

## MARRIAGE, TRADITION, AND WOMANHOOD IN HAUSA SOCIETY: WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES<sup>1</sup>

Elhadji Oumarou Chaibou

How is it that this world always belonged to men and things have begun to change only recently? Is this change a good thing? Will it bring about an equal sharing of the world between men and women?

- Simone de Beauvoir

More than four decades later, this question, quoted by Barbara J. Callaway,<sup>2</sup> remains a focus of concern among scholars around the world. More and more attention is being paid to the issue of women's liberation or feminism. Everywhere it passes, the winds of change blow away many old traditions in which women are defined by men who see them as their subordinates. As a result, new perceptions of women and womanhood are brought into play in order to change the traditional image of women as household keepers or domestics.

It is now held to be true that for a very long time women all over the world have suffered from at least some form of segregation or oppression.<sup>3</sup> Like people who suffered from colonization, women have been given an incomplete and distorted image of themselves by dominant males in their societies. With today's changing times, however, women no longer want to accept this image because the moment has come for them to see themselves in an image that they have created by themselves and for themselves. Whatever the sentiments behind the image created by men, whatever the excuses from men, women no longer want to be seen through the eyes of men. They have a desire to correct the centuries of neglect and oppression and to voice clearly and loudly their own concerns and aspirations.

Africa is notable for its poor record in women's emancipation and independence. As in other parts of the world, the image of women in Africa has been created by dominant males. Whether in politics, education, or literature, women in Africa are taught to be obedient and dependent on men. There has yet to be a feminist consciousness that is clearly articulated and translated into actions. This means that women in Africa have yet to be seen in politics, in education, and other activities in numbers that reflect their demographics and needs.

In the literary field, there are well-known voices which have spoken in favor of equal opportunities between men and women in Africa. Carole Boyce Davies<sup>4</sup> specifies Mongo Beti, Ferdinand Oyono, Sembene Ousmane (*God's Bits of Wood*), Henry Lopes, and

Ahamadou Kourouma (*The Suns of Independence*) as being among those who have fought for women's issues. There are other voices from within Africa as well as from outside which are fighting for a better image of African women, along with other struggles, these voices want to change the traditional glorification and romanticization of traditional motherhood, such as the images associated with Negritude writers.

Davies argues that the lack of choice in motherhood and marriage, oppression of barren women, genital mutilation, enforced silence, and a variety of other forms of oppression specific to women in Africa ought to be at the center of African feminist theory. Such theory must arise out of the realities which make African feminism distinct from international feminism. These realities make African feminism a hybrid of sorts, seeking to combine African concerns with broader international feminist concerns.

While much of this emergent feminism is centered around modern women living in urban areas in Africa, the situation of rural women also merits more attention. In literature, this bias is translated into the importance accorded to the image of modern African women and their problems in modern life. In this respect, some rural women, who go to towns in search of a better life, are often described as symbols of innocence in a corrupt environment. Often, these women are cast as prostitutes in novels and plays.

To fully assess the state of rural women in their African contexts, it is imperative to look at oral literature, that is developed in rural areas and is more reflective of traditional roles played by women. Davies remarks, with regret, that "(t)he examination of women in oral literature created by women as compared to that created by men is another task which so far has not been sufficiently attacked."<sup>5</sup>

It is the concern of this paper to pursue that task in an attempt to bridge the gap between oral and written literatures and to balance the images of women in oral traditional literature. This paper mainly focuses on colonial and post-colonial periods in Hausa regions of Nigeria and the Republic of Niger. Both countries are former colonies of Britain and France respectively and most of the Hausa living in these regions are Muslim.

The texts to be examined are about Hausa women in their rural and urban environments. Both were written by women, one an anthropologist and the other a biographer. The first of the books is *Baba of Karo: A Woman of the Muslim Hausa*<sup>6</sup> by anthropologist Mary Smith. The second book is *The Story of Gambo Sawaba*<sup>7</sup> by biographer Rima Shawulu.

While Smith deals with aspects of women's conditions in a colonial context, Shawulu is concerned with the role of a prominent

Hausa woman in contemporary politics. Both women are from northern Nigeria. In the foreword to the 1981 edition of *Baba of Karo*, Hilda Kuper uses the term "framed autobiography" to characterize the book and indicate the nature of the story for those looking for truth or subjectivity.

