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WOMEN IN THE NIGER REPUBLIC

(preliminary)

Working Paper #1

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PREFACE

Women in the Niger Republic is a preliminary draft report that synthesizes information on women in Niger and makes this information readily available, region by region, to development planners. Working Paper #1 will be up-dated periodically, and will be followed by working papers on Upper Volta and other developing countries.

The Working Paper series at the University of Arizona was designed by the Principal Investigator, Helen Kreider Henderson, in consultation with W. Gerald Matlock, Director of International Agriculture Programs, and Research Associates Nancy Ferguson and Eric Arnould. Arnould prepared the first draft which was then edited by Henderson.

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1.0 Introduction

Women in the Niger Republic (University of Arizona WID Working Paper #1) synthesizes information about economic, social, and political aspects of women's lives in the context of national development. This Working Paper may be used by the Government of Niger and by various bilateral and multilateral agencies as a guide to active interventions aimed at improving women's circumstances. It may be useful for planning in a society where each person has the opportunity to contribute to development, a goal which has been enunciated by the Government of Niger as well as by many Nigerien women (Sahel Hebdo 8/11/80:12; Barres et al., 1975). In order to further these goals, this report identifies relevant dimensions of the traditional statuses of women in Niger, and also illuminates areas of change and conflict in women's roles in the transitional, modernizing society of today.

We consider this Working Paper to be only an initial step in integrating material on women in Niger. Because of financial and time constraints, we have relied heavily on data available in the United States, particularly the University of Arizona document collection assembled as part of the Niger Natural Resources Planning Project. The next critical step will be a collaborative one involving women scholars in Niger working on documents available in their country. These Nigerien women can also evaluate information compiled here in light of more recent developments, gather new information from women who have so far been neglected in the literature, and define issues, problems, and priority actions. This type of activity began in Niger on a limited scale in the late 1969's by the Direction a l'Animaton (Barres et al. 1975: Belloncle, 1976), but should now be extended to the whole of Niger in the context of the creation of the "Societe National de Developpement" which has been proposed by the President of the Republic, Colonel Kountche.

The text of this report has been divided into three main sections corresponding to the three regions of Niger for which information was available: the Western or Niger River Region, the Northern Region and the Central and Ader-Doutchi-Majia Region. Eight main topics are discussed for each region: agricultural production, local manufacture, commerce and marketing, domestic life and tasks, education, health, religion, and professions. Discussion of each topic includes women's access to resources and governmental policies and programs affecting women.

A number of ethnic groups of unequal size live in Niger and in some cases, in contiguous areas of neighboring countries. The principal national languages correspond to five of these groups: Zarma-Songhai, Hausa, Kanuri, Fulfulde (Fulani) and Tamacheq (Tuareg). To this list should be added small groups related to the Zarma such as the Dendi and the Kurfey and Mogo River peoples; Gourmantche and Mossi subgroups related to populations in Upper Volta; the Mawri, a group living in

the buffer zone between the Hausa and Zarma-speaking regions of the country; the Tubu nomads of the far northeast, and the Kanuri-speaking Manga of the east (Poncet n.d.; Diarra 1971: 27). Location of principal ethnic groups is summarized in Figure 1. Because of lack of data, we do not provide details on women's life among the smaller groups. Even among the larger groups, we often discuss issues in general terms.

2.0 The Western or Niger River Region

2.1 Geographical Setting

The Western or Niger River region (Figure 2) straddles the Niger River. Its soils are primarily of the ferruginous tropical variety with some lithosols over gravel, and in the river courses, hydromorphic soils. Promising iron and phosphate deposits are found around Say. Rainfall varies from 500 to 800 mm annually, going from north to south. The southwestern corner of the region, which receives the most rainfall, is in the zone of shrub savannah vegetation of Sudanic type.

Approximately two million people, 40 percent of the nation's total, live in this region, primarily in the valleys between sterile, waterless plateau. Population densities in the valleys may reach 140 persons per square kilometer. Agriculture and livestock rearing are important economic activities, but the capital, Niamey, and the coastal countries now draw much of the work force out of the countryside, at least seasonally. Development of irrigated rice, garden produce, mineral resources, light industry and tourism in the Park W region constitute the major points for economic development in the region as a whole.

2.2 Agricultural Production[1]

Agricultural production is secondary to domestic tasks among rural Zarma women; they do not have automatic access to land as do men. In Ouallam, some women garden, and in a large part of the Boboye area, women cultivate rice and ground nuts for commercialization. Most women cultivate kitchen gardens of okra, sesame, squash, sweet peas, and gourds for home use or exchange within the village.

Women receive livestock from their maternal family when they marry. With luck, holdings of goats and sheep can be transformed into significant cattle herds. Some animals are sent to the steppes where the limit of cultivation during the rainy season and return to the village during the dry season. Women also own chickens and guinea fowl and construct adobe hen houses.

Among the Wogo River dwellers, men are generally the proprietors of the land, although some women also own fields which they may rent to men. Other women use parcels of land owned by their husbands. They cultivate gardens and small plots of okra, the

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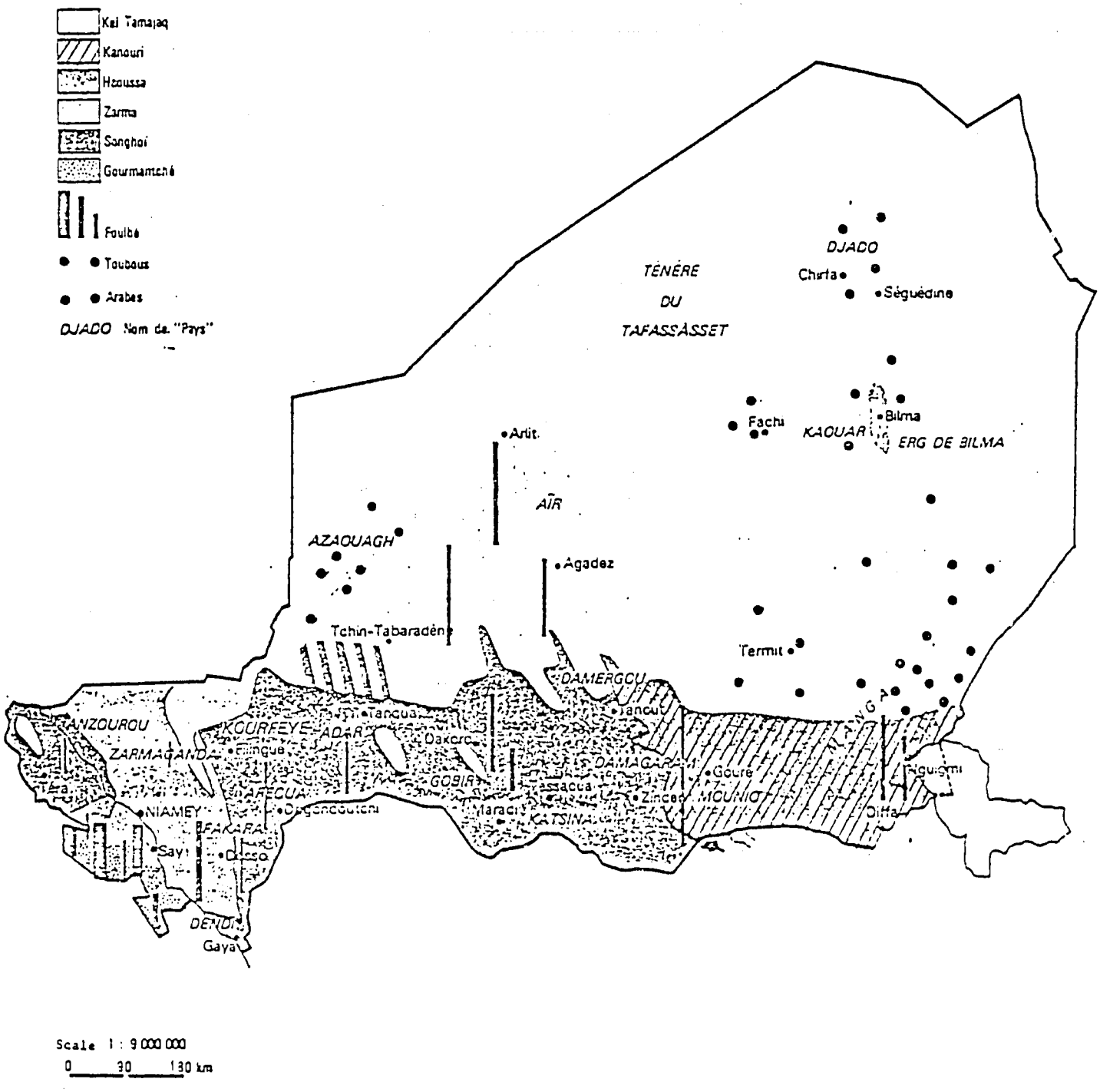
[1]Sources: Diarra 1971; Olivier de Sardan 1969.

Figure 1

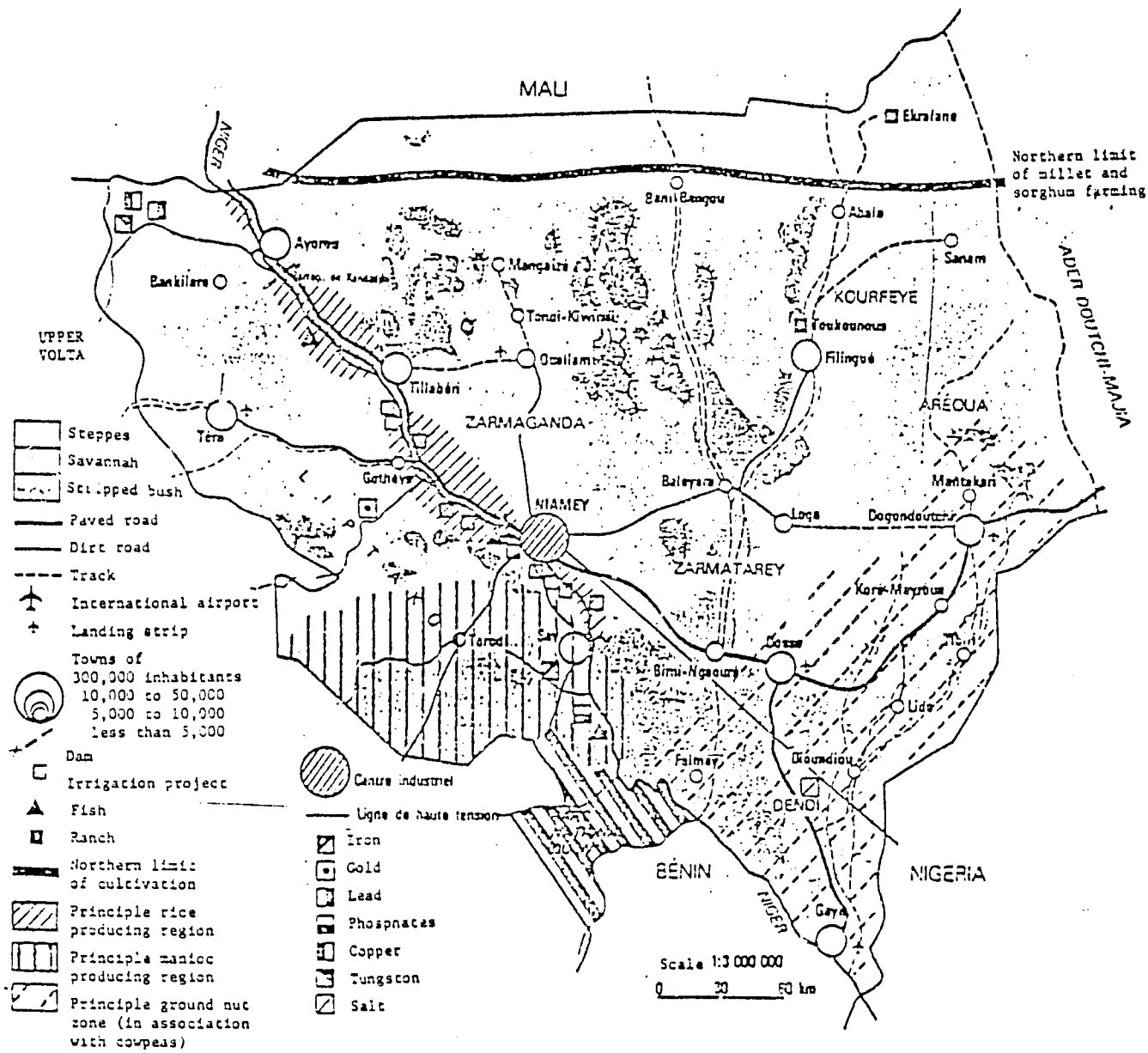
ETHNO-LINGUISTIC GROUPS



Source: Bernus, E. 1980

Figure 2

Western or Niger River Region



Source: Bernus, E. 1980

latter near men's millet fields. Garden crops include tobacco, a specialty product of the Wogo. It is mainly older women who cultivate; younger women reject this activity. Women work alone and their gardens are a source of personal income.

