expected. As she appeared, tobacco pipes disappeared, idle games or gambling were slyly put by. Bible and hymn books brought conspicuously forward and the young girls hastily donned their chastest dresses and looks. (Restarick 1924:50–1)

His characterisation of this intercultural relationship nicely captures both the single-minded effort of missionary women and the apparent conformity, but essentially evasive, response of Hawaiians. It also exemplifies the style of much outsiders' writing about mission women, the tendency to stress a comic element in the encounter. In truth, however, although the endeavour of the American missionary women could easily be described as comedy, it more nearly approaches tragedy.

The American women attempted what was, given the circumstances, a constructive role in the process of social change in Hawaii which it is easy to overlook. Hawaiian culture was being subjected to intense pressure to adapt to the rapid incursion of foreigners into their community. The missionaries were only one element in these first decades, and from an immediate economic perspective the least exploitative element in this capitalist and colonialist invasion. Granted that change in Hawaiian culture was inevitable, what in fact the American missionaries offered Hawaiian girls and women was initiation into that range of skills and behaviour that would ensure some successful negotiation of the new order. Kaahumanu, the queen regent, was astute enough to recognise this fact.

The constructive nature of the American women's enterprise has been overlooked partly by the tendency of historians, themselves products of the same work-oriented society, to envy, and to enjoy vicariously, the lives of those Polynesian island dwellers who were innocent of puritanical drives. Yet there seems little basis in fact for describing Hawaiian women's lives as romantic or idyllic, either in their pre-contact world or in the period of change of the nineteenth century. This tendency to denigrate the missionary women's efforts is intensified by the trappings of Victorian gentility which necessarily surrounded their agenda, particularly with respect to sexuality. Yet the formal and informal education in Western forms which the mission women, alone of their sex, were prepared to offer would enable Hawaiian women to make out in a world increasingly dominated by this alien culture. Such Hawaiian women who were 'successful' in nineteenth-century Hawaii served an apprenticeship in the American mission programme.

Yet ultimately the American women's activities would prove of only marginal value to the vast majority of those Hawaiians who survived the ravages of imported diseases. Clearly a wide range of cultural beliefs and practices were bound to persist, and among these notions of masculinity, femininity and personal familial relationships would prove the most persistent. Moreover, the American prescriptions of femininity were based on an economic organisation which it proved impossible to replicate for indigenous Hawaiians. The male breadwinner, the independent artisan, the small farmer, the wage earner, supporting a wife and family in modest but independent comfort, was a dream that faded before it could emerge (Grimshaw 1986). Eventually large plantations and businesses headed by foreign capitalists dominated, employing non-Hawaiian labour for the most part. The bulk of Hawaiians remained excluded from the prosperity of this new Hawaii. The relative affluence of Hawaiian families and the Western gender division of labour desired by the Americans remained elusive goals. It was no wonder that their cultural constructs of gender characteristics proved unattainable.

The experience of American and Hawaiian cultural contact was an ironic one. The Americans sacrificed much personal comfort, suffered home-sickness, ill-health and heartache in their effort to transform Hawaiian lives. Yet they tended to attack, along with destructive elements in the processes of foreign incursion, many of the very aspects of Hawaiian culture which afforded Hawaiian women

some measure of autonomy within their own social system. Meanwhile the Americans were powerless to reproduce for their protégés the framework which afforded American women informal power within American society.

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"Aba Riots" or Igbo "Women's War"? Ideology, Stratification, and the Invisibility of Women

Judith Van Allen

The events that occurred in Calabar and Owerri provinces in southeastern Nigeria in November and December of 1929, and that have come to be known in Western social-science literature as the "Aba Riots," are a natural focus for an investigation of the impact of colonialism on Igbo women.[1] In the development and results of that crisis can be found all the elements of the system that has weakened women's position in Igboland—and in much of the rest of Africa as well.[2] The "Aba Riots" are also a nice symbol of the "invisibility" of women: "Aba Riots" is the name adopted by the British; the Igbo called it *Ogu Umunwanyi*, the "Women's War" (Uchendu 1965: 5; Okonjo 1974: 25, n. 40). This is more than a word game. In politics, the control of language means the control of history. The dom-

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inant group and the subordinate group almost always give different names to their conflicts, and where the dominant group alone writes history, its choice of terminology will be perpetuated. Examples of this manipulation of language abound in American history, as any examination of standard textbooks will reveal.

Calabar and Owerri provinces covered roughly the southeast and southwest quarters of Igboland, the traditional home of the Igbo peoples. In November of 1929, thousands of Igbo women from these provinces converged on the Native Administration centers— settlements that generally included the headquarters and residence of the British colonial officer for the district, a Native Court building and a jail, and a bank or white trader's store (if such existed in the district).[3] The women chanted, danced, sang songs of ridicule, and demanded the caps of office (the official insignia) of the Warrant Chiefs, the Igbo chosen from each village by the British to sit as members of the Native Court. At a few locations the women broke into prisons and released prisoners. Sixteen Native Courts were attacked, and most of these were broken up or burned. The "disturbed area" covered about 6,000 square miles and contained about two million people. It is not known how many women were involved, but the figure was in the tens of thousands. On two occasions, British District Officers called in police and troops, who fired on the women and left a total of more than 50 dead and 50 wounded. No one on the other side was seriously injured.[4]

The British "won," and they have imposed their terminology on history; only a very few scholars have recorded that the Igbo called this the "Women's War." And in most histories of Nigeria today one looks in vain for any mention that women were even involved. "Riots," the term used by the British, conveys a picture of uncontrolled, irrational action, involving violence to property or persons, or both. It serves to justify the "necessary action to restore order," and it accords with the British picture of the outpouring of Igbo from their villages as some sort of spontaneous frenzy, explained by the general "excitability" of these "least disciplined" of African peoples (Perham 1937:219). "Aba Riots," in addition, neatly removes women from the picture. What we are left with is "some riots at Aba"— not by women, not involving complex organization, and not ranging over most of southeastern Nigeria.

To the British Commissions of Enquiry established to investigate the events, the Igbo as a whole were felt to be dissatisfied with the general system of administration. The women simply were seen as expressing this underlying general dissatisfaction. The British explanation for the fact that women rather than men "rioted" was twofold: the women were aroused by a rumor that they would be taxed at a time of declining profits from the palm products trade; and they believed themselves to be immune from danger because they thought British soldiers would not fire on women (Perham 1937:213–217). The possibility that women might have acted because as women they were particularly distressed by the Native Administration system does not seem to have been taken any more seriously by the Commissions than women's demands in testimony that they be included in the Native Courts (Leith-Ross 1939:165).

The term "Women's War," in contrast to "Aba Riots," retains both the presence and the significance of the women, for the word "war" in this context derived from the pidgin English expression "making war," an institutionalized form of punishment employed by Igbo women and also known as "sitting on a man." To "sit on" or "make war on" a man involved gathering at his compound at a previously agreed-upon time, dancing, singing scurrilous songs detailing the women's grievances against him (and often insulting him along the way by calling his manhood into question), banging on his hut with the pestles used for pounding yams, and, in extreme cases, tearing up his hut (which usually meant pulling the roof off). This might be done to a man who particularly mistreated his wife, who violated the women's market rules, or who persistently let his cows eat the women's crops. The women would stay at his hut all night and day, if necessary, until he repented and promised to mend his ways (Leith-Ross 1939: 109; Harris 1940: 146–48).[5]

"Women's War" thus conveys an action by women that is also an extension of their traditional method for settling grievances with men who had acted badly toward them. Understood from the Igbo perspective, this term confirms the existence of Igbo women's traditional institutions, for "making war" was the ultimate sanction available to women for enforcing their judgments. The use of the word "war" in this specifically Igbo sense directs attention to the existence of those female political and economic institutions that were never taken into account by the British, and that still have not been sufficiently recognized by contemporary social scientists writing about the development of nationalist movements.

Conventionally, Western influence has been seen as "emancipating" African women through (1) the weakening of kinship bonds; (2) the provision of "free choice" in Christian monogamous marriage; (3) the suppression of "barbarous" practices (female circumcision, ostracism of mothers of twins, slavery); (4) the opening of schools; and (5) the introduction of modern medicine, hygiene, and (sometimes) female suffrage. What has not been seen by Westerners is that for some African women—and Igbo women are a striking example—actual or potential autonomy, economic independence, and political power did not grow out of Western influences but existed already in traditional "tribal" life. To the extent that Igbo women have participated in any political action—whether anticolonial or nationalist struggles, local community development, or the Biafran war—it has been not so much because of the influence of Western values as despite that influence.

TRADITIONAL IGBO POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

In traditional Igbo society, women did not have a political role equal to that of men. But they did have a role—or more accurately, a series of roles—despite the patrilineal organization of Igbo society. Their possibilities of participating in traditional politics must be examined in terms of both structures and values. Also involved is a consideration of what it means to talk about "politics" and "political roles" in a society that has no differentiated, centralized governmental institutions.

Fallers (1963) suggests that for such societies, it is necessary to view "the polity or political system . . . not as a concretely distinct part of the social system, but rather as a functional aspect of the whole social system: that aspect concerned with making and carrying out decisions regarding public policy, by whatever institutional means." Fallers's definition is preferable to several other functionalist definitions because it attempts to give some content to the category "political." Examples will make this clear. Let us take a society that has no set of differentiated political institutions to which we can ascribe Weber's "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory," and yet that holds together in reasonable order; we ask the question, What are the mechanisms of social control? To this may be added a second question, based on the notion that a basic governmental function is "authoritative allocation": What are the mechanisms that authoritatively allocate goods and services? A third common notion of politics is concerned with power relationships, and so we also ask, Who has power (or influence) over whom?

The problem with all of these approaches is that they are at the same time too broad and too narrow. If everything in a society that promotes order, resolves conflicts, allocates goods, or involves the power of one person over another is "political," then we have hardly succeeded in distinguishing the "political" as a special kind of activity or area or relationship. Igbo women certainly played a role in promoting order and resolving conflicts (Green 1947: 178–216; Leith-Ross 1939: 97, 106–9), but that does not make them political actors. In response to each of those broad definitions, we can still ask, Is this mechanism of social control or allocation, or this power relationship, a *political* mechanism

or relationship? In answering that question, Fallers provides some help. It is their relationship to public policy that makes mechanisms, relationships, or activities "political."

There are many different concepts of "public" in Western thought. We will consider only two, chosen because we can possibly apply them to Igbo politics without producing a distorted picture. There seem to be actions taken, and distinctions made, in Igbo politics and language that make it not quite so ethnocentric to try to use these Western concepts. One notion of "public" relates it to issues that are of concern to the whole community; ends served by "political functions" are beneficial to the community as a whole. Although different individuals or groups may seek different resolutions of problems or disputes, the "political" can nevertheless be seen as encompassing all those human concerns and problems that are common to all the members of the community, or at least to large numbers of them. "Political" problems are shared problems that are appropriately dealt with through group action— their resolutions are collective, not individual. This separates them from "purely personal" problems. The second notion of "public" is that which is distinguished from "secret," that is, open to everyone's view, accessible to all members of the community. The settling of questions that concern the welfare of the community in a "public" way necessitates the sharing of "political knowledge"— the knowledge needed for participation in political discussion and decision. A system in which public policy is made publicly and the relevant knowledge is shared widely contrasts sharply with those systems in which a privileged few possess the relevant knowledge—whether priestly mysteries or bureaucratic expertise—and therefore control policy decisions.

Traditional Igbo society was predominantly patrilineal and segmental. People lived in "villages" composed of the scattered compounds of relatively close patrilineal kinsmen; and related villages formed what are usually referred to as "village groups," the largest functional political unit. Forde and Jones (1950: 9, 39) found between 4,000 and 5,000 village groups, ranging in population from several hundred to several thousand persons. Political power was diffuse, and leadership was fluid and informal. Community decisions were made and disputes settled through a variety of gatherings (villagewide assemblies; women's meetings; age grades; secret and title societies; contribution clubs; lineage groups; and congregations at funerals, markets, or annual rituals) as well as through appeals to oracles and diviners (Afigbo 1972: 13–36).[6] Decisions were made by discussion until mutual agreement was reached. Any adult present who had something to say on the matter under discussion was entitled to speak, so long as he or she said something that the others considered worth listening to; as the Igbo say, "A case forbids no one." Leaders were those who had "mouth"; age was respected, but did not confer leadership unless accompanied by wisdom and the ability to speak well. In village assemblies, after much discussion, a small group of elders retired for "consultation" and then offered a decision for the approval of the assembly (Uchendu 1965: 41–44; Green 1947: chaps. 7–11; Harris 1940: 142–43).

In some areas, the assemblies are said to have been of all adult males; in other areas, women reportedly participated in the assemblies, but were less likely to speak unless involved in the dispute and less likely to take part in "consultation." Women may have been among the "arbitrators" that disputants invited to settle particular cases; however, if one party to the dispute appealed to the village as a whole, male elders would have been more likely to offer the final settlement (Green 1947: 107, 112–13, 116–29, 169, 199). Age grades existed in most Igbo communities, but their functions varied; the predominant pattern seems to have been for young men's age grades to carry out decisions of the village assembly with regard to such matters as clearing paths, building bridges, or collecting fines (Uchendu 1965: 43). There was thus no distinction among what we call executive, legislative, and judicial activities, and no political authority to issue commands. The settling of a dispute could merge into a discussion of a new "rule," and acceptance by the disputants and the group hearing the dispute was necessary for the settlement of anything. Only within a family compound could an individual demand obedience to orders; there the compound head offered guidance, aid, and protection to members of his family, and in return received respect, obedience, and material tokens of good will. Neither was there any distinction between the religious and the political: rituals and "political" discussions were interwoven in patterns of action to promote the good of the community; and rituals, too, were performed by various groups of women, men, and women and men together (Afigbo 1972; Meek 1957: 98–99, 105; Uchendu 1965: 39–40).

Matters dealt with in the village assembly were those of common concern to all. They could be general problems for which collective action was appropriate (for example, discussion might center on how to make the village market bigger than those of neighboring villages); or they could be conflicts that threatened the unity of the village (for example, a dispute between members of different families, or between the men and the women) (Harris 1940: 142–43; Uchendu 1965: 34, 42–43). It is clear, then, that the assembly dealt with public policy publicly. The mode of discourse made much use of proverbs, parables, and metaphors drawn from the body of Igbo tradition and familiar to all Igbo from childhood. Influential speech involved the creative and skillful use of this tradition to provide counsel and justification—to assure others that a certain course of action was both a wise thing to do and a right thing to do. The accessibility (the "public" nature) of this knowledge is itself indicated by an Igbo proverb: "If you tell a proverb to a fool, he will ask you its meaning." Fools were excluded from the political community, but women were not.[7]

Women as well as men thus had access to political participation; for women as well as for men, public status was to a great extent achieved, not ascribed. A woman's status was determined more by her own achievements than by those of her husband. The resources available to men were greater, however; thus, although a woman might rank higher among women than her husband did among men, very few women could afford the fees and feasts involved in taking the highest titles, a major source of prestige (Meek 1957: 203). Men "owned" the most profitable crops and received the bulk of the money from bridewealth. Moreover, if they were compound heads, they received presents from compound members. Through the patrilineage, they controlled the land. After providing farms for their wives, they could lease excess land for a good profit. Men also did more of the long-distance trading, which had a higher rate of profit than did local and regional trading, which was almost entirely in women's hands (Green 1947: 32–42).

