

## **Food Politics and Gendered Realities in Western Nigeria, 1939-1955**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the dynamics of food production, distribution, and marketing in Western Nigeria. It emphasises the gendered realities, that is, the implication for the involvement of men and women in the food system. The work accounts for the pre-colonial transitions to the colonial era and the impact of colonial governance on food production and marketing. Furthermore, the analysis on food politics is connected to modern agricultural policies; therefore, the work discusses the nexus in modern agriculture and food marketing in Ilesa and Akure provinces of Western Nigeria and its disparity in gender roles. Also, the politics of food marketing in Lagos during World War II implied a lot on gender disparity and complementary roles. The paper exposes how colonialism defined gender roles through food production and marketing in Western Nigeria. It uses the historical method and sources of writing were based on archival materials and newspapers retrieved from the National Archives, Ibadan.*

**Keywords:** food politics, modern agriculture, gendered realities, western Nigeria

### **Introduction**

In different ways, food politics mean politicizing issues around production, administration, marketing, and distribution of food. From a historical perspective, food politics in Western Nigeria moved beyond its subsistence or domestic relations, and became of global relevance in the colonial era. Hence, food politics is not solely a possibility to write by ethnographic research, rather by historical methodology. The analysis revolves the exclusion and inclusion of women in different levels of food production, distribution, provision and marketing. The focus on Western Nigeria explains the role of Yoruba culture in the gendered realities. Also the narratives interface the pre-colonial and colonial era. The late 1930s marked the beginning of the Second World War which deepened the demand and

supply for food from the colonies. Thus, the administration of food production and marketing were subjected to global forces that had overbearing influence on Nigeria's domestic economy and implicated gender relations. The mid-1950s marked the end of World Food Crisis and also the beginning of colonial development plans in designed to further the policy of self –rule that defined indigenous strategies to adapt to colonial food policies. The objectives are stated thus to:

- i. Analyse the gendered actions in the economy of food production in western Nigeria.
- ii. Examine how food distribution and marketing become the work of women?
- iii. Interrogate how food governance matter to European and indigenous men?

Therefore, the relations of gender and food in this context were complicated in the milieus of the colonial economy. The configuration of food politics and the gendered realities were analysed thus: In what ways do men and women matter in the distribution, production, marketing and governance of food.

Literature abounds on the meaning and definition of food politics. It is a concept that has been interrogated by political scientists, anthropologists, gender scholars and so on. The approach to analyse food politics in the context of Western Nigeria is from the view of historical methodology and in the consideration of gendered realities, scholarly work on food is symbolic and its narratives encompasses sociology, history, philosophy, economics in the interdisciplinary discourses of African studies, African-American studies, American studies, women's studies and so on. The spaces and spheres that make meaning of food in the humanities are wide and profound in scholarship (Levenstein, 1993; Witt, 1999; Garnsey, 1999; Schmiechen and Carls, 1999; Brothwell and Brothwell, 1998; Carlin and Rosenthal, 1998; Harriss-White and Hoffenberg, 1994). This work agrees with Hopkins (1973) assertion that food production in African societies depends on geographical endowment. In the world economy, food production in Africa was termed in the realm of peripheralisation and yet it became important in the internal schemes of the colonial states in the coping strategies of the war time era.

The period covered in this work is the era of World War II and part of the colonial Western Nigeria which significantly witnessed interest and disinterests in food planning and administration, visibly to serve the purpose of imperial advantage. The material basis for peasant farming in the pre-

colonial era vividly indicates the mode of reproductions that sustained African societies. Though there were indigenous capitalist innovations that defined the way of land ownership, the gender relations were determined by class. The peasantry farming system did not exclude women. One additional advantage for women was the way they created and filled the markets as depicted in the geographical explanations of B. W. Hodder and U. I. Ukwu (1969). Furthermore, accounts of exploration by W. H. Clarke indicated the way women dominated the markets to trade in food (farm) produce from the nineteenth century.

