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**Women in Niger.  
Socio-Economic Roles in Agro-Pastoral Production, Natural  
Resource Management and Off-Farm Production**

**By:  
Wendy Wilson**

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**GENESYS**

**WOMEN IN NIGER: SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLES IN AGRO-PASTORAL PRODUCTION,  
NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND OFF-FARM PRODUCTION**

April 1992

Prepared for the GENESYS Project  
The Futures Group and USAID/Niamey

by

Wendy Wilson, Ph.D.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACDI	Agence Canadienne de Developpement International
ADF	African Development Foundation
AFN	Association des Femmes Nigeriennes
API	Assessment of Program Impact
DFA	Development Fund for Africa
FAO	Food and Agriculture Office (of the United Nations)
GON	Government of Niger
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
NDD	Niamey Department Development Project
NRMS	Natural Resource Management/Sahel
SOW	Statement of Work
SSRC	Social Science Research Council
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
WID	Women in Development

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

In October, 1991, the USAID Niamey Mission requested assistance from the GENESYS Project to produce a state-of-the-knowledge report on women's productive activities in Niger and a Women in Development (WID) Action Plan outline. The purpose of the report was to update knowledge and to provide a summary document that can be used as a reference tool in project design and implementation, and in preparing the Niamey Mission WID Action Plan Outline. The report was to stimulate discussion and reflection that would lead to the identification of crucial management steps and realistic project and program objectives.

Data was drawn from diverse sources. The text includes excerpts from the recently published 1988 census, from numerous documents housed at the USAID Niger Mission, a preliminary desk study of relevant literature that was available in Niamey (Taylor-Powell, 1991), a draft report by Dunbar and Djibo (see below) and additional information provided by the consultant from field experience and other publications on the subjects of women and rural development in Niger.

A companion report entitled "Islam, Public Policy, and the Legal Status of Women in Niger" has been prepared by Roberta Ann Dunbar and Hadiza Djibo at the request of the GENESYS Project (October, 1991). Dunbar's report provides an understanding of broad issues affecting Nigerien women in a contemporary national context, particularly in terms of public policy issues such as the newly developed Family Codes and the Rural Codes.<sup>1</sup>

### A National Overview

The first section of the report presents a national view of the condition of Nigerien women today as well as selected issues pertinent to women in communities throughout Niger. According to the results of the second general census of the population in 1988, women are 50.44% of the population, whose total is estimated at 7,247,620. Women in the reproductive years constitute almost one-half of the population of women in the country.

Niger has one of the highest fertility rates in the world at 7%, and only 30% of Niger's population live within 5 kilometers of any health facility. One significant corollary of rapid population growth has been the reduced labor capacity of women (due to frequent pregnancies and nursing), and that the poor nutritional and other health conditions of small children also greatly reduce the ability of Nigerien women to participate effectively in the economy, since such conditions require women to spend more time as caretakers (infant mortality remains high at 138 - 158/1,000 in 1992).

Although in 1987 about 22% of civilservants were women, current reports state that today only 5.7% of Nigerien women are literate, which suggests to what extent women in the rural sector are both currently unable to participate in formal economic processes such as the use of banks and other credit facilities, and how far they are removed from decision-making in the extension and input delivery systems (livestock, agriculture, health) which affect their productive activities.

### Cultural and Gender Specificity in the Rural Economy

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<sup>1</sup> The Family Codes are meant to address equality of opportunity for women and men, and to draw new legal parameters regarding married women's rights. The Rural Codes, on the other hand, have been developed in order to reform existing land tenure conditions, with a view towards improved regulation and exploitation of natural resources.

The second section of the report reviews women's roles and responsibilities in agro-pastoral systems, natural resource management, and off-farm production in Niger. The text addresses issues of gender specificity in roles in household economies, family welfare, time and labor management, and work responsibility in grain production and in gardens, in the context of both family and individual fields. The report confirms that women in Niger are not a homogeneous group, and that the evidence of intra-group differentiation is significant.

In today's Niger, it is still important to bear in mind that there is appreciable fluidity between ethnic groups. Although ethnic categories are distinctly defined, people have moved in and out of these categories. On the other hand, social stratification remains an influence on modes of behavior, particularly in terms of the organization of labor. At times it conditions differential access to resources, as among the Tamachek speaking populations, and among settled Fulbe. The report discusses caste, class, age, and other differences within and across ethnic groups and agro ecological zones as they affect women and their socio-economic environment.<sup>2</sup> An interesting and important focus of the study is the analysis of how the situation of Nigerien women is changing, and what constraints and opportunities they are facing now.

Several topics significant to the conditions of most women in rural Niger have been noted as common features in the state-of-the knowledge report.<sup>3</sup> Basic findings included an across-the board importance of small livestock management by women to household economies, and an increasing shift of decision-making from men to women, as male out-migration increases and as women themselves become more involved in rural wage earning activities. In many cases, such activities actually replace roles that were formally characterized by relations of non-monetized reciprocity. Other features of Nigerien society affecting all women which are discussed in the text include divorce, wife seclusion, Islamic practice, spirit possession, and reciprocal distribution (including gift giving).

### **Natural Resource Management Issues**

There are clearly natural resource management issues that have particular weight in terms of women's roles in rural economies. There are particular agricultural and land use activities that are uniquely the purview of women in Niger. One is tempted to speak of the "feminine aspects of the ecosystem," or even the "female role in the ecosystem" in view of the high gender specialization that has traditionally existed in Niger. Women in Niger appear to have their own "ecological niche" in terms of land use practices associated with women.

In Niger there are extremely localized notions of usufructury and proprietary rights to trees and plants, although according to A. Wilson (1989) some of these customary rights are breaking down, such as gathering of "semi-wild" plants and leaves. Tree ownership is part of land-use agreements. Where land is scarce, women are likely to have reduced access, since a local priority is that men cultivate staple cereal crops for communal use. There is intense use of arable land, including inter-cropping and the use of lowlands by women for vegetable gardens.

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<sup>2</sup> The terms "caste" and "slave" as commonly known are not adequate to describe the diversity and fluidity of socio-economic roles which obtain among women in rural Niger. Among most of Niger's ethnic groups social stratification has been an important societal feature, and many women benefitted from the distribution of work among a wider population of women in the community than what currently is available. Outmigration of women of lower social standing has greatly affected women's time management, and subsequently, their levels of production and choice of production activities.

<sup>3</sup> In the course of the study it became apparent that there are significant gaps in the data, both in terms of geographic coverage and in terms of knowledge of the scope and variety of women's productive activities.

The report addresses the types of activities that women are involved in that use land or land products for household use and for occasional commercialization.

### **Off-farm Income Generation**

Increased monetization of the economy, the droughts of recent years, and the economic crisis within Niger have all worked fundamental changes on household economies and their survival strategies. Women in Niger are most active economically on the local level (Fofana, 1982; Diarra, 1971; Arnold and Henderson, 1982). The importance of these localized economic activities may not be apparent on the regional, or national level however, despite their increasingly crucial role as men migrate seasonally for wage earning opportunities. Recent data indicate that there are fewer and fewer in-kind exchanges in the rural sector, and that cash exchange is becoming more prevalent (IFPRI, 1991). Staple foods are increasingly being purchased to offset production shortages. They are often paid for with income from the sale of small ruminants.

Women represent only 4.5% of the private sector (Ernst & Young, 1991). However, studies indicate that women are active on a year round basis in income generating activities such as small ruminant management, vegetable gardening, and craft production, particularly handicrafts such as mat and basket weaving, leather work (notably among the Tuareg), and pottery. The gathering and sale of wild plants, hairplaiting and grain pounding for cash also provide occasional revenues. Other income generating activities include the preparation and selling of food (notably among the Hausa), and oil extraction from local plants, mostly groundnuts.

### **Summary and Recommendations**

Part Three presents recommendations for future actions that are both research and non-research oriented. Women's roles in farm or garden production, how they function in local natural resource management, and how these systems have been secured through traditional land tenure systems are issues which require more applied research. Criteria need to be developed for assessing women's roles in exploitation and management of the resource base. Timely surveys which have the objective of updating the existing knowledge are critical to the development of program plans which rely on assumptions that reflect the current realities of rural women in Niger. Particularly in terms of off-farm income generation, it was found that there is a need for reality testing and household level information to indicate women's actual contributions to and beyond the rural economy.

The dramatic (and positive) political changes that have taken place in the last two years, such as the preparation of a draft constitution, the development of the Rural Codes, and the increasing political visibility of women in such arenas as the National Conference (May, 1991), new administrative appointments at the sous-préfecture and arrondissement levels, and in ministerial posts (Ministère des Affaires Sociales et de la Promotion de la Femme). However, the rate at which similar changes may take place in the economic sphere is uncertain. Although it is true that custom and tradition often function as constraints to women's political progress, traditional land use and economic processes are also embedded in the same cultural contexts. The report reveals that in some cases, further regulation of land use without increased knowledge of how women exploit the land may lead to their further economic disenfranchisement. Specific recommendations include:

- creation of systems through use of technical assistance visit (for issues such as survey design, selection and training of people, particularly women; identification of GON or other unit responsible) and design of strategies for the collection of gender-dissaggregated data for all mission projects for use in base-line studies, monitoring, and assessment of progress towards stated program targets;

- expansion of credit initiatives which target women, and which improve their production and management capacity;
- support to the formation of rural women's groups in a variety of sectors (agricultural production, social development) as well as support to national associations which affect government policy towards such groups, and an analysis of linkages between women's national organizations and their rural clients;
- creation and implementation of training modules destined for men to encourage and assist their support to women's initiatives;
- increase capacity of the GON to establish gender dissagregated targets and to collect gender dissagregated data.

# **WOMEN IN NIGER: SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLES IN AGRO-PASTORAL PRODUCTION, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND OFF-FARM PRODUCTION**

## **BACKGROUND**

In October, 1991, the USAID Niamey Mission requested assistance from the GENESYS Project to produce a state-of-the-knowledge report on women's activities in Niger and a Women in Development (WID) Action Plan outline. The report was to review women's roles and responsibilities in agro-pastoral systems, natural resources management and off-farm production in Niger. Discussion in the text was to address various aspects of women's roles in household economies, family welfare, time and labor management, and their responsibilities in agro-pastoral activities in the context of both family and individual fields.

Women's responsibilities in livestock production, their role or lack thereof in natural resource management, and their access, use and control of land, forest and water resources was also suggested as a topic of inquiry. Women's roles in marketing and market structures, and differences in household management by literate and non-literate women were also areas of interest.

It was intended that this report would address issues of social stratification, caste, class, age, and differences within and across ethnic groups and agro-ecological zones. An interesting and important focus of the inquiry was the analysis of how these factors, both socio-economic and environmental, might be changing over time.

The text that follows is a synthesis of reports that had been done earlier, including a report on women that addresses legal as well as social issues (Dunbar and Djibo, 1991), a preliminary desk study of relevant literature that was available in Niamey (Taylor-Powell, 1991), and additional information provided by the consultant from field experience and other publications on the subject. The purpose of the requested report is to update knowledge, and to provide a summary document that can be used as a reference tool in project design and implementation, as well as in preparing the Niamey Mission WID Action Plan. It is envisioned that the document should stimulate discussion and reflection that will lead to the identification of crucial management steps and realistic project and program objectives. As such, the report elaborates on potentials and constraints facing women in Niger, and offers specific, action-oriented recommendations for how the mission can address them. Most recommendations address the next three years of project activity in the Mission portfolio. This is mainly due to the nature of the Niger Mission API, which is set at a 2 to 3 year planning framework based on current political and economic conditions in the country, and which reflects certain transformations in the political economy of Niger that were not evident at the time of the development of the CPSP.

In reviewing the available literature and conducting some verification inquiries, it became clear that existing statistical data on women in Niger (particularly in view of the Mission's program objectives)

is extremely uneven.<sup>1</sup> The documentation which does exist includes mainly case studies which, although informative, describe small populations and have little comparative data, reflecting the realities of Niger's geography and other limiting field conditions.

Discussion between the consultant and the Mission social scientist centered on finding a way to present disparate information. It was decided that rather than having such data dispersed within the main text, which discusses socio-economic characteristics, production adaptations and environmental conditions (Part I), that salient issues affecting women's activities would be presented with specific field-based examples (Part 2). By organizing the data in this way, significant gaps in information, data weaknesses and areas requiring further investigation or analysis become more easily recognizable. Additionally, this will be a step toward the collation of data for analysis, as past reports are assembled, data organized, and linkages between inputs and outputs begin to be identified.

## INTRODUCTION

The report findings will be divided into several sections in an attempt to coherently reflect available knowledge and literature on the subject. Several topics emerged from the data as significant to the conditions of women in most, if not all, communities in Niger, and these have been compiled in list form with accompanying text. Many of these have earlier been identified in development and other (anthropological/sociological, historical) literature as typical of women's communities in Africa, and an attempt is made to discuss them with a view towards the importance of the productive role of women in Niger, the nature of the Nigerien woman's relationship to her environment, and the reproductive role of women in economic, social and biological terms. The idea here is to present issues that significantly affect women in Niger in as contemporary a context as possible, including the cultural aspects of women's economic environment around the country, and the constraints and opportunities that their present situations may offer. Off-farm income generation activities are discussed to the extent that data is available. Partly because of our concern with describing current conditions as they relate to past ones and not visa versa, we have tried to refrain from unfounded projections as much as possible, particularly in view of the current state of political and economic transition in Niger.

Part One will present selected issues pertinent to women in communities throughout Niger (Section A). Starting with the northernmost areas of Niger, data regarding women of various communities is summarized, and, to the extent possible, also analyzed. The condition of women will then be examined using an ethnographic, geographic, and ecological frame of reference (Section B).

Part Two material will be presented according to the three major headings provided in the Scope of Work, within the context of the major ecological zones of Niger. These three topics reflect the Development Fund for Africa's Strategic Objective no. 3: Developing the potential for long-term increases in productivity. In this section, various examples of on-the-ground situations are presented. It differs from Part One in that material on women in Niger is organized around the themes of agropastoral production, off-farm income and natural resource management, rather than geography

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<sup>1</sup> The data presents many case studies that provide an opportunity for comparative analysis once they have been organized in a matrix for that purpose. Currently, however, this material needs to be indexed, using cross-index subjects such as ethnicity, region, etc. This report has attempted to convey the uneven character of statistics available across various cultural and linguistic groups of women in Niger.

or social characteristics. Due to the very uneven character of available studies (ranging in samples of populations of 30 to populations of over 300), this section presents examples of the situation of women in various parts of Niger which demonstrate important characteristics which may be generalizable, but often are not.

The purpose of Part Three will be to present recommendations for future actions that may be research or non-research oriented. In a general way, current gaps in the knowledge, outstanding applied research needs, possible windows of opportunity for encouraging women's participation, and concrete actions that might be taken towards achieving program objectives will be discussed. Ideas for short and long term research are discussed, and pressing issues in terms of the welfare of women and the potential impact of existing Mission program objectives will be addressed. For example, it is known that one significant corollary of rapid population growth is the reduced labor capacity of women (who are more frequently pregnant or nursing), and that the poor nutritional and other health conditions of small children also greatly reduce the ability of Nigerien women to participate effectively in economy, since such conditions require women to spend more time as caretakers.

An outline for USAID/Niamey's Women in Development Action Plan which suggests project-specific actions, time lines, and responsible actors, is a separate document which also derives its focus from the material in this report. The WID Action Plan outline also includes input from the Mission WID committee gathered from discussion following presentation of salient points from the text.

## PART ONE

### Overview of the Situation of Women in Niger

According to the results of the second general census of the population in 1988, women comprise 50.44% of Niger's population, whose total is estimated at 7,247,620. In 1987, women between the ages of 15 and 45 years of age represented 45% of the female population and 25% of the total population of Niger. It has been noted that out of the 1,505 girls registered in the sixth form (6c), but only 1,017 will make it to the BEPC (Brevé d'étude première cycle: first ten years of schooling) and only 156 to the Baccalauréat. Currently, approximately 5.7 % of Nigerien women are literate. In 1987, women made up about 22% of civil servants (including part-time and temporary), and the majority of them were in support staff roles. Women represent from 4.5% (Fatouma, 1989) to 6% (Ernst & Young, 1991) of the private sector.

The low numbers of women shown as active in the private sector may be misleading. Studies indicate that women are active on a year-round basis in income generating activities such as small ruminant livestock management, vegetable gardening, and craft production. It may be that the definitions that are used to define the private sector need to be broadened, or that an analysis of the private sector could use a category specifically for those income generating activities that have not reached the stature of definition of "small agribusiness," or to indicate some other form of rural self-employment.

The health system suffers from poor coverage (approximately 30% of the population live within 5 kilometers of any health facility) and inadequate budgetary and personnel resources exist for rural areas. For this reason, health status has not improved in recent years and infant mortality remains extremely high (estimated at 170 per 1,000 in 1980 and 138-158 in 1992). Family planning has recently been introduced; contraceptive prevalence is estimated at 2% of married women of reproductive age, but most users are in urban areas. Interest and acceptability are increasing rapidly, but in the near future, the number of contraceptive users in rural areas will remain insignificant (Susan Wright, 1991, personal communication).

Data is quite uneven regarding both sectors covered and ethnic groups discussed. It should also be noted that for many areas of Niger, data about women will most easily be collected by women because of local mores governing relations between strange men and women in a given community.

Part One presents various categories of activity normally associated with women in the Niger Republic; some of which are common to the Sahel in general, but whose specificity requires a focused view according to regional and ethnic differences. Descriptive summaries of selected activities will also be presented. The list of activities presented is not intended to be exhaustive, but is considered to represent crucial activities in the context of the issues which are the concern of the USAID/Niamey program. The descriptions are provided to simplify a wide range of material, and to show that within the context of great diversity present in Niger society, there are in fact similar economic and social functions throughout, and in this case, specifically as they pertain to women.

From a review of over 30 documents or research studies on women in Niger (including some gender-dissaggregated data), it was discovered that quantitative data on women's productivity are virtually non-existent; inappropriate generalities have been made (e.g., data from one site are used to describe, for example, all Hausa women); major dissertations such as from the NAAR/Purdue Project and

others do not disaggregate data or discuss intrahousehold patterns in resource use and control; many documents, including official GON statements, use statistics taken from sources such as the Sahel Hebdo newspaper. A.I.D.'s Social and Institutional Profile contains mostly outdated data. In spite of this, we can assume that the continued monetization of the economy, droughts of recent years, and the economic crisis within Niger have all caused fundamental changes on household economies and their survival strategies. It is critical that our knowledge base be updated, or else we risk basing programs on false assumptions.

## **A. Salient Topics**

### **1. Diversity: Cultural Adaptions and Ethnicity**

Diversity between and within Nigerien populations is fundamental to understanding women's roles in national development. The principal ethnicities (and languages), by their percentage of the population, are: Hausa (53%), Zarma-Songhai (21%), Tamachek (Tuareg, 11%), Fulfulde (Fulani/Peulh, 10%) and Kanuri (5%). To this list can be added small groups related to the Zarma such as the Dendi, the Kurfey and Wogo; the Gourmantche and Mossi subgroups related to populations in Burkina Faso; the Mawri (usually considered a Hausa sub-group), who live in the zone between the Hausa and Zarma-speaking regions of the country; and to the east, the Tubu nomads and the Kanuri peoples, including the Manga of the east and northeast.

While it is critical to understand the principal characteristics of ethnic differentiation in Niger, equally revealing are inter-ethnic differences based on social structure and agro-ecological environment. Attention towards cultural adaptions in the context of contiguous production systems offers some clues to the reasons behind the diversity among women in Niger. Noble Fulbe women in southwestern Niger, for example, have proxies sell their garden products for them, as this is considered outside of their normative class behavior (Wilson, 1984). Similar comportment has been identified by others in the context of Hausa women (Simmons, 1982; Dunbar, 1991) and the Tamachek (Worley, 1989).

