PATRIARCHY, AND THE INVISIBLE LABOUR OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA: A CONSIDERATION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROLES OF KUTEB WOMEN IN TAKUM AREA, 1930-2019

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Abstract

Research Problem:
Patriarchy has been determinant of gender relations in Africa, and has silenced the role of women particularly in society like Nigeria that is widely patriarchal. This orientation sees the woman as being useful only in household chores and childbirth. Thus, whatever the woman does becomes invincible so long as patriarchy is concern. Their rights are subjective across socio-cultural and economic milieu. Though the subject is beginning to receive scholarly attention, but such attention has not dimensioned the phenomenon over time, and the changes thereof.
Method/Theory:
Hence, this study is compelled to interrogate women among the Kuteb in Takum area, from the socio-economic prism. The historical methodology was used, and the theory of radical feminism was engaged. Cutting across pre-colonial, colonial and independent Nigeria.
Results:
The findings suggested that women were not only useful in-home chores as being widely held in the Kuteb and Nigerian society, but are significant in the socio-economic engineering of the Kuteb society cutting across pre-colonial period where they represent embodied of the first educators in

the traditional system, down to colonial period where they combined first instructors, and being head of families due to colonial policies, and was broaden in independent Nigeria.

Conclusion:

Women in Nigeria and particularly among the Kuteb have been key actors in the socio-economic engineering of the society. Even though patriarchy is gradually giving way for a balance orientation, Patriarchal Lence still present women as less important, and so received little attention.

Key Contribution to Knowledge:

The study has extended the frontiers of knowledge on women socio-economic roles in the society, which were hitherto not receiving serious attention by scholars. The dimensioning of the phenomenon and the changes over time via pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods provide a bridge on the subject.

Recommendation:

Though some cultural norms related to patriarchy still present a hurdle on the subject matter, this obstacle can be reviewed by the Ukwe who is the revered rule of the Kuteb, and Chief Custodian of the culture.

Introduction

In some part of the world, women play significant role in the society, but the roles have been largely under-represented due to patriarchal orientation embedded in culture. It has been estimated that women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute immensely in vital ways to societal development (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2002). In most societies, women are seen to be playing diverse roles including: motherhood, producer, home-manager, community organizer amongst others. However, the patriarchal orientation that is wide spread in African society's places women at a disadvantage. Their rights are subjective, and so they suffer from all forms of discrimination and alienation that made it difficult for them to be considered in any matter of socio-engineering. Even though these realities have changed in most developed societies; it is endemic in Africa especially Nigeria.

The trend in Nigeria is a feature of the traditional society structured along social relations with material base in favour of men than women. Women are placed in an unequal position in families particularly in terms of inheritance rights, access to land, and distribution of resources thereof. Hence, patriarchy is a key factor in the gender inequality and perception of women in the society. The patriarchal behaviour, informed by cultural bias against women has succeeded in the misrepresentation of women as inferior, and this explains why the roles being played by women especially in the socio-economic and political milieu are being underplayed.

Thus, the trend has made studies especially with regard to the roles being played by women among the Kuteb society to be under represented, which also exposes a methodological gap on the subject. This is particularly the case with the socio-economic and political roles which were hitherto seen as being dominated by men. This raises a number of questions: what is the nature of the patriarchal system among the Kuteb, what is the social role of the Kuteb Woman, what economic role are they involved in? It is against this backdrop that women among the Kuteb of the Takum area of Taraba State are investigated from socio-economic prism. The roles being played by women varies in terms of space, time, and ethnic group. It is also determined by two major factors: firstly, the

kinship structure of a group; and secondly, the cultural orientation of a group Aboki Zainab (2012, 131). Hence objectives of the study include:

i. To discuss Patriarchy among the Kuteb

ii. To examine the social role of women among the Kuteb

iii. To analyse the economic role of women among the Kuteb

The study which examined the roles of the Kuteb women in traditional, colonial, and post-colonial periods underscored the changes overtime, and contributes to the body of knowledge on gender roles among African societies specifically the socio-economic roles among the Kuteb women. Other aspect such as the cultural and political roles can be further investigated.

