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Hidden Trade in Hausaland

by

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# Hidden Trade in Hausaland

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## HIDDEN TRADE IN HAUSALAND

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There have been few attempts to study the functions of rural West African market-places in relation to the socio-economic life of the communities they serve, and many of the questions which require propounding receive an implicit answer. Thus it is conventionally supposed that where cash percolates into every crevice of the economy, as it does in the Hausa village in northern Nigeria to which this article relates, most cash transactions involving farm produce will then necessarily occur in a market-place. No one asks what happens if the nearest market-place is inconveniently distant (as is obviously common where nucleated settlements are lacking) and few have been interested to explore such extra-market transactions between farmers as must surely commonly occur in West Africa's forest zone because of the great bulkiness of root-crops and plantain.

The fast-growing literature<sup>2</sup> on West African marketing and market-places lays increasing stress on the role of city markets,<sup>3</sup> on the marketing of different types of produce<sup>4</sup> and on market typology and location.<sup>5</sup> As most of this new-style research is undertaken by economists, geographers and rural sociologists, so it is becoming distinctly old-fashioned to study 'the village market', which is thought to have been 'done already' by social anthropologists, to the extent that a stereotyped, even sentimental, image of 'the village and its market' bars the way to further investigation. Perhaps it is because most of the few wholly 'marketless areas' which have been studied happen to be either anomalous or economically backward,<sup>6</sup> that the study of more localised 'marketlessness' has been ignored. However, it is certain that modern studies of marketing nexuses ought to be based on the much better understanding than we now possess of the great variety of functions which may, or may not, be served by the humble local market.

The extreme technical difficulty of operational research in West African marketplaces has been insufficiently emphasised, partly accounting, as it does, for the under-development of the subject. Although, as Mintz has written, market-places are useful 'for the scholar in getting at an important aspect of the rural economy', yet:

... to walk into a market place within such a system is to wonder how one can really go about studying it. The market place itself is often large and amorphous; buyers and sellers look alike; the products are probably mostly unfamiliar, and the measures of quantity and the means for calculating value unusual; the process of exchange may either be so rapid as to be almost incomprehensible, or very slow, but with little to clarify the rationale of negotiation. There is a strong temptation to view much of the activity as erratic and pointless, particularly if one is unfamiliar with the premisses of value which underlie local trade (1964a: 4).

Of course, as Mintz insists, 'there is order in such market places', yet an investi-

gator who happens to work in a locality where retail trade is mainly conducted in greater privacy than in a market-place may enjoy a positive advantage.

As soon as one begins to realise the possible significance of extra-market retailing, one is forced to accept that the 'standard' type of rural market, which stands at the bottom of all market-typologies, is neither a single type, nor necessarily linked at all to other 'higher' types. This 'standard' has been more adequately defined by Skinner, writing on rural China, than by any writer on West Africa:

I term 'standard' that type of rural market which met all the normal trade needs of the peasant household: what the household produced but did not consume was normally sold there, and what it consumed but did not produce was normally bought there. The standard market provided for the exchange of goods produced within the market's dependent area, but more importantly it was the starting point for the upward flow of agricultural products and craft items into higher reaches of the marketing system, and also the termination of the downward flow of imported items destined for peasant consumption (1964: 6).

Do 'standard' markets necessarily serve all these functions simultaneously?

Although it is well-known that in Muslim Hausaland, Hausa (as distinct from pastoral Fulani<sup>8</sup>) women of child-bearing age do not go to market (and this irrespective of whether they are fully secluded in their husband's houses), yet it is conventionally assumed that local markets in Hausaland serve the same general functions as in the forests of the south, where most of the buyers and sellers are younger women; it is also assumed that all sizeable Hausa communities 'need' markets and that a 'marketless chief' necessarily lacks prestige.<sup>9</sup> My fieldwork in Hausaland leads me to doubt these assumptions.

This article is mainly concerned with the importance of the 'house-trade' conducted by fully-secluded women in a village, Batagarawa, in northern Katsina Emirate. I shall show that although each woman sells her produce within the privacy of her husband's compound, one may yet argue that the sellers as a group, together with their customers, are the equivalent of a market-place, especially so far as grains are concerned—a market-place of incomparably greater importance than that which was established in the village recently. I shall briefly deal with some of the other economic activities of secluded women, mentioning the means by which they 'coagulate' their small earnings into sums of investible size through membership of their 'rotating credit associations'. I shall conclude by putting forward a little support for a hypothesis that rural market-places in parts of northern Katsina Emirate serve a relatively unimportant function in relation to the retailing of foodstuffs to the sedentary Hausa population.

There are, of course, many different types of woman trader in West Africa<sup>10</sup>—so diverse are their functions that no useful generalisations can possibly relate to all of them. One may, therefore, emphasise that the women traders of Batagarawa are here being compared with the huge class of women food retailers who frequent rural periodic markets in many regions of southern West Africa, for the purpose of selling foodstuffs grown by themselves, their kin, or their husbands:<sup>11</sup> such women comprise a very high proportion of all vendors in most rural markets in southern Ghana, where local men, with the notable exception of the Ewe, are usually wholly averse to market-retailing of foodstuffs. The extra-market trade conducted by the secluded Hausa women is, of course, entirely distinct from another, certainly ancient, form of West African 'house-trade', involving long-distance traders

in storable produce who, on arrival at their destination, lodge with a landlord, or mai gida, who stores their produce, arranging for its sale directly from his house. <sup>12</sup> There are, also, other forms of extra-market trade in indigenous produce, <sup>13</sup> such as the practice of most of the licensed buying agents of West African Marketing Boards of locating their buying stations away from the market (if there is one), and the growing tendency in larger centres of population for traders in certain produce, such as grain or yams, to sell directly from sheds or stores which are unrelated to the market.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Hausa 'village area' of Batagarawa, is situated astride an unimportant road, six miles south of Katsina city, some twenty miles from the Nigerian frontier with the Niger Republic. In 1967, when I lived there for six months, our house census showed that the area had a population of about 1,400 of whom about 1,150 lived in a very compact 'town' (gari), the remainder in dispersed houses within a mile or so. The gari is the seat of Mallamawa (the title of the chief and the name of his district), one of the twenty-one District Heads of Katsina Emirate. Virtually all women of child-bearing age in the gari (as well as some younger girls who are betrothed) are confined to the walled courtyards of their houses, in such full Muslim seclusion that they do not even emerge veiled; perhaps partly because of the relative lack of wells, 16 which are very numerous in the gari, few of the younger women in the dispersed houses are secluded, though none of them frequent markets in any capacity.

