

Women in Informal Long-Distance Trade: The Family and the Rural-Urban Market Nexus in Southwestern Nigeria

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Entrepreneurial development has, for some time now, been seen as a major factor in development. Its relevance has, however, been encumbered by the unnecessary importance attached to its formalization and the predominance of informal structures in most third world nations. In the process of encouraging formalization, the social structures that gave rise to the informal trading system have not been well studied. This is particularly manifest among women in long-distance trade. The study, therefore, attempts to examine the role of women in rural-urban, long-distance informal trade. Through a combination of qualitative research methods, the paper exposes how the structural dependency that dominates in any formal capitalist economy is engendered in the socio-relations characterizing informal long-distance trade. This is explicated through the poverty in rural areas, which necessitated the trade such that women in rural areas have to "abandon" their "expected" motherly roles and encourage other wives (polygyny) to take care of their children. Also, the rural-urban nexus portrayed the domination of the former by the latter and, by implication, the domination of the rural women in long-distance informal trade by the urban market being controlled by men. It is concluded that, in so far as the structure and culture of poverty continues to exist and, through this, the perpetuation of informal relations at the market place, the exploitation and oppression of the poor and powerless would persist.

Introduction and Scope of Study

The relevance of entrepreneurs to development in almost all the countries of the world began since the triumph of capitalism, first, in Western Europe, and, later, through the emergence of the modernization theory, in other parts of the world. The lack of entrepreneurial ability was interpreted as a sign of underdevelopment in the parts of the world that do not accept the doctrine of modernization. Most especially in the colonized territories, modernization by design was instituted (Dibua, 2002; Davies, 1998; Morse et al., 1969). In Nigeria, the colonial government attempted to create large-scale entrepreneurs through the granting of loans to some people. These were not successful as most of the grantees could not make profits for the sustenance of their businesses. In spite of this, the neocolonial governments have continued to do the same. Even with the Callaway (1973) study of 225 businesses in Ibadan showing the lack of credit as a major factor militating against the success of small-

scale enterprises, the orientation of governments has been to encourage large-scale enterprises. Yet the small-scale enterprises have continued to thrive in spite of lack of credit-assistance (Osoba, 1987; 1990; Fadayomi, 1989).

Ironically, women dominate small-scale enterprises and have been successful, at least in the sustenance of their businesses (Banwo, 2004; Chuku, 1999). Even for the neglected rural areas, where they participate effectively in agricultural production in land clearing, sowing and planting, hoeing and weeding, gathering in and storage of harvests, food processing and distribution of food products and so on, women have been effectively active as entrepreneurs (Banwo, 2004; Onemolease, 2002; Makinwa-Adebusoye, 1991). However, their contributions are being neglected and due to their lack of access to credit, knowledge and technology, their businesses do not grow (Aina and Odebiyi, 1998; Osuala, 1991; Erinsho and Fapohunda, 1988). This is not surprising since they are perceived as second-class citizens in patriarchal

societies. Furthermore, and as Makinwa-Adebusoye (1985) observed, since official employment and occupational statistics are male-biased and western concepts of "economic activity" ignore women's economic contributions, women will continue to be unrecognized. One is also disturbed that this neglect of women's involvement in informal small-scale enterprises is in spite of the spending of a lot of money on informal sector studies by the World Bank (World Bank, 1989). Indeed the concern of this institution is the realization that the informal sectors could develop their own grassroot institutions to meet the demand for credit and training as well as link imported and local technologies to create jobs at lower costs.(Oni, 1999; Aregbeyen, 1999; Omisakin, 1999). Ironically, the World Bank already made up its mind before sponsoring these studies such that the political economy of the system that throws up this phenomenon is not considered. As such, the transformation of the informal sector to a formal modern entrepreneur is not considered problematic. It is assumed that an "enabling" environment and training, along with the provision of capital are enough motivating factors for creating formal entrepreneurs. Even when these created entrepreneurs failed in the 1960s and 1970s in Nigeria, (Olutayo, 1991), the 1990s to date still constitute the World Bank's hope of the entrepreneur in development (Marsden, 1990; Forest, 1994).