2. Literature Review

The role of Women in Nigeria from the socio-economic perspective can be viewed from three major periods namely, the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial. During the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women contributed to the sustenance of the kin groups, by playing active role in the economy which was mainly subsistence. Abdulraheem Nimah Modupe (2022) mirrored on the right of women in pre-colonial and post-colonial eras in Nigeria, and asserted that the problems of oppression, exploitation, discrimination and subjugation of women is neither a new phenomenon nor peculiar to Nigeria but the world at large. Millions of women across the globe live under the condition of abject deprivation and attack against their natural and fundamental human rights. It appears that majority of womenfolk suffer discrimination, exploitation or oppression because they are women and, therefore, regarded as members of a "subordinate" class. In the recent past, women right have been a great concern all over the world (Nigeria inclusive). Though he argues that the fate face by women is worldwide, but the situation has significantly changed in developed economies, while it is still endemic in African societies or remained at an insignificant level of success. In Nigeria for example, the bill to consider affirmative action for women in politics was downplayed.

During the colonial rule, the economy was export-oriented, and it seriously undermined the prestige of the traditional occupations of Nigerian women. While it placed women at a great disadvantage, it enhanced the economic statues of the British, Lebanese, Syrian and a few male Nigerian merchants. Also, many of the smaller markets hitherto dominated by women gradually disintegrated as a result of the emergence of expatriate firms. Women were denied access to medium and large-scale loans which were vital in operating at the bulk purchase level of the colonial economy. In agriculture, cash crop incentives, technology and innovations were restricted to men Effah-Attoe (2015, 1-4). Colonial policies and statutes were clearly biased against women which included education- the curricula emphasized religious instruction and clerical skills for boys and domestic science for girls. This further entrenched gender bias in the system. An argument which seat in the central debate of the current study.

C Achebe (1958;71) in "Things Fall Apart", argues that the perception of women differs in societies: in some instances, they are treated as inferiors; while in other cases as superiors. This is evident in some cultural ceremonies where they stand as fringe like outsiders and that show the inferiority of women, contrary to this, the superiority of women is also cited from the life of Chielo, the high priestess of Agbala, she was highly respected by both the men and the women. She reprimanded Okonkwo the protagonist in these words, "Beware, Okonkwo; Beware of exchanging words with Agbala. Does a man speak when a god speaks? Beware;" This act showed the

differences in the perception of women where they are either respected or abused.

Walter Rodney (2005; 275) suggested that in African societies colonialism worsen social, religious, and constitutional privileges. He deepened this fact by stating that it was when men left their traditional roles such as clearing of land, felling of trees in search of white-collar jobs that the degradation of the women began, as they were left behind and burdened with every task necessary for the survival of the children and even the men. Though Rodney saw this as a disadvantage to women, but it made women more productive especially in agricultural production. Hence women's roles were broadened unintended.

In the post- colonial era, Nigerian women began to play active roles in various aspect of the nation's development, and assumed leading role in agricultural production due to the large- scale departure of able-bodied men to wage labor; Nigerian women in some parts, took over an increasing portion of the burden of food production, contributing between 50 per cent and 70 per cent. This was markedly different from what had been obtained during the pre-colonial era. Five years after independence, only 6.9 per cent of the salaried work- forces were women; by 1970, 8.7 per cent of the total numbers of established staff in the Federal Civil Service were women. In 1980, the percentage of women had risen to 12.6 per cent. Similar paradigms were maintained in State Civil Services (Effah-Attoe, 2015). Women are therefore, fundamental human reservoir of the Nigerian society as obtainable in some parts of the world. They control most of the non-monetary economy such as subsistence, agriculture, child bearing and rearing, domestic labour et cetera. In most societies whether developed or developing, women are regarded as currency with which political and economic alliances are bonded. In the African settings, women have played the role of peace maker, and molder of the character of the children Ogunjemilua A.A and Familugba J.O (2015, 91-95). This study project an argument which the current study project, but with evidences from the Kuteb society based on historical methodology.

