

Abstract

The modern state artificially divides society into public and private spheres, actively creating that reality through both political participants and policy itself. This paper reconstructs that process, focusing first on the pre-colonial relevance of "women's issues," and then early colonial policies and programs which defined women's issues outside the public agenda. Following that, the paper outlines the partial extension of that public agenda to include women on certain terms, but in the name of domestic feminism. The final part of the paper analyzes how public-private distinctions are maintained through political activities and demands which accommodate themselves to those state-imposed boundaries, both nationally and in the name of international feminism. Throughout the paper, public-private distinctions are discussed in terms of how they create the proper setting for capitalist transformation and the long-term interests it serves.

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Women's Politics and Capitalist Transformation in Subsaharan Africa

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WOMEN'S POLITICS AND CAPITALIST TRANSFORMATION IN SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

(Regarding politics) "As for me, I am a woman, so I have 'no mouth' in it."

"From ancient time women have borne men, without women men are nowhere... You know too well that we, the women, shoulder the greater part of the problems in the community."

These two seemingly different comments from Ghanaian women¹ allow some basic questions to be raised about politics and the state. What is politics? Who defines what issues are on the political agenda? And how does the nature of the state expand or contract that agenda? However long-winded and agonizing the debates among political scientists to these questions, the reality people have constructed prior to incorporation into the state has often contrasted with that observed or prescribed. Moreover, people's reality may conflict with the intentions of states, which incorporate categories of people in ways that serve dominant interests and the economic relations they represent.

Africa is a world region in which women are quite obviously involved in economic production. Whether producing and processing food, trading on both large and small scales, or carrying water and gathering firewood, women visibly participate in a wider economy, beyond that of domestic household units. Moreover, Africa stands out above other world regions with its widespread sex-solidarity organizations, suggesting women's collective voice in the polity.

The modern state artificially divides society into public and private spheres, with the public sphere consisting of extra-household affairs and the private sphere, internal household matters. This division of reality into public and private parallels the male and female worlds, whether or not indigenous reality initially conformed to that parallel when the state was erected.² Over time, the state creates that reality, through both political participants and policy itself.

Historically, those who control or protect property and capital have comprised the modern state's active participants and decision makers. With the gradual extension of political participation to men or through male authorities, women have become part of that property, with men controlling and protecting them. A moral and legal policy foundation is laid which defines men as authorities over and representatives of women and children, thus profoundly penetrating the private sphere and male/female power relations within it. Once this foundation is in place, all other male/female issues are defined outside of the public sphere and relegated to a private, apolitical sphere.

Turn-of-the-century Africa had implanted upon it a modern state ediface in the form of colonial rule, which created public and private spheres that

meshed with gender in the same way described above. Initially autonomous from the surrounding society, the colonial state served the diplomatic and economic interests of the colonizer government. The colonial state was manned by the best and brightest of Victorian society, who brought perspectives about appropriate male and female realms to the decision making process. The colonial state aimed to forge a new society, laying a moral and legal foundation for women to be part of a private sphere, controlled and protected by men. As such, women's or gender issues, once part of the indigenous political agenda, were depolitized and women as public actors disappeared.

This foundation did more than simply serve a budding bourgeois class in the colony or the colonizer government, it more importantly created the very conditions necessary for capitalist transformation. Women's labor, no longer defined as work, began to subsidize men and capital. To both foster and enable men's participation in a cash economy, this transformation required that women work in the home, become economically dependent on men, and articulate consumer demands to stimulate the economy. Early capitalism, initiating conditions whereby money attaches to valuation, cannot sustain widespread individual compensation at subsistence levels along with all the inequalities it generates. Instead, it requires one adult (a woman, and often her children) to provide the unpaid labor and income-substituting activities which maintain cheap wages for one family earner, usually the man.

To give added thrust to these harsh economic realities was a gender ideology which portrayed men as "family breadwinners," whose responsibilities were to earn wages to support a family and pay the family or hut tax. As a further ideological incentive, men were symbolically compensated with authority over women for the loss of autonomy their incorporation into the state implied.³ In a colonial context with its superiority-inferiority complex based on conformance to modern "civilization," the domestication of women became a "mark of civilization" for people to strive for.

The economic and ideological components of state-created public and private spheres meant that no policy and program support was relevant, or even justified for women, whatever their breadwinner or economic activities, because they are the responsibility of male breadwinners. State decision makers formulate policies and conduct politics with men in mind, or with the picture of reality whereby men control and represent women. Once in place, the gender distinction undermines women's economic base and the political means to protect that base, thereby generating and perpetuating gender inequality.

Not surprising, women lack much interest in "official" politics and policies, seemingly irrelevant to them. A partial extension of the political agenda and the extension of participation rights offset this tendency somewhat. Women, as the last category to be incorporated into the chain of participants in the modern state, compete with the well endowed, politically experienced, and other late entrants. Moreover, the few women

activists, often among the well endowed, voice concerns compatible with the modern state. Almost invariably, those activities reinforce and reproduce the class relations that the state protects.

As the state enlarges its scope of responsibilities, the public-private distinction is maintained because new policies operate within the confines of state-defined public-private boundaries. Initial state intervention social policy took the form of domestic feminism, which aimed to ameliorate social problems in part through elevating women's status within the home. Domestic feminism ultimately accepts and reinforces the public-private distinction that meshes with gender. Following that, women began to broaden further state intervention, and they were augmented by contemporary feminism which focuses on increasing women's wage labor and political participation. But the ediface within which this operated and the class politics of women activists themselves both limit and confine women's political agenda. Even with socialist attempts to reverse state-protected beneficiaries, the state ediface has so deeply embedded public and private spheres which correspond with gender that real transformation of male/female reality is unlikely.

The depoliticized, state-defined private sphere serves dominant interests in two ways. First, because women's demands are compatible with the public-private distinctions, the dichotomy is perpetuated, and thus maintains the essential foundation for capitalist transformation and the interests it serves. Second, women pursue their interests with class politics in the guise of pluralism. Even if untainted by class politics, their virtually powerless political situation renders them ineffective.

To support these arguments and illustrate their dynamics, I first characterize the political economy of women in indigenous subsaharan African societies and then examine more specifically how the colonial bureaucratic state molded a new reality of public-private dimensions. In particular, I analyze both British and mission education and training programs for women in the name of domestic feminism. Following that, I review the patterns of women's politics in the nationalist and post-independence eras and the state response to those politics. Finally, the effects of outside intervention in the name of contemporary feminism are assessed in terms of how it fosters continued accommodation to the public-private distinction.

THE INDIGENOUS POLITICAL ECONOMY OF WOMEN

Subsaharan African societies were in the past characterized by loose (if any) boundaries between public and private as the "modern" world now knows them. The domestic sphere was extensive, covering more than single conjugal units and incorporating multi-generational compounds and lineages. Besides being active in household and food production, women were legitimate public participants in the political collectivity. They used their work and reproductive capacities to create public valuation of women. As an Asante proverb describes: "It's a woman who gave birth to a man; it's a woman who gave birth to a chief."⁴ In many societies, women's affairs were a comprehensive set of responsibilities ranging from judging infractions among

women to market regulation and community welfare. Women managed those affairs through women's organizations, the very existence of which reflects a collective voice and a means by which women express interests.