Although the Sorkawa are the great Nigerien fishing group, Wogo women fish as well. Fishing occurs after the harvest in October. Women fish with a kind of cylindrical trap, zaga.

The Wogo keep livestock; cattle are particularly prized and formerly figured prominently in bride wealth transactions. Today women keep goats and sheep, many of which are picketed in the village.

2.3 Local Manufacture

In the past, most women spun cotton, but the export of raw cotton and the import of textiles have largely eliminated this craft. Zarma women manufacture palm fiber mats which are often quite valuable, and baskets. They carry mud and clay and prepare adobe for the resurfacing of their homes in the dry season. In Niamey, embroidery and crochetting from European patterns are common activities amongst older educated women (Bernus 1969:60).

In Niamey, women of the Inadan class of Tuareg ethnicity are frequently specialists in the fabrication of leather cushions and leather bound mats. (Bernus 1969:58)

Wogo women earn most of their cash from mat making. Three distinct types are made: square utilitarian mats, oval mats and special marriage mats. They also make wall coverings. At one time, they made the mats used in the construction of the traditional Wogo dwelling, which women also built, but this practice has fallen into disuse. Women also make granaries of adobe for storage of their vegetables and rice.

2.4 Commerce and Marketing

Women in Niamey are active market traders, although it was mainly Beninoise women who were active in the wholesale trade particularly of yams in the 1960s (Bernus 1969). Individually, women are irregular participants at the Little Market in Niamey, but collectively they are the dominant element there. Poor urban women market the garden produce grown by their husbands along the river, while fisherfolk bring fresh fish. Rural women bring a portion of the family crop to obtain a little cash. Women also manage a very large pottery sales yard near the Banque National de la République du Niger building. Throughout the city, women engage in a doorway trade. Although no study of this practice in Niger has been conducted, women sell a wide variety of cosmetics, housewares and imported foods, and some single, women household heads, of which there are a great many, may support themselves from this trade (Sahel Hebdo 6/9/80: 10-13; Bernus 1969).

Rural Zarma women are often able to amass considerable revenues from the sale of livestock. Since male relatives sell these animals in Filingué or Gotheye for them, their earnings are not likely to be spent on immediate consumption. Their earnings are frequently reinvested in more valuable livestock or dispenses on ceremonial exchanges during baptisms or marriages (Diarra 1971).

In a study of markets in the River Niger Region, it was found that four-fifths of the sellers were women (See Table 1), many selling their own products. Kado women sell garden produce, cured dates and salt. Bella (Buzu) women market pots, firewood and millet which they had purchased previously. Fulani women sell butter. Wogo women sell threshed rice which they purchase unthreshed from their husbands, tobacco and manioc which is grown by men, and mats. The opening of a rice mill at Filingue has deprived many women of the revenues they obtained from threshing rice. Table 2 presents a list of women's wares in these markets (Olivier de Sardan 1969).

2.3 Domestic Life

Bernus (1977: 169) concludes that urban life has done little to change the older system of family and marriage and relationships between husbands and wives. Intra-ethnic group marriage is still most common, but in all groups early first marriage is less common than in the countryside, especially among educated women. However, as illustrated in Table 3, the costs of urban marriage have sky-rocketed, creating real hardships for young suitors. Already in 1971, many women and men complained of rampant inflation of these costs which contributes to tension within the household (Diarra 1971: 169). Since that time, these expenses have continued to rise.

When a marriage is contracted, women usually assume the domestic tasks they have learned at home under the new authority of their mother-in-law or husband.

The existence of piped water, grain mills, and firewood vendors in town considerably eases the domestic task load of women.

Polygyny is less common in town than in rural areas. While many women dislike it, others feel it allows them a break from domestic duties and their reproductive role. In some instances, it provides the chief wife with new higher status as head of a prosperous household, and gives her certain opportunities to pursue commercial ventures.

Divorce is common despite high marriage costs. Women initiate about half of the divorces, primarily on the grounds of mistreatment, failure of the husband to provide, husband's drunkeness, and resistance to husband's contracting a second marriage.

Table 1 Women's Participation in River Region Markets

Markets

Groups		Tessa	Yelewani	Meanna	Sakoira	Bonfeba	Tomokwere	Total
Bella	H	27	10	12	7	3	4	63 255
	F	62	6	68	33	15	8	192
Wogo	H	5	8	4	5	3	1	26 268
	F	40	49	30	51	51	21	242
Kado	H	20	19	14	3	4	1	61 334
	F	25	51	104	40	49	4	273
Zerma	H	6	1	3	30	10	2	52 110
	F	7	14	8	18	3	8	58
Peul (1)	H					1		1
	F		6	19		1	5	31
Kurtey (1)	H		2					2 135
	F		14	7				21
Other	H	7	12	10	5	1	1	35
	F	11	5	16	1	12		45

Key

H: men

F: women

Source: Olivier de Sardan 1969:191

Table 2 Women's Sales in River Region Markets

Products (1)	Bella(2)		Wogo		Zerma		Kado		Peul		Kurtey		Other		Total	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
lemti (sésame)			1	100	4	300	18	1.600							23	[illegible]
tabarma mats																
hanti sugar peas			2	100	5	800	14	1.600							21	2.500
kiri salt					5	500	15	2.000							20	2.500
gi (butter)	1		5	300			1	500	12	1.000					19	1.300
demsi ground nuts	1	100	4	1.200	1	100	11	1.200			1	100			18	2.700
donu millet porridge	1	200	1	100	3	400	4	300					8	400	17	1.400
dunguri beans	5	600	9	500	1	100									15	1.200
albessel onions					2	500	10	1.100							12	1.600
ham isa fish			4	100									7 (3)	1.000	11	1.100
dima mats			1	100					6	1.400			3	900	10	2.400
kokondo baskets			9	2.900											9	2.900
hamo sorghum	1	100	8	500											9	600
mo rice	5	1.200	62	23.000	1		8	900			7	2.000	1	700	84	28.000
gabu			8	500	13	1.600	59	11.000	1		1		1	100	83	13.000
Kohoy baobab leaves	31	3.700	5	300	2	200	34	1.600			1		2		72	5.800
mari fermented locust beans	3	100	1	100	7	600	58	4.600							71	5.400
la okra			6	600	14	1.700	41	3.700							62	6.600
wa milk	9	900	15	1.200			7	200	21	1.300					52	2.600
rogo cassaura	10	800	22	4.600	3	400	13	1.600					1	100	49	7.600
hayni millet	24	8.300	8	600	2	500	4	1.600							38	11.000
tãgara mats	1	100	8	3.700	4	1.600	22	5.900					1	300	36	11.600
tonko red pepper					3	1.000	26	1.600							31	2.600
taba tobacco			30	3.000			1	200							31	3.200
turi wood for cooking	30	4.100													30	[illegible]100
kusu pots	24	2.400			1	100	4	400	2	100					29	2.900
kongov doum palm fruit	13	1.200	8	900			4	300	2	100					27	1.500

Source: Olivier de Sardan 1969:195-196

KEY: (a) = Number of vendors
(b) = Total value of wares

(1) = Products sold by more than six vendors
(2) = Sums earned in the previous market
(3) = Sold by Sorkawa women

Table 3. Expenses Associated with Marriage Among the Zarma

250 CFA = $1.00

Expenditure items	Montant des dépenses			
	Before colonization Cowries	Pre-World War II Old Francs	Today in rural areas	Today in urban areas
Silence of the mother-in-law	1 000	1 F	1 000	variable
Wooing	2 500 to 5 000	1 F	2 600	5 000
Greeting the father-in-law	5 000	1 F	200	consecutive expenses
Greeting the mother-in-law	5 000	1 F	200	–
Greeting to other relatives	300 to 1 000	variable		
Money for maternal uncles	10 000 to 45 000			
Declaration of love	5 000	5 F		
Engagement costs	2 500 to 5 000	bétail + 5 F	15 000	50 000
Courting costs				30 000
Bribery of in-laws		1 to 5 F	variable	variable
Presents to praise-singers	payment in kind	payment in kind	50	5 000
Incense	–	–	–	2 000
Gift to person who bathes bride	–	–	200	500 to 1 000
Gift to person who attends the bride	–	–	100	500 to 1 000
Gift to each older sibling of bride	–	–	200 to 500	500 to 1 000
Gift to Foley cult initiated	–	–	100	500
Other	100 000	–	5 000	25 – 50 000

Expenditure Items the Day of the Marriage Celebration

Expenditure items	Before Colonization Cowries	Pre-World War II Old Francs	Today in Rural Areas	Today in Urban Areas
Livestock	salves or cattle	horse or cattle	cow - bull	15 000
Marriage costs	25 000 to 50 000	50 centimes	15 000	50 to 100 000
Gift to priest	50 to 100 c	1 F	250 to 500	500 to 1 000
To marabout for prayer	50 to 160 c	1 F	100	2 000 to 5 000
Gift to praise singers	150 c	50 centimes	100	1 000 to 5 000
Gifts to bride's friends	50 to 100 c	1 F	100	1 000 to 5 000
Costs of necklaces		1 F	100	1 000 to 5 000
Gift to the little sisters of bride			100	500 to 1 000
Transport costs			100	
Levy for opening the door of the house			100	1 000
Levy for bringing bride at night			100	1 000
Payment to musicians			100	1 000
Purchase of wife's sleeping mat				1 000
Gift to chief				1 000
Gift to president of political committee				1 000
Gift to head of women's section of political committee				1 000
Gift to head of women - prostitutes				1 000
Gift to grandparents of wife			50 to 100	2 000
Other	100 000 c	50 centimes	100	500 to 100
			10 000	50 000

Table 3 - continued - Expenses Associated with Marriage Among the Zarma

EXPENSES FOR: CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE
TRANSPORT OF BRIDE'S TROUSSEAU

Expense Items	Before colonialization money = cowries	Before World War II money = old francs F CFA	Total in Rural Areas	Today in Urban Areas
Recompense for bride's virginity	200 c + cattle		2 500 to 5 000	5 000 F or gold jewelry
Gift to break bride's silence	20 c		500 to 1 000	1 000
Gift so bride will take her meals			500	500 to 1 000
Animal for strengthening the bride	or sheep, goat flour, millet cotton or 500 to 1 000			1 000 à 2 000
Gift to "marriage captive"		cotton cloth shoes + 1 F	500	500 to 1 000
Hairstyling	1 000 to 2 000			1 000
Gift to parents for bride's virginity			1 000	2 000
Levy for bride's suitcases				40 000
Gifts to in-laws			500	5 000
Transporter of trousseau			500 to 1 000	5 000

Source: Diarra 1971.