Having said that, Kuper invites readers to see in the book a gold mine, with something for everybody. She claims that the "autobiography" does not fall within the narrow confines of any single discipline, nor does it conform to a conventional academic or literary genre. She adds that it is not a historical reconstruction of a dead past, or a comprehensive ethnography, or a political treatise, or a feminist protest, or a book on race, color, or creed. Rather, she concludes, it is all of these things because it has materials relevant to each of these interests and issues.

To be more precise, the book is the result of interviews that Mary Smith conducted from 1949 to 1950 in northern Nigeria. All of the questions were directed to Baba of Karo, an elderly Muslim woman who died in 1951. The book is therefore her story although one can see through her eyes a large part of Hausa culture and customs and the position of women at the time. Baba's joys and pains, her struggles and dreams were those of every woman who wanted to shake the old traditions and attitudes towards women.

Kuper argues, that as an informant, Baba's information covers a broad cultural spectrum, a vital ethnographic index, with herself as the reference point, within a framework designed by the anthropologist Mary Smith. It is, therefore, a woman's story; a woman's point of view in a male-dominated society. Because the book is composed of interviews about Baba herself, everything that takes place is part of her struggle and dreams in a society where Islam and traditions conspire to block women's paths toward fuller independence and freedom.

Since the heroine, Baba of Karo, was born at the end of the 19th century, her story is a window onto the lives of women who lived during the beginning of the colonial period. Islam was just becoming firmly established as well at this time. Although Islam is said to have penetrated the region as early as the eighth century,<sup>8</sup> it can be argued that very few Hausa people were truly Islamized at the time of Baba. It is therefore a transitional period in which Hausa pre-Islamic values came into contact with Islamic ones. Baba mentions that the *bori* cult is accepted in her family, an indication that Islam did not yet have firm roots in her family, and perhaps in many other families.

In terms of narrative techniques, the narration of the story is linear. As the heroine travels across the north, her travel accounts provide a sort of scenic view of different landscapes and characters who come into play to complete her story. The heroine is close to a movie

character, using flashbacks and other movie techniques to move the plot. The flashbacks come in whenever she recalls past events either related to her own life or to the lives of other people she interacted with, heard about, or reported to her. She uses these flashbacks to explain the present, sometimes with nostalgia, sometimes with candor and frankness.

Contrary to the image of Muslim Hausa women, Baba of Karo is as articulate and outspoken when it comes to her rights as a woman vis-a-vis tradition and Islam. Traditionally, it is believed that Hausa women suffer from many of the various forms of oppression mentioned earlier. Among them are marriage at a very young age, oppression of or pressure on barren women, problems relating to polygamy, seclusion or *kulle*, and silence in all these oppressive conditions.

Baba found ways to avoid or to fight against many of those conditions. Hilda Kuper describes her well when she states that:

Baba's experiences and attitudes as a Muslim Hausa run counter to a number of commonly held stereotypes. African women are frequently described as downtrodden, oppressed, subservient creatures exploited for their labor and biological potential. Muslim women are often described as pitiable or contemptible, mysterious or unimportant, excluded from "real life" by Islamic law which also legitimates the double standard implicit in polygamy.<sup>9</sup>

Baba seemed at ease in a society Westerners might condemn or dismiss as retrograde and oppressive of women. She did not regret her culture and traditions, nor was she happy about them. Through the lenses of her aging eyes, one can see a realistic image of Hausa women from all walks of life. Uncensored, though edited by Mary Smith, her account is far from the romantic and mythic image of African women found in Negritude writings. This kind of romantic and mythic image has caused outrage among African feminists such as Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie. She is one of the few educated African women who voice their concerns, asking for more freedom for women. She says that :

We African women are fighting for our lives, for our rightful place in the sun, for our inalienable nature given place in the leaking boats of what are our African modern nation-states.<sup>10</sup>

In a response to an article by Ali Mazrui, "The Black Woman and the Problem of Gender: An African Perspective," Ogundipe-Leslie accuses him of appropriating African women's voices. She argues that he is not

qualified to speak for them because he continues to perpetrate the old image of women in Africa. She goes further to claim that only cultural insiders, that is, African women from Africa, can speak for their sisters. This claim may not be welcomed by sympathizers of African feminists.