Precapitalist (or pre-Islamic, where relevant) West African societies had no public-private dichotomy which corresponded to gender. Since the domestic or private sphere was an integral part of the public sphere, "power, authority, and influence within the "domestic sphere" was de facto power, authority and influence at certain levels within the public sphere."⁵ Economic activities were as much a part of domestic as occupational roles. Kamene Okonjo calls these "dual-sex" political systems, which are defined as assigning specific roles to men and to women and granting women's full participation by right.⁶

As such, women's issues were profoundly politicized and central to the interests of the collectivity. Yet women's public participation often occurred separately, though not insulated from men or the collectivity. An examination of ethnographic and anthropological studies reveals the centrality of women's politics and the relevance of politics to women.⁷

Women's political functions in pre-state and community politics are rich in variety and broadly representative of all subsaharan Africa. In southeastern Nigeria, women's authority structures paralleled men's to function as women's courts, market authorities, and overseers of village welfare. Women managed their own affairs in kinship institutions, age grades, secret and title societies. In markets, women fixed prices, settled quarrels among traders, and imposed fines to enforce their will.⁸ Ibo villages have women's councils, at various territorial levels.⁹ Among the Mende in Sierre Leone, women's secret societies called Bundu, which protect women's rights, serve as political support bases and training grounds for women chiefs, such as for Madam Yoko of the Kpa Mende Confederacy.¹⁰ In Cameroon, Bamileke female farmers may be admitted into the Mensu, a women's society composed of the best cultivators. The Mandjon was a group of important women who administered village work done by women, such as clearing paths.¹¹ Among the Kikuyu in Kenya, women's age-segmented organizations matched those of men's and performed a wide variety of functions, including judgment, mutual aid, initiation into womanhood, cooperative farm labor, religious ceremonies, and disciplinary action among women.¹²

The kingdoms of the central lakes region, southeastern Africa, and West Africa had formally defined female authorities such as Queen Mother, Queen, or other royal positions, some of which still continue today.¹³ The Ohemaa or female ruler among the Akan in Ghana occupied the senior of two stools, a visible repository of political authority. She advised the chief and had judicial jurisdiction over domestic matters and those of the royal family.¹⁴ Elsewhere, women represented women's interests in the political system. Among the Yoruba, the Iyalode, a woman chief selected on the bases of her achievements (rather than birth) served as spokesperson for women and represented their interests in opening new markets and judging infractions.

She, like the Omu among the Igbo, presided over a council and counselors whom she elected.¹⁵ The Bamileke Fong's mother, regarded as the equivalent of a chief, presided over women's secret societies.¹⁶ Still common in contemporary times are women's rotating credit societies, agricultural communal labor groups, and church and cultural associations.¹⁷

However prevalent women's participation, African societies are not unstratified by gender, class, or status.¹⁸ Not all societies had women's associations or authority structures, and in rigidly stratified societies with titled female leaders, the mass of ordinary women were not always part of politics. Regardless of stratification patterns, the pre-capitalist character of most African societies prior to colonialism limited the scope of existing resources which were distributed unevenly (or evenly) by gender, class and status. The colonial state hastened and aggravated this stratification, setting the stage for an expansion in the totality of resources to distribute unevenly, with men accumulating a disproportionate share of opportunities, wage employment, mobility, and credit.

THE COLONIAL STATE: AN IMPOSITION OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE DISTINCTIONS

With the imposition of European colonialism in Africa, the conceptions of work, and its value and reward conformed to those already present in the industrializing world. While women remained active participants in economic production, that production was not valued with rewards in the same way as other (wage) work. With the spread of market economic systems, labor was redefined "so as to make it virtually synonymous with work for which cash or other forms of remuneration were paid."¹⁹ Other productive activities, once recognized as work, eventually were regarded as not quite "economic."

A general obliviousness to women's indigenous political authority eliminated women's political agenda and women as political actors. Old Ashanti men and women in Ghana responded to an historian's query about women in the formal state hierarchy as follows:

The white man never asked us this; you have dealings with and recognize only men, we supposed the Europeans considered women of no account and we know you do not recognize them as we have always done.²⁰

Once a moral and legal foundation of male authority was established, women were defined out of policy and political reality. State formation had high costs,²¹ among which included women's loss of rights in non-state spheres. Former female-managed political responsibilities (such as judicial functions) were removed from their hands to be replaced with the now male-controlled administration or the private market in which women participated but in increasingly marginal ways. Other institutions, such as the church, established an ideology of "civilized life style" and directly incorporated women in what would later be labeled social policy. Moreover, as Achola Pala points out, the imposition of a head or hut tax under colonialism established wives as financial liabilities of husbands.²²

After defining women out of policy and political existence, the state permitted a delegation of the newly conceptualized private sphere to the missions. Mission ideology and activities viewed and prescribed a reality with an extreme dichotomization of gender along the lines of antiquated Victorian norms, with two important consequences. First, "modern" standards were set, which men and women used to evaluate themselves and each other. Those among the earliest exposed to education, missions, and social policy drew from and augmented a privileged class which emulated and internalized these standards. In this standard, women are helpmates, appendages, and financial dependents on men as well as moral guardians of the home, family, and children. Second, the framework initiated a transformation of gender toward conformity with industrializing class society, where women enable and stimulate male work force productivity through home labor (which in Africa includes food production) and consumer demand as well as serve as a low-skill reserve labor force. In this conception, women are also politically conservative and thus help maintain a given political order. The following specific examples of mission and government programs illustrate these dynamics.

While in theory, British Indirect Rule philosophy had "no intention of using public authority to impose standards of European society," its deferral of education to the missions had very profound impacts on families and private lives.²³ Early colonial governments put little or no energy into public education, especially for girls, but they did support and cooperate with mission education. As late as the 1950s, mission stations still controlled 80 to 90 percent of schools, with supplementary government grants-in-aid provided.²⁴ Christian missions, as custodians of morality extending into all areas of life, considered family life the legitimate object of social intervention, given its role in inculcating values, socializing children, and the like. The missions established home and marriage training programs for African women which provided resilient models for later governmental "development" efforts.

Early female education was justified to provide "special education in various forms of domestic life" and "civilized homes and helpmates" for educated Christian men.²⁵ The initial volumes of the International Review of Missions, a quarterly journal begun in 1912, contained descriptions of special work among women and a regular section which was called "The Ideal of Womanhood as a Factor in Missionary Work." An example among the Kongo spells out the gender-distinct forms of education.

Our youths (men?) are being trained in industrial arts and our girls to use their hands, make their own clothes and above all to be purer wives and better mothers."²⁶

The British colonial historian Lord Hailey stated that there were "few mission stations where some girls or women are not receiving a valuable if limited training in the domestic sciences."²⁷

Also promoting gender-distinct education was the Phelps-Stokes Fund which sponsored two commissions to African countries to introduce the experience of practical industrial education for Blacks in the American South. A central notion of industrial education was that it be adapted to what became educator-defined "needs of the people." A commission report recommended more schools for girls, including instruction

for the special needs of the young women. These schools will necessarily be concerned first of all with the preparation of food; second, with household comforts; third, with the care and feeding of children, and the occupations that are suited to the interests and ability of women.²⁸

While technical education was promoted for all, women's technical education was a special type: "The chemistry of cooking or the art of needlework afford efficient media for education."²⁹ An aftermath of the commissions, the Jeanes Schools, established in various colonies during the 1920s and 1930s, saw the ennoblement of home and motherhood as key components in elevating women's status and civilization itself; "home development" was the "mark of civilization," and woman "personifies home influence as no other member of society can."³⁰

Women's work in agriculture was recognized in the works of colonial historians, outside education commissions, and mission journals. Yet there was a persistent refusal to recognize the reality or legitimacy of alternative women's activities and then to provide policy and program support to farmers who were women. Rather, the ever-present sewing, needlework, and cooking programs institutionalized household tasks as women's responsibilities and thereby extended domesticity without providing women with support to transform their subsistence farm work in the commercialized economic context. Lord Hailey remarked that it is "difficult converting people to agricultural practices where established custom regards it as proper for women."³¹ Women, evidently, were not people.