Ebute Agaba (2007; 73-88) in his consideration of the role of women in Nigerian politics opined that generally the roles of women have always been conceived within the context of the home. Therefore, over the years women have been neglected, deprived, exploited and oppressed. However, Nigerian women have proofed not just to be home makers, but role models in the contemporary socio-economic and political settings (environment). The deprivation of women is based on some cultural assumptions that the woman's place is the "home" and that she has "unique" and "specific" roles based on the biological imperative of sex. Such roles in the traditional setting are not more than cooking and looking after children and the family. Other cultures held that the woman is weaker than the man and as such she is incapable of understanding heavy responsibility. While some traditions on the other hand, believe that the woman is less intelligent than the man hence she should not be given equal education with man; or that the woman is not expected to be in politics because she "should only be seen and not heard". Indeed, his work provided us with some bases on the perception of women as inferior which constitute part of the debate in the current work.

Amah Paul, (2018; 204-215) who also carried out researched on Nigerian women in politics, suggested that women have been faced with all forms of discrimination and uneven grounds in politics. He argues that Nigeria is been dominated by gender roles ascribed by culture. Based on the gender roles, women are confined to reproduction and household chores, whereas production is associated with the men. This societal reality

was deeply rooted in the cultural beliefs and values of societies in the world. Thus, some activities such as politics are exclusively seen as a preserve for men. As a consequence, women had for long suffered various forms of gender discrimination, inequality and exclusion, especially in the area of politics. The movement for alleviation/eradication of gender discrimination is also a multiple consequence of this system of beliefs and cultural values. These societal beliefs, as well as ethnic and most times religious doctrines and norms, have turned into self-fulfilling prophecies.

A. Z. Apenda, (2022) carried out a study on the impact of changing social roles of women in Nigeria, which has resulted to marginalization on account of their gender. For centuries, women's potentials have been fully utilized. But In Nigeria specifically, culture had largely obscured the part women play in development. Even the women themselves seemed not to have recognized their own contributions to the overall development of their communities until very recently. In the last two decades women have increasingly recognized that adequate food, appropriate management of resources, betterment of the near environment, and improvement in the quality of life and participation in the process are imperative for the success of any plan for integrated national development. It is obvious that optimal development in a nation is possible only if the labour powers within all available social categories are fully taped. When no conscious effort is made to harness the contribution of women who constitute fifty percentage of the population it depicts naturally that optimal, sustainable development is illusive. If the whole nation's participation is crucial, then the role of women in the country's development must be as distinctively defined and appreciated as those of men in its development.

Sadiq Mgbe (2018;159) who wrote on the Kuteb people and their neighbours asserted that, in the time past women do not inherit land, but use land only in association with the husband or family land under the control of male, and in the event of a divorce, the piece of land goes to her husband while she has no right of ownership. However, if she has a male child before leaving, then the farmland would become his. On the other hand, if the man dies leaving only females, his brothers will inherit his farm. If he has no brothers, his farm lands are converted to the hamlet head. This is not withstanding some roles women play in Kuteb Society such as those by the female Chief (KweNda), and the female Chief called Iya (mother), who due to her revered role is not installed by the Kukwen but by the Ukwe. Her major role is the organization of all the women of the community, advise them, organised them for mutual farm help, and ensure the prestige of marriage. Women are equally engange by the Ukwe through the Iya, for certain community need/assistance. Also, the customary practice of "Tsanfur" – practices associated with the women's cult dedicated to consideration and cleansing of women in the event of barrenness, weight loss despite proper feeding, and lack of menstruation amongst others. During such occasion, men are not allowed to come close to women. The study by Sadiq clearly demonstrates the patriarchal orientation among the Kuteb, which limit access to land by women suggesting that only men can be more productive. This is indeed an aspect this study is interrogating.

I Innocent (2002;68-69)) in his book on the biography of Ukwe Ali Ibrahim, also speak on the role of women in the Kuteb Society. He argued during colonial rule, women were involved in the marketing of agricultural cash crop especially beniseed. The proceed thereof were used to pay tax for adults in the family, or when any member of the family betrotheds a damsel, the proceeds from the beniseed would be used for the settlement of dowry. In

terms of farming, women form Rikwu (farming group). Rikwu was used for weeding of family farm. When there was a lesser work in the family farm, each woman would then convert the rikwu for her personal use such as the cultivation of groundnut, pepper etc. Therefore, in the household, women were mostly pictured as an institution that all children must learn from most importantly in the kitchen and other parental training, as the female child is drawn closer to the mother while the male is drawn to the father. The mother taught the girl methods of cooking iraen (guinea corn sausage) or itong (soup). Irambiya's book depicts how women were involved in both productions, and their cultural roles as house-wives, mothers and so on.

