

For Money, Children and Peace:
Everyday Struggles in Changing Times
in Ado-Odo, Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

Owo, ọmọ ati alafia (money, children and peace) play an important part in the everyday struggles of women and men in Ado-Odo, a small town in southwestern Nigeria. Without money, *alafia* becomes all the more elusive, without children it is hard to be happy; *alafia* is less a goal to be actively pursued, than a state defined by an absence of difficulties and trouble. *Owo, ọmọ ati alafia* are the things that women and men pray for and struggle to maintain. In this thesis, I explore the relational contexts in which their quests for money, children and peace take place.

Discourses on women's behaviour in Ado-Odo present a powerful normative critique in which women and men of all ages are lively participants. Conjuring up unruly women who fail to obey their husbands, fight with his other wives and run after men and money, these discourses make reference to another time, 'the olden days', when women endured their marriages without complaint and knew their place. Discourses on the kinds of trouble that can disrupt the quest for money, children and peace implicate particular kinds of women as trouble-makers, invoking quite different models of gendered agency.

Focusing on the relational positions that people occupy as subjects in different domains of association and at different points in their life courses, I take discourses on women as a starting point from which to explore the impact of social and economic change on gender relations in Ado-Odo. Situating my account historically and in the different domains of association within and between which people move in their everyday lives, I draw on narratives of change and the lived experiences of people of different generations. I explore what discourses on women's behaviour say about women and men, and about relationships between them and look at the ways in which trouble is made and averted, focusing on relationships between women. Exploring further some of the challenges of everyday struggles in changing times, I address issues of contingency, uncertainty and agency in the pursuit of *owo* and *ọmọ*, and the means to find *alafia*.

Table of Contents

Abstract
Acknowledgements
Notes on Orthography

Preface: For Money, Children and Peace: Everyday Struggles in Changing Times

Chapter 1: Contexts

Chapter 2: Pathways through Ado-Odo

Chapter 3: Domains of Association

Chapter 4: Wayward Women and Useless Men: Changing Contexts of Marriage

Chapter 5: For Love or Money

Chapter 6: Making Trouble, Keeping the Peace

Chapter 7: 'Making it for Ourselves'

Chapter 8: Taking Chances, Making Choices

Chapter 9: In Search of a Happy Ending

Bibliography and Sources

List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the location of Ado-Odo

Figure 2: Ado-Odo: regional connections

Figure 3: Ado-Odo: town map

Figure 4: Trade routes in Egbado in the 19th Century

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Note on Orthography

Yoruba is a tonal language, with three underlying pitch levels for vowels and syllabic nasals: low, mid and high tones. The orthography adopted in this thesis is the modern standard style recommended by the Yoruba Orthography Committee. I have chosen not to mark individual words and phrases with tone marks, as these are rarely used in everyday written Yoruba.

The following symbols are used:

- ɛ roughly as 'let' in English (where ɛ is like 'a' in 'pay')
- ɔ roughly as 'dot' in English (where ɔ is like 'o' in 'over')
- ʃ the sound 'sh' in English
- ɸ the sound when k and p are pronounced simultaneously

Only italicised words and phrases are marked with symbols. Proper names, of people and of places, have been left unmarked. I have used 'sh' rather than 'ʃ' for towns like Ileṣa and Ogbomoṣo. Local slang or idioms peculiar to Nigerian English appear in quotation marks.

Preface

Owo, Omọ ati Alafia: For Money, Children and Peace

Everyday life in Ado-Odo, a small town in the southwestern corner of Nigeria, is peppered with uncertainties; and in these times of hardship, the quest for *owo, omọ ati alafia* (money, children and peace) is becoming ever more of a struggle. The culmination of a successful life is to spend one's last years at the heart of a large family, cared for by one's children and grandchildren and to be buried by them, in a lavish ceremony that draws together people from all spheres of one's life to celebrate one's achievements. This is an aim that women and men share, but it is one pursued through divergent pathways over their life courses. And there are many obstacles to fulfilment. Before arriving at that time and that place, unexpected events and everyday struggles can jeopardise prospects for a good life as well as a good death.

The tactics women and men make recourse to to salvage their prospects when trouble strikes and uncertainties loom draw on expectations, hopes and fears that arise not only from their positions in their life courses but also from their perspectives as members of a generation, from the recursively constituted experience through which they live their everyday lives as agents in ever-changing, multiple domains (Giddens 1984). Moving back and forth across the different domains in which everyday struggles are waged, between situated life stories, the historical time in which these stories are set and the day-to-day settings in which women and men of different generations interact, I explore configurations of changing expectations, opportunities and practices as they impinge on everyday struggles for *owo, omọ ati alafia* in the present.

Narratives of change in Ado-Odo make recourse to another time, *igba atijọ* ('the olden days'), to despair about the current state of affairs. And this despair is quite specific: it concerns the behaviour of women, whose dubious morals, disobedience and avarice are the focus of an unlikely chorus of complaints voiced by women and men of all ages. Tales of *igba atijọ* tell of a time when women obeyed their husbands, knew their place and showed 'endurance' (*farada*), putting up with what they had and making the best of their situations. These days, there are no such certainties. What was most striking about discourses on the past and on the present was the extent to which women's agency featured as a central pivot, almost a catalyst, for the kinds of changes people so bemoaned. No-one seemed to have anything good to say about today's women. Young women who got pregnant by married men were accused of 'uselessing themselves all around', of not refusing men's advances, of being after their money. Those who were not obedient and compliant wives were roundly condemned for their behaviour by peers as well as elders. Women with dependent children who left neglectful or abusive husbands and those who escaped wars with co-wives were maligned for behaving

badly; those who remained non-married were cast as wayward *ilemoşu* ('I'll sleep in my own house'), who were only interested in men's money.

Meanwhile I heard story after story about men who gave their wives no money for their children's upkeep, brought home new wives unannounced and spent their money on girlfriends. The resignation that women expressed about their situations as wives - as one woman put it, 'that's what men are like. What can we do?' - implied a sense of powerlessness that seemed almost completely at odds with women's agency in other spheres. As independent earners, women manage and run their own businesses and keep their own purses. As members of their own natal compounds, women can exercise the prerogative of relative seniority when it comes to family affairs. As members of associations of fellow traders, worshippers or peers, women can assume positions of leadership and gain respect through their own independent activities. In these changing times of economic austerity, women are coming to play more and more crucial a part in supporting their hearth-holds. As men's economic power wanes, many women are now in a situation where they bear even more of the burden of the everyday struggle to feed, clothe and educate their children.

In this thesis, I attempt to explore some of these complexities. I focus on the ways in which people are constituted as particular kinds of subjects, and the subject positions that are available for them to take up in different domains of discourse (Hollway 1984, Laclau 1990). These positions are not in themselves necessarily congruent with sexed bodies (Strathern 1988, Butler 1990), but may be contingent on aspects of embodied identities that have salience in particular settings and at certain times in a woman's or man's life course (Gatens 1983). I suggest that discourses on gender in Ado make available a particular and limited range of subject positions for women and men to occupy that impinge on, but do not in themselves circumscribe, the range of other subject positions available to them as actors in other domains. Moore argues

the elision of the husband/wife dyad with the categories male/female, and the concomitant focus on relations between spouses as a gloss for gender relations in general, may explain why it has taken anthropology so long to recognise intracultural variation in gender models, meanings, categorizations and roles' (1993:200).

In Ado it is precisely this elision that discourses of disapproval draw on to criticise women, figuring women as *essentially* in need of male directors, providers and controllers and as *inherently* untrustworthy. By eliding 'husband' with 'man', male dominance is naturalised. And by situating women in subject positions that recuperate an idealised masculinity, the threat that female economic autonomy poses to male prerogative is conveniently eclipsed. By invoking a discourse on gender that situates women in terms of their sexual relationships with men, a particular model of gendered agency is used to talk about women-in-general and to occlude other variants. Yet this is not the only discourse on gender. And women's interactions with men clearly span beyond the sexual relationships which are, in any case, less prominent in most

women's day-to-day lives than other kinds of relationships such as those with their children, their kin and affines and their associates. These other relations, which are equally 'gender relations' (Peters 1995), may invoke quite different versions of what it is to be a 'woman' in which women's agency is figured in quite different ways.

Obviously gender is not the only difference; nor is it always the one that makes the most difference. In Ado, age is a dimension that not only qualifies gender difference but may actively transform it. Over the course of their lives, women move through a hierarchy marked more by age than by gender, to the point where it might be said of them 'she has become a man': a reference as much to their capability as agents who can 'do and undo' as to their status as women who no longer bear children. People are situated within complex configurations of difference which vary according to the particular domains and interactions in which they engage. They *enact* difference as relative and provisional (Strathern 1988). Fraser argues

Every arena and level of social life is shot through with gender hierarchy and gender struggle... Each, however, is also traversed by other, intersecting axes of stratification and power, including class, 'race'/ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, and age - a fact that vastly complicates the feminist project. Although gender dominance is ubiquitous, in sum, it takes different forms at different junctures and sites, and its character varies for differently situated women. Its shape cannot be read off from one site or one group and extrapolated to the rest (1995:159).

Recent work in feminist theory has offered a level of abstraction from which to examine the extent to which 'gender' features in the ways people construe difference, disrupting some of the taken-for-granted assumptions that are made about gendered identities.¹ To explore everyday real life struggles we need to find ways of bringing together a focus on situated particularity with larger-scale empirical narratives (Fraser and Nicholson 1988): to be able to explore *both* the larger picture *and* localised versions. Fraser's call for 'an impure, eclectic, neopragmatist approach' (1995:158) which draws opportunistically on theory to build a synthetic approach that helps to make sense of multi-layered complexities, offers the scope for going beyond some of the limitations that a choice of a single methodology would impose. In this thesis, I make use both of an approach that seeks to deconstruct 'gender' *and* talk of 'women' as material subjects as a means of sketching out this larger picture, moving through a variety of narrative forms to convey the complex and multi-layered dimensions of sociality.

This thesis is the result of a process that has continued throughout the years with which I have been occupied with research and writing. In Chapter 1, I reflect on this process and on some of the dilemmas that were raised for me along the way. From these beginnings, I go on to set the context for this thesis through an account of Ado as I came to know it. In Chapter 2, I introduce Ado in an account of what I was taught about the town and its history by Ado's elders and what I learnt by pursuing my curiosity about the past in archives and libraries. In this chapter, I trace connections between people and other places in and over time and describe some of the settings of everyday life in the present. I go on in Chapter 3 to explore dimensions

of space and time further, through the domains of association that are the lived spaces in which people interact with others. I sketch out the arenas in which people live, work and mix with others and the movements of women and men within and across different domains over their life courses and in the day-to-day pursuit of their lives. In this chapter, I highlight the domains of association in which I pursue the themes of later chapters in more depth. These chapters serve as a lengthy introduction, a reference point to which subsequent chapters return.

Having set the scene, I begin to pursue further some of the questions that intrigued me along the way and that only began to make any sense to me long after I had returned from Ado. My first question, one that is in a sense the orienting question of this thesis as a whole, arose from the sense of bemusement that I experienced when I began to hear what women and men in Ado had to say about women. Discussions about the present state of affairs, so saturated with negativity, constantly referred to that other time of *igba atijọ* in which these problems barely existed. In Chapter 4, I explore how people used that past to comment on this present and how it figured in their own lived pasts. Clearly, people had lived through quite different pasts and the common recourse to a strikingly similar set of normative images about how things used to be intrigued me, particularly as it was used by members of the younger generation to reflect with disapproval on the behaviour of their peers. In seeking to locate the perspectives of women of different generations on the dilemmas of the present, I explore the investments they have in the subject positions they take up to comment with disapproval on other women and begin to consider some of the implications of the changes they identify for their own present and future.

In Chapter 5, I take up the theme of love and money in intimate relationships that serves as such a potent focus for the articulation of disapproval. Narratives about the past drew attention to changes that often appeared mutually constitutive, as if one were contingent on the other. They highlighted a collapse in the moral order, a rupture with the old lifeways; they told, at the same time, of the expansion in women's economic opportunities and of junctures where economic power began to make a difference to women's relationships with men as wives and lovers. Situating my analysis in heterosexual relationships in the present, I explore some of the implications of changing expectations of intimate relationships and of economic change. Love and money are configured in complex ways in discourses on intimate relationships. An absence of both serves as grounds for divorce in the customary courts; divorce is easy to come by and there are few material barriers to dissolving a marriage. And yet many women 'endure' relationships with husbands who neither support them financially nor give them much in the way of affection or care. What is it that makes women decide to leave? Through a detailed case study of the breakdown of a marriage, I consider some of the factors that anchor women in cohabiting relationships. I explore discourses on women and men, husbands and wives and go on to consider the situations of some of those women who became *ilemoşu*.

Discourses on trouble, on the kinds of problems that can prompt a woman to leave her husband and on the tensions that can brew within the domains of association in which women

live and work, returned to the by now familiar theme of attributing blame and responsibility to women. But in these discourses, women were not merely wayward. Rather, they figured as actively malicious agents who deliberately sabotaged others' prospects. In Chapter 6, I look at some of the kinds of trouble women are implicated in, situating trouble-making in different relations in different domains. I consider, in the process, how women are constituted as particular kinds of agents through the trouble they are perceived to make and the measures women take to preserve the peace.

Peace comes from the realisation of struggles for money and for children, but it is fragile and ever elusive. In Chapter 7 I return to the theme of money to look in detail at some of the strategies and tactics women engage in to start up and to keep going in their struggles to make money. Focusing on the biographies of women of different generations, I situate their pathways through their working lives in historical time and explore some of the opportunities and the hurdles they have experienced. In doing so, I explore questions of choice and circumstance in the development of women's economic pursuits. In Chapter 8, I explore this theme further. I examine the implications of changing contexts of parenting in order to examine issues of agency and power in the shaping of reproductive outcomes. I critically assess the extent to which reproduction can be figured as the result of strategic choices about becoming a parent. As a 'completed performance' (Richards 1989:40), the outcome of a successful life is to have found money, children and peace, but along the pathways to a happy ending, coping with contingency requires 'strategic improvisations' (Callaway 1993:167) and tactical recuperations. It is with these improvisations and with the tactics of those whose agency may be eclipsed by other, complex, agents that Chapter 8 is concerned.

'In search of a happy ending', I conclude by revisiting some of the threads that run through this thesis: love and money, uncertainty and unpredictability and the ways in which people get on and get by in changing times. Considering the broader themes of my analysis, I explore some directions for further research on money and children, and return to some of the questions with which I began this thesis, to reflect on implications for practice.

Chapter One

Contexts

We plead to each other,
we all come from the same rock
we all come from the same rock
ignoring the fact that we bend
at different temperatures
that each of us is malleable
up to a point.

('The Welder', Cherríe Moraga, 1981:219)

Cherríe Moraga captures the ambiguities of a struggle textured by difference and the ambivalences within the constellation of feminisms that has emerged out of a powerful critique of the hegemony of a particular, privileged voice that spoke for and about 'Woman' (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981, de Lauretis 1986, Mohanty 1988). Diversity and difference, the differences within as well as between (Moore 1993), raise complex problems for feminist analysis. And the problem of how to situate writing about 'Other' women without either essentialising or neglecting the implications of the position from which I speak, provokes further dilemmas. In this chapter, I discuss the processes of researching and writing this thesis and the way I grappled with some of these issues.

The themes of contingency, uncertainty and flux that form a focal point for my analysis are brought into vivid relief by my own movements between places, positions, identities and perspectives, on ever-shifting ground. Representing myself to the women and men I spent time with, telling them stories about life in London as they told me stories about Ado and talked of their own lives, raised questions about positionality that go beyond the ways in which I represent these conversations and stories in this text. The tension between points of convergence and of dissonance, between our uses of essentialisms in the positions we took up in discussions and the diverse material subjects who were the 'women' and 'men' we spoke about, mirrored some of the contradictions that I moved between in dialogues with different people. In this chapter, I explore the dilemmas this raised for me as a would-be 'participant observer' and reflect on the paths I took along the way.

Precarious Positions?

Recent feminist work on a revised politics of location re-emphasises the positionality of the writer (Mohanty 1987, Mackey 1991). The idea of 'home' that provides such a potent metaphor for the politics of location (Mackey 1991) speaks less of an already located point of origin than of 'temporalities of struggle... between cultures, languages, and complex configurations of meaning and power' (Mohanty 1987:40-2). The politics of location clearly extends beyond the ways in which the writer chooses to position her/himself, to how they may be positioned by others. Mani (1989) talks of 'multiple mediations', of the contexts in which accounts are situated by others. The contrasting readings and reactions to her study as presented to audiences in different contexts highlights some of the dilemmas of 'location'. Laclau (1990) argues that neither relations nor identities can ever be fixed with any precision. Instead, people position themselves in potentially contradictory 'subject positions' within discourses, always in relation to others, giving rise to 'a field of simply relational identities which never manage to constitute themselves fully, since relations do not form a closed system' (1990:20-21).

The standpoints we take are always situated, always partial (Haraway 1988, Collins 1990); they are part of this complex, unbounded relational field within which many different identities and identifications come into play in locating our concerns. I am white, middle-class, female, British, able-bodied and I cohabit with a man: attributes that condition the subject positions that are available for me to take up (Hollway 1984) and the embodied identities I can move between (Gatens 1983). Yet my experiences - as those of others within, as well as outside, my own social and cultural context - are far from consistent with a single homogenising identity as a 'white woman' (Pratt 1988), nor are they fixed, static attributes. How I position myself relationally with regard to others, the subject positions I *choose* to take up with regard to particular discourses, remains contingent. The implications of these choices provoke issues that go beyond questions of methodology.

Collins outlines a model of a 'matrix of domination' (1990:225) of interlocking, situational contexts of oppression. This, she argues, gives rise to 'multiple systems which frame everyone's lives' (1990:229) and in which individuals are *both* a member of multiple dominating groups *and* a member of multiple subordinate groups. Creating a space from which to speak is about recognising the positions that I may take up as infused with my location in overlapping systems of domination. Choosing to do research in West Africa and to write about topics that have histories that are scarred with paternalism and inflected with a feminist politics that emphasises women's solidarity, I agonised about what I was doing and about the account that I should write. Gayatri Spivak, responding to the choice of silence by a man who says 'I am only a bourgeois white male, I can't speak', challenges him:

When you take the position of not doing your homework - 'I will not criticize because of my accident of birth, the historical accident' - that is a more pernicious position. In one way you take a risk to criticise, of criticising something which is *Other* - something which you used to dominate. I say that you have to take a certain risk: to say 'I won't criticise' is salving your conscience, and allowing you not to do your homework (1990:62-3, cited by Mackey 1991:10).

Spivak's challenge is one I take up with some trepidation, knowing that 'doing my homework' is a process that extends well beyond the writing of this thesis. Taking that risk, however, is to refuse to be silenced by self-paralysing guilt and at the same time to acknowledge the ways in which I am implicated in practices of oppression (Martin and Mohanty 1986, Pratt 1988, Collins 1990). The concerns that occupy me in this thesis involve taking a risk that goes beyond situating my work within the contested terrain of the academy. It is about a choice to engage with issues that are controversial and to position myself with regard to some of these issues not in the role of neutral commentator but one that arises from a passionate commitment to challenging and confronting inequalities. I am all too aware that what I have chosen to write arises from my own, very partial, perspective: and of the contradictions that this invokes.

Location, then, is more than naming the space from which I speak. It is about acknowledging the ambivalence and ambiguity that arises in trying to mark that space in shifting contexts (Geiger 1990, Abu-Lughod 1991). And attempting to work with, rather than resolve, the contradictions between the subject positions I take up provokes a tension that helps to guard against complacency.

Beyond Indifference

Changes in ethnographic conventions have created more of a space for reflections that reveal the partiality of an ethnographer's experiences, spurred by challenges that urge a recognition of the place from which ethnographers speak (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Abu-Lughod 1991). For feminist researchers, many of the issues raised by the so-called 'reflexive turn' in anthropology have long been at the core of an approach to research in which partiality is assumed: actively *chosen*, rather than belatedly agonised over (Harding 1987, Strathern 1987, Caplan 1988). The wave of post-modern and post-structuralist critiques that swept over the discipline in the 1980s and threatened to engulf the no longer so innocent anthropologist, said, in effect, what feminist researchers had been saying for some time: 'truths' are a matter of perspective and, as Caplan puts it, 'what one sees or experiences depends on who one is, both individually, socially and historically' (1988:10).¹

Writing ethnography is a process, but usually the workings are erased to present a final, polished product (Marcus and Cushman 1982). Traces become blurred. A sense of place and of the vitality, the contingency, of action is often lost along the way. The complex, chaotic,

flux of life is neatened, ordered and packaged. There is something profoundly unwholesome about this process. Jackson contends:

The orderly systems and determinate structures we describe are not mirror images of social reality so much as defences we build against the unsystematic, unstructured nature of our *experiences* within that reality. Theoretical schemes and the neutral, impersonal idioms we use in talking about them give us respite from the unmanageable flux of lived experience, helping us create illusory life-worlds which we can more easily manage because they are cut off from the stream of life. In this sense, *objectivity becomes a synonym for estrangement and neutrality a euphemism for indifference* (Jackson 1989:3-4, my emphasis).

The notion of 'objectivity' negates the ambiguities of research as *practised* and occludes the stumbling, partial and intimately personal processes through which ethnographic knowledge is created and packaged. It reduces anthropologists to uni-dimensional 'participant observers' whose presence impinges on what they come to know and whose intellectual histories shape how they come to write about it, but whose own personalities and personal or political preoccupations are kept firmly out of their encounters with Others. Jackson (1989) urges an approach to anthropology which takes our own lived experience as a starting point from which to explore the ways those experiences connect us with other people, rather than set us apart from them. Jackson's call for bringing a sense of our own humanity into anthropological research echoes feminist advocacy of an approach to research that focuses on process, and on drawing on one's own emotions and views as a basis for developing an empathic and intersubjective approach to knowing.²

Drinkwater (1991), drawing on Habermas and Gadamer, highlights the ways in which as historically situated actors, our own values, beliefs and experiences shape our interactions with and understanding of others, producing knowledge that can never be completely 'objective', nor purely 'subjective'. In coming to understand, he argues, both our experience and our perception of our experience changes. Drawing on Gadamer's (1975) notion of 'engagement', Drinkwater highlights the prejudgments that are brought by those who interact into every interpretive situation and the importance of reflexivity as a means of becoming aware of the ways in which our own views and beliefs can extend and constrain our understanding of others. Autobiography, as the lived historical experience of those who seek to understand others, not only conditions that understanding but is in itself productive of the means by which an understanding can be sought. This urges an approach to research that starts from and returns to self-understanding as an integral part of trying to reach into the worlds of others. To divorce ourselves *as people* from what we do as anthropologists has implications that go beyond the quality of our work (see Lindisfarne-Tapper 1991).

In an important contribution to the development of distinctive alternative epistemologies informed by feminist work, Patricia Hill Collins sketches out an approach to knowing that is based in the lived experience of African-American women. She locates the concrete experience of 'connected knowers' (1994:88), developed through dialogue, as the basis for

truth claims and emphasises what she terms 'the ethic of caring'. This ethic is made of up three components: an emphasis on the uniqueness of every human being and on personal expressiveness, the appropriateness of emotions in dialogue and as means of expressing the validity of an argument, and developing the capacity for empathy. Lastly, she proposes an ethic of accountability: 'every idea has an owner and... the owner's identity matters' (1994:94). Collins' work has a number of implications for anthropology.³ Her model of a 'matrix of domination' provides a framework for locating ourselves as actors and for challenging complacency: it forces us to 'do our homework' by thinking about the ways we position ourselves and are positioned by others in interlocking, multiple sites of domination and resistance. The second step is to take Collins' alternative epistemology as a starting point for developing a personal ethical stance that disrupts the old dichotomies, not by appropriating the distinctive standpoint she articulates but by taking it as a challenge to do our *own* work (Pratt 1988).

Thinking about responsibility and about location raises a number of dilemmas for anthropological work (Lindisfarne-Tapper 1991). For the acts of representation that anthropologists make in their texts form only a part of the process of research. So much attention has been paid to ethnographic writing, privileging it over the interactions anthropologists have with the Others they represent. There is a curious disjunction between concerns over representation and the promulgation of the old anthropological lie of the neutral participant observer who is now recognised to be positioned by virtue of their 'race', class, age and gender but who is still enjoined to remain silent about their own views and preoccupations while they are 'in the field'.