Beginning in the early 1940s, the colonial state increased attention to social policy as a result of changes in the international arena, the growth of African nationalism, and colonial development and welfare act funding. "Mass education" and "community development" became the buzzwords of the time, and new journals with this developmental ideology disseminated social program models. A focus both on the "masses" and on "communities" necessarily integrated women more fully into administrative activity, on somewhat different, but still familiar domestic terms.

Various articles and conference reports commented on the "neglected," but "vital role of women" in community development.³² Still, mission training programs of the early 1950s gave priority to domesticity for women. Missionaries described a rigidly disciplined girls boarding school which adapts girls to "a more highly developed life, more closely conformed to modern ways" in three training stages. In stage one, girls live in

dwellings which resemble those of the village; in the next, they go into more modern buildings where "they learn to cook on a stove and to keep the house clean and pleasant," and in the last years,

which are devoted entirely to domestic training and child welfare, the senior girls live in approximately the same conditions as students in a European domestic-economy school. The principle adopted in this boarding school, a principle, none the less, which has been much debated, is to take the little girls between six and eight years of age and to keep them, without ever letting them go home, until they marry. (my emphasis added)³³

Supplementing the individualistic approach to increase women's domestic skills were group strategies which, besides reflecting a community development mass approach, were administratively cost-effective, given the volunteerism upon which implementation was based. In the homecraft movement, women were trained to set up clubs to teach cooking, child care, hygiene, sewing, and mending. In a Ugandan school, girls were also taught English besides cooking, sewing, and needlework.

They need to know enough (English) to be able to follow printed instructions in books on domestic subjects: to use a recipe, to act on instructions about laundry, to make cushions, curtain covers, etc., to use paper patterns and to understand simple books on childcare...(In addition, English enables them) to make contact in the simple level of domestic interests with English women whom they meet.³⁴

Secondary schools even today contain a "hidden curriculum" to prepare girls primarily for marriage with classes in housecraft.³⁵

Although shrouded by domesticity, some programs addressed women as farmers. Belated as it was, colonial officials must have recognized that women's food production enabled widespread male out-migration for wage employment and eliminated the need for a "family wage" to be paid to men (however much this contradicted the ideology promulgated). Moreover, mission schools, Jeanes schools, and non-governmental organizations like Girl Guides and the YWCA trained women in leadership and social work and provided arenas in which women could interact and share experiences. In Kenya, these experiences produced the first generation of national women's leaders whose ideology, however, was formed by the gender confines pervading education.³⁶

Besides the training for domesticity, the public-private distinction conceptualizes women as consumers who motivate men. A colonial official in Kenya described a deliberate policy "to create female competition and jealousy," to spur men's productivity.

She must be educated to want a better home, better furnishings, better food, better water supplies, etc. and if she wants them she will want them for her children. In short, the sustained effort from the male will only come when the woman is educated to the stage when her wants are never satisfied.

Occupational training was instituted that matched not only the sex-segregation of the industrialized world, but also the conception of women as secondary compared to men primary earners. A proposal in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) called for females to be educated as "children's nurses" and "girl domestic servants." The "Chambers of Mines and Commerce have already forseen the latter as a means of releasing further supplies of African male labor to industry."³⁸ (In contrast to other world regions, men often work as domestic servants in Africa.)

Women's indigenous political authority was invisible, except in periods of crisis. Among famous incidents associated with colonial misperceptions about women's power were the Aba Riots of depression-era Nigeria. In response to rumors that Native Authorities were to impose new taxes, women utilized their traditional political institutions, Mikiri (meetings), to mobilize what has been termed a "women's war." Mikiri had always provided a forum for women to discuss their interests as traders, farmers, wives, and mothers; its most important functions involved promoting and regulating women's major activity, trading. Women's main weapons included "sitting on a man" (or a woman), boycotts, and strikes; "to sit on" meant gathering at a compound, dancing, and singing scurrilous songs detailing grievances. In 1929, these mechanisms were used against Native Authorities when women demonstrated in what were termed "mobs," "operating in a state of frenzy," stamping, making noise, and destroying offenders' huts.³⁹ In Pare District, Tanzania, during the 1940s, women participated in tax riots against Native Authorities. Following men's inability to influence the situation, women mobilized themselves to stone officials, after which authorities perceived the situation as taking on "new and uncontrollable dimensions." The graduated tax idea was dropped the following year.⁴⁰

In a public-private world, however, women maintain the established political order. During the nationalist-inspired guerrilla movement (labeled Mau Mau) in Kenya, outreach to women (due to what was termed "the innate conservatism of the female sex") was advocated to put a brake on "extremist" husbands. The government-initiated Maendeleo ya Wanawake women's group was associated with government rehabilitation efforts, and at a 1955 conference on "African Women in the Development of Kenya," the Commissioner for Community Development and Rehabilitation, T. G. Askwith, stated that

...this movement is doing a tremendous amount to overcome Mau Mau. The clubs in the Emergency areas are providing rallying points for women who are opposed to Mau Mau....This is not just tea and buns. We are doing something of great practical value.⁴¹

What was most remarkable about this effort, however, was the inability to see divergence between the gender-imposed ideal and the indigenous reality.

I cannot resist the idea that if the Kikuyu wives had really been in the know and consulted from the beginning on the Mau Mau movement (I know this is speculation and that there are many women now in the movement) there would have been no Mau Mau. (emphasis added)⁴²

A wide variety of mission and development programs laid the foundation for a society that was divided into public and private, at one and the same with men and women. The private world was penetrated in ways which institutionalized household tasks as women's responsibilities and all else, as men's, thereby justifying and perpetuating the neglect of women in other public policies. Women's politics in the nationalist and post-independence eras work within this given reality, as the following section develops.

WOMEN'S POLITICS: NATIONALIST AND POST-INDEPENDENCE ERAS

Nationalist movements, by their very nature, focus on the struggle for independence, rather than on class or gender interests. Women participated in nationalist movements, the outcomes of which were, however, grounded in a continuation of the modern state with its now established public-private distinctions. Either as members of a privileged class articulating interests that benefit that class, or among the coopted and controlled in authoritarian politics, ineffectively advocating redistributive issues, women's politics perpetuates a public-private distinction compatible with capitalist transformation.

Nationalism and Depoliticized Women's Issues. Nationalist movements drew initially from the educated, urbanized, World War II veterans, and wage-earning populace, most of whom were men. As mobilization extended in the 1950s, women became active participants, both in protest activity and in guerrilla movements. African nationalist leaders such as Modiko Keita (Mali) and Sekou Toure (Guinea) publicly praised women's participation in militant action. Toure even exhorted women to deny sex to husbands unless they joined the party. Women collaborated in the famous Guinea 1953 strike which weakened the French colonial government. Women traders refused to sell chickens, eggs, and milk to the French; they, and peasant women, collected rice for the strikers. Ghanaian women were actively involved in the nationalist struggle, providing financial support and organizing trade boycotts. Madame Quezzin Coulibay (Ivory Coast) mobilized Abidjan women to invade prisons where party members were jailed at 3:00 a.m., surprising guards; a jolted government released party leaders two days later.⁴³ Women also were active in guerrilla movements in both support and military functions from Algeria, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Angola to Kenya.