All of the works visited above demonstrate the fact that Africa and the Nigerian society is patriarchal. Though as Achebe rightly pointed out, this phenomenon differs in different societies: While in some women have a voice, in others they are subjected. Among the Kuteb, bias against women is evident especially in matters of land allocation as observed by Sadiq Mbge. This bias had given the impression as women are less important; hence, their role in the society is insignificant. But in reality, this is not actually the case. Iranbiya Innocent has actually anchored the socio-cultural role of women among the Kuteb in the colonial era. Her work, aligns with the argument in this study. However, there is a methodological gap in the existing literature on the subject - a gap which this study fills by dimensioning the trend through pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial periods. The current study argues that women were and still are significant in the socio-economic engineering of the Kuteb society across pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. This aspect is the main embodiment of knowledge so long as the socio-economic roles of women among the Kuteb is concern.

3. Materials and Methods

The Study was centered on Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State, covering a period 1930- 2019. 1930 marks a period when Kuteb men migrated to other region as force labour during colonial era, which saw women taking up leading role as head of families. 2019, falls in the post-colonial period, given the study a leverage of time to examine the changes over time with regard to the subject. The historical methodology was deployed which allows for an in-depth analysis of the subject based on time. Both primary and secondary sources were called upon. The primary sources mainly involved interview with men and women among the Kuteb who are not less than the age of 50, that are in the better position on this subject. The idea is that they either constitute direct participant, or represent succeeding generation of the participant so long as the subject is concern. The secondary sources are books, Journal Articles, M A Dissertations and online source. The secondary sources provided us with foundational information, which were complemented by the primary sources - these limited biases. The literatures were reviewed along lines of themes such as pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods so that changes on the subject over time were examined. The major repository visited was http://www.ipu.org, and the operative word was the role of women in Nigeria.

4. Women in the Traditional Kuteb Society: Examining the Socio-economic roles

On the social front, women are seen as an institution that all children must learn from. They were responsible in inculcating cultural values in children such as respect for the elderly, dignity in labour, and hard work Mgbe S.U (1981, 145). Children, especially the girl-child learn housework from their mothers. The girl-child is trained on how to cook, sweep the

house, and wash the dishes and later procreation. It is the duty of the mother to train the girl-child in domestic chores and craft so as the child can imbibe the culture and responsibility of keeping the home when she eventually gets married. This was the traditional mode of education. The place of Iya in the socio-cultural environment of the Kuteb is a good example. Iya means mother, she is the wife of Ukwe and her office plays an important role in the Ukwe palace via the organization of women during any function in the palace or any cultural festival which women are involved such as the Kuchicheb. The Kuchicheb is an annual festival celebrated by the Kuteb on 25th March of every year. As part of preparations for the festival, women are organized for group farming, and brewing of local beer. Women equally have a traditional cult known as "cikukomb", where they serve as priestesses. The cult, through the priestess prophesies blessings, peace, prosperity, bomber harvest, rain, and success during war etc.

Social roles of women among the Kuteb also anchored by traditional marriage. Kuteb have two kinds of marriage: "Kufen" and "Nba'awen" Mgbe (1981,145). Kufen in Kuteb means exchange. Kufen is a type of marriage where a girl is being exchange with another girl from the family where the man wants to marry from, (you want my sister, and I get your sister in return). If one of the exchanged wives refuses to stay with her husband, the husband of the other wife must return her back to her parent since one of them refuses to stay in marriage, and if she refuses to go back, the husband will then have to pay with seven goats, as dowry according to the custom.