Entrepreneurship in developing economies has always been dominated by informal trade rather than formal trade. In spite of this, attempts have always been made to graft formal trade into third world economies. Nonetheless, the informal economy continues to dominate (Olutayo, 1999). The dominance of informal trade in the Nigerian economy makes it imperative that the social structures that sustain them should be clearly understood. In this informal economy, trade in every commodity has its own social organizational structures and politics (Petre-Grenouilleau, 2001; Cohen, 1966). It is for this reason that each commodity needs to be separately studied so as to disentangle the various structures and politics associated with each commodity. Furthermore, it will help to reduce the inclusion of too many variables. As such, this study is limited to a single commodity—yam. It is also in these respects that the nature of relationship between the rural and urban social structures and the gender factor are

considered in this paper.

The trade in markets of Ibadan, Oyo State, involves traders from in and around Ibadan. This group of traders is infinitesimal to the number of yams that get into these markets through long-distance trade. Long-distance trade, in this context, implies, like Cohen (1966), the sale or purchase and transfer of goods of perishable nature across a distance of several hundred kilometers by the use of indigenous methods of business organization. It does not involve the use of modern institutions such as banks and insurance companies, police or civil courts, or the exchange of documents, even when large sums of money are involved.

Yams that are transferred into Ibadan markets through long-distance trade come from as far as Abuja, Benue State, and the Oke-Ogun area of Oyo State. In our study, our interest is focused on the long-distance trade between the Oke-Ogun area in Oyo North and Bodija market in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State for two other reasons:

1. Women are mostly involved in the trade.
2. The rural-urban informal trade network at the grassroot level of Oyo State could be easily understood.

Even before the independence of Nigeria, Ibadan has always been the capital of one area or the other and the Oke-Ogun area has always been under the jurisdiction of Ibadan. During the era of regionalism, Ibadan was the capital of the Southwest Region. When the Mid-West was carved out of the Southwest in 1963, Ibadan maintained her status as the capital of the latter. In 1967 when the Western state was divided into three, comprising Oyo, Ogun, and Ondo states, Ibadan remained the capital of Oyo State. When Osun State was carved out of Oyo State in 1991, Ibadan still retained her status as the state capital. Ibadan is still the capital of Oyo State to date (Fejokwu et al., 1992). From these, it seems glaring that the Oke-Ogun area has been perpetually structurally dependent on Ibadan.

Yet, throughout these periods, Oke-Ogun has remained the food-basket of Oyo State, and its neglect and character/status as a "rural economy" remains. To date, the Oke-Ogun area lacks basic infrastructural facilities and, up till now, most residents of Oke-Ogun cannot receive signals from the electronic media of Oyo State. Even at the information centers recently established in Saki

East Local Government, for instance, the people watch Cable News Network (CNN) and satellite dishes are owned by individuals. In other words, the people do not often view things going on in Oyo State but listen to foreign news/programs.

Being mainly farmers, the people specialize in the cultivation of yams, maize, guinea corn, and so on. They are, however, mostly known for yam cultivation. The cultivation is done with the help of Sierra-Leonean immigrants acting as *alagbase* (farm-hands). These farm hands are given their own plots to also cultivate as payment for the help they give on the farms, but they must work for certain days on their landlord's farms. It is a kind of feudal relationship that existed in feudal Europe and the pre-colonial *Yorubaland* in Nigeria (Olutayo, 1991).

The long-distance traders buy their yams through middlemen (called *Onibaranda*) or the *Baale* (household head) that lead them to the farm. These are more or less the "gatekeepers" to the farms who have established their monopoly over the buying of farm produce in the rural areas even without capital. The traders have no direct access to the farmers. Having decided how much a lorry-load of yam would cost through haggling, the trader pays the farmers and the middlemen or household head. The cost of loading the lorry and transportation are also borne by the long-distance trader.

Statement of the Problem

The informal economy, especially long-distance, rural-urban trade, is essentially, dominated by women. Not only have these women engaged in long-distance trade even before the advent of colonialism (Banwo, 2004; Fadipe, 1970), their roles today have been considered "critical in maintaining food supply, both for subsistence and expanding urban markets ..." (Obasanjo, 1988). Women have important marketing skills and capabilities but modern business practices exclude them (International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) 1985). In their small and informal status, women in informal long-distance trade are often toughened, both by the risks involved in long-distance traveling, especially in Nigeria, with bad roads and vehicles, and their access to information about their destination which is often rumor-based. More importantly, they do not control the markets (pricing, distribution, sale, etc.) where they sell their