In rural areas, marriage is built upon an exchange of services between husband and wife, but marriage also primarily links two different groups of kinspeople related to a common male ancestor. Among the Wogo, the wife's female relatives enter into an elaborate series of gift exchanges which create alliances between them. These exchanges continue with the birth of the children of the new couple, as shown in Table 4.

As shown in Table 3, marriage expenses are far less in the countryside than in town, but still high by pre-colonial standards. In the early days of a marriage, a couple's autonomy depends in large measure upon the wife's dowry consisting of household goods and livestock which, it is explicitly stated, is destined to ensure the social security of the bride's family. These resources provide rural women with a certain autonomy vis-a-vis their husbands.

Rural women assume a gamut of time-consuming and physically demanding tasks. Drawing and carrying water is particularly onerous in Zarma country where the water table is at 40 m, and few wells exist. Women may spend three or four hours in this task. Gathering firewood is likewise time consuming because of shortages, but is a less wearisome job. Food preparation consumes most of women's time since it takes several hours in the morning and evening. Threshing and milling grain is the most difficult of tasks and the one about which women complain most often. Women also care for small livestock, and of course, small children must be bathed and fed.

Women can expect only the ad hoc cooperation of their neighbors, daughters and daughters-in-law in these tasks. However, the daughter-in-law is expected to assist both her mother-in-law and mother when she can. This is true among the Wogo and the Zarma.

2.6 Education

Knowledge has always been valued by women in Niger as a source of power and authority, both secular and religious (Diarra 1971:185). It is not surprising that education has become a national priority, with doors open to girls as well as boys, in both public, private and technical schools. Many of the latter are located in Niamey. In 1968, 99 percent of River Region women questioned felt girls should attend school and rural women were even more in favor of instruction than urban women. Many felt that education enabled women to discharge their domestic duties more effectively and to get on better with their husbands (Diarra 1971: 181).

The Association des Femmes du Niger (n.d.) found that girls represent 35% of public school students, 47% of private school students, 32% of koranic school students, and 41% of TV school students. Among public school students, they found that 30% of students in primary schools were girls and 17% of students in secondary schools were girls. In private schools, which serve a more elite clientele, the numbers of girls and boys were nearly equivalent. However, it was learned that only 7% of the students in technical schools were girls, thus limiting their future career options.

Table 4. Types of Ceremonial Exchanges at Baptisms and Births Among the Wogo

	GIFT	COUNTER-GIFT
Gift giver	*Weyma* of A	Mother B
Originator	*Weyma*, parents of A	*Weymya*, Mother of B
Recipient	Mother of B	*Weyma*
Redistribution	*Weymya* of B 10 % for A	
Name of gift	*Lafe*	*Kiebo haoru*
Type	cash	rice paddy and millet & sheep
Circumstance of transfer	On the kiebu ceremony	when the Weyma leave

Gifts and counter gifts for baptism

Gift giver	A	Women of the village of B	mother of B
Originator			
Recipient	B	B	A
Redistribution	mère B	Senior women	A and his equals
Name of gift	*Bita*	*Barka*	*Fitenari*
Type	Sheep Rice Millet Cash Kerosene	Loose change	butter, condiments, IS, sheep
Circumstances of transfer	when B goes to her mother's	Day of birth	brought by the *Weymya* of B who accompanies her when she returns to A's home.

A = father of child
B = mother of child

Gifts and counter gifts for a birth

Source: Oliver de Sardan 1969: 167

Women have been disproportionately tracked into secretarial training following Western models of women's employment. However, today many women are entering technical and armed forces training schools (Sahel Hebdo 6/11/80: 11ff).

2.7 Health

Women in the Western Niger River Region benefit from the presence of the majority of the nation's medical technicians and facilities, although Dosso province is less well provided than Niamey province (Bernus, E.: 1980). Women suffer from Niger's endemic illnesses, particularly malaria and also from numerous complications in childbirth. As mothers, they must cope with the great killers of children, measles and spinal meningitis which assume epidemic proportions every five years (Speece 1981: 5).

While almost half of women on this region believe that both traditional and modern medicines are effective, over a quarter take their medical problems to traditional healers. Only 20% seek out modern postnatal medical help, and only 20% would seek modern help in case of sterility. Few women are actively desirous of contraceptive knowledge in spite of the burden which frequent pregnancy places upon them, but many feel that birth spacing, on the order of 2 - 3 years, is good. About 64% of all births take place with some sort of modern intervention, but fewer than 50% of rural births are accompanied by modern methods. (Diarra 1971: 177-178)

Although the majority of women place high value on having large families, two forms of contraception are in use in Niamey: the pill and sterilization. Authorized use of the former requires both a prescription and the written consent of the husband. About 150 women a year seek birth control information in Niamey out of 4000 gynecological examinations. Authorities are concerned because many young girls seek out birth control pills without prior medical advice and in the absence of any prior education (Sahel Hebdo 2/25/80: 12-13).

2.8 Religion

Women are active participants in both Islam and the <u>folevey</u> possession cult. About three-fourths of Zarma women questioned claimed to pray 4-5 times daily; most pray by themselves. About one-third began to pray after their marriage and 37% began to fast during Ramadan after marriage, indicating that men may play some role in encouraging Islamic practice among their wives. Overall, 63% of women claim to fast. Women are also critical of Islam: 41% think Islamic proscriptions are more severe for women than men. This attitude is most developed in Niamey where 51% share it, and least developed in the countryside. In addition, 42% think Islam impedes women's participation in national development, as they see it, and indeed, Islamic authorities in Niger do

reserve a secondary role for women in social life (Sahel Hebdo 8/18/80: 13: Diarra 1971: 200-202).

About three-fifths of the women questioned by Agnes Diarra also declared themselves frequent participants in the rituals of the folevey possession cult. Few women think this cult, which is open to all ethnic groups, and which provides both physical and psychological therapy for women, will die out (Diarra 1971: 203-206).

2.9 Professions

In rural areas, some women have taken up part-time trading, pottery-making, water-carrying, grain-threshing, and mat-making and transformed them into near full-time specialties.

In Niamey and other major towns, three generations of women of very different outlooks and professional status can be found. Bernus (1969: 93-95) distinguishes a first generation, often mestiza, who have been profoundly influenced by European culture and values, often through marriages with colonial administrators. Many of them became teachers, nurses or mid-wives, thus elaborating upon the nurturing roles played by women in Nigerien and European society. This category of professional women includes the founding members of the Union des Femmes du Niger (Union of Nigerien Women) which was created in 1956 to:

-- re-establish the Nigerien family through the education of women;
-- prepare women for their role as mothers and homemakers;
-- induce public authorities to make it possible for the Nigerien woman to play her role in the economy.

A second group of women, probably less than 300 in the late 1960s, who received their education at the end of the colonial period, have become secretaries and minor functionaries in various government agencies. They were also active in the now defunct political party, La Rassemblement Democratique Africain. While women's right to independent revenues has never been contested in Niger, their movement into the profession was, and is frequently contested by their male colleagues who sometimes find their professional qualifications lacking, or negatively evaluate their morals because they are educated (Sahel Hebdo 2/23/80: 4).

A third group of women has emerged in the years since independence, particularly in the aftermath of the military takeover in 1974, who are involved in a great many technical and professional positions. Many are animated by professional goals of the western variety and a sense of nationalism (Sahel Hebdo 8/11/80: 10ff; 9/29/80: 10-11; 3/23/81: 10-11). However, many people complain that the attitude of professional women towards the public is one of condescension and

disinterest. To the extent that this is true, it may be seen as an expression of a widespread attitude amongst Nigerien bureaucrats (Charlick, 1972, 1974; Spittler 1976) and a defensive posture on the part of the few women who have managed to accede to positions of authority in Niger.

In addition to these professionals, a few women have also entered the industrial work force. SONIPRIM, for example, employs 200 women. (Association des Femmes du Niger n.d.) Industrial workers complain of lack of job security, low pay, menial work, and a variety of health and safety problems much as do their sisters in the West (Sahel Hebdo 8/11/80: 23-24).

In rural areas of Niamey province by late 1975, 187 village women had been trained by Women's Animation to act as multipurpose extension workers and 122 midwives had been retrained, or at least exposed to modern theories of maternity. In Dosso province, 71 midwives had been retrained (Barrès et al. 1975: 76).

3.0 The North

3.1 Geographical Setting

The northern region covers 850,000 square kilometers, or 65% of the national territory. Soils are weakly developed lithosols occurring over weathered rock, weathered soils, aeolian sand dunes, and in the south, red-brown soils on sand dunes. Salt, uranium, coal and untapped petroleum reserves are important to national development plans. Vegetation is of the Saharan open savannah type. It is sparse as less than 250 mm of rainfall drops annually over most of the region. Temperatures range above 35° C for most of the year. Only about 250,000 people live in this region, about 5 percent of the national total. Population densities are thus on the order of 1-5 persons per square kilometer. Ethnically heterogenous, nomadic livestock rearing, caravan trading, and oases cultivation have been the traditional economic base of the region. Industrialization is now rapidly taking place, particularly in the Air region.