Situating 'the participant observer'

From what I learnt about 'participant observation', I understood it to involve two apparently mutually incompatible things. On the one hand, it is supposed to involve immersing oneself completely in social life, in order to gain an understanding of what life in that particular setting is all about (see Pelto and Pelto 1978, Ellen 1984). And yet, on the other, the supposed neutrality of the 'participant observer' and the very idea of observation as a means of collecting 'data' invokes a naturalistic positivism. Anthropologists keep quiet so as not to 'bias' the 'data' by revealing views and expressing their feelings: in short, by behaving as people. 'Participation' and 'observation' appear almost contradictory (Wright and Nelson 1995). And there are further contradictions. 'Participation' evokes a sense of mutuality. In order to participate, the anthropologist necessarily becomes 'not an individual without a history face to face with his or her "people", but... a multiplicity, a certain sort of person who will be "read" in different ways by those encountered and who will perform certain "readings" in return' (Jenkins 1994:447). As such, then, the anthropologist occupies and

actively adopts subject positions in relation to those with whom she or he participates in the events of everyday life. And those others equally take up subject positions according to their 'readings' of the intentions or interests of the anthropologist. This much is obvious. What remains less clear, however, is the status of the practices in which anthropologists engage.

Jenkins suggests that in effect the anthropologist is no different to any other actor in a setting in which everyone is 'engaged in the same kind of projects, exploring and constructing that world' (1994:434), a performative engagement pursued through practice (see also Bourdieu 1977, Fabian 1983, Herzfeld 1987). By taking up a particular 'role', Jenkins suggests, the anthropologist begins to learn through the practices associated with the part s/he chooses, through a series of apprenticeships and experiences. Yet the nature of engagement in these activities is 'usually fundamentally different from that of the subjects of their research. Most anthropologists have 'enough money to ensure' that they do not need to make sure businesses or farms yield enough to live on; and after all, most are only temporary visitors on excursions that will soon enough return them to home comforts and the corridors of academia. The reality is that to be an anthropologist in the first place is a choice premised on *not needing* to do the kinds of things that most people do to get by.

Here the theatrical metaphor fits nicely. For anthropologists often engage in activities literally as actors in order to understand rather than pursue them as anyone else in that setting might. As such, they are usually 'virtual' rather than 'full participants' (Habermas 1984, Drinkwater 1991). And rather than just doing, anthropological research involves recording, reflecting and writing: activities directed at the production of knowledge that involve not just getting on with the routinised social activities of everyday life but attempting to step outside them to subject them to scrutiny. Fieldnotes and 'headnotes' (Sanjek 1990) form part of the everyday consciousness of an anthropologist at work, part of a continuing analytic process.⁴ 'Participation', then, is rather more ambiguous than it seems.

Living in Ado in order to study what people did made me a 'virtual' participant in most of the domains I moved in. As a 'virtual' participant I took part in events that as a 'full' participant I would actively avoid, such as church services. In some settings, that I was able to participate at all hinged on precisely the fact that I was not and could not be a 'full' participant. My participation was equally conditioned by my own values and beliefs - which are in themselves far from coherent or compatible. Two of the subject positions I took up seemed to be particularly contradictory, almost antagonistic: those of feminist and anthropologist (see Strathern 1987, 1991). The residual hold that the myth of 'participant observation' had on me made me cautious at first about letting 'the feminist' have any air time at all for whenever I did, I behaved in ways that were inimical to the ideal of neutrality. But it seemed unethical to give vent to my feelings in my diary rather than to allow myself to be challenged. It made me feel dishonest. If I was unwilling to allow people to know me as I

am, then how could I expect them to open up to me? And, more importantly, how could I make friends if I could not share my life with others?

Taking sides, challenging people's views, verbalising dissent: all these things are out of bounds, it would seem, for the 'good anthropologist'.⁵ Instead, mindful of the charge of ethnocentrism and ever cautious about alienating potential informants, the anthropologist might nod and scribble, but never disagree. But I found that to 'take part in the observed action system subject to withdrawal... of [my] qualities as an actor' (Habermas 1984:114) seemed to demand of me that I remain indifferent. Rather than becoming a person like any other, with a personality and views on different matters, the ethic of 'participant observation' enjoined me to keep my mouth shut. When people told me that *oyinbo* (white people) were good, kind, nice people unlike 'we Africans', was I supposed just to record this in my notes to analyse later? When men complained about women-in-general, shifting blame and responsibility away from themselves, should I just have listened and nodded? And when my assistant Mrs Odu admonished younger women for not doing their 'duty' by their husbands, should I have chosen complicity and stayed silent? What *does* the 'good anthropologist' do when confronted with oppressive practices and when she or he is invited to collude in them? This raises thorny questions about what anthropology purports to be about or for.

Contested Concerns

When I set out to work in Nigeria in October 1992, I had arrived at a personal position on what I thought anthropology should be about that centred on relevance. I had wrestled with the angst of post-colonial political demands and with my location as a privileged white scholar. I had worried about representation, about arrogating the right to speak for as well as about some people, let alone 'a people'. I tried to devise an applied project which would have tangible outcomes, rather than just a 'long and lost' (Chambers 1983) ethnography. By the time I returned in July 1994, I felt much more tentative. I don't feel that I have found any answers. And the questions I continue to ask myself persistently undermine whatever safe and comfortable spaces I may imagine myself into along the way.

My desire to work in southwestern Nigeria was first aroused when I read a lavishly illustrated book on a masquerade, *Gelede*, that celebrated women's power (Drewal and Drewal 1983). In it, I read about powerful marketwomen, witches and goddesses: about a world where women made it for themselves as independent economic actors and were celebrated and valued as mothers. Shortly afterwards, I went back to Salvador in Brazil. There, from devotees of the African-Brazilian religion of *candomblé*, I heard Yoruba myths about feisty and fearsome women, the goddesses Iansã, Yemanjá and Oxum (see Gleason 1987). By then, I was hooked. I dreamt up an elaborate scheme for integrating my fascination

with *Gelede* with practical reproductive health concerns. Nobody could do anything to dissuade me from it.

I left Ado with notebooks full of the everyday minutiae of life. My change of heart happened soon after my arrival, prompted both by what people wanted to talk to me about and by the situation I found myself in. When I arrived in 1992, Nigeria was in a state of economic collapse. By the time I left in 1994, the country was in the grip of a massive fuel shortage and political uncertainties had come to dominate everyday life. In a context of dramatic economic change, exacerbated by structural adjustment policies and political instability, I grappled to make sense of the impact of these changes on people's lives. In the process, I left my original project behind. Masquerades were practically irrelevant in most people's lives, apart from on the festival days when they would gather to enjoy performances. And women did not want to talk to me about reproduction, let alone reveal their own reproductive knowledge.⁶ Women claimed not to know anything about their bodies: if they were sick, they consulted someone and that was enough, they claimed. What mattered was that they got better, that something worked. Herbalists were more than willing to answer any of my questions, but I was more interested in working with the women themselves. After several weeks of getting nowhere, I turned to my assistant Mrs Odu and asked her what she thought was the most relevant subject for research, what women would talk to us about. Making a living, she answered: women would discuss their work. So that was where I began.

I had started out with a narrow definition of reproductive health. As time went on, it broadened to encompass the wider category of well-being, a category marked as much by the economic conditions of people's lives and by their state of mind as their physical health status. I asked people to define for me what *alafia*, a term usually translated as 'peace' and the closest Yoruba translation of well-being, meant to them. For some, it was the absence of sickness.⁷ For others, it was about being able to get up in the morning and go about whatever they had to do. Others talked in terms of the peace of mind (*ibale-ọkan*) that a person with *alafia* had. And for others still, *alafia* was about an absence of trouble: about keeping enemies at bay and getting on with the business of life without interference. This, it seemed, was the place from which my research could depart. Over the coming weeks and months, I set about finding out about the obstacles to *alafia*. I moved in different domains, working with women in the market and food production sites, sitting in women's and men's houses hearing about their lives, visiting women and men all over town to pester them with questions about almost every aspect of their day-to-day existence. From a narrow, focused project my research expanded into an attempt to somehow grasp life in Ado in as much of an entirety as I could, to venture into every kind of situation and to understand how people got on with each other and with life. It was, I suppose, a return to the old holistic anthropology.

Part of the crumbling grand scheme had been to fulfil my academic obligations through participatory action research.⁸ My efforts to do this, however, failed: the research remained

my research. No-one had invited me to do research, nor had they set the agenda for what I was doing. People simply didn't have the time, nor the inclination, to spend hours doing analysis when there were mouths to feed and work to do. This was the reality. They indulged me when I used PRA as a research method, but much as I might have wanted to help there was actually very little that I could do. As a lone anthropologist, I had limited resources. Bringing people together to reflect on shared miseries that were hard to see a resolution to in the current economic and political situation seemed more unethical than sitting with them as they talked about their complaints. I tried for a while to act as a catalyst, then turned to using my agency more directly to link people in Ado with contacts I had made and threw my energy into practical activities.⁹ In the party that was thrown for me on my departure, I was commended for having a sense of 'home': that even though I had arrived as a stranger, I had wanted to 'do something' for people in Ado. My ideals of quite a different kind of 'participation' (see Wright and Nelson 1995) had not worked out. But this experience taught me some important lessons.

How I came to know Ado and how people in Ado came to know me are part of the context of this thesis. In the following sections, I retrace my steps and reflect on the process of research, beginning with an old cliché (Moore 1994): a narrative of arrival.

Arriving

The first glimpse I had of Ado was through the broken window of an old *danfo*, a C20 passenger van, hurtling as fast as it could along the wide tarred road from Badagry. We swung past a brightly painted plaster virgin, prominently placed outside the large Catholic church at the fringes of the town, plummeted down a steep slope into the luxuriant green of the swampy forest and up along a road densely lined with stores and stalls into the main street. The van came to a sudden halt next to an untidy row of stalls and I was jostled out. I had not intended to stop at Ado. I was on my way to nearby Igbessa, almost at the end of my quest for a fieldsite.¹⁰ My supervisor had suggested that I try Igbessa and I thought I should at least see the place. I didn't reach Igbessa that day, nor the next.¹¹

It was hot. I had travelled to Badagry on one of the huge yellow beasts called *molue*, seeking respite from the crowded chaos of Lagos. Crammed together on narrow metal seats, my fellow passengers shot me glances of surprise: this, the lowliest form of transport, was hardly the place one would expect to see an *oyinbo* (white person). The bus lurched along, belching smoke and rattling ominously until we reached the motorpark. Dazed by the journey, I was shunted into the waiting *danfo* by a helpful fellow passenger. By the time I reached Ado I was crushed, bruised and very thirsty. I walked into the first stall I could see in search of a coke. The owner of the stall was immaculately dressed in an outfit of beautiful blue lace, studded with sequins. She replied to my halting Yoruba in fluent English, pausing

after serving me my drink, then asking me where I was from. 'England', I said. 'Yes, I can tell by your accent. Where in England?' 'London', I replied. 'Where in London?', she asked. 'Tufnell Park'. 'Which end of Tufnell Park, the Holloway road side?' I sat up, surprised. We chatted. About markets, about the street in Holloway where her sister had lived; about a London that she seemed to know as well as me. That I was a student, from SOAS, didn't seem to surprise her. Mary had worked in Goldsmiths' College canteen. And when I explained why I was there, she suggested that two of the children who were hanging around us with intense curiosity should accompany me on a walk around the town before I continued my journey.

Lola, Yemisi and I set off from the market, walking past the stalls selling myriad plastic items and cheap clothes, past Romeo's Cool Spot, a place I used to escape to, much later, for a cold beer at the end of dusty days, and along the crowded main street. The sights of the town, for them - and later for me, when visitors came - were sites of 'tradition'. We walked on and on through the town, to the shrines of masquerades and *oriṣa* (deities), then up through the winding paths of dense settlement to the large clearing where a market once sprawled and down towards the forest to the grandiose, decaying palace that once housed the *oba* (king) of Ado. As we went, people greeted us and laughed as I called back in Yoruba. One family, high up on the hill, beckoned me in and fed me a delicious soup, applauding my eagerness to eat it. Back in town, another family fended off my protestations and fed me again. As we wound our way back to Mary's stall, I realised that I had fallen for Ado. When the girls asked me if I was going to stay with them that night, I eagerly agreed. And by the time I went with the children to sleep in the old family house, I had talked with Mary and her husband Tokunbo and had made a firm plan to fetch my bags from Ibadan and return. My rational criteria for site selection - on most of which Ado would have failed, as it was too large, too heterogenous - no longer mattered. My feeling was a purely emotional one: within hours, I felt at ease there and knew instinctively that it was the right place.

When I came back, various rumours circulated as to why I had come and what I was doing. Some thought me to be a friend of Mary Akinsowon from London, others a wife or daughter of her husband Tokunbo Akinsowon from Chicago. As my friend Irene Olaofe later reminded me, to just turn up like that out of the blue was very odd. My wanderings around border towns had aroused the suspicions of Nigerian officials. Irene shared their concerns at the outset, convinced that I must be a spy. I realise now how strange I must have seemed. As strangeness dissolved into familiarity and my antics no longer brought bemused stares and whispers, Ado became a home from home. And from my own familiarity with Ado, it is difficult to recall a period of feeling like a complete stranger. Certainly there were moments when various connections suddenly became visible: between people, of paths, patterns, traces; flashes of recognition, moments in which I felt the first stirrings of fondness from and for people, as 'research' gradually gave way to 'everyday life'. But from the first days, as I

tentatively ventured into new parts of the town, gradually marking places and faces in my mind, I was anchored by Mary and Tokunbo Akinsowon and their family who gave me not only a space to live, but a home. And the name people later gave me captured the feeling I had of being in the right place: I was called Ajoke, someone everyone wants to 'pet' and to look after.

Mediations

I gradually moved beyond the interlocking social networks that Mary and Tokunbo Akinsowon offered me spaces within to establish contact with others for myself. Being associated with the Akinsowon family shaped both my experience of Ado and others' assessments of me. At times I was referred to as Akinsowon's *oyinbo* (white person) or *alejo* (lit. stranger, visitor). This opened up spaces for me in which people were willing to accept me and extend to me the benefits of being not quite a total stranger. I found my principal assistant Mrs Dorcas Odu, a widow and mother of five children in her 50s, by another route. A chance conversation in a hospital dispensary brought me to her door. Within days, we began to work together. Through Mrs Odu's networks and connections I made my first forays into other areas of the town. Mrs Odu led me through the paths of Ado's quarters and shared with me many hours of difficult work in the market, braving the hostile reactions of some of the women who resented her as a beneficiary of my financial assistance. Together we gossiped, argued and shared a concern about the people we worked with. What people were willing to tell me through her was also mediated by what they might feel able to tell her.

Mrs Odu mediated my contacts in the early stages of my research. Our interactions with others continued to mark a context for 'research' beyond that time and those settings. When I was with Mrs Odu, I was 'on work'. When I came alone, it was 'just to visit', or 'to play'. At first, when I turned up alone with a notebook in my hand to discuss a particular issue, or follow up on a previous discussion people would ask after Mrs Odu, surprised that I hadn't brought her with me. This work/play distinction came to be quite significant. I regarded much of the time I spent with Mrs Odu as 'work', although we made up our days with social visits to people. After 'work' I would go off to 'play' with people in the town or sit on the step to chat with Mary and the family. In anthropological research there is no clear boundary between 'work' and 'play'. During the day, I would make notes in a small notebook as conversations took place and more rarely record them on tape.¹² This, I felt, offered a certain level of transparency about what I was doing. When I put down my notebook, when I dropped by to visit friends or ventured out at dusk to chat with people, I was not 'on work'. But as I sat late into the night writing my notes, these interactions formed part of my record. It was only when I showed people - to their amazement - the stack of notebooks and papers

that I had amassed that my 'work' really became visible. This thesis is its most obvious product; and one that few of the people I spent time with can read.

That I have used conversations and events that took place as I 'played' as material to 'work' on is something that provokes ethical qualms. Stacey (1991) talks of how friendship in a research situation can become more manipulative than the use of merely extractive research strategies. By getting to know people better, intimate details are shared that would not usually be part of what a conventional researcher might find out. And Wolf (1996) notes that it may be precisely through other people's tragedies and crises that we learn about processes we would not otherwise have opportunities to witness. Ethical dilemmas surface in difficult decisions about which such stories can be told and the extent to which using my 'playtime' experiences at all can be justified. Decisions about what counts as the 'work' I can legitimately draw on in this account and what is 'off limits' becomes even more difficult when some of the subjects I write about are of such sensitivity (see Lee 1993).

Consent alone is an insufficient guarantee in such situations. Some people indicated that certain things were 'off the record' and I do not repeat them here. But I am not sure that everyone really understood my attempts to explain what I was doing. And when I describe events that involved a number of actors in everyday life in spaces that were public enough for me to be a witness, what else am I conveying and what confidences am I breaching? There are no easy answers to these dilemmas. Making the decision to change most of the names of the people who appear in this thesis was one I took when I thought about the implications of what I was writing. I knew that people would want to be mentioned in my 'book', but I felt uneasy about attributing them directly with statements they had made to me concerning aspects of their personal affairs. I settled on a compromise: to name those people who I had interviewed as 'key informants' and who offered me generalised accounts of practices, and to disguise the identities of those who spoke about their own lives or those of other people.¹³ Taking their voices out of my narrative altogether would, I feel, undermine the commitment I have to telling their stories as part of a wider engagement with the concerns that they invoke.

Identities

What my 'work' actually involved inevitably remained subject to a range of interpretations, of which 'spy' was one that was uncomfortably close to the truth. I had thought at the outset that just telling people that I was there to study them so that I could write a thesis about them for my university degree would seem really weird. It also made me feel very uncomfortable. I wanted to do something tangible and make some kind of contribution, not just study people for my own curiosity. I felt that I needed an identity that would give me a reason for being in Ado and enable me to come across in the most benign way possible, as a helpful, respectable sort of character. Getting a part-time voluntary teaching job at a local school and situating

myself as a teacher seemed at first to be a good strategy. I went to school a couple of mornings a week and when I went to visit people, I told them I wanted to find out more about Ado for my studies at university.

So far so good. But on the days when I was in town, people would ask me - disapprovingly - why I was not at school, intimating that I was being paid a salary for doing nothing. When I told them that I was not receiving any money from my teaching, the fact that I chose and could afford to work for nothing must have seemed suspiciously odd. Given that I was white and therefore clearly wealthy, people asked me why I had left London, with all its comforts, to spend so much time living in Ado. Why, I was frequently asked, did I spend every day, day after day, going here and there in the heat rather than taking it easy? Why had I decided to live in a rather ramshackle mud-plaster house in the middle of Ado rather than in a fancy place with a security guard in the posher areas of Lagos that other *oyinbo* seemed to prefer? Why did I ask people questions about things that I ought to know, or that a doctor would be the obvious person to answer? And where *was* my money coming from, what gains were in all this for me?

I struggled at first to find a way to explain why I had come and what I was doing, finding myself ever deeper in a mire of questions that I had been asking myself all along. My affluence and the luxury of being able to choose to go wherever I wanted and to stay there without having to work pained me. I could easily afford a large house and the servants to go with it, but preferred my room in the old Akinsowon family house. I felt horribly guilty. I decided that the only way was to be as open as possible. I tried to explain in some detail about the various reasons why I had come to Nigeria. Trying to account for what anthropology was about made me wonder even more what I was actually doing there. Clearly, the primary reason was to do research for my PhD. But I also wanted people to know that I did not just want to study them, I wanted to try to do something to help. So I tried again. The very act of explaining that I had come all the way from the UK to study people in Ado so that I could help them to work out for themselves solutions to reproductive health problems - in effect what I had imagined my action research project was going to be about - was a salutary experience. The idea was welcomed, but it left me feeling even more awkward. Eventually I went back to being a well-meaning student who wanted to do whatever she could to help, the position I felt happiest with.

I chose for myself at the outset an identity as a Mrs Mainstream kind of character who was very 'respectable', married and supremely bland. In doing so I faced the contradiction of being less than honest about myself at the same time as wanting to find out about the lives of others (see Wolf 1996). I was trying hard to be what I thought I ought to be like as a 'good anthropologist'. Mrs Mainstream fit the part perfectly. I deliberately chose a research assistant who was in her fifties, who I thought everyone apart from younger women would probably find unthreatening: old enough to be respected by men, yet of a generation between

women in mid-life and older women who they would feel able to talk with.¹⁴ Mary was concerned about the kind of people I would be going around with and was pleased to entrust me to Mrs Odu, who was a thoroughly respectable kind of person. And I could not have chosen anyone more suitable in terms of what she represented to introduce me to the widest possible range of people in Ado. What I hadn't bargained for was how soon I would feel so constrained by this identity that my acting career in Ado did not last very long. I have Mrs Odu to thank for making me all too aware of the implications of this position.

I tried at the beginning to cultivate a practised neutrality and urged Mrs Odu to join me in it. But she often found it hard to resist commenting when she felt strongly about something. On many occasions, 'interviews' dissolved into discussions that ranged around the positions she and the person or people we were talking to took on particular issues. At first, I saw this as a problem. When Mrs Odu started to moralise about young women's behaviour and insist that they should do their 'duty', I felt very awkward. But her interventions forced me out of a neutral position and into one which was much more active, more engaged. Initially out of a feeling that I needed to dissociate myself from Mrs Odu's views, I joined in these discussions and offered my actual views on things when I was asked for them. I soon came to see how important these dialogues between us and with others were. Mrs Odu's conservative views were a perfect foil, at times, to the kinds of alternatives I wanted to explore: her opinions allowed me to articulate my dissent, generating lively discussions that spilled out stories and examples to situate the positions of the women and men we talked with. And soon I started telling my own stories, using examples from other contexts as fodder for debate and discussion.

Especially in interactions with people of her generation, Mrs Odu would be able to raise topics that I marked aside as too sensitive and create a lighthearted atmosphere in which we could sit, laugh and share experiences. With younger men, Mrs Odu's obvious approval for their views on women prompted them to disclose stories and experiences that I doubt they would have been so voluble about to me alone. When Mrs Odu took up a subject position as a vociferous critic of women's behaviour, she'd become as much of a patriarch to me as any of the men we spoke with. I often just sat and listened. But even in these kinds of interactions, I could still articulate my position without feeling that I was asking people to agree with me: precisely because we disagreed the discussions often went beyond what might otherwise have been said if I had just probed further rather than taking a stance that required them to justify their position. When we were with younger women, I would often signal a very different attitude to Mrs Odu's by stating my views openly no matter how controversial they appeared. Afterwards, I found that I could have much more open discussions with them.¹⁵

I was starting to be myself in research encounters, but still felt as if I was a polite guest rather than someone who lived in Ado. I felt that I ought to be on my best behaviour at all

times. My initial concern with respectability not only blocked potential avenues of enquiry into the very things that interested me most. It also put constraints on what I felt I could be seen to be doing by others and therefore the kinds of people I might mix with. For the first few months, I never went out in the evening, smoked in secret and if I wanted a beer, I would send one of the children to buy it for me. I imagined that if people saw me they would think I was wayward.¹⁶ It took me some months before I realised that it was not going to impinge on my credibility if I occasionally went out for a beer or smoked the odd cigarette in public. Nor, as I soon became aware, did it damage my reputation to make friends with men or to talk quite openly about subjects that might have seemed 'off limits'. When I confessed that I was not married, it did not seem to matter at all. And when I talked about what marriage meant to me in my own cultural context and my reasons for not wanting to be married, that too seemed perfectly OK. I was different. I had my own views and my own experience was part of who I was: there was nothing strange about that because I was from a different place. This seems so stunningly obvious that it makes me wonder how I could ever have been deluded by the idea that I ought not allow myself to express myself as a person.

But it took something more to shake away the last vestiges of the estranged 'anthropologist' persona. One day, many months into my fieldwork, I erupted in a burst of anger at something that Baba Yemisi, a co-resident in the house where I lived, had done. Heated rows flared up fairly regularly among the residents of the house and I used to cower in fright when they did. I am usually so conflict averse that I would rather do anything than have a shouting match with someone. But there I was, yelling my head off. That argument marked a turning point for me: it turned me into a human being. No-one was in the least bit concerned about my behaviour. And Baba Yemisi and I became closer friends as a result. I no longer had to keep up appearances and was liberated from feeling the guilty pressure to carry on the charade of Mrs Mainstream. As soon as I stopped pretending to be 'the anthropologist' and became the contradictory, multi-dimensional person that I am, I started to *live* in Ado.