Another outspoken African feminist is Buchi Emecheta. Anyone who has read her novel, *The Joys of Motherhood*,<sup>11</sup> knows that the title itself is ironic. Emecheta rejects the traditional image of women and the roles assigned to them by traditional African societies which have been praised by Negritude writers, particularly by Leopold Sedar Senghor in his poetry. The essence of motherhood, in these contexts, is to raise children and satisfy men's sexual fantasies. Thus Nnu Ego, the heroine in Emecheta's novel, listens, with a touch of horror, to her father who incarnates that tradition:

Please don't disgrace the man of the family again. *What great honor is there for a woman than to be a mother*, and now you are a mother - not of daughters who will marry and go, but of good-looking healthy sons, and they are the first sons of your husband and you are his first and senior wife. (emphasis added)<sup>12</sup>

In this traditional world of Nnu Ego, motherhood equals womanhood and the joy of motherhood is to produce as many children as possible for the families of husbands. Because of the importance given to males, giving birth to female babies is an unwelcome event which may be the shame of the mother and her family. That is why Nnu Ego's father is defending the name of the family above, because it bears his own name. As a result, the birth of male babies is a guaranty for the immortalization of his name of a pledge of the continuation of males' dominance in the society.

Nnu Ego is a model of modern women who aspire to a new society which guaranties their right to equal opportunities with men. She wants to be independent and be able to earn her living like her husband. That is why she voices her anger and dissatisfaction as she ponders the rationale behind males' desire to have male babies. "Men - all they were interested in were male babies to keep their names going... God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not anybody's appendage?"<sup>13</sup> The appendage here is likely to refer to the story of Eve and Adam in the Bible which claims that Eve was made out of Adam. Here again religion seems to be faulted for women's misery in a male dominated society.

Despite frequent instances of arranged marriages in which parents choose spouses for their sons and daughters, Hausa women are well known for quick divorces. Some parents insist that their children

should follow their advice even in arranged marriages. But Islam allows any party to seek divorce anytime, anywhere. In first and forced marriages, however, many young girls prefer to become prostitutes instead of staying with someone they do not love. In prostitution they find freedom and independence they cannot have elsewhere.

Baba claims that women from all walks of life enter into prostitution "...if their parents had arranged marriages against their will..."<sup>14</sup> She herself had to accept her first marriage to be arranged. She was a young girl of fourteen years. She complained about marriages of almsgiving, in which parents give their daughters as alms to people of their choice. However, Baba states that even in this case girls are asked about their consent. Parents are compelled to drop the decision if their daughters do not like the choice.

In the case of other forms of marriage, girls and boys see each other for a limited period of time. During this time of courtship each will try to know if they like each other. When he deems it right, the boy has to go through a courtship ritual with the best friend of his love or *kawa*. The suitor will bring presents to his love and leave them in the care of her *kawa*. Baba tells how this was done:

We always showed our mothers the gift, but money was ours. If you like the man, you say to his friend "yes, I like him." Then they put down money and your *kawa* takes it. If you don't like him, you say "get on with your work. You are too strong for us." They put down the money, and your *kawa* says "take away your things, she doesn't desire you."<sup>15</sup>

Only first marriages involve this procedure. Hausa people accord a great importance to the first marriage because it is a landmark in the lives of young people. For the young girls it means motherhood, giving birth to children and taking care of them. For the boy, he is no longer a boy. He enters the world of adulthood and responsibilities as provider of his family.

A full week of activities accompanies each first marriage in Hausa society to mark the importance of marriage as a social institution. On the seventh day the young boy and girl are officially together as a couple. But as will be seen later, some husbands do not consummate their marriages very quickly. If the bride is too young for the groom, for instance if she is 12 or 13, he waits until she is 15 or 16 to consummate the marriage.

After the first marriage, girls are free to break their marriages to marry someone they love. In this case, there is no lavish spending as in the first marriage, nor are there rituals. It is estimated that an average

Hausa woman has three marriages in her lifetime. Once the constraints of the first marriage are over, she can seek a divorce, usually granted with little difficulty. There have been stories in which the bride comes back with the people accompanying her to the conjugal house.