The second kind of marriage is "Nba'awen" which means booking. In this type of marriage, a man registers his interest in the unborn baby of a pregnant woman Mgbe (1981). This is based on the condition that if the woman gives birth to a girl, the girl will become his wife. The man will continue to visit that family until the woman is delivered of her child and if the child is a girl, he then comes with a gallon of palm oil, beads and a keg of palm wine. The palm wine will be given to the new born girl to quench her thirst, the palm oil will be given to her to lick, while some will be rubbed all over her body. The beads will be used to tie around her waist and some on her right wrist. The infant's husband will then continue to serve her parents under all circumstances until the girl is mature. Seven goats are then paid as dowry to her parents. It is when these customary tasks are being completed by the man that he may choose to kidnap his bright before her full maturity. At her groom's house now, she is will be locked up inside a room and water will be poured on her door signifying that she is married. In the event her parent interferes, the groom can report such matter to the Ukwe who is the village Head whom will investigate the situation and if the parents are found guilty, he will issue a decree for the bride's parents to keep off the marriage.

Kuteb marriage under customary law is polygamous in nature, as evidence in other African societies. The number of wives a man has represented his wealth (Mgbe, 145). The labour of his wives adds up to his income and gives room to additional investments. Daughters are simply marketable as wives at an early age and some provide an unpaid labour supply. Apart from the financial advantage of the number of wives, the man in return must treat his wives equally, and be given separate farm lands to cultivate their crops. In the event of a misunderstanding, he will have to correct them amicably without physically abusing any of the wives. The importance of our discussion on marriage with particular reference the "Kufen" and "Nba'awen" types of marriages are that the social status and personal dignity of women were abused in such social contract. This is

reflected in the denial of consent to marriage contract by girls. This situation informed the changes brought about during colonial rule.

It is apt to note that the pre-colonial Kuteb society was strictly organised along gender line (Mgbe, Sadiq, 2022). Gender was the basis of role allocation, opportunities, rights, and privileges. Farming was one of the major economic activities engaged by women. It was a central feature of the life of the people. So, success in farming was a main social ideal. Therefore, the status of a woman was calculated partly by her ability to farm, and procreates. There is usually division of labour in terms of agricultural production. Women cultivated Beniseed, Cassava, Groundnut, Pepper, Maize, Melons, Cocoyam, Beans, Guinea-corn, Millet, Bambara nut, Locust-bean (Daddawa seed), Palm kernel, and Vegetables among others.

The organization of farm labour among the Kuteb took the form of family unit, co-operative farming system called 'Kuku', which usually involved more than two family units (Lazarus Yabkwa, 2016). It is a system whereby a band of friends or inhabitants of the same family cluster, would farm for individuals in turns. On each occasion, the man whose land was to be cultivated provided wine and food for the friends or neighbours as the case may be. Land as with many Nigerian groups was a communal property, which in normal circumstances could not be sold or alienated without the consent of the other members of that community. In any case women were involved either in cooking, planting, or harvesting. The Age-grade farming system was also practiced. This type of farming involves peers not necessary age mates but falls within the same age range that comes together to provide labour within that circle (Iya Ramatu Istifanus, 2016). The women in this type of group farming are responsible for preparing their children to being productive. This system continued even with the advent of colonialism and the Whites called it an "occupational group" meaning co-operate farming (Hosea Mbaetasom, 2022).

The system of farming practiced was the shifting cultivation (Hannatu Maiyaki, 2022). A space of bush is cleared in the forest, generally by bush-burning, ridges are made and crops are planted, manure is not used because of the fertility of the soil. After the farm land has been used for a considerable period of years, and the soil is exhausted, the farm is abandoned and another is cleared for farming. However, the land ownership system among the Kuteb alienated women. Men are hereditary in charge of land to cultivate; while women largely depended on their family land or husband's land to cultivate on. Thus, women in the Kuteb society during pre-colonial period had no control over land. Their husbands and father never deprived them from using the land but they could not claim ownership (Mbaetasom, 2022). A woman access to land is tie to her husband or head of the family who is usually a man, and if a man dies leaving only female daughters, his brothers will inherit his farm. If he has no brothers, his farms will be converted to the hamlet head (Mgbe, 1981).