### **Pre-colonial and Colonial Transitory Food Networks**

Undisputedly, the provision of food is gendered to women that are cooking. In pre-colonial Yorubaland, food preparation was domiciled in the jurisdiction of younger wives within the Yoruba household. As noted in the work of Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997), whether domestic or commercial purposes, women organise for food preparation and this sharply featured in the way women's lives are constructed to combine work and household responsibility. The reality of commercial cooking which was also the work of women was profound in the accounts given by Hugh Clapperton, W. H. Clarke and Richard Landers, that eating out of the home was a norm. Invariably, this kind of food culture developed to enable women function in the market. The dynamics of coping with the markets and the home is elaborated in the work of Niara Sudarkasa (1973). The combination of work and home as reflected in the typologies of women in Oyo Yoruba eased out to concur with B.W. Holder's analysis of women in Yoruba markets as thus:

*Night markets in which women connect their local communities with the town's main sources of foodstuff can only be understood in the context of the local Yoruba habits of feeding. The bulk of the working class population eats food that has not been prepared in their own homes... The explanation for this phenomenon of outside cooking and eating, however, is also bound up with the fact that women put trading first in their interests (Hodder, 1969; Oyewumi, 1997).*

Working in the markets enhanced the role of women in food selling. The features of the pre-colonial era hence forwarded to the colonial era influenced the urban systems of the colonial era where raw food commodities from rural markets were cooked and sold in Yoruba cities.

Food preferences within the family as expressed by Oyewumi (1997) are similar to Caplan's explanation of gender identities and entitlement to

food. In Yorubaland, men get entitled to food which gives women the essential role of providing it. Therefore, the display of masculinity also includes entitlement to food, sourced from women as wives, often, this type of expectation exposes the family culture of living conditions associated with food. Also, the Yoruba thoughts on food and its language affiliations place the production, marketing and consumption of it as a cultural system. While women produce food in and out of the home, the perception gendered the commercial provisioning as the role of women by hawking and selling at strategic places.

Yoruba women's work of cooking food for commercial purposes developed from the nineteenth century. In the narratives of William Clarke, it manifested thus:

*Throughout any town, the rare to be found within every one hundred yards cooking places where the good cooks prepare two or three times a day such articles as meet ready sale and which the natives are generally fond of (Atanda, 1972).*

And furthermore, cooking was a viable occupation for women, because food was eaten twice daily in Yoruba societies. Therefore, within the public and private space, food consumption to an extent was the duty of all and the politics of gastronomic fulfilment required women to provide food for the household and to make money in its sale in public space. Food was part of everyday life in the pre-colonial era and it was of commercial and domestic relevance. Of course the agrarian nature of the pre-colonial societies enhanced supply of food especially on market days (Hodder and Ukwu, 1969). The internal social structure facilitated domestic slavery and it enhanced the movement of food commodities between farm and market. However, abolition of slavery disrupted the flow of food commodities as it were.

In the colonial era, series of Anti-Slavery laws in Nigeria from 1860 to 1916, especially the Abolition of Slavery ordinance of 1916 in Nigeria affected the availability of food because internal slavery facilitated supplies to the market. A colonial officer, Ralph Moore lamented that as slaves left their masters, there were few labour to work on farms (NAI CO/520/121 F. D. Lugard Memorandum). Subsequently, foodstuffs became very expensive and colonial officers were concerned about new ways of using forced labour for food production. Thus, by the 1920s, the resettlement of ex-slaves had created new ways to increase food production because access to land

boosted food supply in the market, which was aided by infrastructural development, mainly rail transportation.

It must be admitted that the agricultural economy developed after the First World War and it was based on dual production of food and cash crops. The introduction of cash crops farming created gendered roles in farming. Basically, men took to production of cash crops to meet up with the demands of commodity boards. While women were left to cultivate family farms to produce food for subsistence. In the colonial era, much of women's power in the food industry was limited to commercial exchanges. Of course, the agricultural aspect of colonial planning already failed to regard women in the production process. Hence, the configurations of women's work in the food industry were basically trade and not production which was intensified in the 1940s. Agitations against colonial food policies created the reasons for the intervention of Lagos market women in the governance of colonial era.