The Sudanese women's movement of 1946-74 started simultaneously with the nationalist movement and Communist Party. The Sudanese Women's Union,

successor to the earlier Women's League, published a magazine and articulated goals which could be easily accommodated by the state, such as equal pay for equal work, extended maternity leaves, and secular as opposed to Islamic divorce laws. Called "prostitutes" by conservative forces after independence, the Women's Union faced a rival group of "reactionary women, hastily organized" and soon experienced demise. Growing once again after the 1964 revolution, the Union saw government responsiveness to reform measures they had pressed for. When the Communist Party fell out of favor with the Nimieri regime, however, the Union was abolished. Thereafter, the Sudanese Socialist Union established a Women's Affairs Committee.⁴⁴ Who benefits from the kinds of measures women advocated? Equal pay and maternity leave for work in wage labor exclude the overwhelming majority of ordinary women workers. Elsewhere on the continent, there is a dismal regularity to this cycle of narrow goals that serves select interests, of political vulnerability; and of leadership rotation or replacement.

The implantation of male government under colonialism, its continuation, and the simultaneous depoliticization of most women's issues to the private sphere became institutionalized at independence and thereafter. Former women's issues have been eliminated from the public or political agenda. Women's agricultural and trade activities are neither viewed as economic, nor measured in national statistics, the indicators for which were developed in states with long-standing gender dichotomies. Deprived of public resources to build on and extend their economic base in this commercialized economy, or even the "need" for those resources given the prevailing gender ideology, the resource gaps between men and women become aggravated. Any and all studies which examine the comparative male-female distribution of agricultural services, from Ghana and Senegal to Tanzania, Kenya, and Botswana find that women get less extension, training, and credit than men. Such distribution patterns are bound to reduce women's comparative productivity.⁴⁵ Yet these phenomena are not viewed as "political."

Women's Politics as Class Politics. While women share commonalities from their reproductive capacities, the overall sexual division of labor, and the state conception of women, there are obvious differences among women based on their class position and resulting differences in opportunities and lifestyles.⁴⁶ Women have not been universally disadvantaged, thus suggesting the importance of sex and class interaction in politics. Given the near universal advantage of those with more education, money and land in politics, women with those resources are politically advantaged, and can acquire skills appropriate in given regimes along with a sense of "winnable" political goals. That very winnability narrows the political agenda to demands compatible with the conception of women that the regime can accommodate. Moreover, very rarely do women activists in conventional politics articulate genuinely redistributive issues. Rather, their issues benefit themselves in a particular class. Thus, despite the appearance of pluralism, women's politics are another dimension of class politics, wherein the political process is used to advance the interests of those already privileged.

A narrow focus on legal issues, specifically marriage and divorce law reform, has taken up much of women's political energy. And again, questions must be raised about who would use and benefit from these reforms. The National Council of Ghanaian Women focused consistently on marriage law reform, but after years of parliamentary debate, bills were finally tabled.⁴⁷ The Ugandan Council of Women also dwelt on marriage and divorce laws.⁴⁸ While the Kenya (now independent) Maendeleo ya Wanawake national women's organization expressed public concerns over a wide range of issues such as female deference to men, male authority, and rural women's extensive labor burdens, group political activities addressed marriage and divorce law reform and the Affiliation Act which, before abolished by an all-male assembly, offered unmarried mothers and offspring financial support. The wider issues and concerns, however, were tinged with the gender ideology of colonialism and built on an idealized conception of womanhood.

European women had for years condemned the everyday drudgery they saw locally....It is not the onus of physical labour that evokes the greatest outcry but the norms of deference. Much of the criticism of work was made not on medical grounds but for its symbolic importance--women being treated as 'beasts of burden.'...The Swahili term of respect for a European woman, 'memsahib,' should be extended in its use (to) African women.⁴⁹

Women's persistent, if ineffective demands for legal change in family law were consistent with the conception of the state. While not denying the fundamental importance of equitable legal foundations, such goals would neither have transformed gender realities, nor affected the mass of ordinary women.

The spokeswomen who represent organizations in conventional politics have absorbed an ideology of public-private that reinforces values associated with capitalist transformation. The president of Maendeleo ya Wanawake stated during International Women's Year that a "woman's place is in the home," and that a woman "should lay more stress on her domestic role." Like the individualism and symbolic affirmations of equality expressed in the Kenyan media, she lays responsibility for sex disparities in individual women's hands, who by "working harder" and proving they "can work as hard as men," can "go forward."⁵⁰

Besides reinforcing the public-private distinctions, women activists who ostensibly represent women's interests may pursue policies that benefit their own class. Local elite women in western Kenyan community politics requested a women's center during an electoral campaign infused with outside donor funding. In the past, women's centers were associated with sewing clubs, in which those women participated at five times the rate of ordinary women, and absorbed therefrom the associated gender ideology. The ensuing sewing and knitting program was both irrelevant and time-consuming for the majority of women farmers. A special marketing arrangement for selling vegetables to the distant township through the externally funded cooperative was known only to the elite women. In the distribution of agricultural

extension training and credit, wealthy women farm managers benefitted in ways similar to corresponding men farm managers, thus obscuring uneven gender distribution among the rest. Should the wealthier women take up this redistributive issue in Kenya's zero-sum politics, more for other women means less for them and their economic stakes lie more in their households than in solidarity with other women.⁵¹

Elsewhere, the promotion of nursery schools has been called "prestige politics." These usually fee-based nursery schools, but still subsidized by government, are only affordable to the already well-off.

State Construction of Demands. The now established state and the economy it has nurtured either cannot or refuses to cope with comprehensive gender issues. As everywhere, the state itself plays a vital role in structuring people's demands in ways that benefit the class relations on which it is based. Even if women do not actively seek to focus on family law and welfare issues, the institutions with which they interact virtually compel them to do so. In program terms, home economics and community development activities such as handicraft training dominate government orientations toward women. Home economics, part and parcel of Ministries of Agriculture, is a separatist approach to women, representing domestic feminism at its height since it aims to elevate women within the home, thereby solidifying the public private gender dichotomy. As "social" policies outside economic and development priorities, such programs are marginal.

Contemporary states have established women's bureaus and women's ministries in government to initiate special programs for women and/or to monitor existing programs. The United Nations has long advocated the creation of what it terms "women's machinery," a practice which expanded after the U.N. International Women's Year Conference in 1975. While these kinds of changes coincide with a new type of feminism which focuses more on women's wage labor and political participation and thus holds the promise for more comprehensive women's issues, governments respond largely in terms of domestic feminism, now nearly etched in stone with decades of policy and program precedents, or let programs shrivel for lack of budgetary commitment. Bureau advocates face a bureaucratic elite which has absorbed and internalized the notion of women as domestic helpmates and guardians of the home. As James Brain concludes in an analysis of women in seemingly progressive Ujamaa villages of Tanzania,

the sentiments of relatively uneducated and unsophisticated men settlers were far more in accord with the views of President Nyerere regarding justice for women than were those of the ruling elite, who in rejecting colonial rule have nevertheless retained attitudes about appropriate sex roles not very different from those found in bourgeois Victorian England.⁵³

And meanwhile, governments have contained into manageable terms energized political women who are seeking to expand the political agenda.

Structurally, most women's bureaus, women's ministries, and advisory committees are attached to social or welfare ministries of low priority and low budgetary resources. Oki Ooko-Ombaka concludes, in a U.N. study which analyzes the effectiveness of this "national machinery" for women based on questionnaire responses from 79 countries (including Africa), that women are "still a marginal consideration in development strategies."⁵⁴

Political Marginality and Women's Political Withdrawal. On the whole, women face a political system whose agenda they neither control nor influence systematically. With the historical legacies of their issues (becoming non-issues) and their minute representation in the largely male activist pool, women's politics are fairly ineffectual. Women activists play pluralist politics, but often lose pluralist political games, being late joiners and voicing social issues not seen as developmental or economic. Women's political marginality in various kinds of regimes is illustrated in the following examples.