Avoiding the missionary position

As careful as I tried to be about how I positioned myself, it was inevitable that people were going to position me from their perspectives. That I was an *oyinbo* (white person) impinged on every other position that I could take up (cf. Johnson-Odim 1991). For those people in Ado who had not travelled abroad or worked in the cities, most of the other *oyinbo* they had previously known of in the area were missionaries or doctors. At that time, I regarded white missionaries with a suspicion that bordered on active hostility and was very anxious not to be associated with them.¹⁷ But soon enough rumours went around that I was a Catholic sister. I was also sometimes approached by people who thought I must be a doctor and much as I

assured them that I was not, I would usually do whatever I could to help and quite often drew on my lay medical knowledge to advise on and treat minor conditions. Boundaries were constantly blurred. My close association with a clinic and a school that were both within the bounds of the Catholic church, as well as with close friends who were Catholics, served to confirm the missionary identity for those who did not know me better. And I never quite succeeded in completely quashing the rumour, although I told many people about my atheism and hoped that *this* rumour would begin to circulate.¹⁸ But up until I left there were still some people who would call out greetings to 'Sister Ana'.

Being an *oyinbo* conferred upon me elite status and enabled me to mingle with the rich and notable people of the town, mediated by my membership of an elite compound and my status as Akinsowon's *oyinbo*. It brought me in contact with elite women, when I accompanied Mary to ceremonies, and gave me entry to the circles of politicians, businessmen and local dignitaries, the associates of Tokunbo Akinsowon. In conversations about politics and local affairs, I become not quite a woman by virtue of my *oyinbo* identity: not quite an 'honourary male', but not far from it.¹⁹ Whereas other women of my age would have been ignored or silenced in such settings, my views were heard and engaged with. A position as a member of the elite was not one I particularly wanted to cultivate, but it was bestowed upon me by virtue of my skin colour. Rather than demonstrate a status that I felt I did not deserve in any way, I preferred to do whatever I could to play it down by my behaviour. My failure to behave in the way a 'big woman' should was often commented on, from my choice of cloth, to my lack of jewellery, to the fact that I usually walked around town. One man berated me, saying that I ought to drive around in my car and show that I was a 'somebody'. And when one day I went into the market wearing a pair of glittery earrings and the most glamorous outfit I had, before joining the family at a ceremony, I was hailed by compliments from the marketwomen and asked why I did not wear clothes like this more often. None of these choices were deliberately about my status. I chose to dress in *kampala* (hand-printed cloth made in Abeokuta) because I found the prints beautiful, did not like wearing earrings every day, and I preferred to walk and chat to people along the way. But once it was pointed out to me that my choices were interpreted in this way, I did not seek to change what I was doing and begin wearing satin and lace.

Why was I struggling to conform in some respects and not in others? It made me even more aware of the ironies of my attempts to resist identification as a 'big woman' in other ways: in a context where people struggle to become 'big', I had the luxury of casting the trappings of privilege away but never really losing any of the benefits. There were, however, ways in which I could use that privilege constructively. Being an *oyinbo* gave me the agency to make and use connections outside Ado as a conduit for resources. It also gave me the licence to do certain things that no respectable woman of my age would do, with relative impunity. I soon realised that I was perfectly free to go out in the evening and sit around with

a beer talking about all manner of subjects with men without eyebrows being raised. I was able to have unusually frank conversations with men in the guttering light of bars, in which I could assume a range of subject positions conditioned by my *oyinbo*-ness that made me not quite a woman.

My age seemed rather indeterminate to people. Several people told me that they thought that I must be in my late forties at least. I clearly had no dependent children if I was able to go away for almost two years. To be allowed to leave my husband and live 'alone' in Ado seemed to indicate to some that I must be pushing fifty. Mrs Odu and many of my close associates were women in their forties and fifties, further confirming my place in this generation. To be childless by choice at the age of thirty was something virtually unheard of in Ado. When I told people my age and that I wanted to finish my education before having children, I did not know how they would take it. The reaction, especially from older women, was one of complete approval: I was even held up as an example on a couple of occasions to the young women they accused of 'uselessing themselves' and not being serious about their work. For young people, I was not only someone who was associated with their parents' generation. I was also a teacher. Confessional revelations about my own past in private and the views I openly professed in public discussions helped to defuse some of the consequences of my earlier attempts to present myself as 'respectable' as well as any vestiges of the missionary identity.

Towards the end of my research, I organised the showing of films in the town hall on HIV/AIDS and got involved in various health promotion activities, including a notorious demonstration of how to put a condom on a polystyrene penis that provoked a lot of mirth and gained me greater visibility among young men as someone who was quite unshockable. By stepping completely outside the role I had initially created for myself, I was able to gain insights into some of the central issues with which this thesis is concerned. Late one night, after a film show, I stood in the road chatting to a couple of young men about things that I had never dared to ask about. It seemed that I had managed to banish Mrs Mainstream to the margins. And as I became more familiar with Ado and Ado with me, people got to know me in different ways.

Of knowledge and ignorance

I spent many months in Ado and came away overwhelmed by the amount of things I did not know. If as knowledge grows, so does ignorance (Fardon 1991), what are we to make of those 'gaps' when creating ethnographies? Becoming informed always requires leaps of the imagination, blurring the boundaries between inferring and inventing. In practice, fieldwork seems to involve a lot of imagined connections, building of successive images of 'how things are'. Flashes of insight may appear to undermine, and replace, these images, but this process

is always partial and always in flux. Anthropological writings usually make sense of this complexity by extracting and abstracting and by fixing processes into static descriptions in order to create coherence. This thesis represents a process over time, fixed only by the need to submit it. In it I stumble through generalisations, ineptly grasping for a way of contextualising the particularity of people's lives. The safety of finding a frame is constantly jeopardised by the nagging reminder that for every instance there is always a counter-example, for every attempt at fixity the sheer diversity and range of lived experience bursts through to disrupt it.

My methodology, the theories and assumptions that guided my research, drew opportunistically on multiple, often conflicting, theoretical viewpoints. The research methods I used were equally eclectic, from those classically associated with positivist enquiry to more discursive and projective approaches (see Pelto and Pelto 1978, Ellen 1984). Life histories formed a central backbone for my interest in the biographical and historical dimensions of people's lived experience (Hareven 1982, Harris 1987).²⁰ Initially, I began with fairly systematic semi-structured interviews with women and men of different ages all over town on their work and marital histories. Later, I selected a small random sample of people in Imasai quarter and visited them regularly over several months to gather their family, marital, work and medical histories.²¹ I sought out the town's historians and religious specialists, and interviewed about twenty herbalists, prophets and Islamic healers (*alfa*), some on a number of occasions, on topics ranging from sickness to love to *aje* and *juju* ('witchcraft' and 'medicine').

Mrs Odu collected work histories from women she knew and visited prophets and herbalists to ask them about the clients they had that week during my absence mid-fieldwork. Baba Yemisi, Mrs Odu and Mr Akintomide helped me to collect proverbs and sayings. And Baba Yemisi interviewed a series of men on their experiences of marriage concurrently to the work I was pursuing with men, as I wondered how frank they might be with me.²² Through the work Baba Yemisi did for and with me I came to appreciate more closely men's viewpoints: learning important lessons about my own biases in the process (see later discussion). Over the course of my fieldwork, three young people - Paul Fadaïro, Agnes Ogunleye and Tunde Oloaṣebikan - worked with me on research on sexuality with their peers, which helped me to understand young people's perspectives. Paul and Tunde carried out informal interviews with young men using a checklist I generated from discussion with them and Agnes kept a notebook for me of stories and incidents involving young women and men, marriage and sex.

I carried out several small surveys. In the market, I surveyed seventy vendors across a range of commodities on topics ranging from how long they had been in their trade to association membership and savings. I surveyed twenty market associations and attended several association meetings. I also carried out a number of counts of sellers in the market at

different times of day. I administered self-completed anonymous questionnaires to a sample of a hundred school students in three secondary schools and to fifty apprentices on topics ranging from expectations of marriage to abortion and contraception. Lastly, Tunde Olaosebikan helped me with a survey of a range of men and women in different occupations and of different generations on responses to structural adjustment. I drew on pair-wise ranking, venn diagramming and direct matrix ranking methods used in participatory rural appraisal (PRA) to devise ways of exploring topics around work and women's social networks and tried them out with women of different ages.²³ Using a modified version of 'wealth ranking',²⁴ I asked a series of focus groups and individuals to rank a sample of adults over 45 years old from Imasai quarter according to their relative wealth (*owo*), well-being (*alafia*) and social esteem (*ola*), as part of a collaborative epidemiological study into psychosocial aspects of hypertension.²⁵ I consulted documentary sources ranging from contemporary newspapers and magazines to archival material on Ado and the civil court records for Badagry (1874-1906) kept in the National Archives in Ibadan, civil court records for Ado for 1965 and for Otta (1908-1940s) kept in Obafemi Awolowo University library at Ile-Ife, and civil court records for Ado from 1966-1994 (assisted by Paul Fadairo), tenement and tax registers for Ado, both kept in the council offices in Ado. And lastly, one of the most important sources of information on everyday concerns was gossip.

Gossip ran as a rich seam through everyday life, weaving together and rethreading sequences of events, with frequent pauses to situate people within processes; like a current that animated people and the events they narrated. Harding, writing on gossip in a Spanish village, comments:

Gossip is a system for circulating real information, but that is never all that is circulated. Although overt criticism is rare, covert evaluation is constant. The evaluation is conveyed by editing if not by editorialising (1975:301).

The 'editorials' that accompanied accounts of the doings of others had an insistent, moralising tone; the subject positions tellers took up in their commentaries spoke as much about their own concerns as about the 'real information' they purveyed. The stories people told to make sense of events, to flesh out some of their complexities or to locate people's behaviour, formed as much a part of the 'action' as the incidents themselves. These stories within stories offered me ways of making sense of experiences that might be lent quite a different interpretation if all I had heard were bald statements of events. When I tell some of these stories in the chapters that follow, I try to retain the sense of the perpetual behind-the-scenes commentaries that always accompanies action in public spaces. And it was through intersubjective engagement in discussions generated by gossip that I think I learnt the most.

As time went on, my own experiences became part of the conversation, as 'interviews' gave way to open-ended discussion and dialogue that sometimes placed my 'interviewee' in the position of the asker of questions and me in the seat of the respondent. This interchange

did not stop me being able to listen to people attentively with the impartiality of a counsellor when they told me about their own lives. Nor did voicing my views mean that I reduced people to saying things to agree with me. Far from it. Instead, my interventions sparked off discussions and debates that helped me to understand more about other people's lives and to make my own life make sense to the women and men I spent so much time with. By adopting a subject position of feminist that was completely dissonant with hegemonic discourses on women in Ado, I invited discussion and critique. Through disagreement, by expressing thoroughly ethnocentric views and by telling my own stories, I learnt more than I would ever have done if I had remained silent. Taking part in the round of gossiping, I ventured my views and was challenged, time and again, for misconstruing things through my misplaced sympathy for the women involved. It was in the contexts of these discussions that I began to understand, if only partially, what was going on.

Telling Stories

In several chapters in this thesis I draw on stories that people told me or stories of events that took place around me to attempt to evoke the texture of everyday life.²⁶ By framing these stories in the context of an analysis that draws upon them as illustrations of my argument, I use them in contradictory ways: to convey complexity and to create coherence. By trying to divide what I learnt about Ado into chapters and bash them into coherence I found myself, again and again, sacrificing particularity along the way and chopping up interconnected experiences to make them make sense within the structure I needed somehow in order to frame them at all. Life does not fall into neat categories. Theories cannot contain experience (Quine 1960); all they can do is construct it in ways that speak as much about preferences formed through a personal sense of affinity with a particular position as about the rightness of fit (Goodman 1978, Hesse 1979). In selecting stories, in fabricating text from the pages of disparate notes I collected, I cannot help but speak from and continually return to my own concerns. Telling stories in Ado offered me the opportunity to make these concerns explicit.

Women and men often asked me what 'women in London' do. My construction of 'women in London' was at first a vehicle for views that I was timid to profess openly. I began to use it as an opportunity to explore reactions to scenarios that illustrated issues that I wanted to pursue further. 'Women in London' became an opportunity to counteract myths that denied us commonalities, as well as a way of exploring our differences. Just as the stories people told were a way in which people expressed their viewpoints, I chose examples that offered me scope for further commentary. The stories I told ranged from things I had read about in magazines or newspapers to the experiences of friends and relatives. Sometimes, they were shocking: one memorable instance was an account of the 'virgin birth' incident, which provoked outrage from the men who were part of the group I was talking

with, but led into a fascinating discussion on fatherhood.²⁷ At other times, I would tell a story in the context of other stories that drew on similar themes.

After a while, I began to realise that most of the stories I was telling were akin to feminist fables.²⁸ The characters in my stories were real enough people, but hardly representative of 'women in London'. Rather, I was guilty of fabricating a highly selective picture of a place I could not yet call my home, an accusation Mohanty (1988) rightly makes of the tendency in some writings by western feminists that implicitly contrast a false picture of freedom and equality with the 'oppression' of women elsewhere. My stories about women contrasted with representations of London as a place that were driven again by political concerns: about homelessness, urban poverty, unemployment and the iniquities of the Tory government. I changed tack. As I tried to portray the sheer diversity of 'women in London', I was struck by the ironies of my initial choice of examples: for all my attempts to capture the particularity of women's lives in Ado, I had chosen to construct and deploy a monolithic category of 'women in London'. Thinking about this, I realised how profoundly ignorant I was about the everyday lives of women in my own neighbourhood in London. How many of them, I wondered, obey their husbands, endure and comply? And how many of them would share the views I expressed that women and men in Ado found so odd? As I talked about the kinds of dilemmas that friends and relatives of mine had faced, their struggles with love and respectability, and with not having the means nor the confidence to break away, the way women reacted and the stories they told me forced me to reflect more deeply about what I was taking for granted.

I had been back in the UK for a few weeks when I visited a female relative, a woman in her late forties. As we talked, she began to tell me her story. It was only after some time that I remembered where I was. Instinctively, I had reached for my mental notebook. The story she was telling me was so familiar, too familiar. Rubin talks of the 'endless variety and monotonous similarity, cross-culturally and through history' (1975:160) of the oppression of women. Small town southwestern Nigeria and urban England are settings in which struggles for money, children and peace are played out in significantly different ways. As different as our life-worlds and experiences were, there were occasions on which the stories that women in Ado told me or those I told them had such powerful resonances that our differences seemed to dissolve. Our reactions to and opinions about the issues we talked about were often very different, but the kinds of things that went on had precisely that monotonous similarity that Rubin talks of: variations on a theme that seemed to be endlessly repeated.

My experience in Ado reinforced in me a rather 1970s version of radical feminism that took me by surprise. And it intrigued me. What was it that made me overturn my intellectual understanding and go back to a way of thinking that I could scarcely defend on theoretical grounds? How could I reconcile the explicit concern of my research with exploring the diverse, localised realities of women's and men's experience with my knee-jerk reactions?

Against all my better inclinations, I had ended up with a lumpen-category 'men' as 'the problem'. Why women as well as men blamed women for causing trouble and for asserting themselves seemed a such vexing puzzle worth exploring because my woman-centred perspective had become so much part of my sense of self that I could not see beyond it. At the same time as I explored situational dimensions of difference, I seemed completely incapable of letting go of essentialisms that had such a powerful emotional grip on me.

As time went on, I began to understand with more insight the perspectives of those who focused their criticisms on women. But it was only on my return to the 'home' in which the seeds for my concerns had been sown that I began to confront the implications of my values and beliefs in a more concerted way. This experience, almost entirely separable from the intellectual activities of academic research, is also part of the 'journey' that this thesis represents. I began to realise how deep-rooted some of the ideas I turned back to during my time in Ado were for me on a personal level. Working through and with the issues they raised required more than a good theoretical argument.

I came back to the UK fired with a desire to do something constructive to help women break through their conditioning and realise their own 'power within'. What I wanted to do was not to write about women, but be directly involved in enabling them to map out strategic objectives for themselves and to work together to achieve them (cf. Molyneux 1985). So I enlisted as an assertiveness trainer. And through the long and intense training process, I began to understand where the anger that had infused my return to radical feminist views stemmed from. Rather than confirming in me a stance that situated 'men' as the Other, I came full circle. Reacting to the models of gendered interaction that assertiveness training works with, I began to realise on an experiential, rather than merely a theoretical, level how little static gender dichotomies made sense of lived reality. What fascinated me most about this process was the parallels it offered with the intellectual concerns that had occupied me for several years and how powerfully it brought lessons home. Deconstructing 'gender' as an intellectual activity had, it seemed, remained entirely distant from my lived experience.

Assertiveness training drew on a similar process to intellectual deconstruction, the taking apart of taken-for-granted categories or 'truths', but related it directly to lived experience. Through the new understanding this process offered me of my own experience, things began to fall into place. What this taught me, more than anything else, was how the discursive subject positions that I'd acknowledged on a theoretical basis actually made sense in terms of individual women's experiences. And it brought me back to the possibilities of making sense of the experiences women and men in Ado had talked to me about. This process also made me realise, experientially, that the different subject positions I occupy are inevitably contradictory and partial: that I don't have to choose between ways of seeing or of being, but do need to be clear about the choices that I make.

Making Connections

To what extent can Western feminism dispense with an ethics of responsibility when writing about different women? The point is neither to subsume other women under one's own experience nor to uphold a separate truth for them. Rather, it is to allow them to *be* while recognizing that what they are is just as meaningful, valid and comprehensible as what we are... Indeed, when feminists essentially deny other women the humanity they claim for themselves, they dispense with any ethical constraint. They engage in the act of splitting the social universe into us and them, subjects and objects (Lazreg 1988:99-100, cited in Mohanty 1991:77).

Developing an ethics of responsibility goes beyond juggling with the polarities of competing theoretical stances, as Lazreg's critique of the post-structuralist attack on humanism makes clear. Rather, it is about recognising the implications that estrangement and indifference have for us as humans. Mohanty draws on Lazreg and the work of S.P. Mohanty (1989) to argue that a positive elaboration of 'the human' is essential 'to avoid the incoherences and weaknesses of a relativist position' (1991:77). Fraser's concern is equally with ways to avoid the 'metaphysical entanglements' (1995:166) of recent theoretical debates that neither get us very far analytically, nor enable us to engage politically. Fraser (1995) contends that as socio-cultural phenomena can be viewed from many different angles, which is most appropriate depends on the purpose. Outlining her pragmatic approach, Fraser invites the possibility of new syntheses with new possibilities for understanding and for action which do not entail abandoning useful dimensions of analysis that draw on apparently incompatible frameworks. As Fraser argues, it is a matter of shifting the frame: 'conceptions of discourse, like conceptions of subjectivity, should be treated as tools, not as the property of warring metaphysical sects' (1995:167).

Finding a way out of the impasse of relativism need not require a return to positivism. Rather, it calls for the situational and strategic use of different ways of approaching questions and for ways of embracing, rather than eliding or erasing, contradictions. Strathern draws on Haraway's vision of a politics in a 'world which might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of... permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints' (Haraway 1985:72, cited in Strathern 1991:38). The 'partial connections' that Strathern talks about extend to encompass connecting with others, a two-way current that involves emotional connections, not merely the extraction of information, and an acknowledgement of the contradictions and the plurality, as well as the partiality, of our perspectives. Collins' (1989) 'ethic of caring' offers a form of practice that is deeply rooted in empathy with people's lived experiences and one that emphasises the importance of feeling as a way of knowing and learning. Most of all it invites a celebration of uniqueness at the same time as a recognition of our shared humanity.

Chapter 2

Pathways Through Ado-Odo

Images of travel - of leaving, arriving, returning - resonate with the life-worlds of many of the people who live in Ado. For many of these people think of themselves as 'strangers': people from somewhere else. Rodman suggests that 'regional relations between *lived spaces* are developed through infusing experience in one place with the evocation of other events and other places' (1992:644, original emphasis). For Ado's heterogeneous population, connections over space and time with other people and other places situate them both as 'strangers' and as those who belong, in shifting contexts. In this chapter, I begin by tracing connections between Ado and other places, situating Ado-Odo spatially and historically within a nexus of regional relationships that have implications not only for a retelling of Ado-Odo's past but for configurations of interests, experiences and identities in the present. I go on to sketch the terrains in which the people who live in Ado live their everyday lives: compounds, workplaces, meeting places, spaces where people come together to buy and sell, to worship, seek help or advice for their problems and to celebrate. From a 'map' of the town in which I describe different places within it, I describe the movement of some of the people who live in the town over the course of a day within and between these sites and touch on some of the interactions that form a focus for subsequent chapters.

Ethnographies are always already located with regard to what has gone before. Fardon's (1990) analysis of the 'localising strategies' that have served to mark out certain regions of the world as sites for the particular local concerns of social anthropology, highlights the ways in which the trajectories of regional ethnography circumscribe the kinds of questions asked and answered by ethnographic work. In the case of 'the Yoruba', the literature is vast, spanning over a century of writings by nationals and expatriates alike. Textual representations of 'the Yoruba' have their own trajectories, motivated at different times and in different places by the concerns of their writers.¹ The connections that I explore are those that became salient to me through my own interests: they represent my own wanderings through the town and to other places, from the compounds in which I listened to accounts of Ado's past to libraries and archives. Throughout this thesis, I draw on the extensive resources of previous work in regional ethnography, attempting wherever I can to maintain the specificity of this account as a study not of 'a people' but of the people who live in this place. My focus in this chapter is less on contested or generalised aspects of 'Yoruba culture' than on the everyday lives of people in this particular small town, most but not all of whom might describe themselves as Yoruba. I present in this chapter what I learnt about Ado and the people who

live there, tracing pathways over time and space.

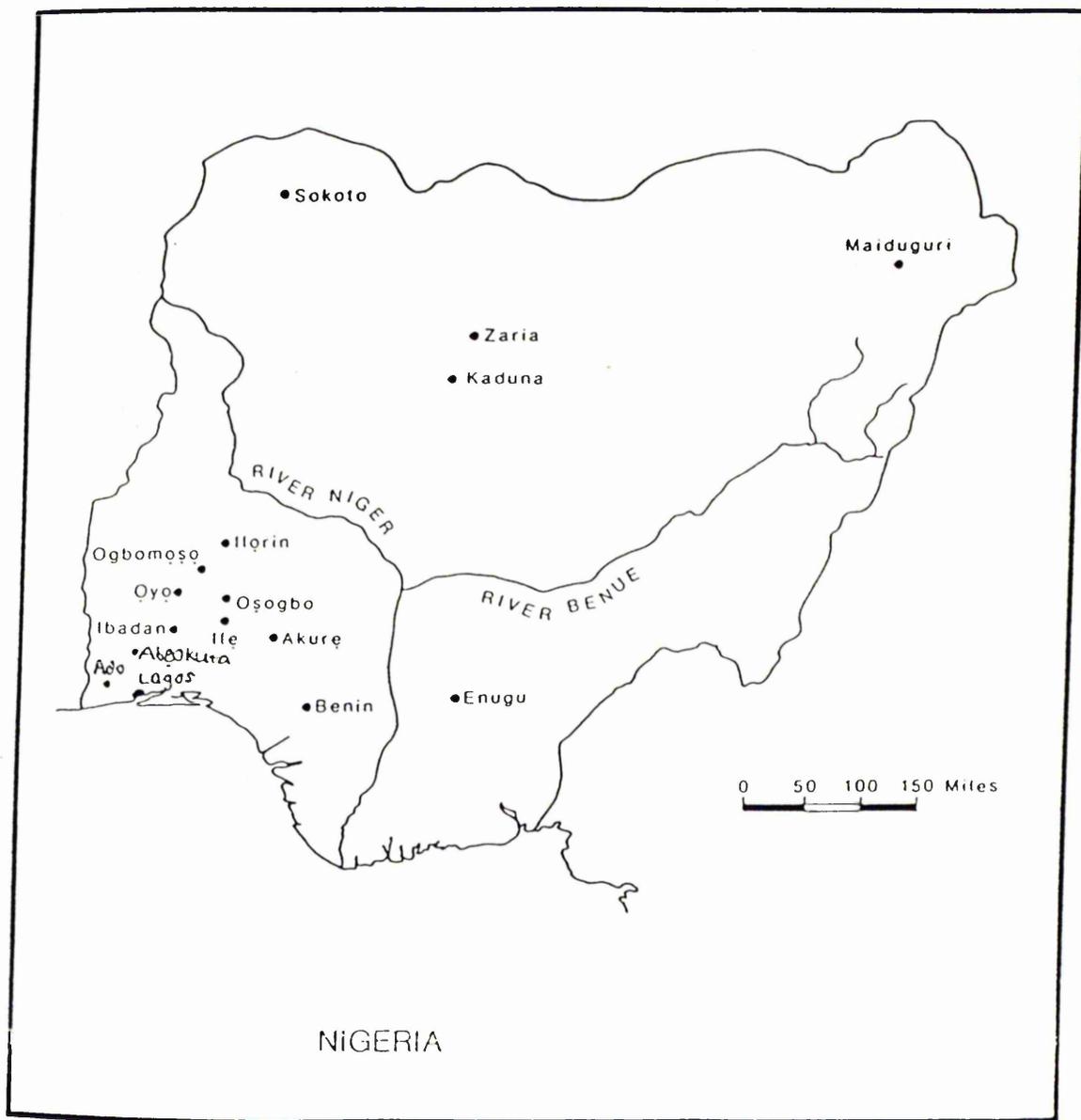
Connections

Ado-Odo lies on the border of Ogun and Lagos States in the far southwestern corner of Yorubaland, close to the border with the Republic of Benin and to the sea (see Fig. 1). It is a town celebrated for its antiquity.² Once a prominent kingdom renowned as the site of one of the principal shrines of the area, that of the *oriṣa* (goddess) Oduduwa,³ it is now a small semi-urban settlement of around 30,000 people, its importance eclipsed by nearby Otta and the expansion of metropolitan Lagos. Set in the agricultural hinterland that stretches beyond the busy roads carrying traffic to Lagos, Ado lies nestled in farmlands and bordered on one side by a swampy expanse. Small settlements, farm hamlets and villages are scattered throughout the sea of fields that radiates out from the town. Lands once deep in forested bush have been cleared and cultivated over the years until now little bush remains. Traces of the cocoa that dominated the area north of the town in the 1930s and 40s have all but disappeared. In its place are fields of maize, cassava, *egusi* (melon), and small plots of peppers, *okro* and vegetable leaf. To the east of the town, towards the lagoon, oil palm, the cash crop that has dominated Ado's agricultural exports for more than a century, flourishes among fields of maize and cassava.