The secluded women sit, or work, in their courtyards all day, except when obliged to take refuge in their sleeping huts owing to rain. There they process foodstuffs, cook, trade and mind their children. Very little companionship is offered by their husbands, who eat separately, rest and receive visitors in their entrance huts, and who spend most of the evening chatting with other men. It is the women's lot to rely on the company of their co-wives, their children and any other women and children who reside with them. Although about 70 per cent. of the wives of household heads are their husbands' sole wives, yet only about one woman in seven lacks adult female companionship, this being partly because a high proportion of married sons (about 75 per cent.) reside in their father's houses—some of them in separate sections. This high degree of co-residence of father and married son is connected with an institution known as gandu, 17 under which sons continue to work on their father's gandu farms after marriage—the group of men which works any set of farms, together with their dependants, being here denoted a 'farming-unit'. 18

In 1967 Batagarawa was the only capital of a Katsina district which lacked a market: I was told of the invariable failure, after months or even years, of all the numerous attempts that had been made to establish a market in the past forty odd years, since the town first became a District Head's seat. In 1968 came another attempt, with what result we shall later see.

## The house-trade in grain

Economic inequality in Batagarawa is very pronounced and many of the

poorer farmers subsist largely on bought grain, either because they grow insufficient for their requirements (it is not uncommon for a 'farmer' to produce but a few bundles or even none at all), or because they sell most of what they grow at harvest-time, to meet their debts, to relieve their hunger for meat, to finance other urgent purchases, to pay their community tax and so forth. Although all the better-off farmers produce considerable quantities of grain, many of them do not aim at self-sufficiency, no disgrace attaching to this. Yields and harvest-dates vary greatly from year to year, and such middle-range farmers as aim at self-sufficiency with no surplus are often caught short. One way and another, there is a large demand for grain at all seasons—this coming partly from richer farmers who buy grain at harvest-time because it is cheap. There are no substitutes for the three main types of grain, early millet, late millet and guinea corn; these provide most of the basic carbohydrates consumed by the people, no yams or cocoyams being grown, as they are further south, and very little rice.

Much of this demand for grain is satisfied by Batagarawa farmer-traders, known as kwarami, who obtain most of their supplies from farmers and markets outside Batagarawa<sup>19</sup> and who entrust most of their retail selling to their secluded wives,<sup>20</sup> whose transactions are conducted through the medium of children and older women. There are about seventeen active kwarami in Batagarawa, many of whom handle groundnuts and beans (wake) as well as grains. Active though they may be, their main occupation during the rainy season, when the demand for grain is presumably at its height, is that of farming—they are all local men. They obtain their supplies of grain, firstly from a number of periodic markets within a radius of some forty miles; secondly direct from farmers who live in more remote areas; and thirdly through agents, known as abokan arziki (lit. friends of prosperity), who buy from neighbouring farmers and store in their granaries, and who may or may not deliver the grain.

During the farming season most *kwarami* go to market once or twice weekly, by donkey or lorry, the two most important markets each being about ten miles away. They never buy either in Katsina city, or in the two rural markets nearest to Batagarawa, in all of which they occasionally sell. They buy either direct from farmers, who usually bring their grain to market by donkey, or more often from 'measurers', either men (*ma'auni*) or older women (*ma'auniya*), who measure and sell on behalf of farmers for a small commission. So far as is known the *kwarami* never buy from wholesalers, which means that Batagarawa is wholly reliant on these local traders who provide the only link between farmer and final consumer.<sup>21</sup>

Most kwarami lack the capital to undertake any long-term storage, except through the medium of such agents as are prepared to wait for full payment after having bought cheaply at harvest-time, to whom they may advance sums such as £10 or £20. As they are constantly buying and selling, so they are constantly re-determining the prices at which they instruct their wives to sell.

Enquiries made of the wives of eleven prominent kwarami, show that these women are usually not regarded as being free to raise or lower the price they charge, or to grant credit without permission. This is the formal position to which there are some exceptions,<sup>22</sup> and certainly no kwarami could trade successfully unless he could trust his wife up to a point. But from what some men frankly say, it is also clear that the women, who seem usually to receive no fixed commission

on sales, are often selling, as it were, in partial opposition to their husbands. They enjoy the opportunities which are provided by their seclusion of charging whatever price they like to friends, of raising the price (and pocketing the balance), of making short-term loans and of selling grain which is issued to them for consumption in their own household—they are altogether much freer than the measurers, their market counterparts, whose selling may be watched by the waiting farmer. Foreseeing profit for themselves, many women urge their husbands on as traders, maybe granting loans for the purpose. Unlike the men, they stand opposed to the establishment of a market-place.

The other main suppliers of grain are farmers who sell grain from their granaries, which they either have grown themselves or have bought, as bundles, for a price rise—threshed grain is never stored in granaries. These farmers entrust some of the retailing of threshed grain to their wives: probably, however, they more often sell bundles directly from their granaries.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout my stay in Batagarawa I never witnessed grain-selling in street or open space and only very occasionally in a man's entrance hut (zaure): hidden house-selling was the general rule. I now proceed to show that the group of isolated grain-sellers of Batagarawa, together with their customers, constitute a form of 'market-place'.

But surely this cannot mean that competitive forces can possibly have such full play in a 'honeycomb-market' (composed of numerous cells), as in a conventional market arena, designed to aid the rapid circulation of people and information? I think there are several reasons why this might be so, and have some evidence it is so. Firstly, a honeycomb-market which is in constant session may have the advantage over a conventional rural market which is open once every seven days (perhaps in the evening only), in that it is not subject to fits and starts,<sup>24</sup> exacerbated as these are by the invariable lack of storage facilities in such markets. Secondly, if the buyers are apt to shop around in both types of market, not being tied to certain houses or sellers (as all the evidence suggests is the case in Batagarawa), there will be nothing to choose between their competitiveness on this score. Thirdly, shortterm competitiveness may actually be enhanced by the opportunities open to secluded wives of deceiving their husbands and of under-cutting other women: in conventional markets the sellers of any commodity sit in a group and prices are more readily 'maintained' on any day. Fourthly, short-term demand may be steadier in Batagarawa, where a fixed population necessarily buys most of its supplies, than it is in a periodic market which is one of a number of alternative buying-points—thus enabling the kwarami to plan their buying policy. Fifthly, the number of kwarami in Batagarawa is probably large enough to ensure that they do not maintain prices collusively to a serious degree, especially as, unlike farmers, they do not deliberately hold for a price rise and their sources of supply are numerous—even though those who frequent the weekly market at Yar Gamji do admit to 'discussing' price together in the lorry on their return journey, any agreement would only last until next market day.