### **Women's food work and advertising language in Yorubaland**

- i. Èra ata ẹ se ọbẹ (selling raw pepper)
- ii. Èkú àárò ológi n kí yin ó (selling processed maize)
- iii. Kengbe àkàrà (selling bean cake)
- iv. Eléja tútù re (selling raw fish)
- v. Iyán re (selling pounded yam)
- vi. Móinmóin elépo (selling bean porridge)
- vii. Alhaja Ọpéyemí Food Canteen (selling cooked food)
- viii. Inasrait Food Canteen (selling cooked food)
- ix. Mama Soji Food Canteen (selling cooked food)
- x. Ìyá Ìbejì Olounjẹ (selling cooked food)
- xi. Yàkoyò Food Canteen (selling cooked food)

The linguistic appellations regard food as a function of women in provisioning for commercial purposes. This traditional understandings and relevance of food reflect in the ascriptions given to the food work of women. In various ways, the seasonal relevance of food at each hour of the day mattered in the women's work scheduling.

### **Food Systems and Colonial Planning**

In development planning, the plan for food production was instituted in agricultural research. In the case of Western Nigeria, Ibadan was taken as a location to station research institutes for food crops (NAI PR/B1). The plan was structured for interventions to manage farm centres. The research stations in Ibadan were aimed at organising and supervising modern farming

practice in Yoruba towns. If not for the purpose of modernisation, reports on agricultural status of Western Nigeria already indicated self-sufficiency by which the soil was observed as suitable but lack livestock production, which required imports from Northern provinces (NAI PR/B1). The emphasis on internal movement of food stuffs implied the activities of women as operators of distribution channel. There were internal movements in the form of intergroup trade connections, which facilitated supplies. In the framework of intergroup relations among different ethnic groups in Nigeria, food supplies for market women in the south were sourced from the Northern Region (Oladejo, 2012). The perspective of women in the channel suffices in the way Olayemi Akinwumi constructed the *Alajapa* (long distance traders) and *Alarobo* (short distance traders) in the trading occupation of women (Akinwumi, 2000).

Colonial administration diverted attention to cash crop production since local production of foodstuff was adjudged as sufficient. Experimental and research facilities in Ibadan, Agege and Benin focused on the improvement of cocoa and oil palm, while livestock were focused at Oyo and Akure farm stations. The diversion had gendered implications because capital requirements of cash crop farming system were sophisticated beyond local production of foodstuff. The involvement of women in farming within family system was a cultural norm sustained till the 1940s, however, urbanisation that resulted from the colonial economy, also drifted women to the cities for greener livelihoods. In the colonial era, food sales in the markets were aided by internal trade movements within Nigeria. Colonial officials realised the economic advantage it portends for the revenue base. Hence, measures to control the market places were adopted, such as attempts at price control policies and market centralisation under state authority. Colonial control in food marketing gendered to women had lots of reactions and resistance in Lagos. The control was defined in the governance of food prices to ensure that wartime economic depression was averted for the colonial officers. The veracity of the unanimous and vehement opposition to food price control was expressed through the media as newspaper editorials expressed eye witness narratives of everyday events in the practice and opposition to Pullen scheme. The gendered reality in the Pullen scheme was that the British perception of marketing system differed from that of Africa. Captain A. P. Pullen's doom was based on the idea of British masculinity that standardisation, efficiency and rationality were the function of men. However, with this "*Nigeria is not a normal country*" (NAI Colonial No. 204, His Majesty's stationery office, 1946).

The abnormality in Nigeria, understands the context of how women dominated the market place and defied all opportunities for state control of production and distribution networks. This was in spite of the structures and institutions put in place that could not break the ties between market women and commercial strings in food economics.

### **Example of Gari Production and Politics**

Gari is a type of granulated food derived from cassava. It was increasingly produced in Ijebu and Egba in the inter-war years. It was a food commodity prominent in the demands for war-time supplies to the military. Hence, there were counter-actions among the citizens and the colonial state on the modes and terms of supply. Internal restrictions on food production in Nigeria were a political analogy of the agricultural policies which ultimately revealed the responses of women. Judith Byfield's work vividly ascribed the way traditional governing systems and colonial government managed food supply between Abeokuta and Lagos (Byfield, 2007). The necessity to produce food for the military personnel in Lagos warranted the interest to source from Abeokuta, Ijebu and other Yoruba towns. Wartime measures required higher demands for food, the trade networks of adjoining Yoruba towns was significant to bypass women in Lagos markets. This was aimed at breaking the monopoly of market women. To the colonial state, women as retailers of foodstuff were a stumbling block. Boserup's assertion that women engage more in agricultural work was peculiar to the food politics of the colonial state. The implication was the actions of women to create unofficial means to bypass the policies of food restriction. Specifically, this policy is linked to the way A.P. Pullen came up with the food price controls. The work of cassava planting changed the agricultural economies in Western Nigeria (Agboola, 1968) and influenced the market vending of women. The disinterest of the colonial state in the concerns of peasant farmers further worsened the way women chose to market farm produce because, the way of labour for expected production was less sustainable, yet G.K. Helleiner (1966) had pointed out that the peasant farmers contributed immensely to food production. Invariably, the capitalist orientation of the colonial state mattered in the changing gender relations which moved women to the realm of food marketing.