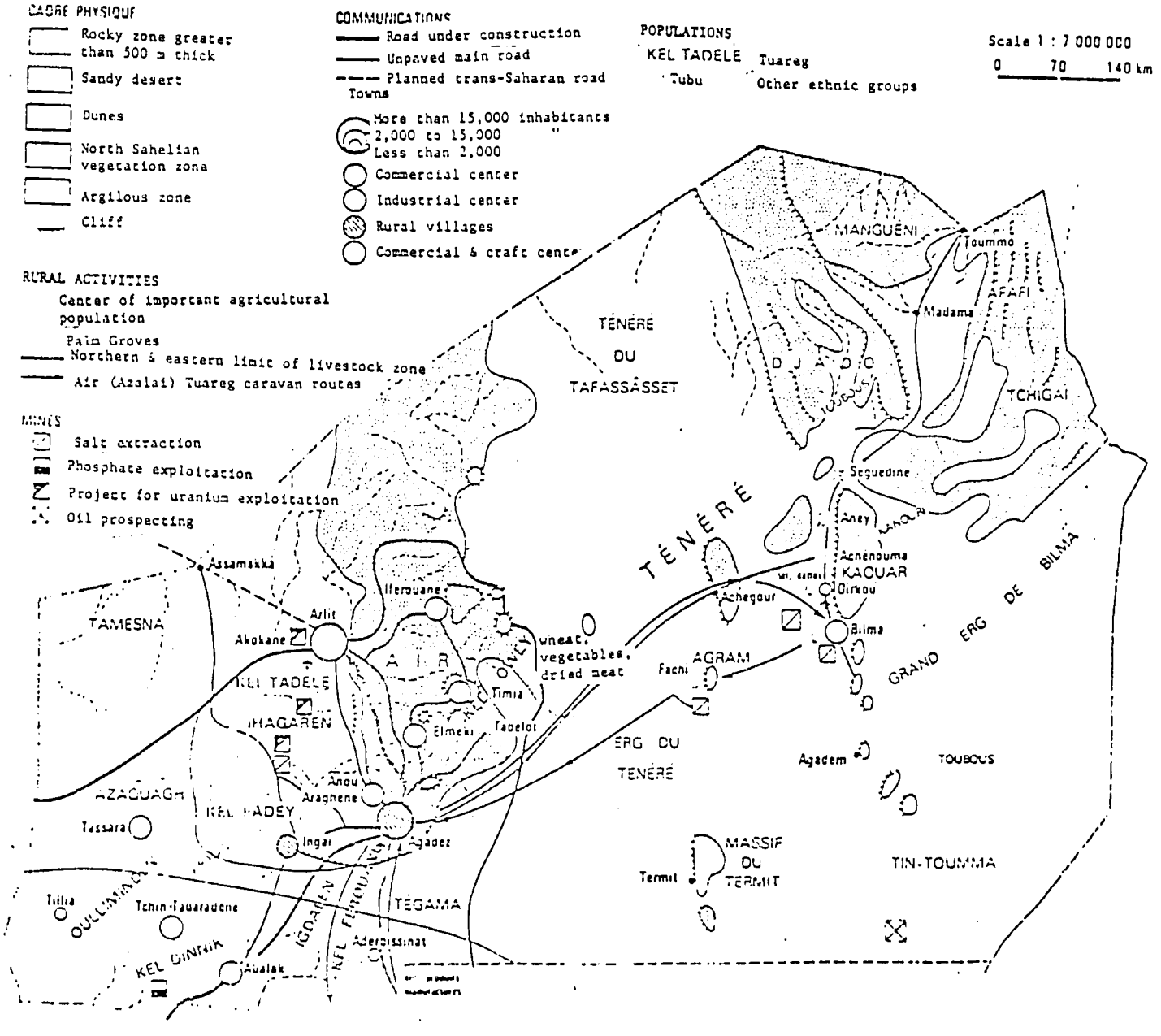
3.2 Agricultural Production

Niger, north of the 200 mm isohyet is primarily a zone of livestock production as shown in Figure 4. Fulani (Fr. Peul) women's participation in the livestock economy is both full and complex. They fully possess few head of cattle. These are the offspring of a few heifers women have received from their parents at birth, or through inheritance from both mother and father (Dupire 1970: 91, 93). The few cattle a woman receives as part of the bridewealth are reserved exclusively for her children. Spouses decide the fate of these beasts together, but women are solicitous of guarding this stock intact until the children grow up. This stock and other beasts in the household herd of each family are progressively allocated to the children over the years (Dupire 1963: 79; 1970: 91). Wives exercise exclusive milking rights over a large portion of the husbands' herds and reserve the right to sell milk and butter. Women meet their share of the household budget from the sale of milk and butter, and occasionally of small ruminants over which they exercise full rights of use and sale. Rights and duties pertaining to cattle among the herding Fulani are summarized in Table 5. When a man dies, his children, not his wife, inherit. There are thus no wealthy widows with personally owned cattle and <u>sadaki</u> (bride wealth animals) as among some sedentary Fulani.

Traditionally, women did not care for large livestock. However, in the aftermath of the 1968-1973 drought, many Fulani women have been forced to take up such difficult tasks as watering the remaining cattle because of high rates of male migration (Rupp 1976:17).

Figure 3

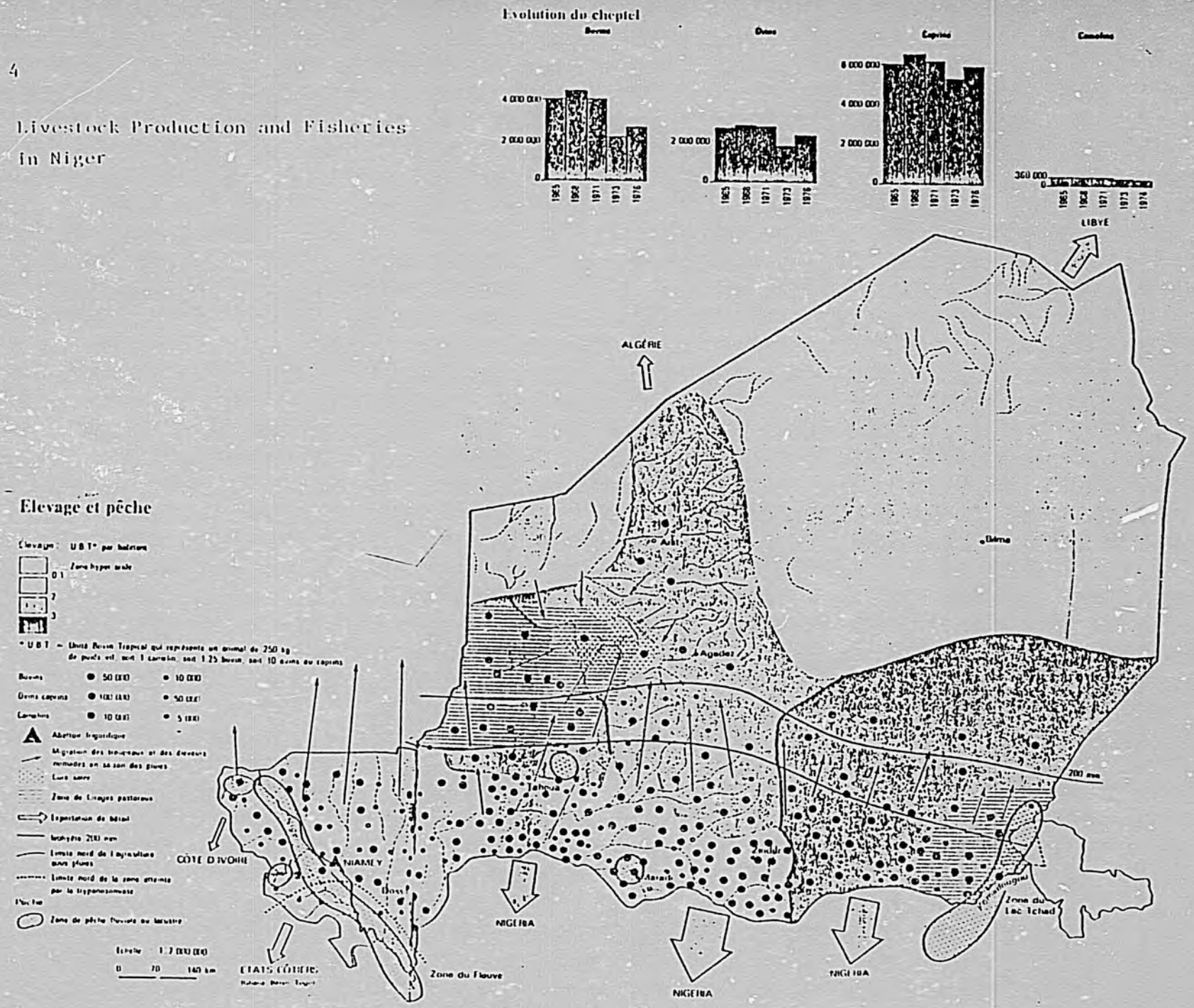
NORTHERN REGION



Source: Bernus, E. 1980

Figure 4

Livestock Production and Fisheries in Niger



Source: Bernus, E. 1980

Table 5

RIGHTS OF OWNERSHIP HELD BY THE NOMINAL MASTER OF THE HERD OVER HIS CATTLE.

Category of cattle	Description and source	Looked after by . . .	Alienation rights held by . . .	Rights to use the milk held by . . .	Inheritance rights held by
birnaaji	Stock held by the head of the family. Acquired through inheritance, gifts, purchases, or *nanngaa na'i* loans . . .	Father of the family.	Father of the family.	*All the wives alike* as required.	The children of all the wives.
darnaaji	Portion of the stock of the head of the family entrusted to the chief wife, *koowaaDo* (same sources as *birnaaji*).	Father of the family.	Father of the family.	*Only* the wife to whom they have been entrusted.	Only the children of the wife who has rights to the milk.
sadaaki (Western Niger region).	Stock given to the *koowaaDo* wife.	Father of the family even after divorce or repudiation.	*Husband or wife* with the consent of spouse.	*Only* the wife who is co-owner.	Only the children of the wife who is co-owner.
sadaaki (Islamized Eastern Niger region).	Stock given to the *koowaaDo* wife.	Father of the family except in cases of repudiation.	*Husband or wife* with the consent of spouse.	*Only* the wife who is co-owner.	Only the children of the wife who is co-owner.
serndereeji	Portion of the stock of the head of the family entrusted to secondary wives (in place of *sadaaki* and *darnaaji*).	Father of the family.	Father of the family.	*Only* the wife to whom they have been entrusted.	Only the children of the wife who has rights to the milk.
sukaaji of the children.	Gifts received by the children.	Father during their minority, sons after setting up households, husband of married daughters.	Father of the family during their minority, sons on coming of age.	Usually *the wife who is the mother of the children who own the stock.*	This is an inheritance in advance of each child in question.
sukaaji of the wives.	Gifts received by each wife from her family.	Father of the family.	*The wife with the consent of her husband.*	*Only* the wife who is the owner	Only the children of the wife who is the owner.

Source: Dupire 1963:81

Traditionally, noble Tuareg women owned livestock, and it is said that their herds were often larger than those of men, despite the fact that Islamic inheritance rules were followed (Nicolaisen 1963: 137; Rupp 1976: 7). There were no data about the composition of their herds apart from the fact that they consisted of camels and small ruminants. The organization of seasonal transhumance and of caravaning was however in men's hands, as was the care of camels. Vassal (e.g. Inadon and Buzu) women might own small ruminants and donkeys, but they were commonly obliged to pasture, milk and water the goats, sheep and cattle owned by the noble families with whom they resided. Skinning and butchery also was the work of vassal women, as was the care of the camels, if no noble men were present in the camp.

Today, the complex division of labor between women of different classes has largely broken down with the formal elimination of slavery and the loss of herds during WWI and the 1968-1973 drought. In the aftermath of that drought, Tareg women have not taken over animal husbandry activities from their migrant or lost husbands. However, the outcome of restocking programs has been of great concern to them. Many felt that men received a disproportionate share of livestock credits (Rupp 1976: 6-7, 17:22).

In areas of the Air mountains where settled vassal Tuareg engaged in irrigated agriculture, women helped in the preparation of the fields, but there is no indication they themselves gardened (Nicolaisen 1963: 191). However, during the drought, some noble women, disregarding previous patterns, began to help their equally novice husbands in digging irrigation ditches and vegetable gardens (Rupp 1976: 32).

3.3 Local Manufacture

Fulani women engage in very few crafts. It is they, however, who build the mat hut and provide its contents: mats, winnowing fans, tether ropes, and other domestic items. In the recent past, these items were not sold, although today they are. Fulani women may also repair cracked gourds for sedentary people on market days or while passing through remote villages (Dupire 1963: 80; 1970: 95; Piault n.d.: 59).