However all this may be, our Batagarawa price statistics (see fig. 1) suggest that unnecessary short-term kinks in the price-curve over time may be at least as well eliminated there as in a small periodic market and that, except when price-trends are rapidly changing, the prices charged by individual kwarami on any day are

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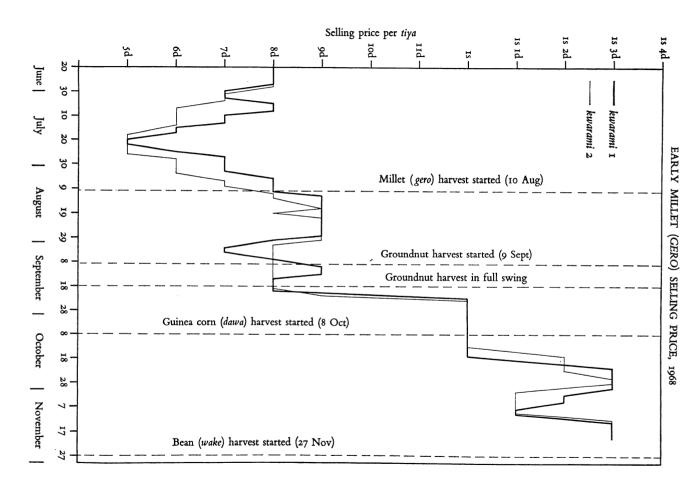


FIGURE I.

remarkably, though not suspiciously, uniform. These statistics are much more reliable than most West African market-price series, as produce is always measured in Batagarawa (as in Katsina markets generally) in a standard enamelware bowl, known as a tiya, which holds about 6 lb. of grain, with some variation according to type of grain and moisture content; originally ordered from a private firm in Kano by the Katsina Native Authority, this measure is one of the few standard retail measures in West Africa (other than the beer bottle and the cigarette tin), for it cannot be forged or tampered with.<sup>25</sup> The price information which circulates round the gari, almost as though it were a stock exchange, is always expressed in terms of the tiya, which is used for measuring grain issued by husbands to wives as well as for trading.

Figure 1 relates to the prices per tiya at which the wives of two kwarami were instructed to sell early millet (gero) between June and November 1968 and takes no account of the extent to which the women actually deviated from these prices. It shows the smoothness of price-trends over time, the high degree of price-uniformity and the extent of seasonal price variations. <sup>26</sup> Although the dates of the Batagarawa harvest for various crops have been noted on the graph, these do not necessarily apply to grain-supplying areas, as local variations in rainfall and hence in harvest-dates are often large. <sup>27</sup>

Price data for this period were in fact collected from four kwarami: but the four curves showed such a close correspondence that, for the sake of clarity, only two of them have been plotted on the graph. Prices charged by eleven kwarami on three dates supplement the graph: on 28 October 1968, when the price trend was strongly upwards, four of the kwarami charged 1s. 1d. per tiya of early millet, three charged 1s. 2d. and two 1s. 3d. (no figures were available for the remaining two kwarami); on 6 and 16 November all eleven kwarami were charging 1s. 2d. and 1s. 3d. respectively.

\* \* \* \* \*

Despite their virtual incarceration for the first thirty-five years of their married lives, the women of the gari enjoy a considerable degree of economic independence -thus having somewhat more in common with their sisters in southern forest country than might be supposed.<sup>28</sup> Just as the economic relationship between fathers and sons (and between brothers) often involves cash transactions identical to those between non-kin, so it is between husbands and wives: thus, to take two examples, fathers pay their married sons in gandu for evening work on the farms, this being outside the range of their customary duties, and a husband will pay his wife at (or near) the standard rate for 'threshing' groundnuts,29 her obligations being confined to domestic duties, mainly cooking. Just as fathers are apt to sell farms to their sons,30 so a wife who makes groundnut oil for sale will pay her husband the proper 'market-price' for any groundnuts she buys from him. Although, of course, husbands and wives are apt to help each other in numerous different ways, a wife's economic autonomy is often sufficient to insulate her from her husband's poverty—as shown by the examples of prominent house-traders whose husbands are notably poverty-stricken.

As has been seen, relatively few women are engaged in grain-selling. What other remunerative occupations do women pursue? The most important are: housetrading on their own account, in which about two-thirds of all wives engage at times; work for payment (aikatau), 31 much of this involving heavy tasks performed for other women, such as the winnowing, pounding and grinding of grain—about half of all wives sometimes undertake this work; and spinning (kadi), pursued by some 85 per cent. of all wives as virtually their only craft, the raw cotton being bought, the thread sold, outside Batagarawa, the crafts of weaving and dyeing having nearly vanished there. Other occupations include:32 market-trading by older women (thirteen such women are known to trade, at times, in Katsina city);33 the selling of miscellaneous produce, other than grain, for their husbands; hairdressing; midwifery; and a little farming or harvesting on their own account, mainly by women living in dispersed houses.

## Women's house-trading on their own account

The most important wares handled by the Batagarawa women house-traders 34 on their own account, are foodstuffs which (with or without paid assistance aikatau) they have themselves processed from locally-grown produce. According to house-to-house enquiries made of women in 1968,35 the most frequently36 traded foodstuffs were: groundnut oil and the associated by-product kuli-kuli;37 millet porridge or gruel (fura);38 various cakes, or snacks, made of grain, bean or tiger-nut flour; 39 'roasted' groundnuts; cakes made of locust-bean seeds (daddawa); 40 boiled cassava<sup>41</sup> (rogo); tuwo, the starchy basis of the main evening meal; and koko, a gruel usually made from guinea corn.