Girls leave their husbands for various reasons. Some because they don't like the arranged marriage, some because of co-wives, and others because of barrenness. Baba left her second husband because she had no children after fifteen years. "Then I left him. I loved him very much, I left him because I had no children."<sup>16</sup> Her first marriage was arranged but she never loved Duma, the husband. She went to see the chief or *maigari* for divorce. Since Baba and Duma were cousins, even after the divorce Baba states that "(we) remained friends, our kinship did not die."<sup>17</sup>

A large part of what Baba told came from experience, her own experience and that of others. But unlike many other women, she had tremendous courage which helped her avoid many problems. When her parents tried to arrange her third marriage, she agreed because she loved the man. "I didn't cry because I liked him."<sup>18</sup> He died and left her a widow for some time before her fourth marriage.

Like many traditional African societies, Hausa society values women who can give birth to many children. Economically, this attitude is explained by the necessity for labor. Poor families need all the help they can get in order to produce enough food and provide for other needs. As Callaway claims, seclusion of women or *kulle* is a relatively recent phenomenon in rural Hausa areas.

Before the advent of Islam, most women who worked were slaves, while the wives of their masters stayed home for more lucrative activities. Scholars argue that with the advent of Islam, rich families see the seclusion of their wives as a mark of social status. Women who are secluded are supposed to work less than those who are not; therefore, they differ from the wives of poor husbands who let their wives go out to work. As a result, more women are put into seclusion today than were when Islam was first introduced in Hausaland. At that time, only the wives of the *mallams* or Muslim clerks were in *pardah* or seclusion.

*Purdah* has been the subject of various debates by scholars around the world. Isa A. Abba has discussed its practice in Nigeria.<sup>19</sup> He gives an historical account of its evolution from its origin in Arabia to its worldwide practice in Muslim countries. According to the historical sources that he consulted, *pardah* was practiced in Arabia before the advent of Islam. It was less restrictive then, than it is today, especially in Kano state as revealed by Callaway's research in the area. Kano is well-known in the history of West Africa as an Islamic and trading center.

For Callaway, *kulle*, especially in Kano is a public recognition of the oppression of women by men. She classifies it in three categories. First, there is *kullen dinga* which is a complete seclusion of women inside houses. These women have very little movement outside their compounds. Callaway claims that, today, this form is limited to the *mallams*. The second category is *kullen tsari*, which gives women a relative freedom to go out at specific moments on certain occasions such as sickness and festivals. The third form is *kullen zuci* or *pardah* of the heart. This form of *pardah* has no physical seclusion and women can go out for work. It is usually for educated women marrying educated men who put emphasis on their wives' ability to behave themselves at work or anywhere they may be.

In her time, Baba of Karo reported that women cheated on their husbands and vice versa. For women, it happened mostly when their husbands travelled. The woman would go out in search of lovers and money. If a woman finds either,

Then quickly, quickly the wife pays her visit (to him/them) and returns. In the compound of his bond-friend (that is his best friend) the man will borrow the hut and take her in; his own wives would beat the woman if they saw her in his compound! If the faithless wife has a co-wife she will say to her "I am going to visit my family." The co-wife will keep her secret. A married woman may have ten (secret) lovers, or even twenty - then and nowadays. She will go and tell her *kawa* (best friend) about it. They desire men and money.<sup>20</sup>

This picture, depicted over fifty years ago, is in sharp contrast with the one presented by Callaway who blames many forms of oppression on Islam. She does not see any possibilities for women in *pardah* to participate in any activities of economic significance. The small activities they do are not reported and have very little impact on the global economy.

Yet, Jerome H. Barkow, who did field work in the neighboring Republic of Niger, concludes that *pardah* has some positive economic benefits for the women that he studied. These women develop crafts, as opposed to women who are always on farms. Eric J. Arnould adds that polygamous households are also beneficial to women since; "The presence of co-wives permits some younger women to devote more time to potting than women in monogamous households."<sup>21</sup> Some claim that women in polygamous households also cheat more on their husbands because they have more freedom to go out, if they are not in *pardah*.