The River Yewa flows to the west of the town, into the lagoon and on to the sea. For centuries people have moved from Ado-Odo up and down these riverine routes, carrying produce, fishing for subsistence and exchange, and making visits to friends or relatives on the far shore of the lagoon. It was the River Yewa that brought the first settler, the hunter-king Onitako, to the town - or so legend has it.⁴ And others followed, peoples whose descendants came to be known as Awori, much later as Yoruba.⁵ Connecting the lagoons that lead down to Badagry and Porto Novo with the interior, reaching as far as Ketu, this river was used for centuries for the traffic in goods between the interior and the sea.

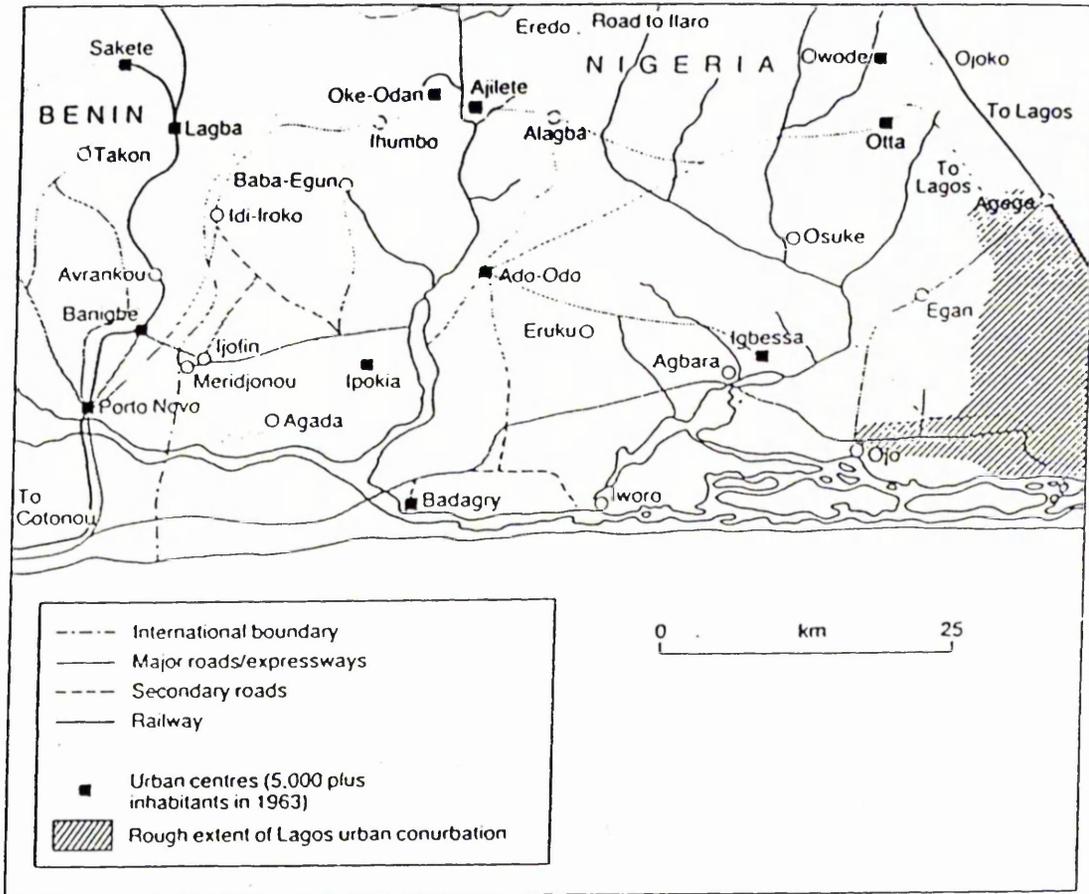
Four roads lead into Ado-Odo. Two - one tarred, one a track of flattened earth - connect the town with the coastal expressway from Lagos to Badagry and with the Egun settlements dotted along the route to the lagoon. This road and this track both mark ancient trade routes that were once travelled by caravans of traders moving goods from the coast to the savannah. Now they are plied by vehicles: by motorbikes carrying fish and other goods to and from Ere and by the C20 vans, taxis and cars that move up and down the road carrying passengers to Badagry and beyond. In the centre of the town, the road branches. One branch leads north, towards the major road that runs between Otta and the Benin border at Idiroko at Owode, a nearby market town, continuing on to the regional centre of Ilaro (see Fig. 2). From there, a wide tarred road takes traffic onto the Abeokuta-Lagos expressway; an older, decaying, route

Figure 1: Map of Nigeria, showing the location of Ado



[Template from Barber 1991:xii]

Figure 2: Regional Connections



[Source: Aradeon et al. 1986: 258]

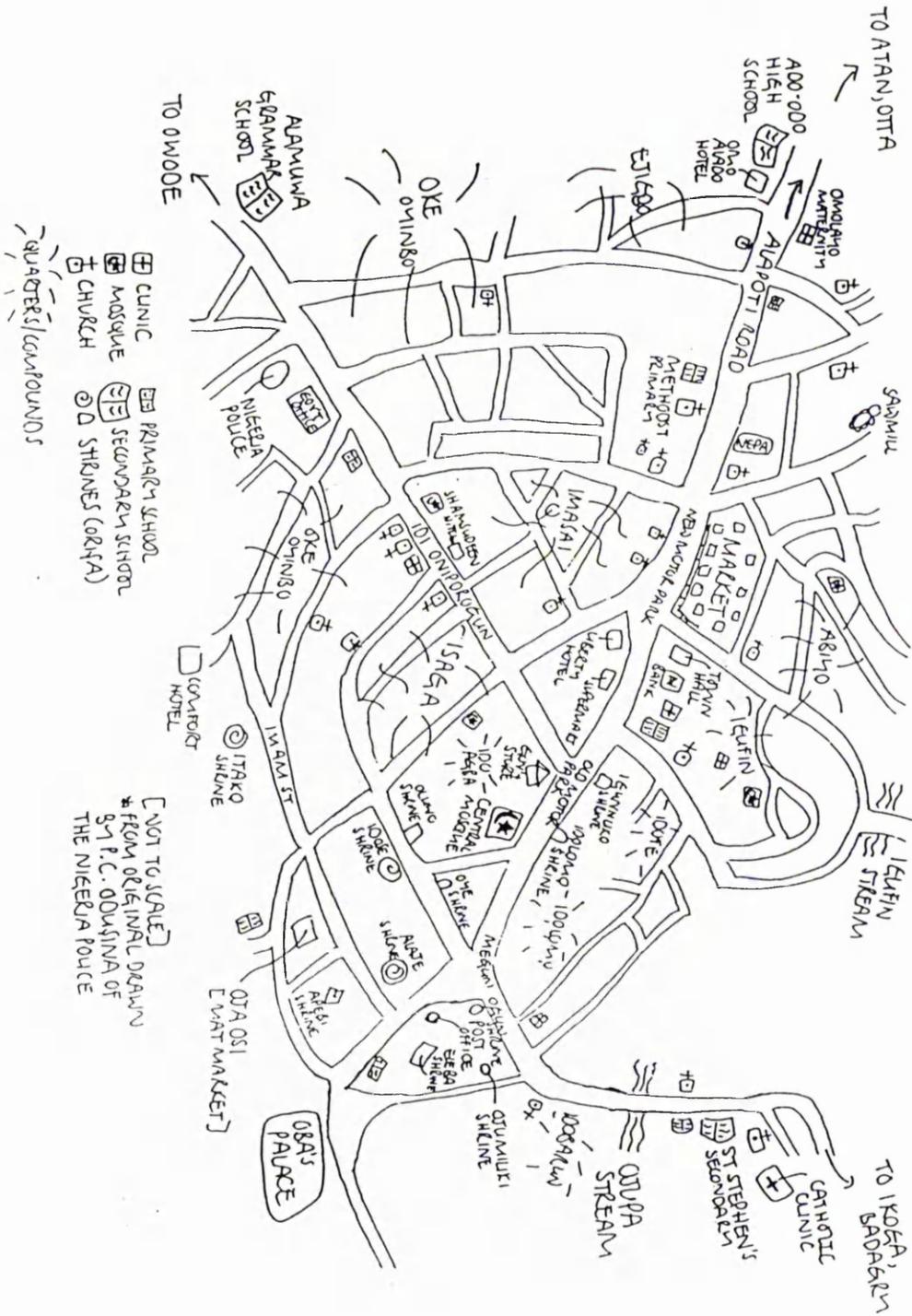
runs north to Abeokuta through a series of small Egbado towns, from which the ancestors of many families in Ado came in the nineteenth century. The other branch continues straight through the town towards Otta, and on to Lagos, providing connections with Igbessa and the largest local market, Lusada.

At each entry point into Ado, the first large buildings visitors see are the institutions of modern Nigeria: three secondary schools, sited at the points on all three major roads at which farmlands give way to settlement, and, along the Owode road, the quarters of the police, the court and government offices (see Fig. 3). Along these roads leading into town are the signs of the expansion of religious plurality and private enterprise in health care. Hastily constructed breeze-block churches, whose male prophets are self-made entrepreneurs in the booming business of Christianity, compete with the grander established churches; recently established maternity centres draw custom away from the impoverished government clinic.⁶

Along the roads leading into the town, vehicles languish in dozens of mechanics' yards swarming with apprentices, alongside shops and stalls tendering services to transport enterprises. These, as the carpenters' yards and the shops servicing electronics repairs and selling bicycle parts and hardware, are the domains of men. Further into town, the roadsides become more densely lined with shops and stalls selling goods brought into the town from other trading centres: imported shoes, spare parts, lengths of printed cloth and guinea brocade, bottles of liquor and soft drinks, brightly coloured plastic bowls and buckets, and the ubiquitous plastic 'kegs' in which petrol and kerosene are stored and smuggled. Most of these enterprises are run and managed by women. Clustered around the motorparks and the markets, and dispersed along the roadside, small scale female traders sell convenience goods from fresh bread, 'provisions' (sweets, biscuits, matches, cigarettes, tins of milk, sugar lumps) and snacks such as *akara* (fried bean cakes), to balls of soap made from palm kernel shells and palm oil (*oşę dudu*). In recent years, they have been joined by young Igbo and Hausa men who sell fried snacks and *suya* (barbecued meat).

Travelling into the town from Badagry, traffic from the mud road leading to the lagoon meets the main road at a small market, where fish sellers gather in the late afternoon to sell fresh fish. The road plunges down towards a tributary of the river, along which there are sites where women supervise their female workers as they stamp palm fruit with their feet to extract oil, and wade in deep pits of water to separate nuts from the matted fibres that are used to make fuel (*iha* and *okuso*). As the road climbs, scattered enterprises give way to more densely clustered rows of shops. At the peak is the site of an old market, Megun, which once spread its stalls across the now barren space where cars and vans park or turn. Fish and pepper sellers cluster at the junction; the day's trade is slow and fitful, but by night the area is lit with guttering paraffin flames as people throng to purchase last minute supplies for the

Figure 3: Map of Ado-Odo



evening meal. Roads lead away from Megun, down towards the swampy forest, to the grandiose, decaying palace of the *oba* (king) of Ado: vacant for years, awaiting possession once the wrangles surrounding the appointment of a successor are over. Here and there, throughout this area, a painted house front or a calabash with dark stains mark the sites of Awori *oriṣa* shrines and those of other more widely known *oriṣa* like Ogun (Barnes 1989). Here too, in a clearing within the dense settlement, lies the white-painted, raffia-fringed Ilaje shrine of the goddess Odudua, beside it two more shrines to Obanla and Ogun, close by is the shrine of the Awori deity Alamuwa and further down, at the far fringes of the forest, is a shrine to Ado's founder, the hunter-god Onitako. Deep within the settlement lies an ancient mat market, Oja Osi, supplied from the numerous women who work from their porches and back yards throughout the area. Lining a path that weaves through the quarter are small stores and businesses - an 'on and off licence' selling beer and minerals, tailors, a hair salon - and a Koranic school.

From Megun market, the main road passes the imposing structure of the Central Mosque and is flanked either side by the old town quarters. Within these quarters, spacious older buildings constructed by notable families cluster next to mud plaster houses in which one large central room leads off into smaller quarters or a central corridor joins separate rooms. Large compounds, composed of rooms ranged around a central courtyard, bear the traces of former residence patterns; grandiose new 'storey buildings' built alongside them and scattered throughout the newer settlements at the edge of town bear witness to fortunes made in the last few decades. In the area behind the Central Mosque are several of these large houses: one built by one of Ado's first contribution (*ajọ*) collectors, who made his fortune from the small daily amounts entrusted to him by small-scale businesspeople (see Chapter 7). Some of the houses have disintegrated, leaving half-shattered walls within which only the oldest and poorest continue to live. Others, built of breeze blocks and concrete have slowly begun to take their place. Across from Megun market, the settlement is even more dense, with narrow paths weaving around the edges of houses. A few houses have ornately decorated exteriors, others are simple mud plaster constructions.

The road leads on towards a brightly painted statue of Onitako, which marks the junction of the Owode road at the site of the Old Garage. Surrounded by shops, busy with the hooting of vehicles and the shouts and laughter of people stopping by to sit outside stalls to talk, this motorpark carries passengers to Badagry and to the Seme border with the Benin Republic. On either side of the junction, behind the main Owode road, are the quarters of 'strangers': Isaga, Imeko and Imasai quarters. The pattern of settlement changes. Few of the houses are clustered into distinct compounds, hardly any of them the larger old-style residences. Narrow paths weave through the quarter, criss-crossing through clusters of houses to join the roads at the perimeter. Doorways of houses reveal the small scale ventures of women: those who have

sewing machines and sit sewing uniforms and dresses, others who have small stands with 'provisions' to sell to neighbours - single sticks of tobacco, limes, headache tablets, sweet and matches; or tiny tins of tomatoes, onions and bundles of *iru* (locust bean, used as seasoning). Several houses have palm-roofed stalls outside them, where women prepare peel, steep, pound and wrap, turning cassava into *fufu* for sale. Further up the Owode road, Oke Oyinbo, the place where the *oyinbo* (white people) built a rest-house during the later colonial era, is now a sprawling new settlement that stretches on into the farmlands on either side of the road; large storey buildings and more modest concrete houses run in straight lines, some the houses of successful women.

Other landmarks of the colonial era lie along the main street: the shop of the late Mr Araboto, a 'stranger' who rose to become Ado's first general store owner, remembered in awe; the school of the Eleja church, built in front of the old church that marked the first local break away of independent Christianity from the missions; the government clinic which in 1945 began to provide the first biomedical health services to the town; the newer town hall where, in the colonial era, officials would come to meet with townsfolk and where now the joint trade, crafts and farming association holds regular meetings with its many members; and the Nigeria-Arab bank, patronised mainly by men (see Chapter 7). Behind this stretch of buildings lie more churches, mosques and the shrine of the masquerade Egunuko. Along the main street modern services can be found: an horologist, a business centre with a xerox machine, a typing service, photographers studios, fashion design salons and hairdressing parlours, a petrol station and the tanks of kerosene vendors, a small bookshop and a supermarket.

The wooden stalls of Agunloye market occupy a large, square site, around which are permanent shops and stalls where vendors sell a range of goods from ironware to bicycle parts, shoes, fish and minerals, and services such as tailoring and carpentry. Close by is the second motorpark, New Garage, where drivers await passengers for Owode, en route to Sango-Otta and Lagos and a motorbike park. During the day the pace is languid, but by early evening dozens of motorbike carriers gather here. Beyond the market, leading out to the farmlands, are the new settlements of Abiyo and Ejigbo. Passing the large, open grounds of the Methodist church and primary school to the left and the huge, defunct, state water company tower to the right, the main road runs past more vehicle maintenance yards, stores and stalls and another primary school until the town gives way to farmlands.

Transport and transit, the roads running through the town and linking it with other places as well as the vehicles that ply them, play a vital part in the lives and livelihoods of men and women in Ado, enabling them to pursue connections with other places. The town's economy revolves around transport: for farmers, to bring their goods to market; for traders, to convey them to near or distant markets; for the dozens of men who service and maintain vehicles,

those who drive them and the women and men who run transport businesses; as well as for the dwindling number of cross-border smugglers. Connections between places and people, and the communications they have facilitated, situate Ado in regional contexts that have impinged in complex ways on the lives and livelihoods of its residents over time.

Slaves, Traders and Refugees

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Ado lay at some distance from the principal trade routes that carried slaves, imported goods and produce from the Oyo Empire and beyond to and from the coast (Morton-Williams 1969, Law 1977). The emergence of the Dahomean Kingdom in the early eighteenth century, and its growing power over the course of that century and into the next (Manning 1982), had an important influence on the fortunes of Ado. In the later years of the eighteenth century, the Alafin of Oyo was forced by the growing threat of Dahomey to seek alternative trade routes to the coast and set up a trade corridor through what came to be known as Egbado country to Badagry, managed through a chain of small kingdoms as far south as Ipokia (Law 1977, Morton-Williams 1969).⁷ As well as servicing the Atlantic slave trade (Lovejoy 1983, Morton-Williams 1964a), these routes served to convey goods across ecological zones through a complex system of interlinked markets, many situated at territorial borders (Akinjogbin 1980), facilitating exchange for local consumption as well as supplying markets further afield.

The earliest written accounts by European travellers remark on the scale and intensity of markets in the region.⁸ In these markets, women traders were predominant.⁹ Bowen gives a detailed description of a market in northern Egbado, which gives an impression of women within markets of this time:

The proper time to see all the wonders is in the evening. At half an hour before sunset, all sorts of people, men, women, girls, travellers lately arrived in the caravans, farmers from the fields and artisans from their houses, are pouring in from all directions to buy and sell, and talk. At the distance of half a mile their united voices roar like the waves of the sea. The women, especially, always noisy, are then in their glory, bawling out salutations, cheapening and higgling, conversing, laughing, and sometimes quarrelling, with a shrillness and compass of voice which indicates both their determination and their ability to make themselves heard (1968:296).

Local markets primarily serviced a local exchange economy, within which opportunities for accumulation were constricted (Belasco 1980). The fortunes to be made from larger-scale trade accrued to those with the means, and the influence, to exert control over the passage of goods along the trade corridors between the coast and the interior: the chiefs and rulers who benefitted from tolls, tributes and taxes, and on whose behest goods traversed the terrain (Law 1977, Belasco 1980). Goods, such as indigo, sorghum, slaves, salt and guns, passed along this land route from the savannah to the sea in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

(Folayan 1967, 1980; Morton-Williams 1964b), headloaded by slaves. During this period, war served throughout the region as an important vehicle in men's quest for power and influence within and between communities. And the pursuit of war was serviced by acquiring guns and gunpowder as well as by the 'wealth in people' (Guyer 1993) that were both the means and the spoils of war, through which big men were able to build their entourages (Barber 1995).

Even in these days, a time on the distant fringes of the 'good old days' recounted in the tales told in the present (see Chapter 4), some women appear to have been able to gain power and prestige within town institutions, to build up followers and to operate within a multiplicity of spheres of influence (Awe 1977, Falola 1978, Denzer 1994). Yet the gerontocratic principles which saturated every dimension of social life dictated the scope for women's involvement in it. With the rare exceptions of those 'women who became men' (see Chapters 4 and 5), such as the notorious Efunsetan (Johnson 1921) and others whose age determined positions of lineage seniority and scope for manoeuvre, it seems that most women remained in the background, 'under a man' (see Chapter 5): betrothed as wives in connections determined by their parents' interests (Johnson 1921), dispersing the farm produce from fields they tilled alongside domestic slaves, children and junior men (Afonja 1981), bearing and caring for their children. Generation mattered, and with it the possibilities for generating the means not only for autonomy but for self-assertion.

Ado remained at the margins of the regional trade scene until it was thrust into prominence in the early 1830s.¹⁰ Ado's shrine to the goddess Odudua had already secured for the town a measure of regional influence, as a religious centre (Folayan 1967, Adediran 1994). With shifting configurations of power among groupings to the north, the fall of the Oyo Empire (Law 1977) and the consolidation of Egba forces as an emergent power (Johnson 1921, Biobaku 1957), Ado gained strategic importance. Seeking a share of the traffic in arms to the interior and the security of their own route to the coast (Newbury 1961), the Egba opened a new trade route in the early 1830s which passed directly through Ado to Badagry (Folayan 1967): a route that brought Ado within the competing spheres of other regional powers (see Fig. 4). And the trade that passed along this route widened opportunities at the local level for the town's female traders and craftswomen. Further to the north, it was these interactions and the possibilities they offered to women that were represented in the masks and songs of *Gelede* masquerade, whose origins are linked by the Drewals (1983) to the growth in opportunities for female mobility.

Shifting alliances in the complex interplay of regional politics throughout much of the nineteenth century left in their wake a land pocked with the aftermath of war (Folayan 1967, Ajayi and Smith 1971, Aṣiwaju 1976).¹¹ All around Ado, towns and villages were laid waste by marauding armies of the Egba (Johnson 1921, Aṣiwaju 1976).¹² Ado withstood repeated

attacks and survived a prolonged, if intermittent, siege by the Egba that most subsequent commentators suggest began in 1842 and lasted until 1853.¹³ It was resolved through the mediation of the Church Missionary Society missionary Townsend (Johnson 1921, Newbury 1961, Asiwaju 1976).¹⁴ The River Yewa and swamp lands to the west, and a high wall and trench to the east, protected the town and the Awori deity Alamuwa is attributed with the spiritual agency that ensured that Ado was never conquered.¹⁵ By the time the siege ended in 1853, the CMS missionary Samuel Crowther recorded in his journal 'the once populous town of Ado' as being 'in a miserable condition' and 'bearing the distress of war and the appearance of desolation'.¹⁶

In the years that followed, hostilities intensified (Folayan 1967, Asiwaju 1976), leading Ado to seek British Protection in 1863.¹⁷ Despite the interests of the British in control over the area, primarily through their attempts to further 'legitimate trade' in palm products to replace the lucrative slave trade, war continued unabated. Although by the 1850s the production and sale of palm produce had escalated (Agiri 1972), considerable local demand for slaves remained (Lovejoy 1983). Indigenous CMS missionary James White recorded the reaction of one of Ado's principal chiefs to the intentions of the British in 1866:

Aro [of Ado] attributes the scarcity that prevails generally in the country both of food and money to the turning of the world upside down by the white man and that unless they quit the country and return to their abode in the sea, there is reason to fear things will get worse and worse - that their forefathers never were in the habit of procuring roll tobacco with palm oil or palm nut oil but with slaves, and that for his part he would rather starve than allow the palm oil to touch his body - that when darkness prevailed upon the country they were honoured and respected for they could sell away all offensive persons [i.e. into slavery] - but now all is light and one cannot act as he pleases.¹⁸

The internal economy continued to rely on the traffic in slaves, both for export sales and for domestic production. Meanwhile, traders faced a perilous path through the area. Bowen (1968) describes the large caravans of men and women who travelled together to minimise the risk of assault. For those travelling in smaller parties, the hazards can be imagined from the account of Mrs Champness, a Methodist missionary based in Badagry, in 1863:

Kidnapping has since become very common, many of the farm roads are unsafe, bands of marauders lie in wait for the poor people, robbing them of their loads and clothes, and sometimes¹⁹ carrying the people themselves to Okeodan, where they are sold into hopeless slavery.