With the possible exception of groundnut oil, all these foodstuffs may be processed, at least on a small scale, by women who own no capital, it being possible to pay for any bought grains, etc., after the selling is complete. Any woman with time available may therefore enter this trade, provided she is at all trustworthy and, as will be seen, the wives of 'rich' and 'poor' farmers alike engage in it. Over four-fifths of all women house-traders sell at least one type of processed food.

Women who sell cooked foodstuffs in market-places benefit from the presence of hungry customers, with money in their pockets, who are away from home:42 there are various reasons why the Batagarawa women find such a ready demand for their similar wares, these including the habit in many households of preparing only a single (evening) meal; the ability of the bright and eager schoolchildren to wheedle pennies out of their parents for a cooked 'breakfast'; the tastiness of the cakes which count as sweetmeats; the substantial number of households which are too poor, or too ill-organised, to prepare any cooked food regularly; the preference of many young men and youths in the gari for partaking of their evening meal in the street.43

The secluded women also handle most of the retail trade in essential condiments, 1000000 such as salt and natron (kanwa),44 supplies of which have to be bought outside Batagarawa on their behalf. Then they sell widely consumed 'vegetables', such as the dried leaves of the baobab tree (kuka), locust-bean seeds (kalwa), locust-bean seeds in pod (dorowa), tiger nuts (aya) and pepper of several types: they also retail

much sour milk, supplied by pastoral Fulani from neighbouring hamlets. Another item is *makuba*, the 'local cement' made from locust-bean pods. Then, many wo men retail kola nuts, mainly obtained from wholesalers in Batagarawa.

A few women handle such lines as manufactured soap, detergents, sugar, matches, biscuits, manufactured sweets, cigarettes, kerosene, etc., though perhaps most customers buy these either from one of the men petty-traders with small tables set up in the open air (known as dan tebur—'tebur' being a corruption of 'table'), or from the two small lock-up 'shops'.45

When account is taken of the numerous other types of ware handled by a few women traders—these include cosmetics, locally-grown henna (lalle),<sup>46</sup> dyed Indian hemp (ramar kitso), spices and antimony (kwalli)<sup>47</sup>—then the total number of wares noted runs as high as sixty-five.

## The new Batagarawa market

Before discussing a few other aspects of the women's house-trade, I turn to consider the relative insignificance, at least during the first six months of its life, of the trade conducted in the newly-founded Batagarawa market, which has been held every Monday evening since 27 May 1968.

On three market-days <sup>48</sup> (30 September, 20 October and 18 November 1968) an average of only eighty-six 'sellers' attended the market, about half of them coming from neighbouring hamlets. Over a third of these people were either butchers and their assistants, or male petty-traders (the equivalent of the *dan tebur* but referred to in the market as *yan tireda—tireda* being a corruption of 'trader'), nearly all of whom had merely shifted their selling-points from the streets and paths where they usually carried on business. <sup>49</sup> The following detailed figures relating to 30 September only (a representative market-day), indicate the functions of the other 'sellers'.

As noted on the graph (fig. 1), 1968 harvest-dates for early millet, groundnuts and guinea corn were respectively about 10 August, 18 September and 5 October. This being so, there was more money about at the time our market enquiries were made, than at any other time of year.<sup>50</sup> So the small volume of retail trade, other than that in meat and in the wares of the yan tireda, is the more remarkable. No grain was sold in the market on any of the four market-days, except by a single seller of bundles of (unthreshed) guinea corn. On 30 September only seventeen men who were not butchers, yan tireda, or sugar cane sellers, sold goods in the market—few of their wares, as note e) of the table shows, were among those normally handled by secluded women: twelve of these men were outsiders, perhaps being partly attracted by the 'city lights' of the gari.51 Only ten females, four of whom were unmarried girls, sold cooked foods in the market-place and it may be that the trade of the secluded women actually increased on market-day. Although buyers were not enumerated in our enquiry and no sales figures were collected, it is yet sufficient to establish that the additional market trade resulting from the existence of the market is likely to be quite small, and that only a trivial quantity of foodstuffs is retailed there. So, in accordance with the women's wishes, the hidden housetrade continues undisturbed.52

\* \* \* \* \*

#### TABLE 1. Batagarawa market 30 September 1968

#### Numbers of 'sellers'

(Non-Batagarawa 'sellers' shown in brackets).

| Goods (Men)   |   | Goods (Women and girls)                |                         |
|---|---|--|-------------------------|
| Meat Yan tireda (a) Sugar cane (b) Boiled cassava Guava (b) Kola (c) Insecticides (d) Other (e) | 13 (3)<br>16 (8)<br>10 (7)<br>3 (2)<br>4 (4)<br>2 (1)<br>2 (2)<br>6 (5) | Koko (j)<br>Tuwo (k)<br>Other (l)<br>) | 3 (-)<br>3 (-)<br>4 (I) |
| Services (Men)  |   | Services (Women)                       |                         |
| Gambling (f) Tailoring (g) Barbering Drumming (h) Other (i)                                     | 9 (4)<br>4 (-)<br>2 (-)<br>2 (2)<br>- (-) } 17 (6)                      | Prostitution (f)                       | 2 (2)                   |
| Total   | 73 (38  |  | 12 (3)                  |

#### Notes:

- a. See above, p. 400.
- b. A seasonal crop—the number of sellers later fell sharply.
- c. A few of the yan tireda may also have sold kola.
- d. Probably mainly for use in granaries.
- e. One seller (only) dealt in each of the following: 'vegetables', peddlers' wares (kayan koli), leather goods, 'tea and bread', second-hand clothes, donkeys. Had the list related to all four market days for which information was available the following wares would also have been included: fanke (pancakes), halwa (a locally made sweet), bundles of guinea-corn (dawa), cloth, mats, cornstalk beds, honey, enamelware, hoe handles, perfumes, toys, rope, cooked yam, makuba ('local cement').
- f. Included in the list of 'sellers' at the express insistence of my assistant, M. S. Nuhu, a Batagarawa man, who did the counting.
  - g. All were Batagarawa tailors who normally worked at home.
  - h. There are many Batagarawa drummers, but these two were from neighbouring places.
  - i. On another market-day a Batagarawa calabash-mender attended.
  - j. The sellers of this gruel were all unmarried girls.
  - k. The basis of the evening meal.
- l. One seller dealt in each of the following: dakuwa (a sweetmeat), kuli-kuli (see note 37), roasted groundnuts (a girl seller), cooked rice.

