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The Changing Role of Women as Viewed In The Literature of English - and French-Speaking West Africa

by

Anne Lippert

May, 1972

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Program of Comparative Literature, Indiana University.

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INTRODUCTION

West African literature has been the subject of a number of literary studies in recent years. Included in this research have been several thematic studies: the concept of negritude, the problems of colonialism, the question of independence, political corruption of black leaders, manifestations of a new colonialism. There seems to be an unspoken acknowledgement in the studies undertaken, that the literature of Africa, perhaps no less than the literature of any country or continent, cannot be separated totally from the situation in which that literature is written. Thus African imaginative literature does not exist as an art form wholly separate from the anthropological, sociological, and political milieu in which the writer exists and from which he creates.

Several African writers have spoken and written to this point in a number of conferences concerned with the role of the African writer. Two spokesmen for situational, "engaged" (in the Sartrian sense) literature are Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe.

Soyinka stated the case for a literature integrated with contemporary political history at the African-Scandinavian Conference in 1967. He noted that the African writer cannot be separated from his past history, yet he warned against too pronounced a historic vision, which he felt would lead to inaction, self-insulation, and hopelessness. "Of course, the past exists, the real African consciousness establishes this --the past exists now, this moment, it is co-existent in

present awareness. It clarifies the present and explains the future, but it is not a fleshpot for escapist indulgence, and it is vitally dependent on the sensibility that recalls it."[1] For Soyinka, the past is extended into the present; yet the writer, if he is to be viable, does not remain in his past, beating the dead horses of colonial exploitation or the anthropological simplicity of an earlier time. He notes that "the artist has always functioned in African society as the record of the mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his own times," and calls on African writers to continue to respond to this "essence of himself."[2]

Chinua Schebe, like Soyinka, is equally committed to the concept of the writer involved through his craft in the social and political issues of his time. Achebe, too, believes that a literature separated from contemporary social-political questions is irrelevant and solipsistic. In 1968 in an address at Makerere College in Uganda, Achebe said: ". . . . this is what literature in Africa should be about today ----right and just causes."[3] To him, as to Soyinka, "art for art's sake" is not a supportable esthetic. Literature should be a reflection of a society; it should be a call to the conscience of a society.

It is in keeping with this view of the African writers of themselves and of their craft, that this study of women's roles in French and English-African imaginative literature is undertaken. Négritude writers like Léopold Senghor,

recognizing their debt to the past and noting the necessity of fully identifying with past history so as to achieve a contemporary identity, have tended to eulogize the black woman, mother of the race, earth mother par excellence. For writers such as Senghor, the woman is symbol of the fertility and vitality of the black race. In her is found racial dignity. The traditions of the black writers lead them to a reverence for the woman as mother, partly because of their own debts to their mothers (early childhood associations), partly due to the general reverence of all African culture for the natural phenomenon of birth. Yet the role of women, even in ancient times, was not confined to the traditional role of wife and mother. In all ages women played political and economic roles.

Contemporary African writers dealing with contemporary problems and social questions in their imaginative literature do not omit the question of women's roles. Their writings, particularly their novels, deal with the struggles of women in traditional society, during colonial exploitation, and in the present problems of political independence and statehood. Their evocation of these women characters is, on the whole, not a simplistic separation into the "old" and the "new" women. Rather the writers are aware of the evolving of society, the gradual changes occuring, and that have occurred, in tribal, religious, and national customs. Their women characters can be divided into those women who are more "traditional" and those women who are more "modern," yet both

groups of women share many of the same characteristics, and both groups of women find themselves in conflict both with their traditional and with their changing societies.

To provide a firm research base to this study, the first two chapters will deal with a summary of the role of African women as described in anthropological, sociological, historical, legal, and political science studies. The first chapter will describe the traditional role of women in West Africa; the second chapter, the changing role (how women's roles are affected by urbanization, independence, political self-direction, European education). The following two chapters will discuss the characterization of the traditional and the "changing" women as portrayed in the novels of English and French-speaking West African writers: the third chapter with the traditional woman in literature, the fourth chapter with the "new" woman in literature. Conflicts of these women characters because of assigned roles also will be described, since role conflict is the basis of many of these works. Finally, in the fifth chapter, comparisons of the literary interpretations of the roles of traditional and "new" women will be summarized as well as similarities and differences in the evocation of women characters by French-and English-speaking African writers.

No specific attention will be given to the role that religion has played in the formation of the traditional woman (Muslim and animist societies) nor to the role of religion (Christianity) in the "changing" woman. Rather the religious

influence will be incorporated into the sections on legal changes in the status of women, changes in attitudes about women's roles, education, marriage customs, role concepts. This is not to minimize the importance of religion in African society, for in traditional soceity there is no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, and certainly a major influence (albeit chiefly through mission schools) in the introduction of Western attitudes about women and marriage customs in Africa stemmed from the Catholic and Protestant churches. Rather than deal with the institution of religion in itself, however, it has been deemed more advisable to relate its influence in terms of the institutions with which it associates itself.

Some attention will be given to literary characteristics other than characterization in this literature, such as language and style in the works, because one cannot separate these totally from characterization. Indeed it is the African rhythms in speech and, sometimes, form, which give a freshness to these novels and reinvigorate the European languages and genres. Nevertheless, primary attention will be given to the varieties of women characters who appear in these works and the types of roles that they play in the development of the novel or short story. Of particular interest is the gradually changing role of the women in these works by West African writers, and the significance of this change.

African women have often been popularly thought of as one of the most exploited groups in the world. Sékou Touré

has used this belief (reality?) to his political advantage in Guinea, and the predominance of a Moslem culture in many parts of black Africa might lead one to hold this view. This literary study will examine the authenticity of that view of African women in anthropological, sociological, and imaginative literature. Although the woman character in imaginative literature is a "creation" and is, in no way, intrinsically one with the woman of actuality, her roots are in reality: the writer's past and present experiences with real women, his evocation of the women of history, his fantasies. What is more, the new African woman character, seeking her own destiny and identity, in conflict with her traditions and the changing society about her, does exist in flesh and blood women. There may be no Jagua, Mrs. John, Séni, N'Deye Touti, or Nini in precisely those forms in West Africa, but contemporary history of that part of the continent includes the names of women like Angie Brooks, Mme. Honoria Bailor Caulker, Letitia Obeng, Younouss N'Diaye, and Annie Jiagge. No society is static; African society is in flux. A changing society requires new role definitions and new adaptations to roles. The women characters in the imaginative literature of West Africa demonstrate the change.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Wole, Soyinka, "The Writer in a Modern African State," The Writer in Modern Africa, ed., Per Wastberg, Uppsala, The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1968, p. 19.

[2]Ibid., p. 21.

[3]Chinua Achebe, "The Duty and Involvement of the African Writer," The Africa Reader: Independent Africa, ed., Wilfred Cartey and Martin Kilson, New York, Random House (Vintage Books), 1970, p. 169.

Chapter I

The Traditional Role of Women

The traditional role of the women of West Africa, like that of women of other parts of Africa, is closely tied to the concept of women as bearers of children. This view of woman, centered on her biological (her fertility) potentialities, determines, in part, her sociological adaptations. Thus a great part of the traditional customs surrounding the life of the woman: birth, puberty, marriage, life in marriage, and old age, are directly related to this view of her primary role, procreation.

This is not to say that women are necessarily regarded as secondary or "second-class" citizens in traditional society. In reality it is for this reason among others that a woman is prized in traditional African society. As Phyllis Kaberry notes in her book on Bamenda women, local custom requires four days of mourning ("cry-die", di kpu) on the death of a woman and only three for a man. What is more, four cocoayams are planted on the occasion of a girl child's birth and only three on the birth of a boy.[1] Kaberry's women informants told her:

> A woman is an important thing. A man is a worthless thing indeed, because a woman gives birth to the people of the country. What work can a man do? A woman bears a child, then takes a hoe, goes to the field, and is working there; she feeds the child (with the work) there. A man only buys palm oil. Men only build houses.[2]

It is not only the women of Cameroun however, who share this view on female primacy. The Fon (local male leader) and

his Council (male) told Kaberry in response to her queries about the customs: "A woman is an important thing, a thing of God, a thing of the earth. All people emerge from her."[3]

In discussing the traditional role of women, then, it is necessary to discuss this primary goal of her existence and the customs of family life that surround it. It must be noted, however, that there are other aspects to the traditional role of women in West African family life beyond giving birth to and raising children. Among these other responsibilities are the woman's obligation of homemaker, which in many societies extends beyond the homemaking duties of cleaning the hut, preparing the food, and giving pleasure to her husband. Many West African women are financial contributors to the household equal to their husbands: a number are in partnership with their husbands on the family farm plots or in trading. Thus, in addition to a procreative, housewife role, the traditional African woman has an important economic role. Further, a girl child is an economic asset (bride-price) to her family. What is more, the woman also plays a major governing role in her society, primarily in women's associations, but these associations like some of her economic preoccupations provide her with a modicum of "political" leverage in her society.

In the following pages the family, economic, and political roles of women in traditional West African society will be outlined.

TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN

In traditional African society marriage is viewed as a group contract rather than as a private act by the two parties concerned. It is a means of continuing the clan, the tribe, and since it is essentially a social act and makes economic and social demands upon the extended family as well as provides for its continuation, the customs surrounding this joining are themselves related to this group. Sister Marie-André notes in her book on West African women:

> In Africa as in all ancient civilizations, marriage is an important social and juridical event, an alliance between two families of primary interest to the heads of those families. Its purpose is to increase, through numerous offspring, the prosperity of the clan, its numerical strength, the fullness of its life. The choice of the woman or women to fulfill this role rests primarily with the head of the family.[4]

Thus it is that the clan chief has the major responsibility for securing proper brides for the young men and husbands for the women. This is not done, in most cases, in a haphazard fashion. It is the responsibility of the clan chief to inform himself of the background of both the men and women and to research the living situation into which the young woman will enter. In cases when the clan chief is not the one to arrange for a marriage, that responsibility usually devolves upon the parents. "The father always chooses the first wife of his son, even if she is one-eyed, and he always chooses his daughter's first husband, even if he is a leper."[5]

In traditional society, the consent of the clan chief or parents or whoever has the responsibility for this portion of tribal life is far more important than the consent of the spouses, and, indeed, in traditional society the spouses' consent was not always required for a valid marriage. In fact, a certain disinclination by the bride manifested during the betrothal and marriage ceremonies in some societies was a demonstration of her refinement. After a first bride, the groom may arrange for future brides himself, perhaps by making arrangements with the parents of a young girl child. At times the first wife may make such arrangements herself even providing the bridal price.

One of the practices of traditional African society was the custom of early betrothal. Since marriage was viewed as an alliance of families, and since the adults of the families were the primary parties to approve a union, arrangements might easily be made when the boy and girl in question were both young. Since the marriage was, in addition, a major responsibility of the tribe's adults, it was conceivable that they wanted to begin the arrangements at as early a date as possible so as to guarantee that marriages between certain families should occur.

Kenneth Little notes in his book on the Mende of Sierra Leone, that such betrothals (termed "mushroom" marriages because of the sums of money involved and the lengthy and cumulative procedure to be followed) might occur even before the birth of the wife.[6] In most cases such a betrothal was

undertaken only by chiefs or persons of considerable wealth who wanted to have the daughter of a close friend as wife because of the friendship.

Early betrothal was an extremely expensive venture for from birth or from the time of the betrothal, the man or the family of the prospective husband assumed the cost of raising the girl and providing for her training. This involvement began with small gifts: a mat and a cloth to cover her at the time of her birth, firewood, oil for her skin. At puberty, presents for her and her family were required in addition to the fees for her initiation ceremonies and presents for those who assisted her in these rites; further, the fiance was expected to contribute to the celebration feast. This was not the end of the man's expenses, however, for bridal price (a sum of money and goods in kind) was the next item to be agreed upon. Even after this transaction, additional small gifts and presents were expected prior to and upon receipt of the bride.[7]

The custom of early betrothal was not peculiar to any one section of West Africa, rather it was a part of most of the traditional societies. Monique Gessaim notes in her study of Coniagui women that "C'est la mère qui donnait autrefois, et souvent alors qu'il était tout enfant, une fiancée à son fils, choisissant en général la fille nouvelle née d'une de ses amies."[8] She notes that the custom is not widespread today (although the mother still plays an important role in the choice of a wife for her son), but one again

notes the tribal and familial role in marriage, its definition as a social act. Marguerite Dupire remarks in her study of the Boro that "La fillette est restée indifférente en apparence aux démarches de son marriage qui ont commencé très tôt, parfois dès sa naissance."[9] Sister Marie-André summarizes the custom by noting: "For a first marriage, the betrothal contract is concluded by the chiefs of the two young people. For a second marriage, the arrangements are made, with some exceptions, by the future groom. In some areas of the West African interior (in the 1950's) she notes that a man may engage in negotiations with one of his friends for a young girl, already born or about to be born, in order to cement the friendship existing between them.[10]

It seems clear that since the woman's role, her prime purpose, could be achieved only by marriage, that in traditional society all that she was engaged in was directed toward this end and a careful parent might begin even prior to her birth to arrange for her welfare.

A second set of customs that surround the girl child and reflect the motherhood/wife concept of her traditional role in society are those customs surrounding her initiation rites. From her earliest education, the girl is taught to imitate her mother and other women; she learns to walk carrying a bowl or piece of cloth on her head, goes to the farm or market (by herself when old enough, or on her mother's back) to assist her there, helps with the work of the household. At the age of six, according to Little,[11] the Mende girl child

undergoes a mock initiation into the Sande society (the women's association) and begins to follow the members about in their activities, dancing, and meetings. In some cases (noted both by Little and Sister Marie-André) if the child has already been betrothed, she may leave her own home for a time and live in the compound of her husband-to-be, either under the direction of his head-wife or his mother.[12] It sometimes occurs in traditional society that a poor family (for a sum of money) might allow their daughter to live with another "family" and assist the wife in the work of the household until the sum of money is repaid in goods or kind. The wife acts as guardian and the child is treated as other younger members of the household.

When the time comes for the completion of her initiation in the Sande or women's association, usually at the age of fourteen or fifteen, the girl returns home (if she has been away) for this part of her education. For a period of about three months the girls being initiated live in seclusion, learning about their responsibilities as women, disciplining their bodies by rising early, working hard all day, and giving proper veneration to their teachers, all this prior to the initiation act itself. The initiation act is female "circumcision" and varies from tribe to tribe from a simple pin prick to removal of the external part of the clitoris. While the girls' wounds heal they again remain in seclusion assisted by the older women who bring water to them in the bush. Finally the time of seclusion is ended and the girls

return in procession from their wilderness camp to the village. They are decorated with oils and jewelry and are given presents at the feasts in their honor.

During the time in the bush, the young girls are taught the songs and dances of the women's society. The girl belongs to the group with whom she has been circumcized, and throughout her life, she finds companionship and social identity with this group.[13]

One additional custom associated with betrothal and marriage and which was formerly prevalent in many parts of West Africa was the custom of the "fattening" of the women. The purposes behind this custom were, in part, fulfillment of an esthetic idea; rotundity being seen as beauty, and, hence, something to be desired in a wife. Aside from the esthetic ideal, a second reason for wanting a plump wife was to be found in the subsistence level of the economic life. There was a certain practical need for the accumulation of fat against a less prosperous time. Plumpness was, further, a sign of health as well as demonstration that the girl's family was indeed well off and could and did provide for her. That she should retain this plumpness was a matter of pride for the husband, for by her continued corpulence he demonstrated his ability to provide as well. Girl children, in the most exaggerated instances of the fattening custom, were force-fed milk for several months prior to undergoing the initiation ceremonies. Again, practically speaking, this did provide them with a certain modicum of reserve for the

hazards of the operation. A further practical reason for the forced feeding was that the custom sped up the maturation process of the girl child, and hence, the time when she might go to her husband and begin to bear children. In a society in which this particular ability of women was the highest achievement of the girl, it was deemed advantageous to begin the process as soon as possible.[14]

POLYGYNY AS AN INSTITUTION

The emphasis on polygyny in Islamic and animist Africa greatly affected the role of women on that continent. Polygyny was a suitable solution for a society that valued most highly of all her attributes the female's fertility. In black Islamic culture, celibacy or virginity had no place. Marriage was obligatory, and if there were not sufficient men, some sort of sharing was necessary. Also, as men were killed by wars (and later were taken away in slave trade) there was some need to provide for their widows and wives. In some cases, victorious chiefs wed the wives of their victims. To illustrate the lack of tolerance for the unmarried state in traditional African society, Monteil notes a study of the Hausa tribe which showed that the unmarried adults were little tolerated, for the unmarried women were reduced to prostitution and the single men were under a taboo if they prepared their own food.[15] Thus it is seen that social status depended upon marriage.

If one wife denoted a certain status, more than one wife

demonstrated that the husband was well-to-do, or at least, reasonably prosperous.. What is more, each of the wives did in a very real sense bring additional prosperity to her husband through the gifts bestowed on her (flocks, etc.,) at the time of her marriage, all of which contributed to the household. In his study of the Mende, Little noted that: "A person who has no more than one or two wives is spoken of as a 'small boy', and his subsequent success and standing are largely measured by the number of women he manages eventually to secure. To obtain wives a person must have wealth, and so polygyny on a large scale is a sign of affluence."[16]

But while polygyny was linked to the question of social status (of men), it was likewise related to the work problems of an agrarian economy. Monteil notes in his discussion of the background of polygamy that there is a clear relationship between polygyny and agricultural production. He cites the article by Nicolas Atangana in which that African scholar lays the responsibility for polygyny to economic grounds. Little notes that where there is cultivation of the soil by primitive methods, a plurality of wives is a definite asset. "The work on the rice farm and in the palm kernel and oil industry is performed entirely by hand, and a large number of women attached permanently to the farming household makes it unnecessary to employ much wage labour."[17] He adds that "in the more rural areas, it is considered that no one can make a proper farm unless he has at least four wives."[18]

This is not to say that women are regarded as chattel in traditional African society, but the work of farming, the household chores, the preparation of food were too much for a women to do alone. Since hired help was not customary, the natural solution was a second wife to assist the first in these duties. Not only did the husband become more prosperous through this means, but so did his wives who could expand the farming, their own private tilling, and some trading in the market.

An additional reason for both men and women to support the idea of polygyny is to be found in the traditional customs surrounding childbirth and nursing. The custom of nursing babies for two to three years began most probably with a lack of proper food for the children, and hence, the mother felt the continued necessity to nurse the child. It was commonly believed that intercourse with the husband during this time could be harmful to the nursing, and indeed, if pregnancy should occur, the food source might well be cut off. Many wives encouraged their husbands to take a second wife, for the men frustrated by the continence imposed by this custom might well attempt to break down their wives' fears and reservations.[19] A second wife provided an outlet for the husband's desires and guaranteed some relief from the household chores by the nursing mother.

There were other practical reasons for the practice of polygyny, at least in the chief's households. The hospitality customs of much of Africa required that chiefs supply

visitors with both food and shelter, and compliance with this custom required a fairly large staff. Since it fell to the women to prepare the food and prepare the sleeping quarters an obvious solution was the addition of wives, who could help one another and take turns with these chores.[20]

Again, since traditional attitudes favor the birth of children (and indeed in many areas of West Africa both a wife and husband do not truly acquire their full status until the wife has borne a healthy child) both partners of a childless marriage (after consultation with a dibia) were usually urged by their friends to add an additional woman/wife to the household to insure offspring, if it was deemed, in fact, that the fault lay with the woman. Marguerite Dupire notes in this regard that: "la crainte d'une sterilité totale est presque toujours chez la femme une raison pour abandonner son mari et chercher par une autre union la confirmation do son statut de femme."[21] It is true that according to traditional custom women may leave their husbands if they fear that they will never have a child by him and are also allowed by customary law, and by popular attitudes as well, to establish other unions in which their goal of becoming a mother can be realized. For the sterile female an alternative is to give her husband a second wife. In the more successful cases of wives' cooperation she may even adopt a child of this second union and , in that way, participate in motherhood. What is more, she will share in the child raising enterprise through the division of labor,

and will be praised for her part in the success of her husband.[22]

Certain advantages accrue to the women of these traditional households where there is more than one wife. One of these is the sharing of the household labors. The preparation of food is a time consuming task. Since many women are engaged in some form of tilling in traditional West Africa and since, in addition, many of them are also involved in some minor forms of trade, it was of particular benefit to the women if their husbands had several wives for it freed them at times from the daily domestic chores and allowed them to indulge in these minimally profitable enterprises which might guarantee them some small luxury as a new cloth or a sum of money for the initiation costs into one of the women's associations.

In addition, the presence of several wives in a household also guaranteed the wives the possibility of extended home visits for they could make arrangements for their share of the household duties with the others and even count on co-wives assisting them in their duties at the market or on the farm in their absence. Since many wives (depending on the tribe) went to their family homes to give birth to the new babies, the arrangement of plural wives was of practical importance to both the wife in question and her husband.

A further reason for polygyny was the customary social structure which in many parts of West Africa required a brother to inherit the wives and children of his deceased brother.

In most cases the surviving brother married the wives (if they were young enough). He did this for two reasons. Social pressures by his society urged marriage as his responsibility, and, in addition, he stood to gain financially from such an action (brides retained use of bridal price). The pressure to take as his own his brother's wives, came from both his own family and from those of the brides. His father had, indeed, made sacrifices to raise the bridal price. This would be lost to his family if he should return the women to their homes. There was, likewise, the danger of alienating the women's families who had remained in close friendship, usually with his own. Finally, in most cases, if the children were to remain with him, he had to retain their mothers.[23]

THE DOWRY

Just as marriage in traditional West African society was inextricably tied up with the extended family and group responsibility, so was it also linked to the total economic structure. (Some of this has been noted in the brief discussion of inheritance of wives.) One area of major economic importance was the custom of bride wealth, or bride price. In its original form in traditional African society, the dowry was viewed as a symbolic substitute for the famale, a symbol of the agreement between the two families.[24] Bride wealth has also been termed a "compensation" for the loss of rights over the offspring of the bride by the bride's family. Originally the dowry was in goods in kind, cattle, and even,

in some cases, slaves. Marguerite Dupire notes that for the Boro nomades the dowry was a present of a cow and her calf along with a heifer and a bull. This represented the husband's rendering of property to his wife and the new right of property of future offspring.[25] This gift was for the bride's use, and, was in fact, the start of her herd. Her household would indeed profit from her herd, but it was clearly reserved for her use and care and was not joined to any herds of her husband.

Monteil quotes from Guilbert Viellard's article on the Peul people to indicate the importance of the dowry as a means of stabilizing the marriage institution. The Peuls held that "affection is a very tenuous thing; utility solidifies, constraint fortifies."[26] Some of Vieillard's Peul respondents noted that the "dowry is what makes the marriage licit, what renders it valid, what softens the problems of cohabitation, what strengthens the bonds of marriage."[27] There is clearly some validity to the statement, for a typical African woman would think more than twice before abandoning her property, and often, in the same instance, her children, for the children, in many cases belonged to the father. Moreover, it was to the economic advantage of the husband not to repudiate or divorce his wife, for he would have to leave her with the bridal price and thus separate his property from his family forever. Marriage bonds in traditional West African society were strengthened by the lines of property.

TRADITIONAL EDUCATION AND THE AFRICAN WOMAN

The importance of women in traditional West African life can most easily be seen from their role in traditional education. It is the mother who first instructs the children (boys and girls) of the family and it is through her that the child learns the first rules of social life, manners, and good behavior. One of the first things that the mother teaches the child, for example, is respect for age. The child is not allowed to dip his hands into the pot before his elders, he must eat with his right hand, he must keep silence as he eats, his hand must not touch that of the elders in the pot.

Until the child is weaned, the mother may carry him on her back to the farm or market. At an early age the child begins to assist the mother with the household chores, for usually the child is not allowed outside the family area alone until he is five or six. At that age he has the run of the village and may seek shelter from a relative if threatened by parental punishment. Girl children begin at an early age to play with dolls. These, made of cornstalks or wood, are often fastened to their backs in imitation of their mothers. Later, when the girls are older, they may carry a younger brother or sister in this fashion.

The boys leave the sides of their mothers for training by the fathers when they are six or seven. The girls, however, remain with the mothers until marriage, unless, of course, because of an early engagement or financial necessity

they are raised in the home of their future husband or serve as "au pair" girls in another family. No matter where they go, however, the education remains the same. The girl is taught to keep house, run errands for her mother, (getting water and wood, for example) assists with the care of her brothers and sisters. Later she learns to cook the stew, pound and make the "gari", brew beer, make soap, weave, , and make pottery.[28]

The mother not only arranges for the practical education of her daughters, but also instructs her in the social/moral code of the tribe. In many West African tribes it is an honor if the girl is found to be a virgin when she marries, and a disgrace if she is not. Hence the mother attempts to inculcate the idea of family and personal honor into the girl and makes her aware of her responsibilities for the future. Following the initiation into the women's groups at puberty (and frequently the accompanying ceremony of excision or circumcision) the girl is fully incorporated into adult life. It is following this ceremony that her marriage may soon take place. Before the initiation the girls are regarded as children. Following their initiation they are regarded as women and are expected to behave as such. As Sister Marie-André notes in her book: "..after the initiation they are women. They must watch their words and actions and behave with decorum and dignity. Any foolishness or misdemeanor on their part is then considered a serious matter and severely punished."[29]

Following marriage the girl begins to care for her husband's house or to assist in his father's compound if the custom is for them to remain there until the first child. During that time the woman prepares his food, may assist in his farm work, begins to raise her own herd (if she has one). If she is not the first wife, she will assist with the total household chores, assist with the farm work, take responsibility for beginning her own herd, perhaps involve herself in some trading. She will, of course, have special privileges with regard to the time with her husband if she is the new bride among the old. After the first month, however, this privilege will no longer exist and the new wife, like the older ones, will take her turn with her husband and have specific times alotted to her just as specific times are alotted to the other women of the household.

In certain tribes the traditional work of the women is to make the butter, doctor the herds, care for their own small herds of goats and sheep. The larger herds and those with steers are relegated to the men as are the more serious physical problems of herds.[30] In some cases the woman will even have the responsibility for building her hut while her husband is involved with his herds.

It is after the advent of the first child, however, that the West African woman fully realizes her identity as woman and her full occupation. As Monique Gessaim notes: "La plus grande qualité d'une femme, c'est sa fécondité: les enfants une des plus grandes sources de tension entre mari et femme

qui souhaitent l'un et l'autre avoir le plus d'enfants possible."[31] Gessaim notes that a male native informant stated that despite his long absences from his wife, she had nothing to reproach him for, as she became pregnant shortly after each of his visits. And Gessaim notes the reality of all West African life: "C'est par son rôle de mère que la femme coniagui assume son rôle essentiel."[32]

ECONOMIC LIFE

In traditional West Africa farming was the major occupation of both men and women, and, indeed, the herd or seed that served as the bride price was the initial part of the woman's wealth. In addition to the farming that the African wife did independently, she also participated in her husband's work. Each family group cultivated what was necessary to feed its own members. As Sister Marie-André notes, the main food of the forest regions was cassava root and bananas. It was the responsibility of the women to cultivate these crops while the men's role was the heavier work of clearing the fields of the brush and stumps which dotted them. Millet or sorghum were the staple crops of the savanna and corn, cotton, and peanuts were also grown there. Again, cultivation of these crops was the primary responsibility of the women.[33]

In most of West Africa the agricultural system was that of "shifting cultivation." Small portions of land were cultivated for a few years (until the soil was depleted) and

then those fields were abandoned and another piece of land was cultivated. Thus the men's role of clearing the land was a continuous process, for new plots of land were needed each year.

Although the men and boys felled trees, took out stumps, and cut brush, the women were generally involved in all other aspects of the operation, namely burning the felled trees, sowing the seed, weeding the crop, harvesting and carrying in the crop, and storing it for future use.[34] (Indeed, it must be noted that the European conquest of Africa altered the patterns of male/female work in that continent. Prior to the conquest, the chief occupations of the men were hunting, warfare, and felling of trees. The Europeans felt the need to impose the male farming customs of their own countries and hence induced the now underemployed males to cultivate commercial crops for exportation, cash crops which were used to pay household poll taxes).[35] Sister Marie-André notes, however, that some of the farm tasks were and are equally shared by the men, women, and children. Of note were weeding and harvesting, tasks that are either incessant or demand prompt action.[36]

Besides her individual contributions to family farming and agricultural duties, the traditional woman is fully responsible for all the household work. Depending on the size and arrangement of the dwelling, and the number of wives, an African woman is expected to sweep out the entire dwelling and courtyard each day, gather water from the well

or standpipe, do the laundry, prepare the meals. For some women the task of collecting enough water is a formidable one for the source of water may be as far as three or four miles away, and it is no small task to collect enough for the needs of the day. If a woman is fortunate enough to live near a river she can do her laundry there and dry the clothes on the banks. Otherwise the water must be carried for this task as well. In rural areas the woman is also expected to collect firewood, this in addition to grinding her meal and baking and cooking.

For the traditional African woman, her skill in cooking is an important quality of her home-making. Sister Marie-André reports that culinary talent in rural areas is measured by the stew that is served with the porridge or rice.[37] One can recall from Ousmane's film, Le Mandat, the scene of the stew pot and the happily belching male, satisified with his wife's abilities.[38] Some stews are a simple mixture of shea butter, pepper, salt, and a fermented mixture of nērē beans. Other ingredients used in the stews are mashed peanuts; baobab leaves, the stalk of the kapok flower, sorrel, vegetables, onions, tomatoes, green and red peppers, fish (fresh or dried), palm oil. The juice from the meat (which is cooked separately) is poured in the sauce.[39]

Children are sometimes rewarded with sorts of "desserts", fritters or pancakes, a kind of cookie made of roast peanuts mixed with pepper and honey. Water is generally served with meals. Native beer is used for special occasions and feasts

and celebrations. Again it is the wife who traditionally makes the beer.

These occupations of the women sometimes are extended beyond the confines of the family, and further, involve not only the maintenance of the home but a supplementary income for the household. Some housewives make millet beer for sale, for example. They take the millet, let it sprout, and then dry it. The millet is then pounded between stones (sometimes help is hired for this task) and then poured into jars of water under which a fire has been set. The mixture of millet and water is simmered for two days, the top of which is skimmed from time to time. Finally leaven is added on the third day and the simmering continued for another day. Liana twigs are added to the mixture (to produce fermentation) and the drink is allowed to cool overnight. The beer is ready to be drunk the following morning.[40]

Other housewives in traditional society not only make beer for sale but other food items as well: porridge, meal, shea butter, etc. Preparation of many of these foods is no simple process. The making of shea butter, for example, is a very time-consuming task. The nuts are soaked in water for several weeks, then dried in the sun and roasted in a special oven. The kernels are removed from the nuts and put in the oven to dry. These are then pounded until they become a fatty, chestnut-colored paste which is ground further between millstones until it produces a thick semi-

liquid. This is poured into a large jar and worked with both hands while warm. Cold water is poured in alternately in order to separate the fat from the residue. After about an hour and a half of kneading the paste whitens and foams, the butter rises to the top, is then gathered and placed in other pots and boiled over a fire for several hours. As this cools, the sediment goes to the bottom of the pot and the fat rises to the surface where it is skimmed off the top. The residue is strained separately to collect the fat. Shea butter is important for it is an export product (thousands of tons are sent to Europe for use in chocolate candy, stearic acid, and soap) as well as a very versatile local commodity. It is used for making soap as well as stew, as a salve, as a beauty cream, as a fuel for lamps.[41]

In the forest areas palm oil replaces shea butter. It is the men who harvest the palm fruit, but again it is the women who prepare the oil. After the nuts have been removed from the fruit the fruit is boiled over a hot fire for two hours while it is stirred continuously with a large paddle. The mixture is cooled, trodden upon on stones (to produce a paste): water is poured over this mixture and the oil which rises to the top is skimmed off and boiled again. During the boiling, the foam is skimmed from the top. This fat, like shea butter, has many uses beyond cooking oil. Oil is also made from palm nut kernels, although most of this has in current times been used for export.[42]

Another task of traditional African women is the making of their own utensils. Again, sometimes these items are also sold in market to provide additional funds for household use. The earthen pots are used for cooking and are made form the clays of the different districts. In some case where the earth is not of good enough quality. It is mixed with the dust of old pots that have been crushed. Traditional pots are made by hand, shaping them about the bottom of an old pot and gradually building it, layer by layer, letting each layer dry before each new addition of parts. One method of polishing the pot is to rub it with a smooth stone or small, wet board. If designs are desired they are etched with a piece of stone or metal, or pressed with a design. After the pot has been dried for several days it is piled with others to be baked with twigs and millet stalks. These piles are covered with bits of wood which are lit. The fire is kept going for about five hours, at which time the pots are generally set if they have not cracked in the process. The spoiled pots are ground and used again.[43]

Other types of household tasks have economic importance outside the confines of the family unit as well. Weaving and basketwork (which is done by both men and women) is another example of this. Materials that are used for this work include palm leaves, issal fibers, raffia, grass stalks. They are first sun dried, then soaked to make them pliable. Bark strips are often used to bind mats and baskets so that

they retain their shape. Grass and straw are also woven into belts, necklaces, headpieces, bracelets, and carrying pads. Items are used for market sale as well as for personal adornment and home use.[44]

In traditional African society women have long been involved in the cotton harvest. Although it is chiefly the male who does the spinning, it falls to the women to separate the raw cotton from the seeds (which are used in the cooking) and to card the cotton. Again, the women's participation in the totality of this chore, farming, harvesting, and preparing the cotton, is of major economic importance to her family.[45]

Historically, the market was of major economic importance to the traditional African woman, although it clearly had a highly social function as well. It was to the local market that the woman brought the shea butter, beer, palm oil, pottery, soap, food for sale. Markets were held in different villages on different days. Some women would go to different village markets each day, walking as far as eight or ten miles to sell or buy produce, carrying their items on their heads. Women as well as men were market traders in traditional African society, and usually sold what they had raised, or made themselves, although the travelling salesman, female as well as male, was likewise a part of traditional society. Women generally were involved with the marketing of food: rice, millet, oil, curds, beans, peanuts, tomatoes, fruit. Some also cooked and sold fritters.

Others sold weaving, pottery, soap. Some women traders engaged in the selling of items purchased for sale: pins, nails, locks, matches, candles, cloth. In some areas of Africa the trading business has been primarily in the hands of the women (as for example the Gulf of Bénin) and has been a traditionally feminine occupation. In other areas, men traders are in the majority.

Most women involved in trading are engaged in this occupation because of necessity. Traditionally the African woman has been expected to contribute to the needs of her household, for the earnings of the male were viewed as his personal property---although he would usually contribute to household expenses. The women, however, needed to earn money for food for themselves and their children, and wanted additional funds for luxuries for themselves and the children. Another reason for the involvement in trading was the social aspect of the enterprise. Many young girls began trading with their mothers at a very early age. It was a chance not only to earn additional funds, but to haggle with a customer, to talk and joke with the other traders, to gossip.[46]

As was noted previously in the section on polygyny and the dowry, in traditional African society women owned property which, though it might stay in their father's house or in their husband's compound, was theirs for life. Some fathers bestow a small herd upon their daughters. As it grows and enlarges, it remains with the father's herd.

At the time of her marriage the daughter may take this herd with her to her husband's home, or she may leave it at her father's (perhaps waiting to see how her marriage "works out") for a time, or even for the period of her life. Her herd, however, is her herd, no matter where it stays, and although father or husband might be forced to sell one of her beasts because of economic reverses, it will go hard with them. As Marguerite Dupire notes in her chapter on women in a pastoral society: "Chef de troupeau", le mari compte les bêtes de ses épouses avec les siennes, mais il n'ignore pas qu'elles ne lui appartiennent pas".[47]

Although the woman owned her herds in traditional society, she did not possess the right to sell them without permission from her husband, or before marriage, from her father. Her husband had to obtain her permission prior to the sale of any of her herd, although her father was not required to do so. One of the greatest "advantages" of an African woman in traditional society was her ability to be of financial assistance to her husband. For him her financial accomplishments were a matter of pride, whether they be reflected in her ability at trade, in raising a herd, in making and selling shea butter. When a husband and wife were congenial it was no infrequent thing for a woman to offer one of the beasts of her herd to her husband to pay the tax or to provide part of the bridal gift for one of her sons. It is to be noted that the women tended

to be even more proprietary towards the bridal price received from the husband than towards the goods bestowed by their fathers. Marguerite Dupire notes that the reason for this was that, in traditional society, the bridal price, the herd given to the wife for her use, was viewed as a tangible symbol of her marriage rights and also represented the future of her children. Anything taken from this herd was a diminution of the financial future of her offspring. Hence any effort of her husband to separate her from part of this herd met with resistance and severe resentment, particularly if the husband would use it for the children of another wife. This is not to say that the mother would not freely distribute this wealth to her children on the occasion of their marriage, but rather that she kept it intact for them.[48]

The first wife, however, did have, traditionally, additional economic rights over subsequent wives. In addition to her "bride wealth" gift, the first wife was given the use of a certain part of her husband's herd to be given finally to her children when they came of age. Prior to that time, the wife enjoyed the use of the milk, which belonged to her. A husband might also at whim, or inspiration, give one or another wife the temporary use of a herd, which use he might recall at any time. It was a way of rewarding industry or his favorite wife of the moment.