Women traders in Abidjan have unsuccessfully utilized various strategies to reduce market rental fees, including delegations and fund raising to facilitate entree with officials. Past support women gave to the mayor, party, and President was forgotten.⁵⁵ Women beer brewers in Nairobi, while successful in securing some household units for women in a relocation project, piped water for their community, and delays in slum unit demolition, have no access to formal jobs and education and face constant police harassment and consequent insecurity at the margin of survival.⁵⁶ Still, there is some evidence of women voting the interests of their specific occupational group, such as women traders, breadbakers, butchers, and fishmongers in Ghana.⁵⁷ However important franchise rights, voting does little to expand political agendas or control officials in between elections or when there are no elections.

Women fare no better in corporatist or authoritarian regimes which either create and absorb women (and sometimes dismiss them at whim) or accommodate them in minimal ways. To centralize voluntary associations and subordinate them to the CPP (party), Nkrumah replaced the Federation of Ghana Women (thought to support the opposition) with the National Council of Ghana Women. Political parties following the CPP have also had women's party wings, but they are little more than paper organizations during elections.⁵⁸ In Zambia, the urban UNIP (party) Women's Brigade polices markets to eliminate "profiteering" among petty traders.⁵⁹ The women's party wing in Mali cannot support a women's issue that the party does not support, according to women party officials.⁶⁰ The National Congress of Sierra Leone Women (Congress), the women's wing of the All Peoples Congress (APC), theoretically links women's issues to APC policy formation. Women in the Congress gain wide support for the party both through recruiting members and serving larger party needs. For example, women challenged soldiers during an attempted coup and created a women's militia unit to protect the Prime Minister after an assassination attempt. Returns to members, most of them middle- and low-income petty traders, are questionable although they pay entry and monthly fees. The following account of a vegetable seller's views is said to be typical of members.

She feels that she has to appear in favor of the government and join Congress or else they would be thrown out of their one-room apartment and her husband would be thrown out of his job....She finds being a member financially impoverishing....She is a member of Congress because all the people in her yard are APC supporters.⁶¹

While socialist regimes expand the public agenda somewhat to include women's issues or to involve women, much of the private sphere remains ignored, cost-effective as that still is for a fledgling economy. Moreover, women's labor obligations in the public sphere appear to increase. In Mozambique, for example, about ten percent of the population now works in communal villages and producer cooperatives which represent models toward which Mozambique is striving. Women are encouraged to participate in production, and in villages with what have been termed "correct political orientation," they are remunerated directly for their labor. (Presumably, husbands appropriate the value of wives' labor in villages with "incorrect" political orientations.) But domestic work and food production remain unremunerated. Although FRELIMO (party) promotes women's political participation and reserves one of seven leadership positions for a woman, the woman represents OMM (the women's party wing) and is thereby relegated to party-defined women's issues such as mobilizing women and fund-raising for creches and orphanages.⁶² Still, a partial extension of public into private spheres exists in party aims to socialize child care.

However limited or ineffectual women's politics, women's more common response is to withdraw from conventional politics into more autonomous management of their own affairs to the extent this is still possible with an ever-expanding state. In Ghana, women are largely indifferent to conventional politics, while active in their own economic associations. When queried, women claim no concern with politics, as revealed in the opening quote for this article: "As for me, I am a woman, so I have 'no mouth' in it." In exchange, women want no interference from men or government.⁶³ Elsewhere, the elaborately organized market women of Lagos exert little pressure on government outside of protests against blatant corruption and political incompetence, even for better market services.⁶⁴ Enormous gaps between men and women in voting participation, and considerable gaps in organizational participation researchers deemed "political", have been discovered in Nigeria.⁶⁵

How is this great divergence between elaborate sex-solidarity organizations in indigenous polities and limited participation in official politics explained? To paraphrase Jane Jaquette, women may find conventional politics for negotiable women's issues to be irrelevant to their needs. Women are alienated from the process and to a lesser degree, from the goals of politics.⁶⁶

With the prevailing public-private distinctions, women's issues are not conceptualized as political, thus rendering politics of little use to them. As the following example reveals, the lingering domestic focus of the

Tanzanian national women's organization is unable or unwilling to articulate the real politics of gender in conventional politics. The Umoja ya Wanawake ya Tanzania (UWT), the women's wing of the party, is involved primarily in daycare, maternal/child health issues, and more minimally, in economic activities such as cooperatives. In a participatory project utilizing Freire-like consciousness raising techniques, women analyze their situation as follows.

Women do not work as hard as the men. They work harder. When we go to the field, he sits under a tree telling me where to cultivate and then complains when the work is not done quickly enough.

Why is it that men leave us to carry all the baggage? I go to the field with a hoe on my shoulder and a child on my back. He carries nothing. Then I return with the hoe, the child and a huge container of water on my head. Still he carries no part of the load.

The money is spent on drinking, not on us or on the children. We share the work, or do more of it, but he takes all the money telling us it is his--that he earned it. It is a joke.

Here, colonialism and capitalism have aggravated an indigenously gender-stratified society. Neither UWT nor development activities in the name of contemporary feminism support activities to question or transform a "gender system in which men control the lives of wives and children but are not economically responsible for them."⁶⁷

With both their marginality in conventional politics and the depoliticization of their issues, it is not surprising that many women withdraw or are alienated from contemporary politics, preferring instead to manage what is left of their own affairs autonomously. While the ability to remain autonomous suggests the still limited power of the state, women's autonomy also magnifies gender participation gaps in conventional politics and thus women's continued marginality in those politics.

CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL FEMINISM

Just as outside forces influenced women in the name of domestic feminism, so also does contemporary international feminism influence women. While domestic feminism lingers under the home economics rubric, contemporary international feminism aims to increase women's political and economic power and thus diverges from the emphasis on elevating women's status within the home. As such, contemporary feminism taps and ultimately builds on the former realities of gender in pre-state Africa and in women's politics with, however, one important exception. Contemporary feminism--whether socialist or liberal--accepts the nation-state as a given, thereby raising no questions about the separation of public and private. Feminists advocate women's integration on better terms into a preferred political and economic (again, socialist or capitalist) system.

The approach of strengthening women's groups within the confines of a given state is illustrated in resolutions from recent international feminist workshops and U.N. conferences. At the international workshop, "Feminist Ideology and Structures in the First Half of the Decade for Women," in which women from Senegal, Tanzania, and Kenya participated, women called for a powerful, grass-roots women's movement which can "mobilize women to exert pressure on government and other structures" and enable women "to develop a sense of power, to influence and redirect the processes of change."⁶⁸ The second section of the Program of Action for the last half of the U.N. Decade for Women calls for cooperation between "government and non-governmental organizations, women's and youth groups," and a host of other organizations. More specifically, it calls for government recognition and support for women's organizational activities, for solicitation of input in planning, and for non-governmental organizations to support government efforts with research, attitudinal change, liaison, and program development. Grass-roots organizations will "serve as a forum for women to develop self-reliance and will even enable women to obtain real access to resources and power and to shoulder greater socio-economic and political responsibilities within their communities and their society."⁶⁹ While U.N. women's conferences, and their mix of liberal and socialist feminists, New International Economic Order advocates, and others, spend considerable time identifying and debating the source of women's subordination, from male prejudice to international capitalism, their solutions are limited to practical, incremental bureaucratic reform, and women's pressure group activity.⁷⁰

Contemporary political-economic feminists make no grand demands, much less call for the transformation of the state. Rather, stronger women's interest groups are called upon to press for issues within the confines of given institutions. The explanation for this reticence is obvious to those working with existing bureaucracies, states, and international institutions. The resistance to a redistribution of social values and resources along gender egalitarian lines and a redefinition of politics itself is profound, and politically weak women's groups are easy to ignore or dismiss. Consequently, active women articulate narrow goals, using grounds for which the institutions will be receptive. This results in building on existing conceptions of men and women, however state-defined, and using arguments which advance the interests of institutions, which may or may not conflict with those of women. The politics of contemporary feminism is implicitly a politics of pluralism, and its goals of more egalitarian policies are "reformist, pluralist, and incremental," through separate women's interest groups.⁷¹ The separatist approach often creates separatist regime responses which are isolated and vulnerable, thus perpetuating women's marginality.