There are remarks in the literature noting the lower productivity of women's gardens compared to mens commercial garden plots. This has sometimes been attributed to less use of fertilizer (see Sutter, quoted in Part Two) but it may also be that women are sometimes choosing not to produce more on their garden plots. What are the cultural contexts for this: traditional natural resource management systems or social taboos, or both? It might also be that gardens, unlike goat herds, are highly and constantly visible. Greater garden production on a consistent basis may result in less contribution from husbands for certain household costs. Also, priorities may be such that women do not have the resources they wish to use to maximize garden production.

Approaching more detail in terms of Niger's major characteristics and the socio-economic context of women in Niger, it is useful to paraphrase Robert Charlick's (1991) apt description of ethnicity in Niger. He states:

Most observers agree that ethnicity is an important factor in contemporary Nigerien society, but, it is difficult to be precise about the country's ethnic identities. Fearing greater divisiveness, the governments of Niger since independence have strongly discouraged research into ethnicity, and this type of classification is also difficult because the people of Niger use it so imprecisely to serve their own purposes. General ethnic groupings, such as Hausa, Zarma, or Beri-Beri, makes a great deal of ethnic diversity because they group people whose

origins and cultural practices can be quite varied.

It is worthwhile to take note of Charlick's description of the "ethnic environment" of Niger. Much of the diversity found within "ethnic" groups actually reflects what could be considered pre-colonial "nationalities," which resulted from state expansion of particular language/cultural groups such as the Hausa, Songhay, etc. In today's Niger, it is still important to bear in mind that there is appreciable fluidity between ethnic groups, and that women have traditionally played an important role in functioning as links between merging cultures. The institutions of polygamy and concubinage played an important role in "upward mobility" in the pre-modern era. On the other hand, women are becoming increasingly independent in their own right. The challenge is to ascertain how it is beneficial, and how their situation can be improved.

## **2. Social Stratification**

Traditional authorities, kinship networks, and class structures were once based, among other things, on the degree of territorial hegemony and the control of labor, whether captive farm labor (slaves), specialized labor (castes such as the blacksmiths) and/or the productive and reproductive capacity of women. (See Meillassoux, 1975, 1986; Robertson and Kline, 1989). Social stratification remains an influence on modes of behavior, particularly in terms of the organization of labor.

The two terms "caste" and "slave" deserve some special attention. These terms, as we know them in the Hindu or American context, are not adequate descriptions of the two social conditions which we refer to in the following text. Miers and Kopytoff (1979) were among the first to tackle the complex meaning of status in African society as it applied to captives and others who held subservient status. Indeed, even the word subservient is misleading. Firstly, caste above all connotes (in the West African Sahel) specialization in occupation, and control over specialized knowledge. Thus, hierarchical groups restricted access to technical knowledge through endogamous, or closed, marriage systems. Social and economic reciprocity, however, assured the flow of material goods and social value throughout the society. That elites in such societies profited and collected surplus has been well documented by the authors cited above and others (Lovejoy, Derman, Robertson and Kline), but it is generally agreed that in the Sahelian context, as well as others, expectations, rights and privileges operated on both sides of the equation. The term slave has variously been substituted by serf, subject, captive and client. The social and economic meaning lies somewhere in the conceptual vicinity of these words. Key to the ambiguity of this status is the fact that it was often mediated by kinship (vertically) to whoever was the lord, patron, etc. as well as laterally (among other serfs, subjects, captives, etc.). The terms caste and slave, therefore, should be taken rather loosely as the social conditions they described also varied from group to group within Niger.

An additional note of interest is that women from all social strata have had to reorganize their labor, and perhaps even their economic objectives as a result of the prohibition of slavery and the ensuing reorganization of the household (which differed significantly both between and among ethnic groups). What today seems like an unfair, terribly skewed or inefficient system may have been significantly less skewed and inefficient, albeit unfair, in times past. As women have moved into new activities, they have also altered their view of themselves. Dependent women have in some instances become more independent of their "owners" or "patrons"; in other cases women whose independence depended on the control of slave labor have in many instances become significantly less independent politically, economically, and socially.

### 3. Commonalities

There are several issues which emerge from the literature as well as field reports and the like. These topics seem to span the literature on women's roles in agricultural production, natural resource management and exploitation, and off-farm income generation. What would be useful in Niger is the application of data regarding key socio-economic structure and process characteristics at the local level to questions regarding women's specific influence on production and decision-making. The issues noted here can be flushed out as topics which are relevant, for example, to all women in Niger. They represent certain commonalities of experience that can be anticipated throughout all ethnic groups. A few examples are given of current information available following the list below.

With the understanding that economic processes are often embedded in, expressed by, and accomplished through social relations, the following topics are salient to an overall understanding of decision-making and economic functions of women in Niger: divorce, seclusion, reciprocal redistribution (formal and informal) and religion.

#### Divorce

At the turn of the century, divorce was recorded as more common in the sahel and savannah regions than in the coastal regions of West Africa. In the classical sense, divorce and serial marriages could therefore be considered "traditional" to the region. Traditionally, early cross-cousin marriages typified the various societies of Niger. Often such marriages were characterized by divorce, and second marriage was more the woman's choice. There are records of this phenomenon dating from the mid-19th century (Barth, 1964). There have been institutions that offset the instability that might have resulted from frequent divorce and serial marriages. Men receive guardianship of children only after age seven, and until recently, this has not been a de-stabilizing force in Nigerien society. One likely reason is men's expected financial support and responsibility that men have regarding their children (particularly after age 7); another reason is the endogamous nature of most first marriages, which favors a strong family network.

A structural feature of Hausa culture is marriage instability. Divorce has been recorded as a strong feature of Hausa society since the mid-19th century. Recent research in Magaria found that 41% of women were in their first marriage, 47% in the second marriage, and 13% in the third marriage (Papma, 1989). In a study of 74 women in Guidan Roumji arrondissement, 41% had been divorced at least once and 17% had been divorced twice (Ado et al, 1990). Indications suggest that divorce is on the rise and some believe is being increasingly initiated by women (Papma, 1989).

Because of the high divorce rates in Nigerien society, women make economic and financial decisions which secure their futures in the event of divorce. Small ruminants are particularly important in this regard because they represent mobile capital. In working for improved economic conditions for women, attention to women's activities in livestock management will be important. Similarly, women are eager to collect gold jewelry because they can take it with them if there is a divorce. Gold collection is an important form of savings for Nigerien women, as is silver though to a lesser extent.

#### Seclusion

Seclusion is largely practiced by rich commercants and marabouts and is more frequent in urban than rural areas. Although seclusion is exclusively practiced among the Hausa (as far as we know), Hausa

men do sometimes marry women of other ethnic groups, particularly after the first marriage. Some think that seclusion functions not only to control women, but just as much as a status symbol for husbands, who demonstrate through seclusion their ability to run the household without the woman needing to go out, and who also demonstrate the extreme devotion to perceived Muslim custom.

Secluded women have neither the right to work outside the concession nor to use public services. They may leave their compounds only after dark, wearing a veil or head covering. In some cases, secluded women may only leave their compounds for special occasions and then they are closely guarded. To say that they are "excluded", however, belies the working realities. Seclusion does not preclude economic activity, and indeed, the majority of processed food production and sale in Hausa cities is conducted by women, from their homes. Extensive networks link secluded women with the outside world (see E. Simmons, 1982). They carry on multiple economic activities totally from within their houses using intermediaries (other women, children, husbands) to purchase raw materials and to market their products or they sell directly to women and children within the home. For crop and livestock work, they engage family members or pay hired laborers. The extent to which seclusion actually constrains women's entrepreneurship is uncertain. The practice of seclusion, per se, has not kept women from participating in credit union development in the southern Zinder Department. Rather, the issue in women's participation in the project seems more related to men's attitudes such as their fear of losing dominance as household provider and decision maker, and their fears of women's possible infidelity.

Seclusion does not seem to be on the increase. It requires a stable income and the current economic situation may mitigate against this practice. Also, the increased participation of women in public education and governance also discourages seclusion.

Seclusion requires that interventions geared toward women in Hausa regions, particularly in small towns and large villages, take into account the difficulties of accessibility to these populations. This is a clear example of why more women need to be identified and trained in data collection and in extension services.

### Reciprocal Redistribution: Gift giving

Gift giving is an important aspect of social and economic life among women in all cultural and linguistic groups in Niger, and particularly among women from sedentary agricultural communities. Material exchanges often echo social obligations among women and their natal, as well as husbands', families. These exchanges provide for redistribution of surplus among women, among other things. An example can be taken from the Hausa context. Gift exchange and other forms of reciprocity are one of the primary ways that Hausa peasants shape their economic lives to ensure an adequate and stable subsistence (10-14% of household total cash expenditures, Sutter, 1982). Gift giving is a form of social insurance, an investment against insecurity. The most prominent expenses are connected with important events in the life cycle of the household: naming ceremonies, marriages, and funerals. *Biki* refers to gifts or contributions to someone of a similar status (friend, co-wife, close relative) who is celebrating, or needs money to attend a special occasion. These gifts are made with the understanding that a counter-contribution (usually larger) will be made at a later moment. Other major occasions for large scale gift giving and exchange take place at the moment of the four great Muslim religious events: first day of the Muslim New Year; birth of the prophet; breaking of the annual fast; and Tabaski. Gifts may take the form of foodstuffs, but the vast majority of these gifts consist of cash offerings. Gifts represent a very large portion of money and goods circulating in villages as income and expenditures of women. To date, IFPRI data indicate that the proportion of

the family budget that goes to gifts is minimal, but it may represent a high proportion of women's income.

This process of gift giving and the redistribution of surplus functions as an investment for the future. Although there are many more cases published regarding the Hausa, this process of reciprocity is as significant among women in other ethnic groups of Niger. When considering the wealth of the Nigerien woman, it is useful to also consider what could be called her "outstanding receivables." For this reason, credit projects and other interventions which seek to assess the financial status and activities of women need to include inquiries into the "tontine" which is a savings society, and into the existence of other redistributive activities in the concerned population. Since patterns of redistributive gift giving are associated with a woman's point in the life cycle, age group will be a strong determinant of women's involvement in such activities.

### Religion

Islam has been an important factor in Nigerien social, political and religious life since before the colonial period. Major geopolitical events in the region are tied to Islamic reform movements, notably the creation of the Say principalty, the creation of the Sokoto Empire, Birnin Gwari, and the Hausa-Fulani states of Daura, Kano and Katsina. This tradition of reform, representing the establishment of new political regimes throughout the 19th century, is represented in much of the folklore and customs of the people of Niger. The Songhay/Zarma were Islamicized before they began their migrations to what is now Niger, and the state of Kanem-Bornu is known as one of the earliest Islamic centers in the area. InGall was once an important stop-over for pilgrims on their way across the Sahel to Mecca. It is important to understand that Islam is as much, if not more, of a cultural force and a force of social cohesion than a reference for judicial process, except for divorce. Its role in civic administration may be relative to the extent that the cultural process is threatened.

In many parts of Niger there are traditions of women who were either warriors or religious leaders in the Islamic context. Although originating in what is now Nigeria, the stories of the study groups of the wife of Usman dan Fodio, the creator of the Sokoto state, and the stories of Queen Amina of Zauzau (Zaria) are part of the folklore of Hausaphone people in Niger.

Documentation of gender specific behavior among the Wodaabe indicates that among some Sahelian populations (and maybe most) gender segregated and defined social and economic comportment is not all a result of Islamic influence. Some of these traditions pre date Islam, which is indicated in countless oral traditions among all ethnic groups in Niger. The extent to which it acts as a constraint to women's improved well-being may be a function of reluctance to part with "tradition" as it is perceived by men who are generally conservative regarding the modernization, or westernization, of Nigerien society. The confusing social transformations that are currently taking place have in fact caused some to refer back to traditional mores and values which are intricately interwoven with Islamic practice and philosophy. It is unknown if and to what extent fundamentalist Islam is increasing.

Throughout Zarma, Songhay and Hausa cultures one finds belief and participation in spirit possession and in women sorcerers. Possession, although not classically Islamic, differs from animism. Animism is the ordered set of beliefs which includes attribution of spiritual qualities to inanimate objects, while possession is a system of belief based on the perceived ability of human beings to be possessed by visiting spirits. Adherence to or participation in spirit possession varies from village to village and from person to person. During the implementation of Niamey Department Development Project,

planned activities were sometimes halted or delayed due to suspicions women had of particular women in the various training centers whom they believed were sorcerers. These beliefs seem to mitigate greatly against the cohesion of women in certain contexts. Additionally, during a training session at Hamdallaye, approximately 7 out of 11 women trainees became possessed during the training seminar there. All of them admitted that they needed to give additional "gifts" to their respective "spirits" because the spirits said they were not being attended to properly as a result of the women's participation in the seminar. (Wilson, NDD, 1983). Whether inadvertently or intentionally, women controlled certain occasions through the interference of spirit possession or the threat of witchcraft.

Paul Stoller has given several examples of women's participation in foleyey (Songhay, Zarma) and others have written about the Bori cult (Hausa). Since once possessed women can pronounce decisions regarding community life (in their altered state), this process bears further scrutiny as an area of influence of women in these societies.

In working with rural women, the practice of spirit possession should be seen as both a constraint and as an opportunity. It is a constraint because it impacts significantly on women's time management and at times on their availability. The practice also presents opportunities because it creates a context wherein women act independently in terms of earning income and in relation to the rest of their community. Often, women who are involved in spirit possession have been divorcees or are single.

The world of spirits has been fairly well integrated into an Islamic world view and they two do not necessarily represent unreconciled systems of thought. Spirits are not gods, but exist in the world of djanna (genies). Accordingly, analysis of women's behavior should take into account the flexibility of the traditional context and the syncretization of values which occurs over time. To some extent, changes in material conditions sometimes allow for local and indigenous evolution of world views that are more inclusive. Moreover, the degree of adherence to strict Islamic tradition, such as the Sunna and the Hadith, varies between ethnic groups, communities, and families. Development workers who are involved in projects which target women from Islamic communities should try to become familiar with the tenets of Islam and how they affect women's behavior. Respect for women's discomfort in gender integrated situations is an example of such consideration. In many instances, women prefer to meet without the participation of their husbands or fathers. Such issues greatly affect the nature of community meetings in Niger.

### Summary

The preceding examples provide an idea of how certain phenomenon regarding women and their socio-economic environment cut across ethnic, linguistic, or cultural groups. The list is provided as a stimulant to further analysis and description of these and other topics that will assist in understanding the circumstances that affect women's economic decision-making.

The remaining sections of Part I will constitute descriptions of the socio-economic environment of women in various areas of Niger, with a focus on the coincidence of specificity of production activity to cultural process. No attempt has been made at this time to verify the information reported in the reviewed documents, much of which is liberally extracted and presented herein. It should be noted, though, that substantial household data from some parts of Niger is expected with the release of a report by IFPRI in June, 1992.

The following text represents the variation in both quality and quantity of information available related to production relations and conditions of Nigerien women. It will be apparent that considerable information is available concerning Hausa women, while information on Zarma women is dated (major source has been F. Diarra, *ibid.*), information on Fulbe women in various sub-groups is uneven (Dupire remains the major source, and lately, some works by Horowitz), as well as for the Tuareg (Brock; Rasmussen; Worley). While some linguistic work has been done among the Kanuri (John Hutchinson) not much has been done on Kanuri social structure in general, or on Kanuri women specifically. The recommendations section of Part Three will address this gap in the existing knowledge.

## **B. Women in Agropastoral Production Systems**

The following discussion follows a geographic, ecological format starting with the sahelian, pastoral zones of the north. It should be kept in mind that large-scale population movements frequently occur in Niger, but ethnographic descriptions will not be repeated for each region. Crucial information will be added according to environmental and other particularities, and the second section will highlight off-farm income and natural resource management issues.

### **A Geographic Approach**

By using a geographic approach, the relationship of women to their social and physical environment comes into focus most clearly. Social processes and production adaptations have been closely molded to Niger's sahelian environment over the centuries. Pre-colonial political forms still prevail to greater or lesser degrees in most parts of the country, and they carry particular weight at the local level, for example. Women in Niger are most active economically and otherwise on the local level (Fofana, 1982; Diarra, 1971; Arnold and Henderson, 1982), and there are dynamics at the local level which may not be apparent at the regional or national levels, but which nonetheless may have significant influence on the way women manage their affairs and how others are affected by their actions. Since women seem to be the nexus of the household, the kin group, and health concerns in Niger, as well as playing a significant role in the management of everyday material needs, one issue that should be addressed is how processes currently controlled by women affect others in their sphere of influence. To what extent do women effect preparedness of youngsters for primary and secondary education? To what extent do women play an advocacy role in the home for change, such as educational or new technology issues? We do not have the answers to these and other questions yet, but the increased application of methodologies which include gender issues will play an important role towards the comprehension of such topics. We expect that gender issues will vary by geographic location as a function of cultural adaptations to agro-ecosystems.

A geographic approach also allows for analysis of cultural borrowing between various ethnic groups situated in the same or contiguous ecological zones, of overlap between economic systems, interdependent production adaptations between groups, and/or simultaneous exploitation of resources at different levels of intensive or extensive exploitation. Additionally, a broader perspective will give further insight into the relationship between cultural process, production adaptation, and indigenous natural resource management (see, for example: Barth, 1960, 1957 on Persia; Highland, 1966, on the Sudan; Horowitz, 1973, 1974 on Niger). This view is crucial for planning in the fragile natural environment of Niger.

Since the report discussion proceeds from an environmental framework, ethnic sub-groups will sometimes appear more than once if their production systems differ significantly. This will be particularly so for the Fulbe, a population that includes nomads, semi-nomads, and sedentary groups whose production adaptations are very different. Similarly, the Tuareg are discussed regarding the northern pastoral area, and the bouzou, or Bella, are discussed later in the text in relation to mixed-farming systems.

## **Northern Niger**

The northern part of Niger, besides those areas of uninterrupted desert, is almost exclusively pastoral and extends west to east from the Mali frontier to the Chad border. It is peopled by Arab pastoralists, Tuareg and other sub-groups of Tamachek culture (all referred to hereafter as Tamachek) such as the Bella agropastoralists and the various clans of the blacksmith caste; the Toubou, and three major Fulbe (in French: Peulh) sub-groups. These sub-groups are the Wodaabe, the Bororoji, the Katsinanko'en, and various semi-sedentary Fulbe groups including the Tolebe, who migrate to northerly zones during the rainy season.<sup>2</sup> Because of significant differences in land use and culture, these Fulbe groups are treated in three different sections. With the colonial period and later changes brought about by the modern era, the pastoral systems of the northern zone are not as efficient as they once were. In brief, Arabs and Tamachek concentrate their husbandry efforts in camels with a few cattle, sheep and goats, depending on various micro-environments in the region, while the Fulani groups concentrate on cattle raising with a few camels, and (ideally) secondary herds of sheep and goats. Farmer encroachment on former pastureland has been one of the major causes of the increasing inefficiency of pastoral systems in this zone.

The Arabs, Toubou, and Tamachek are the northernmost inhabitants of the pastoral zone. Historically, the Tamachek were pushed down from the mountainous areas of Algeria and Libya with the arrival and expansion of the Arabs in north Africa (around the 11th century, A.D.)

Michael Horowitz states the following in the Social and Institutional Profile of Niger (1983):

A most significant aspect of pastoral production strategies in Niger is the extreme decentralization of decision-making in the management of pastoral production units. This is as true of Fulfulde speaking pastoralists (Fulbe) as it is among the Tamachek and Arabic speaking pastoralists, although there are fundamental differences in their social and political organizations. . . . That the basic-decision-making units of pastoral production are highly decentralized among groups of pastoralists with fundamentally different political systems implies that this decentralization is of some considerable adaptive significance to the functioning and continued survival of pastoralism as a form of subsistence and production.