Persistent attacks by hostile forces in addition to banditry rendered other economic pursuits risky (Agiri 1972). The slave traffic provided a source of lucre that fuelled the aspirations and the activities of big men and Ado's chiefs continued to play an active part in it.²⁰ Women as wives and daughters, and as domestic slaves, engaged in farm labour and local exchange, and as porters for the transport of goods; it seems likely that even those who

were the senior wives of wealthy men had few avenues for independent accumulation. Portrayed essentially as dependents, women nevertheless provided for their own children within large compounds. They remained, however, reliant on their husbands and fathers for the means by which to do so (Belasco 1980).

Up to the mid-nineteenth century, the people of Ado experienced the ebb and flow of *alejo* (strangers and visitors): traders who would pass through the town, visitors to the shrine, slaves brought in to till the fields and headload produce to markets. As in other areas, domestic slaves may have become integrated into the lineages that pronounced themselves to be Awori, the 'indigenes'. In the years following the siege, other 'strangers' came, this time to settle and remain as autonomous groupings: those who built their compounds and established their farms, whose identities remained discrete and who remained *alejo*, strangers and visitors: people from another place. Ado became a safe haven for refugees who streamed into the town from Egbado towns (Morton-Williams 1969, Aṣiwaju 1976).²¹ Battles to the west brought further waves of refugees, the Egun people who settled in the farmlands around the town. By the late 1870s the town had become crowded with strangers. An Ado chief told the English CMS missionary Valentine Faulkner in 1877: 'In former times we had the town all to ourselves now it has been thrown open for others... settlers from other places'.²² These immigrants built their compounds at the edges of the original Awori settlement, in sites that later came to be known by the names of the towns from which refugees had come: what are now Isaga, Imasai/Iboro and Imekko quarters (see Fig. 2).²³

Connections to the west of the town, through the lagoon and riverine routes to Porto Novo and overland through Oke-Odan, facilitated trade in tobacco and spirits as well as slaves: a trade that the British were anxious to control.²⁴ This trade had rapidly given rise to a cash economy in the area. Denton notes in 1889:

Without the import into the interior of spirits, arms and gunpowder, it would have been impossible to have developed the large trade which now exists in a country where until quite recently the use of money was unknown and the wants of the inhabitants very limited.²⁵

Contests between the British and the French over the region bounded by the Yewa river led to a number of intrigues in the late 1880s.²⁶ In 1887, the Olofin of Ado made a formal request for British protection. With the Anglo-French agreement in 1889 came moves towards the treaty of 1891 - with strings attached.²⁷ This brought Ado under the jurisdiction of the British colony of Lagos.²⁸ With this agreement, and with a series of treaties negotiated between the British and the warring groups in the interior (Johnson 1921), peace finally came to the region.

The Growth of the 'New Trade'

While the benefits from long-distance trade principally accrued to wealthy and influential men, with the expansion of coastal trade possibilities in the later half of the nineteenth century a range of further actors were able to begin to become involved (Belasco 1980). With the end of the wars through which fortunes made by some offered the means of tight controls over others and with expanding external trade possibilities, the onslaught of the new began to rock the foundations of the old order. Clarke (1981) argues that the establishment of colonial rule led to the fragmentation of the large compounds through which military as well as productive and distributive activities were organised in the nineteenth century. Smaller sub-units emerged from within larger collectivities as the old order was swept away. The changes that led to the decomposition of the huge military compounds of the nineteenth century fuelled further changes. Access to independent incomes broadened with the loosening of controls on dependents. The fission of domestic and production units created possibilities for trade through the bulking and breaking of locally produced commodities as well as the distribution of imported goods. The opportunities that trade came to present for individual accumulation in the early colonial era represent not only the entrance of new commodities into the distributive system but entirely new means of doing trade.

Belasco (1980) points to an important distinction between the types of trade pursued in the pre-colonial era: long-distance trade managed by men and the local exchange economy, pursued by women. In the colonial era, the scale and patterns of trade changed dramatically. On the one hand, a new kind of male trader emerged: the 'new man' entrepreneur who sought innovative ways to make a profit from the flow of export commodities (Belasco 1980). These men were joined by entrepreneurial women for whom the emergence of an individualised enterprise economy, fuelled by the increased circulation of money and goods, meant new opportunities outside the spheres dictated by traditional gerontocratic and lineage controls. Smaller-scale trade, operating through extensive distributive chains, offered new opportunities to women traders.

For the skeins of women who bulked, broke and sold at a profit, as well as for the men who entered new occupational domains or consolidated existing income-generating pursuits in reconfigured institutional settings, the implications of these changes were to have far-reaching effects. Rapid developments in agriculture and in systems of transportation transformed the economy of the south western area in the early colonial era.²⁹ Production of 'new' cash crops - cocoa, *cola nitida* and cassava - by small-scale farmers had begun in the last half of the nineteenth century changed the economic landscape in the south western forest zone.³⁰ Ado was gradually left behind in the economic and social changes that swept through the Yoruba region in the early twentieth century, fuelled by the rapidly developing cocoa economy

(Berry, 1975). Cocoa certainly played some part, however, in determining the fortunes of the farmers of Ado.³¹

A confluence of influences contributed to the eclipse of Ado during the early colonial period. Perhaps the strongest influence of all was that of the growth of Lagos and the development of transportation systems that displaced the trade passing through Ado. Until well into the twentieth century internal trade in southern Egbado continued to be facilitated through an elaborate system of bush paths and waterways. When peace came, traders were able to move unhassled in small groups up and down these paths, exchanging locally produced goods for bulking at periodic markets. This was a time, Clarke suggests, when women made a 'massive move into small and medium scale trading operations' (1981:819). While goods from external trade formed part of the lines of trade pursued by women traders in this region, the principal focus of trade - as in other parts of Yorubaland - remained the internal distribution of local produce for local consumption (Hodder and Ugwu 1969, Sudarkasa 1973). Some products entered the distributive chain as unprocessed commodities, others were transformed into processed goods at or near the site of production and then carried by their processors or by middlewomen to periodic markets. In Ado, the principal agricultural products during this period were yam, maize and oil palm.³² The majority of women engaged in local exchange and production in the many sites where palm oil (*epo*) was processed, or in household production of processed maize products (*ekọ, ogi*) and mats.³³ From accounts of other areas, it seems that women from ruling lineages had long been involved in substantial trading concerns over wider terrains: such were the commercial concerns of the wives of the Alafin of Oyo, for example, reported by Clapperton ([1829]1944). 'Ordinary' women, however, remained outside these more profitable domains (Afọnja 1981).

Alternative routes for trade, developed during the instability of the nineteenth century wars, were further strengthened by new transportation links in the first years of the twentieth century; links that bypassed the old Egbado trade routes and that directed trade towards the rapidly expanding metropolis of Lagos (Agiri 1972, Aṣiwaju 1976). A rail route linking Lagos to Ibadan, through Sango-Otta and Abeokuta, was in operation by the early years of the twentieth century, extending to Kano in the north by 1912.³⁴ Enterprising women traders from Ado were able to make use of the new railway links, but needed to headload goods over fairly substantial distances to join the railway.³⁵ Road transport developments in the first decades of the twentieth century improved the trading prospects of a number of towns in the interior. Ado's traders did not benefit directly from these developments for quite some time. Cars and 'carts' built on lorry chassis were in use in some parts of the country by 1909 (Ekundare 1973). It was, however, not until almost two decades later that roads were widened to enable lorry traffic to connect Ado with other towns and provide the means for



wholesalers to expand their operations - some decades later than the towns of central Yorubaland, such as Ilesha (Peel 1983). A motorable road between Ilaro, Ado and the Ere ferry, from which point people could travel to Ipokia and beyond, was constructed in the mid-1920s and extended to Badagry in the 1930s.³⁶ This marked the start of significant motor bound trade through Ado.

By this time, Christianity and Islam had gained a foothold in Ado. Islam was brought to the town by an Awori trader in the early 1890s, who had reputedly acquired the religion while travelling in northern Yoruba areas.³⁷ By the mid-1910s, he had established a influential following. The first Central Mosque was constructed in 1925.³⁸ Christianity came slightly later. The Methodists had attempted to establish a mission in Ado from the 1880s onwards and by the turn of the century they had gained access to the town. Operating at first from a tent in the centre of the town, they moved to a large site and established the first school in or around 1908 (Aṣiwaju 1976, Lamidi 1992). Despite initial reluctance, increasing numbers of people sent their sons for schooling.³⁹ Other churches followed, several of which opened their own primary schools.⁴⁰ By the late 1920s there was an emergent educated elite in Ado (Aṣiwaju 1976):⁴¹ increasing number of Ado's families had begun to seek an education for their sons, many of whom went on to seek white collar jobs in Lagos and Ijebu-Ode.

'Modern Times'

By the 1920s, a few enterprising women in Ado had begun to take advantage of the opportunities that the new trade offered (cf. Afonja 1981).⁴² Around this time, a remarkable woman rose to commanding heights within Ado. The name by which she came to be known was Iya Kotu, 'mother of the court'.⁴³ Iya Kotu, an Egbado woman from Iboro, built her prestige outside the opportunity structure of 'traditional' titles.⁴⁴ She made her fortune in kola; retailing it from the house and using the railway to send it to the north. She also specialised in the retail of bushmeat and her compound served as a depot for hunters. As her business prospered, Iya Kotu began to command respect from the community in which she lived and rose to a position whereby cases were taken to her for arbitration. Chief Abuja, one of her descendants, told me, 'she became a man'. Not only was she known to wear trousers, rather than a wrapper, Iya Kotu adopted the strategies of a big man to secure her position. Clients, friends and relatives would be rewarded with cuts from the bushmeat she sold. She built up her compound, encouraging people from the villages to come to town and dwell there; thus assembling a large group of followers. Strangers who came from other towns were entertained and accommodated in her compound, extending the bounds of her influence further. Chief Abuja told me that the first Ilesha man to come to the town stayed with Iya Kotu, then Ogbomoshos came and remained in the area close to her compound: 'as far as Ife

people knew her and sent gifts and people to her. People she had been helping talked of her when they returned home'. Iya Kotu had only two children but took on numerous foster charges who became her children, contributing to her prestige. And when her husband died, men respected her desire to be left alone and let her get on with her life.

The story of Iya Kotu is the story of a self-made woman: a woman who 'became a man'. Other women, too, became 'men'; but only when they were old enough to step aside from lives as wives and devote themselves to trade, become elders within a family structure based on gerontocratic rather than gendered authority or bask in the opportunities that being a mother of successful sons afforded. 'Becoming a man' was, for these women, a life-course issue. For Iya Kotu, though, it was more than this. She, having secured a profitable career, transcended even the barrier of appropriate dress and took on the tactics of big men, wielding an influence that the men who came within her orbit not only envied but openly admired. Not for her was the custom of stooping deferentially to men; nor did she need to concern herself with the exigencies of remarriage or being inherited. She had made it: as any successful man might.

Iya Kotu was clearly an exceptional woman. Yet the conditions that enabled her to rise to prominence give clues to the other women of that time who secured for themselves not only affluence, but also influence. The last *Iyalode* (women's leader, see Awe 1977) of the town, Yewande Akinlade, was a woman who had become rich through trade in *obi* (kola), *obi abata* (bitter kola) and *atare* (alligator pepper) and who had built her own house. Chosen as someone who would have the necessary cash to inject into community development, Yewande Akinlade, who died in the 1930s, was the last in a line of rich women elected to this post by the *oba*. Before her were women who had been called in to assist an *oba* who had little in the way of assets; suggesting that even before the time of Iya Kotu some women at least were making a good living for themselves. Up until the 1930s, however, the majority of women in Ado traded in farm produce and household goods such as mats and pots, subsistence strategies that offered little in the way of accumulation.⁴⁵

The cash crop economy in cocoa, kola and oil palm products that developed in the early colonial period, opportunities for wage labour and the development of transportation networks boosted internal trade (see Chapter 2). While men were the direct beneficiaries, women in the urban centres began to take advantage of the new trade opportunities that the colonial infrastructure facilitated, and from the increasing demand for 'luxury' goods fuelled by the growth of the cash crop economy and wage labour. By 1931, the colonial officials reported that the women of Ijebu and Abeokuta provinces 'were said to be very enterprising and rich enough to bear the burden of a tax' (Ekundare 1973:112)⁴⁶, which was duly imposed on women in the region.⁴⁷ Women were entering into the 'modern' economy with gusto. Girls in Ado continued to be trained by their mothers, principally in processing work or mat

weaving; few were sent to school. Much trade continued to be conducted at the local level through periodic markets at Ojo, Ilaro and Badagry, and consisted mainly of commodities processed from farm produce.

European companies and indigenous entrepreneurial men had begun to set up large-scale trading operations in the Egbado area by the late 1920s and early 1930s, using the new transport connections to convey produce and imported goods. Aṣiwaju (1976), drawing on oral evidence from Ado, confirms that in Ado migrant indigenous entrepreneurs rather than indigenes seized new opportunities to trade in the 1930s. He identifies two types of entrepreneur: Ijebu, who bought up local cash crop produce for export and Ijesha and Ogbomosho, along with others from Oro, Iresi and Ire, who became involved in the retail trade.⁴⁸ With the immigrants came 'modern ways', or so Ado people suggested. Together with those men who had left Ado to pursue education and jobs as clerks in businesses in Lagos or under the colonial administration, they brought 'enlightenment' (*olaju*) to Ado.⁴⁹ According to local people, Ado's indigenes hardly took part in the new trade. But, as Aṣiwaju (1976) points out, although this limited their potential gains, money was made from the sale of farm produce and early cocoa growers became quite wealthy; their gains were spent educating their children, building modern houses and acquiring more wives (Aṣiwaju 1976:191).

These 'strangers' who came in search of trade and settled described the local economy at that time as stagnant and sleepy. Like those who came to Iya Kotu, they came from places where people had capitalised on the impact of new opportunities for some decades, as Peel (1983) describes for Ilesha. Coming to Ado for trade, they gained opportunities that they were able to exploit to some effect. A tailor in his 60s, Baba Taiwo, whose father was one of these Ijebu immigrants, told me:

Trade was not moving in this place until outsiders came. They understood it well. Those outsiders were civilised from their area before. People here learnt from them, they learnt trade, sewing, buying cocoa and palm kernel to resell in Lagos and other places. They bought bicycles and went to the villages to buy. Ado people didn't have capital. Ileshas and the others brought their own capital and enlightened people here. They were cheating people at first, buying things for small money and travelling to Lagos to sell them. They brought cutlass, tobacco, matches, milk and tea from Lagos to sell here.

Ado women quickly began to learn. For the 'enlightened' outsiders, 'trade' consisted not of the small-scale distribution of farm products in which Ado women had been engaged for decades, if not centuries, but a more complex, multi-layered operation of bulking, breaking and of the movement of goods through a series of operators to and from, but also within, other areas (cf. Bauer 1954, Sudarkasa 1973). Bauer (1954) argues that for Yoruba, trade was less an occupation than a way of life. In the 1940s it seems plausible to suggest that as new opportunities for accumulation through trade offered themselves, trading came to occupy

a new position in the lives of ordinary women in Ado; as a career, rather than merely as a subsistence strategy.

Bauer (1954) details the chain of distributors, from the involvement of wealthy Yoruba business women in wholesale operations in Lagos to the petty hawkers at the local level. At each stage, profits would be extracted; each transaction offered access to quantities of goods to be broken down further along the chain. When people referred to the skills women from other areas had brought to Ado, it was to the ability to gauge the profits that could be made from intermediate trade activities that they may have referred: from selling, in bulk, at other markets and at bringing quantities of goods to break at the local level, to sell on to other vendors. Many of those who entered trade continued to deal in local commodities rather than imported 'luxury' goods that remained the specialism of 'strangers', of Ilesha, Ijebu and Ogbomosho men and women traders. But with better transport opportunities and as women gained skills in trading, they were able to accumulate sufficient sums to diversify and move away from the 'traditional' processing activities and into trade.

In many of the accounts people gave me of Ado's and of their own histories, the 1930s appear to mark a decisive shift: from then onwards, Ado people began to experience the impact both of internal economic changes and of outside influences to a more marked degree. Shifts in the balance of power within Ado had already started to take place, spurred by the growth in the numbers of educated youth, by the 1930s. The influence of the colonial government had, by then, extended well within the town's affairs. One of the first colonial institutions to be established in Ado was a court, opened at the end of 1915. Although records have perished, it seems likely from records in neighbouring towns that much of the court's business may have been administering cases of broken engagements as patriarchal controls over marriage began to break down (see Chapter 4). Direct taxation had been introduced by 1920, amidst much local resistance and subterfuge.⁵⁰ By the 1930s, the district administration had established a rest house and government offices in the area of the town now known as Oke Oyinbo and Mr Alagbe recounted his father telling him of that time as one when 'the *oyinbo* (white men) were ruling us seriously'. Services, such as a post office and a dispensary, were in place by 1940 and a clinic was opened in 1945.⁵¹ Colonial policies on both side of the nearby border opened up further opportunities for wealth to be made from illicit trans-border trade (Aṣiwaju 1976), that extended over the following decades.⁵²

More and more 'strangers' came to Ado; and more and more Ado people left to find livelihoods in the expanding urban centres from the 1930s onwards.⁵³ The economic impact of the world trade depression of the 1930s and the second world war badly affected farming in the area, driving many men to seek work in the urban waged labour economy.⁵⁴ It was not, however, until the late 1940s that Ado's traders gained road direct access to Lagos. In the interests of protecting railway trade, colonial officials stalled on bridging the Ajegunle river,

thus completing a vital link in the route.⁵⁵ From reports by the district colonial officers, it appears that in the early 1940s, wholesale trade with Lagos in cocoa and palm kernel was still being conducted via the lagoon routes.⁵⁶ With the building of the Lagos connection, more and more traders came through the town. People recalled traders coming from as far afield as Ibadan and Aiyetoro to visit Badagry market, passing through Ado on their way and talked of Ado in this period as 'bubbling with trade'. By that time, however, cocoa farming was becoming less and less viable in the area. The fall in the cocoa trade during the years that followed put cocoa farmers in Ado out of business. Chief Ajuwon, a retired administrator in his late 60s, noted: 'Cocoa was not selling at all. When you don't get cocoa to sell, what can you do? It takes time for other crops to grow'. That was the beginning of the end for cocoa in this area'.⁵⁷ By the time the boom years for cocoa of 1947-1954 came (Helleiner 1966), the era in which fortunes were made elsewhere in the country (Berry 1975, 1985), Ado's farmers' prospects were declining.⁵⁸

The 1940s are remembered as a time of hardship, exacerbated by the fall in international trade in the years of WWII (Crowder 1968). Farmers moved into cassava, palm fruit and maize; kola, by then more profitable (Agiri 1972), continued to be grown. But local economic pursuits had, by then, degenerated more or less to subsistence living by all accounts. With the rapid influx of cocoa money into the economy the price of commodities shot up; shortages in supply put a premium on certain goods.⁵⁹ In Ado, the effects of these changes reverberated. Traders in these commodity lines may have benefitted, but people spoke of this time as one in which there was little money to go round. In this period, significant changes began to take place in marriage spurred as much by changes in migration as in the local economy (see Chapter 4). By the mid 1950s, Galletti et al. (1956) note a significant impact of labour migration to the urban centres for nearby areas. From the early 1940s onwards, manual workers as well as educated men had begun to move in numbers to the cities to seek a living.

By the 1950s, regular wages from wage labour had supplanted other sources of income as a means of becoming wealthy and educated men were able to use their influence to some effect. Things were changing and those in the 'traditional' male occupation of farming, still a large proportion of older men in the town, were no longer able to maintain their positions. Chief Ajuwon told me that during the 1950s:

... those who were not salary earners felt a certain impact, things were not the same, the work pattern was changing at the time and the going wasn't good. People looked up to salary earners. Many people [ie farmers in Ado itself] appeared to be losing their wealth, wives and popularity during that time.

Changing Fortunes

The period during which nationalist agendas came to the fore in contests over political power in the nascent republic, a time referred to locally as *ijoba alagbada* (lit. 'rule by those in *agbadas*', civilian rule), was a time of flux and of movement. Political affiliations drew men into rallies and meetings, within which wealth circulated to amass followers. They also brought a sense of connectedness beyond the town boundaries, a sense of confirmation of a Yoruba identity and wider nationalist concern with the making of Nigeria (see Peel 1983). It was a time, too, of greater mobility and movement to and from the towns where migrants had begun to settle, especially Lagos. Wage labour and the possibilities open to those who had pursued an education came to absorb a large number of Ado's younger men, who had left the town for greener pastures. When the storm broke in the mid-1960s, Ado-Odo reeled with unrest and disquiet under the repression of the western region.⁶⁰ Divisions in the town were ranged less along ethnic than political lines; members of the same family might belong to different parties, causing rifts and tensions that people remember with bitterness. In the 1960s, too, more 'modern ways' were seen in the town - with an impact on women's options and on gender relations (see Chapter 5).

Occupational specialisation marked by a division of labour by sex has long been a feature of Yoruba urban settings (Johnson 1921, Sudarkasa 1973). By the early 1960s, however, women started to train as photographers and tailors, enter the teaching profession in greater numbers and practice farming on their own account rather than simply labouring for their husbands (see Afonja 1981, Guyer 1988): domains once associated with men.⁶¹ Most uneducated women remained in trade, but those who were able to accumulate sufficient capital expanded into new lines of business and began to make substantial profits. Ado lay on the main road between Lagos and the Benin border: trade streamed through the town and traders came from far and wide, spending the night at Ado before continuing on their way. The area around the motorpark buzzed with activity, especially before Badagry marketdays, with traders selling some of their wares on to Ado market women and coming to buy up local goods to take on to other markets. The old Megun market expanded and covered the whole available area, with narrowly packed stalls. Other pursuits flourished with the flow of capital within the local economy. Ado's mats, long celebrated in the region, were sought out by traders from other areas; aromatic palm oil (*epo orun*), another speciality, was one of the purchases those who stopped over might make. It was during this time, it seems, that women in town turned to producing *fufu* (sticky, smooth fermented cassava paste) for sale; a more lucrative product, now sold into the Lagos food markets; that has come to displace almost completely *gari* (roasted cassava flour) production in Ado.⁶²

With the civil war in 1968 came a boost to the regional agricultural economy. By this

time, much of the land around Ado had been declared an agricultural zone and had been turned over to maize and cassava cultivation. Traders and farmers were able to benefit from the demand the closure of Eastern food markets had placed on foodstuffs.⁶³ In 1969 a new market was opened at what was then newly cleared bush at the edge of the town: Agunloye market, named after the ruling Oba who had planned it on advice during the last days of the colonial regime from the district officer. Within a few years, the area around the market was dotted with houses, many of which were built by women. An increase in trade throughout the later 1960s and the flow of vehicles through the town stimulated a thriving industry in motor maintenance, giving rise to what is now one of the principal skilled manual occupations pursued by men. Work associated with vehicles - driving cars or motorbikes, smuggling, mechanical repair, panel beating, brake maintenance, battery charging, tyre repair, painting, registration plate making, spare parts sales and so on - has come to absorb the largest number of young men in Ado than any other single sector.⁶⁴ House construction boomed in the 1960s and 1970s and three new residential areas sprang up. Men in towns used their wealth to build houses at home to retire to, sons from the older quarters moved out into the new areas; in the newer quarters, a number of houses are those built by enterprising women from gains made through trade. With these changes in the local economy and an increasing influence of 'city ways' came transformations in marriage and intimate relationships (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Boom and Bust

The oil boom years of the 1970s brought a rapid influx of wealth into the distributive sector, creating the possibilities for women traders to expand, diversify and intensify their operations. Links with Lagos became all-important. New opportunities burgeoned in the rapidly expanding public sector, in which women played an increasing part although still at the lower levels (Dennis 1991). Three secondary schools opened in Ado, further primary schools were opened and electricity was brought to the town. Men who had become teachers, or who had joined the civil service, the police or the military, were posted all around the country. Trade boomed. It was during this time, people told me, that numbers of women began to earn more than men, some of whom made small fortunes, building houses and establishing a range of business concerns (see Chapter 7). Small businesses associated with vehicle repair mushroomed and the service sector expanded with the influx of wealth from remittances and from the local economy. Then, in 1974, the opening of a major coastal expressway linking Lagos with the border diverted traffic from the Ado route. The town sank from being a hub of trade and gradually became submerged again in the agricultural hinterland that stretches for miles behind the major roads. Traffic continued to flow, to the border and to Lagos, but the steady stream of visitors that had livened up the town's

economy no longer chose to pass through.⁶⁵

By the early 1980s, the economy of the country was reeling from the drop in oil prices (Adepoju 1993). The easy life fuelled by the oil boom years started to collapse. Fashoyin (1993) charts the dependence of Nigeria on oil revenues and the collapse of the agricultural sector over the boom period.⁶⁶ With shrinking government reserves and a crash in oil prices, by early 1986 the industrial sector was held in a stranglehold with a decline of 60% in imports (Fashoyin 1993:80). In 1986, President Babangida sought a radical course of action with the hope of revitalising the economy: September 1986 saw the inception of the Nigerian Structural Adjustment Programme. Coupled with mismanagement and corruption, the effects of SAP have been disastrous (Adepoju 1993). The Nigerian economy has been brought to its knees. The impact in all sectors has been so severe that, with reference to the health sector, Popoola talks of 'hell for all in the year 2000' (1993:96).⁶⁷

Displaced from the cities and finding it increasingly harder to make ends meet, some men moved back into farming in the mid to late 1980s: today, a significant proportion of older men are farmers, some of whom returned to farming from jobs in town and others who maintain farms alongside other pursuits. Hardly any younger men are to be found in farming. Those who pursued education have been able to find white collar work in other towns, or within Ado. Many have entered the transport sector in numbers or gone into skilled manual work within the town. Some have turned to trade, generally in lines associated with men outside the marketplace.⁶⁸ During the 1980s, women with jobs in public services had to seek other ways of maintaining families that their husbands could no longer support. Some returned to trading. Like their husbands, others took up businesses concurrent with their official work. Women who had managed to gain access to the lucrative incomes offered by contracting work for government and the private sector - such as supplying building materials or foodstuffs - had to seek money elsewhere as the cash began to run out. Over the 1980s, informal trading activities, and especially trade in contraband goods, came to represent the most lucrative occupational niches for women (see Dennis 1991). Trade in some form or another was the profession of the vast majority of women of all ages in the town in 1994 (see Chapter 7);⁶⁹ in some areas of town, mat weaving and food processing absorbed fairly substantial numbers of women, and among younger women tailoring in particular was becoming more common.