Although women in traditional pastoral society were, to a degree, economically dependent upon husbands and fathers, they did enjoy a great measure of freedom with regard to herds obtained by personal economies. These could be disposed of pretty much at their own discretion and used for whatever their personal needs might be; it was expected, of course, that part of those personal needs would include the household maintenance or at least some part of it. Again it must be noted that the wife was viewed as a financial partner with the husband, whether they were engaged in farming, herding, trade, or crafts.[49]

WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL POLITICAL LIFE

From earliest times women in some parts of West Africa had important roles to play in the political life and struggles of their countries. Not that in traditional society women were universally leaders and warriors through all of West Africa, but in certain nations and at certain times political roles were played by women, so that one can say that if these functions were not generally part of traditional female roles, they were not totally excluded.

As Welch notes in her book, Africa Before They Came, there were extremely powerful women rulers in some parts of West Africa in the eighteenth century. Queen mothers wielded much power and authority and made treaties with Western powers. She notes that a treaty was made in 1765 between the King of France, Louis XV, and the "Damel" (king)

of a region which is part of the present nation of Senegal, but that the first signature on the treaty was the mark of the queen mother and was followed by the mark of her son. Welch says further that: "We also hear of queen consorts who shared power with the king, and of women who were members of a government head along with a male."[50]

Annie Lebeuf in her article "Le Rôle de la Femme dans l'Organisation Politique Des Sociétés Africaines," remarks that although one tends to reserve the domestic role for the female in traditional African life this is not truly the total reality. For Lebeuf, feminine political participation must be judged by both direct and indirect involvement in governmental activities or group or sub-group authority, and she notes that female participation in authority wielding societies plays an important part in both the history and legends of much of West Africa. One of the phenomena that she notes is the development of parallel male/female authority structures in traditional African society, and remarks that such organization was generally destroyed by colonialism and the implantation of Western political organization which had no real history of such a cooperative system. As Lebeuf says of the position in which the African woman found herself: "Maintenues complètement à l'écart de ce mouvement, elles virent s'effondrer les bases matérielles et spirituelles sur lesquelles reposait leur autorité et disparaître peu à peu leurs prérogatives."[51]

African women played a variety of political roles over the centuries of their history. Welch in Africa Before They Came quotes from the chronicles of Bello, an early voyager to West Africa, a description of the activities of Amina (or Aminatu) who governed the Hausa (Katsina and Kano) country in the fifteenth century. According to Welch, Amina ruled for a period of thirty-four years and stories of her exploits are recorded in both the Kano and Abuja chronicles. Welch notes that "her love life was as spectacular as her warrior exploits, for at each town she conquered she chose herself a lover and murdered him before she rushed on to further military and amorous exploits."[52] Lebeuf, in discussing women's political roles in Niger, Chad, and the Hausa country, notes that in those areas, women besides the famous Amina were involved in founding cities, directing migrations, conquering kingdoms. Some Songhay tribes bear the names of the celebrated women who directed them for a time. Lebeuf states that Amina herself was a highly successful military leader. She led her troops as far as Noupé, constructed cities, received tribute from other powerful chiefs, and was the person responsible for the introduction of the kola nut into the hospitality customs of the area.[53] Welch, who is interested in the more flamboyant details, notes that she was also responsible for the introduction of the custom of the castration of eunuchs.[54]

Lebeuf states that according to tradition another woman chief and warrior, Bazao-Tourounkou, led a group of soldiers which was attached to an ancient city whose ruins are still visible.[55] She adds that in the north section of Cameroun women often selected the site of a new city, bore the insignia of the ruling office, and assumed direction of whole provinces.[56] Perhaps the most famous of these women were the Amazons of Dahomey. Vlahos describes two functions that these "mothers" of Dahomey had. The first resembled the role of the missi of early times. These women were in reality, wives of the king, and they numbered in the hundreds. Rather than sequester them in harems, the king set them to work. "They were the country's recorders, its living file cabinets, its supervisors."[57] Each official of the king had his assigned "mother" who verified his transactions. The women warriors were likewise assigned to male war chiefs.[58] There were women's groups which took part in battles; but there were also "mothers" assigned to guarantee the faithfulness of the commanders to the king.[59]

Welch notes that women soldiers in Africa were not confined to the "celibate corps of Dahomey"[60] who impressed pre-colonial European visitors, but that there were female warriors in other African regions as well. Lebeuf states that the feminine armies of the Nilotics, particularly among the Lango, were equally renowned.[61]

Fage records the occurence of matrilineal descent in his A History of West Africa. His information is drawn

from the eleventh century Spanish Muslim geographer, Al-Bakri, who provided the first detailed description of a West African state, Ghana. Al-Bakri reported that the king of that time, Tankamanin, was the son of his predecessor's sister, and that the throne was typically inherited in the maternal line.[62] Busia's study, The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political Systems of Ashanit, notes that matrilineal descent was common in many regions. Women were the legendary founders of the states of Mampong, Wenchi, and Djouaben.[63]

Davidson states in his book, The Growth of African Civilization, that the Baoule of the Ivory Coast shared in the custom of female rulers. He notes that following the death of Opoku Ware in about 1750, a dispute over who should wield the political governance arose. A number of the Ashanti decided to leave the region and seek a fresh territory to the west. A woman, Awura Poku, led the group which settled in the country east of the Bandama River. They gradually pushed out the people there, the Senufu and the Guru, although some intermarriage between the Akan and these other tribes did occur. Queen Poku died in about 1760 and was buried in the capital, Warebo, according to Davidson. Her reign was followed by that of her niece, Akwa Boni, who further extended the territory of the Akan (who became known as Baoule at this time). This queen died in about 1790, and although the Baoule lost much of their unity with her death, they continued

to rule a good portion of the southern Ivory Coast until the French colonial invasion at the end of the nineteenth century.[64]

The theme of a woman, a queen or chief's daughter, taking a foreign consort to whom she delivers the insignia of power, is a common theme in the traditional legends of the formation of ancient African kingdoms. Lebeuf cites a number of these stories: Queen Daura who in the Chronicle of the Kano married Bayadjidda, the ancestor of the Hausa kings after he killed the sacred serpent; the queen of the Louba country who married the hunter, Kongolo who founded that kingdom; Ndalamba Boulanda, the sister of a king, who married a stranger who founded the second Louba kingdom; Louedji, the daughter of a local Kassai chief, who married a northern hunter, Llounga Kibinda, and founded the Lounda kingdom.[65]

Women did not simply fight, found dynasties, and marry to extend their political power and establish new kingdoms, however. They were inextricably involved in the daily operations of kingdoms as well as in their establishment. Ibn Batouta, an early voyager, is quoted as being surprised at the political intrigues of the women associated with the Mali court, and notes that Queen Kaça, wife of Mansa Souleyman, is closely associated with her husband in the rule of their country. Later voyagers of the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries are similarly surprised at the privileges and rights of the Oulof, Serer, Vili and Bacongo princesses of the day.[66]

Little notes that even with the coming of colonialism women in some of the African regions continued to wield power. In his work on the Mende he states that many women "appear in records of treaties prior to the declaration of the Protectorate, and they include 'Nyarroh, Queen of Barri Country', as a signatory in Treaty No. 113 of 1890; 'The Magao, Queen of Lubu', in a Treaty of 1869; 'Regbafri, principal lady of Manho' in Treaty No. 78 of 1872; 'A Lady of Sherbro Island'. in Treaty No. 66 of 1861; and 'Fony-Lady of Mano Bagru', in Treaty No. 68 of 1861."[67] Little supports the authenticity of reports of extensive political power wielded by women by noting that the founders of certain chiefdoms are cited traditionally as having been women. Further he states that Mende law recognized female inheritance of family property in the absence of a suitable male successor, which further supports the claim that women served as chiefs in a number of African societies.[68]

What is demonstrated by the above example is that African traditional society did, at least, at times, permit women to play active roles in public affairs, that this participation varied from behind the scenes supervision or political intrigue to rule by a woman, to rule by a consort chosen by a queen. In some few cases, as has already been noted in the discussion of two queens of Dahomey, succession went from woman to woman.

Welch comments further on feminine dynasties in Africa. According to this author, the famale ruler in some tribes had the primary responsibility of managing and supervising the weather. Shd was believed to possess supernatural powers which enabled her to "make rain" and to determine the cycle of the seasons. This woman ruler was not permitted to marry in the usual manner and thus selected other women to serve as her "wives," that is to bear children in her name to assure the succession.[69] Annie Lebeuf notes, in addition, that the restrictions surrounding the woman ruler because of her sacred duties were manifold. She was expected not only to bring the rain to her own people, but to prevent it from falling on the lands of their enemies. Since her people believed themselves so dependent upon her and upon her adherence to her required manner of life for their own livelihood and wealth, they insisted upon her faithfulness to her obligations. She was, in fact, a sort of high priestess, and, indeed, following about forty years of service to her people was expected to end her "reign" by a ritual suicide, which marked the end of her service. Local chiefs sent her daughters and sisters to be her "official" spouses, and she was expected to maintain a female harem. There was no restriction against her having children of her own (usually fathered by a close relative), but she was forbidden to marry. She tended to marry her wives to men who might assist her through their influence and relationships

in maintaining peace and order as well as her ascendancy. She served as the chief justice of her people and was assisted with this work regionally by the "mothers of the kingdom," both men and women, to whom she had assigned this local role.[70]

Other types of political involvement are also to be noted in traditional society. Little states that among the Mende, some women are allowed to become members of the Poro, the men's "society." Certain women, Sami, have a hereditary connection with the Poro, and because of this must be initiated. One woman must be initiated to serve as Mabole, of the society. Her duties are to take part in certain Poro ceremonies, to act as matron to the initiates during their training, to serve as caretaker of the pipe and razor used for marking the initiates. Women who are barren may also be initiated in the Poro with the intention that they may be cured of this trait of "masculinity" and that it might be given to one of the young initiates instead.[71] Again, it must be noted, that women in traditional African society have taken part on several levels and in varying degrees of involvement in the authority (political) structures of their societies.

Lebeuf demonstrates in her review of historical female political involvement that it was more customary for a woman (or two women) to reign jointly with a man rather than by herself. She states that in some ancient kingdoms governance lay in the hands of two persons, a king and the

queen mother. If the queen died before her son, a woman was required to replace her. If her son died, she retired.[72] Lebeuf notes additional instances of the practice of this custom. In some societies the queen mother and her son were joint rulers, but each possessed individual residences, courts, villages. Together they controlled the social associations (age groups), distributed the land, judged, presided over religious ceremonies. Though they shared authority, the two rulers had distinct responsibilities. One example that Lebeuf cites is the case of the death penalty. The king alone could decree this punishment, but the queen's councillors sat with him in his deliberations. Moreover, the condemned party could also seek refuge (and obtain it) from the queen mother. The roles of the king and the queen mother were not exclusive, but complementary.[73] Lebeuf cites the Peul, the Bateke, the Bamileke, and the Chamba, societies as examples of this form of governance. In some cases the women involved were the kings' mothers, in other cases a close relative, that is, a sister, an aunt. In all cases authority was wielded in judicial and religious affairs as well as in general governance. In certain cases the women were fully independent of the men with whom they ruled. In other cases the men were the ascendant rulers with the women serving as intermediaries to them. Personal lives were permitted all of these women, with some restrictions, but on the whole their husbands or male associates had no official roles to play in the governance of the tribe.[74]

What must be noted in all these instances of women involved in the governance of their tribes, however, is the specific feminine (Earth mother) role that they were expected to play. Thus, their most important duties were on the spiritual, moral level, but their roles were not confined to those particular aspects. Rather they were truly involved in all parts of the governance of their countries.

In addition to serving as women chiefs, to reigning jointly with male chiefs, to serving as delegates of a chief, to fighting in a chief's army, women took part in other ways in the political lives of their tribes.

Many chiefs' daughters were used as political pawns by their fathers and were married with an eye to his political advantage. A chief's daughter, might by her marriage, strengthen the political position of her father, provide an agreement with a foreign tribe, reward a faithful ally. Lebeuf notes that several tribes used marriage very effectively to strengthen a ruler's authority.

> Toutes les épouses du souverain sont choisies dans des clans différents qui, de ce fait, acquièrent la position d'alliés de la famille regnante tandis que le roi désigne les femmes de sa propre famille pour épouser des chefs importants, même étrangers; du fait de leur origine, elles occupent auprès d'eux une position spéciale et sont les mères des héritiers futurs.[75]

Not only did the daughter in these cases assist her father in the strengthening of his position, but she also retained some authority herself over her husband, always remained a member of the "royal family."

Other types of roles were also assigned to women. Among the Ashanti one of the "elders" was a woman who with the male councillors directed the affairs of the village. In some cases she was appointed by the chief, while, in some villages, the married women elected her to serve in this capacity. Women were also elected or chosen as leaders (representatives) of their age-group association with corresponding duties. In some instances women were selected by their peers to organize the collective work of the women and to regulate the market.[77]

It is to be noted that in some instances women took part in associations of both sexes which permitted them to intervene directly in all public affairs. More usually, however, the women's associations operated in a manner parallel to the men's associations, and each association had its own duties and sphere of influence. In some tribes greater importance was given to the women's associations than to the men's as was the case of some tribes of southern Nigeria. In some parts of the Ivory Coast the local chief was first required to consult with the local president of the women's association before announcing work days.[78] The Sande of the Mende tribe of Sierra Leone play a major role in the total societal life as Little notes in his work. This woman's association was (and is) the major educational structure of the society. The president of this association, the Majo, can exert a good deal of personal influence within the total community, both male and female.[79]

As has been seen the African women was traditionally involved in the political affairs of her society from earliest times. This involvement ranged from ruling to assisting in some manner with the political order (authority structure) of the society. Although the quality and quantity of this feminine participation in the political structure varied from society to society there is a clear tradition of involvement which was often disturbed only by the inroads of nineteenth century colonialism which neither understood the traditional African customs and associations nor could perceive a societal structure different from its own. Thus the colonial powers unwittingly upset the equilibrium of African governance (destroyed feminine participation) by the imposition of Western ideals and Western methodology.

SUMMARY

The traditional role of women in West Africa was closely associated with their physical potentialities. Women were prized particularly because they were able to bear children; and status, in most cases, was dependent upon the satisfaction of this function. Women, generally gained their identity and some freedom of action through marriage and by becoming mothers, but they had broader social responsibilities than the family. First, women were, in traditional Africa, an economic force. They shared with their husbands the financial responsibilities

for the household and for the children. Further, in many instances, it was the women who controlled the wealth (production, markets, and trade) of the countryside. Finally, in many areas, farming was done chiefly by the women. Second, women in traditional African society were also a political force. In some areas they ruled, in others they assisted with the rule of the tribe. Indeed, it was the advent of Western society during the nineteenth century colonial expansion and exploitation that destroyed some parts of traditional African life and resulted in the decline of feminine influence. Third, women were traditionally a potent social force. They were responsible in large part for the education of the children. They took care of the home, prepared the food, made the clothing, did the washing, and perpetuated the race. Their roles were central to the stability and well-being of the tribe. It must be stated, however, that despite the political and economic functions of women in the traditional West African society, that all of the roles of the women were for the most part subsidiary to their functions as mothers wives, and housewives, and were in some manner related to these functions or shaped by them.

Footnotes Chapter I

[1]Phyllis M. Kaberry, Women of the Grassfields, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1964, p. 150.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Sister Marie-André du Sacre Coeur, W.S., The House Stands Firm, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1962, p. 70.

[5]Ibid., p. 71.

[6]Kenneth Little, The Mende of Sierra Leone, London, Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, p. 153.

[7]Ibid., p. 154.

[8]Monique Gessaim, "Femmes Coniagui", Femmes d'Afrique Noire, Paris, Monton and Co., 1950, p. 37.

[9]Marguerite Dupire, "Situation de la femme dans une société pastorale," Femmes d'Afrique Noire, Paris, Monton and Co., 1950, p. 62.

[10]Ibid., p. 72.

[11]Little, op. cit., p. 115.

[12]Sister Marie-André, op. cit., p. 75 Little, op. cit., p. 75.

[13]Little, op. cit., pp. 126-129.

[14]Vincent Monteil, L'Islam Noir, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1964, p. 151.

[15]Ibid., p. 163.

[16]Little, op. cit., p. 141.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Sister Marie-André, op. cit., p. 93.

[20] *Ibid*.

[21] Dupire, *op. cit*., p. 65.

[22] *Ibid*. p. 72.

[23] Sister Marie-André, *op. cit*., p. 99.

[24] Monteil, *op. cit*., p. 156.

[25] Dupire, *op. cit*., p. 63.

[26] Monteil, *op. cit*., p. 157.

[27] *Ibid*.

[28] Sister Marie-André, *op. cit*., pp. 176-182.

[29] *Ibid*., p. 184.

[30] Dupire, *op. cit*., p. 76.

[31] Gessaim, *op. cit*., p. 41.

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] Sister Marie-André, *op. cit*., p. 199.

[34] Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970, p. 17.

[35] *Ibid*., p. 19.

[36] Sister Marie-André, *op. cit*., p. 199.

[37] *Ibid*., p. 203.

[38] Sembène Ousmane, *Le Mandat*.

[39] Sister Marie-André, *op. cit*., p. 203.

[40] *Ibid*., p. 204.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 205.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 209.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 214-218.

[47] Marguerite Dupire, *op. cit*, p. 79.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

[50] Galbraith Welch, *Africa Before They Came*, New York, William Morrow and Co., 1965, p. 312.

[51] Annie Lebeuf, "Le Rôle de la femme dans l'organisation politique des sociétés africaines," *Femmes d'Afrique Noire*, Paris, Monton and Co., 1950 p. 94.

[52] Welch, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

[53] Lebeuf, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

[54] Welch, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

[55] Lebeuf, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 96 .

[57] Olivia Vlahos, *African Beginnings*, New York, The Viking Press, 1969, p. 64.

[58] Basil Davidson, F.K. Buah, J.F. Ade Ajaju, *The Growth of African Civilization*, London, Longman, Green, and Co., Ltd., 1967, p. 226.

[59] Vlahos, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[60]Welch, op. cit., p. 309.

[61]Lebeuf, op. cit., p. 96.

[62]J. D. Fage, A History of West Africa, Cambridge, University Press, 1969, pp. 2-3.

[63]Lebeuf, op. cit., p. 96.

[64]Davidson, op. cit., p. 246.

[65]Lebeuf, op. cit., p. 96.

[66]Ibid., p. 97.

[67]Little, op. cit., p. 195.

[68]Ibid., pp. 195-196.

[69]Welch, op. cit., pp. 312-313.

[70]Lebeuf, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

[71]Little, op. cit., p. 245.

[72]Lebeuf, op. cit., p. 100.

[73]Ibid.

[74]Ibid. pp. 100-105.

[75]Ibid., p. 109.

[76]Ibid., p. 115.

[77]Ibid., p. 114.

[78]Little, op. cit., p. 126.

Chapter II

THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN

When one speaks of a changing role for women in contemporary West Africa, it is not to say that the traditional roles of women as keepers of the home, mothers, obedient mates, participators in the nations' economies are being eliminated. Rather, it is to state a fairly obvious sociological fact. Society is not stagnant; West African society since independence, has, indeed, been anything but static. Just as general societal changes have occurred in these countries, so correlated changes in the roles of women have occurred. The changes in the educational (which implies changes in attitudes), economic, political, and social milieu of women necessarily alter their roles. What is more, the changing attitudes are also reflected in changing law, and changing law indicates an evolution, sometimes a revolution, in traditional customs and institutions. In the following pages the changing system of laws are related to the primary role of the traditional woman (wife and mother), changes in social attitudes about the role of women, new manifestations of the political involvement of women and changes in educational options for women will be discussed.

SOCIAL CHANGE AND LAW: QUESTIONS CONCERNING MARRIAGE

A major difference between women's participation in the social history of the past and that of the present is that currently, in some parts of West Africa, there is a concerted attempt to break with old customs and traditions through the establishment of new laws and codes. Thus it is that in many areas women's role is altered and described by civil law. To comprehend the extent of these changes it is necessary to examine the legal codes of several countries as related to the questions of polygamy, dowry, and divorce.

Two countries of primary interest ot this discussion are Guinea and Ivory Coast, for these two nations are among those in West Africa that have had the most sweeping changes in marriage and divorce laws. In Guinea the first changes in laws governing marriage were inaugurated in 1962. The 1962 laws provided among other things that marriages should take place before an officer of the official registry. Further, it set eighteen as minimum age for the husband, and seventeen for the wife. It further provided that the wife could have disposition over her own property, that she should be able to open a bank account in her own name, that she should have the right to deposit and withdraw funds from this account, and that she should have the right to purchase necessities for the household in her husband's name. If a husband should fail to live up to his obligations of

support, the wife could, under law, bring an action against him in the courts and attach his property or garnish his salary.[1] Changes in customary law are apparent. By the laws of 1962 the customs of early marriage and property rights of a husband over his wife's goods were clearly altered. Further, the woman was given greater economic autonomy by law and provided with legal means to assure financial support by her spouse.

It must be noted, however, that despite these changes, there still exists in Guinea a highly developed concept of "group involvement" in marriage. The 1962 law states that "the solemn character of marriage shall be placed within the habitual framework of the political and social life of the committees of the _Parti Démocratique de Guinée_ in each urban quarter and in each village commune."[2] Thus the party, rather than the tribe was given the role of maintaining family stability, settling marital disputes, and urging fulfillment of family obligations.

The law of April 14, 1962, permitted the dissolution of marriage for three reasons: 1) the death of one of the spouses, 2) the disappearance of one of the parties for a period of five years, 3) divorce. (In Guinea, Islamic law had permitted simple repudiation of the wife by the husband. The 1962 law required that a divorce be obtained through a court of law.) In the case of a divorce, it was stated that either husband or wife, or both parties, might instigate proceedings. Nevertheless, before the

case was allowed to come to court, it was required that it be submitted for conciliation to party controllers. If this failed, a divorce could be granted, and a divorce granted by a court clearly severed the marital bond. Nevertheless, a divorced woman was not allowed to remarry for a period of three months. If she was found to be pregnant, she was not permitted to marry until after the birth of the child and the child was considered to be that of her former husband. Children of dissolved marriages remained in the mother's custody until they reached seven years of age. At that time the children were placed in the father's custody.[3] The continuation of paternal descent in the new legal system is clearly apparent.

The marriage laws of 1968 developed even more drastically the marriage reforms of 1962 in Guinea. In 1968 the Guinean National Assembly passed a law stating that "the practice of polygamy is forbidden to any person of Guinean nationality and remains proscribed throughout the territory of the republic."[4] (The law also provided, however, that polygamous marriages contracted before that date were valid.) The 1968 law spelled out more clearly the grounds on whcih divorces might be granted: "Divorce may only be pronounced for reasons of absolute necessity rendering the maintenance of the marital bonds humanly intolerable; either for a total absence of mutual confidence between the spouses in their common life, or for a degradation of respect of the rights and duties resulting

from the marriage to such an extent that the dignity of one of the spouses has lost all value and meaning as a result of the willful fault of the other."[5]

Several changes of social structure are clearly contained in the laws of 1962 and 1968. First, the position of women is greatly altered by law. Islamic religious and social custom is so altered that women have nearly equal rights with men so far as dissolution of marriage. Further, women were granted economic equality with men to the extent that they had jurisdiction over their own property and redress in cases of non-support. Early marriages were outlawed as was the right of men to have more than one wife. Second, where tribal and religious custom formerly played important roles in the society these institutions were superceded by a new "group" influence, the Democratic Party of Guinea.

In Ivory Coast, just as in Guinea, sweeping changes took place in the laws governing marriage and divorce following independence. Here again the new legislation on marriage was a complete departure from customary law and made few concessions to African traditions. A major reason for this break with the old institutions was that the traditional customs were seen as impediments to social and economic progress.[6] The new marriage legislation, made law October 7, 1964, required the free consent of both parties to the marriage. Further, it stipulated that persons twenty-one years of age might marry without parental

consent, that males should be twenty-one and females, eighteen, to marry. Marriages were legal only when contracted in a civil ceremony before a civil authority. Dispensations from the regulation on age to marry could be given only by the president of the republic.[7]

Ivory Coast, like Guinea, abolished polygamy, and provided that new marriages could only be contracted if prior marriages had been dissolved. The new legislation did not affect polygamous marriages contracted prior to October, 1954, but it did affect further marriages by a party involved in a polygamous contract. If such a person wanted to marry anew he was required to dissolve _all_ previous marriages before a new marriage could be contracted.[8]

As a further step in changing old customs and correcting contemporary abuses, the lawmakers of Ivory Coast also dissolved the institution of the dowry. Since the introduction of a cash economy in Ivory Coast, the dowry had taken on a commercial aspect and had lost much of its traditional significance. Exchange in money had, in most cases, replaced the gift in kind in many areas (not only in Ivory Coast, but also in several other West African nations). It had become quite difficult for a young man to accumulate the funds necessary for marriage, and it was said that in some locales only the old and the rich were able to marry the young girls. Scales for the bride price, devised according to the age, beauty, and virginity of

the female, had been established in many regions.[9]

To illustrate the extent to which the abuse of the dowry had spread in West Africa it is useful to note Monteil's figures. In 1960, he states, the bridal tax in rural Senegal ranged from 20,000 C.F.A. francs and two head of cattle to 40,000 C.F.A. francs and additional presents. In urban areas the sum was even larger: 100,000 C.F.A. francs in Dakar in January, 1960; 205,000 C.F.A. francs in June of that year. It is to be noted that the average annual revenue of an individual in Senegal was 30,000 C.F.A. francs, and that even members of a privileged class, the bureaucrats, earned only 15,000 C.F.A. francs per month. Monteil further points out that in 1964 one fourth of the male African proletariat was unmarried, and unable to marry, because they were not capable of raising the necessary funds.[10]

Under the new law of Ivory Coast, not only was the dowry abolished, but persons who engaged in dowry transactions became subject to criminal penalties. Legal sanctions involved strict penalties.[11]

The new marriage law of Ivory Coast were so explicit as to describe what ought to be the relationship of the spouses. Since tribal-customary law was abolished, the new law needed to provide a new set of customs and to establish anew family roles and responsibilities. Thus the law admonishes spouses to be faithful to one another, to live together, to assist one another, to raise and care

for their children. Children are required by law to provide sustenance to parents and relatives who are in need. As in the laws of Guinea, the husband is stated to be the head of the household and is required to furnish his wife with all the necessities of life according to his ability and status. Just as in Guinea, if he fails to fulfill his obligations of support, the wife may seek judicial enforcement of her rights against him.[12]

The law further alters the role and status of the unmarried woman. In most West African territories, if a husband was ill or absent, no wife was allowed to replace him as titular head of her family. The new law of Ivory Coast provides for the assumption of the role of family head by the wife if her husband is incapacitated or absent. Again this signalled a major alteration of customary law wherein the titular head of a family was a male relative. Not only does the law provide that the woman can serve as family head, however, but allows her to contract in her husband's name for necessities for her household. It further provides that the wife may exercise an occupation (profession) outside her home provided that her husband does not raise objections. Even if he does object, the law provides that the wife may petition the courts to adjudicate the legitimacy of his opposition. A court may permit her to continue her outside employment.[13]

In his study of new African laws Salacuse claims that the intent behind the new law system is to replace the extended family (the traditional tribal concept) by the nuclear family (the Western concept.) He notes that for this reason the community property system was established by law to extend to all married persons. The husband, under law, is the administrator of the property which includes all spouses' incomes, all property acquired by purchase during marriage, and property received jointly by gift or inheritance. The husband has nearly full control of the property, but the wife may obtain judicial relief if her rights are threatened.[14]

In some ways the new laws restrict some of the financial independence enjoyed by some African women under customary law. No longer is what they earn by trade or farming and herds regarded as personal income, but the husband has equal authority over it. Further, a wife may not leave a herd with her father as income insurance in the event that her marriage is unsuccessful. Neither, however, are her father, the tribal chief, or her husband allowed to dispose freely of her property, as was often the case in customary law. Finally, it is evident that the single family group, the nuclear family, is established as the core social group, for the tribal economic functions are reassigned to this group.

Ivory Coast law also takes a strict position with regard to divorce laws. No longer can a man simply

announce he is no longer married, nor a woman quietly leave her husband's home to affect a divorce. Marriage is dissolved only by death or a divorce which is granted by the court of law. Divorce is approved for four circumstances: adultery, cruelty, conviction for an act affecting "honor and consideration," abandonment of the family or marital home. A court may suggest separation in lieu of divorce. The aggrieved parties of a divorce may obtain damages for material or moral injury sustained as a result of the dissolution of the marriage, which may include alimony. In the event of a divorce, community property is divided evenly between the spouses, and, ordinarily, custody of the children goes to the party who brought the divorce action, unless the court should decide otherwise. Divorced women are not allowed to remarry for a year. Again, customary law is gravely altered. In many tribes the children belonged to the father or to his tribe. Loss of the bridal price was integrally related to divorce action.[15]

A final change in customary law is the provision in the new Ivory Coast laws for intestate succession. The surviving spouse is granted one half of all the community property. The remaining half is divided among the children, regardless of age or sex. Inheritance is likewise newly associated with the nuclear family in place of tribal inheritance.[16]

West African countries other than Ivory Coast or Guinea, for example, Nigeria, have made changes in marriage laws which are just as sweeping in their reforms as those of these two nations. Other countries, for example, Senegal, have made few alterations, for their civil marriage laws are rooted in customary law. A few nations have compromised and have altered customary law, but not overthrown it. Mali is an example of this latter course of action. Marriage has been declared a civil act in Mali. Both parties must consent to the marriage; a minimum age (eighteen years for the male, fifteen for the female) has been established. Parental consent is not required if the male is twenty-one and the female, eighteen. Regulations concerning the dowry are now civil law. The total value of the dowry and marriage gifts has been set at 20,000 francs for an unmarried women, and 10,000 francs for a woman previously married. Polygyny is still permitted, but the number of wives (four as in Moslem custom) is restricted. Grounds for divorce are the same for both spouses: adultery, serious injuries or bad treatment making conjugal life impossible, conviction for a serious crim, inveterate alcoholism, and the inability to perform marital obligations. A wife may further petition for divorce if her husband refuses to provide for her basic needs or to pay her dowry as required by the marriage agreement.[17] The solution in Mali is to mix old custom with new custom, following a method of evolution rather than revolution.

Decisions by the different West African nations as to which direction to follow in adaptation of law undoubtedly stem from the political and philosophical intentions of the leaders of the West African nations as well as from the political and economic movements of their countries. What is to be noted, however, is that regardless of the direction these decisions take (Guinea, Senegal, or Mali), the institution of family life and the definition of the wife's role in that life are seen as integral to the whole social system of the nation. Hence civil law is used to alter or retain traditional roles of women.

CHANGING ATTITUDES ABOUT WOMEN"S ROLE

Preceding, or concomitant with the changes in marriage law is a change in the attitudes of the women of West Africa regarding marriage, and their role as African women. André Rétif in an article printed in Etudes, April, 1961, describes the gradual movement of some West African women towards greater autonomy, particularly in the area of marriage and family life. He quotes a young girl from Cameroon: "Pour moi, l'indépendence, c'est de pouvoir choisir mon mari et de me libérer de ma famille."[18] The comment of the girl illustrates quite clearly that for many African women a change in status of the female of seen to be closely related to marriage laws and customs, as well as to separation from certain tribal affiliations.

In his article Rétif states that "polygamy on the grand scale", ten wives or more, is fast disappearing. At the time of his writing polygamy had already been outlawed in Ghana (1961) and he notes that as early as 1943 at the Conference of Brazzaville, polygyny was termed "le fleau de l'Afrique Noire."[19] Rétif's article contains several admonitions. A Catholic priest, he is concerned that the movement towards women's liberation may lead to license and he cites as evidence the new trands in the divorce laws of the West African nations. Further, he states that legal changes of the status of African women must be accompanied by their fuller incorporation into the political and economic streams of their nations, and to this end recommends broader education for women and their involvement in social associations, such as L'Action catholique familiale, which will involve them in both family and social affairs. What Retif points up in his article is that legislation was already in progress on women's status in the early sixties, that a number of women on the grassroots level as well as on the more educated level were concerned with the problem of women's status, that women's associations beyond the initiation group associations were becoming more important in Africa and were playing a role in the definition of women's role, and that education was seen as a necessary concomitant to elevation of women's status.

A more recent article by Kenneth Little and Anne Price in the October, 1967 issue of Africa reflects changes in

attitudes concerning marriage of young people from Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Data collected by the researchers in 1960 from 293 students in eight Secondary and Teacher Training Institutes in Ghana expressed a preference for a civil or religious marriage. Since bigamy is a crime in a statutory marriage of this sort, the students were expressing their desire for monogamous marriage. The students also expressed the desire for educated marriage partners.[20]

Little also notes in his own study of Sierra Leone that 21% of the Creole women cited education as an advantage for a woman. He quotes one informant: "She is than able to converse in society and her husband is not ashamed of her."[21]

The emergence in Nigeria of the "femme libre", the sophisticated prostitute, who because of the absence of educated wives is called in to deputize at official balls and other formal functions is also noted in the Little-Price study. Further they document the fact that it is the ambition of the educated West African male to have a spouse who knows something of modern (Western?) style in home furnishings and in her personal style of dress, who comprehends new methods of child rearing, who is capable of aiding the children with their homework, who can help him advance socially because of her own social competence. That this is a change in attitude from the attitudes that formed tribal custom is clearly apparent, for much more is required of the woman than the traditional chores of child bearing,

housekeeping, trade, and farming. The Little-Price study notes, however, that educated males wanted both the "new" woman and the "old" in their wives. As Little notes: "The ideal seems to be a well-mannered wife who looks after the house and children, cooks, earns money, if required, obeys and respects her husband, and puts his interests before those of her own kin."[22] The authors cite the studies of Crabtree, 1950; Jahoda, 1958; Jellico, 1955; Little, 1966; Omari, 1962; to prove this point.[23]

The Little-Price study also notes that there is divergence of expectations of marriage by the educated male and the educated female. The educated women express the desire to be treated as equals in the marriages, to be accepted as partners. Further they want a good deal of independence with regard to their own careers, even after marriage, and the choice of their own friends. Little claims that it is because they wish to "feel themselves emancipated" that the women are anxious to contract statutory marriages. Such a form of marriage makes a woman legally free of her husband's lineage, includes her right to sue him for divorce on the grounds of adultery, and enables her to inherit property from her spouse. Statutory marriages do, in fact, safeguard the independence of the wife, particularly in the event of her husband's death, for such a marriage frees her from the possible eventuality that the deceased husband's kinsmen will claim all of his property and either leave her destitute or force her to

return to her paternal home.[24]

The educated West African men polled in this study tended to favor monogamy for reasons of social status; that is, for most members of the educated class, monogamy is the socially approved form of marriage. Seventy-three per cent of 292 male Ghanian students questioned believed that polygamy is a "backward practice which must be discouraged."[25] To the students, then, monogamy is correlated with level of education; status and influence which were formerly achieved by a plurality of wives are now achieved through a monogamous union. Little cites Mercier's study of 1960 to further underscore this fact. In that study in Senegal, Mercier noted that monogamy was the ideal of both upper servants and members of professional occupations in Dakar.[26]

Of further interest the Little-Price study notes significant differences by sex in attitudes about polygamy. In the Sierra Leone study "one-third of a sample of male students wanted more than one wife, whereas only five girls out of 119 preferred polygamy."[27] The article also states that in Ghana in 1960, 86% of the girls questioned rejected polygamy whereas only 61% of the boys rejected the custom. This more universal rejection of polygamy by educated females stems from their desire not to share a husband or his income with co-wives according to Little's 1966 research.[28]

In summary, then, the Little-Price article reflects a growing disenchantment with tribal customs concerning marriage among the educated populations of the West African nations. Status was seen by many persons to be achieved through monogamous unions and these new attitudes seemed to be arrived at primarily through involvement with Western education and Western custom. The movement towards a new legal description of marriage and the terms of that relationship was led in part by educated women, who in the 1940's were already voicing their displeasure with their traditional role and their dependent status.