## Arabs

Arabs constitute a minority in the pastoral zone and in the country. Almost all of them descend from pastoralists who have drifted eastward from what is now Mauritania. Most of this eastward movement

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<sup>2</sup> This distinction is important because each of these Fulfulde-speaking sub-groups occupies an ecological niche and pursues fairly specialized range and herd management strategies. Although the Wodaabe have received extensive documentation, they do not represent the largest group of Fulfulde speaking herders; who are various clans of semi-sedentary herders.

appears to have taken place within the last century (personal communication: Tuareg informants in Tahoua and Becky Popinoe, SSRC). Most of the Arabs in Niger live north of Tchén Tabaraden in the department of Tahoua, in the Agadez and Arlit regions, and in some areas of Bilma. Except for those areas around the Tahoua and Arlit departments, their communities tend to be sparsely distributed.

### Social Organization

The Arabs are settled in patrilineal encampments which are kin-based groupings of one or more households, although the encampments typically are not very large, which is normal for pastoralists in arid areas. Women continue to depend on former slave labor to a great extent. Fattening of women is still practiced and a fat wife remains the cultural ideal (B. Popinoe; 1992). Culturally and linguistically different from their Tamachek neighbors, there appears to be little lateral movement of former slaves into the Tuareg population. It can be assumed that degradation of the resource base and increasing population has encouraged pastoralists of low caste to remain in their areas of origin where they have some rights to pasturage. According to current research in the area, there has been some out-migration of former slaves away from the camps of nobles. Such persons establish their own separate communities but continue to interact on a regular basis with nobles of the same groups, including favoring their "home" lineages. Women in this group apparently gain income by charging for work that they once performed for a return of services from their noble patrons, such as the pounding of grain. Popinoe states that former slaves, haratin, claim that since nobles no longer can afford to keep them, they are obliged to earn their living elsewhere. In spite of this, noble women manage to retain some servants who carry out almost all household work under their direction.

### Livestock Management

Unlike the Fulani groups who do not allow cattle herding among the captive class, the Arabs and their haratin practice animal husbandry as the basis for their survival, although haratin reportedly have fewer, if any, camels and concentrate on the raising of small ruminants.

It is not known whether any women in this community (of any class) practice agriculture. Millet appears to be the major staple, and is purchased or traded in the region. Wild grasses are reportedly gathered by the Arabs, Tuaregs, and Fulani of the area for local consumption (FAO, 1990).

### Population Issues/Marriage

Arab girls marry in their mid to late teens, although they may be engaged before then. Their families "fatten" them because a more weighty woman is a more attractive woman. Apparently, this fattening is done with millet, and the millet is purchased from other zones. Little is known about current marriage practices among the Arabs, such as bridewealth, divorce rates, etc.

### Tuareg (Kel Tamachek)

Historically, the Arab and Tuareg pastoralists were camel herders. Today, herds may consist of camels, cattle, sheep and/or goats. In the l'Air, goat herding is often the responsibility of women or girls. Women never herd camels, although they may own some. Tuareg communities normally are settled in the pastoral regions from northern Tera and Abala to the west, just north of the Zarmaganda (ie Ouallam, Tondikiwindi) across Niger through the northern region of the Maradi department (Dakoro northwards), Tahoua and northwards, and continuing east in the northern areas

of Zinder, on to N'Guigmi and Diffa.

Eleven percent of the Nigerien population are of the Tuareg ethnicity. Just 50% of them are women, which equals 10% of all Nigerien women. Their language is Tamachek (one of the four major Berber groups of Africa). Their basic social unit in Niger is the ighhawan, which usually consists of 8 to 10 household units, although in some areas up to 29 tents have been counted, mostly in the southern zones. These fractions are points of decision-making, pasture use, and management regarding externally derived economic activities (such as herders' associations, etc.).

### Social Organization

Tuareg pastoralist society is hierarchical, with a variety of social classes that determine access to resources. Caste organization reflects the gradual absorption of captives and other strangers (migrants, clients) from more southerly regions over time. In fact, caste is based on kin-defined criteria, although ideals for physical appearance are Berber-based. The term Tuareg refers to nobles who are of Berber origin, but two-thirds of the Kel Tamachek are of non-Berber origin. In pre-colonial times, they carried out regular raids on Songhay, Hausa, and Zarma populations. Low caste Tamachek constitute the majority of the population (which is typical of most Sahelian states after the 19th century). Research has revealed that the Tamachek were probably once a matrilineal society. Matrilineal traits, such as succession to the drum chieftainship through the mother's kin and inheritance through women, have been noted in the past by many different authors (see Worley:ASA, 1989). There are five Tamachek classes, not counting the captives, or Bella. These are the Imajaghan (aristocratic warriors), the Ineslaman (religious class), the Imghad (vassals), the Inaden (artisans) and the Ikanawan (traditional potters). Each one of these classes had their own captive or slave class, the Iklan (USAID/NRL documents). Each community was also traditionally characterized by a gender-specific organization of labor.

In Tuareg society there is a clear division of labor. Women are responsible for the domestic work. Caring for camels is exclusively the responsibility of men. Division of artisan activities is also very clear: among the blacksmith caste, men work metal or wood and their wives make cushions and other leather objects. Among the women, responsibilities are also strictly separated according to caste. In general, noble women are isolated: they do not go to the market; they do not participate in the economic life; they do not speak to strangers. They know little of the life outside the camp and communicate exclusively with others of their own caste. The domestic work is done by a woman of the slave caste while the noble women occupy themselves essentially with their children, often lying on their bed where they direct the work. The various gradations of slave or captive castes are called Bella, or Bouzou by the Hausa. The rate of schooling among girls of the noble caste is lower than other castes. It is held that the principal role of women is to safeguard the traditions. This explains the minimal economic integration of Tamachek women who have participated in the exodus to urban areas.

Boube (1989) indicates that Tuareg women of Tchén Tabaraden Arrondissement (as other noble Tuareg women) have very valued status. Monogamy is adhered to. The woman is at the center of family decision-making. She receives particular attention from her husband. Daily household tasks are the responsibility of the husband or of a hired Bouzou. The author thinks that these traditional women and their cultural isolationism actually hinder community development activities. Women of the slave caste, in contrast, are more directly involved in economic activities and are relatively free. They can participate in commerce and earn additional money in the city by pounding millet or food preparation for other families. They often speak Hausa. They never lose their slave caste status even if they attend school and speak French. Traditionally, noble women had camel and cattle while

Inadon and Bouzou (vassal Tuareg) women kept donkeys and small ruminants (see Horowitz, 1983, for further discussion of Tuareg organization).

Today most Tamachek have some Berber descendance due to the institution of concubinage, as well as marriage. Low caste women can be both kin folk and client to noble Tamachek women. This characteristic of Tamachek society is significant when considering demographic patterns and the organization of work among women, which still involves some reciprocity of favors between classes, usually along lines of kinship and client/patron ties. In spite of reciprocity between classes, cooperation in carrying out certain work tasks is avoided and distasteful. In other words, relations between Bella and higher caste Tamachek women may have become less formalized or stratified due to social transformations brought on by hardship. Nevertheless, there are certain day to day tasks which noble Tuareg women probably still avoid.

Traditionally, Tuareg women have more rights than women of sedentary agricultural communities. Tuareg men and women mingle and interact freely. However, there exist distinctions among the different groups, and especially among the different castes. Also, women's status has been subjected to numerous influences (Islam, colonization, contact with sedentary population and modern civilization). It is generally considered that their position has deteriorated since the beginning of colonization. Where Islam is strong, women are more limited to the confines of the tent and family. Worley (1989) states that the basic right of autonomy "cuts across social boundaries," and that "A vassal woman may publicly criticize a male of the noble class without fear of reprimand." She concludes that the pastoral Tuareg essentially have egalitarian relationships regarding gender values. For example, women most often keep their children after divorce. They also participate in public discussions. Every boy and girl is given a gift of a camel, a cow or other animal at birth, and that men and women give comparable gifts of livestock. Worley also notes that among most Tuareg groups, women were the mythical founders of Tuareg society.

#### Population Issues/Marriage

Low birth rates are considered typical of nomadic societies around the world (Barth, 1971; Dupire, 1970, 1974). Various explanations are given for the relatively low birth rate among the Tuareg including the following. Men are often gone for long time on caravan and illegitimate children are uncommon in the noble castes. Girls marry relatively late, as do men (about 29 years). Furthermore, the availability of slaves means that children are not necessary to provide household labor. Monogamy is practiced and extramarital liaisons are considered unacceptable; contraceptives and traditional abortion methods are available; divorced women can stay unmarried for several years.

Because women own animals (camels, cattle, small ruminants), they can be economically independent. At marriage, they bring their bed and make a tent of straw mats which then belongs to them in case of divorce (it is the man who must leave). Kel Tamachek can divorce at any time, and divorce seems to be quite frequent. A divorced woman has the same status as a married women. She can live alone in her own tent, or with the family of her brother, or she can remarry. Given the ease with which women can remain single and divorced, however, there is less need to remarry. Sexual relations out of wedlock are judged unacceptable, so an unmarried woman generally does not have children during this period. They often move back to live with their natal families after divorce.

#### Farming Activities

In areas of the Air Mountains, settled vassal Tuareg engage in irrigated agriculture; women help in preparation of the fields but there is no indication that they themselves cultivate or garden. This was

mentioned by Nicolaisen, based on 1963 data, but circumstances have probably changed considerably since then. For example, Rupp (1976) observed that during droughts, some noble women, disregarding previous patterns, began to help their equally novice husbands in digging irrigation ditches and cultivating vegetable gardens (Rupp, 1976).

### Social Change Issues

Civil strife, poverty, and destabilization of the resource base have created community interdependency that seems to go beyond the descriptions of traditional roles. Although these may be recalled in various social settings for reasons of prejudice or ceremonial purpose, it can be said that the formality formerly obtaining in many of these communities is in the process of transformation. Some informants say that lack of available women in various classes has been such that some Tamachek men prefer to marry outside of their ethnic group altogether, rather than face family or community conservatism.

Women in Tamachek society are highly regarded. Nevertheless, discussions with residents of the Arlit and Tahoua regions (Wilson, 1987-88) revealed that there are growing problems of women who have been deserted. Apparently such women, married to men who have left to work as residential or industrial guards (*mai gardi* in Hausa) are unable to remarry since they have never been officially divorced. According to informants they tend to be socially marginalized, and suffer further because they are sometimes attached to brothers' households where they are considered a burden. In terms of designing development interventions in Tamachek communities for women, it will be worthwhile to estimate the level of economic activity (if any) of these women, and whether their conditions represent a trend in the Tamachek community.

There are indications that vassal and slave women are free to sell agricultural produce or salt whereas noble Tuareg women participate as buyers, not sellers. This is similar to the situation described for the Arabs north of Tchén Tabaraden (see above) where former slaves now sell the same services to their former nobles. In all, there are few published reports about northern women.

There is little quantitative information available about Tuareg commercial strategies at the household level; what exists is largely outdated. We can assume major changes due to droughts over the past two decades. Obviously, there is much differentiation within groups, so it is unsatisfactory to generalize.

### Wodaabe

The Wodaabe make up a very small percentage of the total Fulbe population; they are well known as nomads, and number about 33,000. There are two major lineages in the Wodaabe population: Wodaabe Alijam and Wodaabe Degereji. The Wodaabe exploit pasturelands from Abala to the west, across to Nguigmi and Diffa.

### Social Organization

The Wodaabe are classic egalitarian herders with strong group cohesion vested in the faction of patrilineal-related nuclear and extended families. They tend to claim adherence to all tenets of Islam, though they do not regularly practice them. The Wodaabe characterize their relationship to Islam through their relationship with the famous 19th century leader Usman dan Fodio (Maliki, 1983; Wilson, interviews in Dakoro). Polygamy is not often practiced among Wodaabe, although serial

marriages are. The first marriage is endogamous to the clan, and is usually a cross-cousin marriage (Dupire, 1963, 1974; Stenning, 1957; Maliki, 1983). This marriage functions to consolidate cultural institutions and coincidentally, limits intermingling of cattle ancestry due to the simple fact of proximity. The second marriage is called by the Wodaabe "a marriage of the heart" since it is one of choice, and is often achieved through elopement. Statistics on rates of divorce are not available for comparison, but it is not unusual for a Wodaabe woman to be married three times in her lifetime (Bodaado).

The Kasausawa of the Dakoro area of Maradi department claim that there are Wodaabe affiliated communities known as Kekewa who were formerly their client (subject) community. The Kekewa are said to be unfamiliar with Islam and marginalized from surrounding societies, both herder and farmer. The Kekewa dress in black like the Wodaabe and Bororoji, but in much less elaborate form. There needs to be further verification of information about this group. The Kekewa are also said not to live in encampments like others, but to live in dispersed settlements of one or two huts (Wilson: Niger, 1988-1991 field notes). This pattern will raise issues regarding land use and implementation of the Rural Code.

### Livestock Management

Men are customarily the herders (gainabe) of the cattle and camels. There are also some particularly skilled men who are looked to for traditional veterinary practices. Traditionally, women did not care for large livestock, although they can usually be observed assisting with watering both large and small stock at wells and waterholes. However, in the aftermath of the 1968-74 drought, and later the drought of 1984-85, women have had to take over such difficult tasks as watering the cattle that the men leave behind while traveling (rarely do any Fulbe consider these departures from the cattle camp as "exode" in the context of seeking wages, although this is generally what it is). Often, Wodaabe communities will try to arrange for a younger male in-law, nephew or other acceptable male to stay near the camp to help those women who stay "in the bush." In most such cases, the herd is divided up to protect the interests of those who have traveled.

Wodaabe women are responsible for care of young calves, small ruminants, and sale of butter and milk products. Most care of small ruminants is achieved through the labor of children under the supervision of mothers, aunts, and grandmothers; while calves are generally supervised by the productive housewives of each property owning settlement (usually a nuclear family). Women own cattle in their own rights. Animals are received as gifts at birth, when they marry, and as inheritance from both mother and father. In general, most Fulbe women like to leave their cattle with their brothers who are in a different cattle camp, for reasons of security and privacy (Stenning, 1957; Dupire, 1973). These animals remain as her own, even in case of divorce. The cattle a woman receives as part of the bridewealth are reserved exclusively for herself and her children. Spouses often decide the fate of other animals together, but women are solicitous of guarding her stock intact until the children grow up. This stock and other animals in the household herd of each family are progressively allocated to the children over the years (Dupire, 1963). Wives exercise exclusive milking rights over a large portion of the husbands' herds and reserve the right to sell milk and butter.

Regular access to grain has been noted as a serious weakness in the current economic environment of the Wodaabe (Eddy, 1979; Sutter, 1982; Horowitz, 1983). Grain is an important compliment to dairy products (for acceptable human nutrition levels) in almost every African transhumance system. The African Development Foundation found that more than 60% of requests emanating from the pastoral zone in Niger included storage facility and requests for localizing grain supplies (Wilson and Legesse, 1990). It may be that exchanges which once took place with neighboring farmers (in the

southern phase of Wodaabe regional migrations) simply do not occur as often. With lower productivity, farmers may be reluctant to sell surpluses as they did before. This has serious consequences for Wodaabe women who often suffer from malnutrition (see also Louis Loutan, NRL documents 1981-83). It may have broader nutritional impacts on the household, and may require extra work on the part of Wodaabe women who are responsible for daily meals.

### Social Change Issues

Herding practices, range management, herd offtake practices, and stocking decisions have already been very well described by Dupire (1970, 1973, 1974) and by Maliki (1982, 1983). Extensive work has also been done on the social organization (including labor) and production adaptations of the Wodaabe by White (1984) and Horowitz et al. (1983, 1985). Since so much research has been done over the last ten years, it can serve as a basis for tracking change within this group. It is expected that recent political events and ensuing migrations have had a significant effect on land use and social organization among the Wodaabe today. This may be a regional natural resource management issue. As Maliki's work is very specific (i.e. "Gainako: Herding Among the Wodaabe"), it provides interesting and useful details on husbandry traditions among the Wodaabe. However, we know less about how political and economic conditions of the last five years have affected the practice of these traditions. Recording data on choices made in recent years will give invaluable insight into risk strategies due not to drought but to socio-economic problems which constrain normal choices. During the droughts of 1974 and 1985, for example, Wodaabe women also went on a sort of "exode", at which time they took on odd jobs for other women in nearby towns. Others became prostitutes. Most traveled with their smallest children and left older ones in the pastoral region, or in temporary shelter on the outskirts of town. This pattern has surely had serious health and economic implications.

Women ideally 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. When such goods are sold it is generally to villages near the eggirgol (transhumance) area. For the last five years, it has been rare for Wodaabe women in Niger to sell milk or butter, except on an occasional basis. This decline is a reflection of the lower levels of milk being produced and the fact these products are being consumed on a household level, indicating that there is little or no surplus. When a man dies, his children, not his wife, inherit his animals. There are thus no wealthy widows with personally owned cattle, as among some sedentary Fulbe (cf. Hitzmann; Calvey, ACDI; Dupire, *ibid.*; SIP).

In the wake of the 1968-73 drought when herds were decimated, many Wodaabe had to leave their pastoral existence for other economic activities, such as migrant labor (as *mai gardi*), cultivation (mostly in government sponsored emergency settlements), and guardianship of herds belonging to non-Wodaabe. Others tried to diversify their economic base through the sale of jewelry, charms and medicines. The last two activities, practiced by both men and women, often are more lucrative than the other alternatives.

Women also earn extra money during hard times by selling their services for pounding grain and for hair dressing. None of these activities, particularly outside of the Wodaabe community, are considered desirable. Generally, neither Wodaabe men or women look favorably on farming either as an activity for themselves, and they know little about farming. It has been noted that when circumstances have forced Wodaabe to settle and to farm, women tend to be only involved in harvesting. Since "normal" times have become harder in the last 5 or 6 years, selling jewelry and medicines have become acceptable year-round secondary income activities, especially if any member of the family is going to a large town or market (Wilson, personal observance, 1983-90).

The Tolébé are a sub-group of the Fulbe who interact with the Wodaabe of Abala and the Bororoji of the same areas.<sup>3</sup> Because their land use system interfaces with that of the Wodaabe and the Bororoji, and their near-nomadic lifestyle, they are mentioned here. The transhumance route of the Tolébé traditionally extends northwards to Ansongo. Occasionally, herders (men) of Tolébé, Wodaabe, and Bororoji origin may regroup at Ansongo during the rainy season at which time there are some light festivities.

### Bororoji

The Bororoji are usually considered by outsiders to be the same people as the Wodaabe. Actually, however, the Wodaabe and Bororoji consider themselves to be different, and so do other Nigerien populations around them. This report does not have access to data which discusses the differences between the groups, so that the reader is advised to refer to the section on the Wodaabe for a general idea concerning Bororoji social organization. Nevertheless, it is emphasized that though there is little material on this population as a distinct community, caution should be taken in assuming that they share characteristics of the Wodaabe. It would be valuable in the long run to gain increased insight into the significant differences between the two groups, particularly in the context of population movements and natural resource management.

The Bororoji share their ecological environment with the Wodaabe and Tamachek of the pastoral zone. The Bororoji have a unique relationship to the Wodaabe, to whom they are related, although they insist that they are a different group. In fact, Wodaabe do not marry the Bororoji for first marriages, and only occasionally on second marriages. Wodaabe claim that Bororoji marry outside of the Wodaabe to other Fulbe, and for that reason only one clan of Wodaabe, the Bi-Hamma'en, marries regularly with Bororoji. Bororoji culture closely mirrors Wodaabe mores and traditions, and they keep herds of cattle, goats and sheep as well. It may be that women in the Bororoji group have been more susceptible to drought conditions than their counterparts in the Wodaabe community.

The relationship of Bororoji and Wodaabe land use patterns and demographic distribution, as well as migration habits, could clarify some aspects of indigenous natural resource management, or the lack thereof, in the pastoral zone. In targeting women's needs, the Bororoji women certainly should come under consideration. The Catholic Mission at Bermous was often overwhelmed by the influxes of Bororoji women who came for medical attention during 1974-84 (Beckwith, Fitzgerald, personal communication). Apparently, and for an unknown reason, their dependence on this facility seems to have diminished.