As the value of the Naira declined, numbers of young men took to smuggling goods across the porous border with the Benin Republic. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were fortunes to be made in the traffic in petroleum products, spare parts, rice, jewellery and cloth for men and women alike. Smuggling and driving displaced other occupations as the most lucrative for men, while for women trading offered returns that potentially rise well above any other form of employment. Over the last decade, parents appear to have been

hedging their bets on children's education by sending them to apprenticeships in the skilled manual trades after school or sending them straight on to learn a job after primary school. Educating children has become expensive and the benefits have become more elusive as numbers of job seekers rise. Tailoring, photography, gold jewellery making and hairdressing have become popular among younger women as a way of making a living and throughout the town 'mistresses and 'masters' teach crowds of girls their trades.⁷⁰ Boys are sent to learn the trades associated with men, apprenticed as carpenters and in the range of vehicle-associated professions from as early as eight years of age. People want for their children a 'better life', but what that might now involve has changed with a shift from seeking the status of white collar work to more pragmatic goals of enabling them to make a living (see Chapter 7).

The last few years have seen a shrinking of opportunities (Adepoju 1993, Dennis 1991): urban unemployment has had effects not only on those who would have sought waged urban labour, but also those who operate trading concerns with urban areas; retrenchment has sent workers home; cross-border trade was dealt a hefty blow by the devaluation of neighbouring Benin's currency, the CFA⁷¹, in March 1994, which put many smugglers out of business; a steep rise in the prices of imported commodities have put an end to the careers of some businesswomen and encouraged others to seek home-based professions. An index of economic decline that became increasingly apparent in people's commentaries on the impact of SAP was a shift from imported soaps to the use of local soaps, and a corresponding growth in the number of people, men and women alike, now producing 'soda soap' (*kongi*) in Ado and those using *oşę dudu* ('black soap'), formerly associated with the poorest (see Chapter 7). Public sector occupations have become, by now, so poorly paid that it is barely possible to survive on salaries from these jobs alone. Teachers have turned to carrying passengers on motorbikes after school or to trading, some male tailors have gone back into farming and several market women I knew who had been trading in high value commodities have lost their capital and had to start from scratch. At the same time, incentives have boosted the level of agricultural production which had sunk to an all-time low in the boom years. Farming is now considered to be one of the most lucrative professions for those few women who go into it as well as for men, although problems with labour, machinery and the availability of inputs pose obstacles.

Indigenes and Strangers

Throughout this century connections have taken Ado people further afield, expanding webs of connectedness beyond the southwestern corner of Nigeria. Mobility within Nigeria has brought wealth and prestige to some, and expanded the opportunities of others. Men have migrated, found wives and settled in other places, or sought their fortunes before returning

home. Some have gone to Ondo to farm, some to Ilorin to learn, many to Lagos and Ibadan to study and find work; a few have been abroad and returned, while others remain far from home in Britain and America. Men and women have moved in and out of Ado, to meet and marry spouses from other places. Over the last fifty years, women in Ado have been able to make use of changing trade possibilities and expanding transport opportunities to run trading operations far afield, and establish closer connections nearer to home, as well as to expand their business activities within the local market. Travel and transport have brought other strangers to Ado: those from the North, who trade principally in livestock and sell *suya* (spicy barbecued meat) on the street corners; those from the East, who have set up stalls and shops in the town; Ghanaian sex workers; Togolese and Beninois mechanics. In a town where so many of those who live there are 'strangers' (*alejo*), most families have children who are strangers in other places.

Ado has received, and welcomed, many *alejo*. And many people from Ado have moved on to become *alejo* elsewhere. For many of those who are second or third generation immigrants, 'home' may no longer have a tangible referent in people or places with which there are firm connections. But the sense of being from another place continues to mark their sense of identity and their identifications within town institutions. For more recent immigrants, journeys may still take them 'home'. Some are young men who have travelled from the east of the country to make their fortunes. Others have spent most of their lives in a town that remains a temporary base, a place to work but not to die or be buried in. Their homes lie elsewhere, in towns where they have built houses or where their families may still return to find spouses. For those indigenes who have established themselves in other places, Ado remains the home to return to: to build a house for retirement, to visit during festivals and to remit incomes earned further afield.

Within this heterogeneous population of indigenes and strangers, differentiations are ranged along ethnic lines. Aworis represent themselves as the original owners, the indigenes, of the town. Within the town, the places occupied by Awori lineages are sites where 'tradition' continues to thrive.⁷² Throughout the Awori quarters, shrines bring together older people to venerate the *oriṣa*, the gods of Awori Yoruba religion and gods who are worshipped in other parts of the country, such as Ogun.⁷³ According to local estimates, only around 5% of people still practice the *oriṣa* religions which have been displaced by Islam and Christianity: Islam appears to still draw slightly more followers, but Christianity has enjoyed substantial popularity over the last decade and rapidly constructed churches continue to spring up all over town.⁷⁴ In the newer quarters there is barely a single *oriṣa* shrine and 'traditional' festivals such as *egungun* (a masquerade in which the ancestors materialise through masked dancers, see Drewal and Drewal 1978) have become a form of entertainment.

Since the 1940s, Awori influence has not only been contested but, in recent years, has

been bypassed by younger, educated men, many of whom are of Egbado origin. In the post-independence era, 'traditional' forms of governance have been eroded by the consolidation of other civic interest groups and by state-level government. While male Awori chiefs continue to emphasise their own importance in town governance, men from the Egbado educated elites form a powerful interest group with leverage within and outside the town boundaries, armed not only with a higher level of education, but also with the status that interests outside the boundaries of the town can confer. Traditional titles are those of the Awori and their influence holds sway in the arena of traditional town politics.⁷⁵ But while titles may confirm a man's prominence, they have little bearing on efficacy in domains where influence depends on other routes to becoming 'big'. As the institutions of the Nigerian State have come to have greater salience in these struggles, Awori assertion to dominance within the town has been eclipsed.

When it comes to state politics, the Awori/Egbado divisions lose their local significance as the Egba and Ijebu domination of the regional political scene renders both the Aworis and the Egbados marginal, with the need for collaboration to push for particular common goals. This fragile sense of commonality, which manifests itself only at points where people feel their regional interests are threatened - as when Chief Moshood Abiola's election victory was quashed by the Babangida regime in 1993 - gives way to local differences that continue to be perceived and articulated along ethnic lines in particular local political fora. Associations of Ado indigenes in Lagos, London or Chicago continue to maintain interests and provide connections to those living in the town; relatives may be sent to them to find help with housing or work and some continue to maintain a base in Ado, guarding their prospective interests.⁷⁶

The Ijebu, Ogbomosho and Ijesha people who came to Ado in search of new trade niches claim to have brought 'civilisation' to the town; they describe both the Egbado and Awori people who lived there when they arrived as 'backward'. Many of those who came settled in the Egbado quarters; some married into Egbado and Awori families. But it is still not unusual for members of these sub-groups to seek marriage partners from 'home'. And few wish to be buried in Ado. Some Ogbomosho men told me that 'Ado women', who include Awori, Egbado and others, are unruly and that they preferred to marry wives from Ogbomosho, as women there are 'trained' properly and are appropriately compliant. The Ijesha whom I knew tended to mix with each other and stay quite aloof from Ado people. Several had built houses in Ilesha and talked of 'going home' once they had grown old. Ijebu people, considered sharp businesspeople by others, were described to me as 'difficult'; one woman commented, 'I would never allow my son to marry an Ijebu woman. They are too troublesome'. Men from Ogbomosho, Ilesha, Abeokuta and other towns have 'home town associations' (Barkan 1991) that provide connections between members and with home towns in which they can become

influential from a distance in local affairs. Overlapping linkages run through particular churches, such as the Ogbomosho Baptists or the Ijesha African Apostolic Church, or professions creating other fora for the articulation of ethnic interests. Egun people tend to situate themselves outside town institutions. Many of them remain in the rural areas, maintaining their own distinct language and cultural practices. And those groups who arrived in the town more recently, such as the Hausa or Igbo traders, are almost completely outsiders.

Conclusion

Over the last century, the small town of Ado-Odo has been in the midst of significant regional changes. With the expansion of trade opportunities in the colonial and post-independence era, some have made their fortunes and have risen to prominence in the town's many institutions. Connections with other people and other places have brought innovations, offering new opportunities to some. These connections have brought outsiders to the town and taken people from Ado further afield, to establish homes from home elsewhere. Yet despite the impatient ushering in of modernity by generations of educated youth, traces of the old lifeways and livelihood strategies persist; some have been retrieved in the era of Structural Adjustment, others have emerged in other forms (see Chapter 7). Tales of former times reappear in discourses in and about the present as powerful moral commentaries on the dilemmas of contemporary life (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Defining the people of Ado as 'Yoruba' is fraught with difficulties. Cultural differences between those sub-groups who constitute 'the Yoruba' cannot be simply glossed over (Peel 1983); nor would these groups wish to be represented as constituting a singular category, except perhaps with reference to wider political projects. The men and women with whom I spent time in Ado traced their origins, and their 'culture', in multiple directions. Their life experiences have taken them to other places; the 'cultural influences' that played a part in shaping their perceptions of the world are diverse. 'Indigenes' and 'strangers' come together and interact in different sites in Ado. Some come together in spaces made and maintained by particular interest groups, some move in and out of places where circumstances have brought them together with a range of others. A range of relational configurations mark the contexts in which people spend their everyday lives. It is to some of these settings that I now turn.

De Certeau (1984) draws a distinction between *places* and *spaces*, between sites as objects in themselves and the practices of historical subjects that constitute arenas for action and interaction within them: 'space...as a *practiced* place' (De Certeau 1984:130). Places - the town itself, quarters and compounds within it, marketplaces, churches, mosques and shrines, town institutions, craftspeople's workplaces - are settings in which everyday life is

lived. Within them, connections between people create *lived spaces* that are imbued with other connections, over time and with other places. In the course of their daily lives, people spend much of their time in single-sex company: in their compounds, in the market, in workshops and processing sites, in association meetings, political gatherings and religious settings. In the next chapter, I explore the lived spaces that people make through interaction in these domains of association, contextualising the struggles for *owo*, *omọ ati alafia* (money, children and peace) that are the subject of following chapters.

Chapter 3

Domains of Association

Pathways through Ado lead through the compounds of relatives, friends and strangers, past places where familiar voices offer greetings, share the latest news or gossip, entreat people to buy or call out as they rush by on a motorbike heading somewhere else. People move in and out of these and other domains of association in the course of their daily lives. Interlocking or discrete, localised or dispersed networks constitute domains of association, patterned by a complexity of transient or enduring links between people. Domains of association are threaded through with these linkages, ramifying out into other spheres in which altogether different ties and different positional identities come into play. In this chapter my focus, as in the previous chapter, is on movements of people within and between places that become the *lived spaces* that are domains of association. I look at the kinds of relationships people form with others in the spatial and temporal sites where collectivities of various kinds gather to eat, sleep, work, save, pray and celebrate, exploring the subject-positions that are made available to them and are taken up in these settings.

I begin with an account of daily lives in Ado and go on to consider the connections and relationships within different domains of association. Starting with the compounds where people live, I examine other domains of association beyond the compounds in which men and women work and achieve independent status. Exploring the kinds of networks men and women establish and maintain in these domains, I go on to consider the implications of the positions they come to occupy in these arenas for relations with others in different areas of their lives.

Daily Lives

Soon after dawn, Ado begins to stir. By 7 a.m. the town is already beginning to hum with activity. Men load cutlasses on the back of their bicycles or scooters and leave for the farmlands that radiate out from the town, while others sit to eat their morning meal before leaving for work in the yards of carpenters, mechanics, panel-beaters, electricians, for smithing or tailoring businesses or for white-collar jobs in the schools or in the town's government offices. Before then, men who drive cars, vans or motorbikes will have begun to ply the roads between Ado and other towns. And by this time the roads begin to fill with young people in black, white, brown, green and purple uniforms heading towards school. In compounds around town, domestic chores are quickly finished and women begin the daily

struggle to make money. A few women rise early to wend their way through the area with buckets of breakfast *ogi* (thin maize porridge), others prepare a quick meal at home to start the day. Younger women bathe and dress their children; older women delegate household work to younger kin.

All over town, marketwomen prepare for work. Some travel out to the concentric rings of markets in the area - Sabo, Owode, Lusada, Ojo, Ikoga and Badagry - taking with them goods to sell or to purchase for sales in Ado; others still do *kara-kata*, buying, breaking and selling within the markets and returning with a profit. Some head for the daily market, balancing heavy baskets and boxes of wares on their heads. Other women prepare to go to the sites where they gather with other women to transform bales of cloth into dresses, heaps of palm fruit into oil, nuts and fuel, or to peel and steep cassava to make the starchy, smooth white porridge *fufu*. For some, these sites are within or close to their compounds; others move across town to sites near the river, or to the houses of relatives and friends. Yet other women prepare for their work as nurses, midwives, teachers; as 'businesswomen', minding their shops along the main street or making purchasing forays to the Lagos wholesale markets; or as hairdressers in modern salons that tend to the fashion aspirations of those who have the means. Wealthier women sit in the doorways of their shops during the day, resplendent in fine cloth, awaiting custom and entertaining friends. Most have attained this status on their own account; some, like the wives who sit outside their wealthy husband's alcohol retail business clad in jewelled satin, are *araboto*, wives whose influential husbands maintain them and who engage in desultory trading for additional gain.

Once every five days of the Yoruba calendar¹, traders swell the central market area with a bewildering array of neatly displayed produce and the town springs to life. A whirl of vehicles and people crowd the roads and the motorparks; the hum of bargaining, greeting and gossiping rises from within the densely clustered market stalls, lined by vendors selling similar goods for small profits, from baby clothes to piles of blackened smoked fish. The market is a focal point for associational links which women draw upon for support and friendship, a space in which alliances are made and cemented and into which tensions spill from other areas of women's lives. News and gossip circulate within the marketplace, carried by along the tracks through the narrow rows of stalls and out into other domains of association. Market days blur the distinction between work and social occasions: women put on good cloth and expensive headties to attend to their stalls, awaiting unexpected visitors and expecting the gaze of others to take in the signs of their success. Shouts fill the air: *e ku orọ ajé o!* (a greeting that praises a trader for struggling to make money), *e ku ojọ meta!* (greeting to someone who the person hasn't seen for a few days). Throngs of women pick their way between the stalls, inspecting goods as they pass, halting at those of friends or relatives, settling sales as regular *onibara* ('customers'). And from the nearby motorpark, the hooting of horns and cries advertising the destination of the vehicles vying for trade -

'Owode! Owode!' - fill the air, as private vehicles load up their goods to carry them off to other markets. On non-market days the handful of resident sellers seem almost lost in the maze of empty stands: apart from the male butchers and ironmongers, almost all of those who trade here are female.

As the morning sun becomes hotter, the pace slackens into an early afternoon lull. Children returning from school crowd round their mothers, collecting coins to buy their lunch from the cooked food vendors who cluster close to the main road or be sent to buy pats of *eba* (roasted cassava meal made into a thick, starchy porridge), *iyam* (pounded yam) or *fufu*, to be eaten with the stew of fish or meat laced with hot red peppers that is often prepared in the late afternoon. Some women cook in bulk, preparing a stew for several meals in one go. Others buy in many of their meals from the vendors, for whom business has boomed as women's income-generating work time has become even more precious. Many primary and secondary school children help their mothers with their work when they return home from school, minding their shops or stalls, hawking wares for them, running errands or doing domestic work. Some go straight from school to join the young people who are apprenticed to learn a trade under 'masters' or 'mistresses'.

Women are always busy: 'women cannot rest', one woman commented, 'they have to be working, working all the time'. During the day there is no time to rest. Maria, a trader in her 20s, commented on the difference between men's and women's lives: 'a woman works hard, doing trade and everything, but men don't do anything, they just play and go here and there, they rely on women'. At times in their life courses where the bulk of the work associated with maintaining their hearth-holds cannot be devolved to older children or junior relatives, having spare time is a luxury that many women cannot afford. A number of women told me that they simply could not sit still and go to 'play' as men did, they had to be doing something to stay busy and earn money. Even when they have a little time on their hands, women continue to work: weaving mats, making some *gari* for the house, sorting kola for storage, alongside domestic work. Bolaji, in her 30s, pointed out:

The husband gets up and goes to work, often without giving any money for feeding, while the wife has to clean the house, wash the children, cook *and* take financial responsibility.

Even into the twilight of their lives, women are still occupied with making a living and caring for the children of others while men of a similar age can spend their days chatting and being waited on by others. Opportunities for men and women to socialise with others are not limited only by the time they have to spend on activities that are associated with leisure. In compounds, as in worksites and the market, women gather with others to chat as they work. Friends and relatives may drop by, bringing with them titbits of the latest gossip; women may leave their workplaces for meetings with associates to save money together and discuss their trade, or to go to pray with others.

Some women simultaneously pursue several lines of business: trading in one commodity and sending children out to hawk another, making *fufu* and dabbling in occasional seasonal trade, going to market one day and weaving mats at home another, trading or preparing snacks for sale after schools, clinics or offices close. Diversification is a key to the success of some and the survival of others (see Chapter 7). Men may also pursue a range of business interests, but for them leisure time is available. In the afternoon, many return from their farms, yards or offices, to eat and to rest in their parlours before going out again to mingle with friends and associates. Men in polygynous marriages are cautious about spending too much time with individual wives for fear of arousing the jealousy of others; in many monogamous marriages, couples spend little time together. Most afternoons, small groups of men sit drinking palm wine and *ogogoro* (local spirits) at informal drinking places, joined by other men for conversation. Close to the motorpark, those young men without jobs cluster at different times of the day to sit and chat, or watch the world go by.

As the afternoon sun begins to cool, contribution collectors stop by at the houses of their clients to collect the daily amounts (*ajọ*) that provide a way in which many women can secrete away small sums of money out of reach from the demands of their families, and women and men alike amass savings (see Chapter 7). At this time too groups of women and men may meet as members of *ẹgbẹ*, associations formed around occupational or religious commonalities or through friendship, to save together, plan joint activities and help each other out (*iranlọwọ*). In some of these *ẹgbẹ*, members contribute a fixed amount to a rotating fund (*ajọ*, known as *esusu* in other areas) to bolster trade capital and provide resources for contingencies (see Chapter 7). On market days, market *ẹgbẹ* meet in the afternoon lull to discuss trade concerns. Members of church or mosque groups may meet on Fridays or Sundays, as well as at times during the week, to save, plan or pray together.

Around dusk, paraffin lights are lit along the roadside and in the two evening markets and the centre becomes a whirl of frenetic activity. During the day on non-market days, the pace around the market is languid. By early evening dozens of motorbike carriers (*okada*) gather here; men who spend their days on the farm, in their tailoring shops or in the classroom, use the opportunity of the evening rush to make some extra money. Vendors of cold *ẹkọ* (starchy, smooth maize porridge) cluster with their baskets in the flickering paraffin lights of the night market, selling pats wrapped in leaves to be eaten that night or the following morning; others do a brisk trade in last minute soup ingredients. Women rushing home stop to buy and come to catch up on the latest gossip with friends; young men strut around looking for girls to chat up; older men gather to debate the daily round of political affairs; children play and hawk for their mothers. The sound of car horns, shouts and laughter fills the air.

Only in the late evening is the centre of town finally at peace. Even then the distant sounds of partying or praying continue to break the stillness. Once in a while a celebration

brings light and life to the quiet evenings in the town's quarters: families and friends, dressed in their finest clothes, gather under neon lights to drink, dance to *fuji* or *juju* music and commemorate the death of an old person, the birth of a new child or the 'freedom' ceremony that marks the graduation of an apprentice. Much more rarely, a marriage is celebrated. Late into the night solitary vendors remain by the roadside as the last of the day's sales are made before sleep descends on the town.

Compound Connections

During the day people ebb and flow from the domain of the compound. For some women it is the site in which they live most of their day-to-day lives, for others it is the place they move out from in the early morning and return to at night. In this and other domains, reproductive and productive labour intersect and involve a range of others: rather than two separable spheres, divisions are indistinct, activities associated with each are interdependent and mutually constituted rather than separable facets of a woman's life (cf. Collier and Yanagisako 1987, Blanc and Lloyd 1994; see Chapter 7). Cooked food is often bought in to feed the family, goods from trade may also be used to cater for the hearth-hold and some tasks associated with child and home maintenance can be delegated to those who remain in the compound during the day (cf. Sudarkasa 1973). Those with the means can contract out or buy in labour to undertake household tasks ranging from cleaning to home decoration, washing, ironing and even producing some of the staple foodstuffs from home-grown produce to save money.

The places where people live are also spaces that bring together at other times others who are linked to the compound not by residence but by kinship.² As places, *idile* (compounds) subsume large single living units and clusters of houses of varying sizes.³ As spaces, *idile* are the site of linkages traced through complex genealogical threads (cf. Peel 1983, Eades 1980). Neither residence within nor marriage into a compound confer membership of the *idile*. Women retain full membership of their own *idile* and their children may be associated with the *idile* of both of their parents: although a patrilineal emphasis dominates, people can also trace and activate membership of and entitlements within maternal *idile*.⁴ As the places of families, *idile* encompass people that are descended from members of the *idile*, members of immediate families (*ebi*), children born to particular mothers (*omoiya*) and those who may be descended from others associated with the compound over time. *Idile* members who regard the compound as their 'home' may live elsewhere, coming together for family meetings (*ipade idile*); these include adult married men who have built their own house elsewhere and daughters of the house who live in their husband's compounds in another part of town or in houses they have built on inherited or purchased land.⁵ The *idile*, then, has a dual referent in a place and in people from that place.