Women were entitled to sell the surplus of their own crops. They also received the palm kernels as their share of the palm produce (they processed the palm oil for the men to sell). They might also sell prepared foods, or the products of women's special skills (processed salt, pots, baskets). All the profits were theirs to keep (Leith-Ross 1939: 90–92, 138–39, 143). But these increments of profit were relatively low. Since the higher titles commonly needed to ensure respect for village leaders required increasingly higher fees and expenses, women's low profits restricted their access to villagewide leadership. Almost all of those who took the higher titles were men, and most of the leaders in villagewide discussions and decisions were men (Green 1947: 169; Uchendu 1965: 41). Women, therefore, came out as second-class citizens. Though status and the political influence it could bring were "achieved," and though there were no formal limits to women's political power, men by their ascriptive status (membership in the patrilineage) acquired wealth that gave them a head start and a lifelong advantage over women. The Igbo say that "a child who washes his hands clean deserves to eat with his elders" (Uchendu 1965: 19).

What they do not say is that at birth some children are given water and some are not.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

Though women's associations are best described for the south—the area of the Women's War—their existence is reported for most other areas of Igboland, and Forde and Jones made the general observation that "women's associations express their disapproval and secure their demands by collective public demonstrations, including ridicule, satirical singing and dancing, and group strikes" (1950: 21).

Two sorts of women's associations are relevant politically: those of the *inyemedi* (wives of a lineage) and of the *umuada* (daughters of a lineage). Since traditional Igbo society was predominantly patrilocal and exogamous, almost all adult women in a village would be wives (there would also probably be some divorced or widowed "daughters" who had returned home to live). Women of the same natal village or village group (and therefore of the same lineage) might marry far and wide, but they would come together periodically in meetings often called *ogbo* (an Igbo word for "gathering"). The *umuada's* most important ritual function was at funerals of lineage members, since no one could have a proper funeral without their voluntary ritual participation—a fact that gave women a significant measure of power. The *umuada* invoked this power in helping to settle intralineage disputes among their "brothers," as well as disputes between their natal and marital lineages. Since these gatherings were held in rotation among the villages into which members had married, they formed an important part of the communication network of Igbo women (Okonjo 1974: 25; Olisa 1971: 24–27; Green 1947: 217–29).

The companion grouping to the *umuada* was the *inyemedi,* the wives of the lineage, who came together in villagewide gatherings that during the colonial period came to be called *mikiri* or *mitiri* (the Igbo version of the English "meeting"). *Mikiri* were thus gatherings of women based on common residence rather than on common birth, as in the case of *ogbo*. The *mikiri* appears to have performed the major role in daily self-rule among women and to have articulated women's interests as opposed to those of men. *Mikiri* provided women with a forum in which to develop their political talents and with a means for protecting their interests as traders, farmers, wives, and mothers (Green 1947; Leith-Ross 1939; Harris 1940; Okonjo 1974). In *mikiri*, women made rules about markets' crops, and livestock that applied to men as well as women; and they exerted pressure to maintain moral norms among women. They heard complaints from wives about mistreatment by husbands, and discussed how to deal with problems they were having with "the men" as a whole. They also made decisions about the rituals addressed to the female aspect of the village's guardian spirit, and about rituals for the protection of the fruitfulness of women and of their farms. If fines for violations or if repeated requests to husbands and elders were ignored, women might "sit on" an offender or go on strike. The latter might involve refusing to cook, to take care of small children, or to have sexual relations with their husbands. Men regarded the *mikiri* as legitimate; and the use of the more extreme sanctions—though rare—was well remembered.

Though both *ogbo* and *mikiri* served to articulate and protect women's interests, it is probably more accurate to see these groups as sharing in diffused political authority than to see them as acting only as pressure groups for women's interests. Okonjo [1976] argues . . . that traditional Igbo society had a "dual- sex political system"; that is, there was a dual system of male and female political-religious institutions, each sex having both its own autonomous sphere of authority and an area of shared responsibilities. Thus, women settled disputes among women, but also made decisions and rules affecting men. They had the right to enforce their decisions and rules by using forms of group ostracism similar to those used by men. In a society of such diffuse political authority, it would be misleading to call only a village assembly of men a "public" gathering, as most Western observers unquestioningly do; among the Igbo, a gathering of adult women must also be accepted as a public gathering.

COLONIAL "PENETRATION"

Into this system of diffuse authority, fluid and informal leadership, shared rights of enforcement, and a more or less stable balance of male and female power, the British tried to introduce ideas of "native administration" derived from colonial experience with chiefs and emirs in northern Nigeria. Southern Nigeria was declared a protectorate in 1900, but ten years passed before the conquest was effective. As colonial power was established in what the British perceived as a situation of "ordered anarchy," Igboland was divided into Native Court Areas that violated the autonomy of villages by lumping together many unrelated villages. British District Officers were to preside over the courts, but they were not always present because there were more courts than officers. The Igbo membership was formed by choosing from each village a "representative" who was given a warrant of office. These Warrant Chiefs also constituted what was called the Native Authority. The Warrant Chiefs were required to see that the orders of the District Officers were executed in their own villages, and they were the only link between the colonial power and the people (Afigbo 1972: 13–36, 207–48).

In the first place, it was a violation of Igbo concepts to have one man represent the village; and it was even more of a violation that he should give orders to everyone else. The people obeyed the Warrant Chief when they had to, since British power backed him up. In some places Warrant Chiefs were lineage heads or wealthy men who were already leaders in the village. But in many places they were simply ambitious, opportunistic young men who put themselves forward as friends of the conquerors. Even where the Warrant Chief was not corrupt, he was still, more than anything else, an agent of the British. The people avoided using Native Courts when they could do so, but Warrant Chiefs could force cases into the Native Courts and fine people for infractions of rules. Because he had the ear of the British, the Warrant Chief himself could violate traditions and even British rules and get away with it (Anene 1967: 259; Meek 1957: 328–30).

Women suffered particularly under the arbitrary rule of Warrant Chiefs, who reportedly took women to marry without allowing them the customary right to refuse a particular suitor. They also helped themselves to the women's agricultural produce and domestic animals (Onwuteaka 1965: 274). Recommendations for reform of the system were made almost from its inception both by junior officers in the field and by senior officers sent out from headquarters to investigate. But no real improvements were made. An attempt by the British in 1918 to make the Native Courts more "native" by abolishing the District Officers' role as presiding court officials had little effect, and that mostly bad. Removing the District Officers from the courts simply left more power in the hands of corrupt Warrant Chiefs and the increasingly powerful Court Clerks. The latter, intended to be "servants of the court," were able in some cases to dominate the courts because of their monopoly of expertise—namely, literacy (Meek 1957: 329; Gailey 1970: 66–74).

THE WOMEN'S WAR

In 1925, the British decided to introduce direct taxation in order to create the Native Treasury, which was supposed to pay for improvements in the Native Administration, in accordance with the British imperial philosophy that the colonized should pay the costs of colonization. Prices in the palm trade were high, and the tax— on adult males—was set accordingly. Taxes were collected without widespread trouble, although there were "tax

riots" in Warri Province (west of the Niger) in 1927.

In 1929, a zealous Assistant District Officer in Bende division of Owerri Province, apparently acting on his own initiative, decided to "tighten up" the census registers by recounting households and property. He told the Chiefs that there was no plan to increase taxes or to tax women. But the counting of women and their property raised fears that women were to be taxed, particularly because the Bende District Officer had lied earlier when the men were counted and had told the men that they were not going to be taxed. The women, therefore, naturally did not believe these reassurances. The taxation rumor spread quickly through the women's communication networks, and meetings of women took place in various market squares, which were the common places for women to have large meetings. In the Oloko Native Court Area—one of the areas of deception about the men's tax—the women leaders, Ikonnia, Nwannedie, and Nwugo, called a general meeting at Orie market. Here it was decided that as long as only men were approached in a compound and asked for information the women would do nothing. If any woman was approached, she was to raise the alarm; then the women would meet again to decide what to do. But they wanted clear evidence that women were to be taxed (Afigbo 1972; Gailey 1970: 107–8).

On November 23, an agent of the Oloko Warrant Chief, Okugo, entered a compound and told one of the married women, Nwanyeruwa, to count her goats and sheep. She replied angrily, "Was your mother counted?" at which "they closed, seizing each other by the throat" (Perham 1937: 207). Nwanyeruwa's report to the Oloko women convinced them that they were to be taxed. Messengers were sent to neighboring areas, and women streamed into Oloko from all over Owerri Province. They "sat on" Okugo and demanded his cap of office. They massed in protest at the District Office and succeeded in getting written assurances that they were not to be taxed. After several days of mass protest meetings, they also succeeded in getting Okugo arrested, tried, and convicted of "spreading news likely to cause alarm" and of physical assault on the women. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment (Gailey 1970: 108–13).

News of this victory spread rapidly through the market-*mikiri-ogbo* network, and women in many areas then attempted to get rid of their Warrant Chiefs and the Native Administration itself. Nwanyeruwa became something of a heroine as reports of her resistance spread. Money poured in from grateful women from villages scattered over a wide area but linked by kinship to Nwanyeruwa's marital village. Nwanyeruwa herself, however, was "content to allow" leadership in her area to be exercised by someone else. The money collected was used not for her but for delegates going to meetings of women throughout southern Igboland to coordinate the Women's War.

The British ended the rebellion only by using large numbers of police and soldiers—and, on one occasion, Boy Scouts. Although the shootings in mid-December and the growing numbers of police and soldiers in the area led the women to halt most of their activities, disturbances continued into 1930. The "disaffected areas"—all of Owerri and Calabar provinces—were occupied by government forces. Punitive expeditions burned or demolished compounds, took provisions from the villages to feed the troops, and confiscated property in payment of fines levied arbitrarily against villages in retribution for damages (Gailey 1970: 135–37).

During the investigations that followed the Women's War, the British discovered the communication network that had been used to spread the rumor of taxation. But that did not lead them to inquire further into how it came to pass that Igbo women had engaged in concerted action under grassroots leadership, had agreed on demands, and had materialized by the thousands at Native Administration centers dressed and adorned in the same unusual way—all wearing short loincloths, all carrying sticks wreathed with palm fronds, and all having their faces smeared with charcoal or ashes and their heads bound

with young ferns. Unbeknown to the British, this was the dress and adornment signifying "war," the sticks being used to invoke the power of the female ancestors (Harris 1940: 143–45, 147–48; Perham 1937: 207ff; Meek 1957: ix).

The report of the Commission of Enquiry exonerating the soldiers who fired on the women cited the "savage passions" of the "mobs"; and one military officer told the Commission that "he had never seen crowds in such a state of frenzy." Yet these "frenzied mobs" injured no one seriously, which the British found "surprising"; but then the British did not understand that the women were engaged in a traditional practice with traditional rules and limitations, only carried out in this instance on a much larger scale than in precolonial times.[8]

REFORMS—BUT NOT FOR WOMEN

The British failure to recognize the Women's War as a collective response to the abrogation of rights resulted in a failure to ask whether women might have had a role in the traditional political system that should be incorporated into the institutions of colonial government. Because the women—and the men—regarded the investigations as attempts to discover whom to punish, they volunteered no information about women's organizations. But would the British have understood those organizations if they had? The discovery of the market network had suggested no further lines of inquiry. The majority of District Officers thought that the men had organized the women's actions and were secretly directing them. The women's demands that the Native Courts no longer hear cases and that "all white men should go to their own country"—or at least that women should serve on the Native Courts and a woman be appointed a District Officer—were in line with the power of women in traditional Igbo society but were regarded by the British as irrational and ridiculous (Gailey 1970: 130ff; Leith-Ross 1939: 165; Perham 1937: 165ff).

The reforms instituted in 1933 therefore ignored the women's traditional political role, though they did make some adjustments to traditional Igbo male and male-dominated political forms. The number of Native Court Areas was greatly increased, and their boundaries were arranged to conform roughly to traditional divisions. Warrant Chiefs were replaced by "massed benches," which allowed large numbers of judges to sit at one time. In most cases it was left up to the villages to decide whom and how many to send. Though this benefitted the women by eliminating the corruption of the Warrant Chiefs, and thus made their persons and property more secure, it provided no outlet for collective action, their real base of power (Perham 1937: 365ff).

In 1901 the British had declared all jural institutions except the Native Courts illegitimate, but it was only in the years following the 1933 reforms that Native Administration local government became effective enough to make that declaration at all meaningful. The British had also outlawed "self-help"—the use of force by anyone but the government to punish wrongdoers. And the increasingly effective enforcement of this ban eliminated the women's ultimate weapon: "sitting on a man." In attempting to create specialized political institutions on the Western model, with participation on the basis of individual achievement, the British created a system in which there was no place for group solidarity, no possibility of dispersed and shared political authority or power of enforcement, and thus very little place for women (Leith-Ross 1939: 109–10, 163, 214). As in the village assemblies, women could not compete with men for leadership in the reformed Native Administration because they lacked the requisite resources. This imbalance in resources was increased by other facets of British colonialism—economic "penetration" and missionary influence. All three—colonial government, foreign investment, and the church—contributed to the growth of a system of political and economic stratification that made community decision-making less "public" in both senses we have discussed and that led to the current concentration of national political power in

the hands of a small, educated, wealthy, male elite. For though we are here focusing on the political results of colonialism, they must be seen as part of the whole system of imposed class and sex stratification.

MISSIONARY INFLUENCE

Christian missions were established in Igboland in the late nineteenth century. They had few converts at first, but by the 1930's their influence was significant, though generally limited to the young (Leith-Ross 1939: 109–18; Meek 1957: xv). A majority of Igbo eventually "became Christians," for they had to profess Christianity in order to attend mission schools. Regardless of how nominal their membership was, they had to obey the rules to remain in good standing, and one rule was to avoid "pagan" rituals. Women were discouraged from attending meetings where traditional rituals were performed or where money was collected for the rituals, which in effect meant all *mikiri*, *ogbo*, and many other types of gatherings (Ajayi 1965: 108–9).