### Toubou

The Toubou are another group on which little has been published, and for which little information exists. What is presented here has largely been pulled from one source (Anderson, project proposal, 1990) and helps us to assess what critical information is still needed.

The Toubou are also pastoralists. They live in settlements that are dispersed from the Air Mountains to Nguigmi. The densest concentration of Toubou settlements is in the department of Diffa. In Diffa,

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<sup>3</sup> The Tolébé are a sub-group which is considered different from Bororoji and Wodaabe, although they are closely associated in the west. They exploit pastures on the east side of the Niger as far as the Dallol, as well as on the west side where there are Bitinkoobe and other herders.

there are an estimated 16,550 Toubou, of which two thirds are considered nomadic.

### Social Organization

The patriarchal clan is the most important unit of social organization and alliance. Nevertheless, the Toubou, somewhat like the Wodaabe, do not attach functions of authority to this structure, but rather relations of reciprocity according to lineage. It is the nuclear family that travels together to exploit the semi-desert pastures.

### Population/Marriage Issues:

Toubou women marry relatively late. Men's average age at marriage is about 30, while women's marriage age ranges between 15 and 25. Whether this is a recent result of economic changes is not known. Divorce is frequent, and like the Wodaabe, marriage is usually more stable after the birth of the first child. At marriage there is usually a significant exchange of cattle to the woman's family, usually furnished by the father of the groom. The dispersed nature of Toubou society mitigates against elaborate social taboos; most seem to live in small transhumant groups of not more than two households.

### Livestock management

Sheep and goats are used mostly for special occasions. They have little economic value to the Toubou who generally are far way from markets that would make such animals more valuable as potential income. On the other hand, the Toubou represent 35% of Niger's camel herders.

### Katsinankobe

The Katsinankobe inhabit the rangelands contiguous to those exploited by the Wodaabe, but their settlements tend towards the south towards the Nigerian border. In fact, they are part of the larger branch of Fulbe na'i (cow Fulani) who identify themselves as originally being from Katsina, an area of Nigeria which now borders on the department of Maradi, but which once comprised areas approximately 80 to 100 kilometers northwards towards Gobir.

The term Katsinankobe does not in itself indicate whether the community is nomadic, semi-nomadic, or has become sedentary. Within this large geographically named group are numerous clans (i.e. Daneeji, Ba'en, etc.) These clans, and the Katsinankobe as a group, are usually associated with certain kinds of cattle. Habitually, they specialize in the white zebu cattle. The extent to which their herds are now mixed with red and black bororoji cattle, or dominated by the latter, is an example of the various population shifts of the last century. (Wilson, field notes, 1976). The Katsinankobe community in the Maradi and Tanout departments appears to be culturally closer to other nomadic or semi-nomadic Fulbe than to the Wodaabe, at least in the comportment of women. Although Wodaabe women move about freely in markets and through the savannah with pack animals or shoats, it is rare to see Katsinankobe women moving about on their own. General observation will give the impression that the Katsinankobe and Wodaabe labor organization and land use is the same, but this is uncertain. More understanding of the role of women in this system may indicate different consumption patterns as well as division of labor.

The Katsinankobe do not normally intermarry with the Bororoji or the Wodaabe, although they live in contiguous settlements, exploit adjacent if not the same pastures, and share wells with each other.

This interdependency seems, in fact, to be partly based on the maintenance of their differentness and exogamous rules between the three groups. The men from all groups are not easily distinguishable unless one is familiar with cultural details of the area. On the other hand, this does not appear to be so for the women, indicating that assumptions of what is appropriate for Wodaabe women is appropriate for Katsinankobe may not be true.

As a final note, in the far eastern section of the pastoral zone are another sub-group of Fulbe known as the Kesu Fulani or Fulbe Kesu. At some time before the turn of the century they became clients to the sedentary Kanuri of the area. They can usually be distinguished by facial marks like those of the Kanuri (Beri Beri). Little is known about their interaction with the Wodaabe of that area, who are predominantly of the Jijiru clan. Kane (USAID/Niamey) reports that the majority of the Fulbe Kesu, also known as the **Fellata Kesu** by the Kanuri, have become sedentary and live in communities clustered around the lake, or else in Diffa town.

### **The Transitional Zone**

Those areas with more than 200mm of rain per annum are characterized by two major production adaptations: they constitute the dry season transhumance area for herders from farther north, and are areas of extensive mixed farming, mostly of millet, manioc, cowpeas, onions and some other garden crops. The region is characterized by southerly dry season camps where pastoralist women and children remain in sedentary communities while male herders take herds north. The area extends southward (approximately) from the 200 isohyete mark to the 400 isohyete mark. This area includes the southern limit of the Azawak valley, the region of Kourfey, most of Tahoua, Keita, Dakoro, and the southern area of Tanout, northern Zinder, Gouré, and eastward to the southern reaches of Nguigmi. In this region are Tamachek dry season and year-round settlements, mostly of the Bella caste. Other inhabitants are the semi-sedentary Fulbe, the Hausa, the Kanuri, and the Zarma.

In the west, the Zarma populations extend from the east of the Zarmaganda into the Kourfey region. Zarma villages are also situated along the Dallol Bosso, an alluvial valley which runs from Gaya through the Kourfey region. This valley runs north and is actually the western branch of the Azawak valley, which is mentioned above. The Zarma, a group closely related to the Songhay, predominate in the western part of this area. The Dallol is unique in that it is also characterized by varying degrees of cultural borrowing between the Zarma-speakers to the west and the Hausa speakers to the east. This accounts for much of the diversity that can be found in the region. Additionally, it was the locus of considerable conflict in pre-colonial times between the Fulbe theocratic states that were expanding northwards from Sokoto (Nigeria) and Birnin Gaouré. With this state expansion came the expansion of Fulbe transhumance routes and competition for resources. Although barely comparable with the dynamics of 200 years ago, competition for scarce resources can be noted as a continued cause of conflict between farmers and herders in this region. In spite of this, it is characterized by intensive inter-ethnic cohabitation in contiguous settlements. Accordingly, there is also a great deal of complementarity in the production systems and economic systems of this area.

### Zarma/Songhay

The Zarma-Songhay represent 21% of the population of Niger. Although there is considerable ethnographic information on the Zarma and Songhay communities of Niger, as well as statistical

information regarding their production systems, very little of this data is disaggregated or focused on women and their cultural practices. The primary source on Zarma women is about ten years old (Diarra, 1983), so it is suggested as a source of reference with a note that newer information on Zarma and Songhay women needs to be collected. The IFPRI study on household economies and the expected study by TropSoils on gender issues in natural resource management will provide some of the crucial information needed. Djibo and Price (1990) have produced a report on communities in the Niger River area, which focuses on Songhay related groups.

### Social Organization

Social stratification into noble, free, slave and occupational caste categories has been characteristic of the Zarma/Songhay groups. During the pre-colonial period there was a pervasive warrior tradition and slavery sustained values among free men and women that disdained common field agricultural labor. (cf Dunbar & Djibo, 1991). The Songhai and Zarma recognize a common ancestry tracing to the Hombori region of Mali. Songhai migration southward from Mali in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries initiated a process of Songhai settlement in what is now the Tera arrondissement. Songhai and Zarma social organization of production strongly resemble each other. Both communities originate from the Songhay empire which was a centralized, stratified state.

Major people of Songhai descent include the Kurtey, Wogo, Dendi, Sorko and Kado. They settled in the Nigerien portion of the river valley. The Kurtey, known in pre-colonial times as transporters, are of Songhai/Peulh descent. They apparently came from Mali during the 18th century and took control of numerous riverain islands from the Gourmantche, who until that time dominated the western side of the river. Throughout the 19th century, they intermixed with the Sorko and Kado fishing peoples (Hagen et al).

The Songhay share a similar social organization with the Zarma, except that in some regions of the west they are considered to be somewhat more conservative, and to have a more stratified society.

Rice is a principal crop. Farmers usually also have upland millet fields and gardens in the valley. Principal garden crops are tobacco and manioc, but greater diversification is evolving. Crop production is supported by livestock production and fishing plus numerous other income-generating activities.

Among the Wogo, men are generally the proprietors of fields though some women own fields which they then may rent to men. Other women cultivate parcels of land owned by their husbands generally as gardens or as small plots of gumbo. The principal garden crop is tobacco, a specialty product of the Wogo. It is mainly the older women who cultivate. Younger women tend to reject this activity. Women specialize in weaving grass and palm mats.

Women work alone and their gardens are a source of income. With the creation of rice perimeter projects and industrial threshing mills, women have lost an important source of income in rice threshing (Horowitz, 1983). Wogo women fish as well. Fishing usually occurs after harvest in October. They also keep goats and sheep. Women often buy whole rice from men and resell hulled rice in the markets (de Sardin:1967; Arnould and Henderson, 1982; Horowitz, 1983).

### Agricultural Activities & Livestock Management

Among rural Zarma women, agricultural production is concentrated in gardening activities and must be balanced with numerous and sometimes onerous domestic tasks. For example, for those women

who live along the Dallol, water tables are high and time spent on fetching water may only account for two to four hours a day. On the other hand, for those living in the west of the Kourfey region and in other areas, wells and boreholes are often far away and very deep ranging as far as twenty-plus meters in depth. (See African Development Foundation Projects Report, AFN, 1985 - 86). This is why, even within one cultural group, ethnic considerations must be viewed in a solid context of ecological data, and with an understanding of the environment which so much influences women's decision making and time management. Most women participate minimally in crop production though they are responsible for taking food and water to the field workers and may assist with planting. Small, individual parcels or gardens that women do cultivate are devoted to such women's crops as sesame, okra, Bambara groundnuts (vouandzou), sorrel, peanuts, sedge/tiger nut, and fonio. Rarely do women cultivate millet or sorghum in these individual plots, although they cultivate corn or manioc as cash or "fallback" crops if they have enough water.

It is uncertain whether the limited role in crop production is due to land access (Zarma women traditionally have no land in their own right), competing priorities, and/or social structures. One theory is that the pervasiveness of slave labor among the 19th century Zarma helped mold the comportment of women regarding staple crops. Charlick (1991) reports that "at least two thirds of the population were "slaves" or "captives,..." and this has been remarked upon by many other authors, particularly French scholars who have worked on the region (see also Lovejoy, 1987). If the former predominant role of slave labor is indeed a factor, it will not be a unique one in the context of Sahelian social structure of times past.

Women receive temporary use of land either from the household head or from a neighboring household. Women may have several parcels each "borrowed" from different proprietors. In some Zarma areas, Fridays and afternoons are traditionally reserved for work on the individual kourba and the rest of the time is spent on the family field. Incidentally, this is quite similar to the organization of time and task found in Mali among the Bambara and Malinke. In spite of their lack of participation on the millet field, Zarma women are almost solely responsible for the processing of harvests. Men bring the millet stalks closer to the village, and women relatives work from millet stalk bundles, pounding the stalks so that the millet grain can be put away in the granaries by men.

Besides wet season, condiment gardens, some Zarma women cultivate small irrigated dry-season gardens. Rainy season gardens are often more risky because of the problems of insect attacks. Particularly when women have marketing of such products in mind, dry season gardens are more promising due to easier transport and less risk of produce spoilage. Painter (1985) reports on a village in the Dallol Bosso containing dozens of small fenced garden plots worked by village women. Plots are loaned to the women by relatives or friends for the cool dry season months only in areas normally cultivated in millet during the rainy season. In return for access to the plots, women give the owner a small but unspecified portion of the harvest. Irrigation is easily organized from shallow wells. Onions constitute the most important crop.

While Zarma women's role in crop production varies and is generally described as limited, they are heavily involved in livestock production, particularly small stock production. In 6 villages in Ouallam and Boboye regions of Niger, Zarma women were found owning 76% of all small ruminants: 74% of the sheep and 77% of the goats with flock sizes ranging from 1 to 41 animals (Taylor-Powell and Okali, 1990). Even when small ruminants are owned by men, much of the in-concession care is handled by women. Women generally start with one animal that has been acquired as a gift or through purchase. Small stock are kept for a variety of purposes: (1) a savings account which can be easily transferred into cash; (2) to meet family religious and social obligations (baptism, Tabaski); (3) as a capital investment or insurance policy to buffer against future need. Women reported selling

small stock in order to finance purchases of cereal, clothing and household utensils, marriage and schooling expenses, hired labor costs; husband's or son's migration expenses, or taxes.

### Population Issues/Marriage

Marriage expenses are usually incurred by both households in different forms. Women expect their mothers, and their mothers' cohorts, to contribute to the collection of clothes, pottery and cooking utensils that will accompany her to her new home. Diarra (1979) has a very detailed chart showing the various stages of compensation that a suitor and new husband must transfer to his intended's parents. The cash value of this amount has inflated dramatically over the years, and as is the case in many African countries legislation has even been passed in an effort to stop this rapid increase which results in the impoverishment of both sides, but particularly the groom's. This is a cost that should be assessed on a yearly basis since it fluctuates with the local economy. It may also represent a hidden debt in the household economy that affects financial decision-making, particularly of the husband. Occasionally, new grooms continue to pay off their bridewealth costs after the formal ceremony (Painter, 1986a; Arnould and Henderson, 1982; Taylor-Powell and Okali, 1990).

### Bella

The Bella communities have not been the subject of much research. On the whole, their cultural and economic traditions have been placed in the context either of the Tuareg, or of the sedentary farmers closest to them. Nevertheless, the Bella are a distinct group about whom more needs to be known. It is intended that inquiries will go out to other institutions with the intent of identifying additional literature on this cultural group.

### Social Organization

There are many different Bella communities in Niger. As has been mentioned earlier, there is a corresponding Bella community for each class of Tuareg, of which there are five. They are treated separately here because their economic base is usually distinct from that of the Tuareg and because they often live in separate communities. Those who live in the intermediate zone also reflect great diversity: some practice mixed farming and others rely almost completely on animal husbandry, keeping goats, sheep, cows and occasionally, camels. One way to understand this population is to consider two categories of communities: those who have recently migrated from home regions further north, and those who have lived in the intermediate region for more than a generation and who have institutionalized relationships, both economic and social, with Tuareg patrons further north. While recent migrants may have severed economic relations with their nobles, communities of the area may still participate in some reciprocal services, or pay some form of traditional diaka, or tax. Unfortunately, almost nothing exists in written form on the cultural or economic life of Bella households and communities. The forthcoming IFPRI study should reveal new and helpful information in this regard. At this time, very little is understood about the economic function and the financial life of women in these communities. Not unlike the Bororoji (and in contrast to the Wodaabe), the Bella have not been the object of much research focused on their particular society. AFRICARE carried out activities in the Tanout region during the 1980s, and there may be good information in trip reports, etc. to be found. In any case, there is a need to understand to what extent Bella households in this area are imbedded in a regional north/south economy, or one now acting independently in a perhaps more narrow, but freer, economic environment.

The arrondissement of Filingue is of particular importance in considering the Bella and other

Tamachek populations, because it is intermittently settled, from Baleyara northwards, by former vassals, slaves, or clients of the Tuareg. There are particular towns (or large villages) such as Chiwil and others near Damana which are known as centers of Tamachek influence.

### Agro-Pastoral Activities

Though diverse, Bella communities are generally populations who are agropastoralists who practice mixed farming and semi-sedentary herding, mostly of sheep, goats, and cattle. It is not known if and how these communities continue to pay tribute to Tuareg nobles, but it is doubtful that such relations continue as before. In fact, very little is known regarding the possible economic or ecological relationship to more nomadic systems further north. The Tamachek in the western most regions of the pastoral zone have kin and clan linkages with their neighbors in Mali, and there is considerable movement (in times of peace) between Gao in Mali, Ayorou, and other western areas of the Nigerien pastoral zone (Wilson, field observation, NDD project, 1981-83).

Rural Bella women are usually seen engaged in small-scale retail activities. They can be contrasted from higher caste Tamachek women such as those of the blacksmith class, who can be seen arriving to the market on donkeys or bulls, and who display their wealth through the profusion of silver jewelry that they wear and the elaborate leather bag hanging from their pack animals. An indication of the increased marginalization of Bella women, perhaps to the benefit of other pastoralists in the northern and intermediate regions, is their ubiquitous presence as beggars throughout Niger. Although Bella men are occasionally seen selling handicrafts on the streets of Niamey, it is above all the image of the Bella woman, dressed in dusty black tatters, that characterizes the image of this community. In consideration of possible deleterious effects to the larger Nigerien society both in terms of social destabilization, issues of homelessness, and potential demographic effects in the intermediate and northern zones, the women of the Bella community should definitely be targeted as one of the most marginalized and potentially the most problematic of populations. This may be a case in which the Rural Codes will clearly be of immense influence in transforming the relationship of a community to the territory they inhabit.

### Semi-Sedentary Fulbe

#### Social Organization

As is the case with the Wodaabe, much has been written about the Fulbe, both in Niger and elsewhere; although little has concentrated on women. Little exists in the literature about women from semi-sedentary Fulbe communities in Niger, although some data is available on such groups in Nigeria and Burkina Faso. It is not known if their economy is still largely based on milk sales, goat and sheep management, or other activities. The current role that women play in the processing and sale of dairy products is unknown to the authors at this time. Further, it is not known whether women who remain at the southerly point of the transhumant route in camps or sedentary villages carry out any farming activities, or the nature or volume of trade that may go on between them and women from nearby sedentary, farming communities.

Division of labor varies by season and degree of sedentarization, but generally consists of men having responsibility for herding, watering and care of animals while women are charged with maintenance of the camp, food/milk processing and supervision of young animals left in the camp. The transformation and marketing of part of the milk products (butter, sour milk and cheese) belongs to women. They use this income frequently for buying clothing (especially for children), tea, sugar,

jewelry, and also small agricultural products, such as manioc, during the hungry season. In principle, the purchase of cereals is the man's responsibility. Of all Fulbe populations in Niger, these are probably the most active in the sale of dairy products.

The degree of adherence to Islamic practice varies across different clans, lineages, and geographic locations. Generally speaking, it would not be correct to generalize about the religious habits or constraints among this population. Marriage is characterized by an early cross-cousin marriage, and often a "romantic" or "elopement" marriage follows. Girls may marry as early as 14 years of age. It should be noted here that they form another extremely susceptible group, between the ages of 12 and 18. As will be discussed below in greater detail, the semi-sedentary Fulbe are perhaps best known for their role of manuring fields and exchanging milk products for grain in the indigenous land use and economic systems.

Occasionally marriages to local farmers are arranged for young girls from this community. Many times this is to cement economic relations such as an ongoing trade of milk, meat to grain, manuring, etc. Although this is an informal, and not institutionalized dynamic, it occurs often in circumstances where there is a rapid influx or significant increase in income of the settled farmers. This phenomenon is most dramatic in northern Nigeria. Data from Ahmadu Bello University studies, or the Kaduna State Health officials, indicate that there is the highest incidence of "claw foot" or "Sahel syndrome" among young Fulani women who have been promised to marriage too early. This syndrome results from pregnancies which occur before a girl's body (specifically, her pelvic structure) has matured enough to deliver a child successfully. It usually results in partial paralysis of one leg and foot, due to pressure on the spinal column. In most cases victims are young girls whose parents saw economic and political advantage in establishing kin ties with influential, well to do Hausa farmers. The Sahel Syndrome leaves girls incontinent and unable to participate in normal pastoral or farming activities. The incidence of marriage of girls from the semi-sedentary community to farmers in the region, which significantly affects ties between the two communities, does not seem to be well documented.

#### Agropastoral Activities

Women of semi-sedentary Fulbe communities rarely assist on the transhumant movements that go that sometimes go into the northern zones. This work is mostly considered to be for young men between the ages of 18 and 30. Women of the corresponding age group are usually at a transhumant camp, or related sedentary village further south where they have been left with some milk cows. These female populations are mothers, unmarried sisters, wives and daughters of the herders who are on transhumance route (burtol). Overall, their socio-economic practices are not unlike other semi-sedentary Fulbe communities described elsewhere (Reisman, 1979; Stenning, 1957). Variables based on market linkages, expanding population, shifting burtol routes and changing environmental conditions should be examined in order to better understand this particular land use system and the corresponding economic systems that are associated with it.