goods in the urban centers (Olaoba, 2000). In other words, even in the informal urban market system, men dominate as they control not only the markets but also the means of transportation to and from the market. Most importantly, women do not have equal access to training in business skills (IWTC, op. cit.) and the liberal modernization approach to development, which assumes that modernization benefits men and women equally have continued to hurt rather than help women in Nigeria and, indeed, the Third World (Parpart, 1989). Where the informal economy is liberalized (which it is) there is a need to closely examine the social relations that characterize it (in this case the informal long-distance, rural-urban trade). This will help to illuminate why women engage in such "risky" business, and show whether their involvement in the trade has alleviated their status. Since the family is the bedrock of the society, it is of interest to find out how this institution is protected while the women, seen as the home caretakers, are out of the home. Furthermore, the nature of gender relations and rural-urban informal trade networks characterizing long-distance trade are of immense relevance to development.

Just as political and economic relations characterize the global economy within which "might" seems to be "right", the social relations of the grassroot levels need to be properly grasped. In the former, it is now conspicuous that the inequality between the poor and the rich, the strong and the weak, has continued to widen as the unregulated market condition is emphasized by the advocates of liberalization and globalization (Mohamed, 2001); the same scenario will replicate itself at the grassroots if the consciousness of inequality is not carefully examined.

Research Aims and Objectives

Though structural dependency has always existed between the rich and poor nations of the world, the consequential subordination of the rural (poor) to the urban (rich) center even within the different nations of the world has often been limited to the analysis of formal relationships with respect to policy making and implementation. In other words, the popular saying is always "the policy is fantastic but the implementation is the problem", yet the informal relations required in policy making and implementation are often neglected. The activities

at the market are important to the survival of the economy and within the market, economic substructures are informal relations embedded in the family, political institutions, and trading relations.

This work attempts to understand these by:

- * examining the historical context of women in long-distance informal trade in the Oke-Ogun area.
- * ascertaining the nature of relationship between the rural and urban market system.
- * investigating why women are involved in long-distance informal trade and the effects on the family.

To undertake these, the trade relations between the Oke-Ogun area (rural) and Bodija market (urban) in Ibadan, both in Oyo State, Nigeria, were used to examine the structural dependency between the state capital and the source of its food needs. The Oke-Ogun area is characterized as the food basket of Oyo State.

Research Methodology

Due to the itinerary of long-distance trade and illiteracy which characterize informal trade as well as the relative lack of penetration of the rural social structures by the colonial and neocolonial social formations, qualitative research methods of data collection were found appropriate for this research. The following research instruments were employed through triangulation:

- direct observation
- in-depth interviewing
- focus group discussion

Direct observation of the activities of women long-distance traders was carried out at two levels. At the first level, the researcher spent two weeks at Saki observing the activities of those traders in relation to how they locate farmers, their arrangement for transportation, and how easy it is to conclude their business. At the second level, the nature of observation was that of the relationship between the women long-distance traders and their "landlords". It was at Saki that four focus group discussions were conducted with the women traders and five in-depth interviews held with the landlords to find out the history of the trade, the nature of relationship between the rural and urban informal market system, why women engage in long-distance trading, and the effects of the involvement of women in the trade on

the family and economic and political institutions. The information collected was collated and the contents descriptively analyzed.

Brief Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Markets have always been important institutions in Yorubaland, albeit in Africa, before the colonization of the territory(ies). These markets were highly organized and in some places, chiefs, such as the *Parakoyi* among the Ijebus and Egbas were attached to them to maintain order and collected tolls and duties from traders (Banwo, 2004; Fadipe, 1970; Hodder, 1969; Johnson, 1921). Markets existed daily and periodically (Ukwu, 1969; Hill, 1966). Till date, markets are still organized in these daily and periodic systems with the latter being predominant in rural markets and the former predominant in urban ones (Olaoba, 2000).

Interestingly, it has been confirmed that these pre-colonial trades were not only between adjacent communities but also involved long-distance trading. Trade routes often followed junction zones between forest and savanna as in old market towns from Ilaro through Eruwa and Ogbomoso and Ilorin where the products could be easily exchanged. There were also markets and coastal lagoons and creeks which were important contact zones between agriculturists and fishermen. These traditional markets were clearly related genetically to long-distance trading and these markets resulted from demands in this kind of trade (Petre-Grenouilleau, 2001; Hodder, 1969).