Probably more significant, since *mikiri* were losing some of their political functions anyway, was mission education. The Igbo came to see English and Western education as increasingly necessary for political leadership—needed to deal with the British and their law—and women had less access to this new knowledge than men had. Boys were more often sent to school than girls, for a variety of reasons generally related to their favored position in the patrilineage, including the fact that they, not their sisters, would be expected to support their parents in their old age. But even when girls did go, they tended not to receive the same type of education. In mission schools, and increasingly in special "training homes" that dispensed with most academic courses, the girls were taught European domestic skills and the Bible, often in the vernacular. The missionaries' avowed purpose in educating girls was to train them for Christian marriage and motherhood, not for jobs or for citizenship. Missionaries were not necessarily against women's participation in politics; clergy in England, as in America, could be found supporting women's suffrage. But in Africa their concern was the church, and for the church they needed Christian families. Therefore, Christian wives and mothers, not female political leaders, were the missions' aim. As Mary Slessor, the influential Calabar missionary, said: "God-like motherhood is the finest sphere for women, and the way to the redemption of the world."[9] As the English language and other knowledge of "book" became necessary to political life, women were increasingly cut out and policy-making became less public.

ECONOMIC COLONIALISM

The traditional Igbo division of labor—in which women owned their surplus crops and their market profits, while men controlled the more valuable yams and palm products and did more long-distance trading—was based on a subsistence economy. Small surpluses could be accumulated, but these were generally not used for continued capital investment. Rather, in accord with traditional values, the surplus was used for social rather than economic gain: it was returned to the community through fees and feasts for rituals for title-taking, weddings, funerals, and other ceremonies, or through projects to help the community "get up." One became a "big man" or a "big woman" not by hoarding one's wealth but by spending it on others in prestige-winning ways (Uchendu 1965: 34; Meek 1957: 111).

Before the Pax Britannica, Igbo women had been active traders in all but a few areas (one such was Afikpo, where women farmed but did not trade).[10] The ties of exogamous marriage among patrilineages, the cross-cutting networks of women providing channels for communication and conciliation, and the ritual power of female members of patrilineages all enabled the traditional system to deal with conflicts with relatively little warfare (Anene 1967: 214ff; Green 1947: 91, 152, 177, 230–32). Conflict also took the nonviolent form of mutual insults in obscene and satirical songs (Nwoga 1971: 33–35, 40–42); and even warfare itself was conducted within limits, with weapons and actions increasing in seriousness in inverse proportion to the closeness of kinship ties. Women from mutually hostile village groups who had married into the same patrilineage could if necessary act as "protectors" for each other so that they could trade in "stranger" markets (Green 1947: 151). Women also protected themselves by carrying the stout sticks they used as pestles for pounding yams (the same ones carried in the Women's War). Even after European slave-trading led to an increase in danger from slave-hunters (as well as from headhunters), Igbo women went by themselves to their farms and with other women to market, with their pestles as weapons for physical protection (Esike 1965: 13).

The Pax increased the safety of short- and especially of long-distance trading for Igbo women as for women in other parts of Africa. But the Pax also made it possible for European firms to dominate the market economy. Onwuteaka argues that one cause of the Women's War was Igbo women's resentment of the monopoly British firms had on buying, a monopoly that allowed them to fix prices and adopt methods of buying that increased their own profits at the women's expense (1965: 278). Women's petty trading grew to include European products, but for many women the accumulated surplus remained small, often providing only subsistence and a few years' school fees for some of their children—the preference for sending boys to school further disadvantaging the next generation of women (Mintz 1971: 251–68; Boserup 1970: 92–95). A few women have become "big traders," dealing in £1000 lots of European goods, but women traders remain for the most part close to subsistence level. Little is open to West African women in towns except trading, brewing, or prostitution, unless they are among the tiny number who have special vocational or professional training (for example, as dressmakers, nurses, or teachers) (Boserup 1970: 85–101, 106–38). The "modern" economic sector, like the "modern" political sector, is dominated by men, women's access being limited "by their low level of literacy and by the general tendency to give priority to men in employment recruitment to the modern sector" (Boserup 1970: 99).

Women outside urban areas—the great majority of women—find themselves feeding their children by farming with their traditional digging sticks while men are moving into cash-cropping (with tools and training from "agricultural development programs"), migrant wage-labor, and trading with Europeans (Boserup 1970: 53–61, 87–99; Mintz 1971: 248–51). Thus, as Mintz suggests, "while the economic growth advanced by Westernization has doubtless increased opportunities for (at least some) female traders, it may also and simultaneously limit the range of their activities, as economic changes outside the internal market system continue to multiply" (p. 265). To the extent that economic opportunities for Africans in the "modern" sector continue to grow, women will become relatively more dependent economically on men and will be unlikely to "catch up" for a very long time, even if we accept education as the key. The relative stagnation of African economic "growth," however, suggests that the traditional markets will not disappear or even noticeably shrink, but will continue to be needed by the large numbers of urban migrants living economically marginal lives. Women can thus continue to subsist by petty trading, though they cannot achieve real economic independence from men or gain access to the resources needed for equal participation in community life.

It seems reasonable to see the traditional Igbo division of labor in production as interwoven with the traditional Igbo dispersal of political authority into a dual or "dual-sex" system. It seems equally reasonable to see the disruptions of colonialism as producing a new, similarly interwoven economic-political pattern—but one with stronger male domination of the cash economy and of political life.

To see this relationship, however, is not to explain it. Even if the exclusion of women from the colonial Native Administration and from nationalist politics could be shown to

derive from their exclusion from the "modern" economic sector, we would still need to ask why it was men who were offered agricultural training and new tools for cash-cropping, and who are hired in factories and shops in preference to women with the same education. And we would still need to ask why it was chiefly boys who were sent to school, and why their education differed from that provided for girls.

VICTORIANISM AND WOMEN'S INVISIBILITY

At least part of the answer must lie in the values of the colonialists, values that led the British to assume that girls and boys, women and men, should be treated and should behave as people supposedly did in "civilized" Victorian England. Strong male domination was imposed on Igbo society both indirectly, by new economic structures, and directly, by the recruitment of only men into the Native Administration. In addition, the new economic and political structures were supported by the inculcation of sexist ideology in the mission schools.

Not all capitalist, colonialist societies are equally sexist (or racist); but the Victorian society from which the conquerors of Igboland came was one in which the ideology that a woman's place is in the home had hardened into the most rigid form it has taken in recent Western history. Although attacked by feminists, that ideology remained dominant throughout the colonial period and is far from dead today. The ideal of Victorian womanhood—attainable, of course, only by the middle and upper classes, but widely believed in throughout society—was of a sensitive, morally superior being who was the hearthside guardian of Christian virtues and sentiments absent in the outside world. Her mind was not strong enough for the appropriately "masculine" subjects: science, business, and politics.[11] A woman who showed talent in these areas did not challenge any ideas about typical women: the exceptional woman simply had "the brain of a man," as Sir George Goldie said of Mary Kingsley (Gwynn 1932: 252).[12] A thorough investigation of the diaries, journals, reports, and letters of colonial officers and missionaries would be needed to prove that most of them held these Victorian values. But a preliminary reading of biographies, autobiographies, journals, and "reminiscences," plus the evidence of statements about Igbo women at the time of the Women's War, strongly suggests that the colonialists were deflected from any attempt to discover or protect Igbo women's political and economic roles by their assumption that politics and business were not proper, normal places for women.[13]

When Igbo women forced the colonial administrators to recognize their presence during the Women's War, their brief "visibility" was insufficient to shake these assumptions. Their behavior was simply seen as aberrant and inexplicable. When they returned to "normal," they were once again invisible. This inability to "see" what is before one's eyes is strikingly illustrated by an account of a visit by the High Commissioner, Sir Ralph Moor, to Aro Chukwu after the British had destroyed (temporarily) the powerful oracle there: "To Sir Ralph's astonishment, the women of Aro Chukwu solicited his permission to reestablish the Long Juju, which the women intended to control themselves" (Anene 1967: 234). Would Sir Ralph have been "astonished" if, for example, the older men had controlled the oracle before its destruction and the younger men had wanted to take it over?

The feminist movement in England during the colonial era did not succeed in making the absence of women from public life noted as a problem that required a remedy. The movement did not succeed in creating a "feminist" consciousness in any but a few "deviants," and such a consciousness is far from widespread today; for to have a "feminist" consciousness means that one notices the "invisibility" of women. One wonders where the women are—in life and in print. That we have not wondered is an indication of our own ideological bondage to a system of sex and class stratification. What we can see, if we look, is that Igbo men have come to dominate women economically and politically: individual women have become economic auxiliaries to their husbands, and women's groups have become political auxiliaries to nationalist parties. Wives supplement their husbands' incomes but remain economically dependent; women's "branches" have provided votes, money, and participants in street demonstrations for political parties but remain dependent on male leaders for policymaking. Market women's associations were a vital base of support for the early National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), the party that eventually was to become dominant in Igbo regions (although it began as a truly national party). And though a few market-women leaders were ultimately rewarded for their loyalty to the NCNC by appointment to party or legislative positions, market women's associations never attained a share in policymaking that approached their contribution to NCNC electoral success (Bretton 1966: 61; MacIntosh 1966: 299, 304–9; Sklar 1963: 41–83, 251, 402). The NCNC at first had urged female suffrage throughout the country, an idea opposed by the Northern People's Congress (NPC), dominated by Moslem emirs. Soon, however, the male NCNC leadership gave up pushing for female suffrage in the north (where women have never yet voted) in order to make peace with the NPC and the British and thus insure for themselves a share of power in the postindependence government. During the period between independence in 1960 and the 1966 military coups that ended party rule, some progress was made in education for girls. By 1966, consequently, female literacy in the East was more than 50 percent in some urban areas and at least 15 percent overall—high for Africa, where the overall average is about 10 percent and the rural average may be as low as 2 percent (MacIntosh 1966: 17–37; *West African Pilot*, April 29, 1959; Pool 1972: 238; UNESCO 1968).

Exhortations to greater female participation in "modern life" appeared frequently in the newspapers owned by the NCNC leader, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and a leadership training course for women was begun in 1959 at the Man O' War Bay Training Centre, to be "run on exactly the same lines as the courses for men, with slight modifications," as the *Pilot* put it. The motto of the first class of 22 women was, "What the men can do, the women can" (Van Allen 1974b: 17–20). But there was more rhetoric than reality in these programs for female emancipation. During the period of party politics, no women were elected to regional or national legislatures; those few who were appointed gained favor by supporting "party first," not "women first." Perhaps none of this should be surprising, given the corruption that had come to dominate national party politics (MacIntosh 1966: 299, 612–14; Sklar 1963: 402; Van Allen 1974b: 19–22).

BIAFRA AND BEYOND

On January 15, 1966, a military coup ended the Igbos' relationship with the NCNC: all political parties, and therefore their women's branches, were outlawed. A year and a half later—after the massacres of more than 30,000 Easterners in the North, the flight of more than a million refugees back to the East, a countercoup, and the division of the Igbo-dominated Eastern Region into three states—Biafra declared herself an independent state. In January 1970 she surrendered; the remaining Igbo are now landlocked, oilless, and under military occupation by a Northern-dominated military government.[14] Igbo women demonstrated in the streets to protest the massacres, to urge secession, and, later, to protest Soviet involvement in the war (Ojukwu 1969: 91, 143, 145–46, 245). During the war, the women's market network and other women's organizations maintained a distribution system for what food there was and provided channels for the passage of food and information to the army (Uzoma 1974: 8ff; Akpan 1971: 65–67, 89, 98–99,

128–30). Women joined local civilian-defense militia units and in May 1969 formed a "Women's Front" and called on the Biafran leadership to allow them to enlist in the infantry (Uzoma 1974: 5–8; Ojukwu 1969: 386).

During and after the war, local civilian government continued to exist more or less in the form that evolved under the "reformed" Native Administration. The decentralization produced by the war has by some reports strengthened these local councils, and the absence of many men has strengthened female participation (Peters 1971: 102–3; Adler 1969: 112; Uzoma 1974: 10–12). Thus, at tragic human cost, the war may have made possible a resurgence of female political activity. If this is so, women's participation again stems much more from Igbo tradition than from Western innovation.

It remains to be seen whether Igbo women, or any African women, can gain real political power without the creation of a "modern" version of the traditional "dual-sex" system (which is what Okonjo argues is needed) or without a drastic change in economic structures so that economic equality could support political equality for all women and men, just as economic stratification now supports male domination and female dependence. What seems clear from women's experiences—whether under capitalism, colonialism, or revolutionary socialism—is that formal political and economic equality are not enough. Unless the male members of a liberation movement, a ruling party, or a government themselves develop a feminist consciousness and a commitment to male-female equality, women will end up where they have always been: invisible, except when men, for their own purposes personal or political, look for female bodies.