While deeper approaches querying what is political and the state's conception of public and private are not found on the whole, there are two important exceptions in contemporary feminism. First, the previously discussed women's machinery is called upon to monitor all policies for their effects on women and men. This conception implicitly argues that women are

affected by all public activity, whether intended or unintended. Second, contemporary feminism politicizes the dormant issue of women's unpaid work on which the society and men depend, but for which there is no valuation, measurement, or compensation. As such, it questions the artificial economic split between goods and services of exchange and use value created in capitalism, even though governments and international organizations have no way to grapple with the issue.

The dilemmas inherent in contemporary feminism can be found in the examination of a women's program office in the U.S. Agency for International Development, a bilateral assistance agency. Congress in 1973 added an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act which mandated AID to "integrate women in development." After the Women in Development Office was established in 1974 and a series of changes in leadership, Arvonne Fraser was appointed as the Coordinator to head this sparsely staffed and budgeted office. Fraser exemplifies the contemporary feminist emphasis on increased women's political and economic participation. Such an approach is also a mainstay of liberal American values related to disadvantaged groups. Less than a decade before, Congressman Donald Fraser successfully introduced the Title IX amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act, calling for popular participation in development for AID-assisted efforts. Vague in its conception, and altered in its interpretation within AID, it reflected a liberal faith in the ability of independent, private organizations to pressure mediator governments which arbitrate among competing interests to produce responsive policies.

The Coordinator was in a difficult position in this recalcitrant bureaucracy, long accustomed to including women in development projects solely in home economics or family planning. She was a woman executive vastly outnumbered by male counterparts, who was a self-defined feminist (a term assiduously avoided in agency dealings, however), promoting redistributive policy in a women's program office. Feminist expectations, both her own and the constituency she was appointed to represent, in a male-dominated bureaucracy, expose one to considerable cross pressures. The Coordinator was quite conscious of the divergent pulls of feminist and AID program responsibilities when she stated in a Radcliffe-sponsored panel on Women and Power.

If I am too much of a feminist, I lose credibility as a policy maker and manager. If I am not enough of a feminist, I lose credibility in my job, which is to help women overseas. I lose credibility with those outside whom I need to do my job effectively.⁷²

The Coordinator forged new ties with disparate women contractors, women within agricultural universities, including an uneasy alliance with home economists, and women and development researchers generally; and she strengthened ties with the coalition of groups interested in international development. Arvonne Fraser's long experience in Washington lobbying efforts, political savvy, contacts on the Hill, and constituency links

provided the issue with its strongest source of power. Constituency mobilization, common to individual offices within AID (a bureaucracy always searching for political support for an unpopular issue) is also an important part of contemporary feminist ideology.

The Coordinator aimed to move initiatives on women out of the Women in Development Office and to increase the capacity of outside groups to make demands according to their own defined interests. This thinking extended internationally, with the belief that women in developing countries must be politically empowered to make claims upon government in their own terms. In program terms, this approach resulted in (fairly minimal) AID efforts to build on the economic and organizational activities of women and to promote better access to education along with men.

Since 1977, the Women in Development Office has stressed the development of women's organizations, as traced in the Office policy paper, its 1978 Congressional Report, and FY80 Budget Submission. In testimony before congress, Arvonne Fraser addressed

....the role that women's organizations play. I have come to believe that organizations are important, that problems only get solved by groups. Maybe this is typically American, but I think that women's organizations, both international and indigenous ones, are a means to development.⁷³

The Women in Development Office has an influence on international feminism, given its strong presence at U.N. women's conferences, its support of policy-oriented research (however minimally budgeted), and its networking efforts with women's government and non-governmental organizations elsewhere in the world. At the same time, it is only one of numerous actors in this somewhat fragmented international movement. The Office's organizational strategy efforts peaked in a dual-purpose conference in September, 1979, which drew together developing country women's organizations and OECD/DAC representatives for a meeting to examine both the role of women's organizations in development and means to collaborate among donors, governments, and organizations.

In project terms, this concern for the development of women's organizational capacity has taken form in the "women-specific" as opposed to "women's components" projects, the latter of which are (usually very minor) subprojects in larger efforts which include women and men. In the typically small-scale women-specific projects, women are the sole beneficiaries in groups such as credit unions, cooperatives, and national women's organizations which formulate programs for women. While development justifications are primary for these women-specific projects, they are also designed to strengthen women's organizational capacities which may then lead to the generation of political demands and ultimate political integration.

Women-specific projects are unpopular in AID for their high administrative costs, their seeming preferential or compensatory policy

thrust (however overwhelmingly AID funds are directed toward men, given the mere 2 percent of AID regional bureau funds going to women in development projects), and their indirect political intent. AID had never been comfortable with the Title IX amendments, with one faction interpreting the mandate as separate political development projects such as cooperatives, and the other faction, as infusing programs with sensitivity to distributive effects of programs, supportive policy contexts, and greater assistance from indigenous staff. The latter faction emerged supreme, however much those sensitivities are undermined in the current administration. As a partial reincarnation of Title IX, "Faction 1," there was little receptivity to the Women in Development Office's promotion of women-specific projects.

Women-specific projects in Africa have involved rotating credit, agricultural training, and intermediate technology. Of the 45 on-going women in development projects in Africa during FY80-81, only ten were women-specific. The more political of these included assistance to national women's organizations in Ghana which aim to increase women's income through cottage industry and lightened labor burdens, to the aforementioned, Freire-like consciousness-raising efforts with Arusha women in Tanzania, and to the Zambian Council for Social Development, via the U.S. Overseas Education Fund. Women in the innovative Arusha project subsequently created a shop which competed with the local party official's shop. The conflict was later resolved at mid-level party branches where women were authorized to continue, thus demonstrating their newfound political "muscle."⁷⁴ Still, this was the very project that was criticized earlier for its failure to deal with the larger gender issues women raised. Whether AID and other bureaucracies can cope with these kinds of development issues is questionable.

The Reagan administration transition, with its new political appointees, in both the Office and AID as a whole, reduced the emphasis on separate women's organizations, unless they represent the only way to reach women in the implementation process. Besides, their sometimes welfarist approach was now criticized in this administration's cost-effective orientation and disinterest in social issues. In its stead, women's economic activities are promoted, as women's integration is seen as the most economical way to reach higher productivity.⁷⁵ Whether this different emphasis nudges more internal change in a bureaucracy still overwhelmingly oriented toward its usual operational mode is yet to be seen. Whatever the outcome, and whatever the administration (liberal or conservative), these bureaucratic strategies operate within the confines of those organizational interests and given state structures.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Public-private distinctions are social creations which create the proper setting for capitalist transformation and the long-term interests it serves. Much of precolonial Africa, while gender stratified, had no such distinctions. As such, gender issues were political issues, reflected in organizations and authority structures, and both relevant and central to

society. The colonial state actively created gender distinctions, however much they diverged from indigenous reality. In so doing, men became the public actors, both economic and political, and women, the private, apolitical guardians of the household. The dichotomy was a hierarchical one, allocating men greater social valuation, and women, subordination.