Essentially, the location of markets still follows the old pattern, that is, they are still located mainly in the so-called "junction zones" which, since the colonial period, became urban settlements—being capital cities and towns. Except for certain emergencies like the problem of frequent road accidents, traffic jams, and the problem of space, the old markets, both daily and periodic, still maintain their old status. The Bodija market with which this work is concerned was established as a result of space, accidents and space problems of the Orita-merin market, which was one of the major foodstuff markets in Ibadan (Olaoba, 2000).

Just as the establishment of markets had a long history, the involvement of women in long-distance trade also has a long history. Though men in the northern part of Nigeria due to its Islamic

doctrine, which puts women in purdah, dominate long-distance trade, women dominated long-distance trading in southern Nigeria—especially trade in foodstuffs. As Fadipe (1970) noted, these women traveled up to 150 miles before the coming of the railways trading in livestock such as fowl and pigeons; and food crops such as maize, yam, and beans. Both ordinary women and kings' wives were engaged in this trade. They often traveled in caravans for security reasons. Except for kings' wives who are identified by the special clothing wrapped around their goods, ordinary women pay taxes traveling from one town to the other. If the latter attempt to imitate the former, they are thrown into perpetual slavery if caught. The colonial government stopped the collection of tolls on which the town depended through the threat or use of force to allow for the free flow of trade to the coast. More significantly, the government, in its present neocolonial status, became the tax/toll collectors at the different market towns.

Today women in long-distance trade have been found to be carriers of HIV/AIDS. It is believed that this process occurs due to their long absence from home. During this period, they often engage in sexual activities with truck drivers. (Orubuloye et al., 1994).

Theory of Structural Dependency

This theory is mainly associated with the Latin American anthropologists, economists, and sociologists in their critique of the import substitution industrialization strategy recommended for the development of Latin America by the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) under the leadership of Paul Prebisch. Their main standpoint began with Paul Baran's (1957) *The Political Economy of Growth* which showed that in so far as the nature of unequal trade persists between Latin America and the developed world of the United States and Europe, the continent would continue to underdevelop. It was Andre Gunde Frank who, in his *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America*, (1976) explicitly stressed that a metropolis-satellite relationship developed between the capitalist (metropole) and the underdeveloped (satellite). The Latin American continent (the

satellite) supplies the raw materials needed for the continued development of the metropolises while the latter supply only finished products. In this process, capital is further expropriated from the satellite. In other words, in so far as the finished products require no added value in the satellite nations, it brings about underdevelopment. This is further exacerbated with the unequal exchange, in terms of the fixing of prices by the metropolises both for the raw materials and the finished products, such that the satellite nations are always at a disadvantage. Nonetheless, economic and sociopolitical connections between the satellite and metropole generate increasing interdependence among their bourgeoisie who have developed mutual interests to ensure the maintenance of the system.

Though the dependency theory has been variously criticized, its utility with respect to the relationships between the developed and Third World nations is undisputable. More importantly also is the elucidation provided by Norman Long (1975) in his "Structural dependency, modes of production and economic brokerage in rural Peru", which further exposes the expropriation and utilization of economic surplus taking place at the local and regional levels *within* the Third World nations themselves. The paper shows that rather than limiting analysis to the vertical relations between the metropolis and the satellite, there are also horizontal ties helping to sustain the dependency at the local, regional, and national levels such that an historically specific relationship exists at these levels.

It is this historically specific, horizontal relationship existing between the urban and rural market economies in Oyo State that this paper further explores by showing the nature of inequality in the social structure. This thus draws attention to structural imbalances that exist between the major urban centers and the rural hinterland.

It is in this light of structural dependency of one town (and its people and government) over another that the theoretical analysis of the research work is based. The political economy of dependency is that of the rural areas (and its people) on the urban areas (and its people). The latter determines what would be brought to its market by the former, how the products will be sold, i.e., the pricing, and even when they (the products) will be sold.

Results of Findings and Discussions

History of long-distance trading in Oke-Ogun area of Oyo State

Ever before the long-distance trading between rural and urban systems, the business was limited to the *oriko*—farm “capitals”/junctions—in the rural areas. In other words, it was first a rural–rural trading network, as a key informant posited. The rural–rural yam trading started with *ofa* (counting in one hundred and twenty) as the basis of measurement. It was also a middleman who would take the yams to the market to sell, according to heaps, to another middleman who would take the yams to the market through the help of carriers (*alabaru*). The way they lead the yams to the market was called *Daruke*. With the advent of motor vehicles, the sources of the latter have been virtually dispensed with though this has also resulted in higher prices of foodstuffs. On the other hand, motor vehicles now encourage the transportation of more food to the urban markets and the need for farmers to:

- * be more productive
- * sell their products on time, due to lack of storage facilities.