Families are about place, but also about connections. And in Ado, as in other parts of

southwestern Nigeria, connections are all important (cf. Guyer 1993, Berry 1993). Wherever a member of an *idile* may live, claims and entitlements are contingent on the kinds of linkages they actively maintain and pursue through connections rather than merely by ascription. Kinship terms mark relations of seniority between people associated with an *idile*, offering a fluid range of affiliation with others.⁶ Support and care is expected from, if not always provided by, full brothers and sisters; close relatives are often those to whom people turn for financial help or advice when things are tough and when a relative becomes rich, he or she may have many requests for help.⁷ How members of an *ebi* get on and whether they help each other out, however, depends not only on their characters (*iwa*) but also on the obligations and ties members may incur and create elsewhere.⁸ Relationships with other kin are what people make of them. Dynamic, shifting connections enable actors to pursue their own projects by selective positioning within diffuse, often dispersed, kin linkages (Peel 1983, Eades 1980).⁹ Inheritance rules are perhaps the most clear-cut instance of an arena in which kinship distinctions continue to make a difference. Yet even here prospective and current interests in family property impinge on, and are affected by, the kinds of inter-personal relations that form between relatives and the ways in which people build up and consolidate networks among *idile* members (Berry 1993).¹⁰

Kin occupy an important nexus in the lives and livelihoods of women and men. Lines of assistance and support may flow either way between mothers and their children, brothers and sisters, cousins and other relatives (see Fapohunda 1987, Berry 1993). Incomes derived from an array of sources may be distributed to a range of beneficiaries within and beyond co-resident units to maintain ties or discharge obligations within families, situating individual actors in complex relational webs in which they occupy contiguous, sometimes contradictory, subject positions. Families are spread over a number of domains. Women may have siblings living in other parts of town, or in other towns, to whom they can go to spend a few days and whom they can enlist, or assist, in financial crises. They may have children in different situations: a son who is struggling, a daughter who married up and is thriving. Mothers may have returned to their own kin and provide connections into different skeins of relatives, through which their children can seek support or assistance. Fathers may have taken other wives, fathered half-siblings with whom bonds can be forged if affinities exist or if it is expedient or desirable. These relationships can be close if individuals come to like each other; but some can be tense and even dangerous (see Chapter 6). As in-marrying wives in the compound belonging to the husband's family, women are situated in ambivalent positions. They may divert their, and part of their husband's, resources to their own natal lineages, creating fall-back positions in case of trouble or building up their own standing in arenas where they are able to gain status and influence. Status in a man's compound comes not from being a wife, but a mother of his children; co-parenthood creates links that bind and that can endure long after the relationship has broken down (see Chapter 5 and 8).

Living Together: Relations of Proximity

The densely settled residential areas of Ado-Odo are patterned with shifts over time, giving rise to diverse residential arrangements that vary across the different quarters of the town and with the size of houses. Some houses are clustered together under the collectivity of a compound (*idile*); a few large, many-roomed compounds remain in the older parts of town. Some *idile* are based in individual houses, occupied by owners or rented out by people who have built better residences on the fringes of the town. Decoratively restored houses lie next to crumbling mud plaster constructions, 'storey buildings' (i.e. of two or more storeys) threaten to overwhelm the humble dwellings behind them; passageways open out into yards in which other houses have been built; or into fenced or walled areas in which kitchens are situated. In the central quarters, several of the old family houses have been left to decompose by children who, fearing family conflicts, have neglected their upkeep and built their own houses elsewhere. A large, modern house is an index of how successful a person has become, although not always in itself a marker of status.¹¹

Diverse domestic arrangements bring a range of people into close proximity. Marriages may begin with virilocality, but over time and at certain times in their lives many women seek to live apart from their husbands. Women have long been expected to return to their natal lineages, or to move in with their sons once they have finished bringing up their children (cf. Sudarkasa 1973). These days there are some who do not wait this long (see Chapters 4 and 5). While it is still common for men to establish their own households within the family compound, those with the means seek to build their own houses and to establish a locus of power by building up their own people within and outside it. The fracturing of compounds, a consequence as much of modern aspirations as of family friction, has led to more restricted domains of co-residence and to houses in which the core residents are monogamously or polygynously married couples, perhaps with lodgers and other relatives, rather than extended families.¹²

A combination of pressures, arising from the economic crisis since the early 80s, Christianity, 'modern ways' and concerns about conflict have brought about a situation where co-resident polygyny is becoming less of an attractive option to men and where their wives may not stand for it (see Chapters 4 and 5).¹³ How many wives a man brings home depends as much on his circumstances as his religious inclinations.¹⁴ I knew very few men who still had more than three wives living with them; in several cases, previously polygynous men were living with only one or two wives either because of trouble in the house (see Chapter 6) or because their wives had left when there was no money to go round (see Chapters 4 and 5).¹⁵ Polygynous marriages are often sites for tension and conflict; many people, men and women alike, spoke of them as nothing but trouble (see Chapter 6).¹⁶ Yet whether a monogamously married man lavishes as much time, money or affection on his wife as a man

with three wives might on each very much depends on the kind of relationship they have.

Changing contexts of marriage (see Chapter 4) have given rise to significant changes in living arrangements. Traces remain of larger compounds; the new storey buildings and large single storey concrete houses in newer areas may accommodate the wives and children of a wealthy patriarch. But some of these houses, owned by the wealthy, are the homes of unrelated lodgers each with their own padlocked room and some of these rooms are those of separated women. Smaller mud brick or mud plaster buildings may be part of the extended compound of a family, each housing a cluster formed around a male head. Or, more commonly, they are the residence of two or three generations of a particular family (*ebi*). A few house older women, with their grandchildren and sometimes their friends. In some, daughters who are called *ilemoşu* ('I'll sleep in my own house') live with their parents rather than their husbands (see Chapter 5). In others, young couples live in a rented room. Women living independently may be supported by men who live elsewhere: a new wife is installed by her husband in a rented room, for fear of fights at home; two widowed co-wives stay in the house of their deceased husband, cared for by migrant sons; an elderly mother looks after her grandchildren in her own house, supported by a son whose house is in another part of the town.

Snapshots of residence patterns in time give a very partial story, for houses are also spaces where over time there is an ebb and flow of people whose lives take them out and away and may bring them back home again. Over the course of a day or a week different people may come into and move out of a house. In the following two examples, I illustrate some of the possibilities.

Three women in their sixties share a six-roomed house, made of concrete and mud plaster. They are friends, not relatives, and have lived together for many years. The house was built in the 1960s by one of them, a successful trader considered a wealthy woman by her neighbours, on land belonging to her family. She lives apart from her husband, who sleeps in his own house in another part of town with his junior wife. They have a friendly relationship and he often visits during the day to sit and chat. The second woman has a husband in another town, who has several other wives. She returned to Ado many years ago and visits him occasionally, to discuss the progress of their children and for social events, where she is recognised as the mother of his sons. The third woman is a widow, with no links to her husband's family. All three of them largely support themselves through trade, with some assistance from their children. All have managed to put most of their children through further education with their own earnings.

In this house, the three women maintain entirely separate provisioning arrangements; flows of resources pass between them and others outside the house, linking them into different networks (cf. Fapohunda 1987, Guyer 1988). The next example is the compound of a large family, occupied at different times by a range of people:

Three houses, built of mud plaster, form a compound. They make up three sides of a square, closed on the fourth side by the decaying mud plaster building with collapsed eaves that was the family house and that now houses dozens of folding chairs that are hired out for

ceremonies. At the far edge of the square are many large ceramic jars where *fufu* is fermented for several days before preparation. The largest house has a concrete floor and painted walls. A stretch of concrete forms a long seat along the wall, on which women sit sorting kola, plaiting hair and talking. Inside the house is a long, white-painted, room with benches pushed up against the wall. At the far ends are separate rooms. One serves as a consulting room for the senior male of the family, who is an *alfa*, a Muslim healer and the other as his sleeping room. Next to this house is a roughly built mud plaster house that accommodates the wives and children of the house. It is built according to the most commonly found pattern, with a corridor running through the centre. Each of the two wives has her own room and her own hearth: they get on well and although one has no children of her own, she is like a mother to her co-wife's children. Both are traders. The other rooms accommodate a grown-up son, his wife and their five children, along with a school age daughter of the household head. The third house is of similar construction. In it live the farmer cousin of the senior male, his two wives and five children.

During the day, the younger women gather in the central space, covered with dried palm fronds, to prepare food and to pound *fufu*. Each woman has her own hearth and her own pots, although they help each other out. Babies lie in the midst of them as they take cassava to peel, sieve and pound, and pack the wads of *fufu*, occasionally being hoisted up to their mothers' breasts or cuddled when they are restless. Two other women come regularly to join the group. One is the ex-wife of the cousin, who comes to supervise the work and to help his youngest wife to secrete small amounts of savings from her gain. The other woman is a daughter of the house, estranged from her husband. She became very sick when he brought home a second wife and returned here to her natal home. Though she spends her days in the compound, at night she goes to a rented room nearby to sleep. For some time her sister joined her, pending resolution of a misunderstanding with her husband.

Many people converge in this compound during the day: to work or to visit. Two of the daughters of the house stayed for a while, one of them ended up solving her disagreement and moving back in with her husband and the other one was still with her father when I left, with fading hopes that her husband might come to bring her back to him. I knew women who spent most of the day at their fathers' houses, only returning to their husbands' compound in the late afternoon to prepare food and to sleep, and heard of others who left most of their possessions at home when they married, just in case. Marketwomen working in other towns can spend only a few days a week at home; migrant wage workers return from Lagos at the weekends to see their families and those who live further afield might appear more infrequently. During festivals such as *Eid el Kabir* or Christmas, houses fill with relatives coming home from other towns to visit. Men who have wives in different houses visit from time to time to sleep or eat. Not only does the composition of compounds fluctuate in and over time, but reckoning who belongs to which 'household' becomes more complex when people divide their time - and their assets, consumption and investments - between different spaces.

Household and Hearth-hold

In this setting, the concept of 'the household' as a bounded unity, with its entailments in terms of ways of thinking about relations between co-residents, appears to have limited analytic or descriptive salience (see Guyer and Peters 1987, Ekejiuba 1995).¹⁷ Rather, as

Guyer puts it, households might more usefully be regarded as 'dense centres in a field of exchange relationships rather than closed units' (1980:5, see also Brydon and Chant 1989). These 'exchange relationships' are, in turn, contingent on other kinds of relationships that may also be mediated by gender: between brothers and sisters, cousins, friends, mothers and their adult children as well as the husbands and wives that are often the central, and sometimes the only, focus of studies of intra-household relations as 'gender relations' (Peters 1995).

The extent to which even the form of domestic arrangement that most closely resembles the nuclear family can be regarded as an economic unity in this setting is questionable. To begin with, co-resident conjugal couples maintain discrete purses (cf. Fapohunda 1988) and rarely inform each other of their incomes (cf. Karanja-Diejomaoh 1978, Guyer 1988).¹⁸ Women and men have financial commitments beyond the household to their own *idile*, their own networks and their independent projects as social actors in which money matters. Husbands speak of themselves as the ones who control, provide and decide (see Chapter 5): by giving their wives *owo onje* (feeding allowance) to feed their children, providing a roof over their heads and ruling the roost, they assert themselves as 'household heads'. Husbands may advise their wives in business and some women seek permission before they enter into certain trades (see Chapter 7); they are also the ones who are expected to make decisions about their children, as their 'owners'. Women are, however, expected to meet their own, and a share of their childrens', maintenance from their own independent economic pursuits (see Chapter 7) and most make day-to-day decisions themselves.

The dissonance between idealised male behaviour and everyday realities of managing a family situates women's spending power as an ambivalently perceived necessity (see Chapter 5). 'Conjugal contracts' (Whitehead 1981) within both monogamous and polygamous marriages are a source of contestation (see Chapter 5, cf. Abu 1983, Guyer 1980). Some men 'provide proper care' (i.e. do their bit responsibly) and others are negligent: contributions may be given at three or five day intervals if a woman is lucky, often more irregularly and sometimes not at all. Expectations may be used as a lever in bargaining processes (see Chapter 5; see also Kandiyoti 1988). A breakdown in negotiations does not, however, necessarily mean the end of the relationship: people talked of their marriages in terms of 'co-operation' (*ajumoşe*) and, as one woman put it, 'where there is co-operation the wife can help the husband when he is facing any problem, we struggle together'. Some women end up bearing most of the day-to-day expenses of supporting their children. And there are some who not only receive no support but even subsidise their husbands (see Chapter 5).

Each man and woman runs their own enterprises independently and controls their own income and expenditure; partners have little, if any, joint property and each retains ownership and control over that which belongs to them (cf. Fapohunda 1987). Their investments, as well as their investment priorities, are often separate and different from those of their

spouses. As workers most men and women operate in entirely separate spheres. In cases where occupations are complementary, transactions are managed as they might be in any other *onibara* (customer) relationship: where women process or sell the kinds of crops their husbands grow for a living, for example, they may receive goods on credit but pay the market price for them and either may buy or sell elsewhere for a better deal (see Chapters 4 and 7, see also Sudarkasa 1973). Men are expected to give a wife starting capital at marriage or after the birth of the first child (cf. Sudarkasa 1973). But whether or not this happens depends on the individuals involved and on their own resources and how they get on. Some men gave *owo okowo* (trading capital) and continued to assist with maintenance, others told me that they gave their wives *owo okowo* as a way of saving money later as they could then expect their wives to feed the family from it; there were women who had received nothing at all from their husbands and others whose husbands had not only given them a substantial starting sum but had provided a fresh injection of capital when their business ventures faltered (see Chapter 7). Nothing can be prejudged: much is down to the particular relationships people have and what they are like as people, rather than any other 'objective' social distinctions. In these kinds of households there is 'one pot' and 'one roof', but flows of resources extend in many different directions: as fathers of women's children, as sons and as brothers, men may have a number of obligations to fulfil, to their relatives as well as to the women who are ranged in direct competition for their resources and who, equally, may derive part or all of the costs of maintaining families from connections elsewhere.

Beyond 'the household'

Where, then is 'the household' in all this and what relevance does this concept have? As Whitehead (1991) cautions, the household is the site for relationships which are of central analytic importance, relations of interdependence and of power (Evans 1991, O'Laughlin 1995). Yet the people who are involved in these relations occupy different subject positions in different settings and have connections in other spaces that offer them varying degrees of leverage in their relations with husbands, affines and kin in the context of compounds, as complex as well as individual agents (cf. Folbre 1994). The issues clearly go beyond the evident problem of defining 'the household' in terms of a notional unity, raising questions about the extent to which a focus on 'households' can obscure further dimensions of people's livelihood strategies. Sen's (1987) revised analysis of 'co-operative conflicts' moves beyond his earlier focus on family units to encompass supra-household linkages and the opportunities these afford actors within households to improve their bargaining positions. As Fleming (1991) points out, these supra-household linkages can prove crucial for various dimensions of women's livelihoods and their positions as social agents. Shifting the focus to situated relations in particular spaces offers insights into the complex configurations of agency and dynamics of gender. And shifting the frame from the actions of the atomised self-maximising

individuals of neo-classical economics (or their equivalent as household unities in the New Household Economics) to people as multiply constituted agents (Taylor 1985) equally transforms 'the household' as the site of a bounded collectivity to a *lived and practiced space* (de Certeau 1984) made and remade through interactions.

Ekejiuba (1995) proposes an alternative approach, one which makes a great deal of sense in this setting. Ekejiuba's framework avoids both the methodological individualism of a sole focus on particular agents and the host of problems associated with the concept of 'the household'. She proposes instead an analytic focus on nested female-directed 'hearth-holds' that are not necessarily co-residential and that can either exist independently or as sub-sets within households that may or may not be headed by a man: units composed of a woman and all those whose food security she is fully or partially responsible for. In Ado, hearth-holds might consist of a mother and her children - the *omoiya* unit - along with co-resident relatives of hers, foster children or househelp; they may also include non-resident members of her kin whom she is responsible for assisting. Hearth-hold and household heads, Ekejiuba argues, have different sets of responsibilities, which give rise to gender-specific patterns of production and investment. A woman's husband can, Ekejiuba suggests, be a full member of the hearth-hold or may move between a number of independent hearth-holds, those of his other wives and/or his mother; alternatively, he may have recourse to other hearth-holds outside the household where he lives, those of his sisters, other women who have children for him or his lovers. As household head, a man acts on his own account and makes contributions towards, but is not solely responsible for, hearth-hold expenditure; his responsibility is to provide shelter and access to some resources and in return he can expect access to certain services.

Men as husbands and as sons can be virtually irrelevant to what goes on in the compound on a day-to-day basis, either in terms of their contribution or their actual presence. A focus on hearth-holds, then, serves to highlight the 'gender relations' between *women* in the household that are all too often eclipsed by a focus simply on husband-wife relations. Where Ekejiuba's analysis is particularly illuminating is in its potential use to dissolve the commonly used category of 'female headed households' and, with it, some of the problematic presuppositions that underlie many analyses that employ this notion (see Peters 1995).¹⁹ Brydon and Chant (1989) draw an important distinction between *de facto* and *de jure* female heads of households. *De jure* female heads are, according to Brydon and Chant (1989), non-married women, either those who have never married or those who have separated, been widowed or divorced. *De facto* female headed households are those in which the female heads may be counted as 'married', but their partners are live elsewhere and those in which despite a co-resident husband, women are effectively in charge. Where Brydon and Chant's analysis is especially useful is in highlighting the agency of women within households that are notionally 'male-headed'. Ekejiuba's focus on hearth-holds takes us a step further, beyond

'the household' and permits a more nuanced approach to livelihoods that are constituted through multiple linkages in spheres beyond the domain of co-residence, with implications for relations within it.

In Ado, the ways male heads of households spoke about themselves elide the structural position of headship with hegemonic discourses on masculinity and, specifically, on men as 'husbands' (see Chapter 5). Headship, then, is a complex composite of entitlements, duties, obligations, rights and responsibilities all of which are discursively situated as residing in a domain marked out by active male involvement. These discourses situate women as 'wives': 'under a man'. By becoming *de jure* heads, these women effectively encroach on the space designated as that of 'husband' (see Chapter 5). Failure to meet obligations, however, situates the position of 'husband' as contested rather than simply taken for granted, with consequences that I explore further in Chapters 4 and 5. Significantly these discourses refer specifically to particular things that women do and, by extension, to women at particular times in their life courses and to particular *kinds* of relationships. Mothers of adult sons living with their sons, for example, occupy different relational subject positions that may place them in the position of *de facto* head irrespective of whether they live with their husbands or sons. It can be said of older women with clout that 'she has become a man'; such women may also live independently, as not-wives, or be counted as the heads of households in which their less influential husbands are co-resident.

De facto headship assumed by women within cohabiting partnerships dislocates aspects of headship from men and can provoke contests over authority (see Chapter 5). Yet this is not always grounds for conflict. In some houses in Ado the senior male occupies a position whereby he is less the 'benevolent dictator' (Becker 1981, Evans 1991) than a beneficiary of others' efforts with little real decision-making power over day-to-day activities.²⁰ His wife may be regarded by others as the head of the household to all intents and purposes (see Fapohunda 1987).²¹ As one man told me, 'as you can see, my senior wife is the one who is in charge of everything in my house': including, as far as I could see, him. In many cases, there is little *actual* distinction between the everyday lives of women within 'female-headed' and those within 'male-headed' households. Both may or may not benefit from male economic assistance, may or may not enjoy sexual relationships with men and both may be able to exercise a similar degree of autonomy in their day-to-day lives. Women in marriages may have *anfani*, the advantage of being able to claim entitlements to support, but whether or not it is met is arguably of less importance in determining the fate of their marriages than a host of other, complex, factors.

Blumberg (1993) lays down five pre-conditions for the formation of female-headed households: all of these conditions are easily met in Ado.²² According to Blumberg's analysis, it appears that the only reason women seem to stay with their husbands or marry in the first place is for economic support; ironically, this kind of discourse on women replicates

a tiresomely familiar hegemonic discourse on women that I heard so often in Ado (see Chapter 5). According to this logic, it becomes difficult to understand why, since women do earn their own money, can divorce easily and go home or rent rooms, they are not leaving their husbands in droves. Indeed, it becomes hard to comprehend why women bother themselves with marriage at all. As O'Laughlin (1995) cautions, the fact of significant female autonomy and the separateness of spouses' resources, assets and commitments, does not necessarily mean that there is no co-operation between them, nor that marriage does not hold other advantages for women irrespective of direct financial support. She argues:

maintenance of conjugal ties is often economically and socially advantageous to all members of the household. Among other things, it permits access to the wider web of non-conjugal support that each partner's ties of kinship, friendship and clientage weave (1995:76).

O'Laughlin's point is important. How women manage, as well as why they leave or stay, is as much to do with other *social* relations within and beyond the compound as with the economics of the relationships they have with their husbands. But this does not *explain* why even where women have both the means and grounds to leave they stay with men who give them neither love nor money. O'Laughlin, like other analysts, continues to rationalise marriage in terms of its functions. Matters are clearly far more complex than this. The choices women make may depend as much on love, on feeling trapped by expectations or by a lack of self-esteem and on a host of other intangible factors: to fail to recognise these complexities is not only anachronistic but profoundly 'othering'.

In any case, women do not depend on their husbands alone to maintain their hearth-holds even where their own economic resources are limited. As Ekejiuba (1995) again points out, flows of resources between household and hearth-hold account for only part of hearth-hold entitlements: contributions from and to other hearth-holds and households, through women's kin links, connect women into other domains and provide means of maintaining hearth-hold well being. In this setting, these links are crucial for reasons beyond economic support. They provide the basis for fall-back positions in times of crisis and form part of the wider linkages through which women achieve independent status outside the domain of the household. As members of different *idile*, women and men are both involved in reciprocal financial and other obligations with their kin, assisting and being assisted with ceremonies and helping out siblings and younger kin. In their own *idile* women occupy subject positions as sisters and daughters, with quite different implications for agency as for 'gender relations' (see Chapter 6). The money men and women spend on maintaining ties with others outside the compound can be a source of dispute, invoked negotiations over resources and one reason why both may conceal the extent of their incomes and assets.

Other connections are equally important in securing the means to get on and get by: for *owo*, *omọ ati alafīa*. Alliances with affines can keep the peace in the house, help women manage child-care, as well as provide them with a further source of leverage in contests with

their husbands or other hearth-hold heads within the compound (see Chapter 6). Links between women in similar lines of business or between those who share a common faith can help women forge other linkages for the pursuits that help to guarantee a woman's economic autonomy beyond the compound. These connections provide moral as well as economic support. It is in these other domains as well as within the domain of the compound that women and men make it for themselves and make themselves as social agents. One of the principal domains outside the orbit of the compound where women make an independent living is the market. In the following section, I explore relations within it and touch on issues I return to in Chapter 7, when I consider in more detail the ways in which women make it for themselves.

Selling Together: Market Relations

The market is a space that brings together those who sell and those who buy from them; within and beyond the market, marketwomen cultivate other connections for the supply both of goods and of capital (cf. Trager 1981, Clark 1994). Friends, relatives and associates circulate and cluster in the maze of stalls to exchange news, close sales and take part in an event that can be as social as it is commercial. Marketwomen may have kin scattered throughout the market, coming to sell as well as to buy. Belasco notes the continuity of the marketplace and market activity with other areas of life, citing a proverb: *bi a ba so oko s'oja ara ile eni ni'ba* (if you cast a stone into the market, you are likely to strike your kinsman)' (1980:25).

Handwerker (1973), reviewing debates from the 1960s about the extent to which kinship obligations impinge on entrepreneurial success, highlights the matrix of obligations in which marketwomen are embedded in Monrovia, with kin, close friends and 'good customers'. Making it, as well as getting by, may be contingent on links that facilitate access to credit, assistance with child care and safety nets; yet obligations can also 'eat' capital when family crises demand assistance from a trader, and literally, on a day-to-day basis, as children need to be fed. Women who sell foodstuffs may choose to do so, in order to feed their families from their stock; those with growing children, however, may find it so hard to resist their demands, that they consider switching to other lines to avoid depletion of capital.²³ Relatives may prefer to buy from one of their kin, but how the transactions are managed depend on their relationship: some may take advantage of the deals they can get, others avoid kin for fear of damaging their market.²⁴ Friends may buy from each other and 'customer' relationships (see Trager 1981), formed around the extension of credit, can develop into friendships. But, Mrs Odu told me, 'you can't force yourself to buy from someone just because she is your friend. You buy the better one'.