NOTES

1. This paper is a revised version of papers presented at the 1971 African Studies Association meeting and at the 1974 UCLA African Studies Center Colloquium on "Women and Change in Africa: 1870–1970." I am grateful to Terrence O. Ranger, who organized the UCLA colloquium, and to the other participants (particularly Agnes Aidoo, Jim Brain, Cynthia Brantley, Temma Kaplan, and Margaret Strobel) for their encouragement, useful criticisms, and suggestions.
2. Today the Igbo, numbering about 8.7 million, live mainly in the East-Central State of Nigeria, with some half million in the neighboring Mid-Western State. The area in which they live corresponds approximately to Igboland at the time of the colonial conquest.
3. A number of Ibibio women from Calabar were also drawn into the rebellion, but the mass of the participants were Igbo.
4. Perham 1937: 202–12. Afigbo 1972 and Gailey 1970 give more detailed accounts of the Women's War than does Perham; all three, however, base their descriptions on the reports of the two Commissions of Enquiry, issued as Sessional Papers of the Nigerian Legislative Council (Nos. 12 and 28 of 1930), on the Minutes of Evidence issued with No. 28, and on intelligence reports made in the early 1930's by political officers. Afigbo, an Igbo scholar, provides the most extensive and authoritative account of the three, and he is particularly good on traditional Igbo society.
5. Similar tactics were also used against women for serious offenses (see Leith-Ross 1939: 97).
6. Though there is variation among the Igbo, the general patterns described here apply fairly well to the southern Igbo, those involved in the Women's War. The chief exceptions to the above description occur among the western and riverain Igbo, who have what Afigbo terms a "constitutional village monarchy" system, and among the Afikpo of the Cross River, who have a double-descent system and low female participation in economic and political life (P. Ottenberg 1959 and 1965). The former are more hierarchically organized than other Igbo but are not stratified by sex, having a women's hierarchy parallel to that of the men (Nzirimo 1972); the latter are strongly stratified by sex, with the senior men's age grade dominating community decision-making. Afikpo women's age grades are weak; there is no *mikiri* or, because of the double-descent system, *ogbo* (these terms are defined later in this paper . . . Afikpo women have not traditionally been active in trade; and female status among the Afikpo is generally very low. Afikpo Igbo, unlike almost all other Igbo, have a men's secret society that has "keeping women in their place" as a major purpose (P. Ottenberg 1959 and 1965).
7. I rely here chiefly on Uchendu 1965 and personal conversations with an Igbo born in Umu-Domi village of Onicha clan, Afikpo division. Some of the ideas about leadership were suggested by Schaar 1970. His discussion of what "humanly meaningful authority" would look like is very suggestive for studies of leadership in "developing" societies.
8. A few older men criticized the women for "flinging sand at their chiefs," but Igbo men generally supported the women though they nonetheless considered it "their fight" against the British. It is also reported that both women and men shared the mistaken belief that the women would not be fired upon because they had observed certain rituals and were carrying the palm-wrapped sticks that invoked the power of the female ancestors. The men had no illusions of immunity for themselves, having vivid memories of the slaughter of Igbo men during the conquest (Perham 1937: 212ff; Anene 1967: 207–24; Esike 1965: 11; Meek 1957: x).
9. For the missionaries' views and purposes, see Ajayi 1965, Basden 1927, Bulifant 1950, Maxwell 1926, and Livingstone n.d.
10. It is an unfortunate accident that the Afikpo Igbo, with their strong sexual stratification, have been used as examples of "the Igbo" or of "the effect of colonialism on women" in widely read articles. Simon Ottenberg's "Ibo Receptivity to Change" is particularly misleading, since it is about "all" Igbo. There is one specific mention of women: "The social and economic independence of women is much greater in some areas than in others." True, but the social and economic independence of women is much greater in virtually *all* other Igbo groups than it is in Afikpo, where the Ottenbergs did fieldwork. There are said to be "a variety of judicial techniques" used, but all the examples given are of men's activities. There is a list of non-kinship organizations, but no women's organizations are listed. Sanday's otherwise useful and thought-provoking article (1973) both takes the Afikpo as "the" Igbo and exaggerates the amount of change in female status that female trading brought about. Phoebe Ottenberg, Sanday's ultimate source on Afikpo women, described the change in female status as existing "chiefly on the domestic rather than the general level," with the "men's position of religious, moral, and legal authority . . . in no way threatened" (1959: 223). For examples of precolonial female trading in Igboland and elsewhere, see Little 1973 (particularly p. 46, n. 32); Uchendu 1965; Van Allen 1974b: 5–9; Dike 1956; and Jones 1963.
11. The fact that Englishwomen of the "lower classes" had to work in the fields, in the mills, in the mines, or on the street did not stop the colonialists from carrying their ideal to Africa, or from condemning urban prostitution there (just as they did at home) without acknowledging their contribution to its origin or continuation.
12. Mary Kingsley, along with other elite female "exceptions" who influenced African colonial policy (e.g., Flora Shaw Lugard and Margery Perham), held the same values that men did, at least in regard to women's roles. They did not expect ordinary women to have political power any more than men expected them to, and they showed no particular concern for African women.
13. For examples of this attitude among those who were not missionaries, see Anene 1967: 222–34; Crocker 1936; Meek 1957; Kingsley 1897; Perham 1960; and Wood 1960.
14. The attitude of the Northern emirs who now again dominate the Nigerian government is perhaps indicated by their order in June 1973 that single women get married or leave Northern Nigeria because Moslem religious authorities had decided that the North African drought was caused by prostitution and immorality. Landlords were ordered not to let rooms to single women, and many unmarried women were reported to have fled their home areas (*Agence France-Presse*, as reported in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, June 23, 1973). In late 1975 the military government appointed a 50-man body to draft a constitution for Nigeria's return to civilian rule. As of this writing women's protests have produced no changes in its membership.

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Debating the Impact of Development on Women

Sue Ellen M. Charlton

Since 1970, a debate has been under way concerning the effects of change in developing countries on the well-being of women. In the study that marked a turning point in the thinking about women in Third World countries, Ester Boserup argued that a single technological change in farming could entail a "radical shift in sex roles in agriculture." For example, in areas where the old methods of cultivation have been replaced by plow cultivation, men have taken over the plowing, and men rather than women now operate the main farming equipment. If men are subsequently taught new methods of cultivation, or if they receive credit, new seed varieties, or tools to increase their agricultural productivity, the gap between the productivity—and income—of men and women widens.

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> Such a development has the unavoidable effect of enhancing the prestige of men and of lowering the status of women. It is the men who do the modern things. They handle industrial inputs while women perform the degrading manual jobs; men often have the task of spreading fertilizer in the fields, while women spread manure; men ride the bicycle and drive the lorry, while women carry headloads, as did their grandmothers. In short, men represent modern farming in the village, women represent the old drudgery.[1]

Much of the negative impact of development may be due to changes it provokes in family structures. The less complex the level of development, the more agricultural production and distribution are directly linked to the family—women and children as well as men are viewed as a source of labor. Since public services typically are very limited or absent, all members of the family participate in providing a wide range of social services, such as old-age "insurance" or child care.

Economic growth and industrialization may encourage women to direct their productive efforts away from the home; they may also reduce the relative value of the economic contributions of women if the women lack the education and skills that are essential to employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors. . . . This situation may be one of the costs of increased specialization. If there is competition between family members for jobs, the women tend to lose out. The Committee on the Status of Women in India summarized the process this way:

> In agrarian societies the family is the unit of production. The place of work being close to the home, women and children all participate in the production process. As a society moves from the traditional agricultural and household industry to organised industry and services, from rural to urban areas, the traditional division of labour ceases to operate, and the complementary relationship of the family is substituted by the competitive one between units of labour. The scarcer the jobs, the sharper is the competition. Technological changes in the process of production call for acquisition of new skills and specializations which are very different from the traditional division of labour. Women, handicapped by lack of opportunities for acquisition of these new skills, find their traditional productive skills unwanted by the new economy.[2]

One consequence of the altered family roles and, in particular, the loss of economic complementarity between husband and wife, is that the family itself becomes both smaller (reduced from an extended to a nuclear family) and it is often less stable.[3] If one member of the family migrates to find work, the family is further altered; often the women find that their work load is increased but that their resources are more limited. One does not have to idealize the family as the basic unit of social organization to recognize that in the absence of viable alternatives, the family remains the primary source of security and well-being for the vast majority of Third World women.

Some authors have pointed out that social and economic changes may not overturn relationships between the sexes to the disadvantage of women but simply intensify a preexisting asymmetry. In Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries, for example, women traditionally have never controlled the products of their labor, so compared to women in Africa, the women in Muslim countries have suffered proportionately less erosion in their status.[4] This fact should not imply, however, that women in the Islamic world are necessarily better off. When women are confined by law and/or custom to the family, they may fall further and further behind as development accelerates.

> The exclusion of women from extrafamilial activities was not particularly important in the traditional society that was not concerned with progress, but it is an anachronism in a society that professes to wish to change and is actually investing both capital and effort in bringing about change and development. To confine women to the family structure is to keep them at a subsistence level at a time when entire sectors of the economy are moving toward a money base.[5]

The spread of educational opportunities, a normal part of development, may have the effect of further polarizing sex roles that were previously established by differences in labor productivity, traditional religious or cultural practices, or family organization. When education is a scarce resource, as it continues to be in most rural areas, the tendency is to educate boys before, and longer than, girls. This fact is the reason that worldwide, perhaps two-thirds of the illiterate people are female.

Urbanization, another major factor in social and economic change, also affects women in numerous ways. Some of the effects may be considered beneficial, but many are detrimental. What Elise Boulding has described as the "enclosure movement" for women has always been associated with urbanism.[6] When women are secluded—because of some form of purdah (female seclusion) or feminine mystique—the effect is the same: They are removed from active and effective participation in all the affairs of society. At the same time, urban centers can facilitate the creation of networks among women, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, urban centers have meant a greater access to education and more diverse job opportunities for women. This effect occurred as early as the late eighteenth century in Western Europe and occurs today in much of the Third World. The cost of these opportunities, however, may be that women continue to occupy a marginal position in the economy as they are concentrated in the underpaid, intermittent informal labor sector.[7]

The declining status of women that often accompanies modernization is more than an intellectual assertion of scholars and activists as it is also reflected in statistics on mortality, morbidity, employment, and literacy. India is an unfortunate case in point.

AN INDIAN CASE STUDY

One of the most severe indictments of the impact of development on women emerged in the 1974 report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. Since 1901, the male population of India has grown at a faster rate than the female population except in the period 1941—1951 (see Table 1). Since India modernized along numerous dimensions from 1901 to 1971 (despite persistent and widespread poverty), the continued higher mortality rates among the female population suggest that development has not benefitted women and men equally. Consequently, the life expectancy at birth is lower for females than for males.

Indian demographers have proposed several hypotheses to explain the declining sex ratio, and five of these suggest important contributory factors.

1. Females are underenumerated in the Indian census.
2. The general mortality rate of females is higher than that of males.
3. Indian families prefer sons, and female infants are consequently neglected.
4. Frequent and excessive childbearing has an adverse effect on the health of women.
5. Certain diseases have a higher incidence in women.[8]

In the absence of more reliable data, it is impossible to say which of these factors might be the most important, but each, including the underenumeration of women in a census, suggests at least an inequitable involvement of women in Indian society or the fact that females do not enjoy the same status or facilities as males. The authors of the Indian report stressed the importance of this last factor.

> The explanation [of the declining sex ratio] which seems to have received general acceptance is that due to improvement of health services in the last few decades the reduction in mortality has been greater for males than females. The differential improvement in health conditions must have contributed substantially to the decline in sex ratio. This raises the whole question of the attitudes towards females and the role of women in Indian society.[9]

TABLE 1. Growth of Female Population in India, 1901–1971

Year	*Total Population (millions)*	*Male Population (millions)*	*Female Population (millions)*	*Females per 1000 Males*
1901	238	121	117	972
1911	252	128	124	964
1921	251	128	123	955
1931	279	143	136	950
1941	319	164	155	945
1951	361	186	175	946
1961	439	226	213	941
1971	548	284	264	930

Source: Government of India, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, *Towards Equality, Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India* (New Delhi, 1974), p. 10.

In an important study of neglect of female children in northern India, Barbara D. Miller reinforces the explanations of the Indian Committee on the Status of Women. Neglect and starvation were routinely used in some areas during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to rid a family of female infants, and British observers reported that some villages had no female children.[10] Miller used census data from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to trace the preponderance of males reflected in the sex ratios. One of the important contributions to her study is that she examined several reasons for the cultural preference for sons, such as the high cost of marrying daughters (because of dowries). She also suggests that the higher demand for female agricultural labor in southern India works against male preference there and contributes to more equitable sex ratios in that region.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that a preference for boys lies at the heart of the inferior status of women and girls in India and many other countries. Equally disturbing are the increasing indications that when public services—ranging from medical and health facilities to agricultural extension projects—are provided in the course of development efforts, they may either reinforce the traditional male biases or diminish the status that women enjoyed in the traditional society. For example, in field studies conducted in 1971, the Indian Council of Medical Research found that girls outnumbered boys among children with kwashiorkor, a disease resulting from severe malnutrition, but among children hospitalized with kwashiorkor, boys outnumbered girls.[11] If a family must choose between children in deciding who will receive food or medical care, boys will be given preference. The provision of a public service thus may exacerbate the differential treatment of boys and girls that begins at birth.

The use of neglect or, in extreme cases, of infanticide to limit the number of female children may acquire a sinister twist with improved medical technology. Where amniocentesis was available in private urban clinics in India, nearly all women who had the test in the early 1980s had abortions when the fetus was female. A similar preference for sons has also undermined China's family planning program.[12]

Considerable alarm has also been sounded over the decline in the number of women who are a part of the paid work force in India. Census data have shown a decline both in proportion of female workers to the total population and in the percentage of women in the total labor force. Even allowing for statistical inaccuracies and changes in census procedures, which exaggerate differences, census data from 1961 and 1971 show a decline both in absolute numbers and in percentages.[13]

Three researchers at the Indian Council of Social Science Research conducted a detailed study based on the 1961 census. They examined female participation in several major categories of household and nonhousehold industry in rural and urban areas. They looked carefully at employment in household manufacturing (such as in cottage industries) because traditionally, this type of work has been regarded as the stronghold of female workers, even though at the time of the 1961 census, it accounted for only 21 percent of all nonagricultural workers. The researchers found that the proportion of women employed in household industry was less than 50 percent that of men in half of the major employment categories studies, such as in the production of tobacco products, woolen textiles, and jute textiles.[14] The participation of women in nonhousehold industries was even lower.

A different study covering a later period shows a drop in the proportion of female to total workers in factories employing more than twenty people (a drop from 10.4 percent to 8.7 percent from 1963 to 1972).[15] Since employment in industry is frequently taken as an indicator of economic development, the declining participation of women in this sector is another disturbing suggestion of the effects of modernization on women. The situation is urgent because the alternative for these women is not household leisure but unemployment, underemployment, or menial agricultural labor.

An examination of macrolevel data published in 1981 suggests that the employment trends might not be as discouraging as the earlier studies had concluded. The director of India's Central Statistical Organisation has argued that noncensus surveys, such as the annual survey of industries, conducted during the 1960s and 1970s suggest that female labor force participation rates did not undergo major changes in those two decades.[16] These contradictions may be resolved by ongoing analyses of the 1981 Indian census; until such analyses are made, they stand as a frustrating illustration of the data problems discussed in the next section.

All of the studies cited above offer three reasons for the decline in female employment when it has occurred along with industrialization. One factor is the decline in household industry in general, a decline that began under British colonialism and accelerated after 1947.[17] Since household industries constituted the largest traditional nonagricultural source of women's employment, women were the greatest victims of that economic transformation. A second factor is that within the category of household industry, those activities performed by women—such as some kinds of hand weaving, oil pressing, rice pounding, and tobacco processing—faced especially stiff competition from factory production. Finally, technological changes reduced the demand for unskilled labor, and since the majority of the women in the industrial sector were unskilled, they were the main victims of this change also.[18] To this last factor might be added the observation that as long as women are considered secondary in the home, they will be considered secondary in the formal labor market.[19]

CHANGING ROLES IN CHANGING SOCIETIES

Detailed studies make it clear that generalizing about the impact of social and economic changes must be done with caution, because to date, research has only complicated the picture of the impact of development on women. Agricultural development projects do not inevitably increase female work loads,[20] and changes in the rural economy under colonial rule or in response to production for cash and/or export may not be the primary factors in dichotomizing the sex roles.[21] A new road into a village may open up new opportunities for women traders in remote communities,[22] or modernization and technological advances may create more jobs for women in public services and in the tertiary sector in general.[23]

In those cases in which change has not had an adverse impact on women, it appears as if one of two situations has been present. Either the traditional roles of women have been reshaped in ways that are compatible with broader social changes, or the women have developed viable new roles. By definition, avoiding change is not an option in a nonstatic society. The questions are where, how, and when change comes. In the presence of this reality, the people who have the power to make choices about development must come to grips with the indictment so forcefully articulated by Irene Tinker: "In virtually all countries and among all classes, women have lost ground relative to men; development, by widening the gap between the incomes of men and women, has not helped improve women's lives, but rather has had an adverse effect upon them."[24]

The process of "coming to grips" with this fact is difficult, for ultimately, that means considering the issues raised by discussions of female political dependency. What are the relationships between women's reproductive and productive roles and their secondary status? How do macrolevel political and economic trends—such as expanded state control—affect women? Answers to these kinds of questions demand that research continue even as the subject of the research changes constantly.