Additional proof of a growing change in the attitude of African women towards polygamy, which has been responsible in part for the new marriage laws in several West African countries, can be found in the documents of the many seminars sponsored in Africa by the United Nations on the subject of women. Among these seminars was one entitled "The Status of Women in Family Law", which was held in Lome, Togo, August 18-31, 1964. The discussion at Lome, according to Gladys Tillett, a participant in the seminar, centered about the recognition of the role that African women must play in meeting the aspirations of the newly emerging nations and in raising the standards of living for the peoples of their countries.[29] Mrs. Tillett noted that participants in the Togo conference represented twenty-one countries, eleven of which were West African nations: Cameroon, Dahomey, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali,

Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Upper Volta.

A number of women represented their governments at the seminar. The head of the Togo delegations was the wife of the Vice President of the Republic. Ghana's participant was Mrs. Annie Jiagge, Judge of the Ghanian High Court. Mali sent a member of the Social Commission on Women in Mali as an alternate; Nigeria, the State Counsel of its Federal Ministry of Justice; Senegal, a Commissioner of its Supreme Court; Upper Volta, a Deputy of its National Assembly; Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone, educators; Dahomey, a leader of a woman's organization. The character of the type of representatives sent to the meeting was indicative of changing attitudes about the role of women in government and the growing movement towards legislative change of the status of women. It was noted by Mrs. Tillett that Guinea and Togo had taken the lead in urging the General Assembly to approve the United Nations' document, "Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages," in 1962. In December, 1964, following the Lome seminar, Upper Volta became the tenth country to ratify the marriage convention, thus fulfilling the U.N. requirement for ratification by ten countries in order to bring it into effect. Although the Togo seminar did not result in a uniform condemnation of polygamy, it did achieve universal assent that African women should receive general education as well as technical, vocationa, and professional training "to equip (them) for their new roles and

responsibilities in developing societies."[30]

The Accra Conference on the "Status of Women" held in 1968 went much further than the Togo seminar in its recommendations. All of the West African nations that had been present at Lomé were also present at Accra. The delegates at Accra, however, made a clear statement about "factors, pressures and obstacles to exercise by women of civic and political rights and responsibilities."[31] Among the pressures cited were traditional attitudes and customary practices which tend to relegate women to an inferior position in society; polygamy in its variant forms; traditional marriage customs; the practice of concubinage; the institution of the dowry (bridal price); customary practices of widowhood.[32]

Documents from the conference attacked the institution of polygamy as inconsistent with the worth and value of human persons. Participants of the meeting noted that legislation against polygamy or other repressive customs was not the total answer to the problem, but that the public should be educated to realize the "degrading implications" of polygamy and these customs. A final recommendation of the conference members was that women should be educated not to enter polygamous unions or to become concubines. Further, it was advised that Africans should abandon the current "commercialized form" to the dowry and return to the traditional, symbolic signification.[33]

The general sense of the Accra Conference was that certain traditional customs were hindrances to women's full social and political involvement in the development of their countries. Because of this, Conference members urged that such customs be altered by law, if countries had not already done so, and that the women of the African nations be educated to the broader roles now opening for them in their countries. More educations was seen to be necessary to assist the women to cut down on the heavy domestic committments of their homes: "excessive child bearing and rearing, lack of planning of domestic chores, social habits permitting excessive interference by friends and relatives with domestic arrangements, leisurely habits which lead to the dissipation of valuable time, lack of labor saving devices in the home." In addition, conference participants felt that social and political education was essential for African women so as to overcome their general apathy to civic and political responsibilities.[34]

What may be noted from the changing tone of the Accra Conference is the growing rejection of the traditional role of women and tribal customs. In particular, women spoke against two time honored African shibboleths, child bearing and the extended family. The institution of the extended family and the cultural value given to the child bearing potentialities of the women were at the center of traditional life in Africa. To attack these was to attack the very foundation of customary life.

In summary, it must be noted that changes in attitude of educated African women and male African leaders about women's roles tended tp precede, or at least to accompany, the enactment of new laws related to the status of women. Changes in law centered about the traditional role of the woman as the housewife, spouse, and mother; thus the new legislation dealt with marriage consent and age, polygamy, and inheritance, all of which were problems central to the question of women's status. Further, it is apparent that the women leaders in the West African nations were cognizant of the need for more universal (popular) changes in attitudes about women to occur in order that the legislative and judicial reforms might be fully actuated. What is more, several nations' leaders had enumciated as political philosophy the need for these reforms of traditional culture so that their nations might progress and develop, in part because they were convinced of the need for feminine participation in economic evolution. Finally, it must be noted that there was a direct correlation between the level of education and both male and female positive attitudes on the changing role of women.

NEW MANIFESTATIONS OF POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

Concurrently with the new legislation in several West African nations to ensure women's rights in their personal and familial life, new laws have been and are being enacted to guarantee their political rights. In a report by the

Secretary-General of the United Nations on January 9, 1967, the civil rights and positions accorded to women in the political affairs of several West African nations were described.[35]

The Sierre Leone government reported on June 29, 1966, that women were holding the following high governmental, judicial, or diplomatic posts: one Minister of State, one Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Transport and Communications, one Mayor of Freetown Municipality, one Principal Magistrate in the Judicial Department. In addition, it was recorded that one woman serves as a member of the delegation to the United Nations.[36]

Togo stated in its report that their constitution of May 5, 1963, gave women equal franchise with men, and that women as well as men have access to public services. An earlier statute, Article Two, Act 58-66, December 1, 1958, which introduced the general statute of the civil service in that country provided that "no distinction shall be made between the two sexes except in respect of the criteria of physical suitability and the requirements peculiar to certain occupations as determined by statute for each particular category."[37] Here, although there is some equalization of opportunity, the door is left open for wide interpretation. Togo, as of late 1966 had not yet ratified the "Convention on the Political Rights of Women" that had been formulated by the Human Commission of the United Nations.

In this same report it was noted that Upper Volta had granted women the same political rights as men in their new constitution of November 30, 1960. Article Five of the constitution provided that members of both sexes who were of "full age and in full possession of their civil and political rights" should have the right to vote.[38] Article Six of the constitution further stated that "the Republic shall ensure equality for all before the law, without distinctions as to origin, race, sex, or religion."[39] The government of Upper Volta also reported that as of April 29, 1966, two women were members of the Legislative Assembly, and that women also were serving as jurors in assize courts. In an earlier act that had introduced the general statute of the civil service, October, 1959, it was made law that "no distinction shall be made between the two sexes."[40] It was noted that this provision made it possible for the women of Upper Volta to have access to all levels of posts in the public service.

Jeanne Gervais wrote in the December, 1964, issue of Women Today, that women of the Ivory Coast acquired their full legal rights at the same time these were granted to males, namely, in 1946. She notes that women were given full responsibility as citizens, had full franchise, and might stand for election. She stated in the report that the government of Ivory Coast has established that "the women's committees of the Democratic Party of the Ivory

had four female general advisers in the national government and one in municipal administration.

In the same issue of that magazine it is reported by Marie-Louise Adibe and Andrea Tessa that the civil status of Gabonese women is generally equal to that of men. Since 1961 two women deputies have held seats in the National Assembly. Further, it is required that a woman be present in an official capacity at every meeting of the Council of Rural Co-operatives so that women are represented in decisions made concerning schools, maternal and child care centers, and budget allocations. In Gabon, law courts that administer common law employ women assistant judges; female police assistants and female auxiliaries in the army have been employed since 1962.[42] An additional measure to assure the rights of women was the establishment in December of 1962 of the National Council of Gabonese Women. The primary objective of this organization is to ensure the participation of women in the formulation of government policy in the area of women's rights.[43]

The effectiveness of Mali and Guinean women in implementing resolutions made at the 1959 Bamako Constitutive Congress of the Union of West African Women is described by Artem Letnev in an article in the June, 1965 issue of Women Today. He states that delegates from both nations were participants in the congress and that shortly after its close, the Guinean delegates submitted a draft law

regarding the dowry custom which was adopted by the Guinea legislature.[44] Letnev further remarks that the governments of both nations encouraged participation in the meeting as part of their official policies of "emancipation of African women." It is Letnev's opinion that a major reason for the adoption of such a policy by these governments is that the conditions inherent to an underdeveloped economy require female participation as well as male participation in production, if the nations are to grow in wealth. Letnev states that the mass participation of women in commercial production in these nations would mean a significant increase in the human resources of the rural cooperatives set up in both countries, and hence, a faster rate of development.[45]

An excerpt from Margarita Dobert's dissertation on the civic and political participation of women in French-speaking West Africa, appearing in the October, 1970, issue of <u>Africa Report</u>, describes the rapid movement by women of that country toward full participation in civic affairs.

Dobert remarks that with the extension of suffrage to all adults, African politicians have become very conscious of the possibilities of feminine influence, particularly since about 50% of the electorate is female. It is to attract the women's vote, according to Miss Dobert, that politicians have begun to include women's demands in their party platforms. In her study of Guinea, however, she noted that Sékou Touré had undertaken the support of the women's movement with honest conviction as well as with

great enthusiasm for he considers the "emancipation of women as integral part of his program for total social reconstruction."[46]

She notes that Sékou Touré had said that African women were doubly exploited under French colonialism, that they were "slaves of slaves," and that he has also stated that the women's stake in the revolution in Guinea is higher than that of the males for they are attempting to achieve their own liberation as well as that of their country. From an interview she held with Touré, Dobert quotes:

> The success of any revolution depended to a large degree on the participation of women. If women only participated indirectly, through their husbands and children, they were depersonalized and alienated.
>
> The emancipation of Guinean society requires a total overhaul of the social structures, of relations between people, of customs and ways of thinking. The emancipation of women must therefore be understood as one of the indispensable conditions for the progress of Guinean society.
>
> Actually, the emancipation of women is the essential condition of the emancipation of man. Man cannot be truly emancipated while his companion is not. For this reason we subordinate the emancipation of men to that of women, one being linked dialectically to the other. Women's emancipation means the emancipation of the entire people.[47]

What is important to note from Touré's comments is that the emancipation of women and their full involvement in a new Guinean society with new traditions and laws are basic to his well-thought-out plan to make a new African society founded upon socialistic ideals. An astute politician,

he saw very early that the women's vote and women's support could mean his success or failure. From the time that he became Secretary General of the Democratic Party (PDG) in 1948, Touré began systematically to cultivate feminine support, and as the party expanded into all parts of Guinea in the early 1950's, one of his major activities was to organize the women. His success in this activity qas notable in the 1951 elections when the women voted for the first time, and did so in large numbers.

That Sékou Touré was correct in his evaluation of the importance of women's support can be noted from Guinea's participation in the general strike in 1953. The strike, begun on orders from the General Confederation of Workers in Paris, lasted for only ten days in most parts of French West Africa. Dobert remarks that in Guinea, however, the strike lasted for seventy-three days and succeeded in very seriously weakening the colonial government. While the strike ensued the women traders "refused to sell chicken, eggs, and fresh milk to the French and fed strikers without payment, and peasant women collected rice as their contribution."[48] Through the development of an African political organization throughout Guinea which had grass-roots support, Touré was able to so cripple French colonial government that later, in 1958, Guinea alone among West African nations would reject DeGaulle's proposal for the French Community and elect independence.

Dobert describes the activities of two Guinean heroines who are to that nation's independence what Jeanne d'Arc was to France's. The first of these women, Macire Sylla, a peasant woman from the region of Teliméle, carried water to people attending the secret political meetings in the bush as her contribution to the strike of 1953. She continued her involvement with the movement from that time. During 1964 elections when there was a great deal of tension between the conservative groups in Guinea, who were backed by the French, and Touré's followers she collected rocks in her shawl and carried them to the men who were throwing them at the French soldiers during the street brawls. During one of these fights she was hit by a rifle which knocked out her teeth.[49]

The second woman, Camara M'Balia, is a symbol of the new Africa's fight against feudalism, that is, the custom of the French administration to rule through the traditional chiefs. Dobert records that these chiefs "collected taxes, often lining their own pockets at the peasants' expense, and were prone to taking a daughter or a wife as pawn for an unpaid debt."[50] The struggle against this custom began in 1955, when on February 9, Camara M'Balia, pregnant and quite close to the time of her term was killed during a demonstration against just such an unpopular chief in the Dubreka region. Her death was an important emotional factor in the success of the elimination of this system of government in Guinea, and M'Balia's death date has become

the PDG's "National Woman's Day." The <u>Ballet de Guinée</u> regularly includes a dance pantomime commemorating this incident in its program.[51]

Dobert states that due largely to the results of the campaigning by Guinean women, Sékou Touré was elected a deputy to the French National Assembly in 1956. It was in 1957 that he became vice-president of the Government Council of Guinea and began further to build the PDG. Women's active political participation was part of the new party's platform, and it was partly through the cultivation of women's votes that the PDG won, overwhelmingly, the 1957 elections in which they took 56 of the 60 seats in the Territorial Assembly. As was noted earlier, one year later despite the active campaigning of the French which included a tour of Africa by Charles DeGaulle, "97% of the electorate voted "no" in the referendum on the Constitution of the Fifth Republic and the proposed French Community."[52] Touré with his women's groups had so thoroughly organized and politicized the country, that they alone of the African nations associated with France were able not only to articulate their desire for immediate independence, but to effect it.

It is for all these reasons that women continue to be extremely active in the party. "Today there exists a "women's pyramid" alongside the party pyramid, from the Special Committee of Women in 8,000 villages and city neighborhoods to the National Congress of Women which elects

a permanent 13-member National Committee of Women."[53] Besides the involvement of women on the local level it is of note that in the 1968 elections, twenty of the seventy-five deputies elected to the National Aseembly were women. In the Regional Assemblies, 140 of the 870 deputies elected were women as well. Guinea has a woman Secretary of State, a woman Governor, a woman Police Commissioner.[54]

That Touré's intent to involve women in all facets of Guinean life has been successful seems evident from the report published in Horeva, the PDG party newspaper, which stated that in January, 1968, the total number of women exercising functions, "who were elected to regular party bodies, active in workers' committees, directing agricultural, consumer, or handicraft cooperatives was more than 150,000 out of approximately 2,000,000 women," or one out of every fourteen women.[55]

The effects of the organization of the women have been demonstrated in a variety of ways: the outlawing of polygamy in 1968; a national literacy campaign (African languages) in April, 1968; a smallpox vaccination campaign, 1969; opposition to school reforms 1967. Today in Guinea women are employed in every kind of job. They "direct traffic, drive tractors, become chemists, electronics experts, veterinarians, and geologists. They serve in the army, and learn to handle rifles, and become pilots."[56]

What is evident from Margarita Dobert's article on Guinea is that women were a powerful political force both

in the gaining of that nation's independence and in her continued growth and advancement. Granted not only philosophical but actual equality, the women of that country altered centuries' old modes of behavior in a relatively short span of time and became full participators, responsible for a large part of that nation's progress.

The Accra Conference, cited earlier, had as its focus the civic and political education of women. It was the conclusion of the conference that in most African countries women have acquired civic and political rights on equal terms with men by law, but that, in practice, women from most of these nations were not exercising these rights fully and effectively. As a general conclusion of the conference delegates reaffirmed their support of the numerous documents of the United Nations Commission on Women: "Conventions on the Political Rights of Women" (1952), "The Convention on the Nationality of Married Women" (1957), "The Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage, and Registration of Marriage" (1962), "The Convention Against Discrimination in Education" (1960), and the International Labor Organizations' conventions concerning "Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value" (1951), and "Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention" (1958).[57]

Further actions by the participants of the Accra Conference included the proposal that all African states, if they had not already done so, ratify all of those

Conventions named above dealing with women's rights and adopt appropriate measures for fully implementing their provisions. Delegates reapproved the conclusions and recommendations made at prior seminars on the rights of women held in Africa: "Participation of Women in Public Life" (Ethiopia, 1960) and "The Status of Women in Family Law" (Togo, 1964).[58]

A major aim of the Accra Conference participants was to raise the consciousness level of states, national leaders, and women about the position of women in political and social life. Thus a number of recommendations were proposed by the delegates which dealt directly with the problem of increasing women's civic and political roles. Among these were: 1) That governments establish national committees on women, 2) that countries name national correspondents to the United Nations to provide direct communication about the status of women, 3) that paid maternity leaves be inaugurated by legislation in the nations of the world, 4) that leadership programs and training sessions for women be begun on local levels, 5) that national and regional centers for training in community development and social welfare be established by the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, 6) that foundations be established to support research and publishing by African women on the role of women in their society with particular reference to pressures and obstacles to that role, 7) that a permanent

committee on women be established in the Organization of African Unity and that governments make it possible for the women of their countries to meet in this group regularly, 8) that the Organization of African Unity compile and make available to governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations a list of leading African women who might be used as consultants, 9) that the United Nations Secretariat prepare a bibliography of all material related to the civic and political education of women and have this information deposited with the United Nations offices and the United Nations Development Program resident representatives, 10) that the United Nations inaugurate studies on attitudes and values which affect the advancement of women.[59]

What is apparent from the tone of the Accra Conference participants and from the resolutions of that Conference is that delegates to the meeting were both deeply involved at that time in the active political participation by women in the Third World nations, and committed to the development of greater political awareness and participation by women in the African continent. This involvement was developing beyond the initial stages of participation by women individually and in associations in the political affairs of their own nations, to the demand for a broader organization of women for self-help, assisted by international or regional associations already established. Further, the demands of the women were

enlarged to include research, consulting assistance, training sessions on the local levels, all of which were seen as essential to change current concepts of many African women about their roles, which had been formed in traditional society through traditional customs.

The movement of African women to political involvement has become so widespread as to be the subject of a number of articles in the popular press. Time magazine, August 31, 1970, an issue that focused upon the women's liberation movement, devoted several pages to the "new" roles of African women in their countries. Cited and pictured in the article were women judges (Ghana's Supreme Court Judge, Anna Jiagge), district chiefs (Sierre Leone's Shenge District chief, Mme. Honoria Bailor Caulker), United Nations officials (Liberia's Angie Brooks), marine biologists, actresses, dancers, nurses, students. What the Time article pointed out, albeit in a fairly superficial manner, was the ambivalence of the African woman caught between traditional customs and the demands of her modern society. Time researchers state: "the women caught at the vortex of a changing continent have naturally experienced a certain confusion about their identity."[60] Cited as proof of this confusion are "extensive sale of hair straighteners, skin-lightening creams, and $20 wigs."[61] The implication is that the uncertainty of the women lies primarily in their desire to personally adapt themselves to Western

(white) standards of beauty. What, perhaps, lies at the roots of such confusion where it does exist is more likely the rapidily of social and political change in the African nations, no clear design to Africanize Western culture values which are the values taught by the formal educational systems, a desire to join the "modern" world on a basis of equality, and the heavy pressure for women to fully participate in the formation of a new society as they attempt to reconcile the old tradition with the new. Certainly role conflict can be seen to be a problem for the new African woman.

To summarize, there seems to be a concerted effort on the part of a number of West African nations not only to give the African woman equal franchise with men, but also to involve her very intimately in the political and civic life of her own nation as well as in pan-African organizations and the United Nations. That there has been a growing effectiveness in the participation of women in the political affairs of the continent can be seen from the roles women have played in the modern development of Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast. What is more, the prominence of African women in such bodies as the United Nations further illustrates the fact that women are playing new roles in African diplomacy and governance. That the women of these countries are themselves concerned with the development of a greater and more effective political role is apparent from

their comments as they attend seminars like the Accra Conference, and from the resolutions that they propose for the extension of their influence and participation in the growth of their nations.

CHANGES IN EDUCATIONAL PATTERNS FOR WOMEN

Among recommendations made at the Accra Conference and at other meetings on the development of Third World women, was that education for women should be expanded at all levels. It is in this area, as well as in those of family life and civic responsibility, that great changes are beginning to take place in West African society. Late in 1968 a study on the "Equality of Access of Women to Literacy"[62] was undertaken by the United Nations. Nations which took part in the survey included Dahomey, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Mali, Niger, Togo, Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria.

None of the African countries responding in the study claimed to have no literacy problem. Dahomey, Liberia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger and Togo all stated, however, that they have introduced free and compulsory primary education for all their citizens, female as well as male. The United Nations report notes that the proceedings from the regional meeting on "The Role of Women in National Development" held at Addis Ababa, March 17-26, 1969, stated that "constitutional and legislative provisions have recently been enacted

in favor of the African women although they do not always have a positive impact in practice."[63]

In the majority of the West African nations polled, women are involved in the planning of literacy programs and courses. Ivory Coast, Liberia, Niger, and Nigeria reported that women work in the ministry of education, and as teachers, adult education instructors, and representatives of non-governmental organizations. Mali, Sierra Leone and Togo reported that women hold high posts in the ministry of education as well as lesser administrative and teaching positions. Mali has female adult education instructors. In addition, the officials responsible for the education of women in the "National Literacy and Basic Education Service" are women. Dahomey alone stated that there were no women involved in the Planning Service or in the Ministry of Education except for secretaries.[64]

Figures on the percentage of illiteracy among females of these West African nations were incomplete in the report. However, a 1960-61 survey of Mali showed 99.5% of the women as illiterate and a 1960 survey of Niger claimed 99.7% of the women as illiterate. Not to take these figures out of context, however, it is necessary to note that the figures for illiteracy of the men in both these nations were also extremely high. The difference between the illiteracy rate of the men as compared with the women ranged from 1.2% to 2.5%. Illiteracy is one of the major

problems of both sexes in developing Africa. In most of the West African nations, however, there is a serious gap between the level of education of males and that of females. Ivory Coast noted that "women lag very far behind men in schooling, and today constitute the large majority of our illiterates."[65]

The United Nations' report revealed that literacy campaigns are being directed to women as well as to men in the West African nations. Several reasons were given for this orientation: the contribution of women to the economic and social development of their countries, the need for more active participation by women in public service and public affairs, the desire for women to assume new roles in their societies, beneficial effects for families and children. Guinea and Niger stated that the development of the individual through access to "reading and writing and the improvement in social status,"[66] was sufficient reason for this direction in their literacy programs. Ivory Coast noted that "literacy campaigns will, in addition, allow some women to undertake economic activity."[67]

Some nations declared that the aims for literacy campaigns for women were different from those for men. Ivory Coast noted that "since most illiterates are women, our aim is above all to provide them with means of bringing up their children better and carrying out more efficiently their task as mother of the family and as housewife."[68]

Mali and Niger noted that there were "femine" aspects of courses aimed at women. It is notable that accompanying the concept of literacy as a help to African women to adapt to a change in role, is the attitude that literacy should be an adjunct to her primary, and traditional role as wife and mother.

Inducements used to involve women in literacy programs were mainly related to work outside the home: "better qualifications, better conditions of hiring and promotion, higher salaries."[69] Ivory Coast and Mali noted that prestige, self-development and social place, was a factor in inducing women to become involved in these programs. The contributions possible through education to the economic, political and social development of their nations were also seen as inducements, as were economic advantages to the family.[70]

The majority of the nations queried have one literacy program for both men and women, and in most cases the same facilities are used for both sexes. Ivory Coast reported, however, that the Women's Clubs are used for literacy teaching purposes.[71]

Statistics on the number of persons inscribed in the literacy programs were fairly incomplete. The statistics made available revealed, however, that a much smaller number of women was being educated as opposed to men. A number of reasons were given for this discrepancy in figures. Several nations reported that for many women, participation or continuation in the courses proved to be

incompatible with their family duties. Women had dropped from literacy programs because of pregnancy, jealousy of the husband, economic reasons, requirements of farm work, sickness, and marriage.[72]

The conclusions of the UNESCO study were that all of West African nations were aware of the extent and consequences of illiteracy among women; they were, likewise, cognizant of the benefits of female literacy to their countries in terms of more rapid social and economic development. Nevertheless, the report did show that the situation of women with regard to access to literacy programs was much worse than that of men, partly through the inability of nations to fully fund such programs, and partly through women's inability to participate in such programs due to family, household, and work obligations. The recommendation was made that resources for the expansion of the literacy program for women should be enlarged, and that along with this increase in resources, the fostering of a positive attitude about education for women was essential. The conclusion of the study was that the development of this most important resource, the women, of the developing nations is essential for their continued growth and stability.[73]

Besides the study of literacy programs and needs in under-developed nations, UNESCO also reviewed the "Access of Girls and Women to Technical and Vocationsl Education," published in December, 1968. All of the West African

countries involved in the literacy survey were likewise represented in this study. It was noted that legislation establishing technical education was passed in Ivory Coast in 1957, and in Guinea and in Senegal in 1959. Niger stated in its report that technical and vocational schools had been opened simultaneously for both boys and girls.[74] Despite the efforts by some nations, most countries have given girls access to this sort of education much later than boys, and usually only after the enactment of legislation.

The survey noted that the percentage of women enrolled in technical-vocational schools varies from country to country. Upper Volta reported that 3% of the students enrolled in these courses were women. Nigeria gave the figure of 4%, while Mali stated that 15% of her total enrollment in these courses were women. Ghana noted 10% as the percentage of women students; Ghinea, 19.5%; Cameroon, 28.5%; Ivory Coast, 33%; Senegal, 33%; Dahomey, 37.5%.[75] The high percentage figures do not represent a high number of women students. Rather they indicate the committments by the countries involved to this type of training for women as well as for men. Thus, for example, the number of students in technical training per one thousand inhabitants is three in Dahomey, eight in Ivory Coast, and three in Mali.[76]

It was reported in the survey that, in general, the number of girls at the technician level of training is

much higher than that at the skilled-worker training level. Percentages of girl students at this first level were Mali, 11%; Nigeria, 3.5%; Upper Volta, 1.5%; Cameroon, 35.5%; Ivory Coast, 44%; Dahomey, 46%; Guinea, 23%; Senegal, 37.5%. At the second level of training percentages of women students were: Upper Volta, 5%; Mali, 18%; Cameroon, 14%; Ivory Coast, 19.5%; Dahomey, 25%; Guinea, 6%, Senegal, 14%.[77] Only three countries had a larger percentage of women students at the second level of training than at the first.

The report also revealed that, on the whole, job-training opportunities were much less diversified for women than for men. Guinea alone listed girl students in the industrial training sector.[78] Guinea and Senegal both reported women students in agricultural training; in Guinea there is one girl student for every 192 students in this field of study; in Senegal, 97 girls out of 308 students.[79] Mali reported that the only girls involved in technical and vocational training in that country are enrolled in commerce and clerical occupations sections.[80] The study noted that in most of the African countries the greatest proportion of women students are involved in commercial and secretarial training courses and, to a lesser extent, medical services.[81] In some countries, as Senegal, a large number of women students are enrolled in domestic arts courses where they learn to sew and be mothers' aids.[82]

The conclusions of the UNESCO report stated that there were no legal obstacles to women's involvement in technical and skilled labor training, nor were there discriminatory provisions in the operational directives for these programs. Nonetheless, it was to be noted that women students, on the whole, were involved in what Western society has traditionally called, women's fields of study. Even training in agriculture, which had, in many parts of traditional Africa, been a female occupation, was in practice mainly restricted to males. The report further revealed that the expansion of education in general in Africa has had a favorable effect on providing greater access of women to vocational training. It was noted, however, that there still existed a great need to expand these programs for men as well as for women.

Despite the favorable aspects of women's involvement in technical and vocational training programs, it was further reported that women's opportunities for this type of training remain at a much lower level than men's. In addition, it was noted that the increase of girls in the enrollment total is found primarily at the skilled worker training level, rather than at the technician level. Finally, it was stated that women tend to concentrate in training programs for the service professions, and that in many of the countries these occupations involved training primarily in domestic sciences and "feminine" handcraft skills. Since technical and vocational education is "that

education most linked to economic life and most sensitive to the rapid development of technology,"[83] the report asked for equalization of the opportunities for both men and women in the economic and social development of their nations, and noted that this equalization of opportunity was a most essential factor in the advancement of women and their full participation in the development of their countries.[84]

In summary it must be noted that the move to general education for all and to technical and vocational education is a new direction for the African countries, and one which has followed independence. All of the African states have given some support to the concept of the involvement of women in their economic and social development. At the same time there is an ambivalence in many nations as to what is properly "women's role." Although laws governing the establishment of educational programs and the directives for their implementation have no sexist overtones, the effects of this ambivalence are reflected both in enrollment figures as well as in the areas of female enrollment.

A third report by UNESCO on the "Access of Girls and Women to Higher Education," June, 1967, gives additional information on the growing trend in Africa of education for women. Although figures were not available for all years or for all of the West African nations, it is interesting to note the steady increase of women students and

teachers. Ivory Coast reported that in 1958, of 195 students enrolled in secondary schools, 22 (11%) were women. In 1963 there were 163 women among 1,117 students, or 15%. Nigeria stated that in 1955 there were 46 women students in a total of 931 students, or 5%. In 1963 the percentage of women students had risen to 10%, or 585 women students among a secondary school population of 5,900. Guinea gave no figures prior to 1963, but reported for that year that 25% of the students enrolled in secondary schools were women (225 women among 884 students). Guinea also reported that 16% of the teachers were women in 1963 (21 of 130 teachers). Nigeria reported women teachers for the first time in 1963 as well and noted that 11% of the teaching faculties were female (82 of 742 teachers).[85]

Limited information was available as to fields of study for women students. Ghana reported, however, that in that nation 399 women students were enrolled in 1957 (18% of the total student population). Of this number of women students, 12 were enrolled in the hunanities, 372 in education, 6 in fine arts, 2 in social sciences, 5 in natural sciences, 1 in engineering, and 1 in agriculture. In 1963 the number of women students declined to 199, or 8% of a total student population of 2,443. What was interesting to note, however, was that the distribution of women in fields was greatly changed: 102 women were in humanities, 5 in education, 9 in fine arts, 8 in law, 24 in social sciences, 2 in agriculture, and 4 in other fields.[86]

Nigeria noted both an expansion in the total number of women involved in higher education and in the fields of study between the years 1957-1963. The female student population was raised from 6% to 8%, or from 89 students to 409 students. In 1957 61 women students were enrolled in humanities, 4 in education, 3 in fine arts, 16 in natural sciences, and 5 in medical sciences. In 1963, 158 women students were enrolled in humanities, 61 in education, 18 in fine arts, 10 in law, 43 in social sciences, 74 in natural sciences, 1 in engineering, 34 in medical sciences, and 10 in agriculture.[87] Both nations showed trends toward expansion of fields open to women's study.

In summary, it is apparent that women are increasingly being included in higher education in Africa both as students and teachers. Although the numbers of women students and teachers in no way equal the numbers of men, the number and ercentage of women students and teachers are increasing in most African nations. Further, the number of fields of study in which women can be involved is also increasing, and this reveals a changing attitude about the role women should and are playing in the development of Third World nations. Impetus for this involvement of women is coming not only from the educated women of these countries, but also from male governmental leaders who are convinced of the need for involvement of women in the processes of building new nations.

SUMMARY

As the African countries have gained independence and begun to move towards urbanization and more rapid modernization through technology, new roles and responsibilities for women have been developed. In many nations of Africa, women were involved in the movement for independence, which activity ranged from involvement in strikes, to the street fighting that occured in some countries prior to the granting of independence. Women were also involved in the new political parties, and, given the vote, were solicited for their support at the polls. Women thus began to hold political posts themselves and have now penetrated most of the levels of government.

In attempts by governments to solidify their nations, some means of overcoming tribal differences was seen to be necessary. Thus many nations replaced tribal and customary law with civil law, particularly in the area of marriage and family life. Thus the state began to replace the tribe as "group" influence. Further, the introduction of the nuclear family as a replacement of the extended family was clearly an attempt to make a break with old customs and initiate new. With the change in social system there was, necessarily, additional change in the role of women, for new rights were granted her under the new legal systems.

The United Nations' "Commission on the Status of Women" held a number of seminars in Africa on the rights of women. The results of those meetings as well as the

results of other UNESCO studies indicate that the educated women of Africa are interested in pesonal autonomy, in full participation in the development of their countries, in broader educational opportunities for women, and in an expansion of occupations for women. The studies also reveal that many African women who have not been directly touched by Western educational influences or by Western culture have minimal interest in these goals except in those nations (such as Guinea) where government policy has had as a major goal the emancipation of women.

New fields of education and greater opportunities for education are being opened to women at all levels: elementary, secondary, university, technical and vocational. Many nations have instituted compulsory primary education for both men and women. Additional resources of most nations are being diverted to the other areas of education as well. One of the major difficulties facing most nations, however, is their poverty, and thus, their inability to rapidly increase the opportunities for training.

That some sort of role confusion of crisis of identity should occur for some of the women involved in these changes seems apparent. Africa is experiencing a fairly rapid alteration of traditional economic and social structures; there is a slow drift of the population from rural to urban settings; self-rule and elimination of the colonial influence have in some cases happened quite rapidly. In the new society, governed by a new system of laws, women's

roles are no longer so simply or clearly defined as in the past. No longer can the women of these countries measure their success against the fact of their marriage, child bearing, and trading abilities. New demands are being made upon them for the development of their nations, and the new demands frequently present role conflicts, for the women struggle between the traditional customs under which they were raised, and the new demands of a new society. Finally, much of the education of the people of Africa still continues to be a Western education (technology) and Western values. Here again conflict may arise from the inability to synthesize African customs and attitudes with Western ideals.

Footnotes Chapter II

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[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 110.

[6]Ibid., p. 135.

[7]Ibid., pp. 135-142.

[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Vincent Monteil, L'Islam Noir, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1964, pp. 158-162.

[11]Salacuse, op. cit., p. 137.

[12]Ibid., p. 138.

[13]Ibid., p. 139.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Ibid., p. 140.

[16]Ibid., p. 141.

[17]Ibid., pp. 159-161.

[18]Andre Rétif, "Promotion de la Femme Africaine," Etudes, April, 1961, p. 16.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[20] Kenneth Little and Anne Price, "Some Trends in Modern Marriage Among West Africans," *Africa*, October, 1967, p. 407.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 412.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 413.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 407-414.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 413-414.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 414.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 415.

[29] Gladys A. Tillett, "Family Law and the Women of Africa," *Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 52, #1338, February, 15, 1965, p. 229.

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 230-232.

[31] *Extract from the report of the Accra Conference*, United Nations Economic and Social Council, E/CN.6/L551, January 16, 1969, p. 3.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.

[35] *Implementation of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women*, United Nations Economic and Social Council, January 9, 1967, pp. 30-38.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[38]Ibid., p. 37.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., pp. 37-38.

[41]Jeanne Gervais, "Ivory Coast," "Positions and Problems of the Women in French-Speaking Africa," Women Today, Vol. VI, December, 1964, pp. 50-51.

[42]Marie-Louise Adibe and Andrea Tessa, "Gabon," "Positions and Problems of the Women in French-Speaking Africa," Women Today, Vol. VI, December, 1964, p. 53.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Artem Letnev, "The Extended Family in Mali and Guinea," Women Today, Vol. VI, June, 1965, pp. 88-89.

[45]Ibid., p. 89.

[46]Margarite Dobert, "Liberation and thw Women of Guinea," Africa Report, October, 1970, p. 26.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid., pp. 26-27.

[50]Ibid., p. 27.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Ibid., p. 28.

[57] Extract from the report of the Accra Conference, op. cit., p. 1.

[58] Ibid., p. 2.

[59] Ibid., pp. 4-5.

[60] "African Women: From Old Magic to New Power," Time, August, 31, 1970, p. 33.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Equality of Access of Women to Literacy, United Nations Economic and Social Council, ED/MD/14, August 31, 1970, pp. 1-60.

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[65] Ibid., p. 9.

[66] Ibid., pp. 9-11.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., p. 11.

[69] Ibid., p. 12.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., p. 13.

[72] Ibid., pp. 20-23.

[73] Ibid., pp. 38-39.

[74] Comparative Study on Access of Girls and Women to Technical and Vocational Education, United Nations Economic and Social Council, ED/MD/3, December 20, 1968.

[75] Ibid., p. 26.

[76] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[77] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[80] *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

[81] *Ibid.*

[82] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

[84] *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

[85] *Comparative Study on Access of Girls and Women to Higher Education*, United Nations Economic and Social Council, ED/MD/1, June 5, 1967, Annex II, pp. 1-2.