The productions of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages among the Kuteb women were also significant. Jwab or Ujwab, and Jwombae which are the Kuteb names for locally brewed beer known in Hausa as "Burukutu and Kunu" serves as a source of income for the Kuteb women in pre-colonial era up to date (Lazarus Yabkwa, 2022). The beverages were prepared either from cereal, millet or maize. Women prepared the beer and it usually took them from four to seven days for the beer to be fermented and ready for consumption, while the Jwombae is a day preparation to be consumed the next day without fermentation. This played an important economic and religious roles in the life of the Kuteb people because this drink is

prepared and consumed during marriage, burial, naming ceremony, cultural festivals or during any feast.

Women were also involved in crafts such as pottery, blacksmithing, weaving of animal nets, carving of mortars and pistols, native sack, and local utensils like calabash, wood carving with the use of earth, mats and other hand crafts (Yabkwa, 2022). Craft products such as Tutong-Sa meaning clay pots used in cooking or storing of water, Tikap meaning local tray, using palm leaves in making Ishi meaning brooms, Tukwab meaning crafted tray, Tikaimeaning crafted basket, etcetera is produced by women who marketed these products within the local market and with their neighbours and the proceeds were used to support the family. Though hunting was a predominately carried out by men, but during long distance hunting, women assisted in carrying food and water. Eventually some of the women developed interest in hunting and started taking part in it. Some of the animals hunted by women included: rats, grass cutters, bush fowl, squirrels etc. Such hunting was done during dry season by means of bush burning.

5. Nature and Pattern of the Socio-economic Changes Among Kuteb Women in the Colonial Era

Women gained more freedom and opportunities during colonial rule, Hassan (2012, 90). The establishing of the colonial rule brought a number of changes in the socio-economic roles of women among the Kuteb. The obnoxious practices associated with social contract such as marriage, did not sit well with the British colonial officers. They tended to view all forms of enforced or involuntary marital relations with disfavor. This brought about a modification of the traditional marriage system. Colonialism also changed the traditional lineage based on land ownership which precluded women from the ownership of land. The practice of individuals having independent access to land favored Kuteb women as their right to purchase land was now fully recognized. It was not also uncommon for husbands to rent their land out to their wives. The male movement in to new roles, which involved movement out of the village for wage labour ensured women dominance in food production both to guarantee food supply and to protect family rights to property in accordance with inheritance and land tenure customs. Though the colonial era may have brought some changes with regards to socio-cultural and economic roles of women, it was not intended to deliberately change the plight of the women, but rather a coincidence.

The colonial Native Authority Court accorded more attention to the social status of a woman. Practices that failed the test of British morality were abolished. For example, customary marriage practices as presented by “Kufen” and “Nba’awen” marriages which were considered offensive to British concept of morality were attacked and subsequently abolished (Hassan, 90). The colonial legal system particularly enhanced the status of women. British colonial officers were especially out against the lack of individualism in the indigenous marriage system. The lack of a judicial system to protect women from what was viewed as crude and inhuman incidences fostered upon them by the society were also attacked. It is obvious from the evidence available that the customary marriage system, attached by the colonial authority was not mainly because of concern for the women, but was for respect to their believe in conformity with Christian faith.

It was based on the development above that monogamy was introduced to the Kuteb society by the Christian missionaries. As part of the practice in monogamy, a boy will choose a girl and ask her to marry him (Hassan, 90). If she agrees, he will then inform his parents about the girl’s agreement. The boy’s

father and/or uncle will then approach her parents. After her parent's awareness, they will call and confirm from her about the intention of the boy that has been known. Thereafter, she will receive a love gift from her suitor and then show that gift to her sister or aunt as a way of accepting and appreciating his proposal and they will keep it. It is worth noting that her parents will never interfere with the engagement and proposed marriage unless they have a genuine reason to do so.

There was also the introduction of western educational system. As earlier noted, in traditional Kuteb society, women were also part of the educational process of their children just as the saying goes "charity begins at home". The first form of education children receive is from the home, and women play significant part in it. Women are the teachers from home who first nurtures the child, and teaches the child certain norms and values of the society. This later received a boost with the advent of western education as evidenced by the activities of missionaries like Joanna Vennstra who was though not the first missionary in Kuteb land, but started a pastoral school that has continued to have an impact on the development of female gender education.