After decades, this ideology gradually penetrated educational institutions, law, policy assumptions, and government programs, thus making its way into people's consciousness and political participants' agendas. While the notion of public itself has extended somewhat into the private sphere through social policy, both the state and politically active women negotiate demands compatible with the public-private distinction, thus reinforcing that distinction. As one of many plural competitors in the political process now, women face overwhelming odds against further extending the political agenda and women within it. Besides, women's politics, like other politics, is dominated by class interests which perpetuate a political agenda inimical to comprehensive gender redistribution. Contemporary international feminism aims to chip away at the public-private distinction, but in so doing, plays pluralist, incrementalist politics and encourages an instrumental approach toward women in either capitalist or socialist economies into which women are to be integrated. Colonial administrators' notions about women's "vital role in development" sound quite familiar to contemporary feminism's message. Meanwhile, women secure only crumbs and token recognition from the bureaucracy and state.

In this article, the state is viewed as a relatively autonomous actor, forging gender identities and institutionalizing them in law and policy. The processes synthesized here raise questions about whether the state can ever accommodate women's comprehensive gender concerns, or whether women can transform this ediface responsible for undermining their economic and political activities. Reformers seek redress from the state, in the form of domestic or contemporary feminism. But can the large, contemporary state, which undermined women's centrality to politics, be part of the solution for women? Many women remain aloof from politics, preferring autonomy or resisting incorporation, however much the state envelops them ultimately. Still, the reality that African women have constructed lingers and remains a vision for a world without the state leviathan.

NOTES

1. The first quote is from an unidentified woman, cited in The Changing Position of Women in Ghana, Agnes Klingshirn (Dissertation, Marburg/Lahn, 1971), p. 230. The second quote is from the Queen Mother of Tsito, and is cited in The Village Woman in Ghana, Jette Bukh (Uppsala: Scandanavian Institute of African Studies, 1979), p. 93.
2. The public-private distinction is drawn from various intellectual traditions. For its use in western political thought, see Jean Elshtain, Public Man, Private Women (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) and Zillah Eisenstein, The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism (New York: Longman, 1981), p. 25. Marxists have addressed the transformation of the family under capitalism, but they are vague on the specifics of state action; see Eli Zaretsky, Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life (New York: Harper Colophon, 1973) and F. Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1948; originally published in 1884). An influential collection by anthropologists divides society into public and domestic (the latter composed of my use of private); see Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds., Woman, Culture and Society (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974) and later reflections of Rosaldo, "The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understanding," Signs 5, 3 (Spring, 1980), pp. 389-417. Anthropologists' ahistorical, twentieth century descriptions of societies, divorced from their incorporation into the state, reinforce the notion that women are forever relegated to a private, apolitical sphere.
3. Many pre-capitalist state societies have also imposed a public-private dichotomy, such as in Islamic areas of Northern Nigeria. Compensating men for their loss of autonomy with authority over women may be an essential feature of establishing large-scale state societies, but that analysis is outside the bounds of this paper.
4. Agnes Akosua Aidoo, "Asante Queen Mothers in Government and Politics in the Nineteenth Century," The Black Woman Cross-Culturally, Filomina Chioma Steady, ed. (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman, 1981), p. 65. In the same volume, Steady reports how a contemporary Sierra Leonean political leader said, "We give birth to men so in a way we own them;" see her The Black Woman Cross-Culturally: An Overview, p. 34.
5. Niara Sudarkasa, "Female Employment and Family Organization in West Africa," in Ibid., p. 52. Probably the most gender egalitarian society ever described has been found among the stateless and non-hierarchical !Kung Bushmen; see Patricia Draper, "!Kung Women: Contrasts in Sexual Egalitarianism in Foraging and Sedentary Contexts," Toward an Anthropology of Women, Rayna Reiter, ed. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

6. "The Dual Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria," Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change, Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay, eds (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976). Elsewhere she refers to this as a "bisexual" political system: see her "Women's Participation in Nigeria," in Steady, 1981.
7. As Rayna Reiter points out, however, women's work and politics were often invisible in early ethnographies; see her "Introduction" in Reiter, 1975.
8. Okonjo, 1976; Nancy Leis, "Women in Groups: Ijaw Women's Associations," Rosaldo and Lamphere, 1974.
9. Annie M.D. Lebeuf, "The Role of Women in the Political Organization of African Societies," Women of Tropical Africa, Denise Paulme, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), p. 113.
10. Carol P. Hbffer, "Madam Yoko: Ruler of the Kpa Mende Confederacy," Woman, Culture and Society, Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974).
11. Delaziere, as cited in Judith Bryson, "Women and Economic Development in Cameroon," report submitted to U.S.A.I.D., Yaounde, January, 1979, pp. 25, 114.
12. Patricia Stamp, "Perceptions of Change and Economic Strategy Among Kikuyu Women of Mitero, Kenya," Rural Africana, No. 29, Winter, 1975-76, pp. 19-44; E. Mary Holding, "Women's Institutions and the African Church," International Review of Missions, Volume 31, July, 1942, pp. 290-300.
13. Aidoo, 1981; Lebeuf, 1963; Bukh, 1979.
14. Aidoo, 1981, p. 66.
15. Bolanle Awe, "The Tyalode in the Traditional Yoruba Political System," Sexual Stratification: A Cross-Cultural View, Alice Schlegel, ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Okonjo, 1981, p. 98.
16. Lebeuf, 1963, p. 100.
17. Barbara Lewis, "The Limitations of Group Activity Among Entrepreneurs: The Market Women of Abidjan, Ivory Coast," Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change, Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay, eds., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976); Jans D. Siebel and Adreas Massing, Traditional Organizations and Economic Development in Liberia (New York: Praeger, 1974); Achola O. Pala, African Women in Rural Development: Research Trends and Priorities," Overseas Liaison

- Committee, American Council on Education, No. 12, December, 1976; Kathleen Staudt, "The Umoja Federation: Women's Cooptation into a Local Power Structure," Western Political Quarterly, 33, 2 (June, 1980), pp. 278-290; Margaret Strobel, Muslim Women in Mombasa (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).
18. Irving Markovitz, Power and Class in Africa: An Introduction to Change and Conflict in African Politics (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977). Some stratification theorists take gender-based inequalities as axiomatic, such as Leonard Plotnicov and Arthur Tuden who remark that "unstratified societies are ranked merely on the basis of sex, age and kinship status" in their edited collection, Essays in Comparative Social Stratification (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1970), p. 5. Gerhard Lenski conceives of stratification as ranking on the basis of power, prestige, and privilege which results in differential rewards; see his Power and Privilege (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966).
 19. Sudarkasa, 1981, p. 51.
 20. Rattray, cited in Susan Rogers, "Woman's Place: A Critical Review of Anthropological Theory," Comparative Studies in Society and History 20, 1 (January, 1978).
 21. Charles Tilly speaks of state formation in this way in "Reflections on the History of European State-Making," The Formation of National States in Western Europe Tilly, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 27, 71.
 22. "The Changing Economic Position of Women in Rural Areas: Case Studies from Kisumu District, Kenya," (Nairobi: University of Nairobi, Institute for Development Studies, Spring, 1974), Working Paper No. 156, p. 22.
 23. Arthur Phillips, Survey of African Marriage and Family Life (London: Oxford, 1953), pp. xx. C.P. Groves, The Planting of Christianity in Africa, Vol. IV (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948-1955), p. 113.
 24. Groves, 1948-1955, p. 281.
 25. African Educational Commission, A Study of West, South and Equatorial Africa (New York: Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1922), p. 22; Lord Hailey, An African Survey (London: Oxford, 1938), p. 1256; T.J. Jones, Education in East Africa (New York: Phelps-Stokes Fund, 1924), p. 341; Lord Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa (London: Frank Cass, [originally published in 1922], 1965), p. 457.
 26. Mrs. R.H.C. Graham, "The Moral Impact of the Gospel: A Record of 30 Years Work Amongst African Women," International Review of Missions, 9, 33 (January, 1920), p. 103.