[86] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[87] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Chapter III

THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE WEST AFRICAN NOVEL

The West African novelist and short story writer, is, for the most part, male, but this fact does not mean a dearth of female characters in his works. Most of the contemporary writers have lived and worked in their traditional society and know that society as well as the society in flux of the contemporary African continent. Within that traditional society, women, in particular their mothers, have played an important formative role in the writer's lives. As Camara Laye has stated in a most eloquent dedication of L'Enfant Noir to his mother, a great debt is owed to the women of traditional Africa:

> O Dâman, ô ma mère, toi qui me portas sur le dos, toi qui m'allaitas, toi qui gouvernas mes premiers pas, toi qui la première m'ouvris les yeux aux prodiges de la terre, je pense à toi...
>
> ....
>
> O toi Dâman, o ma mère, toi qui essuyais mes larmes, toi qui me réjoissais le coeur, toi qui, patiemment, supportais mes caprices, comme j'aimerais encore être près de toi, être enfant près de toi!
>
> ....
>
> Femme noire, femme africaine, ô toi, ma mère merci; merci pour tout ce que tu fis pour moi, ton fils, si loin, si près de toi![1]

Indeed, Laye, like most Africans of his age, was nursed, carried, and cared for with much attention during the early years of his life, nor did this attention cease with his coming of age. This care and dedication has made tight

bonds between sons and their mothers, and these bonds are revealed in many male writers' evocation of female characters and in the roles of women reflected in their fiction. Nevertheless, even as the traditional African woman and her daily life is the subject of the imaginative literature of the African artists, so is the traditional woman caught in the stream of change. Thus it is that the novelist's women characters reflect both the traditions and the changes occuring in West Africa, and it is often in the women characters that the conflicts of role due to these changes are personified.

In the work of the African writers several aspects of African traditional feminine roles are described. These can be divided into the roles of the young girl, the woman/wife, and the mother. The literary artists' description of and use of these traditional roles in their works as well as their descriptions of the conflicts of the traditional woman faced with a changing society will be discussed in the following pages.

THE YOUNG GIRL

The subject matter of the Francophone African novels is more frequently centered about society in flux and the resultant conflicts of role of the women, than about traditional society and the portraiture of traditional roles. Nevertheless, in several of the novels, writers do describe the traditional young girl, patiently awaiting her marriage

and her coming of age, obedient to the will of her parents (particularly to her mother), and obedient to her customs. Among the writers who describe this situation are Ousmane Socé in his novel, Karim, and Camara Laye in several of his works. Both writers come from an African Islamic cultural background (Senegal and Guinea) and it is within the context of these traditions that they write.

Ousmane Socé evokes a shy young girl, Marième, who arouses the interest of his hero, Karim, and causes him to bankrupt himself and his friends in his attempt to win her favor, and, more particularly, the favor of her mother. In presenting Marième to his readers, Socé sets a tone which is continued throughout the novel and which emphasizes the girl's youthful beauty and her inexperience. He describes the richness of her dress, the gracefulness of her neck and wrists, the smoothness of her skin, the expensive simplicity of her jewelry. While celebrating her beauty he also shows us a very young girl operating within traditional customs and almost wholly unsophisticated in her relationships. At their first, formal meeting, when Moussa, a friend of Karim's attempts to introduce Karim to her, Marieme is shown to be attractively awkward:

> La demoiselle, intimidée par l'assemblée de ces messieurs en haute toilette, grisée par les parfums qui flottaient dans l'air, ne put articuler mot. Elle répondit par un sourire.[2]

Despite the fact that on this same visit the two young people do demonstrate some affection for each other

('Lorsque les deux amoureux furent dans la rue, ils se souhaitèrent le bonsoir, après s'être embrassés derrière le battant de la porte d'entrée...")[3] both follow the patterns of the traditions of courting. Karim presents himself as a "samba-linguere", a generous and talented suitor; Marième is impressed by his generosity and his spirit, but remains very much the chaste young girl.

To comply with the demands of the courting traditions Karim must give many gifts to Marième and to her family. At one point in the novel, Marième's sister tells Karim that her mother needs some matches. Acting out his role, of "samba-linguere" Karim gives her a fifty franc note, enough matches to set fire to the town of Saint Louis.[4] Yet even as the mother makes financial demands of Karim, Marième retains the modest, docile attitude towards Karim that she had at the outset of the novel. When Karim asks her for water she very reverently and humbly presents it to him:

> La sénégalaise prit un pot de fer émailée, le remplit de l'eau que contenait un canari placé sous la table. Elle s'agenouilla, en signe de politesse, et le remit à son ami.[5]

Despite her own self-effacement, Marieme is instructed by her mother as to what to ask Karim for as gifts for the Tabaski celebration, and is adept at following her mother's advice:

> Dis-lui qu'il te faut faire réparer tes boucles d'oreille; acheter des louis d'or pour mettre sur tes tresses. It te faut payer aussi la griote qui doit refaire ta

> coiffure, et n'oublie pas le prix de deux boubous de soie, d'une paire de babouches dorées...[6]

Not only does Marième ask her suitor for these gifts, but she also asks him to pay for a party she gives during the time of that feast. Both young people are very much obedient to their societal courting customs and neither thinks of going against these customs, despite the enormous financial difficulties in which Karim finds himself. At Marième's party, both young people are the center of attention; Marième because of a dance she does to please Karim and to show her own pleasure in the occasion; Karim, partly because of his generosity to the griots who praise Marième's accomplishments. Yet even as Socé shows his heroine to be somewhat bold in her dance, he notes that this is due to the intoxication of the occasion, and immediately afterwards he shows her hiding her eyes in an end of her boubou, suddenly shy at her own temerity.[7]

The situation with Marieme comes to a climax when a rival for her affections, a cousin, comes on the scene. Marième's mother has demanded a strict neutrality from her regarding her callers which she is not always able to maintain. At one point she obeys Karim's injunction against giving the cousin a drink and is reproved by her mother. When the joust with money occurs between the two rivals, she is incapable of maintaining impartiality and sits with Karim's friends to the displeasure of her mother.

Yet when Karim loses the gift-giving-duel for lack of sufficient funds, she obeys her mother and retains the cousin as her suitor despite a very real affection for Karim. As she tells him after they have been reunited before their marriage: "Je l'ai recu (Badara, her cousin) pour ne pas désobéir à maman."[8]

Marième is the proper young girl. She is docile to both mother and suitor; she does not think of revolting against or changing the traditions of her society, rather she adapts herself to them, including the custom of receiving expensive gifts from her suitors, which gifts are promptly turned over to her mother. She knows that her major adult role will be that of wife and mother. All of her adolescence is spent in preparation for this event and she comes to her marriage chaste, as is evidenced by the bridal sheet: "L'on montrerait, à qui de droit, dans la chambre nuptiale, le linge candide, maculé par endroits, preuve sanglante de la virginité de Marième!"[9] Obedience to her parents and to her future mate, acceptance of the courting customs and the "bridal price", retaining her virginity as proper preparation for her marriage are all demonstrated in this young girl of Socé's creation. She knows no conflict of role except for a brief unease when she wanted to follow her affectionate inclination for Karim despite her mother's injunctions. Marième has no conflict of role because of her education for she has received no European education. She is not concerned with

colonialism or the political situation of Senegal. She is totally adapted to the traditional expectations of a woman: marriage and motherhood.

Camara Laye introduces several young girls into his novels, most of whom are innocent, pure, somewhat naive, and, generally, wholly traditional in their approach to male-female relationships. One of these young girls, Fanta, is the subject of several anecdotes in L'Enfant Noir. In this autobiographical novel Laye recalls how he used to tease some of the girls at school by pulling their hair. Of all these girls, Fanta, did not insult or tease him. He recalls how they talked about why he pulled her hair and how she shyly admitted that she liked him: "Même si tu me tirais les cheveux maintenant je ne t'injurierais pas."[10] Laye admits to a liking for the girl and further reveals how his sister teased him about this preference.

On another occasion when Laye has been beaten by a school bully who stole his lunch Fanta comes to give him a cake from her meal and to sit beside him in company. Laye tells Fanta that he doesn't want her to be near him when he is crying. Fanta replies that she hadn't noticed his tears and Laye notes: "Je la regardai un moment. Elle mentait. Pourquoi mentait-elle? Mais visiblement elle ne mentait que pour épargner mon amour-propre, et je lui souris."[11] What Laye describes here is a sympathetic relationship between a young girl and boy. What is more he demonstrates that the male is the dominant figure in

the relationship. Fanta, as a traditional African girl, is docile to the mood of Laye. If he says he hates the bully and cannot eat, she, too, hates the bully and cannot eat. The traditional African woman must comfort her man, offer him sustenance and support, respond to his moods and needs.

As Laye grows older and prepares to go away to school it is Fanta who suffers from his departure and his absence. His loyal friend comes to see him off, weeps at his departure, waves her farewell. Fanta, at least as described by Laye, is the symbol of pre-pubertal African womanhood: shy, docile, loyal, chaste, and patient --- awaiting the response from the male, subservient to his disposition.

A second young girl character introduced into Laye's works is Marie, who is later to become his wife. The language that Laye uses to describe the girl and her actions are somewhat idealized in their evocation.

> Elle était métisse, très claire de teint, presque blanche en vérité, et très belle, sûrement la plus belle des jeunes filles de l'école primaire supérieure; à mes yeux, elle était belle comme une fée! Elle était douce et avenante, et de la plus admirable égalité d'humeur. Et puis elle avait la chevelure exceptionnellement longue; ses nattes lui tombaient jusqu'aux reins.[12]

What can be noted here is that Laye himself demonstrates some ambivalence about what he wants in a woman. He describes Marie as beautiful because of her white physical characteristics, yet admires her for her traditional black qualities: sweetness of disposition, good manners towards the adults, willingness to join in the household work, her

predilection for the traditional Guinean dress, all of which he describes in subsequent paragraphs. Like Fanta, Marie is shy about her friendship with Laye, and the young people exchange handshakes as the fullest expression of their intimacy. The two young people talk together, dance together (African style without touching) go on walks together; Laye helps Marie with her homework. In all this, however, their relationship remains very ordered and chaste as it appropriate for the traditional black African Islamic society. Laye denies that there is no strong feeling, however, and when he leaves for school in France both parties are nearly in tears.

In Dramouss Laye continues the story of Marie. On his return from Paris they are married (having been affianced and married at the mosque according to Moslem custom during his absence). Marie is still the young girl, timid, yet not so shy that she cannot ask him for an explanation of his relationship with a French girl during his absence. She had thought that Laye was married to the girl and had suffered a great deal from this idea. Despite the fact that Marie has been educated in European schools in Africa, she remains essentially traditional in her relationship with Laye. It is her uncle who has arranged and approved their marriage and who declares that they are to live as man and wife. She accepts this direction from the uncle, continues to live as a daughter in his house, readily turns

to Laye for direction as an obedient wife at this point. Yet even as Marie becomes Laye's wife in reality, she does not totally lose her shyness for although the couple sleep in the same bed, they have not fully begun their married life. Aunt Awa and Uncle Mamadou investigate the situation and through teasing and cajoling assist the maturing of the marriage. Laye shows Marie as embarrassed when the aunts query her about the number of children she wants and her wifely duties.

Other anecdotes that Laye reveals about Marie show her weeping at the thought of leaving her mother, obedient to her mother and father-in-law, submissive to her husband. What Laye demonstrates with these incidents is that Marie is essentially the traditional young African girl, who has been prepared throughout her life for marriage, who fully accepts the direction of the adults of her household with regard to selection of mate and the details of the marriage, and who while reluctantly leaving her childhood eagerly adapts herself to a husband and the adult female status. The virtues of this model African girl are docility, timidily agreeableness of temperament, willingness to serve, gentleness. Laye, in addition, gives us a romanticized version of her beauty. Surely Marie measures up to Laye's esteem for the African woman's virtues as exemplified in his mother. He will have an affair with Françoise, the girl in France, but he will marry the traditional African woman.

A less romanticized picture of the traditional young girl is painted by Sembène Ousmane in his short story, "Lettres de France." Nafi, the young girl in the story, has agreed to a marriage with an African she has never met and who has been living in France for several years. The marriage is arranged by her father and has been celebrated in Moslem fashion. Much to her surprise, when she arrives in France, the young girl finds that the picture of her spouse was taken some twenty years before and her husband is in his seventies. Nafi, despite her indifference to this man, more truly her aversion to him, lives with him as his wife, becomes pregnant by him, pleads his cause before the port officials so that he can obtain work, bears his child, withstands the loneliness away from Africa. She writes to her parents of her distress in this situation. Her father responds and advises her to be a good wife: "Père m'encourage, me conseille, me parle de la femme soumise: ombre effacée."[13] Nafi is an obedient daughter and an obedient wife, but she cannot refrain from remarking: "Le temps change, mais il ne le voit pas."[14] Nevertheless, she does not revolt or leave her husband. Shortly after the birth of her daughter her husband dies from cancer and she is free to return home. Ousmane's Nafi remains the traditional African girl in most respects. She has no interest in politics or in a profession for herself; she will return with her child to her parent's home; yet the seeds of revolt and change are in her. Times change, and

the women with the times. Although Nafi is the docile, subservient, faithful wife in her actions, her thoughts are her own, and there is a new independence expressed in her ideas, although these ideas are still quite traditional in the conception of women's role. Nafi wants warm, friendly Africa with the bustle of friends and relatives; she wants a husband who is not old enough to be her grandfather; she wants children and a household.

The English African novels are, like the French, focused primarily upon a changing African social scene, and hence the changes in women's roles in that society. Nevertheless, some of the writers do deal with the theme of the traditional young girl awaiting her marriage and subsequent incorporation into adult life. One of the authors who uses this subject matter is Flora Nwapa (Nwakuche) of Nigeria, one of the few women novelists in West Africa. In her novel, Efuru, Miss Nwapa tells the story of a woman unable to have children and the personal tragedy that befalls her because of this defect. When Efuru, the heroine of the novel, is first presented to the reader, however, she is a young girl, unmarried, living at her father's house. Efuru, like her tribe and her parents, is an animist. She is faithful to those marriage traditions of her tribe, and, although her husband-to-be does not have the bridal price, she agrees to the marriage with the intention of their jointly raising the bridal price and settling the debt after the marriage.

> They saw each other fairly often and after a fortnight's courting she agreed to marry him. But the man had no money for the dowry. He had just a few pounds for the farm and could not part with that. When the woman saw that he was unable to pay anything, she told him not to bother about the dowry. They were going to proclaim themselves married and that was that.[15]

Despite the rather bold statement of Efuru, she does not separate herself from tribal traditions. She will pay the dowry; she does subject herself to "circumcision," which the tribe euphemistically calls "having a bath." Efuru is the young girl become wife who comes generously and faithfully to her role as wife, but who despite her loyalty to custom and traditions is somehow cursed and can never fully accomplish her womanhood.

A less elaborately defined traditional young girl is a minor character in Chinua Achebe's novel, <u>A Man of the People</u>. Edna is first presented to the reader as a beautiful young girl, who is the girl friend of Mr. Nanga, the Minister. It turns out that she is more than "friends." "Actually it's more than that. He is planning to marry her according to native law and custom."[16] Edna has been chosen by Nanga as a future wife for some years. In the long practiced tradition of early betrothal, Nanga has assumed the expenses for her upkeep at her father's home and for her education. "He sent her to a Woman's Training College."[17] Edna is promised to Nanga as future bride, and he has had her raised to be more than a "bush" bride, yet retaining the modesty and traditions of the rural society.

Achebe describes several encounters of Odili, Nanga's political rival, with Edna. He talks with her first when she, as a dutiful daughter, is preparing a meal to take to her mother who is ill in the hospital. Achebe describes her uneasiness when her father explains to Odili that Nanga, whom he thinks is Odili's friend, has not sent gifts to replace the income his wife has been unable to furnish because of her illness nor has he sent funds to pay for her medicines. Despite her embarrassment, Edna is the docile young girl who continues to prepare her mother's meal and brings a kolanut to her father and the guest. Later when Odili visits Edna at Chief Nanga's house and attempts to dissuade her from the marriage with Nanga she tells him: "That is the world of women."[18] She adds a further reminder of the realities of her daily life and her acceptance of that life: "He paid for me to go to College."[19] Edna remains obedient to her father's choice despite a growing affection for Odili. Only with the downfall of Nanga's government and his imprisonment can Edna's father be convinced to release her from the unwanted marriage, and that only after Odili satisfies the traditional customs of paying back the gifts and expenses incurred by Nanga in this engagement. Edna, despite her education has very much remained the docile African daughter, subservient to the wishes of her father, working quietly in his household, fulfilling her filial duties.

In his portrayal of the young girl Achebe goes one step further than some of the other English-speaking African writers. Edna speaks syntactically innovative English, with an Onitsha market literature flavor:

> My father has told you to stop coming here, or have you come to pick up some gossip for your friend Mrs. Nanga? A big fellow like you should be ashamed of gossiping like a woman. Errand boy, go and tell her I will marry Chief Nanga. Let her come and jump on my back if she can. As for you, why don't you go back to your prostitute-woman in Bori instead of wasting your time here? I have been respecting you for the sake of Chief Nanga, but if you make the mistake of coming here again I will tell you that my name is Edna Odo.[20]

Not only is Edna the dutiful daughter, but she is also a women of many moods. She is the girl angered by what she believes to be Odili's duplicity; she is the woman who tries to protect him from a vicious physical attack by Nanga and the police; she is the faithful visitor to his bedside who charms Odili's parents. Achebe has made a rounded character of his Edna, has put flesh to the African tradition of female docility.

Obi Egbuna describes another type of docile young girl in his work, Wind Versus Polygamy. Although Elina, the young heroine in this work, is a convert to Catholicism, she will marry the hunter that her father wanted to be her spouse to keep her mother from jail, her brother in school, and their lands from being sold. Although it is clear that the debt owed the hunter was not a "bride price" paid to her father, Elina can see no way to protect her family

except through the marriage, and she is grateful to Mr. Ojukwu, the hunter, for his assistance on their farm, at their home, and for his protection of them against her tyrannical uncle, Ofodile, who is the oldest living male in the family, and hence, the traditional father. When Elina is promised by her uncle to Councillor Ogidi, it is Chief Ozoumba who is called upon to resolve the question of her marriage as tribal chief. Elina is, like the traditional African girl, simply a pawn in the matrimonial game, yet although she is somewhat powerless herself, she is protected by her adherence to the tribal traditions, and it is through this adherence that she finally gains a husband more to her liking. Although Elina is a woman in the process of change (she has been baptized and is being educated) she still retains most of the traditional attitudes of the African girl: loyalty and obedience to family and tribe, the desire for marriage and motherhood. Egbuna's Elina is a traditional woman in new trappings.

Elechi Amadi's young maiden, Chisa, in his novel, The Great Ponds, is a chief's daughter. This is not what makes her a different sort of young girl heroine, however, rather it is the situation in which she finds herself, as captive of a rival tribe, and her subsequent fears about what that may mean for her marriage that makes her a unique young girl in literature. Chisa is the typical bush beauty.

> Chisa was not particularly beautiful but she was a buxom cheerful girl whose warmth and ready smile were well known in her village. It was difficult to stay in her presence without feeling relaxed. She had a ready wit which had the desirable quality of rarely giving offence. When she did offend she was quick to apologize, often succeeding in making the offended person feel ashamed for having lost his temper.[21]

Amadi makes of Chisa a woman that the average young man would like to marry. She is attractive, even tempered, good humored, a woman who could be of help to a husband, would be a good mother to children. Ikechi, the young male hero of the novel, wants to marry Chisa, and Amadi shows them to us in awkward playfulness, Ikechi teasing Chisa who is trying to prepare dinner for her father. Yet Chisa is a serious-minded girl despite her teasing and playing with Ikechi. She tells the young man: "He (her father) trusts me and I will never let him down. He is at times fussy over his other daughters but never over me. He calls me his little mother."[22] Chisa is a faithful daughter, respectful of her father's wishes, obedient, ingrained with the customs and traditions of her society.

It is her thorough involvement with these traditions which cause her so much anguish after her escape from her captors, and seem to cause a change in her personaltiy. "What shocked Ikechi most was that Chisa had lost her buoyant spirits. Gone the smiles and the bantering."[23]

What Chisa suffers from is the knowledge that she is no longer a virgin. She cannot go proudly to Ikechi as the pure young girl not that she had not tried to maintain that state. "Believe me I did my best. I slapped him, I bit him, I threatened to commit suicide. I even told him I was a leper. But he forsook his three wives and came after me time and again. He was a huge strong man. What could I do?"[24] Chisa tells Ikechi he must choose another girl, that she cannot marry him, but Ikechi will not abandon this young girl, the victim of tribal wars, and takes her for his bride. Customs can be altered in times of war and plague, but it is the male who takes the lead in their alteration, not the female, at least in Amadi's work.

A final example of the young girl in Anglophone West African literature is Ugoye of Onuora Nzekwu's novel, High-Life for Lizards. Ugoye has been brought to live in Udezue's home by his wife, Agom, who needs help to look after her children and with the household tasks, because she has a lucrative oil trade which requires a good deal of her time.

> When Ugoye came to live with Agom, she was a dirty, rustic lass, looking small and fragile, who hadn't a thing she could call her own save for a string of beads round her waist. But she was a good girl, honest, industrious, obedient, and respectful. Agom brought her up like her own child. She clothed and fed her well and under her expert guidance she learned quickly ...She was no longer "that little fragile thing from Mkpor brought to nurse Agom's children." She had shed every trace of her crude speech and behavior while at the same time retaining her enviable qualities.[25]

Ugoye is, in fact, a child when she arrives at Agom's home. She is far more "bush" than the village, and it is under Agom's tutelage that she becomes a bit more sophisticated. Yet with her new sophistication, the virtues of the traditional African girl are retained by Ugoye. She is docile, good tempered, works hard, is honest and upright in her behavior. It is because she has these virtues that Agom involves herself fully in the venture, including arranging the bridal price with Ugoye's parents. Agom is extremely practical about the entire matter. Her youngest child is not yet two and she intends to nurse her until she is three. During that time she will not have relations with her husband, yet such abstinence is extremely difficult for Udezue. After a midnight visit from her husband, Agom talks to him about Ugoye and promises to pay the marriage costs. The entire matter is resolved without any consultation with Ugoye. Ugoye's parents and Agom and her husband make the decision and arrange the settlement. Thus Ugoye becomes the second wife in a family where she has worked for her room and board. She moves easily into Udezue's bed and bears him a child, nor does this alter her good relationship with Agom which continues as before.

Ugoye is the traditional African girl _per se_, obedient to parents, to mistress, to husband and first wife. She has had no other thoughts about her life than to continue in the pattern she has always known. She thinks herself lucky to be given this new role in Udezue's household, partly

because this is a prosperous household and she will not know want as she did in her own home, partly because she has attained the status of wife. Ugoye has not gone away to school and not been Europeanized in her way of looking at life. She sees nothing difficult about her position as second wife in a family where she has always been accepted as a full-fledged member. This is her destiny and she will live it happily and peacefully.

The traditional young girl as described by both the French and English-speaking African writers has very similar characteristics. She is docile, even-tempered, obedient to her parents and tribal or religious traditions; she envisions her future role to be that of wife and mother, and all else is secondary to that future goal. She is, to some extent, romanticized by both groups of writers to whom she is the "jeune fille incarnée" of the négritude movement. She is beauty (black, although for some, the beauty is the mulatto) and grace, passion still unawakened. She is known for her smile, her smoothness of skin, her litheness of movement. She is depicted as unspoiled, somewhat naive, "la jeune fille éternelle."

THE WIFE

The Francophone African novelists tend to lose some of their romantic evocation of the African woman when they begin to describe the traditional African wife rather than the young girl. What is more, they describe a variety of

situations in which the African wife may find herself. In some cases hers is an ideal, happy marriage; in other cases, sometimes her fault, sometimes the fault of her husband, the marriage is untenable, a catastrophe for both parties concerned. What is important to note is that the wife is described in a far more realistic fashion than the young girl in most of the French-African novels; not every wife is a ravishing beauty with a sweet, docile temperament. It is in these female characters of the novelists that a fuller spectrum of African womanhood can be seen.

A wife who most closely approaches the idealized picture of the young girl is Odilia, Banda's wife, in Mongo Beti's Ville Cruelle. He has met her in Tanga where her brother has been involved in a strike against his Greek patron who has withheld wages for several weeks. Odilia encounters Banda while looking for her brother who is hiding from the authorities. She is not a town girl, but a country girl, just recently arrived from her village because of her brother's needs. Banda tries to help her brother escape, but he is killed accidentally as he travels to Banda's village. Odilia goes with Banda to his home and is received very warmly by his invalid mother who wants Banda to marry someone from a village other than their own, and tells him of her preference: "Cette femme-là, j'aurai attendu toute ma vie que tu la découvres. En voilà que c'est arrivé: c'est un ange du Bon Dieu, un vrai. Je peux m'en aller maintenant."[26] Odilia likes Banda, agrees that

she will marry him, even admitting to the mother that no bride price is required in her village, a fairly bold statement on her part. When Banda asks Odilia if she wants to marry him, she responds very simply: "Elle fit simplement oui de la tête. Un sourire narquois errait toujours sur ses lèvres et ses yeux noirs brillaient dans la demi-obscurité."[27] The couple are married and live together happily-ever-after: ".. il se refugiait dans l'amour d'Odilia, dans l'étrange ambiance de douceur dont le baignait la présence de sa petite soeur."[28]

Odilia is the self-effacing wife who protects her husband with her love and work. She is the dream of her mother-in-law, her husband, her own family. She is beautiful, has an even disposition, loves her husband who is the center of her life; she is the black woman that Senghor evokes in his poetry.

A contrast to Odilia is Sembène Ousmane's heroine, Noumbé, in his short story, "Ses Trois Jours." Noumbé is no longer a beautiful, young wife. "Elle n'etait pas âgee, mais les maternités très rapprochées --- elle avait cinq enfants --- et sa maladie de coeur, l'avaient prématurément vieillie."[29] The story takes place on the occasion of Noumbé's days with her husband. She has risen early, cleaned the house, bathed the children, and has spent hours cooking his favorite dishes, all in preparation for his coming. She looks forward to sleeping with him during her three nights. "Elle ne négligeait pas son devoir de mère,

mais celui d'épouse passait avant...en certains moments."[30] Throughout the entire day and throughout the night Noumbé awaits Moustaphe, perfumed and dressed in her best, but Moustaphe does not come. In the morning Noumbe is shamed before her children and her neighbors because Moustaphe has not arrived. She defends him by saying that he will arrive, but she is short with the children and feels her heart pain increase.

During the second day that she waits for her husband, she is visited by the second wife who comes to see if Moustaphe is there. Jealousy is the reason for the visit, as well as the desire to see an old rival for Moustaphe's affections humbled. When Noumbé had first been married, Moustaphe had stayed with her during the second wife's three days and this resentment has never been forgotten. After her visitor leaves, Noumbe again waits in vain. On the moring of her third day when Moustaphe has still not arrived, Noumbé finally sends the children to the fourth wife's dwelling to find her husband. While they are away she buys fresh provisions and begins to cook anew. The children tell her on their return that he is coming. She finishes cooking, dresses herself for his visit, and again waits. At dusk Moustaphe is still not in Noumbé's hut. When he comes at night, accompanied by two of his friends, Noumbé is in bed. She does not get up to light the lamp, mocks her husband before his friends, and breaks the dishes

that contain the food she has prepared for him. It is at this point that Noumbé has a heart attack; Moustaphe leaves her to the care of her women friends remarking she has brought it on herself.

What Ousmane discusses in this story is the very real problems of many of the traditional African (here Islamic) wives under the system of polygamy. Despite the fact that under the regulations of this culture, equal attention must be given to all wives, this does not always occur, and the wives suffer from the inattention, and what they perceive as rejection by the husband. Further Ousmane touches on another real problem of many polygamous marriages, that is, jealousy between wives; here because of a husband's unequal distribution of attention to the wives, in some other cases because of unequal treatment by the husband of their children. Ousmane's evocation of Noumbé's devotion to her husband and her final mad distress are most dramatic. The reader feels Noumbé's inertia as she waits hour after hour until her final release of breaking the plates. What there was of a relationship between Noumbé and her husband has ~~now~~ died. She can continue to live as his wife, but she has no more expectations for her womanhood than to be the mother of her five children and join her two predecessors, the abandoned wives.

Olympe Bhêly-Quénum describes another situation of the distressed wife in his novel, Un Piège Sans Fin, but in this novel it is the husband who is the victim of the

wife, rather than the reverse as in Ousmane's work. Ahouna begins his married life with Anatou quite happily. She is beautiful, talented, loved by his entire family.

> Anatou se plaisait fort bien chez nous et avec moi. Ma mère l'aimait beaucoup. Seitou (his sister) et elle étaient tout le temps ensemble telles deux soeurs inséparables; l'une n'achetait rien sans penser à l'autre. A quelques différences près, elles avaient les mêmes vêtements. A Kiniba comme aux Baobabs, on disait---et j'ose espérer qu'on le dit encore---que la fille de Fanikata était très heureuse.[31]

This idyllic situation of the happily married man and wife does not continue, however. Sometime after the birth of their fourth child, Anatou begins to develop unfounded suspicions about her husband's faithfulness. On one occasion when she hears him playing his musical instrument and singing while watching his herd, she climbs the mountain to accuse him of infidelity "Je ne puis m'empêcher de voir en toi un séducteur. En fait, c'est ce que tu es, et je suis persuadée que tu chantais pour une jeune fille que tu as dû rencontrer depuis que je ne viens plus ici avec toi."[32] This is no longer the gentle, amiable girl, the docile wife, the even-tempered girl. Anatou is an unreasonable, shouting, raging wife who imagines she sees a young girl in her husband's eyes, who tells him that he will kill her to rid himself of her, who calls him a monster as she leaves him.

Where once Anatou had enjoyed loving her husband, she now rejects him.

> Couchés, je m'approchai d'Anatou. Elle s'éloigna de moi d'un mouvement brusque traduisant une haine que je perçus avec amertume. Contrairement à son habitude, elle me tourna le dos; j'essayais de mettre ma main sur son épaule, elle s'éloigna davantage.[33]

The reactions of Anatou are unlike the usual obedient, respect that the wife shows toward the husband in traditional society. In Black African Islamic society wives did not refuse their husbands, nor did they necessarily expect to be the sole wife in a polygamous society. Certainly they did not berate their husbands.

Finally, in desperation, the husband seeks assistance from his in-laws. His mother and father-in-law tell him that they will help him settle the matter with Anatou and ask them to visit the following Sunday. During their visit to her parents, Anatou describes the siutation in which they are currently living. His wife wants to leave the room, but she is restrained by her parents, who, after a long discussion finally accuse her of infidelity with a former lover who has recently returned to the area. Her father claims after slapping his daughter: "Ou cette fille est devenue folle et très dangereuse, et mérite d'être enfermée dans une maison d'aliénés; ou...le retour de Pylla, réveil de ses amours passées, est le seul motif de ses diableries."[34] Anatou denies having seen Pylla, denies any infidelity, rejects her husband's attempts to placate her, and abuses him verbally.

Returned home, the couple continue to lead the same difficult life. One night, unable to sleep, the husband sits on his bench. Anatou awakens and seeing him seated begins to cry out in terror:

> Je te prie, Ahouna, je te supplie de ne pas me tuer.
>
> ....
>
> Si, si, tu veux me tuer! Regarde, regarde tes yeux! Tu n'es plus l'homme que j'ai aimé, qui m'a aimée et m'a épousée! Le crime frétille dans tes yeux. Par Allah! Par nos enfants, je te supplie de ne pas me tuer![35]

It is at this point in the novel that it seems clear that for some unknown reason Anatou has truly become demented. She is afraid of her husband, afraid for her life. She apparently has actually believed all of her fabrications of her husband's infidelity and of his desire to do her harm. Anatou is truly a distressed wife, not because of the situation in which her husband has placed her, as was Noumbé, but because of her illness and her fears. Ahouna, her parents, she, herself, do not know how to cope with her problems. Neither blows nor logic, affection nor coldness can cure her. What is the weakness of Bhêly-Quénum's character is that although he shows a striking change in her behavior, we are given no explanation for her psychosis, and although her behavior towards the rest of the family and her children remains the same, she is totally erratic in her relationship with her husband.

Anatou begins as the traditional and loving wife. At the end, because of her imaginings and her terror, she destroys her husband, their marriage, and is the cause of the death of another woman. This traditional wife has not been corrupted with European education or the desire for urban life, but she is destroyed by her own personal demons.

Another type of traditional wife is reflected in old Kelara, Meka's wife in Oyono's Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille. Kelara has lived with Meda for over thirty years. She prays with him, sleeps with him, brings him food, compliments him, but after the many years of their marriage she feels that she has some rights over him. When he leaves their home to reply to the summons of the French Commandant, she gives him advice: "Fais attention...Ne va pas montrer ta susceptibilité devant le blanc. Pour une fois, aie un peu pitié de moi."[36] Kelara does not quite bully Meka with her speech, but she does demonstrate their long intimacy and her sense of security vis-à-vis her husband's reactions to her giving him advice.

Still Kelara is the traditional wife. She was given to Meka as a young child by her father to be his wife when she came of age. She generously fulfills all of the obligations of a wife: remains in the background during her husband's honor (being given a medal), feeds and houses his friends, agrees to sew the buttons on her husband's new jacket. But Kelara is not a young girl or a spineless female.

When she sees the new "zazou jacket" she speaks her mind: "Je n'ai jamais vue de veste pareille...tu nages dedans comme un petit poisson dans la mer....l'habillement et toi, c'est comme un chien qui entendrait un phonographe."[37] While his friends will humor Meka, Kelara will speak the truth. Kelara is docile about her household and wifely duties, but in this instance she will quarrel with her husband. Finally she tells him that he was a fool to buy the thing and that she won't sew the buttons on it, but that she will go with him to the tailor and recover the money. The quarrel of the couple is not a serious one, not that Kelara will change her mind about the jacket, but shortly after their words she goes to her husband and helps him put on his new shoes bought for this occasion.

On the day of the ceremony Kelara is very proud of Meka, particularly when the white man shakes his hand, but her pride changes to bitterness when she overhears a young man in the crowd say: "Moi, je dis qu'on aurait mieux fait de l'habiller de médailles!....Cela aurait été un peu plus juste! Il a bien perdu ses terres et ses fils pour ça...."[38] Meka is honored with the medal because he has given his lands to the Church and his sons to the French war. He has no possessions and no heirs. At the ceremony Kelara becomes aware of their loss; she can never forget the deaths of her sons, and she stuffs a handkerchief in her mouth to keep from crying. When she looks at Meka she

suddenly sees a stranger, and for the first time of her life she holds him in contempt.

Kelara's enlightenment does not change her daily life. She continues to serve her husband faithfully and to be his companion. When he returns half-dead from his stay in jail she rolls on the floor in mourning for his mistreatment, but she is a new woman to him. Her faith in God and the Church are weakened; her mistrust of the whites changes to bitter hatred. She and Meka are at the end of their life and they will live out that end together, but she will never forgive the destruction of the children of her womb. A traditional wife is, above all, a traditional mother.

The English-speaking African writers, no less than the French, deal with the realities of married life in their evocation of the traditional wife. One of the most idealized of these portraits of the traditional wife is that of Flora Nwapa's Idu, yet even in this story of a woman of great virtue, there is some tragedy.

Idu is a woman well-respected by her neighbors. "Idu is a good woman. She is like her mother. Her beauty, hair, even the way she laughs."[39] She and her husband are prosperous, a sign of divine approbation; they do not quarrel with one another, a rare occurence in their society; they are generous with their wealth. Despite the idyllic situation of Idu, there are problems. Adiewere, her husband has a stomach illness which causes him great pain and keeps

him from eating. Further, for a long time they have no children. In addition, they both have the burden of difficult relatives, Idu's sister, Anamadi, an incorrigible girl, and Adiewere's brother, Ishiodu, an improvident husband. The couple have assumed financial and moral responsibility for their relatives, and despite the impossible demands of both, do not run from their sense of responsibility.