Animals are owned by individuals (not necessarily men); even children have their own animals. Herding and maintenance of the herd, however, is the responsibility of the group. Women acquire cattle through various means: through sadaki, bride wealth animals that go to the family but whose offspring are for the wife and her children; gifts at time of marriage; gifts from the husband; or she livestock purchases herself. Fulbe keep goats largely for meat, not milk, preferring cow milk if they can possibly have it. Fulbe eat beef only on the most ritualized and ceremonious occasions and have cultural proscriptions against eating beef from public markets.

Semi-sedentary Fulbe women keep a few milk cows, goats and sheep at the **wuro**, and usually assign their care to children, regardless of sex. It is not known to what extent the semi-sedentary Fulbe women of the intermediate zone are linked to long distance markets for the trade of butter. Such Fulbe women in Kano are known to come together to sell huge quantities of butter to intermediates; it is not known whether this exists for Maradi or Zinder, for example, or if it is traded across the border to Nigeria. Of course, the amount of milk produced is a significant variable, but in estimating economic behavior of semi-sedentary Fulbe women in this zone, long distance market links should be considered.

Women in semi-sedentary communities often keep small rain-fed gardens where they grow corn, sorghum, millet. These gardens are almost always for home consumption. Although both nomadic and semi-nomadic Fulbe joined farming communities during and immediately after the drought, very few remained there.

Noble Fulani women generally engage in very few crafts. Women in nomadic or semi-nomadic communities, however, 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. Also, women repair cracked gourds for their sedentary neighbors. Noble women may engage in esteemed crafts such as embroidery and leather work. Part of a women's household equipment consists of tanning materials.

Finally, a note of caution should be made here regarding the analysis of women in the semi-sedentary Fulbe community without consideration of linkages to the farming community through trade, exchange of services, and kinship. Often, the semi-sedentary Fulbe are truly a transitional group which has vertical ties both into more nomadic communities and to sedentary ones. What has been noted here regarding the Fulbe of northern Niger can to a great extent apply to Fulbe communities around Maradi, Birni Konni, Birnin Gaouré, and Gaya. Semi-sedentary Fulbe communities are found throughout the agricultural zone from west to east. They are often called "cow Fulani" in the English literature; while Hausa-Fulani applies to people of Fulani heritage who have become sedentarized but are culturally Hausa.

## Hausa

### Socio-economic Characteristics

Hausa-speakers constitute the largest population group in Niger totaling about 53% of the total Nigerien population (1988 census); 51% are women; 53% of all Nigerien women are Hausa. Hausa "ethnicity" is characterized by an aggregate population of Hausa speakers who originated from diverse communities which melded over time as the Hausa states expanded from the 17th century onwards. Hausa comprise the majority of the population in Tahoua, Maradi and Zinder departments. In pre-colonial times, these areas were part of the Hausa hegemony which included, Kano, Katsina and Zaria in present day Nigeria. Gobir was in Maradi and Daura was in present day Zinder department. Much economic research has been conducted in the Hausa area and with Hausa women, particularly if the northern Nigeria studies are included (see for example, M.G. Smith, 1970, on socio-economic aspects; Mary Smith, 1958, on socio-cultural aspects; Norman, 1980, on farming systems; Simmons, 1982, on commercial networks).

Hausa women generally marry between the ages of 12 and 15 and have large families. Having many children is an ideal; not only do they provide farm labor, but they may enhance a woman's position

in the context of her co-wives. Very early, Hausa girls learn submission to their husbands and mother-in-law. Decorum and respect are the two most important words that characterize social relations of women.

Traditionally, there is little social interaction between men and women who are not siblings, first cousins, or other relatives. There are various levels of intimacy and decorum which constrain familiarity. Most often women eat together, and if a male relative should visit, he would most probably be served separately. Usually women eat separately; their cultural activities (dancing, singing) outside of ceremonial circumstances are usually separate.

Young unmarried people in villages have always had traditional dances and games which they have done together, so that some interaction occurred in a formalized way. Since the mid 1970s, however, the influence of government promotion of the *samaria* has done much to change attitudes in the rural areas. The *samaria*, originally a Hausa institution for young people which included cooperative work tasks and other age group activities, was promoted during the period of Seyni Kountché as a suitable political and cultural instrument for promotion of the Société de Développement. This idea was diffused through all areas of the country, and was effectively put into operation in all regions of Niger. Both girls and boys were expected to participate as part of the Société program. Participation was much greater in the villages than it was in the cities, where more genteel people would not allow their daughters to participate since the urban population was considered more boisterous and/or of unqualifiable social origin.

Another factor which affected sexual comportment and attitudes was the institution of bi-annual cultural festivals which existed during the Kountché regime. These festivals were organized on a departmental basis and featured cultural presentations of young women and men. This required organization on a departmental basis, and localized participation. As the young people of this era are now married, many with children of their own, it is difficult to ascertain what attitudinal differences exist.

As it stands today, some of Hausa society's earlier gender-based conservatism is rapidly disappearing as young people watch TVs, hear the banter at taxi-parks and markets, and listen to stories of siblings and others who come to visit from the towns. It is true that it is frowned upon and considered bad form for women to question their husbands about where they are going or of their income, but they do it, especially if there are matters of urgency as perceived by the woman. In particular, both men and women have the right to keep their overall financial information to themselves.

This indigenous "right to privacy" and other, more socio-cultural parameters regarding gender roles fosters an important division concerning socio-economic interests. Men and women manage their resources independently. They dispose of their own resources to satisfy their obligations and to have a personal income, if not in money, then in goods. This individuality is tempered by regular gift giving, especially from husband to wife, and particularly on the occasion of the Muslim holidays. In some areas, women are even known to make formal loans to their husbands (Maradi). In addition, it must be remembered that women are also responsible to their natal families and that some gift exchange take place in that regard.

Islamic tradition holds that the husband is to provide for the wife (wives) and family. Thus, a woman's earnings are her own to keep and she is not formally obligated to contribute to the household. However, in actuality, there are multiple variations on this theme. In some cases, Hausa men take full responsibility and are able to feed all members of the household. Women contribute only when necessary. Husbands may contribute minimally during dry season but take full

responsibility during the planting and growing season. In other cases, a woman is totally responsible for feeding herself and her children. Some husbands prefer to keep their young wives within the concession as much as possible so he provides for her while the older wife who has received more land is expected to take care of herself. Where wives are secluded, the husband takes full responsibility of feeding her and her children (Ado et al, 1990). Various reasons account for these differences: differing attitudes, economic and social status of the husband, and development stage of the household. Despite the ideal, as economic conditions worsen, many men are finding it increasingly difficult to fully support their families.

Also, the extent to which a Hausa woman contributes to the household appears to depend upon how she feels toward and is obligated to her husband's family. A young married woman with no children has fewer obligations. She may even consider her contributions as a loan which the husband is expected to repay after harvest. Villagers often say that divorce is high because husbands do not repay these loans (Papma, 1989). Free exchanges are more likely in stable families where a woman has several children and there are stronger links with the husband's family.

In most cases when women initiate divorce, they must reimburse the dowry. Principal reasons for divorce include sterility, arranged marriages, impotence, jealousy among co-wives and inability of the husband to satisfactorily care for his family. Normally, in case of a divorce, the woman leaves the home and returns to her natal family. She has no rights to land or children. Land which was given as a gift by the husband must be returned. If a woman gets divorced during the cropping season, she sacrifices all rights to the ensuing harvest, except from her own inherited plots (Sutter, 1982).

Given these strictures and the high incidence of divorce, Hausa women must be economically independent. They prefer activities that allow them to recuperate their capital in case of divorce. Small stock production is one such activity since livestock are inalienable; in case of divorce, women keep their livestock as their own property. Many Hausa women are little concerned with crop production on the family field. Rather, they are concerned with their own personal income activities. Significant numbers practice small commerce, particularly food processing (e.g. peanut oil, cakes, rice). Because women are not formally responsible for household subsistence, they may be in a better liquidity position than men.

In general, Hausa women are economically independent of their spouses and retain a strong orientation to their lineage of origin; a particularly important strategy in the face of frequent divorce. To view the household as a shared economic and labor unit obscures the economic and social reality. This has important implications for interventions, since activities directed to one spouse do not necessarily benefit all household residents. The importance of social obligations in Hausa society bears directly on women's decisions, use of resources and motivation to save. Considerable inputs, costs, time, and exchanges are involved in such ceremonies or social activities as arranging the marriage of children, participation in other weddings, baptisms, etc. The need to finance ceremonies and to build a dowry is the main reason why women save. Poultry are often raised to give as gifts to visiting relatives or strangers. Money is also saved to help relatives and meet other non-routine needs.

#### Agropastoral activities

Of the different ethnic groups, Hausa women are the most involved in cropping. Findings from near Maradi indicate that women produce 30% of the cereal crop, 42% of the cowpea crop and 42% of the peanuts. As one moves east across the agricultural zone, women are more and more active in agriculture and have more and more "durable" rights. Everywhere among the Hausa, women

a pottery producing village near Myrriah, women also 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 (Horowitz, 1983).

Women manage their own revenues of their production. Some women help their husbands with family expenses. However, the major part of their gains, notably that coming from sale of okra, is destined to be used in ceremonies, baptisms and marriages. This assistance generally takes the form of food contributions as bouki. For a single celebration, a woman could contribute 12 kg of millet. In times of poor harvests and low revenues, the bouki results in women going into debt.

### Social Change Issues

Most authors writing about Hausa production strategies discuss three major influences over the last century: (1) growing individualism; (2) fragmentation of large families; and (3) fragmentation of the family field or gandu<sup>4</sup>. The increase in work devoted to personal fields in contrast to working in the family field as practiced in the past is characteristic of this growing individualism. Some link this individualism to the introduction of cash crops, particularly peanuts introduced by the French, and the lure of agricultural profits. By cultivating a personal peanut field, women could gain money. It is clear that economic individualism is progressing especially in market towns such as Maradi. Fragmentation of land is occurring with increasing population pressure. The mai-gida (senior head of household) is obliged to allocate parcels of land (gamana fields) to his married sons, brothers, and wives. Increasingly, sons are choosing to establish their own independent households and must be provided land from a diminishing family land base.

Project reports as well as recent academic studies point to the fact that much change is occurring in Hausaphone areas regarding gender roles. There are increasing reports of matrilineal inheritance, women as household heads, and women as land owners. In addition to the property fragmentation due to inheritance and population growth that has been discussed above, changing economic conditions have incited greater male out-migration for wage earning opportunities. These and other dynamics related to the larger macro-economic picture promise additional transformations in the future. The eventual form of the Rural Codes will potentially have a big impact on the economic and social roles of women in Hausa communities.

### Kanouri

Very little is available to the Niamey Mission on Kanouri women at this time. It is not known whether there are studies recently done by other donors which have not come to our attention. The eastern portion of Niger in which the Kanouri live is more than 1,000 kilometers from the capital city of Niamey. The costs of time and fuel have served as a constraint to the inclusion of Kanouri populations in research and development projects, and in comparison to other segments of the country they have not enjoyed the same amount of attention.

### Social Organization

About five percent of the Nigerien population is of the Kanouri-Manga ethnicity. The Kanouri are

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<sup>4</sup> The term gandu is used to refer to land (joint family land under direction of elder) and/or labor (labor of the extended family used in farming that family land). Gamana is a land parcel under the individual's control.

composed of various ethnic groups that have been absorbed in different degrees over the centuries. Like the Hausa, the Kanouri "ethnic group" or "tribe" as we know it today is actually an aggregate group of various peoples who were conquered by, became the clients of, or came under the cultural influence of the pre-colonial Kanouri state. Some, such as the Kanembou, Boulalas, Boudamas and Toubous are closer to the Kanouri cultural center than others. The Margui, Manga, and Higgi people are distinct groups which are counted among the Kanouri but who are only distantly related linguistically and otherwise. The Mobeurs and Dagaras are groups that have been more closely affiliated, and more mixed with, the Kanouri center. Due to earlier Kanouri domination and their more powerful and centralized society, most of these groups claim Kanouri ancestry.

Islam profoundly marks the Kanouri culture except for one or two sub-groups of the Kanouri (Marghis and Bades) who conserve their pre-Islamic customs. Since the Kanouri have been at least nominally Muslim for the past 1,000 years (minimum) these groups have naturally evolved different customs, and as Arnold (1984, 1986, 1989) and Baier (1975, 1976) have pointed out in several articles, greater access to long distance trade characterized those closest to the political and economic center of Kanem Bornu.

The Kanouri are generally polygamous. Among the Bornu, a related group, adultery is severely punished. The Kanouri society is founded on a patrilineal system based on strong community spirit and grouped in tribes. Each has a family unit where the father of the family reigns as the absolute master. His authority, known by all, is never contested. He is responsible for providing all family needs - housing, food, clothing. Women are formally obedient to the man on whom she depends (either her father or husband), but informally, Kanouri women are considered as very independent and willful.

Girls live among the women until they marry, usually at about age 14-15, sometimes younger. In waiting to be married, the young girl learns domestic work and the "art of being a woman". Motives for divorce include: husband beats wife; treats her badly or not at all; the two do not get along together; the wife is lazy - does not prepare food for husband, etc. In case of divorce, the children belong to the father.

#### Agropastoral Activities

Some Manga women (and perhaps other Kanouri) do have their own fields or garden land which is obtained through gift or inherited. In a study of 96 Manga women in three Arrondissements of Diffa (Lachance, 1986), it was found that all women work in the cereal crop field and 50% cultivate their own gardens. Twenty-five percent of the women reported that the field/garden belonged to them, having been obtained through inheritance. Women cultivate millet and cowpeas, okra, sorghum, peanuts, and small amounts of corn, cucumber, watermelon and rice. Other vegetable crops may be grown dry season gardens. About half of the women cultivate dry season gardens. Most of the produce is consumed in the household. Women may sell some manioc, cowpea, gumbo though the revenues are fairly insignificant. Women are also involved in livestock production, crafts and commerce.

#### Gourmantche

The Gourmantche formerly occupied nearly all the land west of the Niger River from the present Malian border in the north to the Burkina and Benin borders in the south. The Gourmantche had a loose federation of related communities in pre-colonial times. Population density in this area was

never very high which made it somewhat easy to be displaced by more aggressive groups, such as the Songhai, and later the Fulbe, in search of new homelands. The Gourmantche are largely animists.

The Gourmantche women are known as gardeners par excellence by others in Niger. They also play more active role in maintaining the staple crop fields than women in most other Nigerien groups. There has been some Christian missionary influence in the Gourmantche community around Say, Gueladio and other areas further south. Women in the Gourmantche community are known to have responded more favorably to agricultural extension and project related services and training than Fulbe women.

### Settled Fulbe

Settled Fulbe communities can be thought of as belonging to two basic categories: new communities of recently sedentarized Fulbe, and older communities of migrants from the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century. They have important differentiating characteristics that significantly affect the comportment and economic roles of women.

Newer communities probably have less secure land tenure rights. Gained at the turn of the century or later, they have probably settled with client or near-client status relative to the political center of the farming populations that enjoyed pre-colonial hegemony in that area. In such communities, the settled Fulbe women are likely to have more kinship and other ties with semi-sedentary Fulbe, are likely to be more economically independent, and are likely to have more diverse social and economic roles, such as selling dairy products in the market or traveling to nearby villages by themselves.

Fulbe in older villages often live in hierarchically stratified societies, and these are usually more strict in their adherence to Islamic custom regarding women's rights and acceptable behavior for women. These are villages that were generally created before or just after the arrival of the French, so that their founding often included the creation of, or augmentation of, a slave class. Such societies have three basic social tiers: the riimbe (free)<sup>5</sup>, the rimaibe (lower caste former slaves who have acquired lineage affiliations) and the matchuube, people who were slaves when slavery was outlawed, who do not have lineage affiliation (though they do have clan affiliation) and who do not have the traditional pre-colonial options of escaping this ethnic identity, barring migration out of the community and the assumption of another ethnic identity. In most cases, women's work is very much determined by the level of society that she is born into. While riimbe and rimaibe women may have their own cattle, matchuube traditionally were barred from cattle raising. While women of the riimbe and rimaibe class depend more on dairy products for cash income, matchuube women tend to depend more on garden crop sales. While a matchuube may go herself to the market to sell her goods, a riimbe will often send a rimaibe or matchuube woman or man as a proxy. Matchuube women generally have much better technical know-how in farming than do riimbe women, whose cultural identity is tied to rejecting agriculture. The situation is such that settled Fulbe villages may appear to be made up of all farmers, when in fact riimbe may farm just enough for household needs. In terms of land use patterns, riimbe and rimaibe youth, usually but not always men, may in fact represent a semi-sedentary segment of the community which transhumes during the dry season with cattle. In other cases, young men transhume and women stay at the home village (Wilson, 1984).

Of eight Fulbe women interviewed in Boyanga, Kollo arrondissement, none contributed labor on the family field and none owned land. While the women did not cultivate cereal crops, some cultivated

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<sup>5</sup> *Riimbe* are made up of nobles, clerics and free herdsmen.

gardens of okra, sesame or calabash. Most women received parcels of land within their husbands' or sons' fields, but their plots were rotated periodically. Women's crops were generally consumed in the household, not offered for sale. Half of the women owned cattle, almost all owned goats and three owned chickens. One woman said that she could sell the goats that are technically owned by her children. Half of these women received their first animal as a gift, the other half bought their first animal. Except for those from the noble class, they wove palm fiber mats. Their principal income sources appeared to be livestock, fowl, eggs, and mats (Calvey, 1990).

The caste structure influences what is considered acceptable work for women and men. For example, it appears that the Fulbe noble class is not likely to weave palm mats, whereas the rimaibe do. The rimaibe have largely settled in the Say Arrondissement, becoming sedentarized in order to fill the cereal needs of the noble caste (Calvey, 1990). All of them are, or were until the last generation, associated with noble or other rimaibe groups. Say was settled progressively by diverse Fulbe groups (nobles and their communities), in the 19th century; some communities further south or east are older and belonged to the principalities of Liptako and Dori, whose centers are both now in Burkina Faso.

A good example of the problems that these relationships can engender in project populations is the difficulty encountered between participants at the Centre de Promotion Technique at Gueladio. When nobles or women of the clerical class were present, women from other classes were influenced by their behavior and participated less. Women of the noble class in turn avoided farming tasks when rimaibe or matchube were present (Wilson, 1984).

Like women in more nomadic Fulbe groups, sedentary women marry very young, usually in a cross-cousin marriage. The first marriage is usually arranged by the parents. It is not unusual for this marriage to dissolve so that, in fact, the individual actually makes his/her marriage choice. Polygamy is practiced but to lesser degree than among other sedentary farming peoples. Children hold a very important position because they are indispensable as the future inheritors of the cattle herd as well as workers. Thus, women's status is reinforced by the number of children she has, but less so than in historically agricultural groups. Transhumant herding requires less labor than sedentary farming.

In notes from a Gueladio interview with two women (Gavian, 1991) it is stated that fonio cultivated by women may be sold, but the produce from women's small parcels of land (okra, peanuts, corn, sesame) is consumed by the family or given to parents and friends. Women are responsible for providing the condiments for the household. A woman would only ask her husband to buy condiments when her own stock is depleted. These settled Fulbe women decide when to change fields based on the level of production. One woman had a kourga of millet and hired laborers as well as cultivating herself.

## PART TWO

### Natural Resource Management Issues

There are clearly natural resource management issues that have particular weight in terms of women's roles in rural economies. There are particular agricultural and land use activities that are uniquely the purview of women in Niger. It is tempting to speak of "the feminine aspects of the ecosystem," or even the "female role in the ecosystem" in view of the high gender specialization that has traditionally existed in Niger. Women in Niger appear to have their own "ecological niche" in terms of land use practices which are associated with women. This section seeks to highlight certain aspects of the land use system that are of particular importance to the management of natural resources in Niger. By highlighting the function of women in the exploitation and protection of the environment, their crucial role in natural resource management becomes apparent.