As already noted, about two-thirds of the married (and widowed) women of Batagarawa engage in house-trade. Two of the main variables determining whether a woman engages in this trade are, whether she resides in the gari or in a dispersed house, and her age. Nearly half of the women in dispersed houses are not house-traders, the corresponding proportion for the gari being less than a third. Only a tenth of all house-traders outside the gari handle five or more types of ware (lacking turnover figures, I am here regarding the number of 'lines' handled as a very rough indicator of the scale of trade), the corresponding proportion for the gari being two-fifths. Clearly the advantages in the gari of a larger accessible population and of shorter distances between houses outweigh, in this connexion, the disadvantages of seclusion there—as already noted, few women

in dispersed houses are fully secluded. Presumably, the residents of dispersed houses do much of their 'marketing' in the *gari*.

As for the question of age, our evidence suggests that older women are more apt to be engaged in house-trade than are very young women: thus, while about a quarter of the wives of heads of farming-units are not in this trade, the corresponding proportion for other women (exclusive of widowed mothers of heads of farming-units—most of whom are traders) is nearly two-thirds. Presumably, the explanation should be sought in terms partly of the lack of trade contacts of the young wife and partly of the longer time she spends caring for infants.

It is interesting that there appears to be little association between the relative prosperity 53 of a woman's husband and her inclination or ability to engage in house-trade: the wives of notably poverty-stricken husbands are just as likely to engage in this trade as are those of the most prosperous farmers and they produce the same kinds of foodstuffs. 54 The four wives of the District Head are all prominent house-traders. However, there is a little evidence that the scale of trade is associated somewhat with the husband's economic position 55—the economic autonomy of women is not so complete as totally to expunge the latter variable.

But one interesting kind of trade, not hitherto mentioned, is pursued mainly by the wives of better-off husbands, this being the practice of buying produce at harvest-time for later processing or resale when seasonal prices have risen. <sup>56</sup> Fourteen women are known to engage in this trade, which is mainly in groundnuts or grains, but includes beans, locust-beans and tobacco, as well as other storable, locally-grown, produce. Eight of these fourteen women have relatively prosperous husbands and none has a notably poor husband. Such wives of very poor husbands as own a little capital will, presumably, be seldom inclined to invest it in this risky way. <sup>57</sup>

Probably the most successful of all the 246 women house-traders—she handles twenty-seven types of ware—is one of the three wives of a middle-aged farmer whom local opinion regards as having 'stopped trying', although he has five working sons; his *gandu* has virtually collapsed, one son has recently migrated elsewhere for farming, and he is largely maintained by his wives.

About four-fifths of all married (and widowed) women in Batagarawa are members of at least one 'rotating credit association' (adashi). 58 Most of these groups have lives of thirty weeks and the same number of members, one member drawing the pool (kwasa) each week. All the organisers of the groups (uwar adashi) are women and there are hardly any men members. There are about twelve uwar adashi, all of whom are prominent house-traders, though some have notably poor husbands. The adashi members are a representative cross-section of the adult female population, to the extent that the fifth of the population which does not participate consists mainly of the very young, the newcomers, the divorced, the old and the ill. Fourteen out of fifteen of the wives of four members of the ruling and administrative class participate, as do over 80 per cent. of all the wives (and sons' wives) of the very poor farmers. Nearly every woman aspires to save in this way, though some save much more than others.

The main forms of physical capital, or durable consumer goods, in which women invest their savings include: sheep and goats (women owned more than half of all

the thousand or so small livestock counted in the gari in September 1967); house-trading stock; durable cloth or clothing for themselves and their children; and simple household utensils, including mortars, grindstones and cooking pots.<sup>59</sup> Although women own about forty-eight acres of farmland in the manured zone <sup>60</sup> around the gari, they had bought very few of these farms. Nothing is known about the frequency with which the kwasa is 'invested' rather than spent immediately. Under the heading 'investment' should be included such outgoings as loans to husbands for productive purposes, and gifts, or counter-gifts, for friends who are celebrating any special occasion (biki), this being the commonest form of celebratory expenditure by women.

## The markets of Katsina Emirate

I conclude by briefly presenting some evidence for the idea that in Katsina Emirate generally, market-places may serve a rather unimportant function in relation to the *retailing* of foodstuffs, especially grains, to the final Hausa consumer.

In 1966 in Katsina Emirate there were about 178 markets, 61 serving a population which may be very tentatively estimated 62 at around 1,800,000—an average of about 10,000 persons per market. 63 The distribution of these markets does not appear to be closely related to the distribution of the total population. This statement is based on a comparison of the location of the markets, with published population-distribution maps based on the 1952 census.<sup>64</sup> It is to be noted that any lack of a close relationship between market and population distribution would not mean that Katsina Emirate was necessarily peculiar—thus Hodder (1965: 50, 51) has made the same point about Yorubaland, especially where population is sparse: it is merely that such a conclusion would be perfectly consistent with the idea that in rural areas most foodstuffs are retailed outside markets. But for the sake of the present discussion, there is in any case no need to accept this statement on trust. Even more relevant are the following figures drawn from the 1952 population census: 1) about two-thirds of all the 261 Katsina 'towns'65 listed in the census had no market; 2) nearly a third of all the markets were held in places not so listed; 3) a fifth of all the markets were held in places which (not being listed in the census) could be found on no published map.66

If Hausaland were a region where, as in parts of Iboland for instance, markets were commonly held between settlements, the foregoing statistics might be consistent with the common belief that all major concentrations of population are within easy reach of a market: but of this there is no evidence whatsoever, neither today nor in the 1850's, when the explorer Henry Barth visited many markets (Barth 1857). The conclusion must, therefore, be that many major centres, with populations of up to 5,000 or more, are marketless—many of them being the seats of Village Heads, the second level of chief under the Emir, an example being Tsanni, south of (and more populous than) Batagarawa.