When Idu appears incapable of having a child, a second marriage is arranged, but a second wife is not a happy solution for Idu and her husband, Adiewere, are too close, and the new wife feels like an extra appendage on their relationship. When it becomes apparent that Idu is pregnant, the second wife runs away to the house of another man, and Idu and Adiewere are left in their cosy familiarity. They continue to live peaceably through a series of traumas with their relatives (the brother loses all his possessions in a fire), through Adiewere's affair with another woman, through Adiewere's continuing ill health. His death, however, comes as a shock to Idu, and despite her previous fidelity to tribal customs, the docile Idu suddenly revolts. She will not marry her husband's brother; she will not scrape her hair in mourning; she will not eat; she will not mourn.

> Mother, I will not weep. That's not what we agreed. Adiewere and I planned things together. We did not plan this. We did not plan that he would leave me today and go to the land of the dead. Who will I live with? Who will be my husband, the father of my only son?

> Who will talk to me at night?...I am going with my husband. Both of us will go there, to the land of the dead. So, Adiewere, my husband, wait for me after you have crossed the stream. I am coming to meet you there, and we shall continue our lives there.[40]

Idu resolves to die rather that submit to marrying Ishiodu, and does so.

Idu is very clearly a traditional wife, but her feeling for her husband carries her beyond those precincts. Her love of her husband and her dependency upon him surpass her maternal feelings. Pregnant with a second child, she dies, seemingly unconcerned that her one living son will lose both father and mother. Throughout her married life Idu has been the exemplary wife. She has welcomed a second wife, assisted her husband in all his endeavors, nursed and fed him, kept his house, adjusted to his interest in another woman. She has followed the customs of her tribe faithfully in every aspect of her daily life. Her aberration from the traditional wife pattern occurs only with the shock of Adiewere's death. At this point she is no longer obedient, but headstrong. The passion of her love for her husband leads to a romanticized death, the woman who can no longer live without her love.

Efuru, a second creation of Flora Nwapa, is also a woman of incomparable virtue, who despite her goodness suffers from the infidility of her husbands (they leave her) and the injustice of the gods (they refuse her children). Efuru has left her father and gone with her husband, hoping

to raisê her dowry through their joint work. One day he simply leaves her without an explanation, abandoning her for another woman. Her second husband, Eneberi, is a more faithful man. He appreciates her industry (Efuru is very successful in trade and brings wealth to her husband) and her virtues. He is not alone in his admiration of his wife. The other women of the village like her, find her to be generous with her money. Efuru's greatest tragedy in her life is that she does not have children. When finally she is able to conceive and has a daughter, the child subsequently dies. Her husband, concerned about the death and her barrenness, consults a dibia who states that Efuru has been adulterous. Efuru has not been unfaithful, however, and will not admit that she has, so her husband leaves her, and she is once again alone. Efuru, like Idu, is a wholly traditional woman. She willingly consults the dibia, follows all of the customs of her tribe is loyal and fiathful to her husband. She will not, however, lie to retain her husband (who says he will stay if she admits her adultery). Efuru, like Idu, is a victim of life. The ending of the novel is poignant. Efuru has accepted her fate, her loneliness and her failure to be a mother.

> Efuru slept soundly that night. She dreamt of the woman of the lake, her beauty, her long hair and her riches. She had lived for ages at the bottom of the lake. She was as old as the lake itself. She was happy, she was wealthy. She was beautiful. She gave women beauty and wealth but she had no child. She had never experienced the joy of motherhood. Why then did the women worship her?[41]

Agom, the wife described by Nzekwu, in <u>High Life for Lizards</u> is both traditional and successful, but along with her compliance to customs and to her husband, she is an independent personality. Like many Nigerian women she is successful trader in oil and has built a lucrative business. Not only does she receive money from her husband, but she can provide from her own funds for some of his needs, which gives her an independence and a sense of equality in their relationship. Further, her success makes her an important person in the woman's associations, and when the English levy a water tax it is Agom who leads the demonstration. As the District Officer tells her before he jails her:

> I've found out you're one of the brains behind this opposition to progress. Two days ago you addressed the women at Ojele village square and roused them into hostility against the government. Yesterday you made some exceedingly rude remarks calculated to antagonise your delegation against me. You started that vexing song with which the women trooped out of the premises. Now you've set up an action-planning committee on which you are serving.[42]

Agom is fully her own woman. It is not required that she ask her husband before she participates in these activities. As a woman she has the traditional right to take part in the activities of her group and no man will interfere with her or with the other women, although, the Obi of the village does give the women advice and in this case acts as a peacemaker between them and the District Officer.

It is to comply with the customs of her tribe that Agom arranges for a second wife for her husband. Her

second child, Chinedo, was born only two years and three months after her first. "Right from the day she became pregnant her conscience pricked her. By local standards the baby had come nine months too soon and was, for people, a genuine proof of her sexual laxity."[43] To supply the needs of her husband and to retain her own virtue Agom pays the costs of the bride, coaxes her husband into accepting a new bride, and convinces the parents of the girl chosen that this marriage is a fortuitous occasion.

At a celebration of her birthday organized by her stepdaughter, Agom tells the women at the feast of her mother's admonition to be a good wife and relates her mother's description of the ideal wife.

> She said the ideal wife's place is at home. Her duties are simply bringing forth her husband's children, feeding him well and on time and looking after his home and his babies. The ideal wife, she said, is obedient to her husband, persevering and desirous of pleasing him. She only speaks to him confidentially on matters of any importance. She neither trusts her friends with her secrets nor discusses her home with them, for friends, at best, are ill-advisers. She also said that so long as she gets her share of love, respect and care from her husband, the ideal wife does not make it her business what else he does.[44]

This Onitsha woman has exemplified these virtues. She is docile, industrious, concerned for her husband's welfare, a good mother, a prosperous trader. She has managed to control her occasional jealousy. She is faithful to the prescriptions of her religious group. Agom personifies the traditional wife; she is happy and contented in her

role, and in no way is she a self-effacing martyr. Her relationship with her husband is an easy, comradely one. She is not the reflection of his personality and his wishes, but a total woman, strong and independent, yet fully incorporated into her traditions.

Less exemplary examples of the traditional wife are Nwabunor and Ogugua in The Victims. Their husband, Obanua, is a weak man, a drunkard who cannot keep a job. Both women nag him, and Nwabunor fights him physically because he cannot provide the funds for her son's education. "She gripped him smartly by the waist. He swung round quickly and caught her by the neck. Together they crashed to the floor and struggled on."[45] Obanua had married Nwabunor when he was middle-aged. After three years they succeeded in having a son, but in the nine years following that birth there was no new child. Finally, he brought a new wife to the home without forewarning her, and it was at that time that he lost all control of her. Nwabunor moved into his room with her son; the new wife moved into the other room, and Obanua was an unwelcome guest in his own home, barely tolerated by both wives.

The jealousy and ill-will between the two women increases as they co-inhabit Obanua's dwelling. At length Obanua seldom comes home; the two women refuse to cook for him since he gives them no money; he cannot control their nagging or their vindictiveness toward one another. Angered because Ogugua'a children have been stealing from her,

Nwabunor's bitterness and spite finally bring her to crime. Following a new quarrel, her mother-in-law suggests she return to her parents, so that there can be some peace in Obanua's house. She leaves with her son, but only after having poisoned the food of the second wife and her children. Her only sone is also killed in this poisoning, for he had accepted a morsel from his half-brother. At his death Nwabunor goes mad.

Neither Nwabunor nor Ogugua are good wives to Obanua, but Obanua has failed in his obligations to his women. He does not command respect; what order exists in his household is imposed by his mother. He does not choose a wife well; he does not provide for family needs; he is unfair in demonstrating his preference for his new wife; he is thoughtless concerning his first wife's feelings by failing to consult her when bringing a newcomer into the home; he wastes the family goods by his drinking and carousing. The two women are jealous, suspicious, vindictive, but much of this is caused by Obanua's inaction. All three chracters, are creatures of the tribal traditions. They do not break from these traditions, but they do not truly observe them. The tragedy demonstrates that polygamy was certainly not a success in every African family.

The traditional wife is no stereotype in either the Francophone or Anglophone African novels. There does exist the wifely ideal: qualities that any good wife should have. These include fertility, docility, beauty, industry. The

traditional wife is expected to assist her husband in his undertakings, to take a self-effacing role in his triumphs. She must above all, be a good mother, a good member of her tribe, associations, village. As Agom tells the unmarried girls, a good wife bears children, takes care of her husband's house, cooks his food. There does not seem to be much divergence in the definition of a good, traditional wife in either of the two literatures.

What is of interest, however, is the broad spectrum of situations chosen by the writers to demonstrate the problems of the traditional wife. If she fails to have children her husband may leave her, take a second wife, accuse her of some infidelity either to himself or to the gods. If her husband dies, she must marry his oldest male relative; there is no real freedom of choice for the woman. If her husband neglects her, she can divorce him, but in most cases this means she must return to her home and her parent's reproaches, and, in many cases, must leave her children with the husband.

Both groups of writers deal with the custom of polygamy. In some instances a writer shows the advantage of this marital system. In others an author describes the very difficult living situation which may arise through the unequal treatment of the wives and the ensuing jealousy. It is to be noted that polygamy and child-bearing (or the lack of it) are two main themes in the literature dealing with the traditional wife. All other themes are

secondary to these.

In their description of wives the writers tend to be less romantic in their language than when they describe the young girl. Perhaps it is that with the wife there is reality; with the young girl, the dream takes hold. At any rate, the wives evoked by these writers are flesh-and-blood women, rounded characters. They have their weaknesses and their strengths; they are not "the black woman", but individuals.

THE MOTHER

Motherhood is regarded with veneration in the West African countries and it is not surprising with the cultural emphasis placed upon it, that the mother in literature is most frequently treated with reverence by the Francophone African writers. As was noted earlier, the pattern of long-term breast-feeding by the mother in the African countries, as well as the carefully defined early role of the mother in caring for the child tended to establish close bonds between mother and children. In a home of many wives, each mother felt the obligation to further the future of her children with the husband, and thus the mother when it came time for education, incorporation into tribal groups, marriage, was often the one to intercede with her husband on her children's behalf. This role of the mother within the family tended further to establish a unity between children and mother. The ideal mother is one who

sacrifices herself for her children in traditional society. It is not surprising that the long-suffering aspect of the African mother is frequently related in the literature.

Camara Laye relates the close association of a child with his mother in his autobiographical novel, L'Enfant Noir. The early incidents that he recalls concerning his mother are all incidents that show her concern for him. As a small child he was playing with a reed, teasing a snake into swallowing it. As his fingers were about to disappear down the snake's gullet, the child was abruptly rescued from his dangerous game. After her sudden fright his mother reacted: "Ma mère surtout criait fort et elle me donna quelques claques."[46] It is in his mother's hut that Laye lives as a small boy. She is the one who makes certain that food is saved for him, putting aside his portion for fear her husband would give it away to their guests in his generosity. "J'eusse risqué de demeurer éternellement sur ma faim si ma mère n'eût pris la précaution de réserver ma part."[47] It is the mother who protects him from further encounters with snakes. After the day of his "game" he has been instructed to tell her any time he sees one. "Si c'était un serpent comme tous les serpents...elle le tuait aussitôt à coups de baton, et elle s'acharnait, comme toutes les femmes de chez nous, jusqu'à le reduire en bouillie."[48]

It was his mother, likewise, who introduced him to the animist mysticism. When the child showed her a small

black snake she told him that that snake should not be killed nor should he interfere with its course. "Ce serpent, ajouta ma mère, est le génie de ton père."[49] Laye relates that he and his mother watched the snake wriggle through a hole into his father's workshop. "Tu vois: le serpent va faire visite à ton pere, dit encore ma mère."[50] It is from his father that Laye learns further of these mysteries, but the mother is his first tutor in the supernatural, and it is she who understands and comforts him in his trouble over this new knowledge. Laye protrays his mother as totally sensitive to his own feelings. "Pourquoi, elle aussi, paraissait-elle triste? Avait-elle senti mon désarroi? Elle ressentait fortement tout ce qui m'agitait."[51]

Besides his memories of his mother rising early to cook the meals; taking care of him, his brothers and sisters, the apprentices; scolding the children when they were too noisy, Laye has less prosaic incidents to recall concerning his mother. One of these latter concerned certain "powers," authority, that the woman had. On one occasion the help of his mother was sought to get a mare, ready to begin her labor, into the enclosure. The master of the horse had spent a great deal of effort in trying to persuade the horse to move without avail. Laye's mother went to the field and looked at the horse. Going up to it she raised her hand and said:

> S'il est vrai que, depuis que je suis née,
> jamais je n'ai connu d'homme avant mon mariage;
> s'il est vrai encore que, depuis mon mariage,
> jamais je n'ai connu d'autre homme que mon
> mari, cheval, lève-toi![52]

Laye tells us that the horse got up immediately and went to its master. What is important from this incident in Laye's very strong beliefs in the unusual qualities of his mother. It is also to be noted that in her oath, the mother swears on very sacred things, her virginity at the time of her marriage and her fidelity to her husband. No more serious oath could be taken than this. Laye further claims that his mother would often receive information in her sleep concerning persons who planned some wrongdoing. At daybreak she would shout her warnings to that person: "Si cette entreprise se poursuit, je ne tarderai plus à la révéler. Tiens-toi-le pour dit."[53]

It is his mother who accompanies him in spirit through the initiation rites into puberty, his circumcision. After three weeks in the bush he is permitted to visit her. Both are somewhat awkward at this meeting, Laye because he has truly missed his mother, his mother because she knows that from now on her son will be more separated from her. They are not allowed to touch. The gifts she has brought him are carried to him by another boy who had undergone circumcision earlier. The meeting and the care that Laye gives to its telling, however, show the very close relationship of son and mother as he grows to manhood, which unity is not altered by manhood or marriage.

One of the qualities that Laye ascribes to his African mother is dignity. "Elle se tenait si droite, elle paraissait plus grande qu'elle n'était; et elle marchait toujours très dignement: sa démarche était naturellement digne."[54] This dignity did not consist merely of her manner of dress and walk, however, but accompanied her actions in all the small sufferings of her life. Laye is given his own hut after his circumcision. His mother has prepared it for him, made him new clothing. She tells him that she will be within call if he needs her. This is their first separation of many and she manages it in a dignified fashion, although sadly. At a second separation from her son (he leaves for school in Conakry) she cannot restrain her sorrow at the separation, although she goes about the preparations for his departure in calm strength. Laye hears her crying in the night and at his leave-taking she cannot repress a quiet sob. After his success at Conakry, Laye is chosen to go to Paris for his university studies. It is at this point that his mother's sense of dignity dissolves. She does not want to lose her son again, is fearful for his well-being in a strange country. Unable to suppress her fears and angers she scolds her son, weeps, finally capitulates. The traditional mother will never lose her love for her children; she will want to keep them near her, but she will never ultimately oppose the decisions of her husband. The mother's role is to serve her family; she will continue to

do so as grandmother; she will not assume the role of family head.

Laye's portrait of a mother is a nostalgic evocation of a childhood that will never return and of an unequivocating love. Although other French African writers will not treat the subject with equally romantic detail, the loyalty of the mother and her continued concern for her children is a common secondary theme in their writing. Rokhaya, the mother in Ousmane's O Pays, Mon Beau Peuple!, has the same concerns for her children as Laye's mother. In her case, however, the suffering that her child imposes is of a different kind. Rokhaya had had much difficulty in having children. During the first years of her married life all of her babies had been born dead. In desperation, once pregnant with her son, Faye, she had gone throughout the country looking for a conjurer who could help her deliver her baby alive. The night of her delivery she had drunk several magical potions, covered herself with amulets and charms to protect herself from the evil eye, and wept in terror that the same fate might befall this new child. Faye was born healthy and she gave him the name Haré-Yala, Wait for God. The seven years following his birth she had gone every Friday to beg alms, a penance she imposed upon herself to guarantee that the child would continue to live. Every time the child became ill she carried it to the conjurer. Nothing in her life mattered except that her child live.

> On disait qu'elle était un peu folle, mais elle avait acquis une connaissance très profonde de la maternité. On la consultait souvent sur les défauts des filles; des mères venaient la voir au sujet de leur gendre, et de son mieux elle les aidait. Ses rivales qui, au début, avaient peur d'elle, se sentaient protégées.[55]

Like Laye's mother, the mother in Ousmane's novel also has special powers; she, too, is a wise woman, sought out by the villagers for her knowledge.

Rokhaya had had her son with her until he was nineteen and had gone to fight for the French. She had given him amulets to protect him at the time of his departure, had suffered herself in his wounding at the front. Rokhaya, her son was her life, yet every event of his life brought her pain. At the time of the novel opens Rokhaya has a new concern about Faye. He has married a white woman and has brought her home to live in their village.

> La vieille Rokhaya les attendait, debout au milieu de la maison.......La mère et le fils se regardaient. Les larmes ruisselaient sur le visage de la vieille: elle était déchirée de voir son petit tenir la main d'une toubabe...... Qui était cette femme? Pourquoi avait-elle suivi son fils jusqu'ici? Avait-elle ravi l'amour que lui devait son Hare? Ne savait-elle pas qu'elle, la vieille Rokhays, n'avait rien à voir avec les blancs?[56]

Rokhays is distressed by her son's actions for a number of reasons. First, his marriage with a white woman will set him apart in the village where there has been a clear separation of whites and blacks to this time. She sees his action as impetuous and unwise and fears that her son is very changed, that he is more a white man than a black

man now and will reject his society. She also fears that his bringing a white wife into the household will be the cause of great familial dissension. Already her husband has voiced his disapproval and disfavor. She also fears that she will have little claim to the grandchildren, that they may be educated abroad, and that she will lack the happiness of a grandmother in her old age. Despite her fears and disapproval, however, Rokhaya warmly receives her son, weeping and stroking his cheek as if he were a little boy. Reminded by Faye that his wife is also present, she swallows her repugnance, shakes her hand, says the few French words she knows, and draws her into the home. "Malgré sa désapprobation, elle éprouvait un véritable sentiment de femme et de mère."[57]

When her son and his wife leave the family dwelling to live in their own home, the mother suffers. Her only pride and purpose in life is in her son. His quarrel with his father about this disastrous marriage and his leaving her are very painful to her. "Les larmes se libérèrent, inondant son visage...Pourquoi me fais-tu ça, mon fils? Pourquoi?"[58] When she sees him leave she is convinced that it is due to socery on the part of her daughter-in-law and that she will never again see him. She is angry with the girl who has taken her son from her, but her anger never descends upon him or changes her feeling for him. Later, when Faye determines to be a farmer and needs capital to finance this new venture, it is Rokhaya who supplies it.

At length she becomes adjusted to the idea of her son's white wife, begins to spend more of her time at their house, and even uses her knowledge to assist the girl to become pregnant. Her happiness in her role in her son's life is shortlived, however, for he is ambushed by men paid by the whites to kill him, and dies. Rokhaya's life purpose dies in her son. Her only reason for continuing her existence lies in the hope that her daughter-in-law will have a son that she can claim and raise.

Like Laye's mother, Rokhaya is totally devoted to her son. She does not want him separated from her, will even disobey her husband in her attempts to see him. There is no sacrifice that Rokhaya will not make for her son, and she will even accommodate herself to his new customs in order not to lose him. For Rokhaya, her motherhood is her identity. Without it her life has no meaning; in her eyes and in those ofher society she has status only in relationship to the fact that she has borne a son. Her tragedy is that despite her magic she cannot keep this son safe. Her sole comfort in his death is her hope of an heir. Rokhaya is the traditional mother caught in a changing African society personified by her son. The mother retains the self-sacrificing and loyal qualities of the traditional mother, but she suffers from changes she cannot understand and like her son is a victim of the times.

The theme of the loyal mother in Francophone African literature is balanced by the theme of a mother's influence on her son. Mongo Beti, in his novel Ville Cruelle, is one author who describes the strength of this influence. Banda, who has been sleeping for some time with an African woman, tells her that he will not marry her because his mother is opposed to the idea. "Elle craignait que tu ne sois devenue stérile. Tu avais couché avec tant d'hommes... parait-il."[59] The woman is angered and tells him that his mother will soon die and that the other men of his age are not concerned about their mother's choice. Banda, is angered at first by her words, then, more reasonably explains the reasons for his devotion to his mother's wishes.

> J'aime ma mère...A la mort de mon père j'étais âgé de quelques années seulement. Ma mère entreprit donc de m'élever. Elle y a apporté une sollicitude extrême. Elle a fait tout, m'entends-tu? Tout ce qu'elle croyait devoir faire pour mon bien. Elle me gavait de nourriture, de bonne nourriture. Elle m'administrait un lavement toutes les semaines. Chaque soir, elle me plongeait dans une énorme marmite pleine d'eau tiède et me frottait longument tout le corps...J'étais mieux habillé que les gosses de mon âge qui avaient leur père. Nous dormions sur des lits de bambou des deux côtés du feu que ma mère ne cessait d'attiser la nuit tandis qu'elle me racontait des fables ou me parlait de mon père, de son enfance à elle, du pays où elle était née, de ma grand-mère, morte peu avant ma naissance....[60]

Banda continues to recount his childhood memories of his mother to the woman, how she teased him out of his night-time fears, how he cried when his mother took him to school

and how she visited him there every weekend until he began to be annoyed by her visits. It was after he had finished his schooling that he began to realize what she had done for him. When he returned to his village he found his mother ill with the sickness from which she is dying as the story opens. He learns then how his mother has resisted marrying his uncles to assure his succession to his father's lands, how she has continued to till his father's fields by herself in order to keep them for him. He vows to revenge himself on those who have made his mother's life difficult since his father's death, and further resolves to please her and fullfill her wishes for him before her death. Banda notes: "Je ne crois pas que rien au monde soit aussi abondant que l'amour d'une mère pour son enfant.'[61] He will respond to that love by marrying before her death since she wants to see him settled. He will marry no one of whom his mother disapproves.

Banda's mother is not indifferent in the matter of her son's marriage. She has suffered a deal in the village where they live and would prefer that her son marry someone from another village, particularly since he has made so many enemies in the village with his quick temper. She loves her son and wants him to have a good wife. She wishes that she might see grandchildren, but knows that despite all Banda has done to cure her, that she will die before that is possible. When Odilia arrives at her house,

the mother is convinced that God has been good. Odilia is a pure young girl, from another village. To marry her Banda will not have to give all his earnings to his father-in-law, and as a last action of her life the mother suggests to Banda that he marry the girl. Banda agrees; first, because of his devotion to his mother; second, because of his very real affection for and attraction to Odilia. The son gives his mother her wish in all filial affection. He will repay in some small measure his debts to her by marrying the one she has chosen for him and by assuring her of his compliance with her wishes before her death.

Banda's mother is the self-sacrificing mother _par excellence_. The same spirit that motivates Laye's mother and Rokhaya motivates her. She has really given her life for her son and his rights. The only payment that she requires is some assurance of his future happiness. This assurance is given her with the knowledge that he is not penniless, that he will marry a good woman, that he will have a new home in Odilia's village. Mongo Beti, like both Laye and Ousmane, is consistent in painting an idealized picture of the African mother. Absolute devotion to her children is the requisite quality of most mothers in French-African fiction.

Ouhigoué, Tioumbé's mother in Ousmane's _L'Harmattan_, is another traditional mother caught in the struggle between her emancipated daughter and her husband. She is concerned for her daughter for several reasons: she is sleeping with

a man to whom she is not married; her father disapproves of her political activities as well as of her agnosticism (he is a catechumen) and may do her physical harm to stop her activity; she is of an age to be married and shows no desire to settle down and have children as women should do. Ouhigoué cannot understand her daughter or the passions that drive her. It is because of her daughter's generosity that she is able to live, for half of Tioumbé's earnings are given to Ouhigoué for her support. It to protect her daughter that she wishes her married for then Tioumbe could move away from home and be safe from her father's wrath. Ouhigoué would lose her financial security with her daughter's marriage, but she would have peace of mind.

Returned home from her political activities, Tioumbé is warned by her mother that her father has broken the door of her hut and taken her books. Fearful of her daughter's welfare, the mother begs her to cry when her father beats her and reminds her that if she cannot do it for her own sake she should do it for the mother who suffered three days in her birth. The mother's fears are fulfilled. Ouhigoué must stand by and watch her husband order the two young catechumens to bind her daughter and see him beat her brutally. She attempts to intercede with her husband during the beating: "Pardonne-lui! Elle ne le fera plus!"[62] Finally she turns her husband's wrath to herself:

> Ouhigoué, épouvantée, recula. L'homme venait vers elle. De son avant-bras, elle se couvrit la figure. Elle était acculée contre le mur. Des pieds nus, elle cherchait en tatonnant une issue qui n'existait pas. Là, il la cingla avec sa cravache. Elle poussa un hurlement aigu.[63]

The mother is unable to help her daughter or herself. She cannot prevent her husband from nearly killing his daughter nor can she keep him from burning her daughter's books and her voting card, but she will arrange to warn her daughter's friends of her distress.

It is because of her love for her daughter and her distress at her mistreatment that this traditional woman revolts against her husband. She has known no happiness in his house except for her daughter. Mother love is stronger than wifely docility.

> Tu n'as pas de coeur! Tu es un homme, et tu te conduis bestialement avec elle. Es-tu vraiment un lâche pour te conduire comme ca?
>
> Elle marchait sur son mari tout en parlant. Elle ne se rendait plus compte. Elle était mue par une force nouvelle. Une révolte longtemps étouffée, eclatait enfin. Ses yeux, froidement, plongeaient dans ceux de l'homme. Les co-épouses, terrifiées, reculaient.
> Frappe!.....Frappe, Koéboghi![64]

Koéboghi not only hits her, but nearly strangles her. Before going to the church he warns her that he will flay her live if she frees her daughter. Ouhigoué has not so emancipated herself that she will totally ignore her husband's authority, but she does not keep Tioumbe's friends from freeing her and helps her to the waiting car.

The mother does not understand her daughter; she weeps because the daughter is leaving her house forever. Tioumbé, on her part, is not unmoved at her mother's distress, yet she cannot do those things that would make her happy. The traditional mother suffers in her children and Ouhigoué is no exception to this rule; yet she, unlike many traditional mothers, has no influence with her daughter. She cannot protect this child; she feels she will never have grandchildren; sorrow is Ouhigoué's lot.

Just as the Francophone African novelists create long-suffering traditional-mother characters, so do the Anglophone African writers, but there is a different dimension to some of their characters. Some mothers unable to cope with their sons and daughters revolting against tribal traditions simply abandon them and continue with their own lives as best they can. One of these mothers is Chiaku in John Munonye's The Only Son.

Chiaku is a widow left with one son, Nnanna. All of her life is centered about this son, and it is her intent that he be brought up fully formed in the traditions of her people. She is urged to remarry, but does not do so because Nnanna would be left with unfriendly relatives. Custom gives the children of the father's house, and if a widow does not marry the brother of the deceased, she cannot bring her child to a new marriage. Despite Chiaku's youth she is happy to give her life for her son.

Nnanna is a good son to his mother, helping her with the household tasks, her trade, and the farming. In a quarrel with her brother-in-law and his two wives over Nnanna's teasing of their children, Chiaku is set upon by all three after she tells them that their ill-will towards her son is due to their own guilt for having seized his father's property. "Since Okafo died you and your wives have been treating his son like a stranger, even like a slave. You are afraid he may grow up one day to demand from you all his father's land and the other things which you have grabbed."[65] Chiaku continues her string of accusations until Amanze, her husband's brother, unable to control himself, begins to hit her with a broom. Chiaku attempts to defend herself, but is not able. She in turn, struggles with Obidia, one of the wives, and, as all three set upon her again, Nnanna's voice rings out: "Leave her now or I shoot."[66] The boy stands in the doorway with his bow, and he does shoot Obidia in the ankle when she continues to scratch and tear at his mother.

After this fight Chiaku is convinced that her dead husband's relatives will kill both her son and herself to retain her husband's goods. There is no recourse, because, according to tribal custom, Amanze is father to her son and head of their household. Mother and son leave their hut and return to her brother who has offered

them shelter and assistance. Here the two know familial peace and some prosperity until Nnanna's friend Ibe introduces him to the mission school. Chiaku has done all she can to keep Nnanna from these strangers and the new customs, but she is unsuccessful. Despite her sermonizing and her tears, Nnanna goes to the school. At length he becomes a fanatic follower of the new religion, leading a righteous raid against the Chief's house to return one of his truant sons to the school. Chiaku, knowing her son has truly left her, that he has rejected the wife she has chosen for him as well as all their tribal customs, can no longer live totally in her son. Encouraged again to remarry, she determines to do so, knowing that she can still have children and realizing that without a new marriage her loneliness will continue to grow. She tells her son of her decision and reminds him that their home will belong to him, but Nnanna decides that he, too, will leave and determines to go to a distant town with one of the priests.

Chiaku is saddened by her son's decision and by his unwillingness to live either with her or with his uncle. Still she had determined that despite her failure with this son, she must continue her own life. She likes her new husband, Okere, and is already pregnant with his child. He is wealthy, virile, and even-tempered. Chiaku does not leave her son easily for he is still flesh of her flesh. She goes to see him at the mission; he visits her before

he leaves for Ossa. There is not much for the two to say in these meetings, however, for Chiaku will not give her blessing to his departure, and Nnanna is now imbued both with the desire to convert his mother and to leave this area. Chiaku is angered by the words of Nnanna and his friend Ibe during the last visit with her son. She tells them: "Why don't you two go away now?....Go away and leave Chiaku to settle down here in peace. Do you know if this one I have in my womb will be a boy?"[67] Chikau must once again start her life anew. Perhaps she will have better luck with this new child; she must now forget her Nnanna.

Both Chiaku and Ouhigoue are powerless before the changes that have occurred in their children. There is a difference in the reactions of these two mothers, however. Ouhigoue can only weep over her daughter's decision to live independently from her family. She is tied to her husband despite his antipathy towards her. She will not divorce him for she has no home to return to. She will continue to suffer in her husband's house until her death, stealing away occasionally to see her daughter and perplexed by this new life. Chiaku, too, suffers from the predilection for a new sort of life and new religion. She will not spend all of her days in tears, however, for she is still young. She chooses to marry a good man, well-established and kind. She is not certain that this existence will be any better than the two situations she has lived in before,

but she will not sit at home in mourning for a son. If he must go, he must go; Chiaku will build a new life.

Another kind of tragedy befalls Ihuoma, the heroine of The Concubine, through one of her children. Like Chiaku, she is left a young widow, and like Chiaku she determines to devote herself to the children. She is courted by several men, including Ekwueme but she refuses them. She is fond of Ekwueme but she realizes that she must not burden a young man with the responsibility of a ready-made family. Ekwueme is unhappy, but at length he agrees to obey his father and marry another woman. His attentions to Ihuoma do not cease, however, and finally she is forced to ask him to stop visiting her. Despite her efforts to dissuade him, he does not do so, and soon his wife becomes jealous. Concerned that she retain his affection Ahurole gives her husband a love potion that poisons him. Through Ihuoma's nursing he is saved; his wife goes home to her parents, and Ekwueme is free again to court Ihuoma. A wedding date is finally set and all seems in order, but the tribe's medicine man warns Ekwume's parents about the marriage. If their son marries Ihuoma, he will die. Actually Ekwueme dies before the marriage is celebrated. Ihuoma's ons, Nwonna, is sent to kill a lizard, for part of the sacrifice to protect the married couple. Nwonna is told to kill only one lizard, but he cannot resist a second shot. As he shoots, Ekwueme

goes to check the wedding preparations.

> The arrow flying parrallel with the wall just missed a big red lizard. It hit the upper part of Ekwueme's belly and he fell back across the doorway with a cry. Ihuoma rushed forward, saw the arrow and fell across hid body with a gasp. She was dry-lipped and her whole body trembled violently. She could not cry, but moaned inaudibly. Nwonna, her son, who had shot the arrow at close range--barely more than the length of Ekwueme's room--dropped his bows and arrows and came forward crying in dismay.[68]

Ihuoma's husband-to-be is dead, shot accidentally by her son. Here the mother's suffering from her child is not due to his revolt against tribal custom, but the result of the will of the gods. Nwonna is a pawn in the hands of the Sea God who forbids marriage to Ihuoma. Ihuoma's only future is in her children despite her own wishes and her efforts to create a full life for herself in her village.

Nwabunor, on the the wives in Okpewho's novel, The Victims, is a traditional mother whose whole interest in life revolves about her son. The fights that occur between her and her husband are caused, for the most part, because of his failure to support her son and provide for his education. "If you call Ubaka your son you must be prepared to show it. Otherwise you will have to kill me in this house."[69] Nwabunor and Obanua do not succeed in killing each other, but they come close to it. The couple fight that night and again in the morning to the terror of the children of the household, yet the fight does not

provide funds for Ubaka's schooling, and is partly responsible for Obanua's losing his job. Later that night, when the father returns to the house he finds Nwabunor ill. He asks his son to prepare bath water for him. Nwabunor orders her son not to touch the water, but to put some yams on the fire for his dinner. The son becomes a pawn in the struggle between husband and wife. Although he is loved by his mother, she uses his loyalty as a means of humiliating her husband.

Strife continues among all parties of Obanua's house. One afternoon Ubaka is sent away from school for failure to pay the fees. He returns home weeping. His mother has no money for his needs. His own efforts at earning funds have failed, for a cheating contractor has not paid him for his work. Some of his mother's goods have been stolen by the daughters of the second wife. Another terrible fight breaks out between Nwabunor and Ogugua, the second wife, because of Ubaka's shame, and results in Nwabunor and her son leaving Obanua's dwelling, but not before she has poisoned the other inhabitants. Despite her precautions, Ubaka, too, has unknowingly eaten some of the poisoned food. He dies as they near her old home, and the mother goes mad, no longer having any reason for living: "She began to rave uncontrollably, her hair dishevelled and her cloth falling loose off her waist. The rain had stopped completely, and only her ululations broke the quiet expanse of the emptiness around."[70]

Opewho's very well designed novel evokes the hopelessness of Nwabunor's situation: an alcoholic husband, a single child, no money, no future for her child. The drudgery and sordidness of her life culminate in the final despair of a traditional mother, the loss of her son through her own uncontrolled passions, and no prospect of additional sons because of her age and status. Okpewho does not give an idealized picture of this African woman. She is vindictive, spiteful, uncontrollable. Her sole virtue is a very real affection for her son. She is not beautiful, or fruitful, the image of the Black Earth Mother. "He scanned her and thought what an ugly bitch she was, skin folded like a maggot's and biceps dangling like the dewlap of a cow."[71] One of the major differences between Okpewho's evocation of this traditional mother and that of most other African writers lies in his realistic use of detail and the absence of a romanticized picture, even when he tells about motherly devotion. His novel is the exception in this genre of the literature.

T.M. Aluko describes the problems of a traditional mother with a recalcitrant daughter in his novel, One Man, One Wife. Ma Sheyi, the mother in question, loves her daughter, Toro whom she had affianced in an early betrothal to a rich farmer, Joshua. Where the child had once delighted in this suitor, as she grows older she

becomes more and more reluctant to accommodate her mother's wishes, and finally ignores and insults her fiance.

> Ma Sheyi was worried that Toro's ungratefulness was going to affect her in a more serious sort of way. For if Toro persisted in her refusal to marry him, then Joshua would demand a refund of the dowry he had paid on her.
>
> ...A vision rose before the worried mother of endless claims in respect of presents dating as far back as the day her Toro was born. She recalled them all---yams by the hundreds, oil and palm wine---scores of tins of them, bush meat, kolanuts, funeral expenses, festival expenses.[72]

If Toro refuses to marry Joshua, all of the dowry must be repaid, but Ma Sheyi does not have the funds to do so. At night she wakens her daughter and talks with her seriously. She reminds her that her own life was led in obedience to her parents, which is the custom of their people. She tells Toro that she has selected Joshua to be her husband and that Toro must obey her. Ma Sheyi swears to this by all she has done as mother for her daughter, and then adds the threat that if Toro disobeys her she will give her to the Oba as a gift bride. The two women weep their affection for each other, and it seems assured that Toro will not revolt against the tribal customs.

Despite the midnight conference, Toro relapses into her dislike for her fiance several weeks after that truce. In addition to a growing disaffection for the man, she begins to hate her mother as well. Ma Sheyi is not one to react placidly to insolence and disobedience, and continues to be firm and unrelenting with her daughter. Toro is temporarily saved from the marriage through Joshua's accidental death, but she is willed to his oldest son, Jacob, who then determines to claim the bride. Rather than submit, Toro runs away. Ma Sheyi laments her daughter, and, once convinced that the fiance has not stolen her away, looks for her throughout the territory. Finally, during a court suit brought by Jacob to regain his father's investment, Toro returns, and her new husband repays the dowry.