### **Gendered Realities of Food Politics and Administration in Colonial Lagos**

The gendered realities appeared in a bid to pitch men against women. The Pullen scheme was acting on Victorian ideals in the control of market prices of food commodities, while the African culture of women controlling food marketing and commerce was vital to indigenous economies. Therefore, the

arguments of Captain A.P. Pullen in the intervention was hinged on how the British perceived the activities of market women as against standard business practices, irregularities in labour relations and so on. However, the practices of labour relations were based on kinship assistance in which women and girls in the levels of daughters, siblings, co-wives, cousin and so on assist in enterprise management in hawking and sales representation in the markets. Women in Lagos markets stuck to the pre-existing trade systems before the colonial era. They adapted it to the changing nature of urbanisation in the colonial era. However, the colonial officers planned to centralise the retail system to assert imperial order and nationalise revenue. Subsequently, clerical sales men were appointed to manage retail spots created by government. Lagos market women were central actors in challenging food price control and they engaged the colonial administration. However, the colonial state planned to use the policy of food price control and takeover of market management which the market women resisted aggressively. Lagos Market Women Association (LMWA) used petitions, protests and friendly alliances with labour unions to stop the price control scheme.

LMWA engaged in war on both fronts; the first was against the Pullen scheme, and the other in support of the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) demanded by colonial civil servants through labour unions. Furthermore, they were struggling to maintain the economic power of commodity price in the markets. The deal to cushion the effects resulted in the Workers' Relief Fund where market women donated to help workers (Oladejo, 2015) to prevent hardships exemplifies the complementary roles of men and women in the 1940s labour relations.

Despite the role of Lagos market women to work out the Pullen scheme of re-organising market system to continue food commodity trade, Captain Pullen insisted on stationing colonial civil servants to manage Lagos markets. As at 7<sup>th</sup> July 1945, the Pullen markets were located at Apapa, Sabo, Oyingbo, Araromi, Alakoro and Idumagbo (NAI DCI 1/1 4037/s. 44/c.5.) Obviously, the activities of Lagos Market Women Association (LMWA) sabotaged the scheme to an extent of almost rendering it unviable. As colonial civil servants were designated to oversee market operations, it became obvious that the regulation and marketing of food in the scheme were unpopular and awkward because of the radical roles of LMWA that undermined the expansion of Pullen markets. The construct of contemporary supermarkets could have resulted from the Pullen markets, but the culture of such was alien to Africa. Captain Pullen's hold to



this policy was resented by concerted radicalism of LMWA and Labour Unions as Michael Imoudu in a letter sent to LMWA in May 1941 affirmed:

*The Yoruba have a common adage which says that “There is nothing that affects the eyes that will not affect the nose”... The monthly income we are earning now is barely sufficient for our wives to engage in trade and also cook, much less to buy clothes to pay our children’s school fees... There is no language that the Europeans understand more clearly than the workers should go on strike [sic]. We know the implication for this for the people throughout Nigeria... God help us, unless we unite our voices to enable the Europeans to increase our monthly pay as they should. It is your cooperation that we seek in this matter and the cooperation of our wives, children, senior and junior siblings and our relatives, many of whom are members of the women’s Marketing Association in Lagos and all its environs. We are asking you to devise a means by which our mothers can make the white men realise that their workers did not just descend from heaven.... Our strike is your own strike (Kenneth Dike Library, Macaulay Papers; Lindsay, 2003; Oladejo, 2015)*