NOTES

1. Ester Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), p. 56.
2. India, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Department of Social Welfare, *Towards*

Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (New Delhi, 1974), p. 149.

3. Fredricka Pickford Santos, "The Role of Women in the Development Process: Market Integration or Family Disintegration?" *Journal of International Affairs 30* (Fall/Winter 1976–1977):173–174, and Nadia H. Youssef, "Women in Development: Urban Life and Labor," in Irene Tinker and Michèle Bo Bramsen, eds., *Women and World Development* (Washington, D.C.: Overseas Development Council, 1976), pp. 71–72.
4. Deniz Kandiyoti, "Sex Roles and Social Change: A Comparative Appraisal of Turkey's Women," in Wellesley Editorial Committee, ed., *Women and National Development: The Complexities of Change* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977), and Nadia H. Youssef, *Women and Work in Developing Societies* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), pp. 3–4, 19ff.
5. Fatima Mernissi, "The Moslem World: Women Excluded from Development," in Tinker and Bramsen, eds., *Women and World Development*, p. 36.
6. Elise Boulding, *Women in the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, for Sage Publications, 1977), pp. 41–42.
7. Lourdes Arizpe, "Women in the Informal Labor Sector: The Case of Mexico City," in Wellesley Editorial Committee, ed., *Women and National Development*, pp. 25–37, and Kenneth Little, "Women in African Towns South of the Sahara: The Urbanization Dilemma," in Tinker and Bramsen, eds., *Women and World Development*, pp. 78–87.
8. India, *Towards Equality*, p. 11.
9. Ibid.
10. Barbara D. Miller, *The Endangered Sex: Neglect of Female Children in Rural North India* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 51. See also Maureen Norton's commentary on Miller's research and related work, "Death at an Early Age: Culture, Sex Discrimination, and Mortality in South Asia," *Horizons 2* (May 1983):37–39.
11. Kathleen Newland, *The Sisterhood of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, for the Worldwatch Institute, 1979), p. 47. On differences in male-female medical care, see Miller, *Endangered Sex*, pp. 98–102 and Table 6, pp. 93–97.
12. *Christian Science Monitor*, April 11, 1983. In China, an experiment with early sex-determination techniques to permit selective abortion in early pregnancy demonstrated the limited impact of the Communist revolution on traditional gender preferences. In one trial, of thirty women who chose to have abortions, twenty-nine aborted females (see Newland, *Sisterhood of Man*, p. 180).
13. India, *Towards Equality*, p. 153.
14. Asok Mitra, Adhir K. Srimany, and Lalit P. Pathak, *The Status of Women: Household and Non-household Economic Activity* (Bombay and New Delhi: Allied Publishers, for the Indian Council of Social Science Research, 1979), pp. 2–14.
15. Swapna Mukhopadhyay, "Women Workers of India: A Case of Market Segmentation," in International Labour Office (ILO), *Women in the Indian Labour Force* (Bangkok: Asian Employment Programme, International Labour Organisation, 1981), pp. 96, 114.
16. K. C. Seal, "Women in the Labour Force in India: A Macro-level Statistical Profile," in ILO, *Women in the Indian Labour Force*, pp. 24–29.
17. For a case study of the effects of colonialism on women in agriculture and handicrafts, see Manoshi Mitra, "Women in Colonial Agriculture: Bihar in the Late 18th and the 19th Century," *Development and Change* 12 (January 1981):29–53.
18. India, *Towards Equality*, p. 153; Mitra, Srimany, and Pathak, *Status of Women*, p. 13; and ILO, *Women in the Indian Labour Force*, pp. 13–14.
19. ILO, *Women in the Indian Labour Force*, p. 11.
20. Dunstan S. C. Spencer, *African Women in Agricultural Development: A Case Study in Sierre Leone*, OLC Paper no. 9 (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, Overseas Liaison Committee, 1976).
21. Ann Stoller, "Class Structure and Female Autonomy in Rural Java," in Wellesley Editorial Committee, ed., *Women and National Development*, pp. 74–89.
22. Mary Elmendorf, "The Dilemma of Peasant Women: A View from a Village in Yucatan," in Tinker and Bramsen, eds., *Women and World Development*, pp. 88–94.
23. India, *Towards Equality*, p. 151.
24. Irene Tinker, "The Adverse Impact of Development on Women," in Tinker and Bramsen, eds., *Women and World Development*, p. 22. See also the summary of a debate at the seminar on women in development held in Mexico City during International Women's Year (June 1975) in ibid., pp. 141–146.

Doing Their Homework: The Dilemma of Planning Women's Garden Programs in Bangladesh

Margot Wilson-Moore

Recently a number of development agencies in Bangladesh (for example, CARE, CIDA, Helen Keller International, the Mennonite Central Committee, Save the Children, UNICEF, USAID) have planned and implemented independent projects or program components directed specifically toward homestead gardening as an alternative to field crop production. For the growing cadre of marginal and landless farmers with little or no cultivable land outside of the household, homestead gardening constitutes a subsistence strategy with considerable potential for improving family nutrition and cash generation.

Traditionally a complement to field crop production, homestead gardens provide a much-needed supply of nutritious, interesting, and vitamin-rich foods for home consumption. Additionally, the sale of homestead garden produce makes substantial amounts of cash available for rural farm families. The discussion that follows considers homestead gardening within the broad context of international development in Bangladesh and more particularly in relation to the burgeoning literature on the role of women in development. This discussion focuses specifically on homestead gardening as a viable development strategy for rural women.

International development aid constitutes a major influence for change today. In Bangladesh millions of foreign aid dollars comprise a large proportion of the national budget. Since 1974 to 1975, Bangladesh has received not less than $700 million from the United States each year in international aid, and these donations represent two to three and one-half times the total revenue budget generated in-country. However, the results in terms of quantifiable improvements are relatively few, and despite these substantial foreign aid contributions Bangladesh continues to demonstrate a negative balance of payments (greater than $5 million in 1984 to 1985) and a negative balance of trade ($135 million US in 1984 to 1985).

Environmental stress, population pressure, illiteracy, and historical explanations such as exploitation and isolation have been espoused as general causes for the persistent poverty in Bangladesh. Similarly, behavioral causes, such as a closely structured hierarchy and system of patronage, rugged individualism, and failure of Bangladeshis to "trust" one another and work cooperatively, have been offered as causes of the destitution and privation that characterize daily life in Bangladesh (Maloney 1986).

Whatever the causes, pervasive poverty and widespread destitution are commonplace, and in terms of standard "development" criteria, such as per capita income, literacy rate, mortality and fertility rates, economic diversification, and physical and social infrastructure, Bangladesh can only be termed a development failure. Historically, vast transfers of resources out of the area have significantly depleted the resource base while more recent problems of overpopulation, land fragmentation, and environmental disasters have drawn the attention of the international aid community.

Original material prepared for this text.

Women's issues have received considerable attention from the international donor community in recent years, but to understand the "state of the art" of women and development research[1] in Bangladesh, it is necessary to trace its roots in broader issues of development theory and feminism. Early development theory tended to overlook the special needs of women, anticipating perhaps a "trickle-down" of benefits from men toward whom most programs are directed. Feminist critiques of development theory revolve primarily around this issue—the failure of development theory to address the problems of women directly. Women are either categorized with men or ignored altogether. Women are routinely subsumed within the rubric of more general development processes that are expected to address the issues of both men and women.

A variety of critiques of development theory exist (for an in-depth discussion see Jaquette 1982; Barnes-McConnell and Lodwick 1983; Wilson-Moore 1990), and the ongoing dialogue among these critiques has generated a vast and critical literature addressing the issue of women and development in the Third World. The feminist critique of development theory is firmly grounded in feminist thought, and the theoretical perspectives that have emerged in feminist development theory clearly reflect theoretical underpinnings in feminist theory. Feminist theoretical models predict relationships between various spheres of women's lives[2] and generate research questions and information useful, indeed imperative, for appropriate development planning for women.

Too often, however, women and development researchers fail to incorporate feminist theory into their research designs or neglect to articulate the underlying feminist assumptions that influence their work. Theorizing is, in large part, left to feminist academicians who usually rely on ethnographic (rather than development) literature for constructing and testing their models. As a result feminist theory, women, and development research have progressed, in recent years, along separate and divergent paths. Despite the actuating influence of feminist theory on women and development research and their common concerns with the situation of women, discourse between these two bodies of literature is remarkably scant.

Women and development research tends to be of a highly practical nature, concentrating on the immediate and pragmatic problems faced by women in developing nations. Resources and institutional support are then directed toward these identified needs. A women's component may be incorporated into existing development programs, or alternatively projects may be designed specifically and solely for women. Often, however, development programs do not meet the needs of the women for whom they are designed. Many focus on "individual solutions," such as education to improve women's opportunities for urban wage employment, increase their access to innovative technology, or improve their subsistence production skills. Too often the systemic constraints on Third World people in general and on women in particular, such as high rates of unemployment and lack of child-care facilities, are overlooked.

The role of women in socioeconomic development has been the subject of much interest in Bangladesh (cf. Hossain, Sharif, and Huq 1977; Islam 1986) and has focused the attention of the aid community on those development issues particular to women, especially those at the lowest economic levels who are often the poorest of the poor. Khan et al. (1981) have shown that in 1981 326 government and nongovernment programs for women were registered with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The majority provide training in knitting, sewing, embroidery, handicrafts, and garment-making. Unfortunately, however, although directed toward poor and destitute women, the income-generating potential of these skills is minimal (Khan et al. 1981:24) and the emphasis on low payment and domestic-like work only serves to perpetuate women's subordinate status and economic circumstance.

In 1986 Schaffer found that the focus of more than 100 development projects directed specifically toward women had expanded to

include self-help and income generation, family planning and health, education and literacy, agriculture development projects, rural employment and industry, and female leadership training. The majority of these projects focus on integrating women into existing programs, although a few "women only" projects exist. Most donor agencies philosophically support development activities for women (Schaffer 1986:4); however, a number of cultural attitudes toward women constrain them. The view of women's work as minimal and unimportant is compounded by the women's own perception of their work as noneconomic and therefore without value.

Beyond this, religious proscriptions that predicate family honor on women's virtue and legislate women's appropriate place as inside the household necessitate development on an outreach basis (providing inputs and training to women in their own homes), while effectively preventing agencies from recruiting female staff to provide that outreach service.

Initially, little specific information was available about women in Bangladesh, and the resulting imperative for more and better data regarding women's roles, statuses, and activities generated a predominantly descriptive focus in the early research. This is especially true in the rural areas where early village studies (cf. Raper 1970; Zaidi 1970) provided only brief references to women's activities. Other village studies followed (cf. Arens and Van Beurden 1980; BRAC 1983; Chowdhury 1978; Hartmann and Boyce 1983; Mukherjee 1971), but still little direct reference was made to women.

More recently a number of authors have commented on the "invisibility" of women's economic contribution in Bangladesh (cf. Chen 1986; Huq 1979; Islam 1986; Smock 1977; Wallace et al. 1987). Women's labor routinely includes postharvest processing of field crops, such as rice, jute, mustard seed, lentils and millet; care of animals; homestead gardening; and minor household maintenance, to name only a few. Because the labor of rural women takes place primarily inside the household, it often goes unnoticed. Nevertheless, their economic contribution is substantial (Chen 1986; Wallace et al. 1987). The importance of these kinds of studies is in shifting the focus away from the view of women as dependent and helpless. Instead, they are recognized as actors, engaged in economic pursuits in both rural and urban areas. As such they cease to be "welfare cases" and become instead an appropriate target for "mainstream" development processes.

In addition to their traditional domestic roles increasing numbers of women from landless and marginal families are being forced by economic circumstance to leave their homes to seek wage labor. At the same time technology, especially mechanized rice processing, is displacing rural women from their traditional roles in postharvest processing of field crops (Begum 1989). Cooperative programs are encouraging and supporting female entrepreneurs, but the success of these schemes often accrues from their constituting an extension of existing female roles that do not "encroach upon the traditional domain of men . . . [and are] not conceived as a threat to men's interests" (Begum 1989: 527).

Homestead gardening as a development strategy for women fits easily within these dictates because it neither encroaches on nor threatens men's traditional subsistence activities. Homestead gardening is an integral part of women's work in Bangladesh (cf. Chen 1983; Hannan 1986; Hassan 1978; Huq 1979; Hussain and Banu 1986; Scott and Carr 1985) and provides an opportunity for women to make sizable contributions to the rural farm family in terms of nutritious food for consumption as well as income generated from the sale of excess produce.

Homestead gardening is *not* the exclusive purview of women, although much of the research to date suggests that it is (Chen 1986; Huq 1979). This misconception is likely a result of research bias toward women. In Bangladesh women's issues have become a primary concern of development planners, and as a result women's roles are often considered without reference to other members of the community and to men in particular.

The result is a misrepresentation of women as the principle, even exclusive, actors in certain sectors of the subsistence economy; in this case as the cultivators of homestead gardens. By contrast data from my own research (Wilson-Moore 1989, 1990) show that both men and women are involved in vegetable cultivation, although some clear differences exist between what men and women do in the garden.

Men and women grow different crop varieties at different times of the year—men in winter, women in summer. The fact that the crops grown by women tend to be more indigenous in nature and those cultivated by men more likely to be imported varieties may be an artifact of men's more active participation in the public sphere. Because men are active in the marketplace, they may simply be exposed to new varieties of vegetables most often and are therefore more predisposed to experimentation. In a similar vein it may be argued that women are in some sense a reservoir of traditional information and cultivation patterns, reflective of a time before imported varieties and development inputs were available.

A clear distinction also exists between male and female patterns of vegetable cultivation in which men's patterns are reminiscent of field crop production patterns characterized by monocropping and the rows and beds of European gardens. Women's gardens, by contrast, have a jumbled appearance and may represent the indigenous patterns commonly in practice prior to outside influence (for a discussion of cross-cultural gardening traditions see Brownrigg 1985).

Women's gardens are found inside or immediately adjacent to the household. Requirements for housing, cooking, stabling of animals, and postharvest processing and storage of field crops necessitate that individual plants or small clusters of plants be scattered throughout the homestead, dotted around the central courtyard and household structures. Small plots may be located around the periphery of larger homesteads, usually immediately outside of the circle of infacing buildings.