It is only at this point that Ma Sheyi is somewhat mollified. She is a traditional mother who expects obedience from her child. That is the way of their tribe, and the custom she, herself, has followed throughout her life. If her daughter is recalcitrant, she will talk with her, cajole her, command her, and, if necessary, correct her with a few blows. It is not that Ma Sheyi does not love her daughter, nor that she has not sacrificed herself for her. She has spent her life for this child and has sought her happiness (material prosperity) in the marriage that she had arranged for her. She does not know fully how to cope with her daughter's resistance,

however, and she is totally unprepared for the blow of her running away from home. Despite this disobedience and the unhappiness that Ma Sheyi feels over the conduct of the daughter, she will not reject her. Ma Sheyi wants to bring Toro back, discipline her, and give her to Jacob, since she feels that it is her responsibility to recall Toro to her obligations. Yet she is not certain that she is capable of this action. "The unhappy woman sighed. The girl had outgrown her both in size and in strength."[73] Ma Sheyi is the traditional mother, incapable of understanding the changes occurring in her society and losing her child in the process. When her daughter returns married, she accepts the situation, since there is no longer anything she can do about it. She knows she has little place in this new life of her child and will return to Isolo where she was born.

The suffering of Ma Sheyi comes from a headstrong, independent child who rejects her direction and her commands. Unlike Nwabunor who brings her own destruction upon herself, Ma Sheyi is really not responsible for her own failure. She is at odds with a society in flux, and one woman is not strong enough to withhold the tides of change. Ma Sheyi, the traditional mother, is a victim of her times.

SUMMARY

Both the French- and English-speaking African writers deal with the traditional African woman as young girl, wife, and mother in their literature. Yet although there are similarities in the manner of treatment by the two groups of writers, it is to be noted that there are also some differences. Both literatures tend to romanticize the character of the traditional young girl. Usually she is a beauty, or at least not ugly; she is docile, unspoiled, the representation of the ideal future wife. As a rule she is very obedient to her own customs as well as to her parents. She is chaste, kind, cheerful; her greatest dream is to be a wife and mother. Although she is not spiritless, she is easily tamed by the hero, to whom she most happily submits. The two groups of writers do not diverge from these characteristics in describing the traditional girl.

The traditional wife is less stereotyped in the two bodies of literature. French- and English-speaking African writers tend to be far more realistic in dealing with this character, and the wife, with the problems that afflict her because of her very traditions, is portrayed as a far rounder character than the young girl. Of particular interest to the writers are the problems of polygamy (jealousy among the wives and the inequity of some husbands), the problems of the childless wife in a society that honors fertility, the problems of women

married to weak men; the problems of women who are mentally or physically ill, the problems of widows. Although there is a tendency of some writers (particularly among the English-speaking writers) to dwell on the perfections of the wives and to show them as virtuous, long-suffering women, the wives generally are shown as spirited individuals, not without faults, who share some equality with their husbands in the establishment of their daily lives. They are obedient to the customs of their tribes and their religions, but this does not keep them from individuality nor from being a power in their households. The description of the wives is less romanticized than that of the young girl. Where the latter is always a beauty, the wife may be old with sagging breasts and a withered skin. Dreams die, and aging is inevitable.

The mother tends to be idealized in the works of the Francophone African writers, whereas she is a far more vulnerable character in the Anglophone African novel. Both groups of writers see the mother as devoted to her children, yet in the writings of some of the English-speaking authors, the character of the mother, unsuccessful in raising her offspring, is shown leaving her child and starting a new life on her own. There appears to be less pschological dependence in these works than in those by the French-speaking authors. Mothers are shown in a variety of situations; sacrificing themselves for their children, fighting with their husbands in an attempt to get financial support for the children, protecting their children from the father's wrath,

correcting their children and insisting on obedience, and suffering because of the absence of the children, because of the children's revolts against traditional customs, because of the needs or actions of the children. Like the character of the wife, that of the mother is not so idealized as the young girl. The mother may very often be almost ugly; she may be almost virtueless, but she is never indifferent to her children. The character of the mother, like that of the wife, is a rounded character. Although she is shown worthy of veneration, she usually is not shown as perfect and blameless. Motherhood is the highest goal of the traditional African woman. Attainment of this goal is identity, status, and satisfaction. The writers show that even this plum at times has its rotten center.

Footnotes Chapter III

[1]Camara Laye, L'Enfant Noir, Paris, Libraire Plon, 1953 pp. 7-8.

[2]Ousmane Socé, Karim, Paris, Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1948, p. 22.

[3]Ibid., p. 25.

[4]Ibid., pp. 30-31.

[5]Ibid., p. 31.

[6]Ibid., p. 36.

[7]Ibid., p. 46.

[8]Ibid., p. 145.

[9]Ibid., p. 147.

[10]Camara Laye, op. cit., p. 94.

[11]Ibid., pp. 110-111.

[12]Ibid., p. 212.

[13]Sembène Ousmane, "Lettres de France", Voltaïques, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1962, p. 104.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] Flora Nwapa (i.e. Flora Nwakucke), *Efuru*, London, Heinemann, 1966, p. 1.

[16] Chinua Achebe, *A Man of the People*, New York, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967, p. 21.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

[21] Elechi Amadi, *The Great Ponds*, London, Heinemann, 1969, p. 39.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 206.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

[25] Onuora Nzekwu, *Highlife for Lizards*, London, Hutchinson and Company, 1965, p. 175.

[26] Mongo Beti (i.e. Alexandre Biyidi), *Ville Cruelle*, Paris, Editions Africaines, 1954, p. 212.

[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 215-216.

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 219.

[29]Sembène Ousmane, "Ses Trois Jours," *Voltaïques*, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1962, p. 42.

[30]*Ibid.*, p. 45.

[31]Olympe Bhêly-Quénum, *Un Piège Sans Fin*, Paris, Stock, 1960, p. 101.

[32]*Ibid.*, p. 110.

[33]*Ibid.*, p. 118.

[34]*Ibid.*, p. 133.

[35]*Ibid.*, p. 135.

[36]Ferdinand Oyono, *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille*, Paris, René Julliard, 1956, p. 13.

[37]*Ibid.*, p. 97.

[38]*Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

[39]Flora Nwapa, *Idu*, London, Heinemann, 1970, p. 2.

[40]*Ibid.*, p. 210.

[41]Flora Nwapa, *Efuru*, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

[42]Onuora Nzekwu, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 191.

[45] Isidore Okpewho, *The Victims*, London, Longman, 1970 p. 3.

[46] Camara Laye, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

[55] Sembène Ousmane, *Ô Pays, Mon Beau Peuple!*, Paris, Amiot-Dumont, 1957, p. 26.

[56] *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[58]*Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

[59]Mongo Beti, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[60]*Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

[61]*Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

[62]Sembene Ousmane, *L'Harmattan*, *(Livre)* I: *Referendum*, Paris, Presence Africaine, 1964, p. 230.

[63]*Ibid.*, pp. 230-231.

[64]*Ibid.*, p. 239.

[65]John Munonye, *The Only Son*, London, Heinemann, 1966, p. 10.

[66]*Ibid.*, p. 12.

[67]*Ibid.*, p. 200.

[68]Elechi Amadi, *The Concubine*, London, Heinemann, 1966, p. 279.

[69]Isidore Okpewho, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[70]*Ibid.*, p. 197.

[71]*Ibid.*, p. 11.

[72]Timothy Mofolorunso Aluko, *One Man, One Wife*, London, Heinemann, 1967, pp. 104-105.

[73]*Ibid.*, p. 155.

Chapter IV

The Changing Role of Women In the West African Novel

Because the African writer is committed to writing about the social and political issues of his nation,[1] it is logical that one of those issues to be treated by him in literature is the role of women, and the changes and conflicts now occurring in that role. Just as the traditional role of women as mother was a pivot for African society, so are her new roles in building a new Arica. As was noted in Chapter II, legal changes in the status of women in Africa have been seen as a first step to creating and updating the new African society. The education of women and their broader involvement in their nations' political and economic lives are further steps in building a new society. That this change of role by the women from a dependent to a more independent status is not without its difficulties and conflicts, for her as well as for those in her milieu, is evident. As a young Nigerian woman-poet, friend of Wole Soyinka, writes:

Two Strange Worlds

Women,
What fools we are,
Invading unprotected
The world of men so alien,
And ever manifesting
Weakness in tenderness.

In that world of reason,
Is it not reason to give?
Willing converts
Ardent learners
Giving, giving.

But, fools---
Our hearts have lost
The room for reason.
Can we unlearn
That which was taught?

Can we survive?
How can we live?
The flame is out,
The cinders
Painful memories.[2]

Thus it is that the writers use not only the changing role of women, but their conflicts in adapting to that changing role as themes in contemporary West African literature. Among the themes and roles most frequently explored in this literature are those of the prostitute, the educated woman, and the woman in politics. In the following pages West African authors' use of and treatment of these themes will be discussed.

THE PROSTITUTE

In traditional black African society, prostitution was relatively unknown. The high incidence of prostitution in most contemporary literature is related to the growing urbanization of Africa and the poverty of city women, unprepared for employment or unable to get work because of a high rate of unemployment, as well as to the availability of this type of work because of the economic inability of

many city men to support a wife and family. In addition to these reasons, the writers also create women characters who enjoy this type of work, who do not want to settle down to a husband and the regular life of a village, who like the excitement of the "high-life" and the clubs, or who see the work as a means to becoming wealthy.

Maurice Koné develops an interesting variant of this latter motivation in Fanta, a young woman protrayed in his novel, Le Jeune Homme de Bouaké. Fanta is more a tease than a prostitute, for although she will sleep with some young men of Bouaké, she will not let them touch her. Moussa, the hero of the novel, first sees Fanta as she is dancing the "cha-cha-cha" with one of his friends. Fanta is desirable not only because of her beauty but also because of her sophistication, which is shown through her facility in adopting a Western dance. His friend warns him against her, telling him she is mercenary, of bad reputation, and that she will promise what she ultimately will not give, taking his money in the process. Moussa ignores the warning, convinced of his own ability with women, and charmed by her beauty. He finally meets the girl as she is selling her oranges in the market. Fanta charges Moussa ten francs for each orange, to him an exorbitant price, but he decides that the cost of the fruit is worth it and gives her a bill for a hundred francs, asking her to deliver the oranges to his home at noon.

During their second meeting Moussa abruptly tells Fanta that he is attracted by her and wants her to be his very good friend. Fanta does not seem too surprised by his words, but tells him that she is willing to establish this relationship on one condition: "Que personne no sache que nous sommes ensemble, que notre amour soit un secret."[3] At that she goes away, promising to return in the evening. Late in the evening she does return, explaining her long absence by the words: "J'avais été à Koko, voir mon oncle."[4] After her brief explanation, Fanta leaves again, telling him she must go home because her sister will be worried about her, but promising to return the following evening. Moussa is convinced she is lying, is simultaneously angered and aroused, but gets no satisfaction from her except a cool good evening.

The following night Fanta does return to Moussa's house and the two young people walk about the town and talk together for several hours. Returned to his dwelling the young girl declares that she would like to stay with him that evening. Fanta stays, but that is ~~the~~ limit of her generosity. Moussa tells his friend in the morning: "Quand j'ai voulu toucher ses fesses, elle s'est mise dans une telle colère, que j'ai préféré la laisser tranquille. Et le bouquet, c'est qu'elle m'avait demandé de lui donner une somme de cinq mille francs, sinon, elle me parlera plus jamais."[5] Moussa is disillusioned about the girl and breaks

off their budding relationship, but Fanta is not left destitute. We hear later that she has married a very rich old man. Fanta has learned to trade on her looks; she is clever enough to wait to get a sufficient return on the investment of her affections. Although she is not quite a prostitute, Fanta has learned that her womanhood is her most valuable item of trade, and she turns it to a profit.

A sympathetic creation of the prostitute is René Philombe's Mandari in his work, Lettres de Ma Cambuse. Mandari, a woman fifty years old, has just been evicted from her dwelling by her landlord as the author meets her. She is still a beautiful women, despite her age and the difficult life she has led (as the reader learns later).

> C'était une femme de près de cinquante ans et d'une beauté naturelle. Emmitoufflée dans des blouses amples et des pagnes à fleurs bleues sur fond blanc, elle avait une taille moyenne et un teint bronzé. Sa chevelure, très noire, descendait sur la nuque en trois longues tresses voluptueuses. Deux gros yeux d'amadou eclairaient vivement sa large figure, plantée d'arcades sourcillières bien fournies.[6]

Her story is that she had been a queen (of the village of Mankim), a camp follower ("Convaincue de bonne heure que la fortune me sourirait dans la prostitution, je ne tardai pas à devenir la triste Madelon des camps militaires de Ntui et de Batschenga, ou l'on parquait tous les nationaux étrangers réfractaires à l'appel du Général de Gaulle."[7]), the mistress of a Greek businessman, a dancer, and a "call girl."

It is only when she begins to cry that the author truly discerns her age, for the tears spoil her makeup and he can see her wrinkles and the ruin of time. The writer is softened by her weeping and calls her "mademoiselle" which she has asked him to do, rather than "madame", which term, to her, is indicative of her lost youth. Mandari knows that youth is important in her profession. She no longer has that nor much of the excitement she knew in the early years of her trade. She has not saved money, because she has spent much of it on her clothing or on her lovers. She is an outcast of her society, husbandless and childless, now homeless. There is no future for Mandari so she must live in her past and the splendid celebrations she once inspired. The writer's use of "mademoiselle" permits her to continue for the moment to live in the fiction of her continued youth and desirability, without which fiction she is unable to function.

Mandari is the prostitute at the end of her life. She has not gained the financial security she envisioned by this trade. She is forever an outcast of respectable society, particularly now in her decline. She has cut herself off from the traditions of her people and her society by rejecting her role as queen and electing to live as she has. She is truly the victim of her changing society.

The two women prostitutes in Ferdinand Oyono's Vie de Boy, are far more practical about their profession than

Mandari. Sophie, the mistress of the white agricultural engineer sees prostitution as a means of self-improvement and financial security. Her intention is to steal the engineer's money and go to Spanish Guinea with it. There is no affection in her relationship with her lover; despite his infatuation for her, the engineer treats her as a black woman before his friends, and Sophie resents his hiding and ignoring her before the white population. She explains to Toundi: "...nous autres négresses ne comptons par pour eux. Heureusement que c'est réciproque!"[8]

On a trip to the agricultural station with the Commandant, the engineer has his mistress accompany him. He makes her ride in the back of the truck with the Commandant's boy, despite his intense jealousy regarding the woman, and also permits her to sleep in same hut with Toundi. He is ambivalent about Sophie, wanting her totally to himself, yet unwilling publicly to acknowledge their relationship. It is this attitude that Sophie most resents, his unwillingness to treat her as an equal, and it is for this reason that she has decided to enrich herself at his expense.

One night the engineer leaves the keys to his desk in his pants. Sophie takes them, opens his desk, and takes 150,000 francs plus his clothes. Her revenge is complete; the man loses his mistress, his money, and his clothes.

Kalisia, another character in the same novel is not so successful as Sophie, but she has been just as indifferent in her relationship with her first white lover. The man had said he would marry her, but Kalisia, bored with her existence, left him one day, and went to live with a black man on the coast. She has drifted from white lover to black lover for several years, staying for awhile, then bored, gathering her possessions together and moving again. Like Sophie she is very much an individual, proud of her own identity. When interviewed by Madame for the position of maid, Kalisia walks in her own slow pace, remains aloof from Madame's inspection. She has a dignity that makes a fool of the white woman who has led a life similar to Kalisia's but without the motivation of "making a living." Kalisia has tired of that existence and now will follow a new profession, at least for a time.

Oyono uses Kalisia as comic relief in this novel. There is a wry humor when she answers Madame's question of whether she has ever been "une femme de chambre." "Ououououiii...Là-bas...vers la mer..."[9] Kalisia is well aware of what Madame means, but she will pretend to misunderstand, partly for her own amusement, and partly for that of her audience, Toundi, who bites his lips to keep from chuckling out loud. She, as Sophie, is used to contrast the honesty of their relationships and their view of themselves with Madame's. There is no hypocrisy in either Sophie or Kalisia. They know what means they have

used to make a living and will not deny it. They are fully aware of their blackness and identity with the black man in Africa and will not deny that. They are full of concern for other black people; they resent their own degraded status because of the color of their skin. They will use the white man to their own ends, however, and will come out unscathed from this manipulation. It is the Toundi's who are incapable of self-protection and self-preservation.

Sembène Ousmane makes Penda, the prostitute, one of heroines in his novel, Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu. Ousmane is realistic in his approach to Penda and her profession, at least in the reactions of many of the women to her because of it. Penda, until the strike, has been somewhat of an outcast at Thiès, partly because she has made herself one. At an early age she rejected marriage. "Jeune fille, elle semblait haïr les hommes et avait repoussé tous ceux qui étaient venus la demander en marriage. A la mort de sa mère, elle avait été adoptée par Dieynaba, la seconde femme de son père, qui lui avait donné l'une des cahutes de la concession."[10] Penda has gone from man to man, living with one for a time, until she becomes bored with the escapade, and returns to her own hut.

During the strike, her independence and leadership are used for the strikers and their families, who are starving. She employs the talents of three young town boys to steal rice from the Syrian shopkeeper whom she

diverts by asking him to show her samples of cloth. The young boys siphon the rice from a sack into their own sacks while Penda and the shopkeeper haggle. As the sack from which they are taking the grain begins to topple, the group leaves the shop with enough rice for two days of meals for the town.

Penda is not satisfied with this small act of revolution, however. She determines to organize the women and does so, becoming not only their leader, but the one chosen to speak for them. At a meeting of the strikers in Thiès where reports of the strike negotiations are being given, the women request the right to speak. They are given the opportunity to address the crowd, a totally new sort of role, for although the women's associations in the past had much power, speaking before the men was not a part of the tribal customs. The women believe that they have an answer to the French who claim that the African women, because of polygamy and the lack of a civil marriage ceremony, are concubines, and that, therefore, familial allocations cannot be given to ~~the~~ African workers. Penda explains their plan:

> Je parle au nom de toutes les femmes, mais je ne suis pas que leur porte-parole. Pour nous cette grève, c'est la possibilité d'une vie meilleure. Hier nous riions ensemble, aujourd'hui nous pleurons avec nos enfants devant nos marmites où rien ne bouillonne. Nous nous devons de garder la tête haute et ne pas céder. Et demain nous allons marcher jusqu'à N'Dakarou.

> Oui, nous irons jusqu'à N'Dakarou entendre ce que les toubabs ont à dire, et ils verront si nous sommes des concubines! Hommes, laissez vos épouses venir avec nous! Seules resteront à la maison celles qui sont enceintes ou qui allaitent et les vieilles femmes.[11]

Penda's proposal is startling, not only because this is the first time a woman has spoken in public, but also because the woman themselves have determined upon a social-political action. After much discussion it is decided that the woman should be allowed to make the march from Thiès to Dakar as demonstration of their solidarity with their husbands in the matter of the strike and as protest against the denial of their ture status as wives because of the tribal customs.

Throughout the march it is Penda who leads, cajoles, terrorises, rebuilds the enthusiasm of the tired marchers. Sometimes she does it with threats, sometimes with blows, usually, a reminder of their purpose is enough. It is Penda who restores order when one of the women has a fit and the others accuse Yacine of being a sorceress. She is the one to whom the male bodyguards report and who has them carry the ailing women. Just before arriving at Dakar Penda is the sole woman to die in the protest as the women march through a line of soldiers attempting to halt them from continuing the demonstration. Frightened by the mass of human bodies advancing, some of the soldiers fire, and Penda and one of the male bodyguards at the head of the march are struck down.

Penda is a complex character. Her preference for prostitution to marriage is simply an indication of her own independence and individuality. She is not interested in prostitution as a money-making profession. These same qualities are demonstrated in her ability to organize the women as well as to organize the forages for food. She has thrown off much of tribal custom, yet she has not totally isolated herself from her tribe, for in their time of need, they accept her abilities and her leadership. Penda is also a woman of feeling. She is kind to the blind woman, Maïmouna, and relies upon her for advice and companionship. She is not without affection for a man. Maïmouna warns Penda about her feelings for Bakayoko, telling her that he has no permanent place for anyone in his affections. He is involved in the struggle, in his ideas, and Penda will, as all other human beings, be a very secondary interest to him.

Ousmane's Penda is a very different sort of character from Oyono's Kalisia or Sophie. Her revolt is a conscious social act against the French colonists and capitalists. Sophie and Kalisia revolt in a personal fashion, for their own advantage. Penda is involved with a concept of human liberty that is expressed in group action that she initiates and organizes. Both her prostitution and her political action are part of her revolt against Senegalese society as she has known it. She achieves her purposes by her death.

A final variation of the character of "prostitute" is found in Abdoulaye Sadji's <u>Nini</u>. Nini is a mulatress who thinks of herself as being white, not black. The women in her family have rarely married and she lives with her grandmother and aunt in Dakar where she works in an office. Nini has the profession of typist but her greatest dream in life is to find a white man who will marry her. In the process of this search she sleeps with a number of men, all of whom leave her. It is after her final disillusionment that she sells some of the family property and flies to Paris, leaving her aunt to fend for herself.

Nini is not truly a prostitute (she might more truly be called a sexually liberated woman), but she prefers living with a white lover to marrying a black leader. When she finds she has been given a job as secretary at the request of a black political figure, she resigns the post, believing firmly that she has been insulted. She has rejected the attentions of this same political leader who was interested in marrying her. To her, such an involvement is dishonorable and degrading. Nini differs from all the other prostitutes discussed so far. Her intention in sleeping with her white lovers is quite different from Sophie's goal. What Nini hopes to gain is marriage; the other women have primarily looked for money, an exciting life, personal independence. Nini is a woman at war with her roots. To retain her sanity and her self-image she disassociates herself from her black heritage.

In so doing she gains nothing; marriage, family, country are lost to her.

The character of the prostitute in the English-African novels is somewhat different from that of the French-African novels. In the former there is a romanticism associated with the prostitute, some of whom resemble Dumas' Camille more than the aging and faded Mandari. The prostitutes are beautiful women, glamorous, wordly-wise. Men are totally consumed by their passion for these women who ensnare them by their exotic looks and manners. One such woman is Simi in Soyinka's, The Interpreters.

> Even children knew of Simi! Wives knelt and prayed that their men might sin a hundred times with a hundred women, but may their erring feet never lead them to Simi of the slow eyelids. For then men lost hope of salvation, their homes and children became ghosts of a past illusion, learning from Simi a new view of life, and love, immersed in a cannibal's reality. Simi broke men, and friendships.[12]

Simi is the temptress. She draws men away from their families, drives a wedge between comrades. She is mysterious; one cannot know what Simi thinks. "In company Simi would sit motionless, calm, unacknowledging, indifferent to a host of admiring men."[13] She takes men's money, matches them drink for drink (never changing her attitude nor losing her sobriety), finally chooses one man for herself. She is described as having "frozen eyelids" which reflect her own coldness and indifference.

The young Egbo leaves secondary school because of her. Seeing her one evening in a club he feels himself drawn to her and into her. The next day in school he explains how she is the "Queen Bee," in human form, and because of his "precocious madness," he is required to leave his studies. Following his departure from school, Egbo earns the funds necessary to go to Ibadan where Simi lives, and it is here that he becomes her lover. On the night of his arrival in Ibadan he finds her in the third night-club that he visits. He asks her to dance, offers her a drink which she refuses, telling him he should save his money. She refuses a second dance, protects the "boy" from the men who would have him stop bothering her, finally takes him away with her to her home where they become lovers. Simi is older than Egbo; she is experienced where he is innocent. It is his youth and his inexperience that attract her, and keeps her involved with him. He has nothing of value to give her but, his own being, what he terms his "orphan virginity." For Simi, this is what she needs. She is, in the author's words, a "notorious, international courtesan,"[14] but she needs her innocence. Egbo is a searching young idealist. His sadness matches hers and complements her unease. To her he is child and lover. To him she is sin and self-destruction, but he cannot avoid it. "Egbo watched her while she walked towards him, eyes ocean-clams with her

peculiar sadness...like a choice of a man drowning he was saying...only like a choice of drowning."[15]

Soyinka gives the reader little information about Simi except for her beauty, her indifference, her predilection for Egbo. What motivates her is not clear, although the author indicates that both she and Egbo are driven to some extent by a desire for self-destruction. Both are sad, uneasy in their world. They are drawn to perform some good actions, but usually cannot move themselves to act. Simi is the prostitute who has not been touched by her work. She, like Egbo, is called an innocent precisely because of the distance she maintains from most of living. She has known many lovers, but she has not been touched by them in her spirit. This romantic rendering of the courtesan is far different from the practical prostitutes of the African writers like Philombe, Oyono, and Ousmane. Simi is the spirit of passion itself; Mandari is Simi, old and abandoned.

Elsie, in A Man of the People, has nothing of Simi's mystery. She is an educated girl, but she likes a good time, someone who can provide her with entertainment and healthy loving. She has gone from lover to lover, having no intention of marrying. Her greatest weakness is that of calling her current bed partner by the name of her former lover. Like Nini, Elsie is not truly a prostitute. She is a nurse, a sexually-liberal woman, a girl who will enjoy a good time with any number of men. What she seeks in her

relationships is some relief from her work at the hospital and, before that, in nursing school, and someone who can afford to give her a good time. Her affection for any lover is not so great that she will not go to another who has a higher status. It is because of her willingness to sleep with Chief Nanga that Odili, her former lover, breaks with her and the chief. Elsie is an opportunist. A chief can do more for her than a young teacher.

Like Simi, Elsie, too, is untouched by her lovers. She cannot understand Odili's anger at her lack of fidelity. She is truly surprised by his reactions and by his breaking off their relationshi. Elsie has broken with her tribal traditions and customs. She is an independent woman, financially self-supporting, educated, and individualistic in her style of life. She is not moved by good causes, but by what is good for Elsie. Fun is what is good. Elsie has neither mysterious powers of seduction nor does she face a tragic end. Elsie is new Africa's party girl.

Beatrice, the prostitute in Cyprian Ekwensi's <u>People of the City</u>, has both the quality of mysterious seductiveness and that of doomed beauty. First seen by Sango in one of the clubs where he is playing she is described as "a girl who might have come from the pages of a South Sea travel book."[16] She is small, delicate, "shining", and Sango is immediately attracted to her despite his friends' warnings" "She's hot stuff, Sango. Keep clear.

The Europeans are crazy about her. I hear tales of disputes settled out of court on her behalf. If you're looking for trouble well..."[17]

The woman has been living with an Englishman for some time, and with him, has three children. They are married according to African law, but this does not keep her from going places with other men or from leaving him to live with someone else. It is at a club where she has come with her "husband", Grunnings, that Beatrice introduces herself to Sango and tells him of her plan" "...I'm going to leave Grunnings....I want to move from Rokiya Hill...The place is a grave...And I like high life and drinks and music."[18] Just after this announcement, as she walks back to Grunnings, she has an attack. Sango is simultaneously introduced to the beauty and the tragic illness of the woman at their first meeting.

Later Beatrice does go to meet Sango's landlord about a room. The man, despite his eight wives, is immediately passionately attracted to her. He offers her a room free is she will be his "girl." Beatrice makes no committment, but Lajide offers to drive her home. On their way out they meet Zamil, who has been negotiating with Lajide for the house in which he has promised Beatrice a room. Thinking over the situation she decides that it would be better to be Zamil's mistress than Lajide's if she should live in that house. Unable to fully determine her course

of action, Beatrice sees Sango and asks his advice. In their discussion she reveal more about her motivations and her life:

> She made no secret of what brought her to the city: "high life." Cars, servants, high-class foods, decent clothes, luxurious living. Since she could not earn the high life herself, she must obtain it by attachment to someone who could. But she was not so well, and having found Grunnings, who did not quite satisfy her, she had to stick to him.[19]

What Beatrice wants from her relationships are those things that Mandari and Sophie have sought, excitement and money. She does leave Grunnings to live in Zamil's house and causes bitter arguments between Lajide and Zamil, both of whom want her as mistress. Tired of the triangle, she leaves Zamil and takes work in a department store to support herself. The independence she had sought through prostitution was not hers; she attempts to gain this independence with another sort of work. Even here Beatrice cannot avoid the men's attentions. At length she goes to live with Kofi, a timber dealer and overland transport operator. This happiness is short-lived. Beatrice is still seriously ill. When she goes to Lajide and accuses him of fraud in timber sales, she is set upon by his wives. She dies from their beating, unable to protect herself, and too weak to run from them.

Beatrice, like Simi, is the romantic evocation of the prostitute. Both women are very beautiful, cause immediate passionate desires in the men they meet, are somewhat detached

from the men they have as lovers. The two women also both seek a romantic attachment to a young man. Where Simi was successful with Egbo, Beatrice does not succeed in developing any liaison with the obtuse Sango. Both women are mysterious as well as seductive, yet part of Beatrice's mystery is her imminent death. Simi and Beatrice both receive loyal and faithful love, in Beatrice's case, from both Kofi and Grunnings. This sort of portrayal of the prostitute is far removed from the portrayal of the struggles of Penda and Màndari. Beatrice and Simi are sophisticated and exotic as opposed to the more common attractiveness of Sophie and Kalisia. The difference between the French and the English-African writers lies in the French-African realism as opposed to the English-African romanticism.

An English-African characterization of the prostitute that lies midway between realism and romanticism is Ekwensi's Jagua Nana. Jagua is fully a prostitute. She likes the life, the excitement, her effect on men. She is attached to a young man, Freddie, and plans to send him to school in England. What she hopes to gain with this relationship is someone with whom she can settle down when she becomes too old for her profession. At the moment, however, she cannot be faithful to one man, no matter how strong her need of him. As she is about to go off with three government men who have come looking for her company,

Freddie tells her: "One of my friends tell me you done begin stroll in de night. You doin' what dem call solicitin'. You strollin' so de white men kin pick you up in de car and take you home."[20] Despite the truth of this accusation, Jagua denies it, just as she denies to Freddie that she sleeps with other men, but Jagua needs men. She cannot be satisfied by Freddie alone. She needs the money successful men give her, the excitement she causes, the clothes, the drinking and dancing, the music of the high-life to feel fully alive. Even her very real affection for Freddie cannot keep her from indulging her needs, and it is these needs that end in Freddie's breaking off his attachment to Jagua.

At the time Ekwensi begins his novel, Jagua is forty-five years old. She is a well-preserved forty-five, appearing to Freddie to be only thirty in the light of the Tropicana.

> She knew that, seen under the dim lights of her favorite night spot, the Tropicana---and from a distance---her face looked beautiful. In any light she was proud of her body, which could model for any painter or sculptor. When she walked down a street, male eyes followed the wiggle of her hips which came with studied unconsciousness...When she painted her face and lifted her breasts and exposed what must be concealed and concealed what must be exposed, she could out-class any girl who did not know what to do with her God-given female talent.[21]

Despite her way of life, Jagua has managed to maintain her beauty, but it is not the ethereal beauty of a Simi or

Beatrice. Jagua is a substantial woman with substantial curves, flashy in her choice of costumes, earthy. Despite her self-assurance, she is conscious of growing older, and worries about losing Freddie. She is jealous of the young Nancy to whom Freddie is attracted, because, despite her own infidelity, she wants her lover to be faithful to her. She is aware that despite her experience and her wealth, she cannot compete with the youth of the girl.

Jagua does lose Freddie after a quarrel about her streetwalking. She attempts a reconciliation with him before he goes to England for his studies, but she is not totally successful. Although Freddie writes her when he first gets to England, his letters grow more infrequent and finally cease. Jagua determines to go to Bagana and meet his family, thus establishing her claim to Freddie. It is there that her "Jagua" sophistication is of great benefit. Through cajoling and satisfying Chief Ofubara's desire to sleep with her, Jagua is able to bring about a reconciliation between Ofubara and Freddie Namme's father.

For a short time after this Jagua attempts to become a "Merchant Princess" in her home town, but she misses the glamour and excitement of Lagos, and returns. There she becomes the mistress of Uncle Taiwo, a Lagos politician, and is fence and lover for a young head of a ring of thieves, Denis Odoma. She is pressed into political work by Uncle Taiwo, and with his failure to win the election is forced

to flee her lodgings. Because of her father's death she returns home to Ogabu. There she sets up shop with money that Uncle Taiwo has left with her and begins a new attempt at becoming a "Merchant Princess.'

Jagua is drawn in both a romanticized and realistic manner by the author. She loses everything that has been important to her: Lagos, the Club Tropicana, Freddie Namme (who is killed by Uncle Taiwo's thugs), Dennis Odoma (who is hanged for killing a police officer), Uncle Taiwo (who is murdered for his failure in the election), her baby (fathered by a stranger and born dead). Despite the fact that she is growing older and despite her losses, Jagua is indomitable, however. She determines to become successful in trade. Unlike Mandari she is not destitute nor does she live only in the past. Unlike Sophie and Kalisia she has not been without real feeling for some of her lovers, Jagua is an original, independent woman, a heroine of striking powers. She is a "Jagwa."

The role of the prostitute in the literature of French- and English-speaking West Africa is given much attention by authors who write about women developing an independent manner of life for themselves in a changing society. What is to be noted is that, in most cases, prostitution is associated with the cities and the glamorous "high-life" that is found only in urban areas. The prostitutes of both bodies of literature have seen prostitution as a means

to achieve their personal goals of a life different from rural tribal life. It is likewise to be noted that the profession or role of prostitution is clearly associated not only with the desire for independence from family and tribal customs, but also with the desire to become independently wealthy. Further, in some cases, prostitution is closely linked to other crime: theft, selling of stolen goods, mismanagement of funds, political conniving. In the English-African novels there is a tendency by many writers to totally glamorize the prostitute, to make her an incomparable beauty, a woman of mystery and sophistication. The French-African novels, on the other hand, tend to a more realistic picture of the prostitute and her physical attractiveness. In some of the novels, the prostitutes die unhappily, victims of their trade and their changing society. More often, however, the prostitute is a successful woman, one who has learned to cope with her situation and her milieu.

Gideon-Cyrus Mutiso wrote in his dissertation on *Socio-Political Ideas in African Literature in English, 1945-67*, that the first and necessary step in the emancipation of the African woman was her sexual liberation.[22] Although certain political leaders who have engaged women in political organization would question this thesis, the woman characters discussed in this section most certainly have been shown to be motivated by a desire for autonomy.

In most cases, lacking the education and funds for other types of work, they have endeavored to use their bodies to gain this independence. In the instance of the women who could not clearly be classified as prostitutes, it was noted that they also used their sexual attractiveness to trade for the goals they successfully or unsuccessfully sought: marriage, financial security, an exciting social life. In Africa, too, social mores rapidly change. The liberated woman takes shape in the Jagua, the Mandari, the Sophie, the Nini.

THE WOMAN IN POLITICS

Despite the fact that women in Africa have exercised political power over the centuries, French- and English-African writers have described new roles for women in politics in a number of novels dealing with the overthrow of colonial power, the movement towards independence, and new political problems in Africa. What is new about the involvement of their women characters is the change in status of the "average" woman who attains public equality with the male" (male/female political teams; women political leaders who alter old customs forbidding women to speak in public to mixed audiences; revolutionary women). This emphasis on the new African woman in politics is found particularly in the works of some of the French-African writers, who create a number of strong women characters

involved in the political development of their countries in several ways.

Charles Nokan, a writer from the Ivory Coast, creates several "political" women in his novel, Violent Etait Le Vent, which takes place prior to independence in the Congo. His heroine, Séni, is not herself conscious of a political role. During a season of very bad harvests, the black farmers are unable to pay the taxes required by their white governors. Men leave the farms to work in the gold mines in order to pay their debts, which leaves no men for the enforced labor details for the white commander. Angered by this, the commander sends troops to the villages. The people flee into the forest, but in one village a young, pregnant woman, Séni, is unable to flee. The soldiers beat her, and she dies from her wounds. It is at this point that Séni becomes a political heroine, a martyr in the cause of independence. The people are aroused by the wanton murder of this young woman; the black leaders who have cooperated with the whites fully comprehend their own powerlessness and lack of status with the whites. At Séni's burial a revolutionary song is sung:

> Séni, tu seras dans la terre et en nous. Personne ne disparaît complètement. Tant que nous penserons à nos jeux d'enfants, à nos rêves de jeune fille, tu vivras en nous. Chaque vendredi, tu auras devant ton tabouret de la nourriture et de la boisson. Nous esperons que ton âme mangera et boira bien. Séni, nos frères te vengeront:

Les Blancs ne seront pas toujours nos maîtres.
Pour les esclaves, l'heure de la delivrance viendra.[23]

Séni has a number of historical prototypes in the African movement towards independence. The woman martyr for freedom is particularly effective on a continent which traditionally has had great reverence for the woman as mother. So few details are given concerning Séni's life prior to her death that it is difficult to say that she was anything but a traditional wife as portrayed by the author. Nevertheless, she is a woman involved in a changing society. Her husband was absent from their home because of his need to work in the mines to pay his taxes. She is pictured living at a time when the revolutionary spirit is beginning to grow in Africa. This woman, caught in her changing society becomes a symbol of white oppression and the black desire for freedom; in spite of herself, in death, Séni becomes a political woman. It is through Séni's death that the black politician, Kôtiboh, turly becomes dedicated to black political freedom and proposes African independence at the French National Assembly in Paris.