Lagos market women used the support of labour unions to put forth negotiations against unfavourable policies and the alliances strengthened resistance to colonial rule. After World War II, world food crisis escalated. Correspondences to Nigeria from the secretary of state, London indicated the existence of crisis thus:

*Government are anxious to learn immediately whether stocks of locally produced cereals, vegetable oil, oil seeds or pulses are held in territory under your administration in sufficient quantities to permit of the possibility of shipments being made out of them in the course of the next few months to relieve the shortage in other colonial territories or the U. K. A preliminary reply is requested by March 16 at the latest (NAI DCI 1/1 365).*

The position statement marked a new phase in the food politics in the colonies. Exportation of food from Nigeria became prioritised in the food policy. Subsequently, indigenous business networks of trade were disrupted to suit this motive. At least for a decade, that is from 1946-1955 food commodities connected rural and urban areas. Entangled in the politics of food is the cost of living allowance (COLA) which necessitated demands for salary increase. Women and men producers of food commodities in rural

areas were connected and adjoined to Lagos. Other parts of Yorubaland were enjoined to intensify food production to increase supply. Therefore, the traditional rulers were used to appeal to women to increase farming, possibly, the context of complementary gender relations worked out as women though did not own land, had the productive capacity. In Ibadan for example, the Olubadan and the chiefs toured the rural districts of Oyo province to campaign to women on the need to increase food production (NAI CSO 26/12723 Vol. xvi Oyo Province Annual Report). Women outside the western provinces were also involved through the importation of staples and grains such as yam and potato (Showunmi, 2001)

In order to limit the rate of profiteering in the local markets which was the domain of women, the Nigerian Defence Regulation of 1939 was activated to control the markets. The 1939 regulation had already stipulated against incessant price changes and allocated to government the power to fix the price of local foodstuff (*The Nigerian Daily Times* January 5, 1943). The regulation was entrenched at the peak of the Second World War which further complicated the supply system. Specifically, there were the strikes over the demand for a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA). For market women increase in COLA accounts for profit. Given the trend of urbanisation, market women keyed into the COLA struggle because increased wages for colonial civil servants meant improved purchasing power for foodstuffs.

A factor in the limitation of women from profiteering was the demand for women to support in the production and supply of food crops during the Second World War (*The West African Pilot* June 17, 1940). In the context of “Win the war fund,” campaign for support was intensified in the colonies. The collectives that had been formed for socio-economic purpose were compelled to engage in charity to support soldiers. For instance, Gbongan women’s society contributed 3,000 tubers of yams to Ibadan Division of the military in 1943 (*The West African Pilot* February 4, 1943). Also, food retailers donated food for the war effort, and in some cases, to create business relations for food contracts. Hence, Mrs. Agbaje from Oyo province donated edible oils worth £40 (NAI Oyo Prof I, 3474). Commercialisation of food service was featured in urban areas as food preparation work was prominent to the extent of hawking. In order to meet the demand for cooked foods, canteens sprang up in urban centres around the soldiers (*The Nigerian Daily Times* February 5, 1942).

### **Food Trade and Networks in Ilesa**

J. D. Y. Peel (1983) in the book-*Ijesas and Nigerians* presents a holistic lifestyle of Ijesa people in the twentieth century. The summary of the book provides a template to discern the entrepreneurial astuteness of Ijesa men and women. Although the inclusion and exclusion of women in trade networks was dynamic, the politics of control in food distribution and marketing prompted new ways. The colonial idea of administration created various forms of collectives. A specific collective that became necessary in the administration of the markets was Ijebu-Ijesa Women Trading Association (NAI Ile Div 1/1 2198). The association, whose membership had the thumbprint of 17 women, created the impression that food marketing was complex in the 1950s. The veracity of this assertion was profound in the fact that an external marketing system was developed to exchange imported household commodities which constitutes trade for women, especially kitchen utensils which complements trade in food. K.V.M. Mackenzie, the District Officer in response to the inauguration of the association also emphasised that such trade group could lead to monopolies that usually increases prices of foodstuff. Mackenzie's fear was rooted to the era of the Second World War in Lagos when the Pullen scheme was contested by the market women.