The distribution of Katsina markets strongly suggests the possibility that in some localities some of the markets in the smaller centres off main roads, lie on Fulani cattle-routes, for they are strung along lines.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, there appear to be no published maps of the routes followed by transhumant Fulani (as distinct from trade-cattle routes) in this region, so this hypothesis cannot be checked. Nor are

there any reliable statistics which would enable one to estimate the proportions of settled pastoral Fulani in different districts <sup>68</sup>—these would help in checking a hypothesis that markets are especially likely to come into existence in localities where grain 'surpluses' of Hausa farmers are conveniently 'exchanged' against the milk and butter of the unsecluded women pastoralists.

Enquiries I made in a dozen markets in northern Katsina Province, mainly in the pre-harvest months of June, July and August, when the demand for grain is surely at its height, have suggested to me that most of the substantial markets there owe their existence to special factors which attract wholesale buyers from some distance away—that they are not primarily serving local consumers, as, for instance, is apt to be the case with many substantial southern Ghanaian markets. Although one knew that the market in Katsina city had never regained the fame it had enjoyed in the eighteenth century, 69 one was nevertheless unprepared for its general insignificance, especially as a grain-selling arena—one can only conclude that in this city, with a population of over 50,000, most grain is retailed from houses and sheds.

In northern Katsina Province (which includes Daura Emirate) most substantial markets are situated either very near Niger (many Niger buyers and sellers flowing over the frontier to attend)<sup>70</sup> or in localities which *both* specialise in producing certain goods which attract wholesalers (such as onions, grains in substantial quantity, mats, pottery) *and* are strategic centres for selling livestock, which in this region are necessarily sold in huge numbers in all large markets.<sup>71</sup>

Of course, I am not denying the possibility that some rural markets are the places where most of the grain bought by Hausa consumers in the locality is retailed: I am only suggesting that the secluded grain-sellers of Batagarawa are unlikely to be a special case.<sup>72</sup>

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Thus, there is still no West African work to compare with that of Mintz in the West Indies and Latin America—for example, there are no publications with titles corresponding to those of the six selected articles by Mintz (1959; 1960a; 1960b; 1964a; 1964b; Mintz & Hall 1960) included in the list of references, though see Cohen (1969) on the Ibadan cattle market.

- <sup>2</sup> For bibliographical material see Bohannan & Dalton (1962) as well as Hill (1966a).
- <sup>3</sup> Readily defined as markets which are daily and not periodic—see Hill (1966a).
- <sup>4</sup> One may here mention fieldwork recently organised by the Stanford Food Research Institute in conjunction with other U.S. academic institutions.
  - <sup>5</sup> See Ukwu (1965) who, like a fellow geographer Hodder (1965), takes a wide spatial view.
- <sup>6</sup> Examples being Meillassoux's work in Gouro country (1962: 1964) and Douglas's (1962) among the Lele.
- <sup>7</sup> As I know to my cost, an investigator in a crowded market-place feels as encapsulated as a rush-hour traveller in the London underground, so that the trainful of passengers (the market participants) is necessarily studied out of context, as a passing event. Considering the hubbub, the general harassment and impatience, the primacy of business, the lack of both privacy and shade, the numerous idle on-lookers who trail as a cloud of glory behind the pathetically exposed outsider . . . it is not surprising that both interviewer and respondent should often find conditions almost intolerable.
- <sup>8</sup> The wives of Fulani pastoralists, whether settled or transhumant, are not secluded; they sell their milk and butter both inside and outside markets.

- 9 See M. G. Smith (1962: 305-6), for the assertion that chiefs [of what rank?] abandon settlements where markets fail: 'I can recall no Hausa community having an officially recognised chief which lacked a market at its centre . . .' Although all the twenty-one District Heads of Katsina Emirate now live in towns with markets, there must be numerous officially-recognised Village Heads, see note 14, who are 'marketless'. See also Smith (1955: 142): 'The distributive organisation typical of the local community is the market, which is usually held at the community centre twice a week. Here the community members purchase the bulk of the services and commodities which they need . . .' It should, however, be added that Smith was later aware of the importance of extra-market trade, estimating (1962: 314) that in rural areas the volume of commercial exchange of all types (women's house trade included) which occurred on the non-market days bore comparison with that in the market.
- The organisation of trade in foodstuffs varies greatly with many factors, including the physical nature of the produce. Thus five types of specialist yam wholesaler have been distinguished by the writer in south-eastern Ghana—Hill (in press). Small-scale 'collecting-wholesaler-retailers' resembling Mintz's well-known Jamaican 'higgler' (Mintz 1960b) handle certain produce in certain circumstances in West Africa.
- <sup>11</sup> In much of rural southern Ghana most women are both market traders and farmers—the latter occupation usually being the more time-consuming.
- <sup>12</sup> See Hill (1966b) and Cohen (1969). The term *mai gida* (landlord), which is employed in this special sense in many West African regions, is the Hausa for 'house-owner'. (Not all landlords who receive stranger-traders, sell the goods from their house.)
- <sup>13</sup> The loose term 'indigenous produce' includes all goods processed or made in the country-side. (Most 'shops' handle mainly manufactured or imported goods.)
- <sup>14</sup> The District Head is the highest level of chief under the Emir, the second and third levels being denoted Village and Hamlet Heads. Mallamawa is the smallest District in the Emirate. (For further background information on Batagarawa, see Hill (1968; in press).)
- <sup>15</sup> This is irrespective of whether a purdah-type marriage (auren kulle) had been contracted: see Smith (1955) for much very valuable background material on this and numerous other relevant matters.
- <sup>16</sup> In much of north-central Hausaland the water-table is high and wells, dug by specialist well-diggers, are quite cheap. (If women are to be in full seclusion, four 'physical conditions' must be satisfied: there must be house latrines, numerous wells, clay-walled compounds and donkeys to carry firewood. One factor relevant to the absence of wife-seclusion in rural Muslim Bornu is, presumably, the low level of the water-table there.)
- <sup>17</sup> See Smith (1955) and Hill (1968; in press). In Batagarawa only about fourteen married sons (exclusive of those who have migrated) have formally left *gandu*, although there are others who do very little farming for their fathers, usually owing to the latter's poverty or inefficiency. (The institution of fraternal *gandu*, under which a set of brothers works under the authority of the eldest, is very weak in Batagarawa: even when it occurs, it is hardly ever a 'normal phase' of the development cycle, but is due to some special factor, such as the father's migration.)
- <sup>18</sup> Although many sons in gandu have farms of their own, on which they can work in the evenings and at other times when their fathers agree, and although non-farming work is never organised on a gandu basis, yet the economic affairs of most sons in gandu are usually sufficiently bound up with those of their fathers to make it reasonable to classify the farming population in 'farming-units'. Exclusive of the ruling class, there are about 170 farming-units in Batagarawa, of which only about forty-four are organised as gandu, the remainder being basically simple families.
- <sup>19</sup> Although crop-sizes vary greatly from year to year, mainly according to the weather, it seems improbable that Batagarawa is ever a net 'exporter' of grain—which may, incidentally, be stored for much longer than one season. (Batagarawa's main export overseas is groundnuts, subsidiary 'exports' to consumers elsewhere being (non-commercial) tobacco, beans (wake) and sweet potatoes.)
  - <sup>20</sup> Sons' wives or mothers may also sell on their behalf, but not daughters or sisters.
- <sup>21</sup> The independent economic viability of rural communities is seldom appreciated by those whose research is city-based.
- <sup>22</sup> Enquiries made of eleven prominent kwarami provided two instances in which wives were permitted to grant credit to those they trusted till the capital was required for replenishing supplies. Some wives volunteered that if they sold below the fixed price they had to meet the difference from their own pockets. In two instances wives said they could sell above the fixed price. Usually each wife receives her own grain allotment from her husband—but a common supply of groundnuts or beans may be issued to co-wives and shared out between them.