Noble women engaged in a few esteemed crafts such as embroidery and leather work. Part of a women's household equipment consisted of tanning materials. In Agadez, leather working and tanning were once entirely within their hands. (Rodd 1926: 174; Nicolaisen 1963: 134, 275 ff). Some women migrants to southern towns have continued to do leather work. Vassal and slave women also made natural goat hair bags, employing handweaving techniques. Plaiting doum palm fronds imported from the south by men, into mats for window screens, beds and tents is also an important task

(Nicolaisen 1963: 263, 269). Noted for their independence and resourcefulness, Tuareg women of the blacksmith caste recycled a wide variety of metal scraps, turning them into lamps and other items for sale during the drought when sheer survival was at stake (Clark 1978: 115). Collection of some fifty species of wild plants, which became an important resource during the recent and past droughts, was also in women's hands (Lhote 1944).

3.4 Marketing and Commerce

Little information concerning the commercial activities of Fulani women is known. The best sources are Dupire (1962: 133), SEDES/INSEE (1966) and Sutter (1980: 7). Women's occasional sales of milk and butter were at one time the main way in which Fulani interacted with the market economy. These sales provided herding families with a few regular necessities, while the occasional sale of livestock provided them with millet for the dry season when the preferred food, milk, was scarce (Dupire 1962b: 345). By 1963, butter accounted for only 2.7% of total household income (SEDES/INSEE 1966).

Herders still are not highly motivated by market forces (Rupp, 1976: 12), but the drastic drought-induced reduction in herd sizes has forced Fulani to market more livestock and to spend more cash on food items than ever before. Livestock sales now account for 95% of all revenues in the Tanout region (Sutter 1980: 20). Herds now consist of a greater proportion of small, highly productive animals such as goats and sheep than cattle. Before the drought, these animals were mainly owned by women, but whether women's share in the family herds has now increased is not discussed in the literature.

The Government of Niger is currently engaged in a number of schemes with World Bank and U.S. AID participation, to increase commercial offtake in the grazing zone. It is likely that these activities will negatively affect women. Men traditionally were responsible for the overall management of the herd regardless of ownership of particular animals. Development programs are most likely to target men for participation as historically has been the case in Niger.

Apart from Bernus' work (1974) little quantitative information is available about Tuareg commercial strategies at the household level. Women seem to have participated in the market economy indirectly, letting their husbands or other male relatives play the role of intermediary in the sale of livestock or leather goods. Livestock sales could be made by noble women on the condition that proceeds from them benefitted the entire household.

Vassal and slave women seem to have been free to sell agricultural produce or salt. Vassal Tuareg women in Zinder town were at one time entrusted with the rainy-season management of the date and salt business of Tuareg lords who spent that season in the Air. Many of these women became wealthy traders, inn keepers and real estate brokers in their own account in the early 20th century (Lovejoy and Baier: 1977). No noble Tuareg were seen by the authors selling in markets in northern Zinder province in 1978-79, although they did participate as buyers.

Among Tubu groups who travel south from the northeast of the country during the latter half of the dry season, women are active date vendors in the markets of Gouré country. Some half dozen were seen in the small market of Wodo by the author in 1979.

3.5 Domestic Life

It was expected that Tuareg women at some point would marry. Mixed caste marriages were uncommon until the recent breakdown of Tuareg society (Nicolaisen 1963: 21; Clark 1978: 118). First marriages were often contracted late in life, and second marriages were often made for "love" (Rodd 1926: 172; Clark 1978: 61). A considerable dowry, larger than the bridewealth payments, accompanied the bride. (Nicolaisen 1963: 152; Clark 1978: 118).

Divorce was easy to obtain. A man rejected by his wife would consider it ignoble to cling to her; nor did his family require the return of the bridewealth as was the case in southern regions. In case of divorce, children often went with the mother's family again unlike practices in the south. Remarriage was easy unless a son, who stood to inherit a considerable amount from his mother forbade it, since he would lose property to her husband if she remarried (Nicolaisen 1963: 461). Nonetheless, many unions were quite stable, in part because of a long tradition of monogamy among the Tuareg, and in part because of the freedoms married women enjoyed. They were highly respected in home and public life, were permitted to cultivate extramarital freiendships with members of either sex, and were the living repositories of Tuareg history and culture. Tuareg women composed, sang, played the one-string violin, and created poetry about past and present adventures (Rodd 1926: 174). Nonetheless, noble women had little knowledge of other languages and cultures, unlike their husbands (Nicolaisen 1963: 24).

Noble women rarely worked. Vassal and slave women attached to each camp or living in settled villages performed the same domestic tasks required of women in other parts of the country. However, all women cooperated in child care. Slave women also not infrequently served as concubines for noble men. It was the responsibility of the noble men to care for all the women in

their camp. During the drought and after, many mature noble women have been forced to perform domestic tasks for the first time.

Among pastoral Fulani, first marriages are carefully arranged, endogamous affairs. The first marriage procedure is prolonged, involving the slow transfer of livestock between households, and the progressive integration of the wife into the husband's camp. Although marriage is a necessity, and childbirth marks the confirmation of a mature women's status, marriage is a matter of economic cooperation between spouses whose roles are rigidly gender-linked (Dupire 1962a: 169-170). The relationship between a man and his wife is quite formal.

Relations between a wife and her female relatives through marriage are of primary importance in a new marriage, since it is they who cooperate in performing domestic tasks. A new bride is virtually at the beck and call of her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law who together milk, fetch water, gather wood, prepare food, weave and share baby care (Dupire 1970: 66). It is only after a woman has borne and weaned her first child at her mother's camp that she returns permanently to her husband's camp, bringing with her the dowry, and claiming a new more authoritative status towards female in-laws.

A mature woman owns her house and its contents, as well as the tie rope for that portion of the herd she milks. The house is in fact the symbolic attribute of motherhood. After the death of their father, consanguineal brothers frequently regroup around their mother's house, and it is behind her house that a woman is buried.

Bororo women are stout defenders of monogamy. Since their tasks are individual ones, any sharing of the dairy products of the household herd with a co-wife would be their loss. Women frequently instigate divorce, although it entails the loss of the bridewealth animals. Secondary marriages are freely contracted in contrast to the first ones, and are more often exogamous (Dupire 1970: 67). A woman's children benefit from the cattle held by the second husband. Secondary marriages provoke conflicts within patrilineages because they disrupt prior expectations of inheritance (Dupire 1962a, 1970: 27, 52).

3.6 Education and Health

Very little is known about the education and health of northern women, although girls constitute about 40% of the school-attending population. Health services and schools are scattered in the north. Rupp (1976: 5-6) did not find that Tuareg women expressed much interest in the extension of medical facilities. Bororo women asked the author for anti-malarial tablets on several occasions

in 1978-79, however. The Rupp report noted that problems of malnutrition and prematurely curtailed human lactation were acutely felt among northern women. In the post-draught context, they were frequently assuming the work of absent menfolk in addition to their own tasks. They were most concerned about the substitution of millet for milk and sorghum for millet in their diet; and the disappearance of wild plants and game (Rupp 1976: 5-6).

3.7 Religion

Almost nothing has been written concerning the religious life of women in the northern zone. Both groups have been described as indifferent Muslims (Rodd 1926: 178). Although Fulani were in the forefront of the "holy war" (jihad) of the latter 19th century in northern Nigeria, neither group appears to participate in the bori or foleyey possession cults.

3.8 Professions

There are few published reports about northern women in new professions. Bernus (1969) noted that the majority of Fulani women household heads in Niamey described themselves as courtesans and many Tuareg women used this same source of livelihood during the the drought (Clark 1973: 118).

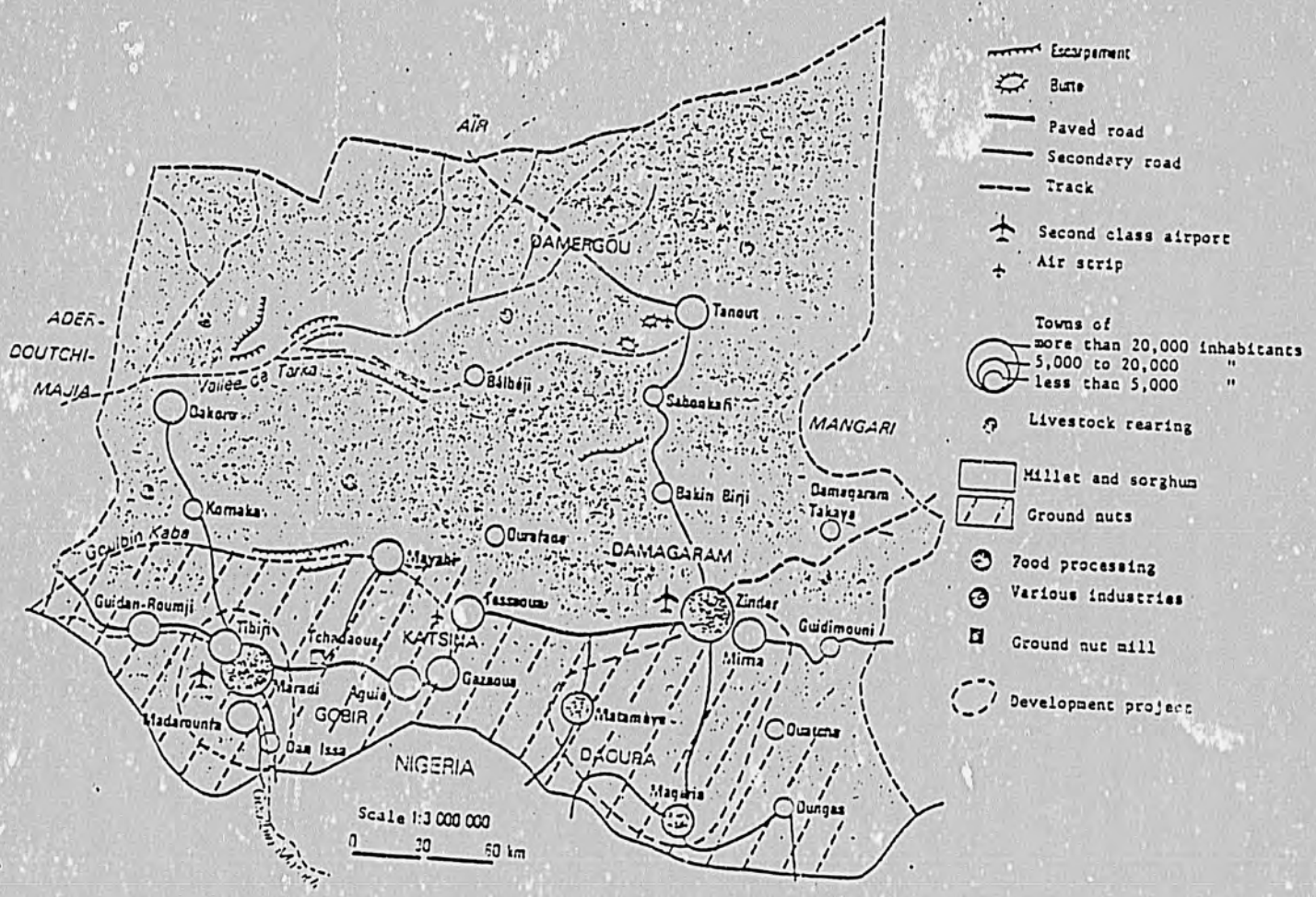
4.0 The Center and the Ader-Doutchi-Majia

4.1 Geographical Setting

The central region and the Ader-Doutchi-Majia are the heartlands of Niger which lie along the Nigerian border. Soils in the Ader-Doutchi-Majia are of the ferruginous tropical variety with deep clays in the fossil river valleys and ferruginous crusts overlying gravel deposits on the plateau. Soils of the center are similar to these, except that there are zones of hydromorphic soils in the southeast and of red-brown soils on stabilized sand dunes in the north. The terrain is varied. Plateau and valleys, in some of which are important permanent marshes in the west give way to rolling plains with occasional low hills in the east. Rainfall varies between 300 and 650 mm annually, going from north to south. Vegetation is of the shrub savannah type associated with the African Sahel, but has been profoundly modified by human occupation. About 2 million people, or 41 percent of the total national population live in the central region, and 900,000, or about 15 percent of the national total live in the Ader-Doutchi-Majia. In the latter region they are concentrated in the valley bottoms, where densities reach 97 inhabitants per square kilometer. Maradi and Zinder in the east are centers of ground nut, millet, cowpea and garden cultivation, while the Ader-Doutchi-Majia produces 80 percent of Niger's cotton, and large amounts of onions and red pepper.

