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Claire Robertson and Iris Berger, eds. *Women and Class in Africa*. New York: Africana Publishing Company (a division of Holmes and Meier), 1986. 310 pp. Introduction, tables, map, bibliography, and index.

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national economy and political system" (p. 306). The transition which took place is very rare in Latin America. An agrarian bourgeoisie in Latin America usually develops through the "Junker model." In this case, an agrarian bourgeoisie developed out of the peasantry following the peasant model.

Dr. Mallon's work is based on exhaustive research and documentation. She has worked in numerous local and national archives in Peru. Anyone interested in pursuing similar research can read her indispensable bibliographical essay which contains a section on theoretical and comparative materials. This book has truly contributed to a clarification of the study of capitalist transition in Latin America. Her theoretical focus and model is applicable to other areas of Latin America. This work will be an indispensable volume for any researcher's shelf for a long time to come.

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Claire Robertson and Iris Berger, eds. Women and Class in Africa. New York: Africana Publishing Company (a division of Holmes and Meier), 1986. 310 pp. Introduction, tables, map, bibliography, and index.

That the study of African women is still in its early stages is indicated by the lack of full-length books and the proliferation of edited volumes. But collected essays, typically replete with recent important research, also demonstrate the strength of the field. Women and Class in Africa is an excellent example of the new research being done, and of how to organize a set of essays so that they not only are thematically related but support each others' conclusions, making a coherent whole of the book itself.

The introduction to the volume, by Robertson and Berger, is a fine overview of the field and relevant theoretical considerations. While it focuses on the articles that follow, it also pulls together many of the disparate threads of research on African women in the twentieth century. The main themes of the volume are

explicated within a grounding in African studies generally and particularly the place of class and gender within African studies. Robertson and Berger begin by pointing out that earlier publications on class in Africa have ignored gender issues, with one especially telling example: a collection of forty-two articles on social class in Africa published in 1977 contained not one single article that addressed gender or women's issues.¹

Some of the ways in which African women were ignored mirrored similar gaps in western social history. Women were assigned to their husbands' class position, or were discussed only in the context of marriage and the family. The essays in this collection refute both generalities. In Africa perhaps more than in other world areas women were economically active and independent of men before and during the colonial period. One of the often cited effects of colonialism is the increased dependence of women working in subsistence agriculture on the wages of their employed husbands. But earlier expectations of female independence colored that relationship, so that women in many areas were expected to continue their economic independence in the face of a new economic system that did not incorporate women workers. Thus although women needed their husbands' wages, they often did not have access to that money.

Another issue dealt with in the introduction is the difficulty in applying the traditional concept of class to the African situation, where the ownership of property was not common. In many parts of rural agricultural Africa, people had the use of land for growing crops, but ownership was only introduced by colonial governments. The usage rights were certainly related to political power, and the twentieth-century transformation of those rights into actual ownership was a way of formalizing a system to the disadvantage of women. Robertson and Berger argue that in order to accommodate African reality, the idea of class must revolve around access to critical resources rather than actual ownership. This enables us to study stratification and hierarchies of political and economic power without the problems of applying ideas of ownership to societies that did not recognize those ideas. It also enables us to

examine women's position without attaching them to men, or assuming that they fill only certain economic roles in the society. We can also better understand both gender differences between men and women, and status differences between women.

The introduction and organization of the volume address three main areas: class as "access to critical resources," "dependence versus autonomy," and "female solidarity or class action." The thirteen articles include both eastern and western Africa (with perhaps too much attention to Kenya and Nigeria), as well as one article on South Africa. While most contributions are detailed case studies, each topic area also has one longer more general article.

The first section focuses on the issue of access to critical resources. The broad essay in this section examines access to formal education; in it Robertson argues in part that formal education is dysfunctional for African girls and women. They are still of central importance in Africa's food production, yet after education many girls refuse to work as peasants, but are also not able to find other work due to (among other things) a continuing preference for male workers. The case studies in this section examine Kikuyu [Kenya] self-help groups (Stamp), women in a Kenyan pastoral society [Tugen] (Kettel), Ghanaian cocoa farmers (Vellenga), and land control among the Yoruba in Nigeria (Afonja). All of these studies specifically address questions regarding women's economic position within these different societies, and in particular the impact of colonialism on that position, which was negative in all these cases.

The next section, "Dependence versus Autonomy," has a more social focus, and looks particularly at the ways in which women's class position is determined. The case studies include women in the Zambian coppertowns where their husbands worked as miners (Parpart), businesswomen in Zaire who have profited from the inflationary situation (MacGaffey), and stratification among Ugandan women as exemplified in a close look at a Ugandan physician and her personal network of family and friends (Obbo). The overview article in this section illustrates how capitalist transformation in Africa has only rarely drawn women into wage labor; women

continue their agricultural work and in many areas turn to petty commodity production and petty trade in order to supplement their agricultural efforts (Bujra). The process of class formation is also reflected within families, in status differences between husbands and wives and parents and children, who must now struggle over access to the resources of the society.

Political activity is the theme of the final section on "Female Solidarity or Class Action." Articles on South African women in recent labor struggles (Berger), Yoruba women's political activity under colonialism (Johnson), and labor activism among Kikuyu female coffee pickers under colonialism (Presley), all support the more generalized article by Staudt on stratification and the implications for women's politics. In all three case studies women became active as women, in response to their oppression, yet they were also constrained by class differences between women. In the two discussions of labor activism, their work conditions were colored by their status as women, and their efforts at organizing were in response to their situation as women workers. The Yoruba history especially demonstrates the importance of both class and gender, in a study of three different organizations, each based in a set of women of specific class background. While some attempted to organize women across such boundaries, others were restricted to their original base, whether that was market women or women of the elite.

The mass of detailed information in the articles is well presented and fascinating in all cases. Despite the division along the subtopics described, the ideas presented are woven between the different articles and sections, all contributing to the development of the essential argument: African women's history depends on an elucidation of the issues of both class and gender, and anything less is incomplete.

My one criticism of the book is directed at the map. A single continental map is included at the beginning of the book, and the labels for Botswana and Zimbabwe have been transposed! But this lapse is not repeated throughout the book, which is exemplary in its lack of printing errors. The twenty-two page bibliography is a very useful list of relevant literature. This

collection is highly recommended. If you only read one item on African women this year, read the introduction, which I recommend as a state-of-the-art essay in African women's history. Then I hope you go on to read the entire volume for its insights and information on the history and current situation of African women.

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¹Peter Gutkind and Peter Waterman, eds. African Social Studies: A Radical Reader. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977.

John C. Super and Thomas C. Wright, eds. Food, Politics, and Society in Latin America. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1985. 261 pp. Index.

The ten essays collected in Food, Politics, and Society in Latin America offer a thorough critique of current understanding of land-use practices and agricultural production in Latin America. In focusing on linkages between political structure and the region's continuing problems with agricultural production and food supply, the volume provides a new and important context for our view of Latin American society.

The book presents work written from markedly different perspectives and concerned with a wide range of periods of Latin American history. Essays cover both general issues (such as urban provisioning in Latin America history, the Green Revolution, comparative effects of United States food aid) and more specific concerns (diet in nineteenth-century Peru, revolutionary approaches to food in Cuba and Nicaragua, food dependency and malnutrition in Venezuela during the oil boom).

A third of the essays supply general background to food-and-politics issues and provide historiographical analysis. Outstanding among these pieces is Roland Bergman's "Subsistence Agriculture in Latin America," which presents a revisionist view of the supposed "irrationality" and inefficiency of the subsistence techniques employed by sixty percent