The role of the District officer (DO) in Ilesa was formidably meant to control economic actions of the citizenry. In anticipation for tax collection and other fees in the markets, the DO was entangled in the politics of food marketing and distribution. In Ilesa, the market women and artisans realised the hegemonic and emerging authority the DO had on disrupting indigenous trading culture. Several collision courses ensued and the legality of business enterprises was challenged. Hence, commodity or trade associations formed business groups to appeal to the sensibilities of the DO and/or the traditional governing council. Also, the formation of trade/business groups was used as a strategy to individualised taxation. While women dominated trade associations, men dominated commodity groups. On the first of June 1954, Dry Meat Sellers Association, mostly a collective of men engaged in buying and selling meat, thereby reiterating the existence of their group (NAI Ile Div 1/1 2198).

Food politics in Ilesa markets was of intensity in the 1950s. The colonial interest in food marketing attests to the volume of farm commodities that circulate in the markets. Also, the scale of markets that had been established earlier became an economy of scale to drive traders to a collective that regulated the price of foodstuffs and generated revenue through market fees. Beyond the formation of trade groups, the gendered

realities manifest as male merchants with the capital wherewithal larger business groups that connected formed beyond the local spaces. To an extent, patriarchy was advanced and it became too sophisticated for women traders to understand the nuances of formal business deals. Access to enlightened business information and credit aided the gender disparity. For men, such privilege was enhanced by the social structure of Yoruba towns which placed premium on female subjectivity. Therefore, business groups, which excluded women, were formally registered, because the scope of female business was profound in the local market spaces. For instance, Ijesa male traders had the opportunity to form The Famers and Marketing Company Limited, (NAI Ile Div 1/1 2209) and the company was aimed at being a merchandising outfit to coordinate food marketing. Of course, the Directors were men namely: A.O. Adurosakin, S.A. Lamikanra, and S.O. Ambokeomo. The business formation established trading depots in all Ilesha districts; which implied that a class stratum was formed because the capital to trade resided in the hands of the directors, and by implication, women were limited to domesticated trading channels that supplied and purchased from the depots. Capital mattered in the dichotomies of men and women's involvement in trade. The larger businesses had the capital and were mostly controlled by men; which in turn amounts to patriarchal power. However, for women it amounted to powerlessness or reduced control over the supply flows.

Invariably, food marketing created class distinctions of gender, because capital was fundamental to determine who controls the distribution of merchandise. As a matter of fact, negotiation for capital is a factor that changes the social relations of production along gendered lines. Registered merchant groups owned by men formidably articulate resources for trade. The dynamics of gender in trade created new ways of understanding credit systems among the Yoruba, as women negotiated the powerless position in supply flows by ordering goods for credit to retain trade in the markets.

The drive for colonial intervention in food production was geared by the need to generate revenue from the indigenous economic system. Also, the aftermath of Second World War already increased the cost of living in the colonies, hence it became imperative to regulate the economy to reduce the cost of purchasing foodstuffs and maintain revenue for district governance. Beyond subsistence farming that women were prominent, the plan for local development recognised masculine entrepreneurship. A correspondent with the Assistant District Officer in Ilesha stated that: governance system recognised men, and women rarely mattered in the schemes of development. Among men, the intervention in livestock

production and marketing complicated the existing democratic strategies among trade unions because trade conflicts that ensued disrupted the existing marketing networks. On July 8, 1948 Two Butchers Union in Ilesa petitioned the Senior Resident and Owa Council on the way butchering had been taken over from them through connivance of Ijesa businessmen and colonial officials (NAI Ile Div 1/1 1565). The argument offered by the Native Authority Office in Ilesa affirmed that the steps were to break the monopoly of Iwo Butchers in the meat stalls of Ilesa. Creating trade conflicts in meat distribution channel was opportunities to make indigenous men already in the services of colonial veterinary have access to markets to sell butchered meat. In a survey the colonial officers observed that:

*In about eight Ijesa villages in 1948, 40 livestock farmers were offered colonial veterinary services. The cost of living in Ilesa is very high. I have made enquiries and found that the reason is the high prices charged by cattle dealers in Ilorin, who supply most of this District. I believed that by going further afield, it will be possible to reduce the price of meat very considerably if Messrs Fajemisin and Ajanaku are able to capture the Ilesa market; it is probable that other large towns in the neighbourhood will become interested and the Ilorin dealers will be forced to cut their prices (NAI Ile Div 1/1 1565).*

Generally, the cash crop economy affected indigenous food production and high cost of living created a form of insecurity to the returns expected from the colonies. The problem of meat supply was a reason for the intervention of the colonial veterinary expertise which was taken as an opportunity to expand the propaganda of British involvement in development of the colonies.