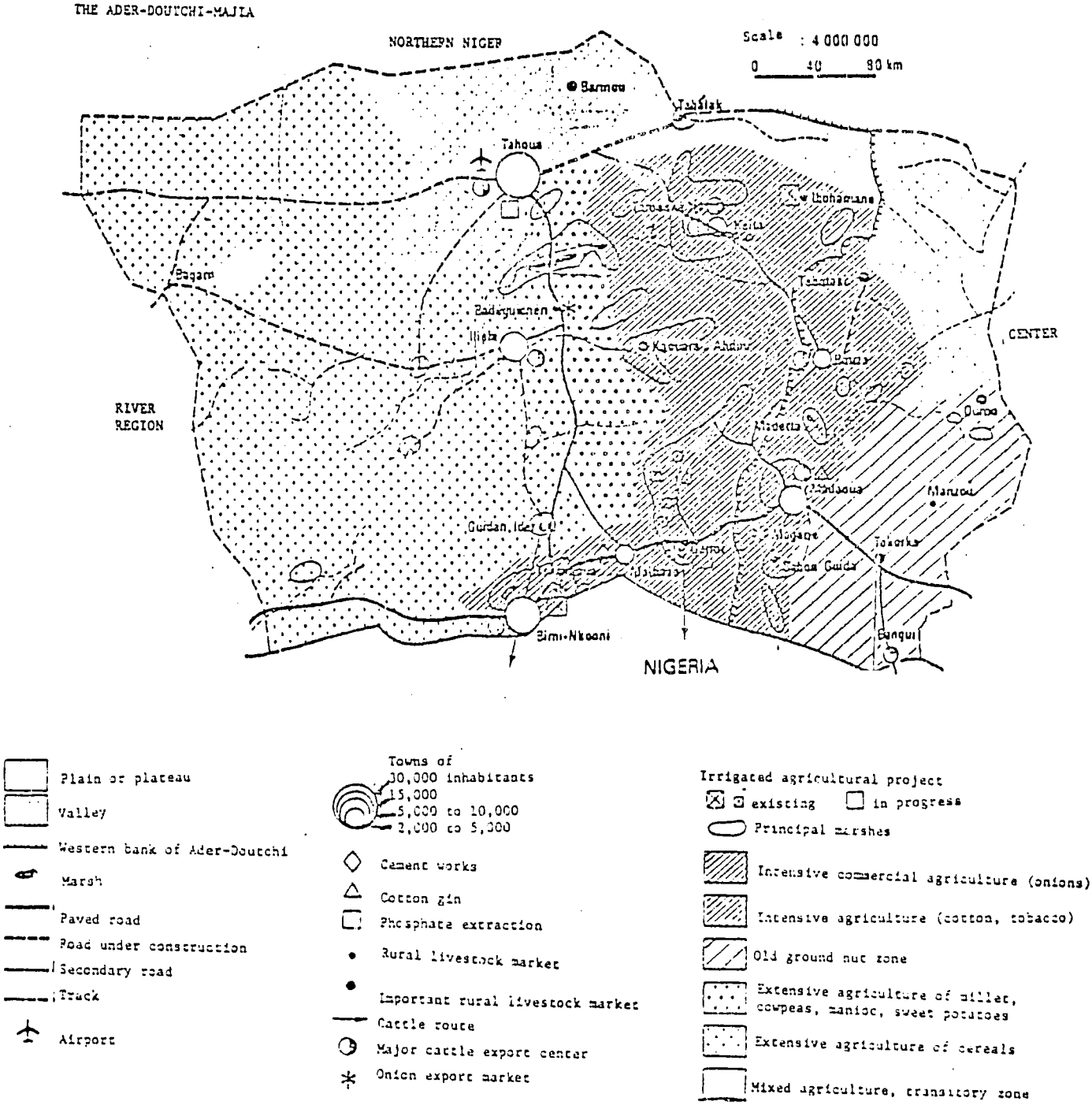
Figure 5

CENTRAL REGION



Source: Bernus, E. 1980

Figure 6



Source: Bernus, E., 1980

Farming populations mingle with nomadic pastoralists and semi-sedentary nomads. Much of the manpower of the Ader-Doutchi-Majia is drawn off to Nigeria during the dry season. Zinder province is the center of intensive rural development activities.

4.2 Agricultural Production

Women's role in agricultural production in these regions varies from place to place. In Mawri country, Madaoua canton, the valley of Maradi, Magaria county, and many parts of Matameye and Mirria counties women cultivate on household (gandu) fields of millet, sorghum and cowpeas. However, in Kantche and in Mirria canton, women do not in general participate in this activity, except perhaps at harvest time (Nicolas 1966: 10; Piault 1965; 45ff; République du Niger 1974: 2; Raynaut 1976; Chefou 1976: 6; Faulkingham 1976: 2; Saunders 1978, 1980; Henderson and Arnould n.d.; Arnould, in preparation).

Around Dogondoutchi, aside from participating in household productive activities (summarized in Table 6), women and girls cultivate on their own account. Women cultivate Bambara ground nuts and other crops. A daughter may be given part of her mother's field to work. But land belongs to the husband so that a woman's field changes yearly as women's crops are rotated with cereals. Women have a right to dispose of their produce throughout this region. They employ an archaic short-handled hoe (Kursa-Kursa) as well as other tools, but not modern ones. Older women claim that women's role in agriculture was once more extensive (Piault 1965).

Around Madaoua, women, like men, cultivate subsistence crops, though not the highly profitable irrigated onion plots. With increasing male migration, they are assuming more of the burden of cereals cultivation (Faulkingham 1976).

There has been a rapid transformation of the role of women in agriculture in the valley of Maradi over the past several decades. Intensification of commercial garden crop production by men , division of crop lands into small parcels, a decline in the range of conjugal family units pooling land and labor from collective (garden) production, have placed about one-third of cereal production in women's hands.

Data show that the conjugal family unit has become the most effective unit of subsistence production; production per person falls as the number of economically active persons in the household increases much beyond the size of the nuclear family. Thus women are substituting for the labor of dependent males who farmed for the household heads a generation ago as part of the gandu system, gandu referring to the family farming unit and any fields cultivated by

Table 6

TABLE INDICATING THE SEXUAL DIVISION OF AGRICULTURAL TASKS FOR PRINCIPLE CROPS AMONGST THE MAURI

Crops	Hausa Name	Sow	Used	Harvest	Transport	Sold
Maize	masàraa	H & F	H & F	H & F	H & F	F
Millet	haSii	H & F	H	H & enf.	H (& F)	H (1)
Okra	kuBèewaa	F	F	F	F	F
Fermented locust bean cakes	yaakùwaa	H	H	H	H	F
Bambara ground nuts	gujjiyaa	F	F	F	F	F
Sorghum	daawìa	H & F	H	H	H	H(1)
Gourds	dumaa	H	H	H	H	H & F
Beans	waakee	H	H	H & F & enf.	H	H
Cassava	Roogòo	H	H	H & F	H & F	H & F
Ground nuts	kʷalanšee	H	H	H	H	H
"Cocoa"	ʔayaa	F	F	F	F	F
Cotton	kàaDaa	H	H	H	H	H & F
Sesame		H	H	H	H	H & F
Red pepper	tonkaa tʷankaa	H	H	H	H	H & F
Onions	ʔàlbasàa	H	H	H	H	H
Tobacco	taabàa	H	H	H	H	H

(1) Men are responsible for the sale of sheaves (of sorghum) and of grains in large quanities; women can be responsible for the sale of small quantities of grain, selling it either for their husband's profit or for their own, if their husband has given them the millet. They can also dispose of the harvest coming from a field inherited (or given) by their own family. The cultivation of this field can then be done conjointly by the woman's husband and herself or by one of her children.

Source: Piault 1965

that unit. However, it appears that women practicing dune cultivation of cereals achieve yields inferior to those achieved by men on garden plots. Women are not receiving the extension and credit services provided to men through the agricultural cooperatives.

Changes in production strategies have been accompanied by changes in concepts of property. Women are sometimes said to possess gandu, which has come to mean any piece of ground over which an individual has exclusive rights. A quarter of dune land parcels are now cultivated by women, of which 22% have been received through inheritance. Matrilineal inheritance of land, once nonexistant, is becoming more common. Nonetheless, 77% of women's parcels are still considered gamana, individual plots granted by the household head to members of the household. Women exercise only usufructory rights over gamana (Raynaut 1976).

In Zinder province, the situation is considerably different; the commercialization of the economy, and emergence of economic individualism has not proceeded as far as in Maradi. In a recently formed village north of the official limit of cultivation, women farm with their husbands to obtain the cereals ration. In a village populated by descendents of Tuareg vassals, south of the limit of cultivation, women do not farm gandu lands, and some do not farm at all due to post-marital seclusion (armen kuble) (Henderson and Arnould, n.d.). In a pottery producing village near Mirria they do not farm at all. Men displaced them from their traditional cultivation rights a generation ago. In addition, they had found it more remunerative to specialize in pottery production.

A Kanuri-Hausa village in southern Mirria was typical of many villages south of the 400 mm isohyet. There women help to sow and harvest the gandu fields, although they do not clear or weed them. With the sporadic help of their male relatives, they also cultivate individual plots allocated them by their husbands. Some husbands help them to sow. Some women are wealthy enough to hire agricultural laborers to weed for them. In this village mean gamana size was 1.84 ha, but ranged from 0.1 to 2.69 ha. In addition, women had small plots of ground nuts which averaged 0.1 ha in area (Arnould, in preparation). In Matameye county, mean gamana size was 0.1 ha and in Magaria county it was 0.25 ha in the early 1970's. (République du Niger 1974). In Kantché, where women do not participate much in cereals cultivation, they do garden, particularly in polygynous households (Nicolas 1956:10).

Women use fungicide when they can obtain it, respect officially recommended planting densities (primarily because their fields are so small), apply some organic fertilizer (although it formally belongs to their husbands), or picket goats on their fields, but are generally less active in the fields because of their other responsibilities (République du Niger 1974; Belloncle 1976: Appendices VI and VII).

Women's fields in one Hausa-Kanuri village were more productive per unit of area sown than men's, producing 205 kgs/cereals/ha as opposed to 132 kgs/cereals/ha on gandu plots in 1978-79. Gamana were less productive overall than gandu. Women's ground nut yields were worth an average of about $21.00 in 1978-79 (Arnould, in preparation). Women use their produce or harvest for a variety of purposes. They exchange it for clothing for themselves and their children; they transform some into prepared food for sales. About 73% of women report that some of their ground nut harvest is put aside to plant the following year (République du Niger 1974: 10)

In three villages studied in 1977, one-third of women obtained seed from their own granaries, one-half from relatives. In these villages women did not consult the extension services, nor did they desire new agricultural machinery: 29% of women vs. 84% of men desired new agricultural tools (Henderson and Arnould, n.d.)