Joanna Vennstra was a missionary who came to the region in 1921 and introduced a pastoral school whose primary aim was the training of clergy men and their spouses in preparing them on harvesting souls for Christ (Ika 1983: 60). It is worthy to note that, Vennstra built on what already existed, but this time tilting it towards western education. It is pertinent to note that in most part of Nigeria, Christian Missionaries were pathfinders to British colonialism in the sense that they prepared the way for British colonial annexation. The first Christian Missionary to have visited the Kuteb area was said to be Mr. Whiteman who came in 1907. His entourage settled at Mbarikam hill. But it was not until the coming of Mr. William Bristow that missionary activities took firm roots in Kuteb land (Ika 1983: 63). The dramatic success of the missionaries' activities in this area is reflected in the following record on missionary activities in Kwambai:

Christ first, the chief, followed by the elders, then the youth as well. After this some said they would make a new place for people, for spiritual rites but only two village people show up to help the old men with the work of building this shrine when completed the surrounding it was blown down by the wind and even women saw it so the whole attended to revive the old way collapsed (Mgbe 1981: 145-152).Again, the introduction of western education through the Christian Missionaries, was only part of the deceit by the British colonialist, so it could easily water the ground for colonialism. It was not mainly for the development of the Kuteb people.

Colonialist themselves embraced sentiment for or against women. This was alternated depending on where their interest lies. For instance, the colonial government opposed employment for women in the civil service partly due to the traditional conception about women, and so job opportunities which the colonial setting offered benefited males than females (Deborah Audu, 2022). But later this situation changed. The colonial government now encourages female education including reduction of school fees, low pass marks for girls, scholarship and establishment of separate schools for girls (Fyafa Kefas, 2022). Some of the women who benefited from the formal education became teachers, nurses, prison wardens, and in turn contributed significantly in the areas of education and health care delivery services. Thus, the level of education provided, was mainly to take care of colonial need such as services related to warden, teaching for clerical assistance amongst others.

Available evidence shows that by the 1930s, many Kuteb men had migrated from the division and were working in other parts of the country as clerks in European firms in Yola, Jos, Ilorin, Ibadan, Zaria, Kaduna, and Lagos, (Magaji Shamaki Riye, 2022). Other developments which took men out of the villages in Kuteb land during the colonial regime include forced labour or compulsory labour, colonial career services, recruitment for services abroad and missionary work (Yabkwa, 2022). The absence of men from the villages gave rise to changes in the traditional economic roles of women. Women whose husbands were absent from the villages start to play the roles of husbands and mothers to their children. Cash crops such as Rice, Cotton, Yam, and Cocoa were introduced by the colonial government (Mgbe,2022). The colonial government promoted improved and extended production of those cash crops needed in the metropolitan market. As men shifted from the traditional staple crops to the cultivation of new cash crops, women were now involved in order to avoid famine. This development brought about expansion in roles and empowerment of the women. Empowerment led to enhanced status in their various families and the larger society (Rahila Lawi, 2022).

Therefore, what may seem to be a change or impact on the women during colonial rule was never intended but coincidental. Firstly, the polygamy that was replaced with monogamy was not burn out of share concern for the women, but was mainly to align with their believe system. Even the education provided was so that it could help facilitate their activities in the region such as clerical assistance. The mobilization of men as labourers which was made possible via tax, to ensure the exploitation of resources which informed the surplus attraction philosophy of the colonial era, left the women with no option but were compelled to take up active role in agricultural production just so that the need of the family could be taken care of. Hence, in reality what is being considered as an advantage to the women was actually a distortion of the traditional educational role being played by the women, to a new role as head of families since their husbands were conscripted as force labourers. Be that as it may, western education was introduced which became an unintended advantage.

6. Socio-Economic Development Among the Women in Independent Nigeria

It is in Independent Nigeria that Western education actually got spread, especially Deborah Garba – a Kuteb woman, who backed her first Degree at the prestigious Ahmadu Bello University Zaria (Mgbe, 1981: 45). This development saw women now being part of decision making in the family. Women are now not only full-time housewives, but they are equally involved in bills payment and engage in works which were hitherto seen as a reserve for men. They now take up paid jobs and also earn a living to support their families just like men.