From the outset, the exclusion of women from organised livestock farming found its support from the indigenous political system. The Ooni of Ife in a statement of support in 1947 emphasised that only men were suitable for veterinary expertise (NAI Ile Div 1/1 1565). The statement gave the impression that the traditional politics shaped the direction of food governance in Western Nigeria.

Grains and other cereals were of export interest especially driven by its scarcity in European countries (His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1946). The idea of governing food in Nigeria was based on the concept of '*Dig for Victory Over Want*' which manifested in various Yoruba towns. Instructions

to implement this concept sought to investigate based on the itemised criteria to determine feasibility:

- i. Progress of local campaigns for food production;
- ii. Stocks in hand of foodstuffs arising from indigenous crops which are available for export;
- iii. Harvest prospects of crops for local consumption;
- iv. Harvest prospects of crops for export;
- v. Statements of any supplies of machinery, fertilisers etc. required to maintain production at the maximum;
- vi. General reports on transport and storage conditions in relation to production;
- vii. Statements whether consumer goods are being imported in quantities sufficient to maintain production at optimum level;
- viii. Statements whether (price) levels are satisfactory in respect of crops for export (NAI DCI 1/1 365).

Mainly traditional chiefs possessed a total of 233 cattle. This feat created a network of Ijesa cattle rearing society in the 1950s operating through the consultancy of colonial veterinary unit.

Planning for food security in the terms of colonial administration was male-centric. It was obvious that the local system had women largely involved in farming. But the terms of modernisation excluded women. The Acting Resident Oyo Province in a letter to the Senior District Officer Ife/Ilesa Division admitted that women were subsistence farmers and most of them work on the farm (NAI Ile Div 1/1 1565).

### **Family Farms, Group Farms and Gendered Exclusion in Ondo Province**

Women's relevance in family farm production was concurrently synonymous with the market-farm production system in Yoruba towns. The introduction of cooperative farms tagged group farms indicated a paradigm shift. The shift was to justify agricultural interventions to curtail the rising cost of living. Globalisation of farming systems based on the world agricultural survey mapped Ondo Province as a local extension food production.

The native authorities were mainstreamed in to the modern trends in agriculture (NAI Ondo Prof 1/1 2472). The intent was stated in reference to Oke-Ako-Irele-Ipawo group farming that:

*The purpose of the scheme is to increase food production in a rural community and to increase the income of food producing farmers. It is hoped to achieve this by helping farmers to acquire a higher standard of agriculture via their own effort on their own farm, by the use of agricultural machinery coupled with an organised method of crop rotation and regular application of fertiliser (NAI Ondo Prof 1/1 2472).*

The group farming system for food production changed the relations among farmers, as they were schemed to work along the plan. The practise of crop rotation and other systems required re-allocation of farmlands. Here, gendered exclusion is foreseen because the previous system where women had opportunity to work on family farmlands was eroded. The changes are profound in how Simi Afonja (1986) explained women's travails in access to land. Silence on how women fit into the new system was a function of Victorian ideals of the essence of women in public spaces. Often, the colonial agenda failed to realise that women were at the grassroots already involved in all forms of farming. The large scale modernisation approach lacked the insight that women were at the subsistence level rearing livestock and working on the farm.