<sup>23</sup> Only two of the wives of the eleven *kwarami* referred to in note 22 admitted selling any grain grown by their husbands, but certain other wives are known to do this. As so much reticence surrounds the selling of self-grown grain, and as the granary is a private place, reliable information is hard to come by, except from third parties.

<sup>24</sup> It is significant that markets are often compared to the fickle rivers of Hausaland (kasuwa kogi ce—the market is a river): one never knows whether they will be dry or at full flood.

<sup>25</sup> Originally obtained from Kano on orders placed by the Katsina Native Authority, the words 'Katsina N.A.' and 'Tiya', as well as the date, are boldly enamelled on the bowl. One does not know how widespread the use of this bowl is—but one of about the same capacity, known as a tia, is used by the Hausa of Niger (see Nicolas 1967). A smaller measuring bowl, the well-known mudu, varies greatly in capacity—though see Smith (1962: 308, 321, 328) who refers to it as a 'standard'. The adjustment of receptacles is sometimes a serious industry: thus, in the famous market of Asesewa in Krobo country in southern Ghana I found that all the kerosene tins used for maize-measurement had false bottoms fixed by blacksmiths in the market.

<sup>26</sup> Seasonal price variations, which affect all storable crops, are very pronounced and rather unpredictable. See Hill (in press) for the significance of such variations in relation to economic inequality. (The sharp rise in millet prices, following the guinea corn harvest, is said to have been mainly due to a poor guinea corn crop.) The author plans to obtain regular price data from Batagarawa over a term of years. It is difficult to exaggerate the significance of such price variability in a community where many poor people are mainly dependent on bought grain and where farm wages vary only slightly. In July 1968 the price of millet was one-fifth of that in July 1967, when there was a late harvest. Price movements in Batagawara closely reflect those in neighbouring markets, including Katsina city.

<sup>27</sup> It is, however, interesting to note that early millet prices are apt to fall well before harvest, when the date can be accurately foreseen, so that risks of a shortage are no longer involved in

running down granary stocks.

<sup>28</sup> Of course many more types of occupation are open to southern women, and many of them operate on a much larger scale than their northern Nigerian counterparts. On the other hand, the latter are freer to trade, owing to their having no obligation to farm.

<sup>29</sup> Other examples are: the harvesting of beans by non-secluded women, who are rewarded for a morning's work for their husbands by being permitted to retain all they can pick in the afternoon—which they may later resell to their husbands; and the winnowing of groundnuts, the daily rate of pay for wives being about <sup>28</sup>.

30 The sale of farms is generally very common.

<sup>31</sup> From aiki (work): there are numerous other more specific Hausa words for work done by women for payment, such as dakau (the grinding or pounding of grain).

32 See Smith (1955: 60, 244) for more detailed lists: these apply generally to Batagarawa, though no sheanut butter nor pots are made there. In four of the communities studied by Smith, 386 out of 421 adult women were spinners (1955: 244).

33 Their main wares include: tree fruit, products of the locust-bean tree, boiled cassava and

tafasa (leaves of a shrub of the senna family used in soup).

- 34 Of course these women are not all fully secluded, though most of them are: it seems that owing to higher mortality rates the proportion of older women is much lower than in southern West Africa, and many older women are in any case partially secluded.
- <sup>35</sup> I am most grateful to my assistant Mallam M. S. Nuhu for helping me in numerous ways and particularly for his initiative in organising these enquiries.

36 The figures relating to the number of types of ware handled by each woman relate to those

they are *apt* to sell, not to those actually sold on the day enquiries were made.

37 Fried balls of the residue after expressing oil from groundnuts. (It is said that groundnut oil is only made by those who sell it.)

38 This is the main midday meal and is often taken outside the house or on the farm.

<sup>39</sup> Including: kosai (a cake made from bean-flour); dan wake (dumplings made from bean-flour, flavoured with baobab leaves and natron); waina (cakes from the flour of guinea corn or other grains); dakuwa (a sweetmeat usually made from tiger nuts).

40 Small black cakes made from fermented locust-bean seeds, which are much used as a

flavouring for soups.

- <sup>41</sup> The spindly tubers, which are enthusiastically cultivated in northern Hausaland, though with much difficulty, partly owing to marauding livestock, are a non-toxic delicacy when boiled.
- <sup>42</sup> See Nicolas (1967: table 27) who divides vendors in Niger into six main categories, one being the women sellers of processed foods. (Hausa women in rural Niger are not in Muslim seclusion.)

43 Young unmarried men and youths do not partake of meals with either parent.

44 The ancient long-distance trade in natron (or potash) continues to flourish; for both humans and cattle it is a salt-substitute, 'medicine', etc.

45 Although these men traders handle a few lines, such as torch batteries, which are never stocked by women, at most times their stocks (save in one case) are very low, their range of trade very narrow: they handle durable goods only, with the exception of kola and of bread bought in Katsina city by one trader—there are no bakers in Batagarawa.