4.2.1 Livestock

In three villages studied in 1977: 42% of women claimed to own some of the animals grazing on their fields. Women tend to keep small livestock at home, while men entrust their large livestock to Fulani herders. Women also leave some livestock in their mothers' care so that co-wives will not become jealous, nor husbands dispute ownership in case of divorce.

In one of these villages, 21 women owned 198 head of stock, about 9 head each. Of this total, 87% were small ruminants, and 11.5% were cattle. Men owned a greater proportion of livestock of greater value than women. However, more of women's total resources were tied up in livestock than were men's resources. On average the value of a women's herd was about $293, which is about three times the value of her annual agricultural production ($99), and fifteen times the value of earnings from the sale of prepared foods ($20). (Arnould, in preparation) Women in a pottery-producing village were able to obtain large number of cattle from the proceeds of their craft activities. Nine of the most important potters owned an average of four head each.

Women control a large number of the small ruminants in the Central region. Throughout the area, clothing, gifts, and purchase of more valuable livestock are the three most important uses to which livestock are put (République du Niger 1974: 10). In the three village sample mentioned above, two-thirds of women indicated they had sold animals during the past year. Only six percent said they used their earnings to buy food for the household.

In villages contacted by the Women's Animation program, women seemed anxious to obtain ground nut seed loans, baobob tree seedlings, and new agricultural inputs, including Maradi red goats, and improved hybrid roosters. The livestock improvement programs met with limited success, in part because of technical problems, and in part because men appropriated much of the new stock for themselves (République du Niger 1974, Barrès, et al. 1975).

4.3 Small-Scale Manufacturing

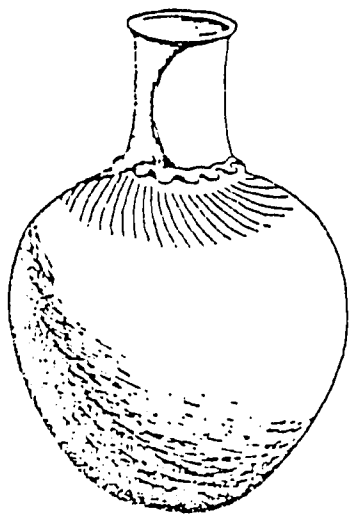
In the Filingué region, women make mats from doum palm, grow gourds for utensils, make soap and weave calabash covers. A few women still spin cotton, though this craft is dying out, and in the village of Chikal, a lone woman potter can be found (Giles 1978: 13-14).

Mawri women of Dogondoutchi make small baskets, and do a little embroidery. They also decorate gourds, and in their leisure hours spin cotton. (Piault 1965: 56ff).

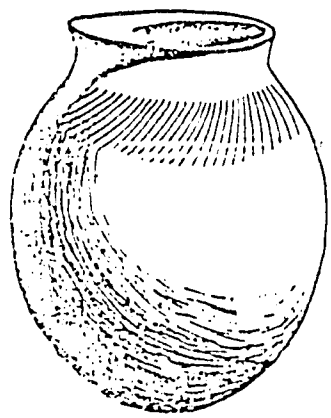
Buzu women throughout the region make several different kinds of mats. One is woven from long strips of woven and dyed doum fiber, the other is woven from a continuous band of fiber. Women of other groups also have taken up this craft. Kanuri-Hausa women make calabash covers. Some 95% of the women in Magaria county manufacture peanut oil (Republique du Niger 1974: 10). In the southern part of Zinder province, there are numerous natron (hydrous sodium carbonate) seeps which produce a continual thin crust of salt. Women may devote a morning or two per week to sweeping up piles of this material. Natron is given to animals and is used in some sauces. A woman can earn up to $50 a year from natron collecting (Arnould, in preparation).

Around Dogondoutchi, Gayi (Wacha canton) and Mirria, many women specialize in pottery production. Some types of Mawri pots are illustrated in Figure 7. Some thirteen different kinds of utility pots are made around Mirria, but water jars (tulu) and a type of cooking pot (kuloguna) predominate. In Mirria proper, pottery is decorated using designs brought in by a French military office. In one village near Mirria, annual pottery production amounted to 34,000 vessels, valued at $18,621 (subtracting 10% for breakage). Nine women accounted for 50% of production, but over 100 women participated. Some women earned as much as $400/year from this trade. In Mawri country, the maximum a woman could earn, turning out 15 pots a week 9 months a year would be about $300 (Piault 1965: 56ff).

Figure 7. Mawri Pottery

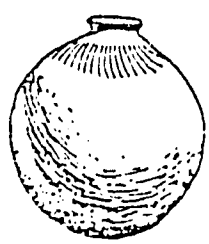


Long-necked jar
Height: 80 cm



Short-necked jar
Height: 60 cm

Round pot
without neck



Small-necked pot
Height: 34 cm

In large towns like Maradi and Zinder, craft activities are limited due to seclusion of married women. A survey conducted in 1977 in Zinder found no women craft specialists, however it was subsequently learned that women perform rural crafts, embroider and make decorative leather horse collars, among other things (Arnould 1981).

4.4 Marketing and Commerce

Many women participate in the markets of the region which were given a boost by the development of the colonial ground nut trade. Thirty years ago women were the dominant element in the markets of Matameye county as vendors of prepared foods, garden crops and animal products (Nicolas 1960: 27). Men have subsequently come to dominate trade there. Today women are active sellers of cereals, ground nuts, peanut oil, potash, condiments and prepared foods and animal products. Many women attend market between 2 and 4 times per month although women's participation in town is constrained by Islamic strictures accompanying marriage (Saunders 1978). Women generally sell and market what they have produced; those who act as retailers (58% of those questioned) usually turn over their wares within one week due to a shortage of cash (Arnould and McCullough 1980: 30). Many young girls hawk kola nuts, limes, and candy on market days, taking goods on credit in the morning and pocketing the proceeds in the afternoon.

Women are buyers as well as sellers. Fifty-seven percent of women consumers questioned attended market at least three times per month in Zinder province. Thirty percent of women questioned came to purchase manufactured goods, primarily cloth. Ten percent purchased cereals (although on a smaller scale than men) and four percent purchased livestock (Arnould & McCullough 1980: 36-37).

Nicolas' (1962) work in the 1950's suggests that at that time fewer women than men had extensive personal budgets. However in an agricultural community in Mirria studied in 1979, it was learned that 15 women sold $800 worth of agricultural produce, $1640 worth of livestock, and $200 worth of prepared food over a nine-month period. This accounted for 80 percent of their total income. In a pottery producing village studied in 1979, fifteen women sold over $4000 worth of pottery through their itinerant male relatives, $760 worth of livestock and $370 of prepared foods over a nine-month period. Such sales accounted for sixty percent of their revenues. Secluded women in Zinder were able to earn from the sales of prepared foods only about $100 per year, at least 75 percent of their total revenues. Only urban women with co-resident unmarried female relatives could engage in this trade, since it is the latter who hawk the foods (Arnould, in preparation).

In a village in Maradi province, 80 percent of village women engage in the sales of prepared foods, as do many in Zinder province (Raynaut 1979: 576; Belloncle 1976: Appendix VII). They even sell food within the household, although not to their own husbands. Men spend an average of $50 to $100 and women between $50 and $60 annually on prepared food in the village studied by Raynaut (1979: 576).

Activities normally considered part of women's service functions within households in the West have taken on a mercantile character in Niger as women assume a greater share of responsibility for their own welfare.

Many other women in town engage in a doorway trade in cosmetics and household goods and run restaurants and rent houses (Saunders 1978). No date were available on their numbers or revenues. Few are inscribed in commercial registries, nor do they participate in the Nigerien Chamber of Commerce (Association des Femmes du Niger: n.d.:3).

4.5 Domestic Life

A wide variety of marriage forms occur in the Central Regions of Niger. In Mawri county, preferential matrilateral cross-cousin marriage and other forms of alliance between close kin (armen gida) are favored in some rural areas. In Mirria, armen gida is preferred for first marriages and patrilateral cross cousin marriage practiced (Piault 1976 97; Saunders 1978; Arnould, in preparation). Armen gida is cheaper to contract than other forms of marriages and is thus a good strategy to follow in a context of brittle marital unions. Older women with established incomes may engage in je ka da kore ka (go with your bow) marriage which allows them to retain their independence while preserving their moral reputation (Arnould, in preparation). Other voluntary alliances may be contracted secondarily but women do not have the right to act as their own representative in marriage negotiations (Saunders 1978).

In the past, the household was a patriarchal corporate unit, and tasks were assigned on the basis of age and gender (Roberts 1979: 64). Today marriage has become a contract based upon an exchange of services which works only so long as both partners find it profitable (Thompson 1976: 137-141). The role of wife is a very labor-intensive one. The bulk of her labor is committed to unpaid household production, but she has also begun to substitute for, rather than help the men in subsistence tasks due to massive male labor migration (Saunders 1978: 247; Faulkingham 1976; Piault 1965: 12-27; Roberts 1979: 64-65). In some areas, it is water carrying that is the most onerous task, in others it is the threshing and milling of cereals with mortar and pestle which consumes most of women's time and energy (Piault 1965: 12; Belloncle 1976: Appendices VI and VII).

The increase in women's work load and the difficulty which many men have in supporting their household throughout the year as custom demands leads to considerable tension between spouses. Women defend their interests in many ways. Increasing the number of services for which they demand monetary compensation is one way; accepting a co-wife or seclusion which reduces their workload is another way; adultery committed in exchange for monetary presents is another; and finally, divorce is a last resort (Saunders 1978: 249).

Among Hausa, divorce rates are quite high: 32/1000 married women per year in Mirria. Sixty-seven percent of all first marriages end in divorce there, as do 52% of all second marriages (Saunders 1978: 264; 279). Divorce initiated by a woman can be obtained only through a legal procedure, and a male witness must speak for the woman. However, it is relatively easy to obtain and entails no dishonor for women (Saunders 1979). Some of the bridewealth is lost, and weaned children usually stay with their father's household. In rural areas, divorce is less frequent because wives may be harder to obtain. Among Buzu, the cash component of bridewealth payments is set so high that the penalty to the husband for divorce is great (Thompson 1976: 143).

Marital instability has a negative effect upon household economics. Men cannot easily develop cohesiveness within the household in order to consolidate resources to obtain new inputs with which to improve land use practices. Wives for their part do not want to tie up capital in forms difficult to disaggregate in the event of separation. Wives are likewise disinclined to invest heavily in improving their gamana, because men can always reclaim them for the gandu, or exclude women from cultivation entirely (Thompson 1976: 165; Roberts 1979: 65).

Domestic life among most elite women does not differ greatly from that of other women although some tasks are eased. Neither their husbands nor their own economic or educational achievements serve as a springboard into public, political or religious roles. Elite women spend more time with other women in seclusion, and attend maternal child clinics more often, but are generally excluded from official or semi-official functions. Husband and wife may enjoy greater companionship at home, especially when the wife is employed (Saunders 1978: 259-261; 327).