Gourds are encouraged to grow over trellises, along the walls, and across the roofs of buildings. Other climbing plants may be trained to grow up the trunks of nearby trees. Shade-loving plants are grown under the cover of fruit and fuelwood trees, and those more tolerant of direct sun are planted in the clear places.

Plant species are highly diverse. Because there are no beds or rows, tall and medium height trees, smaller bushy shrubs, upright plants, creepers, and root crops form the horizontal layers characteristic of this type of garden. Weeding is infrequent, and it is often difficult to differentiate the homestead garden from the surrounding undergrowth. In fact an untrained observer might not recognize this type of homestead garden at all.

Husbands often fail to recognize the gardening efforts of their wives, even when the proof was crawling across the roofs and walls of the homestead and into the cooking pot at meal times. That men fail to acknowledge women's productive labor in gardens may lie partially in more general societal attitudes toward women as producers (they are not seen as such) but also in the scattered appearance of their homestead gardens, which prevents their immediate recognition by uninterested, or uninitiated, observers, be they husband, anthropologist, or development worker.

Women cultivate vegetable varieties that spring up readily, can be produced from seed preserved from the previous year, and are well-adapted to the seasonal vagaries of the climate, flourishing inside and around the homestead with a minimum of care or input. Women often stagger the planting times so that everything does not mature at once. In fact related women in separate households may coordinate their planting times, as well as the varieties planted, to maximize their production through sharing.

Vegetable gardens cultivated by women tend to have a high diversity of plant species but a small number of plants of any particular type. Accordingly, the quantities are smaller yet more varied, and they are intended for family consumption. High diversity and low volume production is the predominant characteristic of women's gardening patterns in Bangladesh and throughout Asia, a strategy well-suited to fulfilling family consumption needs.

It is no coincidence that the vegetables grown most commonly in homestead gardens are the ones villagers prefer to eat. These vegetables can be eaten on a daily basis without becoming unappetizing. Alternatively the diversity of vegetables produced in the homestead garden also helps to offset the boredom of eating the same food every day. In fact villagers prefer to have a variety of foods, even if that means eating something that they dislike from time to time.

In this way the garden acts as a living larder, providing fresh produce on a daily basis. As individual plants become ripe the women harvest them and prepare them for consumption. If more vegetables become ripe than can be consumed within the household at one time, they may be given away, traded with neighbors, or sent to the market for sale.

Homestead gardening as a development strategy for women is predicated on a view of women's production as valuable and essential to the nutritional and economic welfare of the rural farm family. Furthermore, the minimal overlap between men's and women's gardening patterns ensures that as a development strategy homestead gardening also does not compete with men's traditional activities in field crop cultivation or vegetable production. Thus, homestead gardening conforms to two primary stipulations (Begum 1989; Schaffer 1986) for success and would seem an ideal development strategy for women.

Unfortunately, these stipulations do not necessarily guarantee a positive result, and outcomes of garden programming may prove surprising if the planners have not "done their homework" prior to implementation. In this regard Brownrigg has (1985) emphasized the necessity of in-depth locally based research and observes that when such research is omitted or conducted in a cursory manner programs often fail to meet the needs of the target population. Barnett (1953) has argued that acceptance of innovation is based on the ability of recipient populations to analyze new ideas and technologies and to identify some similarity with existing culture traits. Accordingly, the more identifiable an innovation is, the more easily it can be matched with a trait already existing in the cultural lexicon, and the more readily it will be adopted.

Social science, and anthropology in particular, has much to contribute. Participant observation is a field methodology well-suited to producing detailed information about existing indigenous practices; information often not available through any other means; and information appropriate, perhaps imperative, for planners who wish to build on and enhance those existing practices. By focusing on extant patterns planners can effectively determine which goals are attainable and which populations are most appropriately targeted.

In the context of Bangladesh, for example, homestead garden programs intended to improve family nutrition and increase consumption of vitamin-rich vegetables are most appropriately directed toward women because their production is intended, in the first instance, for home consumption. If, on the other hand, program goals include increasing family income through sale of garden produce, men may constitute a more appropriate target group because their vegetable production is traditionally intended for the market. Finally, a program goal of increased access to cash for women requires careful consideration because women's limited access to the market and ramifications of cash generation on family nutrition are two important, potentially negative, dimensions of income-generating schemes for women.

Women routinely remain secluded within the household in Bangladesh. As a result, marketing of women's garden produce constitutes something of a dilemma. Produce must be transported and sold by a male family member or neighbor. Women are able to retain control over the cash generated in this way by providing a shopping list (for household essentials such as oil or kerosene) when they turn over the produce for sale. Accordingly, the money is recycled back into the family budget on a daily basis and does not accumulate. It fails to be assigned a "value" by

men or women and as a result goes unrecognized. That this particular economic contribution fails to affect women's status in any appreciable way has been discussed elsewhere (Wilson-Moore 1989).

Beyond the lack of recognition that greets women's economic enterprise in the garden, Boserup (1970) has shown that when women's economic activities become profitable (especially in terms of cash generation), men tend to take them over (see also Chaney and Schmink 1976). Male takeovers of the income-generating component of women's homestead gardening and the displacement of women from their traditional roles in vegetable production necessitates only a small shift in production activities. However, the ramifications in terms of family nutritional well-being may be far reaching. Rural farm families depend on women's homestead production for a ready supply of varied and vitamin-rich vegetable foods, a complement nutritionally and aesthetically to the *masebhate* (rice and fish) mainstays of the Bangladeshi diet.

Redirecting women's vegetable production toward the market would necessitate a change in production technique, disrupting the traditional patterns of women's homestead garden production and interfering with that ready supply of vegetable foods. The traditional pattern that produces small quantities of diverse vegetable foods intended for consumption within the homestead would have to be replaced by high-output, low-diversity cropping. Furthermore, there is little evidence to suggest that rural families would use the cash earned in this way to "buy back" or replace vegetable foods in the diet. Rather, high-status processed foods such as tea, white sugar, white flour, and bread are more apt to make an appearance when cash becomes available for their purchase.

Maintaining a balance between growing vegetable crops in large volume for sale and in sufficient variety for home consumption represents a problem in terms of the space and time constraints of homestead production. However, the existing, complementary yet rarely overlapping patterns of men's and women's traditional vegetable production seems well-suited to the respective cash generation and consumption needs of the family. Accordingly, planners concerned with pervasive poverty and widespread nutritional deficiency diseases in Bangladesh may wish to consider the benefits of developing each of these gardening strategies as they mutually, yet independently, support the rural farm family.

NOTES

1. Throughout this paper the terminology women and development has been used as a generic term for women's development in an effort to avoid more specific references such as women in development (WID) or development for women. These advocate, in the first case, the incorporation of a women's component into existing programs and, in the second, separate programming by women for women (see Jaquette 1982; Barnes-McConnell and Lockwick 1983; Wilson-Moore 1990 for a more comprehensive discussion of these terms).
2. For example, see Boserup (1970), Friedl (1975), and Sanday (1973, 1974) for models that predicate women's status on women's participation in the work force and their economic contribution to the family.

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The "Comparative Advantages" of Women's Disadvantages: Women Workers in the Strawberry Export Agribusiness in Mexico

Lourdes Arizpe and Josefina Aranda

In recent years, the women's movement the world over has stressed the need to provide women with increased access to salaried employment in order to improve their living conditions. In some industrialized countries, however, the recession and long-term economic trends are making it more difficult for women to get adequate employment, because, among other reasons, many of the jobs traditionally held by women in industries—particularly in textiles, garment manufacturing, and electronics—are being relocated in developing countries.[1] For several decades, many of the labor-intensive agricultural activities in which women worked as wage laborers have also been shifting to developing regions. In these regions, where male and female unemployment has been perennial, most governments welcome capital investments that will create employment and bring in foreign currency through exports. For example, many jobs formerly held by women in the northern cities and in the southern rural areas of the United States have moved south to Mexico and to other Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Behind this movement lie both the market pressures that force companies into a constant search for lower production costs, and the rationale of "comparative advantages," according to which different economies are advised to specialize in those products that they can sell profitably in the international market. But it so happens that such "advantages" are closely linked to the cheap labor costs that come from women's social and economic "disadvantages"; a woman's loss in one country may be some woman's gain in another country. Thus, it could be said that women in developing countries are gaining the jobs that have been redeployed from industrial countries. In fact, companies are using women's liberation slogans in deprived areas to justify giving jobs to eager young women rather than to older women or men who also desperately need jobs.[2]

The main issue raised by these events—whether the fluidity of the international labor market has become more of a zero-sum game for women than for men—cannot be fully discussed in this paper, but some light can be shed on it by examining the extent to which such a "gain" for women in a developing country actually improves their status and living conditions. A survey through interviews of young Mexican peasant women who have recently entered salaried employment in the strawberry-export packing plants of Zamora in the State of Michoacán helps us to understand the changes created by salaried work in their consciousness, their living conditions, and their situation within family and community.

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AGROINDUSTRY AND RURAL EMPLOYMENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Worldwide, the optimism generated in the 1950s by the projects for rural community development and after that by the increase in agricultural production due to the Green Revolution came to an end in the 1970s. Meanwhile, in the last three decades rural unemployment, movement of peasants toward the cities, demographic growth, and the marginalization of rural women from the technological and economic benefits of development have increased rapidly in many countries of Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

Import-substitution policies as a strategy for development in such countries led to rising foreign debts due to the high costs of technology and of capital goods imported from the industrialized countries.[3] The governments of developing countries, in order to acquire foreign exchange to improve their balance of payments, have encouraged export-oriented agriculture, which in many African, Latin American, and Asian rural areas has led to food scarcity.[4] Attempts to compensate for this scarcity by purchasing food from abroad have only perpetuated the vicious circle of dependency and poverty.[5]

The use of technological improvements from the Green Revolution increased yields and efficiency in rural production, but also led to higher concentration of agricultural resources in the hands of capitalist entrepreneurs.[6] In many countries this concentration has displaced small family producers who have become agricultural laborers or migrants surviving precariously in the outskirts of overpopulated cities.[7] The expansion of this surplus population in rural and urban areas is being attacked through massive family planning campaigns, even though it is clear that population growth is closely linked to the conditions of extreme poverty and insecurity that prevail on the land. Another solution now being proposed to stop the rural exodus lies in the creation of rural employment through agroindustries, a policy sponsored both by national governments and by multinationals who have found a fertile field for investment.

Following this trend, in Latin America the per capita production of subsistence crops decreased by 10 percent between 1964 and 1974, while that of agricultural products for export increased by 27 percent.[8] During this same period U.S. capital investments in agriculture for export in this region increased considerably, since investments in the food industry provide a 16.7 percent profit abroad, compared to an 11.5 percent return within the United States.[9] Since World War II, food processing companies have invested more in Mexico than in any other country of the Third World. An example of this type of investment is the strawberry industry in Zamora, which since 1970 has provided employment for approximately 10,000 young peasant women in its packing plants. Significantly, as in the textile and electronics industries that are also redeploying their production units abroad, the employment of women rather than men is clearly preferred in these agroindustries.[10] Why are young women preferred? Is it sufficient to say, as do the managers of such plants, that it is because they are "more dexterous" and "less restless"?

PEASANT WOMEN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

According to recent census statistics in Latin America, women's agricultural work shows a relative decrease in all countries and an absolute decrease in many.[11] This may be due, partly, to inadequate census registration of rural women's activities, but it also reflects increased female migration from rural areas, as well as the shift to other self-employment (especially petty trade) and intermittent domestic service—occupations that fall between the borders of organized economic activities and unpaid female domestic and community work.[12] Another important shift in rural women's activities has been reported among small family producers, where the agricultural labor of household women is intensified in order to increase or maintain productivity in deteriorating market conditions.[13] Finally, a fourth trend in which poor, rural women enter wage labor in agricultural and livestock production or in agroindustrial activities is also becoming widespread.[14]

These four trends appear separately or in combination in different countries and regions. But all of them stem from the same process: the economic crisis of small peasant

family production in rural areas in Latin America. Discussion of the causes of this crisis go beyond the scope of this paper, but the major trends in the status and employment of poor rural women in Latin America must be understood in the context of strategies these households use to survive in an increasingly difficult environment. There are also, of course, large numbers of women who have broken completely with their parents' or their husbands' households and who live and make decisions on their own. We find them, for example, along the Mexico-U.S. border or in the shantytowns of all the major Latin American and Caribbean cities.[15] Their choice of economic activity and lifestyle constitutes an individual decision-making process that should be analyzed as such within the narrow limits set by widespread unemployment and underemployment, cramped housing, and strict social pressures.

But in agrarian societies, there is little room for individualistic response. Especially in the case of young peasant women, the decision to work or to migrate is either made by the family patriarch or through permission granted by him. In any case, even more than sons, daughters are bound to their parents' households by the religious and social norms that prescribe absolute obedience, docility, and service toward others. In fact, this paper will argue that it is precisely these qualities that make the young women so attractive as a work force. The data that follow should make this abundantly clear.

STRAWBERRY PACKING AND FREEZING PLANTS IN ZAMORA

The strawberry agribusiness in Zamora began to expand in the mid-1960s, first through U.S. capital and later through Mexican capital. Its competitiveness in the international market comes from the fact that Mexican strawberries are cultivated in the winter and that their transport and especially their labor costs are very low.[16] Production is completely dependent on U.S. companies: the seedlings are imported from California; the export trade is handled entirely by six U.S. commercial brokers who have stopped attempts by Mexican plants to sell directly to the European market; and the strawberry prices are dictated by conditions in the U.S. market, especially by the success of the California strawberry harvest.

Eighteen packing and freezing plants for strawberries functioned during the 1979–80 cycle in Zamora and in Jacona, a neighboring village. Among them the hiring characteristics and working conditions for women, as well as male personnel, vary little: for example, some pay $14.70 (US¢66) per hour of work on the conveyor belts and others $14.00 (US¢63), but the lower wage is counterbalanced by payment of bus tickets and by better treatment for the workers. As Marta Rodriguez put it: "X is the packing plant where women workers are treated the worst, and that is why they have many problems in hiring people. Even though they pay more there, the girls prefer better treatment, such as they get at Bonfil, where no overtime or commissions are paid. At X the bosses are almost Nazis. . . . " It is interesting to note that firm X is the one that consistently shows the highest productivity and efficiency; it is the only one, for example, that has devices under the roofing to prevent swallows from nesting there. In most of the plants there is a minimum investment in installations: they are prefabricated metal structures that can be easily dismantled. Everything reflects short-term investment.

Fifty percent of production for export in the 1978–79 cycle, which produced 88 million pounds of frozen strawberries (though the official figure given for exports was lower, 72.7 million pounds), was handled by the six companies we studied. Of these, three hire as many as 900 women workers at the height of the season, one hires 650, and two hire up to 350. One of the worst conditions of work women face in these plants is the acute annual fluctuation in labor demand according to changing conditions in cropping and in the price of sugar (sugar is added to the frozen strawberries). . . . Except in special conditions, all plants are closed from four to six

months each year and have a peak season for hiring from March to May. Later on we shall see how the hiring is organized and how the women workers adjust their working lives to such conditions.