It is under these circumstances that female headed families emerged. Families are no more male-dominated. Like men, women also make major family decisions. Women have raised their voices against dowry and domestic violence. Even in the corporate settings, they are advocating against sexual abuse, gender equality, and child marriage among others. The continuous advocacy is gradually eliminating the male superiority syndrome as Men now assist their women in the upbringing of their children/wards. Both men and women now share responsibilities at home. Women now stand against any form of discrimination and abuse. There have been lots of gender related movements and social organizations that now advocate for women's rights. Women are now featuring prominently in both rural and urban developments. Women are still often seen in the formal educational sector as teachers. This

is equally reflected in sectors like politics, and the legal system amongst others.

Though, Mgbe opined that western education only got spread in Independent Nigeria, which was ok because, women were already instruments of the traditional education system before the western education. However, the suggestion that it was after the acquisition of western education that they now play active role in the family as bread winners was a miscarriage. They have always played active role in the family which has often been invincible due to the bias they suffer in the society. In the traditional society they have always been an integral part of the socio-economic process as care givers and producers. Also, based on the evidence provided here, colonial policies unintentionally placed them as head of families, since men were compelled into the colonial labour force. The development in post-colonial period only deepened the place of a woman as head of families or bread winners.

Conclusion

Patriarchy has dominated and determines gender relations in Nigeria, thereby making the labour by women invisible. This is particularly the case among the Kuteb. Thus, women labour has always been silent, or viewed with regard to men. Not because women do not play active role among the Kuteb, but because they are women, it is being seen as insignificant. But an examination of the subject suggest otherwise. The Study observed that Kuteb women actively participated in the social and economic engineering of the Kuteb society. Existing study has established their role as first teachers in the traditional educational system, and suggest that colonial era gave them an advantage through the revisiting of traditional practices such as polygamous, and the introduction of western education which gave them an edge up through independent Nigeria.

However, based on the empirical evidences provided, the traditional role of women as first teachers was unequivocal. But the suggestion that women became more active during the colonial era was a miscarriage. What was clear is that there was a change in role of women among the Kuteb, from first teachers to now head of families due to colonial policies which compelled men into force labour. Though the policy changes which either went in favour of men or women at different times, was not informed by their concern for the Kuteb, but mainly their interest. This brought about unintended results such as acquisition of early western education which other studies sees as an advantage, but was actually meant to service interest of the colonialist. Also, existing literature observed that development in western education in post independent Nigeria ushered female dominated/headed families among the Kuteb. Again, this study argued that the prevalent of female headed families actually had it root in the colonial era based on the evidences provided. The colonial policies forced women to take up leading roles in the family as producers and bread winners. Hence, development in post independent Nigeria only further deepened the trend. These findings were made possible by the methodological approach- historical methodology.

However, challenges exist as presented by the customary system that alienate their right to land, and deprivation of right of choice in marriage. Though some of these practices are no longer wide spread, but these challenges which are patriarchal embedded in culture, can be addressed by the Ukwe (the supreme and traditional leader of the Kuteb), through its council of chiefs who can review some of the obnoxious practices and change the cultural orientation since the problem is embedded in culture.

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S/N	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	LOCATION	DATE
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2	Lazarus Yabkwa	60 Years	Civil servant	Wukari	8th/06/ 2016
3	Iya Ramatu Istifanus	111 Years	retired farmer	Kwambai	7th /04/ 2016
4	Hosea Mbaetasom	87 Years	Retiree	Lupwe	15th /3/ 2022
5	Hannatu Maiyaki	61 Years	Kwambai	Farmer	18th /06/2022
6	Mrs. Deborah Audu	66 Years	Wukari	Retired civil servant	20th /05/2022
7	Mrs. Fyafa Kefas	53 Years	Takum	Teacher	5th /06/ 2022
8	Rev. Magaji Shamaki Riye	60 Years	Takum	Pastor	4th /06/2022
9	Lazarus Yabkwa	65 Years	Wukari	Civil Servant	8th /06/2022
10	Iya Rahila Lawi	77 Years	Kwambai	Farmer	10th /03/2022

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