4.6 Education

No data dealing directly with girls' participation in school was found. Many Nigeriens of the central regions are hostile or indifferent to schooling, which impedes the extension even of basic literacy programs. Fewer girls attend school than boys. Zinder province had a total school-attending population of 28,000 in 1977, about 13 percent of potential students (République du Niger 1977:

166-168). If girls represented 5 percent of this number, there were 1400 of them in school. If, on the other hand, they represent about 30 percent of the school attendees as suggested by the Association des Femmes du Niger (n.d.), then they may number some 8,400. Reality probably lies between these two extremes for the central region. In Mirria in the early 1970s, girls represented less than 5 percent of a secondary school population of 246 pupils (Saunders 1978: 109). In Zinder, there was an all-girls school with several hundred pupils in the late 1970s. These girls were often the object of derisive comments concerning their morality, which stemmed perhaps from the fact that unchaperoned bachelor administrative personnel frequently dated them. This pervasive attitude towards educated girls added to the pressures upon girls for early marriage and discouraged female participation in higher education.

4.7 Health

Women are highly motivated to participate in health-related programs, particularly because of the loss in productivity that care for children ill with malaria, measles or spinal meningitis entails, and because of the nutritional and physical stress they suffer during childbirth. Health and healthy children permit them to pursue other activities (Speece 1980: 5; Barrès et al. 1975: 8; Giles 1977).

Women traditionally gave birth at home, alone or attended only by a traditional mid-wife who intervened only after birth (Belloncle 1976: 52 ff). Today they frequently attend local maternal child health clinics. Saunders (1978: 106) reported 218 prenatal visits to the Mirria (population 7000) clinic in 1973, and 250 visits to a well-baby clinic in a six month period. The maternity clinic in Zinder town commonly saw 200 women a day in 1977 (Dr. Jallier, personal communication). Many women cannot attend clinics because they are too far away and they lack the funds, knowledge or consent of their husbands to make the trip.

4.8 Religion

Women's religious activities in the central region have been discussed in detail elsewhere (Monfougou-Nicolas 1972; Echard 1978). Islam, as practiced in Hausa-speaking regions, leaves little public space for women's self-expression (Echard 1978: 554; Sahel Hebdo 8/18/80: 13). Women pray alone, or in small groups on the margins of male congregations. They receive little formal religious instruction beyond the basic prayers. A few women receive religious tutoring at home (Saunders 1978: 114-115). Nevertheless, those who can would like to make the pilgrimmage to Mecca, and women provide about 80 percent of the clientele of the Islamic marabouts who provide them with charms and potions (Echard 1978: 555; Henderson & Arnould, n.d.)

Pre-Islamic animist cults, still practiced in Tahoua and Maradi provinces are linked to the old system of patrilineal clans and thus are not woman-oriented. Opposed to these male dominated religious instructions is the bori possession cult, an almost exclusively feminine institution very widely followed (Echard 1978). Through possession by one or more of the large number of spirits, the rich ceremonial life of the cult can play a psychotherapeutic role in dealing with biological sterility, and provide an outlet for women's intellectual and spiritual creativity. The spirits represent, mirror, and reinterpret the modern social order. Participation enables women to come to terms with the crisis in the sex-gender system and its rapid transformation (Piault 1965: 115; Roberts 1976: 65). Through participation, women are also able to express, albeit strictly within the cult, personality traits of hunger for power, extraversion, and aggression which men routinely exercise in everyday life (Monfouga-Nicolas 1972: 338-339; 343ff). The cult is called upon to cure a variety of states of mental distress which are mainly the product of guilt and a variety of ailments. Though widely practiced, the cult is absent in Mirria, perhaps due to the activities of the Tijjaniya Islamic brotherhood (Saunders 1978: 115).

4.9 Professions

A few women have entered the professional world, primarily as teachers, nurses, pharmacists, secretaries and switchboard operators (See Table 7). Other women have turned traditional occupations into paying specialties.

One traditional occupation which has been re-established is that of mid-wife (Belloncle 1976: 52). Generally every village has a traditional mid-wife, a woman who is post-menopausal, who sometimes practices her occupation as an hereditary obligation (gado), and who usually is recompensed with food, kola, and other gifts. Women's Animation has retrained some 600 women to be medical auxilaries in the central region (Barrès, et al. 1975: 76). Notions of pre-natal care, sanitary delivery practices and worthwhile nutritional supplements to feed weaned children have been taught (Belloncle 1976: 63-72). This program has been successful, partly because men and women see in it the reinforcement of traditional procreative roles of women.

Another traditional occupation undergoing expansion in recent years is that of courtesanship (karuwanci). Hausa courtesanship resembles the Japanese institution of geisha rather than Western style prostitution. There were several dozen courtesans in Dogondoutchi in the sixties as in other medium size towns, and there were some 1000 in Zinder during the drought years, primarily Fulani and Tuareg (Piault 1965: 104 ff; Saunders 1978: 255).

Table 7. Occupations of Mirria Women: Some Typical Examples

A. Traditional Sector

Labor:
- Daka: pounding grain for pay
- sussuka: threshing grain for pay

Sale of Foodstuffs or Prepared Foods:
- tova: frying and selling various sorts of doughnuts such as waina (millet cakes) and pankasou (wheat cakes)
- hura: preparing and selling hura (cooked millet flour mixed with sour milk and water), a common mid-day meal
- tuwo: preparing and selling tuwo, the standard evening meal, of various types of cooked grain flours served as a stiff porridge with a sauce of vegetables, spices, and meat if available
- maka: making and selling some-make "macaroni" from flour and water, processed through a small hand-operated press, and dried in the sun
- mai gujiya: producing peanut oil by hand as a home industry and selling the oil (mai gujiya) and its by-product kulikuli (fried peanut meal balls)
- save-save: petty retailing from one's doorway of the typical feminine stock of spices, sauce ingredients (tomatoes, onions, dried leaves, red pepper, etc.), fruits, and kola nuts

Other Traditional Occupations of Women:
- commercant: large-scale retail sales of a stock also suitable for men, sold at weekly markets
- gine tukwane: making and selling at market various types of pottery: tukwane, cooking pots; gargoletti, a type of water pot
- karuwanci: courtesanship (practiced by formerly married women)
- kitso: braiding women's hair into the various elaborate braided hair styles typical of Mirria Hausa fashion (kitso, hairdo)
- mai gida: landlord of rental housing, restricted to a very few well-to-do women; also practiced by men
- talle: hawking, the most common occupation of young girls, also practiced by some older women; typically involves hawking of kola, cigarettes, etc. from a head tray in public places

B. Modern Sector

instituteur: teacher (primary school level).	Also practiced by men.
infirmiere: nurse	"
secretaire: secretary	"
telephoniste: switchboard operator	"

Such occupations are only open to educated women with a minimum of six, and for many positions ten or twelve, years of education. Most women practicing these occupations in Mirria are not native to Mirria.

Source: Saunders 1978: 125

Women are attracted to courtesanship because it allows more personal independence from familial obligations and sexual freedom than any other role in contemporary society. Such women were active in the now defunct political party, participated in the Women's Animation programs and are active in the bori cult (République du Niger 1974: 6; Piault 1975: 104).

Many women become karuwai after an unsuccessful first marriage, and may eventually re-marry (Piault 1965: 104; Saunders 1978: 255). Some courtesans live together under the tutelage of a madam, who may be a highly regarded member of the community; others operate independently. Personal insecurity and public disgrace are the inevitable costs of this lifestyle (Piault 1965: 108).

While women are certainly not without some professional options, Saunders feels that economic opportunities for them have declined, at least in Zinder province. She cites three causes of this decline:

- few women own land or other real estate;
- women have no institutionalized access to labor, and suffer from a shortage of labor inputs; and
- cultural values shared by both sexes and expressed in a variety of social sanctions limit women's aspirations

(Saunders 1978, 124-129).

5.0 Conclusions

Sex-gender roles and the sexual division of labor in the Niger Republic are undergoing rapid and deep-seated changes as part of the development process. The effects for women have been contradictory. Many women have benefitted from the expansion of commercial opportunities. They are frequently able to accumulate more disposable assets than their husbands. However, they lack investment opportunities and management capabilities.

The range and intensity of women's productive activities have also increased. In rural areas, some women are beginning to demand monetary compensation for many domestic tasks formerly compensated indirectly through the husband's contribution to the household. They have also intensified cultivation, traditional crafts activities and invested in livestock with more commercial aims in view than was traditionally the case. In the cities, women engage in numerous "service" occupations such as food preparation and courtesanship. Among a small segment of the population, women's work outside the home has become acceptable. Many women are becoming secretaries, clerical workers, teachers, maternity clinic and hospital workers, civil servants and military personnel. A few women have entered the industrial work force.

Because of radical modifications of intra-household cooperation, women are called upon to provide an increasing share of their own and their children's subsistence needs from these activities. Due to stagnation in the primary sector of the economy, men are less able than formerly to fulfill their role as breadwinner. These tasks have been added to their already onerous burden of domestic work. Increasing women's work load contributes to increasing polarity between the genders and marital instability (Diarra 1971; Saunders 1978).

Women's ability to contribute to the growth of the Nigerien economy is hampered by a number of factors seen in various contexts. In the rural sector, women to not have access to new agricultural technology. Sources of credit scarce even for men, are almost nonexistent for women. The tendency for men to monopolize land and livestock aggravates women's problems. However, women are far less likely than men to be placed in untenable debt situations vis-a-vis the government-sponsored cooperatives.

A constraint upon women's participation in national development of equal acuity is health-related. Women suffer from many ailments connected with frequent pregnancy, childbirth and sterility, in addition to chronic malnutrition, malaria, measles, spinal meningitis and parasites. Caring for themselves and for sick children limits the amount of time they can devote to productive activities. Although some 1200 women health workers have been trained, Niger has over 8000 villages, many of them far from medical facilities (Barres et al. 1976: 76; Republique du Niger 1977: 166).

Women's access to new careers is constrained by unequal participation in education. Unequal participation is due primarily to the high value placed on marriage and motherhood, suspicion of the moral character of educated women, lack of career opportunities, and male perception of a threat to their authority by educated women. Post-primary education is mainly limited to women of elite families.

Islam is an important factor in national unification, and does not seem prejudicial to women's legal rights (Saunders 1979). However, the spread of Islamic values, particularly the practice of wife seclusion inhibits the participation of many urban women in the economy. Islamic values, along with women's exclusion from development, do seem to have negative effects upon women's self-conception. As a result many women have turned inward to the remarkably multi-faceted bori cult, and to increased participation in other women's ceremonial activities (biki, suna, arme) as sources of economic and emotional self-expression (Diarra 1971; Monfouga-Nicolas 1972; Echard 1978).

Women's contribution to the Nigerien economy and the "Societe de Developpement" advocated by the President fo the Republic can be promoted by increased educational opportunity of all kinds and at all levels of society and expanded and better-funded programs of Women's Animation run by and for local women (Barrès et al. 1975; Correze and Barrès 1978; Roberts 1976; Nelson 1979).

Glossary

armen gida	marriage between close kin including first cousin marriage
armen kuble	post-marital seclusion
biki	ceremony
bori	Hausa women's possession cult
folevey	Zarma women's possession cult
gamana	individually farmed plots
gandu	household fields
gado	inheritance including property and social obligations
je ka da kore ka	"go with your bow" - type of Hausa marriage
karuwai	courtesan
karuwanci	courtesanship
mestiza	woman of mixed parentage
sadaki	birde wealth

List of Acronyms

BDRN Building	Banque du Developpement de la Republique du Niger
INSEE	Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques
SEDES	Societe d'etudes pour le developpement economic et social
SONIPRIM	Printing company in Niamey

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ADDENDUM

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