Nokan points out in his novel that Séni was not an isolated case of feminine involvement in the black revolution in Africa. Following Kôtiboh's election to the French National Assembly, the white governors became concerned about the movement to independence. The new

tactics of the colonial powers are to imprison his followers. A peaceful demonstration of black men and women demanding the release of the political prisoners is ended by a volley of shots by the French soldiers. "Deux femmes touchées par les balles tombèrent, écrasant leurs bébés.."[24] Both men and women are involved in the demonstration and in the political party for independence. Together they work for the independence of their country and together they die. No longer is there separation into women's and men's associations. The struggle for political independence requires equal participation by both sexes in political organization.

Nokan's novel does not end with independence, however. The story that he tells through brief, affective tableaux, is dedicated to true revolution. Despite his committments to black independence, Kôtiboh prefers the French, white society to his own. Rather than press for a black, socialist state after independence he prefers to collaborate with the former, white colonial powers. In this new struggle between Kotiboh and the young, black revolutionaries, women have other roles to play; one of these is that of spy for the black government:

> Depuis quelques jours, une jeune fille tourne autour de moi. Elle me montre un visage tendre. Elle me suit encore ce matin. Elle me dit de sa voix douce: bonjour, ami ....Elle appartient à l'armée des belles filles rétribuées par le pouvoir pour nous espionner..Mais n'est-il pas normal qu'en ce regime les femmes regardent le côté argenté de la vie?[25]

The girl is employed to watch the actions of Kossia the young revolutionary hero. She will sleep with him, if he likes, for in that intimacy it is possible that she may learn of the plans of the new black, militant group. The young hero is cynical about this occupation for black women; he sees them faithful to those who have money, that is, the men in power.

There are other young women, however, involved equally with the men in the revolutionary movement. At a secret meeting black soldiers surround the political group; history is repeated; a number of women die as the revolutionaries are taken prisoner. "A mes pieds une femme a le visage et les seins baignés de sang."[26]

A third type of political role for the women is that of intermediary between leaders of the revolutionary group and the black leaders in power. Amakos is one of these women. She has been sent by her husband to attempt to reconcile the young, imprisoned revolutionary leader, Kossia, with the government in power. Amakos flatters the young man, offers him the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs, tells him that he can truly help his people by collaboration with the government. She is unsuccessful in convincing him, however, but she does fall in love with him, and weeps at Kossia's death.

What is to be noted from Nokan's use of women characters in his novel is that women are increasingly used

in a political manner in his story. In some cases theirs is an independent, individual response to a personal desire for political freedom. In other instances the women are employed to perform political tasks that cannot be done by men. A growing equalization in women's political power is noted by Nokan in this work.

Sembène Ousmane describes the politically conscious woman in several of his works. In his novel, L'Harmattan, which deals with the 1958 referendum of de Gaulle in Africa, Tioumbé stands out as the new revolutionary woman. She is not simply an auxiliary of the male revolutionary, but Tioumbé is fully convinced of her own political position. She tells the priest that her father is a Christian because he is paid to be that. She accuses the Church of collaborating with the French government to exploit the resources of Senegal. A member of the Communist party in Senegal, Tioumbé is an important, contributing leader to the organization, yet she never loses her identity as a woman.

> Tioumbé les étonna. Malgré ses résponsabilités, elle était première secrétaire régionale, elle restait femme. Aussi tous l'auréolaient d'un respect devot. Dans les discussion les plus serrées, intervenant souvent après Sori, elle gardait son sens des responsabilités sans tenir compte d'un raisonnement ou d'un élément d'ordre personnel ou sentimental. Cette froide lucidité ---séparant le personnel du collectif---finit à la longue par imposer son autorité à Sori, qui finit par ne plus intervenir dans aucune discussion du parti.[27]

What Tioumbé has done effectively is to separate her personal life from her political life. She is a dedicated party member and works tirelessly for that party totally convinced of the Marxist ideal. Nevertheless, she has a very close relationship with her lover, Sori, which is somehow separated from her work. Despite the fact that her liaison with Sori is deep and also completely involved, Tioumbé does not let her personal life interfere with her work life. If Sori goes to Guinea to work against the referendum there, she will stay in Senegal to continue her work in that country. She will regret their separation, but that does not keep her from continuing with those things she considers as duties. Tioumbé is not the traditional woman of Africa in any way. She is fully a new woman, conscious of her own identity and of her own political goals.

At the same time Ousmane shows a very real sensibility in his character. Tioumbé is delighted when Sori waits to eat his evening meal until her arrival at the hut they share. She had told him: "Je suis un peu ta femme, Sori. Je n'ai pas honte d'être ainsi ta femme."[28] She would like him to stay with her in Senegal, but she will not tell him that. Neither will she quit her own responsibilities in Senegal to follow him to Guinea. Within her own mind, however, she wishes he would stay with her: "Et, tous les soirs, elle attendait cette phrase."[29]

There are additional aspects of Tioumbé's character that show her to be a very different sort of young African woman. Not only is she involved in a political party and living with a man to whom she is not married, but she has also almost totally separated herself from her family. She gives some funds that she earns as a teacher to her mother for her support, since the mother is out of favor with her husband, but beyond that gesture and a real affection for her mother, Tioumbé has severed all but the most general ties with the family. On occasion she will stay in a hut in the family compound; however, she rejects her father's authority over her and his whole mode of life. She believes he is a hypocrite and a mercenary who will sell his country and his soul for money. When her father brutally beats her, attempting to make her submit to his authority and his will, she refrains even from crying, despite the fact that she is made so ill by the blows that she cannot walk without help. She will not admit a religious belief she does not hold, nor will she cease her work against de Gaulle's referendum. To force her to submission her father burns her books and takes her voting card. It is after this beating that Tioumbé breaks with her family. She regrets the pain that she causes her mother, but, as in her relationship with Sori, she represses all those feelings that interfere with her fulfilling her responsibilities to the cause. Nearly weeping, she

leaves her mother. "Tioumbé ne pouvait plus accepter l'uniformite et cette regle du temps ecoule. Elle rejetait, pour enfanter un autre monde, un temps nouveau."[30]

The climax of Tioumbé's revolt against her father and traditional custom comes when she returns home to get her voting card. She goes to her father's hut and asks him for it. He gets it, throws it on the ground, and stands there prepared to whip her if she reaches for it. As she bends to pick up the card, her father strikes. Tioumbé is no more the docile girl.

> De toute sa force, elle donna un coup de tête à son père. Il alla heurter le mur. Furieux, il voulut se jeter sur elle. Elle lui fit, involontairement, un croc-en-jambe, et l'esquiva. Cette fois-ci, de tout son long, le père s'affala. Agile, elle bondit, comme um félin. Elle ramassa la carte et ressera solidement le noeud de son pagne... Son coeur battait. Elle était epouvantée par sa conduite.[31]

She does not stand by passively letting her father beat her, yet even she is shocked by her own conduct. A child does not hit a parent, particularly a father. By this action Tioumbe has broken totally with the traditional culture. What is more, from this day her father disowns her. She loses all family identity by her deed for even her mother cannot understand her action. Tioumbé herself is horrified by what she has done, but the deed is accomplished and cannot be undone. In all ways, now Tioumbé is an emancipated woman.

The full committment of Tioumbé to the cause of free Senegal comes after her political defeat when Guinea is the sole nation to vote "no" on the referendum. Sori returns to Guinea without her, to rebuild his new nation. She refuses to go with him because she is conscious of her responsibility to her own nation. At the same time her mother repudiates her for her affair with Sori. At the close of the novel Tioumbé has disassociated herself from all those ties and goals of the traditional girl: family, the hope of being wife and mother. Alone, separated from relatives and lover, she determines to devote herself to building the Popular Front in Senegal. That will be her mother and her husband and her child.

Tioumbé is an educated woman whom that education has changed. She reads Marx and Lenin; she reads books dealing with the role of women in the building of the Party. Hers is an intellectual assent to a new role for women. Her beliefs bring her to actions which irrevocably seal off a possible relapse to traditional customs. Despite her own feelings to the contrary she breaks with her family and her lover. Tioumbé is not a woman without heart, but her mind fully controls her actions and her decisions.

Ousmane's novel, Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, is full of politically-socially-conscious women. What brings the women to this state of consciousness is the railroad strike

of 1947. The men are striking for living wages, for unemployment compensation, and for family allocations. The black men working on the railroad are on a pay scale totally different (much lower) from the white workers. Black workers have no insurance benefits of any kind. In an attempt to equalize the wage differences, the black workers strike.

The strike is successful because of the role the women play in it. From the onset they support their husbands. When the men first strike, it is the women as well as the men who arm themselves against and fight the soldiers who attempt to force them to submit. The market women, armed with bottles and sticks, join the strikers against the soldiers, who attack with smoke bombs and bayonettes. After this first skirmish in which both men and women are hurt and a baby killed, the people are united. The struggle (a political-economic struggle) becomes a struggle of men and women equally united.

The women share food with each other. Since the men are no longer earning money, there is soon nothing with which to buy food. The women sell their jewelry and their goods for food for their husbands and children. They begin to assume the responsibility for procuring, in some manner, something to keep them all living. "Et les hommes comprirent que ce temps, s'il enfantait d'autres hommes, enfantait aussi d'autres femmes."[32]

For some of the men, this new dependency on their women is somewhat threatening. Beaugosse feels he is prostituted if he takes food from Arona, who likes him. Despite his feelings, however, he submits and drinks the coffee she brings and eats the food she supplies.

Even the women who throughout their lives have been traditional African women, obedient to law and to their men, change in this time of the strike. One of the most remarkable of these is Ramatoulaye. There are twenty people in her house who need food. The grocer tells her one morning that there is no rice for sale. As she waits in his shop, a young boy arrives to buy rice for Mabigué, her brother, who like the shopkeeper is opposed to the strike and has joined with the French in opposition to the demands of the workers. There is rice for Mabigué, but for no one else, at least for no one who must buy on credit. Angered, Ramatoulaye looks for her brother. She finds him, asks him to guarantee the payment of rice for her family. Mabigué refuses, saying at first that he can't, and then, being caught in his ~~lie,~~ suggests that the women force the men to stop the strike and return to work. Totally enraged, Ramatoulaye reminds her brother he is fornicator and thief. She tells him: "Je veux que tu ne viennes pas à mon enterrement et que si l'incendie dévore ma maison, tu attises les flammes plutôt que d'y jeter des seaux d'eau!"[33] Finally she warns

that if his "sacred" ram, Vendredi, enters her house, she will kill it.

When she returns home and finds that the ram has eaten the little food there was in her house, Ramatoulaye is thoroughly angered. She takes a knife, and despite the size of the animal, goes to meet it as it attacks her. Ramatoulaye loses her clothing in the struggle, but with the assistance of one of the young boys in the family she succeeds in killing the old ram. The women in the quarter butcher the animal and it is divided among the hungry families. Ramatoulaye feels justified in her conduct. She would not have killed the ram if it had not destroyed the food for the children. The strike has changed the role of women. Now they are the heads of their households.

> Quand on sait que la vie et le courage des autres dépendent de votre vie et de votre courage, on n'a plus le droit d'avoir peur... Ah! nous vivons des instants cruels, nous sommes obligés de nous forger une dureté, de nous raidir.[34]

Ramatoulaye has not feared for her own safety. The times require new women; she has become one in spite of herself.

On the complaint of Mabigué the police attempt to arrest Ramatoulaye for killing the ram. They demand that she turn the animal over to them. This is an impossibility; it has been butchered and eaten. She cannot understand why they arrest her for killing the

animal that had taken their food. Justice has been done; their food was restored by the ram itself. At length the women in the quarter surround the police officers, armed with sticks and bottles. As auxiliary troops arrive on the scene, a battle breaks out between the women and police, who keep the latter from taking Ramatoulaye to jail. When Ramatoulaye learns that the police will return later for her, she decides to go to them herself to avoid any further bloodshed. Her friend, Mame Sofi, forbids the action. She, like Ramatoulaye, has adapted herself to a new way of life. If to get food for the hungry she must steal it, steal it she does. She organizes another defense against the soldiers, but it ends in burning many homes in the quarter.

At length the police succeed in arresting Ramatoulaye who wishes to keep greater damage from being done. The women of her quarter follow them to the police station and there surround the building. The police turn hoses upon them, hoping to disperse the crowd. In this clash one woman is killed. What is more, the women are more fully dedicated to the strike and resistance to the whites than before, and what is true of them is even more true of Ramatoulaye. She is told that if she apologizes to her brother, she will go free. Her niece, N'Deye Touti, tells her to do what the judge commands, but Ramatoulaye will have no part of it. She slaps the girl for her words,

explains that under no circumstance can she associate with those who have neglected their own people and connived with the whites, and taking the girl by the arm, leads her from the station.

Ramatoulaye is no more the docile, law-abiding, God-fearing, obedient Moslem black woman. She is fully independent, the woman who will fight to preserve those in her charge. She has become fearless, strong, wholly an individual. Her sense of dignity and right is tied to common sense and necessity rather than to the rules of the Koran. Ramatoulaye and the other women in Dakar have become politicized by two means: the first, households of hungry children; the second, the brutality of the police and the soldiers. Like their men they will be intransigent until the end, whatever that end will be.

The prostitute Penda, in the same novel, has asserted her independence and her individuality before the strike occurred. She had broken with tribal custom by her manner of life. The strike merely gives her a new theatre of action. She, like Mame Sofi, will not shrink from stealing food for the hungry. It is she who organizes the women of Thies and leads them on the protest march to Dakar. She, too, becomes a martyr for the cause. Her revolutionary action leads to her death, being shot by an anxious soldier frightened by the hordes of women approaching the line of troops.

It is through these women and their resistance that the strike is achieved. In so doing the women discover themselves anew. They change drastically, become harder, more sure of themselves. They perform actions that were formerly a male province: serving as family head, taking part in political demonstrations, playing a major role in determing what action will be followed by the strikers, living by needs rather than by formulas, sharing equality with the men in the struggles of the strike. The situation in which the women find themselves causes them to alter life patterns. From the six month struggle, new women are born.

Although a number of the English-speaking African writers deal with political issues in their works, few of them develop strong women characters involved in politics. Unlike the Tioumbé's, the Penda's, and the Ramatoulaye's of the French-African novelists, except for Jagua Nana, a rather flat portraiture is given of the politically active woman. Nevertheless there is variety in the types of women characters who are politically involved and of their motivations of these characters in the English-African novel.

Chinua Achebe describes three of these women in his novel, <u>A Man of the People</u>. The first of these is a "merchant princess," that is, one of the woman traders who has made a fortune in trade, Mrs. Eleanor John. She is a woman from the Coast, a powerful member of Chief Nanga's

party. She is no longer young and is heavily painted and perfumed, yet she does not doubt her influence or position with the Chief, whom she has traveled three hundred and fifty miles to see. She is a member of the Library Commission, one of the statutory boards within the Chief's portfolio. She is a successful woman and has done it through her own talents. She is uneducated, has been beautiful, and was and is determined. She began her career as a street hawker. At the time the story opens, she presides over the entire trade in second-hand clothing. Mrs. John is necessary to Chief Nanga in a political way. She has a good deal of influence with the other traders throughout the country. It is through the assistance of similarly powerful women, that Nanga has come into power and will remain in power.

A second woman in politics, who, too, is a close friend of Chief Nanga, is Barrister Mrs. Akilo. Like Mrs. John she, too, sleeps with Chief Nanga on occasion, when she has business in the area. Mrs. Akilo, also described as beautiful, is in private practice with her husband. Hers is a personal relationship with Nanga, although both benefit politically and economically from the association. Both Mrs. Akilo and Mrs. John are women involved with the political establishment. They are independent, self-made women who profit from their association with Chief Nanga. They are practical women whose political

involvement is closely associated with their economic goals. They have power which they enjoy using. They belong to the new breed of African women, who have severed ties with tribal customs in their own personal lives, although they may retain some ties necessary for their economic and political existence. Their relationship with Chief Nanga is as his equals. He will never marry a woman like these two, but he will enjoy their company.

Eunice, the third woman in politics in the novel, is also a lawyer, engaged to Max, one of the leaders in the party in opposition to Nanga whom she has met when they were both enrolled at the London School of Economics. Eunice, like Tioumbé, Marxist, and it is through her involvement with Max and her social ideals that she has become involved in the Common People's Convention. She and Max are both personally very close as well as formed by the same political ideals. Odili, the young hero of the novel, covets the closeness they enjoy, although he does not begrudge their happiness.

During the campaign against Nanga, Odili notes their unity:

> Seeing Max and Eunice once again, sharing every excitement, had made my mouth water, to put it crudely. As Max made his speech I had found myself watching Eunice's beautiful profile. She sat at the edge of her chair, wringing her clasped hands like a nervous schoolgirl. Her lips seemed to be forming the same words that he was uttering.[35]

Odili, who is lonely, would like to share his life interests with someone as loyal as Eunice. Eunice proves dramatically that she is thoroughly united to her fiance. During the struggles of the election, Max is killed by the driver of one of Chief Koko's (member of Nanga's party) jeeps. Eunice, missed by the car by only a few inches, shoots Koko as he approaches the scene of the accident, before she mourns the death of her lover. She is imprisoned for the murder, but later freed when Nanga's government falls. She does not care about her freedom, her life has really ended with Max's death; corruption is widespread. Odili comments on Eunice and Max at the end of the novel: "...in such a regime, I say, you died a good death if your life had inspired someone to come forward and shoot your murderer in the chest...without asking to be paid."[36]

Eunice is not so single-minded in her political goals as Tioumbé. Where Tioumbé makes her personal life subservient to her political-professional life, even to the loss of her lover, Eunice is not capable of doing this, Her personal life is inextricably woven into her political life, and with the death of her fiance, her world has lost its meaning. Both women have a good deal of feeling, but for Eunice, political activity has lost its viability without the man who inspired and shared her work. Like Tioumbé, however, she is a totally new African woman, devoted to a different set of ideals from those of the traditional

African woman. Her interests lie in the party and in her work with her man for that party. Her orientation towards marriage is quite different from that of the traditional woman. She intends to share every part of her husband's life. Children are secondary, if they come at all. Education, the struggles of new nations have resulted in new women.

Cyprian Ekwensi creates a politically conscious young woman in the character of Beatrice the Second in his novel, People of the City. Sango, the young newspaper writer and trumpet-playing hero of the story meets her as she is almost killed in the crowds who swarm to honor the dead nationalist leader, de Pereira. Although Beatrice herself does not plan to go into politics, she is impressed by de Pereira's dedication to the cause of nationalism. Like him, she wants to devote herself to her nation. She plans to do it by joining her fiance, who is studying to be a doctor, and working with him as nurse and midwife in the interior. There they will devote themselves to building the nation, and helping the people who most need help. Beatrice's goals have less firm foundations than those of Tioumbé and Eunice, for when her fiance commits suicide in England, her plans are drastically altered. She and Sango marry and leave for the Gold Coast to seek their fortune. At that point political interests and the desire to build the nation become secondary to personal needs and plans. For Beatrice, as

for Eunice, plans that she has made are thoroughly united to a man with whom she will share those plans. When the identity of the man changes, Beatrice changes her goals as well.

Jagua Nana, in the novel of that name, is a woman who loves the political stage. It is only her involvement with Uncle Taiwo that brings Jagua into politics, and that only briefly, but she loves the excitement, the crowds, the attention she can draw. Jagua goes with Uncle Taiwo to several campaign meetings. At most she does not speak, but Taiwo has planned that she address the market women.

> Jagua knew these women; astute, sure of themselves and completely independent and powerful. Their votes could easily sway the balance because they voted en bloc. Some of them had children studying in England and most of them had boys in the Secondary School. To them education was a real issue. They went to the mosque on Fridays and to market on Sundays, if the market-day fell on a Sunday. From dawn to dusk they sat in the squalid market with the drain running through it.[37]

Jagua has lived and worked with these women and with women like them in Onitsha. She knows what will move them. She tells them that the officials of O.P.I. are crooks, "people who will build their private houses with your own money."[38] She tells them if they vote for Uncle Taiwo's party, O.P.2. they will not pay taxes, their children will be provided with a good education, that the party will block off their smelly drain, improve their market. She is good at her speech. She discredits Freddie Namme, her former lover,

reminding them that his wife is a foreigner, a woman from Sierra Leone. She appeals to their loves and to their prejudices, and then the women respond to her words.

Jagua's political success is short-lived. Uncle Taiwo loses the election, and with that loss goes Jagua's further involvement in politics. She leaves the city and returns to her home. Jagua has no real political convictions; her interest in Nigerian politics is a personal one. She has been hurt by Freddie Namme so she will work against him. She likes the excitement, the music, the crowds in Uncle Taiwo's campaign meetings; she appreciates the fact that he is paying her living expenses. For these reasons she will work for his party, but she is in no real sense a political power. Without Uncle Taiwo, Jagua has no position. Returned home she will regain personal position by becoming a "Merchant Princess," which is more to her liking tha the corruption of the political scene. To Jagua the Tropicana (a nightclub), the political platform, and a stall in Onitsha market all give her an opportunity to parade herself as Jagua. Whichever stage is available at the moment is the one she seeks.

In dealing with woman in politics, the French-African tend to show her as a woman with very serious purposes as opposed to the English-African writers who link feminine political interest with the men in women's lives. In both bodies of literature, however, the women in politics are

shown to be essentially "new" African women, those who have thrown over traditional customs and who lead individualistic self-directed lives. Although the woman may be married, no mention is made of children, and the primary goals of these women are far removed from those of the traditional young girl, wife and mother. In many cases education has been responsible for the political outlook of the women. In some cases it has been shown by the authors that situations have politicized the women. In particular, the women in Ousmane's novel, Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, belong to this category. An English-African writer has described how a situation can also make a woman a-political, as in the case of Eunice in A Man of the People. What is to be noted, too, is that women's franchise is given some attention in these novels, and the common woman is often shown to be strongly independent, voting for her own personal convictions or in a women's bloc. The authors have also treated the theme of the woman as symbol in the fight for independence, and have shown the role that the woman-martyrs in this fight have played in their nations. In summary, what the writers have tended to show is a new set of ideals for women in a rapidly changing society. Where once female goals were circumscribed by their village and ancient customs, the new women must find new goals and new criteria for judging their lives. The writers describe this search, and individual women's tentative solutions.

THE EDUCATED WOMAN

An important factor in bringing about changes in the life style, the attitudes and interests, and, hence, in the roles of African women is education. Often it has been through education (for the most part a "Westernized" education) that the African woman has come in conflict with her traditions and with her prescribed roles. Both the English- and French-speaking writers deal with this sort of women and her role conflicts, (generally as a minor character) in their works. French-African writers, on the whole, tend to emphasize the conflicts of these girls and women, whereas the English-African writers show them as liberated, independent women. Yet in both bodies of literature there are reflections of similar characteristics.

A writer who deals especially effectively with the conflicts of the "Western"-educated woman is Sembène Ousmane. In Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, Ousmane creates the character of N'Deye Touti, a young woman about twenty years old. She attends school in Dakar, and has adapted herself to some Western ideas and customs. Her aunt, Mame Sofi, is suspicious of education; N'Deye Touti has learned to defend herslef against her, yet she is simultaneously torn between the black world of her birth and the white world that she knows through her schooling. At the beginning of the strike, when asked by her aunt what she thinks of it, she tells her that the question is too difficult for her to answer. Her

aunt's reply, in the form of a question, is: "Qu'est-ce qu'on vous apprend à l'école, alors?"[39] To her practical aunt, the strike is the most important thing in their lives now. It has shut off the source of water to the women, closed shops, made it difficult for them to find food for themselves and their families. If your education does not assist you in solving these real problems of existence, then of what use is it? N'Deye Touti's attempted defense of her schooling falls on deaf ears. "Tout, tout de la vie"[40] has no meaning to her aunt who sees life at that point in terms of survival rather than in terms of ideas and the arts. She expects her niece to have a practical solution to their problems, while N'Deye Touti, exposed to the ideas of other cultures, is more a dreamer than a political woman.

The beautiful young woman has been influenced by her education in many ways, however. The one girl in the quarter to attend the normal school, she is, because of her knowledge, the writer and interpreter of letters, yet she feels separated from most of the people with whom she lives. Her "real" world is the romantic fantasies that her education brings to her.

> Elle vivait comme en marge d'eux; ses lectures, les films qu'elle voyait, la maintenaient dans un univers ou les siens n'avaient plus de place, de même qu'elle n'avait plus de place dans le leur. Elle traversait l'existence quotidienne comme en rêve, un rêve ou se trouvait le Prince

> Charmant des livres. N'Deye ne savait pas exactement que serait la couleur de sa peau, mais elle savait qu'il viendrait un jour et qu'il lui apporterait l'amour.....Dans les livres qu'elle avait lus, l'amour s'accompagnait de fêtes, de bals, de weekends, de promenades en voiture, de somptueux cadeaux d'anniversaire, de vacances sur des yachts, de présentations de couturiers; là était la vraie vie et non dans ce quartier pouilleux, ou à chaque pas on rencontrait un lépreux, un éclopé, un avorton.[41]

N'Deye's real world is the idealized, glamourized world of Western Europe. Love is associated with monogamy (despite her liaison with a married man) and with wealth. Her own culture is an affliction to her. She is ashamed of the nudity and the poverty. She knows nothing of African writers, African culture.

As a demonstration of her separation from African customs and her desire to adopt Western standards of propriety, N'Deye Touti had made herself a brassiere as she began to mature physically. She wore it openly at school, but during vacation times was careful to hide it. On one occasion she forgot and suffered immensely from her aunt's scorn: "Hé, venez voir, venez voir! Il y a une vache pleine qui se promème tout habillée dans la maison sur deux pattes!"[42] N'Deye does not give up her brassiere, but the incident further closes her off from her society and into her world of dreams. Although her education gives her a practical ability and a profession (as letter writer) it succeeds in alienating her from the

African world and the real problems that exist in it. Her "real" world is the world of imaginative literature, and this world has no time for considering the meaning of strikes, or human rights, or political independence for herself or her country. N'Deye's education succeeds in making her so ashamed of her culture, that she ceases to think of herself as black, and so brainwashed by her feelings of white superiority and power, that she fears to revolt with the rest of the women in her quarter. Education reduces N'Deye Touti to inaction.

Her most traumatic experience with the white culture that she has adopted occurs when she overhears three white men talking about the countryside and the people. They are appalled by a woman relieving herself in the street, and N'Deye is ashamed of her people for their lack of "modesty." She listens as the men continue talking, and, as they approach her, hears them comment on her beauty and on her availability (she'd sleep with them for a handful of rice) in a derogatory manner. She recognizes that despite her talents, she is regarded as less than human by these men, and she is angered and hurt. Later, one of the men apologizes for the insults in an attempt to rally her to the French side in the dispute over wages, but at this point N'Deye Touti has seen enough outside her books not to be won over. Her relationship with Bakayoko, one of the leaders of the strike, has brought her to an awareness of her own culture,

and her experience and that of her family at the hands of the French, has brought her to revolution.

At the close of the novel N'Deye Touti is in the process of becoming one of the new black women. She is brought to this awareness of herself and her culture through the loss of her lover, through his influence and example, from the sufferings of the strike, from the actions of the French colonials. It is despite her education, rather than because of it, that N'Deye becomes committed to her own culture, to the building of a new Africa. Western education has fed her with romantic dreams. Bakayoko saves her from that education:

> Il y a plusiers façons de se prostituer, tu sais. Il y a ceux qui le font sous la contrainte: Alioune, Deune, Idrissa, moi-même, nous prostituons notre travail à des gens que nous ne respectons pas. Il y a aussi ceux qui se prostituent moralement, les Mabigué, les Gaye, les Daouda. Et toi-même?[43]

N'Deye Touti responds to Bakayoko's challenge by studying her own nation and the rest of Africa. She forgets her dreams of "Prince Charming" and the unreal world of a perpetual Continental party, and sets to work to become a part of her family, her quarter, and Senegal.

Sakinétou, the young wife in Ousmane's short story, "Devant L'Histoire," is a second example of the woman alienated through European education. Both she and her husband, Abdoulaye, are educated; both revel in European entertainments and in European dress. They ignore their

former, black, uneducated acquaintances. Their simulation of European customs does not make them a happily married couple, however. Quarreling over whether or not to attend a film, the wife asserts her independence: "Je ne suis pas une Fatou (appellation qu'on donne dans certains milieux aux femmes illétrées). Je peux payer ma place."[44] Sakinétou abruptly leaves her husband, gets into a taxi, and drives off to visit her family. In this very brief vignette Ousmane shows the corruption of values in some of those persons educated abroad. Traditional values of order in the family, obedience, clear definition of role are lost, and, in this instance, have not been replaced by any new value system. Rather the adoption of the customs of another society has ended in an alienated wife and husband, imitating the worst part of the European monogamous marriage pattern. The two young people belong to no society, nor to themselves.

Catherine, the mulatress fiancee of Diaw Falla in Le Docker Noir, has not had the formal education of Sakinétou or N'Deye Touti, but she has been living in France since she was a small child. With her lover on trial for murder, her stepfather wants her to marry a cousin, who despite the fact that she is bearing Falla's baby, is anxious to marry her. Catherine, who has been given a practical education (sewing school), is, partly through her experience and partly through her education, an independent young woman. She rejects the traditions that say she should obey her stepfather. It is through her associations with French

society that she has become so closely involved with Falla. They have chosen each other, and she writes his family as her own. She is, however, a woman caught between the two cultures. With the expected conviction and death of Falla (he has accidentally killed a woman who stole his novel.) there is no one to protect her in France, and she is seven months pregnant. She has never met Falla's family in Africa and they are suspicious of a mulatress. She has lived only in French culture since her youth, and is, in no way, adapted to living with Falla's family in Africa. In her case, because of her situation, both education and environment have unfitted her for coping with her life's problems. Catherine is a woman outside the traditions of Africa, yet she lacks the ability to fully cope with European society. She is a victim of her age, and the changes in society.

Ousmane shows another sort of educated woman in his novel, Ô Pays, Mon Beau Peuple! Agnes, a "liberated" woman, is a free spirit. She is treated as an equal by her male friends, who see her more as a comrade than a lover. She has read and thought a good deal; she would like to visit France and the rest of Europe, but she has not had the opportunity. Despite her interest in Europe she does not disassociate herself from her race and her culture. She is not alienated in that sense, but she is a woman far different from traditional women of her village.

At a gathering of the young people of the village at Faye and Isabelle's home, one of the young black men states as his opinion that women should not go to school. Agnes reacts strongly to his words: "Diagne, les «femelles» te disent merde..."[45] She goes on to say very seriously that she views the idea of not sending women to school as a means of maintaining the system of polygamy in Africa, and notes that the women who have gone to school resist this traditional custom. To Agnès, polygamy is equivalent to the dehumanization of women:

> La polygamie a existé dans toutes les nations. Mais vous, tant que vous ne considérez pas la femme comme un être humain et non comme un instrument de vos viles passions, vous piétinerez. Les femmes constituent la majeure partie du peuple. Il n'y a pas de plus puissant obstacle que la polygamie en ce qui concerne l'évolution.[46]

To Agnes, one of the things that keeps her nation in a subservient position is the failure to fully utilize the power of the women. In her view, it is polygamy that militates against the emancipation of the women and of their nation. She believes that if Africa is to be freed from the colonial powers, that the men of her country will need to treat the women as their equals and collaborators in this work. Education has put Agnes in conflict with the customs of her nation, and with the apathy of her compartiots towards the colonialists. It does not alienate her from her society, but is responsible for her committment to independence. She,

like Tioumbé and Eunice, who were discussed in the section on "Women in Politics," has synthesized her education with her own cultural background.

The young girl-scholars in Olympe Bhêly-Quénum's novel, Le Chant du Lac, illustrates another sort of conflict of the educated women with traditional customs. Home on a holiday, Adjai and Fina attempt to adjust to village life, which in large part they do. They are popular guests because they have been in France and can talk about another society and another culture. Yet they no longer believe in the gods of the sea which demand human sacrifice on occasion. On the other hand, they are just as distrustful of some of the new black politicians who promise all sorts of benefits to the people, but who are, in truth, just as exploitative of the people as the colonialists were before them. They are convinced that the women of Africa must be liberated, but they are not certain of how to achieve this. Whay they intend to do on their vacation is to influence the young women in whatever way they can: "....il nous faudra nous rendre perméables à nos soeurs restées au village; c'est à nous, les jeunes filles, de leur faire comprendre l'importance de la femme évoluée dans l'Afrique nouvelle."[47] The girls make a pact to do so. One thing that the young women do speak openly against, nevertheless, is the belief in the sea-gods. It is not they who destroy them, however, but

the traditional woman, Mme. Ounéhou, who to save herself and her daughters, assists a boatman in killing two sea monsters.

Adjai and Fina are new African women, whose education does not separate them totally from their culture (although Adjai's engagement to a young Frenchman may do so). They do not see their responsibilities in Africa as being that of political leaders. Rather they see their own personal mission as that of freeing their younger sisters from the traditional customs which keep them subjugated. It is with women like Adjai and Fina, as well as with those like Agnes, that the African movement of women's liberation is fully formed. These women are not Europeanized, nor are they traditional African women. In them there is the foundation for a new role for African women in their society.

The English-African writers evocation of the educated African woman in conflict with her society has less of the sense of mission than do the characters in the French-African works. On the whole, their sense of revolt against traditional customs comes from a personal involvement rather than from a philosophical conviction. One of the women destroyed by her revolt is Achebe's Clara in No Longer at Ease. Clara meets Obi, the male hero of the novel, at a students' dance in England, and later takes the same boat as he to Africa. It is on the boat that they become friends; in Africa they become lovers as well. Obi has every intention of marrying

Clara, despite the fact that she has resisted the development of their intimacy because of her caste. She is an <u>osu</u>, that is, one set aside for the gods. <u>Osu</u> can only marry other <u>osu</u>, Any other marriage is totally forbidden by African custom.

Despite Clara and Obi's education, they are not free from the influences of their culture. There are other ties as well; in Obi's case, his tribe has sent him to school. He is indebted to them and must repay the loan for his schooling. On returning home Obi further discovers to what extent he is emotionally bound to his family. He would go against his father's wishes and marry Clara, but he cannot oppose his mother to whom he has strong emotional ties. Before their engagement Clara, too, demonstrates that she has not separated herself from her culture. She informs Obi that their marriage is forbidden, although she weeps as she tells him, and later accepts the engagement.

At length Obi determines that the engagement will have to be broken, at least temporarily. His mother is very ill and has threatened to commit suicide if he goes ahead with the wedding. He knows her well enough to know that it is no idle threat. When he tells Clara of their "temporary setback," she returns his ring. Discovering that she is pregnant, he locates a doctor to perform the abortion; when the doctor meets with them, he suggests they marry. Obi takes Clara to a different doctor who agrees to perform the operation for thirty pounds. As the doctor and the girl

leave for the place where the abortion is to be performed, "Obi wanted to rush out of his car and shout: 'Stop, Let's go and get married now,' but he couldn't and didn't."[47]

After the operation, Clara becomes very ill from complications and almost dies. She refuses to see Obi, and leaves Lagos. Both Clara and Obi have been educated. Their education frees them, in a sense, from the customs of their tribes, and yet they find on their return to Nigeria, that they are still bound by those customs, no matter how they might revolt against some of them. Clara, the educated woman, is bitter through her experience with Obi, but she has not really expected anything different from what occurs. At the outset of their affari she has anticipated that she (they) will not be able to go counter to the tribal customs. She will not have freedom in the choice of a husband. Her education and her profession do not keep her from personal tragedy, rather they bring her to temporarily flaunt her traditions which action ends in failure. She loses Obi, her child, her health, her job.