Callaway contrasts with Baba of Karo on the subjects of childhood and friendship. Callaway makes these experiences look dull, arguing that Hausa society does not provide young girls and boys with possibilities for lasting friendship which can lead to marriage. She also claims that romance in the Western sense does not exist in Hausa culture.<sup>22</sup> Because of this and Islam, she contends that "...young men and women are not thrown together in situations where they could form relationships that could lead to marriages."<sup>23</sup>

But Baba reported that young girls and boys come to play with her adopted daughter, Yelwa. In those situations,

...they fill up the hut and sleep, they bring their boys with them. ...(T)he boys and girls all go (to the same hut) and light a lamp, they talk and tell stories and laugh. When the girls get older (that is near the age of marriage or even beyond in some cases) *some of them become pregnant*....(emphasis added).<sup>24</sup>

Despite marriage at an early age (12-15) and the contention of Callaway above, girls and boys do get together before marriage and do form long lasting friendships which may lead to marriage. They also have romance in their own way which does not have to be exactly "Western". As a result of this mixing and romance, they eventually practice *tsarince*, or love-play, which Callaway acknowledges several times to her credit in her book. It is out of the *tsarince* that some girls become pregnant.

Callaway conducted surveys in Kano and Sokoto states about arranged marriages. Only twenty percent of the women and men surveyed, all at the university level, think it desirable that they should have the option of making their own decision about marriage. An overwhelming majority think that their parents should arrange their marriages.

In Niger, the same kind of survey was conducted in 1968 by Janet E. Pool. It was a cross-cultural study involving three West African countries of Ghana, Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta), and Niger. One of the questions asked was "Do you think parents should choose spouses for their sons (i), their daughters (ii)?" The idea was strongly rejected in Niger where even the researchers expected the opposite response. To her surprise, Pool observes that:

In Niamey (Niger Republic), where conservatism was expected, the results were even more surprising for both men and women overwhelmingly rejected the idea of parents choosing spouses for their children.<sup>25</sup>

The difference between Hausa women and their attitudes in Niger as opposed to their counterparts in Nigeria is acknowledged by Callaway. Speaking of *kulle*, for instance, she says that this practice "...is in contrast to Hausa women in the neighboring country of Niger and to Islamic women who live in the neighboring state of Bornu, and is generally not true of women of other cultures in West Africa."<sup>26</sup>

Another big surprise is the silence of Callaway on a very well known Hausa woman politician. Her name is Hajiya Gambo Sawaba and she has been the subject of a biography, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba*. Although the book presents some flaws, according to John P. Barnard, it does great justice to African women many of whom are lost in anonymity.<sup>27</sup> Barnard's accusation is that the book has biases against the rival party, NPC. This does not damage the paper which aims to pay tribute to distinguished Hausa women.

Born in 1933, Sawaba first married at 13. Her husband, who was older than her, cooked her food and let her go out to play with young girls of her age, assuming the role of her dead mother. It was not until she reached age 16 that her husband accepted to consummate the marriage, this delay is a practice common in Hausa society.<sup>28</sup>

Gambo Sawaba<sup>29</sup> entered politics at a very young age. Her first marriage went broke after she bore a baby girl. While she was with her second husband, the first became poor and alcoholic. She bought him a house out of love for him and her daughter and bought him a ticket for the pilgrimage to Mecca. Although Callaway mentions the party to which Sawaba belonged, she does not mention Sawaba herself anywhere in her book about Hausa women in Nigeria.

Sawaba entered politics through NEPU where she found Mrs. Ladi Shehu as Secretary General of the women's wing, Amina Aduke, and Fati Misisi as members. All are reported to have "...dutifully attended the (political) meetings."<sup>30</sup> When the number of women grew bigger, they chose Sawaba as their party leader. At age 25, she represented her party in Ghana in 1958 at the invitation of the newly elected president of the young state, Kwame Nkrumah.

She was known for her outspokenness, her courage and her hard work. She quickly became a very active leader, giving lectures to awaken women, despite the ban by the colonial officers who created a rival party, NPC, to counter-balance the actions of NEPU. As Callaway claims, the colonial administrators did nothing to help women into politics or other activities.