27. 1938, p. 1256; revised edition, 1953, p. 1186.
28. Africa Educational Commission, 1922, p. 24.
29. Jones, 1924, p. 116.
30. Ibid., pp. 17-18, 26-27.
31. A U.S. Department of Agriculture representative recognized women's agricultural participation, in Jones, 1924, pp. 370, as did other parts of the report on pages 38, 240, 351, and 377. Lord Lugard recognized women's agricultural activities when he said that "female labor in the fields" should be replaced by men, 1965, p. 517. Lord Hailey's quote is from p. 872, 1953. His other references to women farmers are found on pages 821, 872, and 1386.
32. "Women's Clubs in Uganda," Corona, 4, 5 (May, 1952), n.a.; Community Development Bulletin 4 editorial, (December, 1952 - September, 1953). Also see December, 1962. The Journal of African Administration also disseminated pragmatic program models.
33. Marguerite Mikolasek, "Some Attempts at Feminine Education in Cameroon," International Review of Missions, Vol. 41 (October, 1952). A similar school is described in Yvette Bergeret, "A Training Centre for Home and Family Life," International Review of Missions Vol. 41 (October, 1952).
34. Jane Bell, M.B.E., "Domestic Science in the Bush," Corona, 12, 5 (May, 1960).
35. Vandra Masemann, "The "Hidden Curriculum" of a West African Girls' Boarding School," Canadian Journal of African Studies, Vol. 8, 3, 1974, pp. 479-494; Lois Weis, "Women and Education in Ghana: Some Problems of Assessing Change," International Journal of Women's Studies, 3, 5, pp. 431-453.
36. Audrey Wipper, "Equal Rights for Women in Kenya?" Journal of Modern African Studies 9, 3 (1971), pp. 429-442.
37. G.M. Roddan, C.M.G., "The Key is Woman," Corona (February, 1958).
38. Eveline King, "On Educating African Girls in Northern Rhodesia," Rhodes-Livingstone Journal X (1950).
39. Judith Van Allen, "Sitting on a Man: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women," Canadian Journal of African Studies 6, 2 (1972).

40. Jean O'Barr, "Pare Women: A Case of Political Involvement," Rural Africana No. 29 Winter, 1975-76, pp. 121-134.
41. Barbara Dobson, "Woman's Place in East Africa," Corona 6, 12 (December, 1954).
42. Ibid.
43. Kenneth Little, African Women in Towns (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 63-65, 70, 206-207; also see M. Dobert, "Liberation and the Women of Guinea," Africa Report, October, 1970).
44. C. Fluehr-Lobban, "Agitation for Change in the Sudan," Sexual Stratification: A Cross Cultural View, Alice Schlegel, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).
45. See Bukh, 1979; Louise Fortmann, "Women's Work in a Communal Setting: The Tanzanian Policy of Ujamaa," Women and Work in Africa, Edna Bay, ed. (Boulder: Westview, 1982); Carol Bond, Women's Involvement in Agriculture in Botswana, 1974, unpublished; Kathleen Staudt, "Agricultural Productivity Gaps: A Case Study of Male Preference in Government Policy Implementation," Development and Change, 9, 3 (July, 1978), pp. 439-457; L.B. Venema, The Wolof of Saloum: Social Structure and Rural Development in Senegal (Wageningen: Center for Agricultural Publishing and Documentation, 1978).
46. Of course, it is difficult to place women on the class hierarchy. One cannot simply assume they derive their class status from husbands given the tradition of income separation within households found in many African societies and the changed situation of women (if economically dependent on husbands) after separation or divorce. Divorce and remarriage are quite common in some areas. Sam Jackson reports that Hausa have three to four marriages before menopause in her study of women agricultural laborers; "Hausa Women on Strike," Review of African Political Economy, 13, 1978. Bukh, 1979, pp. 42-26, indicates that over two-thirds of her respondents reported being divorced at least once and 42% of households were female headed.
47. Barbara Callaway, "Women in Ghana," Women in the World: A Comparative Study, Lynne Iglitzin and Ruth Ross, eds. (Santa Barbara: Clio, 1976), p. 197.
48. Little, 1973, p. 73.
49. Wipper, 1971, "Equal Rights...", pp. 434-435. Priscilla Abwao had the idea of using 'memsahib' for African women.
50. Daily Nation, November 13, 23, 1979, October 18, 1974, and March 27, 1975. The leader was Jane Kiano, interviewed in Viva magazine.

51. Kathleen Staudt, "Class and Sex in the Politics of Women Farmers," Journal of Politics, 41, 2 (May, 1979), pp. 492-512.
52. Klingshirn, 1971, p. 227.
53. "Less than Second Class: Women in Rural Settlement Schemes in Tanzania," Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change, Nancy Hafkin and Edna Bay, eds., (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), p. 274.
54. "An Assessment of National Machinery for Women," Assignment Children 49/50 (Spring, 1980).
55. Lewis, 1976.
56. Nici Nelson, "Women Must Help Each Other," Women United, Women Divided, P. Caplan and J. Bujra, eds., (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).
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This section is based on my forthcoming book, Gender and Redistribution Within Bureaucracy (New York: Praeger, 1984), a part of which was published in "Bureaucratic Resistance to Women's Programs: The Case of Women in Development," Women, Power and Policy, Ellen Boneparth, ed (Pergamon, 1982).

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WOMEN'S POLITICS AND CAPITALIST
TRANSFORMATION IN SUBSAHARAN AFRICA

by

Kathleen Staudt, Ph.D.
The University of Texas at El Paso

April 1984

Working Paper #54

Abstract: The modern state artificially divides society into public and private spheres, actively creating that reality through both political participants and policy itself. This paper reconstructs that process, focusing first on the pre-colonial relevance of "women's issues," and then early colonial policies and programs which defined women's issues outside the public agenda. Following that, the paper outlines the partial extension of that public agenda to include women on certain terms, but in the name of domestic feminism. The final part of the paper analyzes how public-private distinctions are maintained through political activities and demands which accommodate themselves to those state-imposed boundaries, both nationally and in the name of international feminism. Throughout the paper, public-private distinctions are discussed in terms of how they create the proper setting for capitalist transformation and the long-term interests it serves.

About the Author: Kathleen Staudt received her Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin, with a minor in African Studies, in 1976. She is currently an Associate Professor of Political Science at The University of Texas at El Paso. She has published articles on agricultural extension, cooperatives, and women's politics in the Journal of Developing Areas, Comparative Politics, and Journal of Politics, among others, and has a forthcoming book on the Women in Development Program in AID entitled Gender and Redistribution in Bureaucracy (Praeger, 1984).