Greater understanding of women's "ecological niche" will contribute to fuller integration of natural resource concerns within the Mission's program, and to fostering Nigerien capacity to manage natural resources at all appropriate institutional levels, national to community (see AID, 1987). Although little is known about women's roles in agropastoral production, even less is known about how those activities impact or are congruent with local natural resource management objectives. Similarly, there is very limited understanding of women's activities in off-farm production and hence of the relation of these activities to indigenous land use systems.

The understanding of local knowledge and management systems (FAO, 1990) can provide a solid base upon which to build appropriate modifications for new environmental problems. The local knowledge of climatic patterns, their variability in space and time, and the ways in which it is predicted, forms an indispensable part of the information the pastoralist and farmer need to survive. Local calendars are more flexible than the western calendar because they are linked to both climatic variability and agricultural activities (FAO, 1990).

This report reveals that women do indeed have very specific and defined roles in local land use systems. In agropastoral production, for example, the rotation of women's garden plots with the family fields (where staple crops are grown) improves soil conditions, since some of women's leguminous crops provide soil nutrients that are exhausted by staple crops. Small ruminants, largely owned by women, forage freely and also contribute manure necessary for soil fertility.

Gathering of plants and barks (for food or medicine) is almost exclusively a woman's activity. The existing documentation suggests that there are additional relationships between women's work and local knowledge and management systems as they relate to natural resource management. What follows are examples of some of the relationships between gender-specific work roles or resource allocation, and local systems of using and managing the environment. The challenge today is to attempt to improve on management systems that have evolved over decades, sometimes centuries, and that are now inadequate for the increasingly rapid transformations that are taking place in both the socio-economic and physical environments. A clear understanding of these systems must include an understanding of gender roles within them.

## Land Tenure in Sedentary Cultivation Systems

There are extremely localized notions of usufruct and proprietary rights to trees and plants, although according to the thesis of A. Wilson (1989) some of these customary rights are breaking down, such as gathering of valuable "semi-wild" plants and leaves. Wilson cites evidence from Kollo (Boula) that farmers are increasingly exercising gathering rights over trees and plants on their inherited land. The use of certain trees whose products have commercial value has become increasingly individualized. In Zarma areas, for example, leaves of *Adansonia digitata* (Baobab) and fruits of *Hyphaene thebaica* (doumier) are so valuable that these trees are individually owned and protected from casual harvesting of passers-by. Tree ownership is generally part of land-use agreements. For instance, small herbaceous plant *Ceratotheca sesamoides* cannot be harvested without permission of the person cultivating the field in which it grows. The privilege of harvesting usually rests with a female relative of the cultivator (Wilson, 1989). The use of farm lands for specialized secondary tree crops is an area of study which definitely needs further research.

The types of activities that women are involved in that use land or land products include charcoal making, tobacco curing, fuelwood collection (for sale or domestic use), gathering medicinal plants or local fruits/snacks, and collection of fodder.

There is also little known regarding the extent to which women use, through kin obligation or exchange of cash, proxies to achieve certain economic objectives. One of those objectives might be the ownership of land, or holding title to land, which is not necessarily the same thing if title is based on customary usufruct rights. There are, however, instances where women own land, but do not necessarily hold title to the land in their own name. Beyond the obvious labor roles in gathering, watering, and cleaning that women often perform around women's gardens, their larger role as inheritors needs to be considered in the context of "proxy" management of their property.

It is also worthwhile to consider women's reliance on their children in analyzing natural resource management patterns. It is suggested that children play several crucial roles in contributing time and labor to women's environmental management activities. Through her children's rights to assets, a woman may also expand her own (de facto) access to resources. Fulbe women purchase (or inherit) animals for eventual distribution to their children; women farmers may have effective ownership of land if they hold priority usufruct rights to plots designated for their children. This may be of particular importance for widows and women who have been named as inheritors by their fathers, and are concerned to protect their access to this land.

In the Koran, women are envisioned as property owners since their rights as heirs are clearly spelled out, as well as the rules for dividing a woman's property among her heirs. Under shari'a law, daughters inherit property in shares equal to half those of sons, and widows inherit an eighth share of their husband's wealth. However, to what extent such laws are applied is uncertain, as is the degree of variation in their practice. Painter, in writing of the Zarma of the Dosso region (1986a), states that women do not ordinarily acquire land through inheritance, although this may occur if a woman is the sole heir at the time of her husband's death or the death of an older brother. In a nine village study of Magaria arrondissement, Zinder Department, it was found that women have no inheritance rights to land; they cultivate land loaned by their husbands (Kansaye, 1989). In the Bouza Arrondissement, Majjiya, Hausa women inherit land but few women cultivate it; they prefer to rent it to others (often their husbands) and invest their revenues in craft activities such as pottery, mats and livestock, but they do work in their husbands fields when male labor is insufficient. Reports from Balleyara and Hamdallaye regions indicate that there women only have the right to inherit land if

they have no brothers. Even in cases where there are no brothers, the father's brother allocates land even though daughters have legal right to it. Because of women's subordinate and dependent position relative to men, women do not usually exercise their claim to land in order to maintain good relations with brothers or uncles and to avoid scandal. Thus, few of them inherit land in Niger (Yacouba, 1988). On the other hand, where there is heavy male out-migration, women are taking control over land and associated crop production. For example, in Keita Arrondissement, it was estimated that at least thirty women were chefs d'exploitation in fifteen villages studied (Cremona, 1986). There are also reports that matrilineal inheritance is increasing (Papma, 1989).

Not a great deal is known about the incidence of land sales either. There is some indication that riverbed land in the Maradi area, which is valuable for gardening activities, is obtained through inheritance, purchase or request from a relative. There are cases of women buying land in southern Zinder region (Papma, 1989; Ado et. al., 1990). The CARE Guidan Roumji Report (Ado et. al., 1990) refers to a woman who owned a garden plot in the riverbed at Goulbi: she had bought it several years earlier for 2000 FCFA, and could now easily sell it for at least 100,000 FCFA. In a similar field interview conducted by Taylor-Powell (1990), it was unclear whether the woman being interviewed was speaking of purchase or "mise en valeur" (modern use rights).

Calvey (1990) reports from Boyanga in Kollo arrondissement that land is scarce and land loans and sales are "quite common in the area". As Robertson and Berger (1986) argue, "In a sense it does not matter who 'owns' something; more important is who can 'use' and/or 'control' it, an issue that is particularly cogent in dealing with African land tenure and labour control." In formalizing the rural code, the challenge will be to avoid usurping the flexibility that usufruct rights (access/use/control) ensure.

Where land is scarce, women are likely to have reduced access. When there is increased pressure on available farmlands, men cultivate staple cereal crop on whatever arable land is available. This pattern may be an indication of household consumption priorities, but perhaps also an indication of male roles in household decision-making. This gender-specific use of land also depends upon the physical particularities of the local situation. Women tend to exploit low lying areas, near the household, around the village, and in areas contiguous to the millet fields. Sometimes these low lying areas, good for the production of garden crops are exploited individually, or they may be cultivated by a group of women. The labor and maintenance required for garden crops, as well as the household purpose of many gardens, allows women to take advantage of small areas of land that otherwise would remain unused. This is particularly true of moist, high clay content soils in high population density areas. This intense use of available arable land is also an indication of the specificity of local production adaptations, and of local knowledge of the limits and potentials of the environment.

Modern land law tends to collapse complex patterns of land use rights into ownership of land as the property of a single title holder. Modern law does not reflect the actual organization of production which allows a man to cultivate manioc while his wife cultivates tomatoes on the same parcel of land. Such land use as the intercropping of two cash crops usually includes a corresponding income structure. Husband and wife often maintain separate budgets, although they may hold (in modern system) individual and not joint rights to use of the unit, probably through the husband. In Hausa villages land is distributed by the chief of the village to household heads (mai-gida) for usufructory rights; otherwise land is inherited (patrilineally). Household heads are able to expand what they have inherited through requests for usufruct rights. In Hausa, gandu comprise household fields while personal fields held by individuals, including women, are gamana. In rare cases, women are proprietors of gandu. Women sometimes acquire tenure through inheritance from father or

brother. A widow, mother, or sister may occasionally "hold" land for later exploitation by a male family member. An example is when the head of household is deceased and the family feels both modern and traditional tenure laws may apply. Modern Nigerien law states that land left unused may go back to the state or be appropriated to others. In such cases, a woman may work the land in question with the help of relatives or with hired labor until the rightful (male) owner comes to take over. Women participate heavily in gandu cultivation but are normally little concerned with the management and exploitation of that land. They are more concerned with fields and activities that provide them with personal revenue and priority in decision-making.

Papma (1989) describes various changes in land succession ranging from traditional cases where Hausa mai-gida have control over and distribute family land to more recent situations where individuals negotiate with others - even outside of the family. Currently, various methods of acquiring land such as gifts, loans, "mise en valeur" and land sale could be advantageous for women, since these mechanisms seem to provide more opportunity for women to acquire land. Traditionally, women have been excluded from permanent access to land (Papma, 1989). Today, growing numbers of women are acquiring land themselves.

Much of the WID literature argues that because women do not have land security, they are at a disadvantage in terms of access to quality land. In Niger, however, women clearly make their own decisions regarding land use and often move from plot to plot freely, depending upon crop rotation patterns and fertility. Having access to multiple plots and rotation possibilities ensures greater flexibility and spreading of risks. Additionally, some legumes enrich the soil of former family grain fields, so that locating gardens in such fields provides soil nutrients. Nevertheless, women have no formal authority in the distribution of plots. Women's plots tend to be least fertile. When women improve fertility, men may expropriate it and may well allocate less fertile land to women (Horowitz, 1983).

The Hausa speaking areas of Niger are generally densely populated. Virtually no unexploited land exists in the region. Women's fields are generally smaller than men's fields. However, if a woman has inherited a field from her parents or dead husband, then that area is larger. Women cultivate various crops principally millet, sorghum, and gumbo. However, the crop choice depends upon the season (rainfall), soil and size of the plot. Like men, women consider agriculture essential for meeting food needs of the family. Women complain that there is insufficient land to reap a maximum profit.

There are many de facto and de jure differences in local resource rights between certain groups that must be considered in designing natural resource management initiatives, e.g. Bella women cut and gather firewood but never own the trees or land. There is a danger that as investments are made in the resource base and land values increase, men will take over that land and receive all benefits. Means of securing benefits for women must be established before natural resource management programs are initiated.

### **Land Tenure in Pastoral Systems**

Wodaabe do not form large, tightly-structured groups which control access to water and pasture. That control, such as it is, is vested in the fraction, the small group of closely and patrilineally related nuclear and extended families that normally coordinate their daily and seasonal movements:

Lineage fissioning keeps the fraction to a manageable size. . . It is likely that the fissioning of lineage segments . . . serves a major ecological function: to maintain the decentralization of decision-making regarding the management of the herd. . . The herd manager monitors the quality of pasture, largely through milk production, and moves his animals when he decides that a better quality of pasture is available elsewhere. . . In summary, the ecological system of which Wodaabe form a part, with its uncertain and frequently deficient rainfall, encourages a fragmentation of lineage structures into small groups which can most efficiently exploit the terrain (Horowitz, 1983).

Tuareg exploitation of the rich but short-lived pastures of the Eghazer of Agadez is a crucial but poorly understood element in the transhumant strategies there. Some studies attribute that movement to the availability of terrestrial salts.

Pastoralists living north of the Eghazer and the 150mm isohyt exploit a desert ecosystem that depends in part on pastures in the valleys of seasonal water courses flowing out of the Air mountains, as well as on the occurrence of chance winter rains in the far northern valleys of the Air Massif, and the winter growth of nutritious desert vegetation . . ." (Horowitz, 1983).

Through control over permanent traditional wells the ighawnan (8 or 10 household units) also control the dry season pasture surrounding these wells. Pastures between these wells form the dry season grazing reserves of numerous groups which are primarily although not exclusively of the Kel Fadey confederation (Horowitz, 1983).

Semi-nomadic Fulbe and Bella exchange manure for fodder as herders pasture their animals on cropped grain fields. Annual manuring contributes to refertilization of the fields and to their long term stability. It appears that this investment is made into staple crop and family fields, not to plots used by women (Horowitz, 1983). Women of both the sedentary and semi-nomadic communities do own ruminants who graze freely around villages. As is the case throughout Niger, these animals pose an environmental threat.

### **Small ruminants: Livestock production Among Women Farmers**

Sutter (1982) suggests that livestock represent the single most important accumulation of wealth within a village. In his sample, Hausa women owned a high proportion of animals: 59% of the cattle and over two thirds of all sheep and goats. If one breakdowns livestock ownership within a household, it is easy to see the differentiation within a household, i.e. different members of the same household may have very different capacities to mobilize resources. Sutter attributes the widespread ownership of sheep and goats among women to their desire to engage in activities that enable them to recuperate their capital in case of divorce. Thus, they are eager to amass an individual form of "mobile" capital.

There is no gender bias in small ruminant raising. The male head of household, the wife or even the daughters, may take responsibility for their care. Otherwise, each individual in the household takes care of his/her own animals. There is no formal veterinary care for small ruminants, although there is usually at least one person in the village who is conversant in traditional veterinary practice. Animals are treated locally for diarrhea and parasites or else killed.

Livestock production is a principal economic activity of all Nigerien peasants. Women sometimes

own donkeys for use in transport. They also own cattle, sheep, and goats. The system of herding and management varies. Some women hire herders and others manage their animals themselves. Previously, women who owned cattle did not consider small ruminants as part of the herd. The latter were offered for ceremonies, given to parents or friends as gifts or sold for cash. Goat's milk was generally not consumed.

Livestock are not sold directly by women but through a male intermediary (husband or father). The proceeds, however, belong to the woman and are transmitted back to her. She may reimburse the seller with small gifts, or with cash. Sometimes, however, husbands who have acted as sellers spend the income themselves, or they may buy fabric or jewelry for the wife, often at her request.

### **Food gathering**

As noted above, gathering is an activity which is widely regarded as being gender specific. Recent data (Taylor-Powell, 1992) indicates that men also practice gathering, though the plants that they gather, the purpose and the organization of this work varies considerably from what women do. The study of gathering activities of women is in fact an interesting point of departure from which time management, land use, and household nutrition can be analyzed. It is an activity that is practiced on a year-round-basis. Although crops and plants exploited may differ, Niger offers enough variety in wild and semi-wild plants, tree extracts, and wild fruits that throughout the country gathering remains an important activity. In particular, old women and children benefit from both the consumption of products gathered and from the small income derived from their sale.

The study by A. Wilson (1989) on plants gathered in Kollo Arrondissement indicates that in fact vital nutrients were supplied primarily through the consumption of wild or semi-wild products, and that the time of the day when they are gathered was also significant to the extent to which they were available to women and children. Lack of access to plants through privatization could possibly have deleterious effects on local nutritional levels unless gathering activities are considered as an integral part of the indigenous natural resource management system.

The Wilson thesis (1989) includes a survey in a Zarma region on gathered foods. Only 13 of 63 species (wild foods consumed) were also listed in the Rodrick/Filingue survey which focused on woody species for construction, forage, fuelwood, and medicines as well as foods. It is not known how their categories were defined, or how terms were defined. It is also unclear why so few species overlap between the two studies.

The commercial value of wild foods is often great. A survey in Zimbabwe found that over half of the respondents were involved in gathered food commerce and that a single day's earnings was estimated to equal a sum representing 5% of average annual per capital income (Wilson, 1989). Women from Zarmaganda (Ouallam) often migrate to Niamey to gather and market wild foods. One can observe them returning at dusk along the city streets with gathered foods they've collected to sell. Some may walk as far as 50 kilometers to gather wild plants. A 50-kilogram gunny sack full of leaves is worth 5000 FCFA or approximately 4% of average annual income (Wilson, 1989).

Gathering of wild foods is often not reported by women since it is done by almost everyone and on the way home from fields. It is often consumed within the household (Ado et. al., 1990). Women may also think that these products do not fit the category of foods that educated investigators are

asking about.

In an analysis of income from tree products, it was found that of 144 Hausa women surveyed in Filingue arrondissement, 12.5% were involved in gathering of tree products for selling purposes. For these women, sale of tree products ranked midway in income generation as compared to other economic activities they were engaged in, such as cropping, catering, small business and crafts. Gathering and sale of tree products is found more frequently in the northern zone where fewer alternatives exist and where agriculture is particularly risky and poor harvests are commonplace. The conclusion is that with a diminishing tree population, this supplemental income will be increasingly hard to come by. Income can be generated from wood, leaves, fruit, bark, pods, roots, gum. Uses include fuelwood, forage, construction, medicine, crafts/rope, and perhaps most importantly, nutritional balance.

### **Wood Gathering**

Firewood prices vary and are apparently dependent upon fagot size, not on weight or the type or quality of wood (fagots priced at 100 FCFA ranged in weight from 7.2 kg to 15.4 kg and were made up of a mixture of species) (Rodrick, 1990). Women tend to carry wood on their heads, so they transport lighter branches smaller in diameter. This is also a function of their cooking needs and habits. Women are not usually involved in the sale of firewood. The CARE Guidan Roumji Report (Ado et. al., 1990) states that women don't sell firewood but gather it for home use. Men and boys with donkey carts or camels may collect larger diameter branches, which are usually taken to towns and cities.

Respondents in Rodrick's (1990) survey were not interested in maintaining woodlots for fuelwood and gave various reasons (can't cut trees, long time horizon) but did express interest in plantations of forage trees and trees which provide food products, where benefits could be realized in a few years. The most desirable tree to grow was the neem; the most valuable function of a tree was supplying food products, though provision of shade was also important.

It was unclear whether the women interviewed completely understood what a woodlot is. The survey found that women also tended to be ill-informed as to the causes of desertification. The majority attributed it to the will of Allah and as such, expressed that nothing could be done to prevent desertification. In contrast, men more often gave drought, growing population, etc. as causes for changes in the natural environment. Rodrick argues that women need to be targeted specifically with information and extension education. They are the ones most affected by consequences of environmental degradation and often their labor is critical to intervention success.

In the Magaria arrondissement, a new trend is found to be emerging. Firewood in fields increasingly belongs to the field owner, whereas in the past, wood was abundant and could be collected by anyone, anywhere.

## **Water Management**

In the Azawak and Irhazer valleys, people often depend on artisan wells in areas between boreholes and traditional wells, which are often very far apart. On the other hand, water is very close to the surface along the valley bed, and sometimes can even be scooped up from a one-meter depth with a plastic dish. This is possible for at least 8 months out of the year, sometimes more (Wilson, field notes, 1989). In this region women are responsible for collecting household water supplies, and they anticipate needs and availability between both permanent and seasonal water sources.

In most agricultural areas, there do not appear to be overt constraints to the construction or use of hand dug irrigation canals for women's commercial gardens. Several women's groups received support during 1988-90 through the African Development Foundation in Ouallam, Belaye (Dogon Douchi) and in Karida (Zinder), but through their village cooperatives which were run by men.

Women's dry season gardening activities are very often constrained by lack of access to water. Cement boreholes generally serve as public sources of water for the local population, often to the consternation of the communities which have had them installed. For example, at Kourfey, AFN women complained to local authorities that the borehole installed during project implementation was practically inaccessible due to general public use. The renegotiation of women's access to the project well was necessary. This case underscores the need to understand how use rights get negotiated (at the local level) when new water sources are established, as well as to ensure women's access to such resources.