NEPU was a popular party because of their platform to help poor people who could not make their voices heard. Many of its members were against colonial rule which made the party more dangerous for the colonial officers. Perhaps that is the reason why

Callaway says nothing about Sawaba though she mentions Aminu Kano who was one of the influential leaders of NEPU. Aminu Kano is very much admired by Callaway who claims that he wanted to have a woman as vice president if his party won the elections of 1979. What she does not know, or refuses to acknowledge for whatever reason, is that Sawaba was more likely to be the woman Aminu had in mind because they worked together in the party and he had always admired her.

Gambo and her party also had problems with traditional rulers. These rulers used Islam to justify the oppression of women in their states, accusing leaders of NEPU of using women in politics against the law of Islam. But in reality, their fears were related to past events in the south of the country, where women have more freedom to go out though they work harder than men. Igbo women revolted against higher taxation by the colonial administration in conjunction with the traditional rulers. Shawulu reports that Mrs. Ransom Kuti led what is now known as the revolt of women which forced a powerful king to abdicate.

Having heard the story, Gambo Sawaba decided to go to Mrs. Kuti to learn from her experience. She came back changed by what she saw, heard and learned in the south. But troubles awaited her back home where the traditional rulers saw in her and her party a potential danger to their rule. Members of the rival party joined the traditional rulers and created deep troubles for her. She was sent to jail several times, but even in prison she continued to fight. She was accused of causing riots in prisons and leading prisoners to rebel against the law that oppressed them.<sup>31</sup> She was beaten almost to death several times, and to this day she is said to suffer from the effects of the beatings. Because of her courage and determination, she continued to awaken women to their social and political reality. One of her plans was to help rural women get access to education or literacy training so that they could read and vote. Women joined her party in masses, making her their heroine, to the consternation of all her opponents. The women in her party wrote a petition to the federal government asking for the limitation of both the age of marriage, which often leads to problems during childbirth, and compulsory marriages, which often lead to prostitution.<sup>32</sup>

Despite her political activism, Gambo is said to have been a great mother. Although her formal education stopped at primary school, she speaks many Nigerian languages. As a result, she was also an interpreter and translator during lectures and campaigns of her party. Gambo, who is now in business, is considered a pioneer in politics in northern Nigeria.

A look at the history of Hausa society shows that women played very important roles in politics and other activities. In neighboring

Niger, Ousmane Tandina reports that one famous Queen or *Sarraounia* lived in the region of Dogon Doutchi, in southwestern Niger. She has been the subject of a novel by Abdoulaye Mamani, *Sarraounia Ou "Le Drame d'une Reine Magicienne."* ["Drama of a Sorceress Queen"].<sup>33</sup>

In Nigeria, Callaway gives an interesting account of women's roles in traditional pre-Islamic Hausa society. These roles are reflected in several titles held by women for centuries. When a king ruled, his mother, who was not necessarily his biological-mother, was called *Magajiya*. She is said to have had such enormous powers that she could even depose the king whom she advised. In Daura, one of the original seven Hausa states (i.e. Daura, Kano, Katsina, Gobir, Zazzau, Zaria, and Hadeijal), the *Magajiya* was called "Queen Mother", as reported by Callaway.

Five of these states have records of women rulers. Daura had seventeen queens in its early history. Other titles such as *Iya* exist to this day in Zaria as reported by Baba and Callaway. The same title is found in Bornu as *Magira*. Queen Amina of Zaria was as illustrious as she was combative, expanding her empire to Kano and Katsina according to the *Kano Chronicle*.

In this document of historic importance, one Emir of Sokoto is quoted as saying the Amina conquered "...all the towns as far as Kwararafa and Nupe by 1580".<sup>34</sup> Finally, there was another Queen, Tawa, from Gobir in the present day Republic of Niger. She is believed to have ruled around the fifteenth century according to Nicholas and in early eighteenth century according to Hogben and Kirk Greene, all cited by Callaway. The latter claims that the sixteenth century was the zenith of women rulers before men took over their thrones.

Carole B. Davies is right to observe, after Van Sertina whom she quotes, that women's roles in Africa did not start in the colonial and immediate pre-colonial period.<sup>35</sup> In fact, Callaway argues that the colonial administrators did nothing to help women in northern Nigeria. The accounts of women rulers in Hausa society is in accord with Davies' remark that women in Africa were very active and competent rulers, warriors, and participants in the pre-colonial antiquity. As this paper argues, Hausa women's roles as rulers, warriors, and participants cut across every aspect of Hausa culture, and across pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods.