THE SITUATION OF WOMEN WORKERS IN THE STRAWBERRY PLANTS

Approximately 10 percent of the personnel in the plants do administrative work; of these usually all managers and accountants are men, and the secretaries are young, single women from the town of Zamora. In production work, except for the young men who unload the strawberry crates from the trucks and those in charge of the refrigerators, the great majority of workers are young peasant women who live in outlying villages of the Zamora valley and the region.

The 300 women workers interviewed were selected at random from each of the six plants. On the average, between 5 and 10 percent of the total female workers in each plant were interviewed, with the exception of El Duero, where 18.3 percent of the women were surveyed. Interviewed in proportional numbers, they perform the different tasks described below:

1. Stem Removers. Women who remove the stems of the strawberries do piecework, that is, they are paid $5.00 (US¢23) per crate of strawberries, each weighing seven kilograms. A worker with magic hands is able to remove the stems of up to thirty-five crates of strawberries per day; one with slow hands can barely manage five crates per day. But the number of crates available to work on varies from week to week. For example, on February 4, 1980, the 400 workers at Frutas Refrigeradas were assigned only one crate of strawberries each, because it rained the previous week and very few strawberries were harvested. On days like this the expenses of the workers for transportation and food are the same, but they earn only according to the number of crates they finish. On average, 80 percent of the women workers in the plants do this type of work; in the sample taken for the survey, they represent 75 percent of those interviewed.

2. Supervisors. These women are chosen by the head of personnel, or by the union leader, to check whether the strawberries tossed into the canals have had the stem properly removed. They represent 4 percent of those interviewed, which is equivalent to the proportion of women working as supervisors in most plants.

3. Selectors. Once the stem is removed, strawberries float along canals filled with water and disinfectant until they reach the conveyor belts, where the selectors pick out defective or rotten strawberries. As in the case of the supervisors, the selectors are chosen by the head of personnel or by the union leader, both of whom frequently show favoritism toward their friends or toward women from their own villages. This type of work is done by about 15 percent of the women workers in the plants and by 18 percent of those surveyed.

4. Tray Workers. From the conveyor belts the strawberries are put in tins or small boxes to be frozen, the best being placed on trays and frozen individually. This is also done by women who are selected in the manner described for those performing the two previous tasks. The women who performed the last three tasks mentioned were paid hourly, at the rate of $14.00 (US¢66) per hour during the 1979–80 cycle. Though a stem remover who works with amazing dexterity might earn a higher wage than women engaged in the other tasks, normally supervisors, selectors, and tray workers earn more. Those who work on an hourly wage enjoy greater prestige because they earn more and are closer to the higher-level employees. Many of the stem removers would prefer to work on the conveyor belts, especially those who, because of their age, are no longer able to work at high speed. But seniority normally is not taken into account for either promotion in tasks or other

fringe benefits. The younger workers sometimes resent the favoritism, not so much for personal reasons, but rather because of loyalty to their villages: "See here—why aren't there more from Tinguincharo on the conveyor belts?" But others say that it is a tiring job. For instance, Berta Olivares prefers working as a stem remover because, "We can at least go and walk around a little when we go get a crate for strawberries to de-stem . . . but those on the conveyor belts are damned uncomfortable, they don't even let them move, they can hardly even sigh. We can even sing."

Now that the scene of their work has been described, the first questions to be answered are: Who are these women? Did they work before? If so, what jobs did they hold?

Occupational Background of the Workers

Of the women surveyed, 61 percent stated that they had never worked before. It must be noted that these included those who, because they are very young, had not yet entered the work force. Those who had worked before going into the packing and freezing plants (41.3 percent) performed the types of jobs indicated in Tables 1 and 2. More than half worked in agriculture previously, and a third passed through paid domestic service. Their agricultural wage labor in the region has been replaced by immigrant labor, but this is not the case in paid domestic work, since housewives in Zamora repeatedly complained that "you just can't find servants around here anymore."

TABLE 1. Workers' Previous Employment by Sector

Sector	*Cases (N)*	%
Agriculture	69	55.7
Services	38	30.7
Industry	7	5.8
Trade	7	5.8
Agroindustry	2	1.7
Handicrafts	1	0.3
Total	124	100.0

TABLE 2. Workers' Previous Occupations

Position	*Cases (N)*	%
Agricultural laborer	52	41.9
Servant	25	20.2
Unpaid family worker in Agriculture	17	13.7
Office or shop employee	13	10.5
Factory worker	11	8.9
Trader	2	1.6
Others	4	3.2
Total	124	100.0

Table 2 shows that of the formerly wage-earning women whom the strawberry agroindustry has attracted most have been servants and agricultural laborers. We can now ask: Why have they taken jobs in the strawberry plants? Most of the female employees prefer to work in these plants rather than as servants because, as Irma Cortes said, "We are not subject to the will of *la patrona* [the employer] and we can live in our own homes in the village where we have friends." Some of them like working in agriculture, but they find the work harsh. One of them said she preferred work in the fields "because we are out in the air, and not under the discipline of the factory, even though it is much more tiring work; for example, pulling out the weeds growing in the fields is awful hard work, and one ends up with one's back real tired."

Did they change jobs because of wage differentials? The income of 76.6 percent of those interviewed increased with their employment in the plants, while that of 7.6 percent remained the same. The high percentage of those who earned lower incomes (16.6 percent) can be partly explained by the fact that many of these had only recently joined the plants and had not yet acquired the necessary skills, while others attended work irregularly. Of those who previously held jobs, 66.1 percent worked in their own community, 28.2 percent in the region, and only 0.7 percent in another state, in Mexico City, or in the United States. Clearly, the strawberry companies have not brought back women working outside the region, nor have they attracted migrants from outlying regions, for the recruitment system precludes doing so. In fact, only 6.7 percent of the female workers were born in Zamora and Jacona, or in Ecuandureo, a neighboring municipality. The rest come from other municipalities in the same region.

None of the women workers live by themselves or with friends. With one exception—a woman who was adopted by the family with whom she lives—they all live with family or kin. The fact that they still live with their families is due to a very deeply rooted social rule that forbids a young woman's leaving her father's home unless it be through marriage. But their choice of residence is also directly enforced by the acute housing scarcity in Zamora and Jacona and by the fact that the wages they earn are clearly insufficient to permit living in a boardinghouse, the only socially acceptable form of habitation for single women living away from home.

Age, Marriage, and Schooling

Most of the workers, 68.7 percent of the sample, are between fifteen and twenty-four years of age (Table 3). Managers of the plants stated that they prefer to hire young women because of their higher productivity, and because they are "very quick with their hands" and "concentrate better than the men." In fact, the younger women's manual dexterity is crucial in the task of removing the stems, but it is of only secondary importance in selecting and packing the strawberries; older women could do the latter tasks just as well. In only two of the plants, however, were older women predominantly chosen for these. Additional factors that influence the preference for hiring young women are analyzed in the next sections.

TABLE 3. Ages of Female Workers

Age	*Cases (N)*	%
12–14	30	10.0
15–19	141	47.1
20–24	65	21.6
25–29	16	5.3
30–50	39	13.0
51–80	9	3.0
Total	300	100.0

Girls usually begin to work in the plants when they are twelve to fifteen years old, and they work until they marry, normally between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one. As one of them put it, "The women marry before they are twenty because at that age the men say we have already missed the last boat." Those who do not marry continue working, and a few young married women return to work in the plants.

Of the female workers interviewed, 85.3 percent are single, 9.0 percent are married, 3.0 percent are divorced or abandoned, and 2.7 percent are widows. Almost all workers over the age of thirty are widowed, divorced, or separated from their husbands. Most of them support their children and perhaps their parents or siblings. The few married women workers state that their husbands do not send back enough money from the United States where they are working.

One older woman told us that in the early times of the packing plants women stood in long lines outside of the plants hoping to be hired: "There were little girls, young girls and adults, even old women." But, at present, the increase in the number of plants has led to a relative scarcity of women workers, particularly during the peak time of the season. At this busy time, plants hire women of all ages, including twelve-year-olds and older women. Then, as strawberries begin to come in at a slower rate, the management begins to eliminate workers: "First the little girls, then the lazy ones, then others begin to drop out by themselves when they see that there is very little working time left," one worker told us.

Sixteen percent, mostly the older workers, have not been to school at all, while 31 percent attended primary school up to the third

grade. This low average in schooling can be explained by conditions in their communities, but it is significant to note that 3.7 percent have reached the high school or preparatory school level, since in theory their education should have given them access to jobs with higher incomes and prestige. But the fact is that very few such jobs are available in Zamora, and, besides, these women explained that they earn more money working at a fast pace in the plants than they would working in a shop or an office.

Although they seem to recognize this, the great majority of the women are convinced that their low degree of schooling prevents them from getting other jobs, and they complain bitterly that their parents, especially their fathers, did not allow them to go on studying: "Women are not allowed to finish [school] because our parents say it does not pay for itself because we then go and get married, and it has only been a waste." "If I were to study," said another, "I could be a secretary, and I would stop doing this very tiring job." The mythical nature of this hope becomes clear if we realize that, as has happened in other developing countries, an increase in levels of education would lead to an increase in job entrance requirements, and consequently, the same proportion of less qualified women—even if their educational level were higher in absolute terms—would continue filling the lower-level jobs.

This hypothesis is further strengthened if we compare the plant workers surveyed in Zamora with a group of female agricultural laborers, surveyed in the state of Aguascalientes north of Michoacán, who pick grapes seasonally.[17] The profile of marital status among the grape pickers resembles that of the workers in the strawberry plants: 80 percent are single, 8 percent are married, 3 percent are divorced or separated, and 9 percent are widowed.[18] In ages and schooling, the percentage distribution is also similar, but there are significant differences.

The similarities in both age structure and schooling indicate that roughly the same social group of women enter either of those jobs (Tables 4 and 5). But more women with

TABLE 4. Ages of Female Agricultural Laborers in Aguascalientes and Women Workers in Agroindustry in Zamora

Age	*Women Workers in Zamora* (%)	*Women Laborers in Aguascalientes* (%)
12–19	57.0	52
20–29	27.0	21
30–39	7.7	10
40 or over	8.3	17
Total	100.0	100

Source:—For the Aguascalientes: Lucia Diaz Ronner and Maria Elena Munoz, "La Mujer Asalariada en el sector agricola," *America indigena* 38 (April–June 1978): 327–34. Other statistics from authors' research.

higher schooling between the ages of twelve and nineteen enter strawberry-factory work in Zamora. The foregoing suggests that many young, single girls enter agroindustry who otherwise would not work for wages and, second, that strawberry-plant work attracts women whose higher educational levels make it unlikely that they would accept work in agriculture. However, additional data not included in the surveys on the educational levels in the communities would be necessary to confirm the latter hypothesis.

TABLE 5. Schooling of Female Agricultural Workers in Aguascalientes and Women Workers in Agroindustry in Zamora

Education	*Wormen Workers in Zamora* (%)	*Women Laborers in Aguascalientes* (%)
None	16.0	32
1st–3rd grade, primary	31.0	28
4th–6th grade, primary	49.3	40
Secondary or preparatory	3.7	. . .
Total	100.0	100

Source.—See Table 4.

Social Attitudes toward Women's Work in the Factories

When the strawberry industry first began, it was very difficult for the plant managers to recruit enough women workers. They could get those who were already working in other jobs but were unable to attract young women whose families were not in dire need of additional income. The women's reluctance to enter paid employment was due to the very real fear, confirmed by women's experiences, that unaccompanied young women in public places would be "stolen." Carmen Garcia summarizes it neatly: "Previously, it was really rotten for the girls, because they were frequently stolen when they were going to fetch water, or to wash clothes or to bring the *nixtamal* [maize dough]. . . . They were even stolen with the help of a gun or a machete. They were taken into the woods and then the men would come to ask their parents for the girl [in marriage]. Most of the girls did marry them, even if they did not want to, and here divorce is out of the question. If they don't get on together, the woman just puts up with it. Here it is customary for the husbands to beat the women when they are drunk, they say that blows make women love them more. . . . " Yet, as it happens, the fact that the young girls are no longer "stolen" as often in the peasant villages of the region as they were in the past is attributed mainly to their working in the strawberry plants, although no one ever explains exactly why this is so.

At first, the fathers flatly refused their daughters permission to work in the factories. One woman told us: "The parents are not used to one's working and in the village people gossip a lot, they say that the women who go out to work go with many men." Not long ago it was still forbidden for men and women in the villages to address one another on the street. What the parents most feared, did occasionally happen. An experienced worker, Ines Gomez, explained: "When it [work in the plants] began, it turned out that many of the girls got pregnant because they did not know how to look out for themselves, and as we move in an environment of 'machismo' and paternalism, it happened frequently. . . . but now the girls know how to handle themselves, now they even want to study and improve themselves." The young women workers see their situation in a different way and complain bitterly: "All they do is spread rumors about us. Many boys say they won't marry those who work in the plants, and all the girls from the village work there, but of course later they themselves are after us. They spread many untrue stories about us. Some of our nieces even went around saying that we were pregnant, and that we had left the children at the Social Security."

The young women workers' situation is further complicated by the migration of most of the marriageable men: "The girls don't go North [to the United States] because people talk badly about them. Even if we just go to Zamora they talk badly, we can never go anywhere. . . . The boys are allowed to go North and they come back real proud, some of them shack up with the American girls over there. They say they are very loose, that they even go after the boys. Others do return here to get married."

Initially the local priests were opposed to the women's factory work too. One incident illustrates the situation very clearly. The strawberry plants in Jacona were unable to get female workers because every Sunday the local priest thundered that women would go to hell if they sinned by going out to work in the factories. It is said that the problem was solved when the owners of the plant spoke with the priest and offered to pay for the cost of a new altar for the parish church. Since that day, the local priest has exalted the dignity of work.

Wages and Expenditures

As has been noted, the workers' wages are subject to the rate at which the plants buy strawberries during the year and to their own level of skill. The monthly average wage among workers surveyed is $1,126 (US$51.18). Eleven percent earn an average of $1,750 (US$79.51), 26 percent earn an average of $750 (US$34.09) per month, while 8 percent earn an average of $350 (US$15.90).

These wage levels are very far below the legal minimum wage, which amounted to $4,260 (US$193.63) for that region in 1980. Since a single person, let alone a family with children, cannot survive on this income, such low wages can only be considered as complementary to the main income of a family.