## **OFF-FARM PRODUCTION/INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES**

It is now clear that women contribute immensely to household maintenance and survival. It is hoped that the IFPRI study will provide insight into household resource flows in its survey villages. What data we have suggests that surplus is sometimes used for direct sale, for use to offset purchases, or as input into another primary sale (forage fed to an animal which is subsequently sold). There are factors which make it difficult to quantify sources of income and revenues: small quantities, prevalence of barter, circulation of goods through exchange and gift. There are few women who work as investigators or in data gathering. This sector is definitely under-represented in existing documentation. There is a need for the updating of existing information and an expanded area of inquiry (social and geographic) in order to ascertain best approaches to providing financial and other support in the commercial sector. Most income generating activities are seasonal, taking place primarily in the dry season, since people are occupied with cropping activities in rainy season. The gathering and sale of wild plants tends to be the only year-round activity since it is done en route when people return from family fields and personal gardens. Hair plaiting also provides occasional income. These activities have significant implications for the savings capacity of rural women.

## **Food Preparation/Processing**

Hausa women in particular gain income from preparing and selling food products. This was documented as early as the mid-19th century by Barth. Of women in the Guidan Roumji sample, 61% prepare food for sale (Ado et. al., 1990).

Oil extraction is considered by Guidan Roumji women as one of their most profitable income generating activities. The authors state that benefit comes not just from the oil (much of which is exported south to Nigeria where it sells for roughly ten naira a bottle, but from the tortaux (mass left after oil is extracted) which is used for a supplement in animal feed for fattening. Another by-product is kuli-kuli, a seasoning for local foods.

One limitation of the Guidan Roumji report is that it gives expenses and benefits obtained from different activities, but is based on interviews and retrospective data from few individuals. There is no quantification or systematic data collection for costs and returns of the enterprises noted.

Although little has been documented regarding food processing and sale, it is important to the daily income of many Nigerien women. Zarma women, for example, sell such products as "copteau" in regional markets and in Niamey markets. More research needs to be done in order to better understand the levels of activity and income associated with this activity.

## **Collection and Marketing of Wild Foods**

The Wilson thesis (1989) provides the sale price of different wild foods, categorized by whether they are fresh, dried, or ready-to-eat preparations, and whether they are gathered or purchased and resold, and all the foods described may be bartered for millet and milk in exchange. There is, however, no data on their contributions to income. She states that "the sale of gathered foods is a commerce in which women profit and which they control. Women who sell prepared foods and fruits realize substantial profits." Wilson argues that trading of wild and cultivated foods may be the only income source for unattached women in small villages. Gathering of doum palm leaves to make into mats and the sale of gathered damsas fruits are a major source of income for buying livestock in the Dosso region (Taylor-Powell and Okali, 1990).

## **Handicrafts**

Only 23% of women in the Guidan Roumji sample engaged in craft activities consisting of cookstoves, pottery, mat making, hairplaiting, beds. Pottery cookstoves and beds are only produced in the dry season. Returns on mat making are estimated at 100-500 FCFA depending upon whether the doum palm leaves used are bought or gathered, and whether or not colored or plain mats are being made. It may be that these crafts are kept at the level of local (village wide) production, and that other income generating activities are chosen in the context of their marketability across the border to Nigeria.

In the villages covered in a study in Magaria (Zinder), craft activities among women are minimal and largely limited to mat making.

Wodaabe women engage in very few crafts. Two crafts activities which have emerged as very popular in the last six years or so (due probably to their exposure to Westerners through various projects and increased tourism in their area) are the making of bead necklaces and the embroidery and sewing of traditional blouses (hinaaré). Such tops occasionally make it to a specialized market. Their preparation is extremely time consuming, and both crafts activities are limited to the rainy season when women's work is a little lighter and people have more food. The beads for the necklaces are brought back by Wodaabe men and their wives who have traveled to places like Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal. (W. Wilson, from interviews).

Tuareg women are more likely to make palm leaf handicrafts, and they are known for their extensive leather crafting. Artisan activities are traditionally done by the wives of blacksmiths. (W. Wilson, ADF: 1988, 1989). Although these crafts were formerly produced almost exclusively for local use, since the droughts of 1973-74, 1981-82 and 1984-85 these goods have become commercialized. Leather pillows and key chain holders seem to be the most popular. The Tuareg women also produce embroidered clothing. In Abalak a crafts cooperative project was funded by the African Development Foundation but did not have much success for several reasons. Leadership was not well based and lacked technical know-how in management, market linkages and product transport were not well defined, cooperative members received insufficient training in improved production techniques such as pacing production, quality control, etc., and external factors such as local political dynamics and mismanagement by the local ADF representative worked against the success of the project. More than half the participants were women, whose supplies were designated as separate line items. Lessons learned can be pulled from this experience when considering interventions in this sector.

### **Hairdressing**

Hairplaiting is done by women between other work and not prioritized; there is an average price of 100-150 FCFA but in reality is often paid in millet. Newly introduced activities aren't as often aligned to specific groups and can be done by anyone. They are practiced because of their profitability. Thus, one finds that mat making is done by nearly all women without distinction to status or role.

### **Mat Production**

The Mead study (Mead et al., 1990) states that mat weaving dominates non-farm employment in several regions of Niger, primarily Dosso, Madoua and Tahoua. In rural Dosso, it is the largest non-farm employer, employing 114 women per 1,000 population vs. Maradi where in rural areas only 5 people per thousand were found weaving mats. The explanation provided is that Maradi respondents have ready commercial alternatives in groundnut processing and dry season vegetable production. It is suggested that returns are low and appear to be falling as export outlets shrink. There seems to be dismal potential for mat making. They estimate the return (gross profit margin) to be in the order of 130-150 FCFA per month for 4 mats (less than 50 FCFA per mat), and only 15-62

FCFA/day when figured in returns to labor.

### **Paid/Hired labor**

Women pound grain, carry water for other women, assist in peanut oil extraction, and migrate to irrigated perimeters to thresh. Economically disadvantaged women will also offer their services for threshing to more well-to-do women in their communities. The earlier cited report of women in Gidan Roumji states that some women migrate to northern Nigeria for up to five months to pound for people in the cities. They usually travel there in groups (a typical group consists of 5 women) (Ado et al., 1989).

### **Healing/Fortune Telling**

Women in Niger are unlikely to practice either of these trades for income. The midwives are about the only women practicing an indigenous health profession, except what takes place in the context of bori and foleyey possession cults (see religion, in Part One.) Women who are zima, (people who are possessed) receive remuneration for their services from clients who have requested a possession ceremony. Through such ceremonies, clients expect to learn something about the future, or to alter current or future circumstances. Payment to individual zima does not appear to go beyond 2,000 FCFA per client (Stoller: 1989).

### **Commerce and Marketing**

There are no reports that adequately describe the role and position of women in the marketplace that we are aware of at this time. A 1982 report indicates that individually, women are irregular participants at the Petit Marché in Niamey, but collectively they are the dominant element there (Arnould and Henderson, 1982). Most vegetable sellers and hawkers are men. Certainly women in Niger are not the dominant force in trade as seen in West African coastal countries. At the same time, Niger is characterized by a large population that has traditionally had both short and long distance trade and commerce as a dry season activity for Hausa men, while such activities are not characteristic of the coastal populations, with the exception of Pulaar, Dyulla and Woloff speakers from Guinea to Mauritania (all emanating from western sudanic cultures). In sahel/savannah areas, therefore, historical patterns have developed a commercial niche for men that does not exist, at this time, for women of the region. There is a potential for competition in the savannah/sahel cultures regarding women's participation in commerce that is not apparent in cultures further south.

There are pottery sellers in Niamey who normally operate out of two large pottery markets. Women are hardly at all engaged in the doorway trade; it is mainly young girls, boys and men who do this in Niger's cities, although women occasionally do this in villages. In rural areas women usually wait for the periodic markets, since this also gives them a chance to shop for themselves, to get out of the village, socialize with friends, etc.

### De Sardin's

1969 data indicate that among Niger River region markets, four-fifths of sellers were women, many selling their own products. Kado women sold garden produce, cured dates and salt; Bella (Buzu) women sold market pots, firewood and millet which they had purchased previously; Fulani women sold butter; Wogo women sold threshed rice (which they purchased unthreshed from their husbands), tobacco, manioc (then grown by men) and mats.

### Other Professions

Generally every village has a traditional mid-wife, who is invariably post-menopausal. She is usually recompensed with food, kola and other gifts.

Courtesanship also exists, but the practice resembles more the Japanese institution of geisha rather than Western-style prostitution. There are two immediately apparent categories of courtesans, those that practice in the traditional context and those (usually young girls) who are spontaneously taking up the profession.

A minority of women are now employed in the rural areas as civil servants and in private enterprise as secretaries or project assistants (though no disaggregated data exists). At the sous-prefet level there are secretaries and health workers, and sometimes other services also employ women. With the re-organization of GON services, assessment of the distribution of women in jobs related to the rural sector would be interesting in view of repeated mention in the literature of the poor delivery of technical services to women and the lack of women in the agricultural extension networks.

## PART THREE

### Conclusions and Recommendations

As a prelude to the recommendations which follow, it is useful to sum up a few points which are areas of overriding interest and importance in considering women in their productive capacities in Niger. We have seen, for example, that the social and economic position of women is in great flux. Macro-economic conditions such as the government's current attempts to establish a democracy, as well as crisis conditions of the national treasury, are having a direct effect on women. Fewer employed men in the family means fewer salaries in the urban context, and this can directly affect the market for certain products and services which depend on civil servant consumption habits. Further, transportation and other market related services have also increased. The search for cash income has increased the incidence of out-migration among rural men, thus again putting women in the central role of daily provider for the household. Among the factors affecting women on the macro level such as the climate and the national economy, public policy is one of the most significant. In the context of policy, the evolution of the Code Rural, and the Family Codes, will have marked effects on the position of women in Niger.

There appears to be a consistent drift towards wage or cash earning activities during the off season in particular, but also in the rainy season when opportunities present themselves. This has already become quite evident in the pastoral community where the incidence of youth employed as herders for sedentary merchants or well-to-do farmers is growing; most of the national herd now no longer belongs to herders (AID, 1991). In the same context, women, without the protection of a legal structure like the Code Rurale, risk losing regular access to gardening and gathering activities, both of which are important to nutrition and income needs. Finally, the extremely low literacy rate of women constrains their capacity to absorb new information, and the circulation of new information among women is crucial to improved farm production, natural resource management, and off-farm income producing activities. Training at the grassroots level and intermediate levels through cooperatives can provide a stimulus to greater rural literacy, as Belloncle and Easton have pointed out in various essays, articles, and project related documents.

Finally, the transformations that are taking place on a national level in politics and economics demand that women participate more fully in the national development process. Fully means here greater access to resources and economic opportunity as well as greater security in the sustained use of natural resources and financial structures. This will require greater institutional diversity and capacity among women from all parts of the country. The diversification that environmental conditions require in production adaptations, as well as the low level of development of rural infrastructures, both human and material, demand a more sophisticated level of organization from women in Niger than was even needed ten years ago during the early days of the Societe de Developpement. Men in Niger also require support in training and orientation that assists them to support women's efforts to improve their situation and therefore, the situation of their households. The move toward democratization, as well as the liberalization of market structures, presents crucial opportunities and equally significant challenges to Nigerien women today.

Specific recommendations for USAID activities and interface in Niger are presented in a separate document, the Women in Development Action Plan Outline. The recommendations which flow directly from the text, many of which concern field perspectives, data collection and data management, include the following:

- 1) Existing data at the mission should be organized and catalogued with a system established for inputting new information that becomes available, ie. reports, studies, etc.
- 2) Rapid Rural Surveys could be done, drawing some data criteria from the IFPRI studies which should be available in June, 1992, in order to have a more widely applicable data base on current economic and social conditions of women in Niger today. Particular points of focus should be:
  - women's contributions to household economies in groups and locales not covered by the IFPRI studies;
  - inventory of crops and plants cultivated or gathered by women whose use might be at risk with changing tenure laws;
  - identification and analysis of salient structural features of women's marketing activities; important variables in decision making;
  - women's land tenure; access to and use of land products;
  - women's non-farm income sources.
- 3) Gender-dissaggregated data should be collected for all mission projects. These data would then be used in baseline studies, monitoring, and measurement of progress and the establishment of gender-dissaggregated targets. Systems for the effective collection and use of such data must also be put in place.
- 4) There should be an expansion of credit initiatives which target women and improve their production and management capacity.
- 5) The Mission should encourage and support the formation of rural women's groups as well as national associations which affect government policy towards such groups, and analyze links between women's organizations (formal and informal), as well as between such organizations and their rural clients.
- 6) A gender sensitivity training module, perhaps including the use of a video cassette, should be developed for rural men which would include information on the current situation of Nigerien women, and how the improvement of this situation will improve the quality of life for the Nigerien household. Such an activity should also provide a forum through which men offer their observations and thoughts for future consideration in planning.
- 7) Women who are in particular danger of rapid marginalization due to environmental degradation and socio-economic factors need to be identified, i.e. Bella, Bororoji, women of Zarmaganda. Intervention strategies need to be considered also.

## TABLES & CHARTS

Ethnic Composition of Niger by Department  
(Percent)

	Total	Agadez	Diffa	Dosso	Maradi	Tillaberi	Tahoua	Zinder
Arab	0.3	2	3				0.5	0.2
Zarma-Songhay	21	5	1	50	0.5	59	0.7	0.4
Gourmantche	0.2					1		
Hausa	53	26	5	38	83	14	77	66
Kanouri-Manga	5	4	59		0.3	0.3		14
Peulh	10	3	22	10	10	13	3	11
Tiareg	11	59	1	1	6	12	18	7
Toubou	0.4	0.3	9					0.8

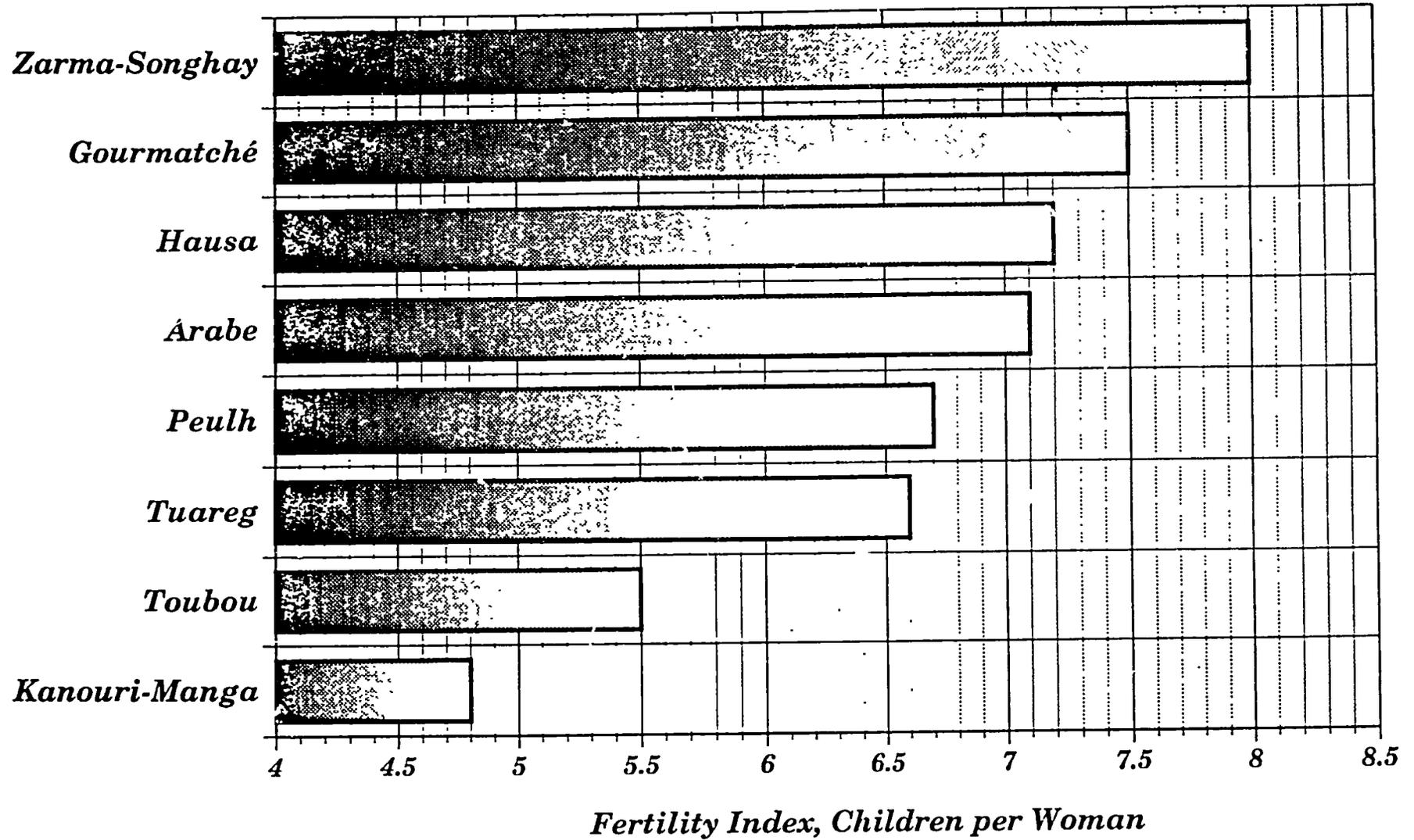
Source: Table 3.2, 1988 census

Population by Department

	Population	% Total Population
Agadez	202,090	2.8
Diffa	184,180	2.6
Dosso	1,012,700	14.1
Maradi	1,389,080	19.4
Tillaberi	1,633,150	22.8
Tahoua	1,304,680	18.2
Zinder	1,431,630	20.0
Total:	7,157,510	

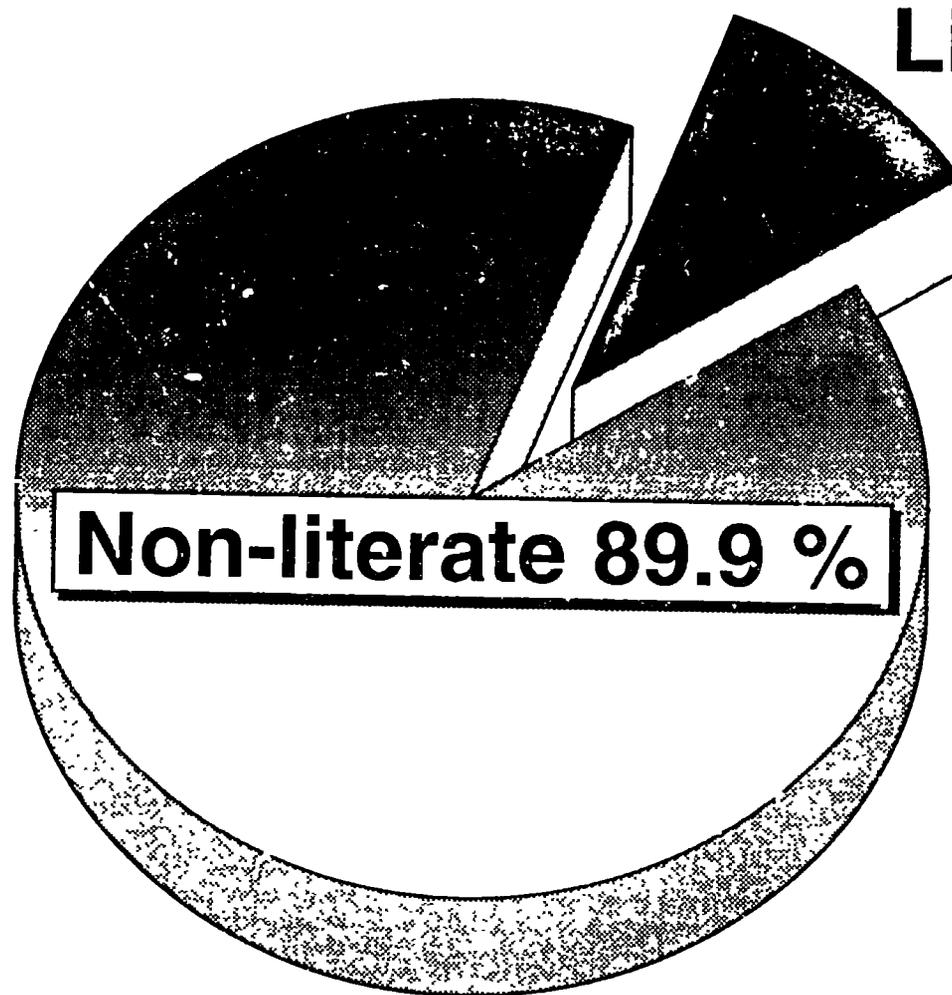
Source: Table 3.2, 1988 census

# *Synthetic Fertility Index by Ethnic Group, 1988*



Source: 1988 Niger National Census Synthesis, 1992  
Prepared by: CRED/DEP/MAG/EL, Jan. 1992