Dehinwa, Sagoe's girl friend in The Interpreters is more successful than Clara in opposing family and tribal customs in her manner of life. As the story opens she has gone with Sagoe to a party where he has become very drunk. Unable to get home by himself, he convinces Dehinwa to take him to her apartment, telling her, "I promise I'll behave. In any case, I am in no condition."[49] They go to her apartment where much to her surprise she finds her mother and her

aunt. Sagoe goes to sleep in the bedroom while the rest talk.

Dehinwa's mother has heard that the girl is going with a Northerner, a Gambari. When Dehinwa tells her mother that her friends are her own concern and not that of her family, the mother replies:

> Oh, no, it isn't your own business, and you don't go with who you like, not if you are my own daughter. I should think I have a say in the matter. I haven't worked and slaved to send you to England and pulled strings to get you a really good post nearly in the Senior Service only to have you give me a Hausa grandson.[50]

Despite her mother's words, and a real affection that Dehinwa has for her, Dehinwa is truly independent of her tribal customs. She is repaying the cost of her schooling to her mother; she knows that she will marry whomever she wills. Her life in Lagos is quite different from her former life in her village. She will never again, because of her education in England and her introduction to African city life, be a rural girl. She is working, and has been living in an independent manner for several years. There is no way that she can return to dependency and filial docility. For the present she is somewhat placating towards her mother, but she knows that ultimately the break will come.

> And Dehinwa, steeling herself for the final act that must pronounce the break, was slowly being worn down from the midnight, visitations of aunts and mothers bearing love, and transparent intentions, and manufactured anxieties, and, quite simply, blood cruelty....[51]

Dehinwa does break with her customs eventually. She selects her own husband and her own way of life, but she is not rude to her relatives despite the time of their night visits, her tiredness, and their differences.

Sagoe and Dehinwa are very good friends. She likes the man, yet despite all his attempts, for a long time she will not sleep with him. At length they become lovers as well, and at the end of the story have determined to marry. Both Dehinwa and Sagoe are educated and talented. Their relationship to each other is one of equals, and includes frankness of speech with each other as well as a teasing, comradely manner together. Dehinwa is truly the liberated woman. She has both her work and her equal relationship with a man. The educated woman, she has been able to free herself from old customs without guilt and without destroying her consciousness of being an African woman. Perhaps her success is due to the fact that she is a city-dweller operating within a totally new African environment. A new African milieu requires new responses and new roles for the women.

A second woman character in The Interpreters who is a new breed of woman is a schoolgirl whom Egbo seduces one afternoon. She comes to his house to leave her assignment for Bandele, her teacher and his roommate. Egbo, restless, takes her to see his favorite spot, a wild place by the river with natural sculptures. The girl is independent;

despite the difference in their education and ages she treats him as an equal. At length he makes love to her by the river. She tells him as they leave that he must not try to see her again; she does not tell him her name. All he knows is that she is preparing for her examinations.

When the sculptor, his good friend Sekoni, dies, he again hears from the girl. This time it is a simple note. "I remember you spoke of a sculptor friend of yours called Sekoni. I am sorry about his death. I would come if I thought you needed me, but I am sure you would rather be by yourself. I am very, very sorry."[52] Although Egbo makes several attempts to find the girl, he is unable to do so. His involvement with the prostitute, Simi, also keeps him from pursuing her, but he is moved by her youth, her individualtiy, her independence, and her intuitiveness.

Finally Bandele tells him that he has a message from the girl. She is pregnant. She had gone to Dr. Lumoye, asking him to perform an abortion. His condition for performing the operation was that she sleep with him, and she refused. Angered by her refusal Dr. Lumoye had begun to spread tales about the girl. Bandele tells Egbo that she had decided to keep the baby, has left school to have it, and intends to return after the child's birth. She wants Egbo to know that he has no obligation towards her.

This nameless schoolgirl of Soyinka's creation is a totally new breed of African woman. She is entirely independent.

She will operate on impulse (her trip with Egbo), and yet take full responsibility for the results of her actions. She will seek no help from anyone. She wants to continue her education; nothing will prevent her from attaining this goal. When she has the child, she will keep it with her. In her responses to events and situations the girl acts in opposition to both traditional customs and the practice of polite, educated society. Soyinka's schoolgirl is a very new African woman.

Sarif Easmon describes another sort of educated African, woman, Makallay Touray, a Susu-Creole woman who is part of Chief Briwa's harem.[52] She is an educated woman, a Moslem. She is really not happy in Chief Briwa's house, despite the fact that she is the wife he prefers. She is living in rural Sowanah country and she misses the sophistication of her home city, Luawa, the capitol. She is at odds with the customs of Luluahun and with most of her co-wives. When she interferes in a judgment of the elders and pays the debt of Damba, the leaders of Luluahun are incensed because her deed weakens traditional law. Her husband, president of the court, is also vexed by her action, although he can appreciate the sympathy that brought it about, yet he cannot bring himself to punish her. Makallay treats her husband as an equal. The other wives do not have this liberty. Because of his affection for her and the power she has over him, he gives her what

she wants, even a dwelling for the woman she has saved from prison.

When Makallay has an asthma attack and must return home for several months, Chief Briwa is desolate. At length he requires that she return. It is a new Makallay who comes back to his house; she makes excuses so that she will not have to sleep with him. Finally, through the treachery and ill-will of Mahtoe, the first wife, who has always hated Makallay, Francis Briwa learns that his wife is pregnant by another man. He threatens to beat Makallay and kill the baby, and is about to do so, when she upsets a table with an oil lamp which engulfs him in flames. Makallay is saved from the flames by her brother and her lover, V.K. Brantley, a famous African architect who has come to take her away and marry her.

Makallay has not been educated in England nor in any formal way, but through her brothers who have received a formal education and through her family life, she is imbued with attitudes and ideas very much at odds with the rigid tribal customs that she finds with Chief ~~Francis~~ Briwa. Makallay opposes those customs before her visit home. After her return from Luawa, she is no longer able to conform in any way. At home she has found a man whom she loves, and she will marry him; she will bear children for him. There is nothing for her to do but to leave the harem. She will have a husband to herself.

With Makallay, as with Dehinwa and Clara, the revolt against tribal customs is related to her personal life and her personal desires. There is nothing of the political woman in Makallay. Her convictions arise not from theoretical principles, but from what her practical sense tells her is the way she wants to live her life. It is her education in her family and her life in the city that have prepared her for her revolt.

SUMMARY

Both French- and English-speaking African writers have described the changing role of African women as they adapt to a rapidly altering society. The qualities of the new woman, as described by the writers are independence individuality, intuitiveness, beauty. In some cases the women characters have also been headstrong and capricious. What marks the relationship of these women with their men is the equality of both sexes in that relationship. In no way are the women subservient to the men.

One of the ways in which some of these African women characters have freed themselves from tribal custom and from their rural existence is through prostitution. In that way the women attain financial independence and break with the traditions of marriage and children. For some of the women, the break with custom is a conscious act in another way. They are imbued with a political sense and

have desired to become a part of the new political futures of their countries. For a number of women characters, the break with custom comes through their education, but the impetus for the break, is not always because of their political views, but often because of their personal desires and needs. Some of the women come to their new understandings of their role as women from the political situations in which they find themselves. Faced with the possibility of death through starvation, they develop an independence and an equality with their men that otherwise they would not find to be in their powers.

It is to be noted that Western education, the movement to urbanization in Africa, and the political independence of the African nations are all credited with the development of a new African woman. A changing society brings about new roles and functions for all of its members. African writers deal with the new voice of the women.

Footnotes Chapter IV

[1]"It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid the big social and political issues of contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant." Chinua Achebe, "The Duty and Involvement of the African Writer," The Africa Reader: Independent Africa, ed., Wilfred Cartey and Martin Kilson, New York, Random House, 1970, p. 162.

[2]Francesca Yetunde Pereira, "Two Strange Worlds," Poems from Black Africa, ed., Langston Hughes, Bloomington, Indiana U. Press, 1969, pp. 94-95.

[3]Maurice Koné, Le Jeune Homme de Bouaké, Paris, Jean Grassin, 1963, p. 44.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 53.

[6]René Philombe (Phillippe Louis Ombede), Lettres de ma Cambuse, Yaounde, Editions Abbia, 1964, p. 32.

[7]Ibid., p. 36.

[8]Ferdinand Oyono, Une Vie de Boy, Paris, René Julliard, 1956, p. 43.

[9]Ibid., p. 142.

[10]Sembène Ousmane, Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, Paris, Le Livre Contemporain, 1960, p. 215.

[11]Ibid., pp. 288-289.

[12]Wole Soyinka, <u>The Interpreters</u>, New York, MacMillan (Collier Books), 1970, p. 51.

[13]<u>Ibid</u>.

[14]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 263.

[15]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 273.

[16]Cyprian Ekwensi, <u>People of the City</u>, New York, Fawcett World Library, 1969, pp. 40-41.

[17]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 42.

[18]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 44 .

[19]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 72.

[20]Cyprian Ekwensi, <u>Jagua Nana</u>, New York, Fawcett Work Library, 1969, p. 36.

[21]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. 6-7.

[22]Gideon-Cyrus Mutiso, <u>Socio-Political Ideas in African Literature in English</u>, 1945-67, New York, Syracuse University, 1969, p. 80.

[23]Charles Nokan, <u>Violent Etait Le Vent</u>, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1966, p. 94.

[24]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 100.

[25]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 140.

[26] Ibid., p. 142.

[27] Sembène Ousmane, L'Harmattan, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1964, p. 78.

[28] Ibid., p. 97.

[29] Ibid., p. 99.

[30] Ibid., pp. 243-244.

[31] Ibid., pp. 274-275.

[32] Sembène Ousmane, Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, op. cit., p. 63.

[33] Ibid., p. 79.

[34] Ibid., pp. 114-115.

[35] Chinua Achebe, A Man of the People; New York, Doubleday "Anchor Books," 1967, p. 120.

[36] Ibid., p. 141.

[37] Cyprian Ekwensi, Jagua Nana, op. cit., p. 154.

[38] Ibid., p. 156.

[39] Sembène Ousmane, Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, op. cit., p. 83.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 345.

[44] Sembène Ousmane, "Devant L'Histoire," *Voltaïques* Paris, Présence Africaine, 1962, p. 11.

[45] Sembène Ousmane, *Ô Pays, Mon Beau Peuple!*, Paris, Amiot-Dumont, 1957, p. 119.

[46] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

[47] Olympe Bhêly-Quénu, *Le Chant du Lac*, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1965, p. 15.

[48] Chinua Achebe, *No Longer at Ease*, New York, Fawcett World Library, 1969, p. 140.

[49] Wole Soyinka, *The Interpreters*, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 37.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[52] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

[53] R. Sarif Easmon, *The Burnt-Out Marriage*, London, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1967.

Chapter V

Conclusions

The literary output of English and and French-speaking African writers is not primarily a literature of the women of those countries nor a literature of the women's movement in Africa. One can say that the consciousness level of the writers about women is extremely varied; and, indeed, the portrayal of women ranges from the fantasies of some of the male writers, to approximations of certain historical characters, to the portraits (romanticized, perhaps) of their own mothers, sisters, and lovers. What is of note is that women do count in this literature, and if, in many cases, they are not the central figures of the novels or short stories, they are central to the movement of the story and provide more than "local color" or erotic interest."

As has been noted in the sections on the traditional woman, the traditional female character has primarily three roles: daughter (the young girl) wife, and mother. All other roles, whether they are political or economic, are secondary to these primary roles, based on the view of women as procreators of the race, and for which role, both status and reverence accrue to women.

The young girl, as described by both English- and French-speaking writers, is shy and innocent for the most part. Her primary goal is to be married, have children, and thereby, achieve an adult status in her tribe and society.

In general the writers of both bodies of literature describe the physical and personality traits of the young girl in a somewhat romantic vein. As has been noted, she is generally very attractive, intelligent (although usually not an intellectual), exuberant at times because of her youth, but generally even-tempered, docile, hard-working, and home-loving. That there is some awareness by these traditional girls that their society is changing about them is not absent from some of the author's descriptions of their characters. Thus it is that Nafi, in Ousmane's short story, "Lettres de France," notes that times change; yet her awareness and her unhappiness in her marriage with an old man in France do not lead her to disobey her father or husband in any way. She submits to the marriage arranged for her by her father, and, despite her loneliness and her attraction to another, younger African, is a faithful wife. Only circumstances (the death of her husband), and not her own will and actions, free her from her servitude and despair and make it possible for her to return to Africa.

Like Nafi, the traditional young girl may be dissatisfied with her lot in life, but revolt and change, the assertion of independent action by the young girl, are primarily characteristics of the "changing" woman, the one who has been influenced by education or political and economic events to assert her own individuality. The traditional young girl, like the traditional wife and mother, believes

that security and happiness lie within the safety of the tribe and the extended family. Personal goals are subjugated to group needs and goals in the choice of a marriage partner as well as in all other aspects of one's life.

Some of the young girls discussed, like Achebe's Edna and Laye's Marie, have some formal education. This education has been such, however, that it has had little influence on their traditional views. For both women named, marriage and child-bearing are seen by them to be their primary roles. Both have received their schooling without having the intention of taking up a career. Their education is the result of a family's expectations for them, or, in Edna's case, Chief Nanga's desire to have a wife whom he can introduce without fear into Western society, rather than any personal desire for this education on their part. Of all the traditional young girls described in previous chapters, it is only Marie who seems to have changed somewhat through her schooling. Coming from a Moslem society, the monogamous concept of marriage is an idea totally new to her. She is attracted by this concept, however, and it is because of this that she is disturbed by Laye's relationship with a French girl, has suffered from jealousy because of it, and is hopeful that her union with Laye will be monogamous. Here, in the character of Marie, the traditional girl is beginning to change, is in conflict with the fabric of male-female relationships of

her tradition. This one attitude, however, is Marie's only deviancy from traditionalism, and in all other ways she is the docile, shy, modest African girl integrated with her Moslem traditions.

It is demonstrated by some writers that the traditional girl is protected by her adherence to her traditions. Thus Elina, Egbuna's young girl heroine in his novel, Wind Versus Polygamy, is saved from an unwanted marriage through her compliance with the tribal tradition of having the chief resolve marriage disputes. Elina is the traditional young girl, obedient to her mother and the wishes of her dead father, who is, nonetheless, without any fault on her part, in conflict with her society. In conjunction with her educational training she has been instructed in catholicism and baptized a catholic; nevertheless, she is more truly a part of her tribal traditions than of these new traditions to which she has joined herself. Elina's conflicts are caused by the two sources of traditions insisting on their rights over her, tribal traditions and catholic church traditions, as well as by the two men who claim to possess the right to marry her. Ebguna arrives at a compromise solution in the novel, with the two traditions being upheld and Elina's marriage problem being solved by the polygamous tribal chief, but Elina, at least in his characterization of her, is completely the traditional gir, far more steeped in her tribal traditions of obedience to family and tribal law than in any loyalty to the catholic concept of monogamy in marriage.

It is important to note that although the African novelists portray traditional young women, these are not characters inhabiting an anachronistic society. Neither are they bits of anthropological data, given a name and a situation in which to act. The young girls are truly full-scale characters, albeit somewhat flat at times, and they exist in a changing society in Africa, one that is affected by colonialism, the movement to independence, Western education. In that changing society, however, they maintain an adherence to the traditional roles for women: wife and mother. Obedience to the norms for these roles and to the norms of other tribal traditions is their distinguishing mark.

It is in the portrayal of the traditional wife that the African writers depart from the romanticized portrait of African womanhood and begin to deal with some of the problems of the traditional woman. Although the ideal African wife most certainly has a place in the broad specturm of characterization in West African literature, she is not the sole representation of the traditional wife. For every Idu and Kelara, there is a Noumbé and an Efuru. It is in their characterizations of the wife that the African writers study the effects of some of the African traditions on the woman. This does not mean that the novels are used as means of urging the abolition of certain traditions; it does mean that the writers deal with life situations, and, therefore, with certain problems of the traditional woman. Thus Noumbé,

the third of four wives, is shown to be physically and psychologically disintegrating because of the neglect of her husband and the shame she feels because of his neglect. Noumbé does not become a "new" woman. She does not leave her husband and his compound and begin to carve out a new life for herself in some manner (actually, she is incapable of this sort of action both because of her health and her orientation to her role in life), but she does demonstrate that all is not peaceful in every household of many wives. Noumbé's story reveals the rivalries and petty jealousies that can occur in a household of many wives. It also describes a change in relationship that occurs between the man and his wife, from tender submission to bitter resentment.

Nwabunor and Ogugua, two traditional wives in The Victims, find far more dangerous ways to exhibit their spite and their resentment of their husband than Noumbé's plate-shattering exhibition. They fight each other physically, do battle with their husband, refuse him food and a bed. At length their venom towards him and towards each other increases to such a level that Nwabunor returns to her home, poisoning her rival and her rival's children before she leaves. Ogugua, no less than Nwabunor, is not the docile, faithful wife prescribed by her traditions. She is promiscuous before her marriage as well as after. Neither woman is a woman in revolt against her traditions, however, their spite and their misdeeds lie within their acceptance of their traditions and their roles as women.

The African writers point out realistically that not every traditional marriage is composed of a strong male and even-tempered, obedient females. Marital strife occurs in the traditional family, even as it will be shown to exist in the writings that deal with the "changing" African family.

An interesting variation of the problems occuring between husband and wife in the traditional household is the portrayal of the growing mental disorder of one wife, Anatou, in Un Piège Sans Fin. Here the difficulty in the marriage does not come from the character of the two parties involved, but rather from an unknown illness which so changes the wife, Anatou, that she is the cause of crime and mental breakdown in her husband. There is no conflict in customs or roles. What Olympe Bhêly-Quénum illustrates in his novel is that tragedy can occur in the traditional family with no one being fully responsible for it and with no one being able to avert the tragedy. His characters are truly human, subject to the vicissitudes of health and love, unable to resolve their problems by any of the traditional means of family counsel.

Perhaps one of the most sympathetic portrayals of the traditional wife is Oyono's characterization of old Kelara in Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille. Kelara, like the good traditional wife, observes all the customs of hospitability of her village, is concerned for her husband and practices a deference toward him, is thoroughly imbued with the least

tribal custom (e.g., rolling on the floor in mourning when she believes her husband has been shamed). She discovers during the ceremony at which her husband receives a medal from the French government, that she and Meka have lost all that is really important to them in their desire to be approved by church officials and the representatives of the French government. In no way can a medal restore her two dead sons, killed fighting for France, nor truly repay the loss of land suffered by her husband and herself in their generosity to the church. Her husband, Meka, too, comes to an awareness during the day of the ceremony that the white men have little respect for the African despite the bestowing of medals, for the priest refuses to give him the same respect and attention he gives to white men, and Meka later finds himself in jail, unrecognized as the medal winner, imprisoned for drunkenness. Neither Kelara nor Meka changes much after their awakening. Kelara does not start a march against the colonial officials or do anything against the priest. The two settle deeper into their tribal traditions, refuge from their lost hopes.

Some of the African writers portray women who are traditional in their outlook on their roles as wives and mothers, but who belong more to the changing society because of some economic and social exigency. Thus Agom in High Life for Lizards is a mixture of the traditional woman and the changing woman. Perhaps her character best exemplifies the gradual change that comes across Africa in the spirit of

its women. Agom serves as a leader in the women's protest against the water tax by the British, yet at home she is the docile wife and good mother, who, through her own idustry, procures a second wife for her husband. The primary difference between this character drawn by Nzekwu and the Ramatoulaye of Ousmane is that Agom does not revolt against her own customs. In her actions she does not assert a position in conflict with any traditional customs, and when the male leader of the tribe counsels patience in the dispute with the British, she and the other women obey him. The changing woman, as portrayed by Ousmane in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, acts against her traditions: speaks in male assemblies, acts contrary to the prescriptions of the Koran if they do not seem sensible in a given circumstance. Agom is more truly an example of the successful, traditional wife who has economic and political roles to play within the contexts of her traditions.

As has already been noted, neither the English nor the French-speaking writers makes a stereotype of the traditional African wife. In no way do they avoid the problems of marriage in a traditional society, whether those problems be a weak husband, jealousy and unfairness in a polygamous marriage, illness of one or both parties, childlessness, the death of a spouse. What is noteworthy, too, is that the writers tend to emphasize situation, so that character is defined by the situations in which each character finds

herself. There is much less romanticism in the portrayal of the wife by the African writers than in the portrayal of the young girl. Perhaps for the writers, mothers and daughters, early loves, lie somewhere between dream and reality. The wife is wholly reality.

It is in the description of the mother that mystic elements come into the works of some of the authors. Not only is the mother the subject of reverence and loyalty because of her motherhood, but for many of the writers she also possesses spiritual qualities that set her apart and make her one with the most intimate spiritual fibres of her society. Laye certainly claims special mystic powers for his own mother, relating her ability to read the hearts of men, to make animals obey her, to work small miracles. This spiritual attribute, however, is not the essential quality of the traditional mother. Rather the mother is recognized for her sacrificing love for her children, and it is this aspect of the traditional mother that figures most prominently in the writings of both English and French-speaking African writers.

Laye describes in detail the happiness of his early life with his mother, the closeness that existed between them, her assistance at his initiation, her concern over the smallest detail of his life, her suffering at his departures for school. Ousmane's Rokhaya is no less faithful to her son than Laye's mother, nor is she less mystically endowed. Their spiritual powers, however, cannot

keep their sons from leaving them, and in Rokhaya's case, it cannot prevent her son's death. The mothers described by these authors are traditional in all of their attitudes. Their lives are wholly dedicated to their children, and it is this dedication that causes much of their suffering. The mothers' loyal observance of traditional custom does not prevent their children from being influenced by Western education and experiences outside their traditions. Thus Rokhaya and Laye's mother are part of the long line of traditional mothers in African literature who suffer because of their children's non-acceptance of tribal traditions, and who, despite their suffering, are unable to break their ties with their children.

One of the few examples of a traditional mother who cuts her ties with her son because of his abandonment of her customs is Chiaku in Munonye's novel, The Only Son. Converted to catholicism, Nnanna abandons the customs of his tribe and rejects the bride chosen for him by his mother. Despite her years of sacrifice for her son, Chiaku determines to marry again with the hope that she may have other children who will follow the tribal customs and from whom she may have grandchildren in her old age.

Tioumbé's mother in Ousmane's novel, L'Harmattan, is loyal to her daughter for a long time, despite the disfavor she suffers from her husband because of her daughter's conduct.[7] At length, she, like Chiaku, abandons the daughter,

not only because the girl has struck her father, but also because she is living with a man to whom she is not married. To the mother this total disregard of custom is too much to condone. For her, now, the child is as good as dead. She has no hope for a daughter married, happy with a husband, bearing children for her to care for in her old age. Unlike Chiaku, however, Tioumbé's mother is incapable of beginning a whole new life. Abandoned by her husband and rejecting her daughter's new values, she is alone and destitute.

In general the novelists' portrayal of the mother is that of a valiant woman, one who has worked hard all her life, whose interests lie primarily in the lives of her children, who will do all in her power to protect and help these children. In only one instance is the traditional mother shown to finally abandon her child in the establishment of a life for herself in the tribe. Like the portrayal of the young girl, that of the mother tends to be idealized, not in physical qualities of beauty, but in qualities of character, particularly that of faithfulness to the children of her womb.

It is probably appropriate that spiritual awareness accompanies this intense love of children in the portrayal of the mother, for the mother is shown to be superhuman in her love. This kind of fidelity to her offspring merits the reward of some participation in things occult. Further,

the woman's participation as mother in the fertility cycle of the earth has always been seen as part of natural religion. It is, therefore, appropriate that such a participant in the secrets of life should share in its spiritual mysteries. The traditions of natural religion have always linked conception and child-bearing with religious rites, thus the authors in their portrayal of the traditional mother are careful to link these two aspects of her character: maternal fidelity and spiritual insignt.

The traditional African woman as portrayed by the West African writers is not separated from the milieu that is changing about her. The writers deal with the conflicts of the women, united to their familiar customs and confused by some of the societal changes. Although some of the characters are primarily traditional in their outlooks, they are beginning, because of circumstances, to question their traditions. Despite the appearance of this beginning of unrest, what links all of the characters described as "traditional" is their general adherence to tribal custom, to the concept of the extended family, to the importance accorded to group goals rather than individual needs, to the acceptance of the role of women defined in terms of motherhood and marriage.

As has been noted in the sections on the changing woman, new roles in society are assumed by these "new" women. What is of primary importance is that the "changing" woman character has goals other than those of becoming wife and

mother; indeed, to accomplish her personal goals she may have to forego these essential roles of the traditional woman. What is also of note is that the changing woman, to achieve her new goals, must consciously separate herself from tribal and familial customs. Thus it is that many of the novelists discuss the prostitute, the woman in politics, and the educated woman when the theme of the changing role of women enters their fiction. As has already been stated, several African political leaders have recognized the importance of female political power (the franchise) and the necessity of adapting male-female roles in their countries if their nations are to enter competitively into the world industrial market. For these reasons there have been movements in several countries, especially those of socialistic persuasion, to alter the marriage laws and customs of their countries and to engage women in political as well as economic organizations.

The prostitute, for the most part a role new to West African society, is a character found commonly in contemporary African fiction, particularly in that about urban life. In both English and French-speaking African literature the prostitute is a woman who has developed a high degree of independence. She has separated herself from her family and her customs to pursue her own interests: money, an exciting life (the decadence of the "high-life" and the clubs), power, a living standard similar to the

former white colonialists. In both groups of literature she alligns herself most generally with those new African leaders who can supply her with the money and the power that she seeks. Although she may have a young lover, this does not prevent her from seeking other lovers who will provide her with the practical necessities of her life. Her "trade" is herself, and for many of the new African women, this is their most accessible item of trade.

As a rule the prostitute is portrayed in current fiction as a woman who is exceptionally beautiful and sensual, who possesses the quality of immediate fascination for men, who is sophisticated, yet simultaneously simple. Thus it is that Jagua Nana, for all of her drive for wealth and position, does not marry the chief who has asked her (actually paid the marriage price for her) because of her affection for her penniless young lover. Not only is Jagua shown to be the superior woman in every sense, the woman never destroyed by the vicissitudes of her fate, but she is also the woman who arranges for a truce between two warring parties so as to avoid bloodshed. She is a character bigger than life, treated both romantically and realistically by her creator, Ekwensi. The romanticism is demonstrated by the erotic domination she exercises over her lovers; the realism by her recognition of her age and her fears of losing her powers of domination.

The greatest difference between the English and French-speaking writers in their portrayal of the prostitute is

the tendency of the English-speaking writers to exaggerate the mysterious power of the prostitute, to make her a spiritual being in her rather earthy, self-serving environment. The French-speaking writers, on the other hand, tend to be far more realistic in their portrayal of the prostitute, and are much more apt to show her as an aging woman, ravaged by her fears and her way of life, unemotional in her relationships with her male clients. Thus it is that the French-speaking writers create characters like Mandari (the aging prostitute, destitute at the end of her life), Penda (a woman who has contempt for most men), Sophie (a prostitute who steals her white lover's cash box and his clothes), Kalisia (a woman who sees the profession of prostitution as one way to make a living). It is the English-speaking writers who create the romantic figures for their readers: Simi (the lady of the slow eyelids who entraps men), Beatrice (who like Dumas' Camille suffers from a languishing illness and has men weeping at her death), Jagua (who with a swing of her hips can settle years of disputes between brothers).

What is of primary importance to note with regard to the role of the prostitute is that the West African writers describe this role as one means for African women to evade the expectations of tribal and familial customs, to assume an independent existence, and to lead an easy life (at least financially) in the city. For the most part the prostitute

is portrayed as a woman who has little desire for married and familial life, who lives almost totally in the present, who through her own actions and manner of living has cast off the essentials of custom regarding women. Her search for autonomy is realized by means of her trade. She, of all women, is allowed to treat men as equals, or even, in some stories, as her veritable slaves. The docile, oblig-ing female of tradition is shattered by the advent of this new character in fiction.

Like the prostitutes, the women who are described in African fiction as women involved in the political futures of their countries are women, who for the most part, have freed themselves from their tribal traditions and have found new traditions and personal autonomy through their political involvement. Not that they are no longer con-cerned with group goals (for at least those women involved in the political "left" are concerned with the community of their political parties), but the old tribal concerns and taboos are no longer theirs. For some of these women the political party has replaced not only family and tribe, but also the traditional goals of marriage and children. Thus it is that Tioumbé stays in Senegal after the Refer-endum of 1958, is approved to continue her struggle for the political independence of her nation, letting her lover return to his own country, Guinea, alone, to begin the building of a new government. Tioumbé's real goal, the new

role she has set for herself, is that of spiritual mother of her nation. She will devote herself totally to the cause of independence, and all else in her life, despite her tenderest feelings, is subjugated to this new cause. It is most particularly in women characters like Tioumbé that the traditional goals of women are shown to be most completely overturned.

Some of the "political" women described in West African novels are portrayed somewhat as are the prostitutes. They are used by men politicians to bring revolutionary (leftist) men to the side of the current African leaders or to spy upon the activities of the opposition. Nokan peoples his novel, Violent Etait Le Vent, with several of these women. Their role is not that of political liberator, but rather that of spy (the employment of eroticism in political gamesmanship). This role, too, is a concept somewhat new to traditional African structures which separated male-female groups (both of which wielded power) in the villages and tribes. This erotic use of women to achieve certain political goals is a further example of the Westernization of African society.

Other women characters in politics are described as new power figures in a new society. Mrs. Eleanor John and the Barrister Mrs. Akilo (A Man of the People) are two women characters of this type. The women have been educated abroad and have been given positions of responsibility in their government. They treat the new male African leaders

as their equals, not in the deferential way of the traditional African wives. These women are fully aware of their power and their importance to the stability of the government for which they work. It is their responsibility to garner the support of the women for the party which they represent. These women, too, are independent of tribal and family customs. They may be married, but their primary interest is not their husbands or children, but their own careers. If it is necessary, or if they want to, they will sleep with some of the African political leaders. (Generally they are represented as beautiful.) What is common to the portrayals of both the prostitutes and the political women is the emphasis on Western eroticism, and the role that the erotic plays in the achievement of autonomy by the women in Africa.

Some of the African women in politics are portrayed as totally new women, imbued with new goals and roles, yet still attached to a man, whi is inextricably united to their political visions. Thus Ekwensi draws the somewhat romanticized picture of Eunice, a beautiful young African, who with her fiance, Max, is involved in building a new "Peoples' Party" in Africa. At the death of her lover, Eunice shoots his killer and is herself imprisoned for murder. Freed after her party comes to power, fully conscious that the dead Max is now a national hero, Eunice is incapable of further political action. Her personal political activity

and her involvement with party goals do not exist without the man responsible for her politicization. In his absence she retreats to inaction.

Some attention is given in West African literature to the women killed in the movement for independence, the female martyrs of the movement. Some attention is also given to the "ordinary" women, those who have not totally freed themselves form the customary roles of wife and mother, but who in the trappings of those roles, discover their political autonomy through the vote, through some form of political activity, through their struggles to earn enough money or raise enough food to feed their families. Both English and French-speaking writers create these characters. It is in the works of the English-speaking African writers that one finds especially the overtones of Western eroticism. In most of the French-African writers' novels, eortic description is almost non-existent, or clearly incidental to the story line.

As was noted in the discussion of the prostitute, the woman in politics is essentially a woman seeking a new way of life for herself. She is independent, somewhat educated, has skills or training different from the average tribal bride, seeks an active role in the political development of her nation. She may be motivated by the same desires as those of the prostitutes: wealth and the wish for an exciting life. On the other hand her motivation may be her own

philosophical principles embodied in some form of African socialism or in a Marxist conception of society. She is an individual; she is aggressive; she is in revolt against traditional customs.

The third type of "new" women discussed was the African woman who is influenced by her European form of education to reject her old customs and values, but who, unlike the prostitute and the woman in politics, has not fully discovered a new role for herself. She, like Flaubert's Madame Bovary, has believed the romanticized literature of Western society, its stories of violent passions, prince charming, and its interpretations of feminine beauty. This character, like Emma Bovary, is somewhat destroyed by her education which causes her to reject her own society, her own roots, and to identify with an unknown, often unseen. culture. It is in this type of new woman that the conflict of cultures is personified. One such character is Ousmane's N'Deye Touti, who to show her independence from tribal custom, fashions herself a brassiere. Unable to cope with the real life about her, threatened by her understanding of the colonial power (her education has brainwashed her to accept their standards of behavior and their judgments of her people), N'Deye avoids confrontation with the real world and retreats, insofar as is possible, into her world of the imagination. It is only through her affair with Bakayoko, a revolutionary, and through her own forced con-

frontation with the fact that the educated black is treated no differently by the whites than the uneducated black, that N'Deye begins to emerage from the confusion brought about by her education and to establish an identity for herself as a black woman, one committed to some social action for her country.

Some other educated women characters are not so fortunate. Sakinétou, the Europeanized wife in "Devant L'Histoire," succeeds only in imatating the worst in Western monogamy. She and her husband love everything European: fimls, books, clothes, entertainment. They have not established any real happiness in their relationship with each other, however, and are an African couple in the tradition of Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? They reject their old African friends and tribal associates. Neither has found new goals. Like N'Deye, Sakinétou is alienated from her own society by her education, yet she has found nothing positive to replace her old customs and traditional goals.

Several writers portray women caught between the old and new traditions: victims of a changing society. Catherine, the mulatress mistress of Falla, is such a woman. Having lived most of her life in France she is not capable of going to Falla's family in Africa to have his baby there, nor does she have any means of practical survival in her present condition. Her acclimatization to Europe has tendered her

unfit for adjustment to her African roots and has resulted in her abandonment of familial obedience.

Achebe's character, Clara, is also a victim of a changing society and her schooling. Educated abroad to be a nurse, she falls in love with Obi, and despite a tribal taboo, becomes engaged to him. The two lovers discover, however, that despite their professed independence from old customs, they cannot assert themselves against the opposition of their families and tribes to this marriage. Clara, because she is an "osu" is not permitted to marry Obi. After submitting to an abortion (also an idea alien to traditional custom) and a subsequent illness, Clara removes herself totally from Obi's life. Her education has enablet her to flaunt custom, but education has not provided her or her lover with the force of will to totally resist the will of their families.

What is of particular interest to some African writers is the portrayal of the conflict of two cultures at war in individuals. Clara, Catherine, N'Deye, are all excellent examples of sites of this warfare. In the female characters of some other writers, however, a synthesis of cultures rather than a war between two cultures is a prominent feature in their characterizations. Adjai and Fina from Le Chant du Lac are two such women characters. Their stated goal is to bring independence to the women of their village who have not had the same opportunities for education as they. They

do not reject all of the customs of their society, however, rather they feel an obligation to help in the development and change of their village and in the beliefs of its inhabitants. Agnes, a minor character in Ô Pays, Mon Beau Peuple!, feels a similar dedication. She believes that polygamy and the legal restrictions on women's rights are deterrents not only to her personal growth and the growth of the women about her, but also to the development of her country. Like Adjai and Fina she seeks means of liberating the women of her country, not because she finds European culture superior to African culture, but because she wants to assist in her nation's advancement.

It is noteworthy that the literary treatment of the educated African woman by both the English- and French-speaking writers reveals these writers' awareness of the role education has played in the present cultural conflicts of the African woman. Without the process of Western education, and the awareness of other cultures which is a concomitant of that education, it is unlikely that a dissatisfaction with the customary roles of women would have been so clearly articulated and that new political, economic and social roles would have been made available to African women.

In conclusion it must be noted that, like every other national society, African society is in the process of constant change. What the English and French-speaking African writers have achieved in their creation of women

characters in their novels is a vivid demonstration of the changes in the traditional role of women, problems accompanying these changing roles, and activities that women have undertaken in changing a society. Although many of the writers have an avowed political ("engaged") cast to their writings, it cannot be said that they are fundamentally polemicists for women's rights, or for a political party. On the other hand, neither are they writers of sociological or anthropological treatises. African writers are artists concerned with telling a story, creating viable and interesting characters, performing their craft within the boundaries of their own education and experiences, and the cultural backgrounds from which they have emerged. That the role of women characters in their novels shows a gradual change from the traditionsl wife-mother to the women active in the development of her country is something to be anticipated. For the African artists, their art is not separated totally from the reality from which it comes. New roles for women are a part of the political and economic reality of their nations; these new roles for women find an expression in their literature.

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