Scholars like Callaway claim that Islam is largely responsible for the state of women in Hausa society. More research is needed before one can make such a sweeping statement because the state of women in Niger is different from their state in Nigeria, both Muslim countries. In the two countries, however, a lot remains to be done to correct the situation in which women find themselves.

It is time to let African women voice their concerns and aspirations, give them power to assert themselves, as well known African feminists claim. The path to women's liberation passes through education. African women need to be educated just as men are educated. Men can help them to reach that goal, but it is their responsibility to fight and to win their freedom.

In conclusion, I wish to end this paper with the words of Buchi Emecheta who illustrates the future of African women in education as Nnu Ego reflects on her situation. A mother sends her children to school and her friends are happy about it, believing that,

... (s)he (the mother of the children) wants them to (go to school and be happy) and they will make it. I (Nnu Ego) am beginning to think that there may be a future for educated women. I saw many young women teaching in the schools. It would really be something for a woman to be able to earn some money monthly like a man.<sup>36</sup>

---

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Professor James Delehanty of the Department of Geography at the University of Wisconsin, Madison for taking his time to read and correct this paper. I am solely responsible for any mistakes.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara J. Callaway, *Muslim Hausa Women in Nigeria: Tradition and Change* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1987), p.21.

<sup>3</sup> Carole Boyce Davies, "Feminist Consciousness and Women in African Literary Criticism", "Introduction," in Carole B. Davies and Anne Adams Graves, eds., *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Smith, *Baba of Karo: A Woman of the Muslim Hausa* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1964).

<sup>7</sup> Rima Shawulu, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba* (Jos: Eco Communications Ltd., 1990).

<sup>8</sup> Joe A. McIntyre, "An Overview of Education in Northern Nigeria: Attempted from the Perspective of Qur'anic Education," *Afrika Spectrum* 1 (1982): pp. 21-31.

<sup>9</sup> Hilda Kuper, "Foreword," in Mary F. Smith ed., *Baba of Karo: A Woman of the Muslim Hausa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Molar Ogundipe-Leslie, "Beyond Hearsay and Academic Journalism: The Black Woman and Ali Mazrui," *Research in African Literatures*, 24.1 (Spring 1993): p. 110.

<sup>11</sup> Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (New York: George Braziller, 1979).

- 
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 119.
  - 13 *Ibid.*, p. 186.
  - 14 Smith, p. 68.
  - 15 *Ibid.*, p. 103.
  - 16 *Ibid.*, p. 118.
  - 17 *Ibid.*, p. 108.
  - 18 *Ibid.*, p. 112.
  - 19 Isa A. Abba, "Kulle (Purdah) Among the Muslims in Northern States in Nigeria: Some Clarifications," *Kano Studies* 2.1 (1980): pp. 42-50.
  - 20 Smith, p. 64.
  - 21 Eric J. Arnoud, "Process and Social Formation: Petty Commodity Producers in Zinder, Niger," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 18.3 (1984): p. 511.
  - 22 Callaway, p. 40.
  - 23 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
  - 24 Smith, p. 178.
  - 25 Janet E. Pool, "A Cross-Cultural Study of Aspects of Conjugal Behavior Among Women in Three West African Countries," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 4.2 (1972): p. 241.
  - 26 Callaway, p. 59.
  - 27 John P. Barnard, "Book Review of *Baba of Karo*," *Ufahamu* 22.1 (Winter 1992): pp. 95-99.
  - 28 Shawulu, pp. 28-29.
  - 29 After she received a trophy of honor from the hands of President Ibrahim G. Babangida, she was interviewed on CNN World News and Report on May 16, 1993. She was recognized as one of the few women politicians who have paid dearly for their activities, as shall be seen later in this paper.
  - 30 Shawulu, p. 45.
  - 31 *Ibid.*, p. 97.
  - 32 *Ibid.*, p. 105.
  - 33 Abdoulaye Mamani, *Sarraounia, Ou "Le Drame d'une Reine Magicienne"* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1980).
  - 34 Callaway, p. 8.
  - 35 Davies, p. 9.
  - 36 Emecheta, p. 189.