Worse still is the fact that the wages these women get vary enormously on a day-by-day and week-by-week basis. The season begins in November or December and lasts until July or August. However, during that period there are "bad months," as the women call them—November, December, January, February, August, September—in which they earn an average of less than $500 (US$22.72) per month. During the good months they may earn as much as $2,200 (US$90.90) per month. Most of the women are not hired at the plants for the whole year; 56 percent work from seven to nine months; 5 percent work from ten to twelve months; 16 percent from four to six months; 11.6 percent from one to three; and 11.3 percent do not get to work even one month per year. Many of those in this latter group work only on the Saturdays during the peak season, or they are younger sisters of the workers who tag along a few days per week.

During the months when there is no work in the plants, 75.3 percent remain at home helping with the domestic work; some do embroidering or knit pieces for sale. The surprisingly large number of women who follow this pattern indicates that these families do not urgently require a constant income from the women workers. In some cases— as, for example, one where the daughter supports herself and her mother—the income earned in the plant in the months of seasonal work is sufficient to keep them during the three months without work. Among the 24.3 percent of the workers who do work during these months, 7 percent work as servants, 11 percent go harvesting in the fields as day laborers, 1.0 percent work in offices, and 0.3 percent migrate to the United States. The remainder work in the informal sector in a variety of ways.

To what extent do these predominantly peasant families depend on the women workers' income? The majority (61.6 percent) answered that their work only partially supports their families, 20.7 percent replied that they give no financial help to their families, and 17.7 percent stated that they offer major support. It is usual for one of the younger girls to hand over the entire weekly wage to her father or mother, who then little by little lets her have whatever money she requires for her expenses. Table 6 shows that the correlation between the amount a worker gives her parents and the amount she earns is not significant.

How are their wages spent? What the workers keep for themselves, they spend on fashionable clothes, costume jewelry, romantic comics and stories, and beauty products. But the larger part of their wage, handled by their parents, goes into buying household consumer goods. This has been a boom for shops selling furniture and electric appliances. Some of the consumer goods purchased in the poorer households are basic items such as gas stoves, beds, wardrobes, and sewing machines; in other households the goods may be televisions, radios, blenders, and record players. Only a few households buy luxury items such as enormous consoles, fancy furniture, porcelain figurines, wine glasses, and so on.

TABLE 6. Workers' Monthly Wages by Proportion Given to Parents (%)

Monthly Wages (Pesos)	*All*	*Almost All*	*One-Half*	*A Little*	*Nothing*
200–1,000	36.9	15.7	23.8	10.5	13.1
1,001–2,000	30.1	25.3	27.4	12.4	4.8
2,001–3,000	38.2	27.4	25.4	7.2	1.8
Over 3,000	11.2	44.4	11.1	22.2	11.1
All wage categories*	31.0	24.0	25.7	11.0	5.7

*2.6% of workers surveyed did not answer this question..

The survey indicates, however, that the parents buy these items not only for prestige but also because they can sell or pawn them when times get hard. It must be noted that the commercial boom in Zamora is due only in part to the women workers' income; it is mainly a result of the income in dollars sent back by the male migrants working in the United States. Even so, the pattern of consumption is the same in both cases.

Recruitment of Workers for the Plants

Women workers are recruited each season through social networks in the communities. In the plants that have unions, the union secretary chooses women delegates in each village or hamlet; in plants that don't have a union, the head of personnel chooses these delegates. Once the word is sent to them that they should begin recruiting, these delegates go around the village letting everyone know that they are hiring. They list the names of those women who want to go to work, purportedly giving preference to experienced workers. But Antonieta Castro complained that previous experience matters little: "Some of the new ones are given preference by the bosses, because they give them *gollete* [some present]. We don't get angry about this, we only feel hurt." The "loyalty" that a worker has shown toward the general secretary of the union or the company is also taken into account during compilation of the lists, as are personal preferences and group rivalries within the community. In hiring, the company follows the list made by the delegate, moving through it progressively as the season advances. The recruiter in the village, usually an older woman, is socially responsible for the young girls she recruits as workers. Parents sometimes allow their daughters to go only if they trust the recruiter. This responsibility also gives the latter the power to decide who will work in the plant.

Conditions of Work

Hiring conditions and benefits in most plants are clearly below legal requirements stated in Mexican law. In the first place there are no contracts or permanent jobs for the workers. (According to the law the companies should pay the minimum wage, establish fixed working schedules, and hire the workers permanently during the entire year.) In the second place, fringe benefits are nonexistent: plant workers have no Social Security, nor do they have adequate medical services. More mothers could work if the plants had nurseries, and by law factories must provide one whenever there are more than thirty permanent women workers. When the women ask for a nursery, however, they are turned down. One manager said: "We saw that the nursery was not really necessary because only two or three children come along with their mothers, and that is why we did not put one in."

Women's Perception of Their Work in the Plants

Although these conditions persist, and in spite of the fact that many of the women employed in the plant consider the work to be tiring and oppressive, they prefer it because their only alternative would be to remain shut in their homes doing domestic work or to work in jobs that are even more underpaid. Of the workers surveyed, 65 percent said that they prefer to work outside their home. As Amalia Vega put it: "We like so much to go out and work in the packing plant that when we return to our village in the evening we skip along the road dancing and singing. We don't mind about being tired [after a working day of eight to eleven hours]; because we have earned our few pennies and have left the little ranch for a while, we are very happy. In the village you get bored by seeing the same faces all day long and listening to the same gossip. By working we entertain ourselves." This is, in fact, a very fair assessment of the situation. When asked what type of work they like best, 59 percent answered that they prefer to work in a strawberry plant; only 4.5 percent prefer to work on the land, and 36.5 percent would prefer to be employed in an office.

Although four out of every five workers interviewed said they wanted improvements in their working conditions, particularly in

wages and in the treatment they receive from their bosses, there are no real channels for protest. Only half of them belonged to a union, but this was due to the fact that only four of the six plants had a union. However, less than half of the workers (46.7 percent) thought that unionization could help them get better working conditions. This distrust reflects the fact that the existing unions closely collaborate with management. The pragmatic attitude of the union leaders, some of them women, is evident in the statement of one woman leader. Asked how she and other leaders got along with management, she said: "Fortunately there has always been a good relationship. People get to understand each other by talking. Also, we are interested in the company not having a loss, otherwise, we don't get *utilidades* [a profit-sharing government scheme]." In actual fact, workers rarely receive *utilidades*, which are sometimes used to pay for the annual fiesta and Mass in the plant. As a result, workers hardly participate in union activities: "We get bored going to the meetings," one worker told us. "We don't understand anything and we get nothing out of it. We just waste our time."

Almost all the younger workers consider their job in the agroindustry as a stage in their life that allows them to get out of the daily routine of the village. More than half (58 percent) answered that they do not plan to go on working once they get married. In so many words, they were saying: "Why, that's what I'm getting married for, to stop working!" Of those who say they may continue to work, most believe they will marry a bum and will end up having to support their household.

CONCLUSIONS

Why does the strawberry agroindustry predominantly employ women? It is true that the jobs of removing stems and selecting strawberries require a manual dexterity that men do not usually achieve, but this is not the main reason that the industry employs women. In the region of Zamora, agroindustry cannot compete with the wages paid in the United States in order to attract and retain migrant male labor. At the same time there is a large population of young women who have very few alternatives for work. The strawberry plants do not have to compete with urban wages for women workers, since the emigration of women from the region is not frequent; male emigration largely covers the deficit in the budget of most peasant families. Moreover, the great majority of young women in peasant families have access only to paid domestic work or to wage labor on the land, both of them unrewarding jobs.

Therefore, the main reason for employing women is that they can be paid much lower wages than those stipulated by law, and can be asked to accept conditions in which there is a constant fluctuation in schedules and days of work. Here it seems to us that the companies take advantage of the traditional idea that any income earned by a daughter, wife, or mother is an "extra" over and above the main income of the father, husband, or son. If such wages were paid to male workers, the low income and the instability of the job would be untenable in the long run; workers would either move to other jobs or organize and strike to get higher wages.

Other results of the analysis support this view. That the percentage of women household-heads in the packing and refrigerating plants is very low—5.7 percent as compared to 12 percent in the region as a whole—suggests that the wages paid by the plants cannot constitute the central income of a household. In a circular fashion, of course, it also reflects the factories' preference for young, unmarried workers.

Thus, the plants attract many young women—approximately one-half of the women workers—who normally would not enter wage-earning jobs if the plants did not exist. So it seems, at least, from a comparison made with a group of agricultural laborers from Aguascalientes and from the fact that 42.4 percent of the workers surveyed gave only half or less than half of their wages to their households. Further support for this hypothesis is found in the large majority of women workers who do not seek alternative work during the months they are not employed in the plants. Another advantage for the plants is the constant turnover among women workers. This impermanence allows a company considerable savings in wage increases due to seniority as well as in payments for maternity, disease, or disablement and in old-age pensions. It also prevents the workers from accumulating information and experience that would lead them to organize and to demand improvements in hiring and working conditions. Meanwhile, the traditional culture itself assures continuous instability by making marriage the only aspiration for women.

Clearly, the strawberry agroindustry in Zamora can exist only thanks to particular conditions by which cheap female labor is readily available. This conclusion coincides with that reached by Ernst Feder, who points to the low cost of labor as one of the most important factors in making the Mexican strawberry industry competitive internationally.[19] Thus, the "comparative advantages" of this industry in the international market are closely associated with the "comparative disadvantages" of young, inexperienced, rural women who suffer social, legal, and economic discrimination. From a sociological point of view, what the agribusiness capitals have done is to make use of certain social and cultural characteristics of the region, that is, the high demographic growth, the traditional cultural values that assign a subordinate role to women, the family structure of the communities, and the local patterns of consumption. The key question to be asked is whether this way of using resources will improve the living conditions of the women and of their communities.

Have conditions for women changed with their entry into salaried industrial work? This study shows that they have changed very little. The great majority of workers continue to live in their parents' homes; a very few go to live with other relatives in Zamora, but always under the same conditions of subordination and restriction they experienced in their own homes. About half of them hand over the greater part of their wages to their parents or use their earnings to support their own families. Thus they have only slightly increased their personal consumption. Their families, of course, have an improved standard of living, at least temporarily.

Although the women have more freedom when working outside of their homes, they are harassed by the men in the streets and are not free to move around the town or the villages on their own. Even when traveling to and from the plants the young women are closely supervised by the recruiters and the union leaders. There have been some changes: the young girls are not "stolen" as frequently as before, and apparently they have a more decisive voice as to whom they will marry. Also, some have become eager to study and to get ahead.

But work in this agroindustry, for the majority of women, is certainly no way to get ahead. There are no promotions; the workers get no encouragement or help to acquire skills or education; and the instability and low wages of the jobs, as mentioned previously, do not offer any prospects for improvement in the future. Predictably, under these conditions no significant cultural change is taking place. On the contrary, the lack of prospects for promotion in the agroindustry, the low wages, and the high level of unemployment only push the workers back into the traditional hope of marriage as the only road toward a better future. Only a few of the young women, mostly those who have not married, have acquired new aspirations about employment possibilities and lifestyles. For these too, however, it will be very difficult to find employment once the strawberry industry declines. The strawberry companies take advantage of the traditional values and conditions that subordinate women and end up reinforcing this traditional order. In fact, it is in their interest to oppose any initiatives to change the passive, submissive role of women in Zamora. In this sense, no "modernization" of women's roles is evident in the region.

What has been the impact of the strawberry agroindustry on the communities of the region? In the short run the industry has provided a better standard of living for rural fam-

ilies. The majority use the women's incomes to improve their housing and, particularly, to purchase household goods—furniture and electric appliances—which also serve as a form of saving. The workers' wages, then, flow rapidly through the merchants of Zamora toward the urban industries that manufacture these consumer goods.

But while the market for consumer goods has expanded, the poorer groups in the region have not been brought into the market. Because of the hiring practices in the plants, work is not given to women heads of households, nor to the poorer male and female laborers—those who most require an income. Rather, since the survey shows that the majority of the workers do not support themselves, it would seem that jobs are given mostly to young women of the middle-level peasant families, whose wages serve to improve their families' standard of living. Although such a gain is not to be underestimated, it benefits only minimally those households whose economic survival depends entirely or partially on women's wages. As a result, older women who are heads of households are pushed back into the strenuous, harsh, and even more poorly paid job of strawberry picking in the fields.

The strawberry agroindustry is not creating conditions for the future development of the region. It is not training workers, nor is it promoting or improving the social services. It does not serve to stem emigration of men to the United States. The cultivation of strawberries, on the contrary, tends toward the concentration of land and capital while it displaces and undermines production in small landholdings.

Thus, it seems to us that the strawberry agroindustry has provided some short-term improvements, but in the long run—aside from the profits that flow mainly to U.S. agribusiness concerns and to affluent local entrepreneurs—it will leave behind nothing but ashes when it collapses. The collapse is expected, according to two plant managers, in about three to five years. It is difficult to refrain from apocalyptic forecasts when we can see that the decline of this agroindustry will plunge the region back into underdevelopment: peasant household incomes will fall, massive unemployment will force countless women and families to migrate, and the hopes for a better life that have been raised among women will, once again, be destroyed. Basically, nothing will have changed for women. Since the strawberry industry requires female workers whose income is not essential for the household, it bypasses the needy and predominantly employs women from middle-income groups. Since it requires submissive and docile workers, it reinforces patriarchal and authoritarian structures. Since it benefits from a constant turnover of workers, it does not oppose the machismo that confines women to home and marriage.

The basic dilemma emerges very clearly under a feminist analysis. Much of the data—for instance, Amalia Vega's touching description of the joy she and other women feel at being allowed to leave the narrow horizons of their villages—shows that the plants improve the lives of women and therefore from a feminist point of view should be defended. At the same time, salaries and working conditions at these plants are dismally exploitative, comparing unfavorably both to the norms set down by Mexican law and to actual situations elsewhere in Mexican industry; for this reason they should be denounced and opposed.

An even more painful dilemma faced by women's movements in situations such as this is that women whose consciousness has been raised by a temporary prosperity will be left stranded when economic and social survival again becomes difficult if not impossible, while industries that were once a source of hope move to regions populated by another group of docile and disadvantaged women. Thus, by the time the strawberry agribusiness—or the U.S. assembly plants along the Mexican border, for that matter—move to other countries that offer lower production costs, the jobs Mexican women had temporarily gained from the loss experienced by their U.S. counterparts will also be lost to them. The jobs will then become a temporary gain for, perhaps, Haitian or Honduran women.

In this way, women's "comparative disadvantages" in the labor market in any given country can, at some point in time, be translated into "comparative advantages" for companies, capitals, and governments in the international markets. When disadvantaged women organize to get even minimal improvements in wages and working conditions, the "comparative advantages" are lost, and investments go elsewhere. Clearly, all women lose along this chain. This being the case, one can only conclude that discrimination against women in employment, reflecting as it does the disadvantages women suffer from attitudes about gender, from social customs, and from their lack of political power, cannot be fought effectively in one place or country unless an appropriate international perspective is developed.

NOTES

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