It is truism that the exclusion of women was obvious, even though, the scheme reiterates a sense of self determination and dependence and of course it was in the period of internal self-rule that the colonial system was quite democratic. The Assistant District Officer explained his experiences and disposition thus:

*The other farmers and the Bales had some ideas about organising the clearing, all of which were listened to; we tried to put into effect as many as possible because we wanted them to feel that their hands and minds are directly linked in the affair. Great emphasis has been made throughout on the fact it is their farm that they are looking on and their welfare and progress that they are augmenting through that work (NAI Ondo Prof 1/1 2468).*

The new agricultural interventions debased the family labour system and replaced it with cooperative farming (NAI Ondo Prof 1/1 2510). From a survey of Akure in Ondo province of 1950, it was discovered that cooperative farming was tedious and unyielding to convincingly enhance mechanised farming for food production. In spite of the discrepancies, Akure Government farm was launched to imprint government policy of

food production into practice. The purpose was clearly stated at Akure District Agricultural Committee meeting that:

*To obtain control of the land. The N.A.; it is said, is to acquire the said area and pillars should be built to mark the acquired area. The farmers who are farming on the proposed site should be informed and a piece of land should be offered them within the framework of the scheme (NAI Ondo Prof 1/1 2510).*

The scheme offered the special arrangements for a two-fold purpose: to increase production of cocoa and to increase foodstuff production to reduce local market prices.

Ultimately, the planning gave no prerequisite for gender, but in practice, women were absent in operation. Funds were sourced through the Western Region Production Development Board (WRPDB). In the scheme, of fifty four farmers, one woman was enlisted and her produce was as fair as that of men (NAI Ondo Prof 1/1 2468).

Planning for food security in the works of WRPDB rarely incorporated the domestic farming life of women and at the same time, the exclusion had effects on women's economy in marriage. Divorce cases were abounding in native courts with series of complaints bothering on sustenance. Yet the planning system failed to adopt a structure that accommodates the needs of women. From the petitions written to actualise divorce, the interest of women to switch into another marriage clearly declares the interest of the colonial state to generate funds from the native courts, while the WRPDB only catered for men for futuristic development. The involvement of just one woman, out of over fifty farmers in the farming scheme attests to this.

In the long run, the aim of WRPDB intervention was to increase food circulation beyond domestic consumption, but to increase exports, yet the finance capital was generated within the colonies. The argument for food production was in continuum to circulate capitalism that created unequal exchange and beyond that, gendered exclusiveness that made men active participants in the rubrics of development. The strategic layout tendered by WRPDB was actually not gender definitive.

### **Vending of Food in Ibadan Markets**

The growth of cities in colonial Western Nigeria, specifically in Ibadan has received scholarly attention (Oladejo 2015). Mostly, historians of informal



economies pointedly agree that there is a rural-urban interface in the network of supplies in Western Nigeria. The Ibadan example in particular implied a multiple stakeholder involvement in food marketing – of which men and women constitute the farm-market nexus. While men stuck to production, women engaged the market space as a sales channel. This way, markets were adjoining and they served as distribution channels for farm produce. In these were Oja-Oba, Orita merin, Oje and Dugbe markets.

The informal economy became meaningful as the markets expanded. Of course, the existence of mammy wagon trucks and railway transportation facilitated the movement of food commodities. Forming commodity unions was common in the markets e.g. Egbe Alata, (pepper sellers) Egbe Onigari (cassava flake seller), all these categories constitute the explanations in the narratives of women's entrepreneurship as depicted by Olayemi Akinwumi (2000).

The rural interface in food supply were managed by food commodity groups and their existence, especially of the women vending to sell the food commodities, were the payers of tax and the basis for the existence of local governing systems.

### **Conclusion**

In the colonial period, the analysis cannot overlook the fact that gender and empire mattered. The Victorian ideals viewed the public space as that exclusive to men and collective resistance by women lacked. Thus food politics in the Pullen scheme gendered political power and created a situation where men and women were either against each other or for each other. After Nigeria's independence in 1960, food production, marketing and distribution were subjected to variants of political changes and economic policies. Thus food politics were tied to the importation policies and the food question during the Biafran War affected food demand and supply, also was the era of structural adjustment. The gendered realities subsequently tend to place women at the level of food marketing (cooked and uncooked) while the nuances of production, importation and industrial processing were embedded as the work of men. Invariably, women's work in the context of food politics remains a factor in the existence of public markets and retailing spaces in Yoruba cities. Therefore, the markets for retailing being the sphere of women have been fraught with the questions of power and powerlessness among food commodity traders. In spite of the efforts of the colonial state to enforce restrictions that stifled the role of women as marketers of food commodities, the realities of women's work in

this regard still remained resilient as it indicated the way the informal economies of Western Nigeria transformed even till contemporary times.

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