To solve the latter problem, the farmers have developed yam-flour production, which only requires the fermentation of yams, to help in the preservation of what cannot be sold.

Even though the ownership of land and its produce used to belong to the man, yam-flour production has become, essentially, a woman’s affair. Thus yams that are not sold, either due to lack of demand or for long-term home consumption, more or less, belong to the woman. She is responsible, along with the children, for peeling, sun-drying, and grinding to yam-flour. Some may be sold by the woman at the market and some left for home consumption.

The processing of yams through its being sun-dried is another major source of income to women in long-distance trade since it has become an important product in the long-distance trade. Furthermore, it has helped to economically empower the women when new yams are no longer available in the market. In fact, some of them reserve their yams specifically for this purpose. The processing of sun-dried yams to yam-flour is an important contribution of women both to survival at home and societal development in general.

The Relationship between Rural and Urban Informal Market Systems

While reconsidering the importance of recognizing the idea of relative dependency between the rural and urban social structures, as the latter largely depends on the former for the supply of most of its food needs, it is clear that the survival of the rural areas is determined by the urban systems. This fact was generally agreed during the focus group discussions held at Saki urban/township and Ago Amodu, the capital of Saki East Local Government—that it is poverty that necessitated the involvement of women in work outside the home, not to talk of long-distance trade.

Perhaps rather than “poverty” as posited by the women, one may assert that their non-inclusion in sharing proceeds from the farm in a patriarchal setting necessitated the need to be involved in trade. This argument is plausible when viewed against the fact that even when women “assist” in the clearing, cultivating, harvesting, processing, and marketing of products, very little is allocated to them from the proceeds. The economic situation, which makes it impossible for men to satisfy the needs of their wife/wives and children, has exacerbated the need for women to contribute to the economic needs of the family in the rural areas.

Viewed from this disadvantaged position, and coupled with the lack of adequate storage facilities in the rural areas, it behoves on the people in rural areas to quickly dispose off their agricultural products. Nonetheless, sun-dried yams have become a viable option though earning less from its sale.

In addition, having agreed to sell their products, the women are faced with various taxes and rents. At each local government, which they pass through, they have to pay certain taxes before getting to their final destination at Bodija market in Ibadan, Oyo State.

At the urban market, the women in long-distance trading are confronted with further payments. The landlords or shop owners in Ibadan North collect rent (*owo-ile*) from the traders, which is 10% of whatever goods they have come to sell. The fixing of food prices is again, carried out by the *onibaranda* - the middlemen - such that the number of days/hours it would take to sell their products is indirectly determined by these middlemen comprising the so-called market officials.

It is interesting to note that most of the shop-owners and market officials are men while most of the long-distance traders are women. As the picture therefore emerges, the men determine where the products would be located and the prices for the products to be sold. This arrangement is in spite of the town associations to which the women traders at Ibadan belong. It is as if the patriarchal ownership of land at Ibadan, this time the shops, is reflected at the urban market system. It is not uncommon to see these "landlords" sitting down idle in the markets only for them to collect their "tithes" at the end of the sales.

The Initiating Factors that Enhance the Involvement of Women in Long Distance Trade

From investigations at Saki East local government, it was generally agreed that "poverty" might be the explanatory factor for the involvement of women in long-distance trade. This question with regards to why women engage in long-distance trade was asked with a view to ascertaining the effects on the family. This is important when viewed from the sociological perspective that women play important social roles in children's upbringing.

Indeed, it has been posited that the absence of women from home often leads to deviance among children. This is because the socialization of children revolves around women. They are expected to teach the children the basic societal norms and values. In their absence from home, especially in the urban areas, the housemaid takes over the mother's role with many negative consequences. Yet, it seems inevitable that women have to work outside the home for the survival of the family.

In the "rural" areas, it is also becoming clearer that fathers do not shoulder all the needs of their wife(ves) and children. Women have always contributed to the survival of the family though their contributions are not often qualitatively valued. The dimensions of women in trade, generally, have not clearly brought out women's economic contributions to the family and society. Women in long-distance trade have clearly enlarged women's economic contributions to the family and society.