46 The dried leaves of lalle are made into a paste which is widely used by women for red-

dening their arms, legs, hands and nails.

47 Mainly used (by men as well as women) for darkening the eyelids and the eyebrows, kwalli also has other uses.

<sup>48</sup> A count of 'sellers' was also made on 11 November; the figures for that day are, however, excluded from the average as only fifty-six 'sellers' attended, owing, it was thought, to the important annual *kalankuwa*—a harvest festival—which had taken place two days earlier.

<sup>49</sup> The butchers and meat-sellers of the *gari* sit every day in a central open space, known as *fage*, displaying their fly-ridden meat. (On most days small livestock only are slaughtered.) The Batagarawa *yan tireda* who attended the market were all of them already on my lists as being *yan tebur* in the *gari*, and the non-Batagarawa traders were presumably in like case.

<sup>50</sup> The only important crops which remained to be harvested after the middle of November were: beans—the harvesting began on about 27 November—tobacco (taba) and sweet potatoes (dankali). (In northern Hausaland much cropping occurs long after the abrupt cessation of the

rains, usually around the end of September.)

<sup>51</sup> Despite its small size and lack of all modern amenities, the 'miniature city' of Batagarawa exerts a strong magnectic power over residents of neighbouring hamlets, some of whom migrate there.

52 Although it may be objected that it is too early to pronounce on the success of a market which had only existed for six months, it can yet be seen to be right outside the main-stream of Batagarawa trading except with butchers and yan tireda who remove there for the evening. (It is thought that during the first six months only one lorry arrived at the market.)

- 53 Space does not permit me to outline the means by which farming-units were classified in four groups, according to their economic circumstances—see Hill (1968; in press). About 10 per cent. of farming-units (the 'top 10 per cent.') were classified as 'telatively prosperous' (they farmed an average of 20 acres of manured land, against an average of 6½ acres for all farming-units); at the other end of the scale were the 25 per cent. or so of farming-units which were classified as seriously 'poverty-stricken'—many of these units produced hardly any grain. (Economic inequality is not a consequence of land-scarcity—there is much uncultivated land within a mile or two of the gari which may be freely taken up by any Batagarawa farmer.)
- 54 Many calculations failed to throw up any preferences, except that wives of the 'top 10 per cent.' less often sell *fura*—the gruel consumed at midday.
- 55 Thus, 30 per cent. of the wives of the 'top 10 per cent.' handled five or more types of ware, compared with only 16 per cent. of the 'poverty-stricken wives'.
  - <sup>56</sup> This is a common practice among better-off men.
- <sup>57</sup> Nor do these wives so often handle such lines as salt or natron, which have to be bought for cash on their behalf.
- <sup>58</sup> Ardener (1964) presents much material on this world-wide institution: the Batagarawa form of association is relatively very simple, involving flat-rate weekly or daily contributions. The organiser (*uwar adashi*) receives a commission payable by the drawer of the pool. The members being secluded women, there are no associated social functions. The Nupe form of *adashi* (known as *dashi*) is very similar—see Nadel (1942).
- <sup>59</sup> A young bride who is a daughter of relatively well-off parents may, however, arrive at her husband's house with more possessions than she ever owns later, including a bed, many enamel plates (for decorating the wall of her round sleeping hut) and household utensils. (See Smith (1955:54) for further details.) As co-wives cook in rotation (not every day for their own children, as in some savannah societies), they are apt to help each other and household utensils may be usable by anybody—they may even be bought by husbands.
  - 60 Most of the produce grown by Batagarawa farmers is cropped from farms in this zone.
- <sup>61</sup> I am grateful to the Katsina Native Authority for providing lists of markets by District, which were based on special enquiries in each District. Gazetted as well as ungazetted markets (many of them non fee-paying) were included. I am also grateful to the Survey Department at Kadura for checking the lists, to which they made some additions.
- <sup>62</sup> I am here relying on estimates presented by C. Okonjo in Caldwell *et al.* (1968: table 8, 93), having allowed for a 10 per cent. increase between 1962 and 1966. (Okonjo's estimate is a scaling-down of the 1963 census figure of over 2½ m.)

<sup>63</sup> A figure which, interestingly, is roughly equal to those for each of the regions of Ghana and for Yorubaland—see Hill (1966a: note 75).

<sup>64</sup> I hope to discuss this matter further at the International African Institute Seminar on the Development of Trade and Markets in West Africa which is to be held in December 1969.

<sup>65</sup> Most of these centres were recorded as having populations between 2,000 and 7,000: the population of the central *gari* is always unknown as dispersed houses were included with it for enumeration purposes.

66 And this after some additional place-names had been added to the map by a member of

the Survey Department—see note 61.

<sup>67</sup> The hypothesis was first suggested to me by casual informants in Mashi District when I was seeking some explanation as to why three markets in that District were held every alternate day—and not weekly, or bi-weekly, as is the general rule throughout Hausaland, except in peripheral areas in the south-west: I then found that two other alternate-day markets lay on the same straight line in Dutsi District further south.

68 The 1952 census specified 'cattle Fulani' separately, by District, but the numbers were

ridiculously small and quite out of relation to the cattle population.

- <sup>69</sup> It is worth noting, however, that as a trading centre Katsina city still faces north towards the Sahara.
- <sup>70</sup> Much the most important market in northern Katsina Province (perhaps in the whole Province) is that held weekly in Mai-Aduwa in Daura Emirate, very near the Niger frontier.

<sup>71</sup> See Hill (1966a; note 22) for a very brief review of certain literature relating to the location of West African markets.

72 Since this article was written Dr Abner Cohen's book (1969) has appeared. The secluded Hausa women of Ibadan (in Yorubaland) are virtually all 'engaged in business from behind their seclusion'. About a third of them 'dominate the business of retailing' kola, oranges and plantain, while the remainder 'dominate the cooking industry' of the Hausa quarter, supplying thousands of bachelors, streams of strangers and other Hausa households. As a result of economies of scale and of specialisation many women are 'emancipated from having to cook for their own household and enabled to produce for the market [sic]'. Cohen regards it as a 'most significant paradox' that Hausa women can engage in business and amass wealth for themselves when they are in the bondage of seclusion and wifehood, but cannot do so when they are free as prostitutes (1969: 64–5).

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