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**Literate 10.1 %**

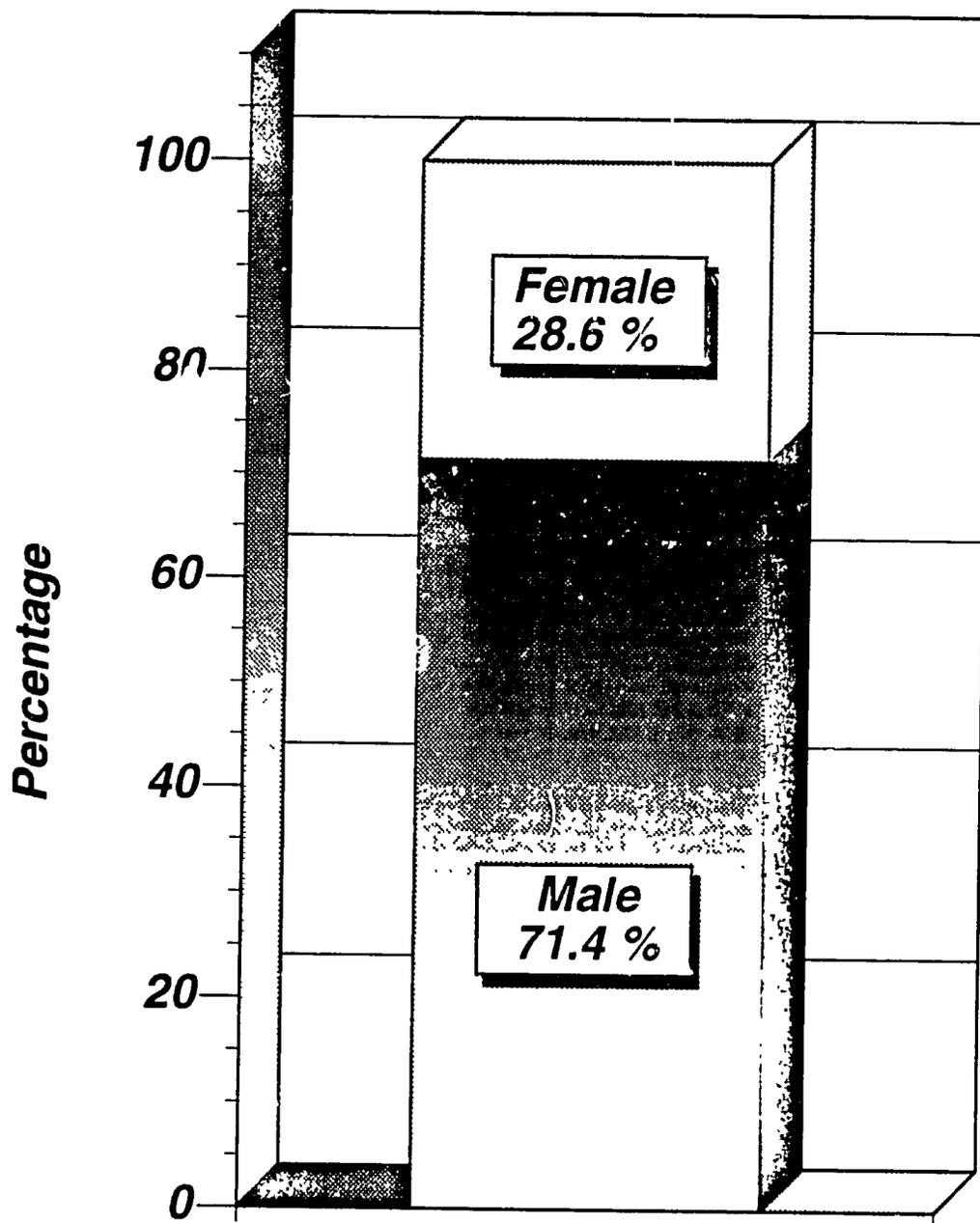
**Non-literate 89.9 %**

Source: 1988 Niger Census, p 50-52  
Prepared by: CRED/DEP/MAG/EL, September 1991

***Literacy Level for the Population of Niger, 1988***

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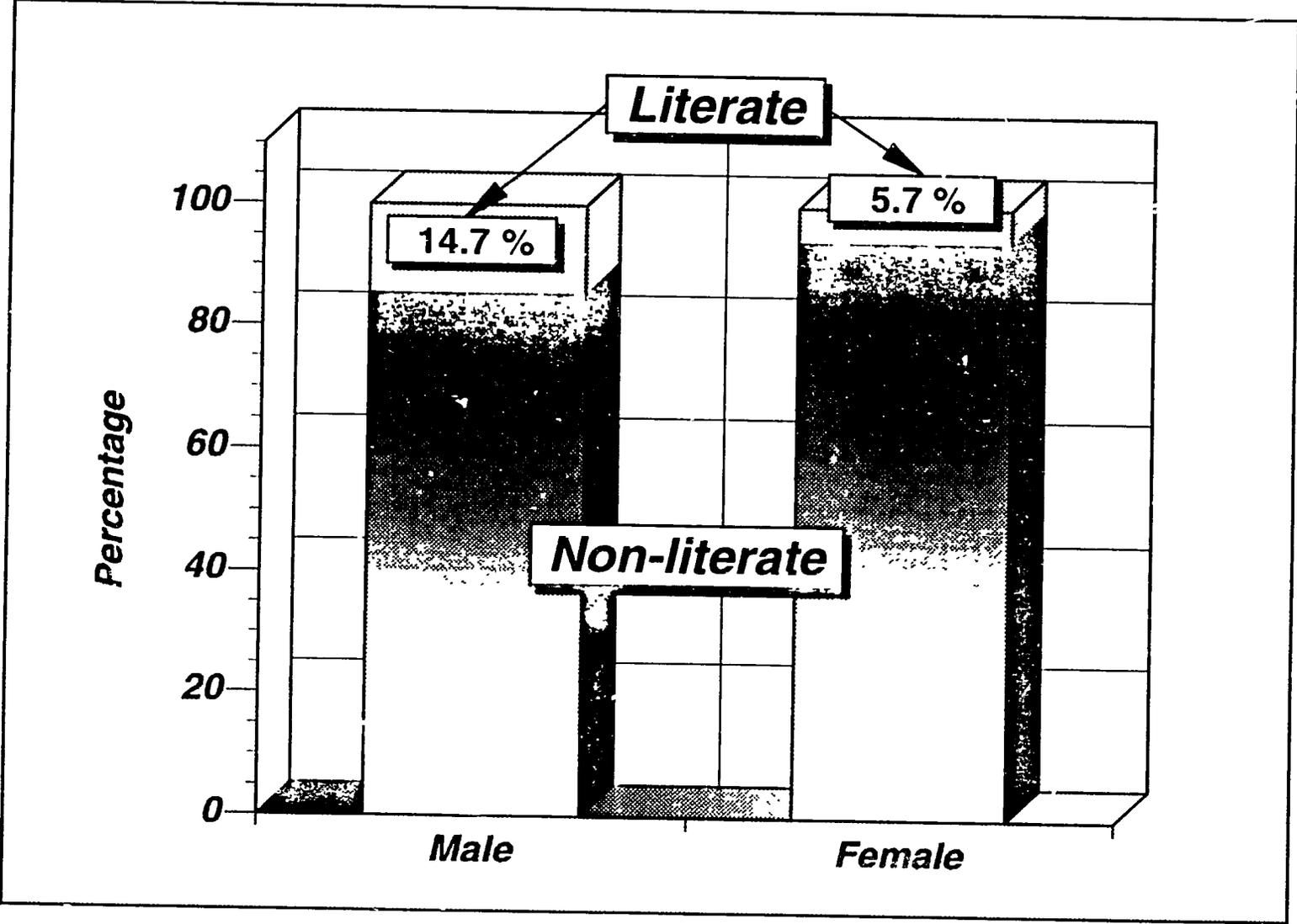
# The Structure of the Literate Population of Niger by Sex, 1988



Source: 1988 Niger Census, p 50-52  
Prepared by: CRED/DEP/MAG/EL, September 1991

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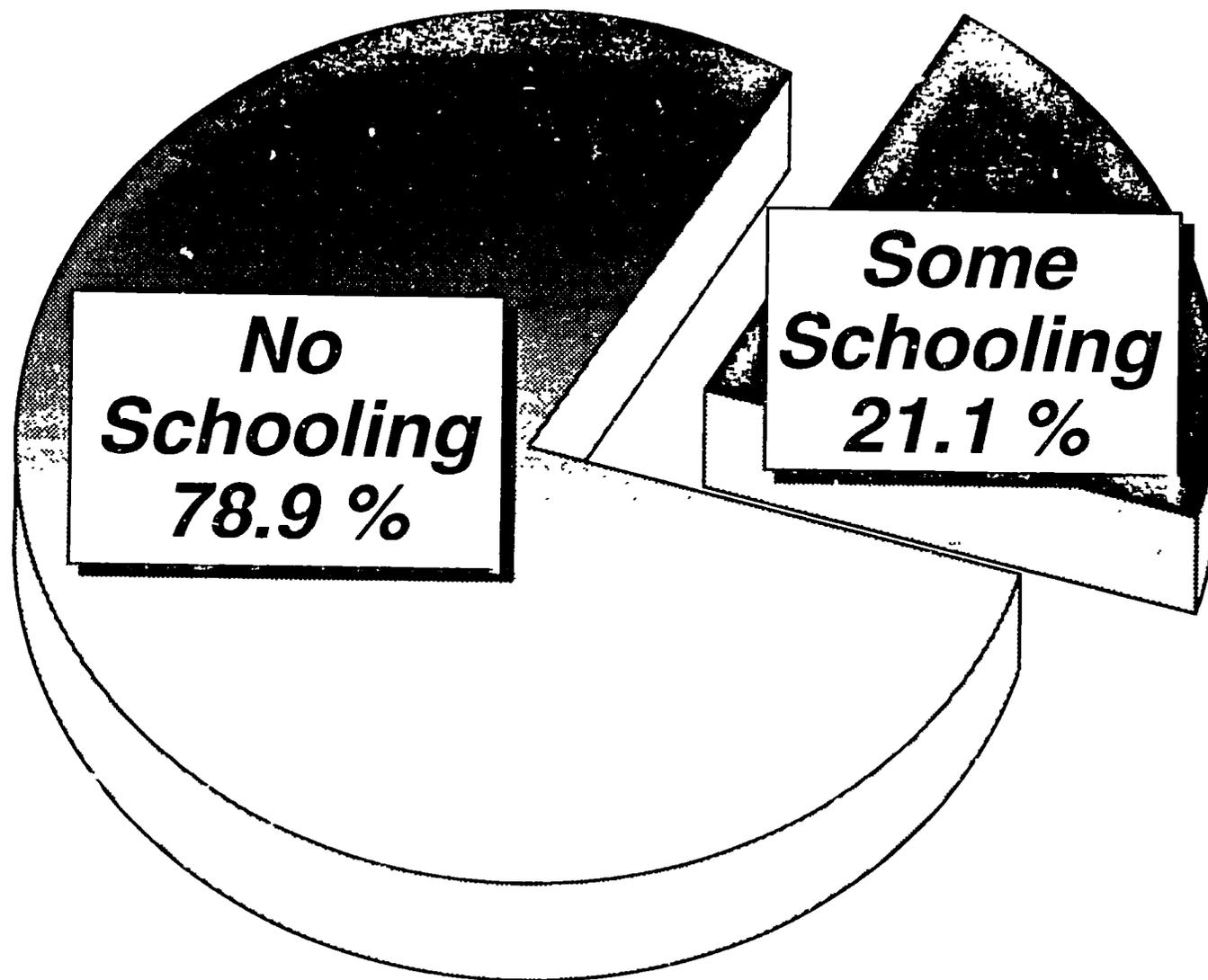
# Literacy Level by Sex for the Population of Niger, 1988



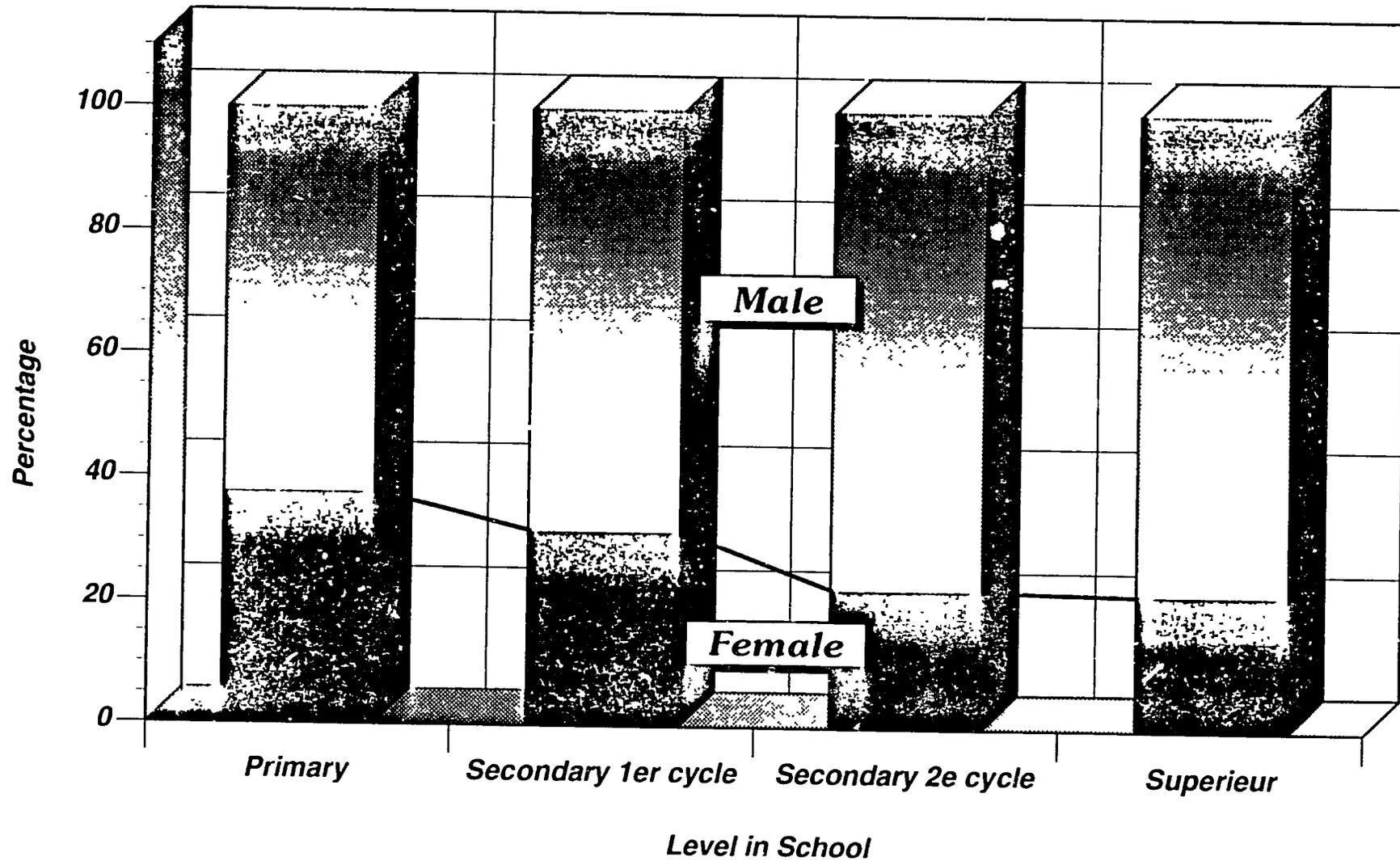
Source: 1988 Niger Census, p. 50-52  
Prepared by: CRED/DEP/MAG/EL, September, 1991.

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**Percentage of Total Population with some Schooling, Niger 1988**

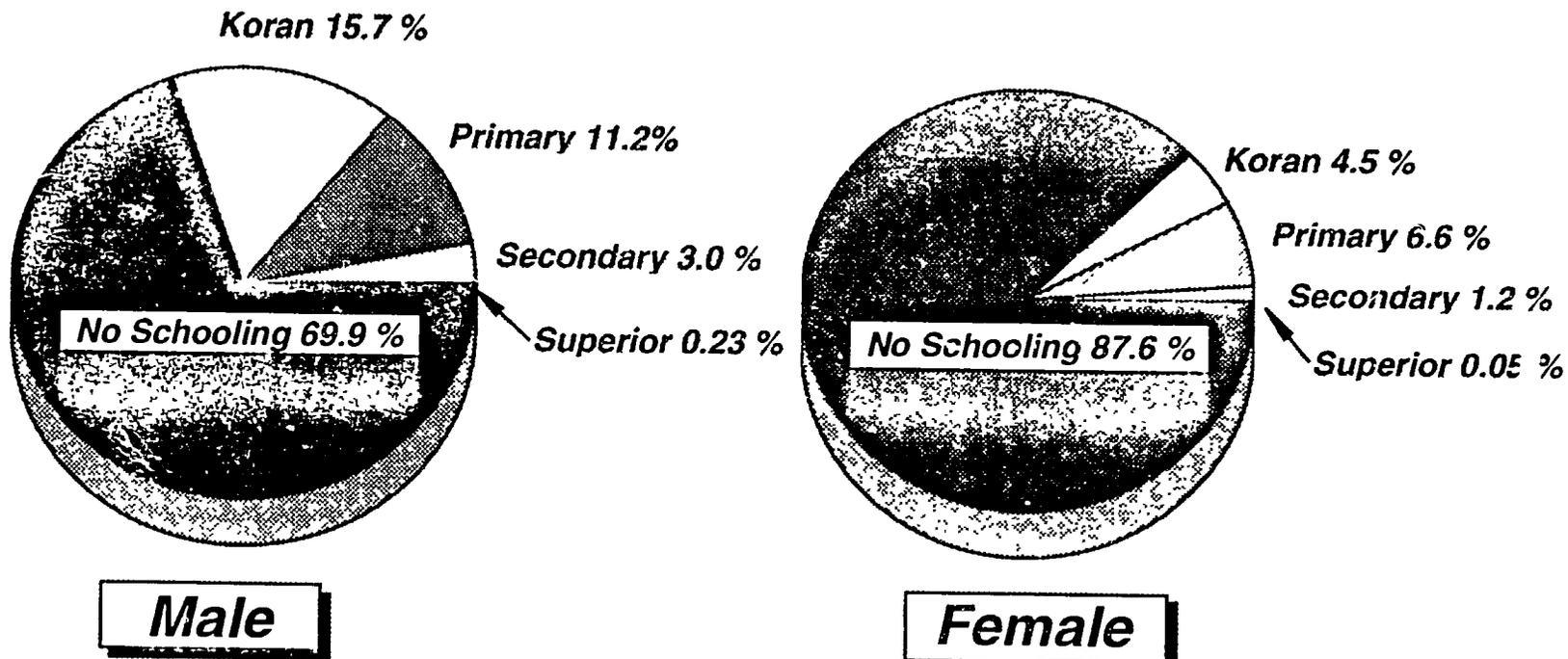


# Percentage of Total School Enrollment by Level by Sex in Niger, 1988



Source: 1988 Niger Census, p 50-52  
 Prepared by: CRED/DEP/MAG/EL, September 1991

# Level of Education by Type and Sex for Nigeriens 6 years and older, 1988



Source: 1988 Niger Census, p 48-49  
Prepared by: CRED/DEP/MAG/EL, September 1991

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