The first source of "capital" for the engagement in the trade is often the parents or by borrowing from the family relations. Of recent, however, apprentices under their bosses often accumulate "profit" through shrewdness and

prudence in business. Shrewdness by making extra profit over and above the prices their bosses expected them to sell the goods, and prudence by keeping these profits for the future as capital for their own independent business.

When they become married, *alajapa* expect their husbands to understand that the business is their way of life and as generally agreed, in a focus group discussion with women, they believe that:

a man knows he cannot satisfy all the needs of his wife and children and should therefore, be ready to accept the woman, as she is...

According to them, the extended family relations also help in ensuring that the home is taken care of. However, the women do not mind if their husbands marry another wife if the assistance from the extended family is not forthcoming. The women do not, however, frown at their men marrying other women to assist in home management. Though this may be as a result of the area being Moslem-dominated, the women explain this away through "cultural" reason. However, the reality of the acceptance of "other" women comes to the fore when the women stated that they do marry other women for their husbands to have someone to take care of the home in their absence thus encouraging polygyny. When this happens, the women shoulder the responsibility of taking care of the new wife and her children for her husband. In fact, as some women claimed, a man is a husband of all.

Gender and Land-ownership in Rural Saki: Source of Capital for Long-Distance Trade

Yoruba culture has often been identified as being patriarchal. Male dominance has been associated with men/males being the owners of the means of production and decision-makers at home and in the society. Superficially, it is said that males being the "heads" of households and kings show, albeit, clearly that males in African societies dominate both the political and economic spheres of life. At Saki, this is contradicted, at least, in the economic ownership of the object of production—land.

Women do have access to land as children to their fathers. In an in-depth interview with an old man of more than 70 years, and another old woman of about the same age, they concurred, separately, that:

In so far as women would share the fathers' liabilities, i.e., if the father owed some debts, women do also share in the father's assets including land.

In another in-depth interview with a woman of 32 years, her own father's stepsister gave her her own inheritance, including land, even when she was the only child from the mother to her father. In fact, during the burial of the father, the cows that were killed were equally shared between the children whose mothers had more than five children with her being the only child.

Nonetheless, it is generally agreed, that where there is "love", female children often give their own share of land, especially, to their male siblings since they do not farm by themselves. This is further substantiated with the reasoning that women would go to their husbands who is expected to take care of them. In situations where the women decide to take possession of their inherited land, they *do not* give it to their husbands but hire laborers to farm the land for them. By implication therefore, they also contribute equally to the sustenance of the family with their brothers when the need arises, e.g., the burial of relations. On the other hand, where they give out the land in "love" to their male siblings, the latter would be responsible for all the needs that would arise from within the immediate and extended family members.

It is not therefore surprising that parents and family relations are always ready to lend money to women who are interested in long-distance trade to establish their business. This may also explain the seemingly "poverty" status of women. "Seemingly" because women, culturally, are not seen as burden-bearers with their male siblings and, husbands are expected to be their caretakers. As the ability of the latter to take care of the women decreases, especially with decreasing returns from family and the need to therefore diversify into other areas, women are forced to go outside the family to work. As such, they also sustain the family with economic returns to the family and the acceptance of polygyny to take care of the family social needs.

Other sources of capital for long-distance trading have been identified as *ajo* or *esusu* {daily contribution} with friends—an old means of capital formation in rural areas. Cooperative societies, in its formal setting, have also recently become an

important source of capital for long-distance trading. The respondents identified the problems associated with capital creation as one of the greatest problems facing their business, apart from armed robbery attacks, road accidents, and the inability of buyers to promptly pay credit.

Conclusion

The inequality between rural and urban social structures has continued to persist since the pre-colonial to the neocolonial regimes. This inequality pattern significantly increased during the colonial period and has been further perpetrated in the neocolonial regime with the urban-biased development strategies. This has created the rural poor comprising its people and institutions versus the urban rich with its people and institutions. In this study, it was made clear that poverty informed rural women in long-distance trade and that there is domination by the urban dwellers in their relationship. Most importantly, this study has shown that women have access to the object of labor, that is, land which they inherit from their parents though they may, in "love", give these lands to their brothers. In either case, the liability of the woman is decided. If she chooses to inherit the land, then she would be responsible for certain family expenses. Where she chooses not to inherit the land, the brothers become responsible. Finally, we may say that women in long-distance trade encourage polygyny due to the need to assist the family to generate some income and at the same time take care of the home.

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