Within the periodic and daily markets, clusters of stalls fall into an organised pattern,

dividing up the market into domains of particular commodities. Vendors sit close by each other, often elbow to elbow, competing for sales. Implicit regulations mark out proper behaviour within the market: sellers may call out to attract customers, but once a person shows interest in the goods of one, the others should leave the buyer alone. Entering the market, customers can establish the market price by asking others as they go and then move towards a particular seller to negotiate a deal; it is not acceptable to go along a line of vendors shopping around for the best bargain. As one woman put it, 'you don't want to make enemies in the market'. Customers may have a regular stall that they buy from, but may occasionally vary their source to avoid creating cause for complaint or jealousy or may buy from others close by if they need something else.

Competition between those who sell a particular commodity may be expected to be particularly intense, but can be offset by membership of market associations (*egbe*) that bring marketwomen together for mutual aid. Many commodity lines in the market are, or were in the past, attached to an *egbe*: almost all are associations of women.²⁵ Some associations are defunct, some are struggling to keep up membership and others are thriving. Many associations were of fairly recent origin and the oldest, according to members, had been going for around thirty years. As with other *egbe*, then, Ado's market *egbe* are also not necessarily 'traditional'. Market *egbe* operate in a number of ways and there is considerable variation between them in the extent to which they are able to operate a closed shop, their capacity for price setting, the support they offer members and the degree to which they provide a means to generate capital through rotating credit schemes (see Chapter 7 for more details).²⁶ The benefits and importance of co-operation, *ajumose*, featured prominently in women's accounts of *egbe* in the market. The demise of two significant associations while I was in Ado came about through a lack of *ajumose*; members of ones that were successful would talk of the association as 'co-operating well' (see Chapter 7).

Market associations mediate conflicts between members and act as a check on the consequences of the kind of direct competition that exists as part of the relations of trading within the market. Social sanctions are applied, as well as measures such as reprimanding errant traders in association meetings. The social ties that bind members create further opportunities for collaboration. Women talked about meeting to discuss business tactics, hand on tips to each other and work out ways of maximising gain. Competitiveness between individual women may be displaced onto competing relations between associations representing the same commodity drawn from different areas within the locality, but it remains as a tension within this space (see Chapter 6). Anxieties over sales as over competitiveness within this sphere brings a steady stream of custom for herbalists who deal in 'medicines' to allay concerns, keep the peace and secure fortunes (see Chapter 6).

By emphasising co-operation, associations attempt to avert the eruption of jealousies within the marketplace, although not always successfully. Collective action can effectively

block competition by seeking to exclude external vendors; the fights that this provoked led to the need to appoint officials, I was told, to act on behalf of the townspeople.²⁷ Since 1988, the market has had two appointed leaders who arbitrate disputes: the *Iyaloja* ('mother of the market') Alhaja Asimoun Ogunola and *Babalaja* ('father of the market') Alhaji Sikiru Akande.²⁸ In other areas, the title of *Iyaloja* is one of some antiquity. Chief Olabintan told me that the former Oba Akapo created these titles, arguing that as other towns had them so too should Ado. The *Babalaja* has been particularly instrumental in encouraging market associations. Any disputes in the market are reported to the leaders, who intervene to settle the matter. Positioned in the rather uneasy situation of being both representatives of those who sell in the market and those charged with defending a free market for the benefit of Ado's consumers, the *Iyaloja* and *Babalaja* are both respected and influential traders in their own right, with networks of supportive clients beyond those that accrue from their positions in the market.

The market is a sphere in which many Ado women make their living and one in which some become successful enough to branch out into other enterprises, build houses for themselves and put their children through university. As a domain of association of women and one in which independent incomes are made and maintained, the market offers women subject positions to take up in other spheres of their lives. Transactions remain based in the economics of the market, prices and quantities continue to be negotiated over, but the relations between buyer and seller are also social relations that may extend into other spheres of people's lives.²⁹ Women dress up to go to buy or sell in the market, some in their only good outfit; it is a place to be seen, as well as a place in which women can meet anyone they might not be expecting to see.³⁰ In the market, and through their trade, women acquire identities associated with their business pursuits: they come to be known throughout the town as *Iya Alata* (mother, who sells pepper), *Iya Eḽeḽo* (mother, who sells vegetable leaf) and so on. As members of a market association, women are linked into networks that can act as safety nets in crisis and as sources of friendship and support in everyday life. Relations between customers and sellers can, over time, develop into favoured friendships; market days throb not only with sales, but with gossip, news and laughter as women mingle in the ebb and flow of the crowds that pass through the marketplace. The lived spaces women make for themselves in the domain of the market situate them as agents in their own right.

A Yoruba proverb compares the world to a market: *aiye l'oja, orun n'ile* (the world is a market, heaven is home). This resonates, on one hand, with the liveliness of the market as a social domain and with the opportunities as well as obstacles of life in this intense, competitive space. But it also situates the market as an arena associated also with other less tangible manifestations of female power: as *alaiye*, 'owner of the world' women are also figured as possessors of ambivalent powers bound up with life and death, as *aje* ('witches', see Belasco 1980, Lawuyi 1988, Matory 1994). Another saying, *ogun l'aiye*, 'the world is

war' talks of the potential for trouble that flows as an undercurrent between the domains of everyday life. And when trouble happens, women are often implicated: *obinrin iku aiye*, 'women are the death of the world' (see Chapter 6). The ambivalences of the market as a domain that represents, more than any other, a locus for women's struggles for *owo*, *omọ ati alafia* and for the capacity this confers for them to exercise agency in other domains of their lives highlights the complexities of gender relations as relations among women as well as between women and men.

Domains of Influence, Spheres of Recognition

Wives and husbands operate as independent agents in most areas of their lives and in domains in which they come to occupy a range of other subject positions. Flows of money, and the domains of influence within which these flows make a difference, link partners into separate networks. Ceremonies are occasions that bring overlapping circles of relatives, neighbours, colleagues and acquaintances from all areas of celebrants' lives together.³¹ Even in the current economic crisis, a great deal of money is spent on lavish social occasions where invitations are thrown open to almost anyone who turns up. As members of *idile*, women and men are both obliged to assist when a member has cause to celebrate and according to their wealth and seniority may be called upon to make a substantial contribution. They are arenas in which to be seen, in which men assert their prominence and in which women pronounce their own status by gathering around them well-dressed friends. Members of women's associations (*egbe*) can come to help with costs and cooking at ceremonies, wearing their association cloth to show that the celebrant has friends and helpers; men who have influence can gather around them prominent people to emphasise their own standing. Husbands and wives can attend the same ceremony separately as members of different groupings, or attend ceremonies associated with their own separate networks. The extent to which the social spheres in which they are active intersect is not given by their relationship alone, it depends on how they choose to position themselves and what kinds of alliances they make.

A woman's social esteem (*ola*) and wealth (*owo*) is achieved and assessed by others according to her own achievements as well as whom she is married to; those women who have made it for themselves are respected more than those known to be financially supported by their husbands of the same socio-economic status. How a woman makes herself and makes it for herself may be contingent on the opportunities afforded to her through marriage, but equally may be due to her prowess in other spheres *despite* her position as a man's wife. Some women achieve higher social standing as well as greater wealth than their husbands by dint of their own work.³² And successful women can raise the standing of their husbands, by contributing to the social spending that guarantees a man prominence. For men, membership of prominent *idile* confers status that is constituted recursively: *idile* are made and remade through those who attach themselves to them, their 'wealth in people' (Guyer 1993). A son

may choose to seek closer links with his mother's *idile*, if they are in a better position or help him establish himself; he may also carve out for himself a reputation based on his own individual achievements. A man's background has become less and less important as struggles for recognition span domains where making it has more to do with charisma, education and popularity than ascribed status: how much money and influence a man can wield rather than from which family he comes matters more in the political domains in which men make their names.

Processes of 'self-investment' (Barber 1995) are often, but not always, distinctly different for women and men. Women might complain that their husbands spend their time 'playing', where for men the kinds of social contacts they build up and maintain through social activities are an important part of getting on. Men might speak with resentment of the money their wives 'waste' on clothes and cosmetics (see Chapter 5), and the time they use up going to ceremonies, while for women the settings in which they dress up to look fine are those in which they extend and consolidate their own networks. One man complained bitterly to me about his wife buying cloth with her friends, saying 'why should she help her friends and not me?'. She had turned around and told him that it was because her friends, and not him, were the ones to help *her*. Although often the relationships women have with other women are not particularly close (see Chapter 6), friends may be cast by resentful husbands as a bad influence on their wives, encouraging them to divert time and resources to gatherings outside and even leading them astray.³³

Work is vital for *owo*, *omọ ati alafia*; many people believe, however, that it is God who determines their progress and who can assist when things get really tough. Religion plays an important part in the everyday lives and well being of many people in Ado on many different levels. Women with busy lives may spend long periods of time attending to religious obligations, putting prayer before other commitments. Constant prayer is a way of keeping those who might intend harm at bay (see Chapter 6), creating the source of emotional security that both women and men named as the most crucial in their lives.³⁴ The domains of religions are not only spaces where people seek emotional security through their faith, they are also sites within which connections are made that extend into other domains, a point of intersection of networks that contribute towards the more material aspects of well being as well as to the social standing of associates. Churches and mosques may be run by male preachers, imams and prophets, but within them women often predominate. The central mosque, attended by the majority of the town's Muslims, draws members from across the spectrum of status, occupation and age. Churches, however, tend to cater to more specific segments of the population.³⁵ Within mosques, shrines and churches, interest groups form among those of similar age and often also status, forming collectivities that branch out into other parts of people's lives. Most churches have associations of regular worshippers, who undertake various church duties and support each other in other spheres.³⁶ Mosques have tiers

of female leaders, each of whom enjoys considerable status in other domains as a respected titleholder; supportive and business connections are facilitated by links made within *assalatu* (women's prayer groups) in this space.³⁷ Among a sample of women in Imasai quarter, religious associations were by far the most common form of collectivity in which women were participants beyond their households.³⁸ Although these are spheres in which women predominate, men are generally found in positions of authority and leadership in religious institutions beyond those of the *oriṣa*, in which women often hold the key positions: and men are given even more licence to dominate by the prescriptions of the world religions.

Social networks formed through worship intersect with other networks, such as those between the educated elite who favour the mission churches, ethnic groupings such as the Ogbomosho Baptists and the Ijesha African Apostolics,³⁹ or the business elites whose connections that run through other spheres.⁴⁰ When women talked of their close friends, many were those from the church, mosque or *oriṣa* shrine they attended, with whom they had relations of trust cemented by their faith. But close relationships also span across different religions.⁴¹ For, as I was told by one Muslim woman: 'we all worship one God, it's just that the way we do it is different'. And, as another pointed out, 'your brother may be a Muslim, your sister a Christian and your father a Pagan [*aboriṣa*]. We all have to live together'. Mutual assistance between those who share the same faith was often placed, however, above any other kind of links with non-kin by many men and women I spoke with, as I myself found one day when my car broke down on the road from Lagos and the mechanic who mended it decided to help me get home because I had informed an Anglican priest who came to spectate that I was a 'pagan'; the mechanic told me later that 'we pagans' like 'those Christians' must stick together and help each other out.

Associations (*egbe*) formed through shared religious, occupational and ethnic interests draw friends together in the more formalised domain of named collectivities who meet regularly for mutual aid. The names of women's *egbe* in Ado illustrates some of the prevailing concerns of the women involved. Some are known by their status: associations of rich women and of Alhajas. Others have names that celebrate the attributes of those involved, such as the association of neat women or the many associations of good women (*obinrin rere*). The predominant theme in association names, however, is children: women who rejoice in children (*omolayo*), women for whom children are more important than money (*omọ ni bori owo*). Other names refer to coming together as friends, helping each other out, looking good, and, most importantly, acquiring the means to provide for children (see Chapter 8).⁴² And the name of one of these associations, built up of women who contribute money every five days so that one member can have the capital to keep her independent business running, draws on the image of husband as controller and provider: *egbe oko ni olori aya* (husband is the head of the wife).

Egbẹ are a point of intersection between members who are linked into other, more diffuse networks and establish and draw on personal connections between people, as kin, friends or associates. Both men and women take part in associations of some kind or another, often but not always in single-sex groups.⁴³ *Egbẹ* are collectivities that can prove important in providing an economic safety net as well as a means of saving money for men and women alike, but changes in recent years have made them less popular (see Chapter 7). Men's membership of *egbẹ* is, however, most frequently associated with activities in the workplace, and serves to further and protect their professional interests and make other kinds of connections between different spheres of their lives. Older men may join together with others to contribute to a rotating fund to save face when expenses have to be paid, as they do not have to go to borrow money from someone else; younger men may form savings groups to pay for construction work or vehicle purchases. *Egbẹ* offer an important means of social and financial support and one that is particularly valuable for women. The spaces they create are those in which women can establish and consolidate positions beyond those they occupy in their compounds.

Membership of such associations enables women and men to draw on a client base as well as a group of supportive associates, to further their business and raise their social esteem. As leaders of associations, women accrue further status and influence that can extend beyond the bounds of the association itself. Women's associations, however, often ask men to take key positions such as chairmen, secretaries and treasurers. Having names written down and amounts recorded by a neutral party can assist in minimising the grounds for conflict, if disputes over money do arise. Men are chosen not only because they are more likely to be literate. Some women suggested that men are less likely to cheat the women in the group and are more trustworthy. A soap maker, in her 30s, told me:

It's not easy for women to do contribution that involves a lot of money. At the end, there will be a fight between them. That's why we chose two men to be our helpers. Women will follow the instruction of men.

Avoiding disputes is crucial if the association is to continue working effectively. An educated man in his 40s put forward a version that plays on some of the ideas about women-in-general discussed further in Chapter 5, to explain why women's associations ask men to take positions within them:

When women get together in a group they will be chattering on about irrelevant things, making comments about each other, especially those women who are better dressed of which they will say that they are too arrogant, they will be fighting and backbiting and will not concentrate on the matter at hand. Then they will think that they need a director and will call a man to tell them what to do and to keep order.

Social Networks

Men's and women's social networks feature people with whom they have common interests and concerns and through whom they can establish connections in the domains in which they live, work and worship. While, as I go on to suggest, there may be considerable differences between the kinds of networks they are involved in, men and women tend to 'move together' with friends who are their 'mates' (i.e. peers), that is those of similar age, sex and status. Whether they can count on these associates for support, borrow money from them or entrust them with their secrets is another matter (see Chapter 6). Gossip permeates every corner of people's lives; even if people do not know others personally, they may know a lot about them. It is hard to keep things secret and secrecy is a premium placed on friendships that may test them to the limits. Dayo, a driver in his 50s, told me one day about what had happened to one of his neighbours on an operating table at Badagry Hospital. I exclaimed, 'but how on earth do you know all this?'. He smiled. 'That's why,' he said, 'I have no friend in this town. Everyone will know your secret.' Yewande, a woman of my age, told me of how she would test out the friends she made by supplying them with small pieces of information about herself and waiting to catch them when the circuit of information flow brought them back.

The extent of women's social networks varies with their circumstances as well as their personalities and interests. Some women are very gregarious and build up a large circle of people around them; others tend to keep themselves to themselves and are neither known by nor know many people beyond neighbours and kin.⁴⁴ Money, age and occupation play a large part in the extent to which women have the time and means to establish and maintain networks, but popularity is also obviously a matter of personality as well. Young mothers and those who maintain large hearth-holds with home-based occupations may have little time for socialising, but may have people dropping by throughout the day and be invited to ceremonies all over town; those whose work takes them into other domains may have larger potential networks of associates, but fewer friends. Those in the prime of their lives with few domestic responsibilities and a trade they have pursued for decades may have a wide or restricted pool of associates.

Although their cases cannot be considered representative as there is so much variation, the friendship networks of Abiola and Catherine illustrate the restricted scope of social networks as support networks.⁴⁵ Abiola, a trader in her twenties, spent most of her days in her back yard with her child and went once every five days to Lusada market. People would stop by to greet her, but the only visits she paid were to her family and while she got on quite well with the other women she lived with, she did not count any of them as friends. The only person she trusted, she said, was an old school friend with whom she would go to the market. Otherwise, she preferred the company of her family.

Catherine, a popular and once wealthy woman in her late 50s, and a regular church-goer, counted eight women among her friends.⁴⁶ She divided her time between buying and selling kola and working with other women in her ex-husband's family on *fufu* processing. She had known most of the women she regarded as friends for more than a decade and three of them for more than twenty years. Two women of her age, both Muslims, were her closest friends and she had known them for over twenty years. They also bought kola from her regularly. They were the only ones she'd ask if she needed to borrow money or if she had problems: she could trust them. Both lived virtually next door to her and she had lived with one of them for years, while she was with her husband. A further four were younger than her and would come to her if they had any problem, for advice. They were women she'd shared a compound with at some stage, one of them her brother's wife and one the wife of a relative of her husband; two of them also made *fufu*, and both were Muslims. A further two of her friends, one the same age and one who was younger, shared her Catholic faith and the basis of their friendship was membership of the same association in the church. As in Catherine's case, occupational and religious affiliation feature significantly in the extent to which women's networks branch out beyond the restricted domain of their neighbours and family.

While the extent of women's social networks is not necessarily in itself an indication of their wealth, social esteem or wellbeing, men's networks can be an important marker both of prominence and of their relative wealth and wellbeing.⁴⁷ Among men, considerations of age and status equally influence their social and friendship networks. As with women, men's friendships tended to be with their 'mates'. However, men may more actively cultivate links with those younger or older than them, linking them into networks of clientage and patronage (see Barnes 1986, Lloyd 1974). For aspiring men, the path to what Barber refers to as 'self-aggrandisement' (1991) lies in attracting followers and in the jostle for power and recognition among other ambitious actors in the town. Theirs is the domain of 'politics', an arena of complex interactions that may come to embrace, but is not contained by, regional or national political interests (see Peel 1983). 'Politics' is a domain in which men build up a reputation as one who can 'do and undo', drawing into their orbit other men who reflect their importance (Barber 1981, 1991). Women can also engage in these pursuits, but those who enter male domains may do so as 'women who have become men'. And few do: men explained this in terms of a lack of interest or inclination, while women told me that they had more important things to do than sit around talking as this would not feed their families.

Networks of patronage and clientage between men can draw on a range of links between actors in different domains, providing a wide client base for prominent men.⁴⁸ Linkages run through the domains where men work and live, connecting them through kin, friends and associates to a wide range of contacts. Some are based around ethnic affiliations, creating linkages within and beyond the town. Egbado Big Men draw followers from a range of professions and interests, to come together as a series of interest groups for different

purposes. Men from Ogbomosho, Ilesha, Abeokuta and other towns have 'home town associations' (Barkan 1991) that provide connections between members and with home towns in which they can become influential from a distance in local affairs.⁴⁹ Overlapping linkages run through particular churches, such as the Ogbomosho Baptists or the Ilesha African Apostolic Church, or professions creating other fora for the articulation of ethnic interests. The domain of 'traditional' politics in the town, one occupied principally by older Awori men, is a sphere in which some of the more prominent Awori men may dabble. 'Traditional' forms of governance, however, have a diminishing influence in a setting where aspiring Egbado actors and educated Aworis take to other platforms to exert influence within and beyond the town.⁵⁰ Titles may confirm a man's prominence, but have little bearing on their efficacy in domains where influence depends on other routes to becoming 'big'. As the institutions of the Nigerian State have come to have greater saliency in these struggles, Awori assertion to dominance within the town has been eclipsed.

Prominent men pursue their political interests in more contemporary domains, through trades associations and collectivities articulated with wider regional and state interests. Trades associations are one arena in which connections can be made and extended, within the umbrella union that embraces a range of discrete associations within the town.⁵¹ Virtually all skilled manual occupations pursued by men are attached to an association, known under the collective term *egbe*, as are other more 'traditional' pursuits such as farming, hunting, herbalism and blacksmithing. Significantly, outside the domain of the market only two of the occupations practised exclusively by women - both ones that have only become popular relatively recently, hairdressing and soda soap making - had associations. Members of *egbe* are drawn from all of those who are recognised practitioners of particular trades and have tiers of titled officials who organise and manage meetings, which take place on a regular basis. Trades associations set rules of entry, establish guidelines for training and regulate the operation of members. These *egbe* provide a forum for collective action, a means of maintaining exclusionary measures that regulate trades and fora for mutual aid and support in times of difficulty.

Elite interest groups bring together men who have their sights set beyond the town itself; members who are active in a range of other associations draw support from a wider client base. Community Development Committees (CDCs) in the town quarters tend to be run by men with few, if any, women participants. Local community based organisations are domains of association where political agendas intersect with other projects: membership of these organisations tends to be dominated by men from the educated elites. Those specifically oriented at a female membership are articulated with regional or national bodies such as the infamous 'Better Life for Rural Women', the flagship of Maryam Babangida, and branches of national women's organisations. These organisations are dominated by educated, articulate, elite women and leave little scope for 'ordinary' women's participation.⁵²

Whether or not men enter into the struggle for power in the town depends on their personalities. Some stay away from the arenas in which reputations are forged, keeping out of the limelight. For just as words can build up a person's public persona, they can also pull them down. Men love to gossip too and stories about the deeds of well known men can detract from as well as add to their acclaim. Those men who keep themselves to themselves are less likely to be regarded with respect by others, for part of engaging in socialising is making one's presence felt and to do that acts of generosity or other forms of patronage bring the doer into the limelight. But those men who are known to have educated their children well and who offer words of wisdom and involve themselves in helping others out are respected no matter whether they go out or stay at home.

Women and men pursue opportunities for making money in domains in which their identities as workers may be strikingly different from the subject positions they occupy in the space of the compound. And identities, as well as linkages, forged in the domain of work carry over into other areas of a person's life, enabling them to accrue prestige through their achievements and through the things that their money can buy (see Chapter 7). For men, making good money enables them to discharge obligations, attract people and to exhibit the generosity and open-handedness (Belasco 1980) that can make them 'big'. The living women make in these spheres guarantees their economic autonomy: making and spending money involves creating and sustaining the connections that make women as independent social agents.

Making Connections

Women and men in Ado move within and between different domains of association. Affiliations bring them into contact and connect them with a range of different people: in each of these spheres, gender relations and the subject positions that women and men occupy may be very different. Contiguous domains can offer people quite different arenas for agency: a young wife, for example, may be subordinate to her husband, junior to her *iyale* (senior wife) and subject to her mother-in-law,⁵³ but in her own compound her junior brothers look up to her, in her associations she is an equal to others and in the market and elsewhere in the town she may come to be known as a successful trader in her own right. Marriages bring a woman into a man's compound, but women's security depends on other links and on making it for themselves in other domains.⁵⁴

As women become older or more successful in their own economic pursuits, they can rise to positions of influence within their own *idile*, diverting resources into building up kin connections as a form of security and prestige. As the mothers of men's children, women gain more agency in their husbands' compounds as they grow older, cemented through

alliances within a man's circle of people that may give them some ballast to resist the incursions of another wife. Outside these settings, women acquire independent incomes and attain status as independent social actors through their own achievements, in their workplaces and through leadership in religious or other associations.

Women's and men's positions in different domains impinge on each other through connections that run through them: money made in one sphere maintains relationships in another. People make themselves as social agents through intersecting webs spun with money, establishing themselves as actors in multiple domains. Connections extend through occupational, religious and ethnic interests and through family ties and neighbours to bring together circles of associates in different domains at certain times for particular purposes. Building up and maintaining social networks is important for men and women as a source of contacts and support that may be realised in quite different ways. *Iranlọwọ*, helping each other out, is an ethic that creates and maintains connections between people in *ẹgbẹ*. Lines of commonality within *ẹgbẹ* extend in many directions: they may be based on any combination of ethnicity, proximity of dwelling places, shared beliefs, similar socio-economic status, occupation or be made up of a core group of friends who have known each other for years who introduce others. They bring together a wide range of people from different walks of life, open up connections into other spheres and offer support networks when times are hard. Together, members of savings, religious and trades *ẹgbẹ* can help each other to raise money for contingencies and spread the burden of bulky expenses. Membership enables people to expand their social networks, as well as to consolidate friendships through regular meetings and mutual assistance (cf. March and Taquu 1986).⁵⁵

Social historical work in other Yoruba areas (Peel 1983, Guyer 1993 and Barber 1991; 1995) has drawn attention to the importance 'wealth in people' has played in establishing men's social standing: a wealth built up through followers, as well as through wives whose children swell a man's compound and add to a man's standing. Barber, in her work on colonial Okuku, characterises the acquisition of 'reputation' as a quintessentially male pursuit, one that successful women might actively avoid for fear of being labelled 'witches' (1991:234-6). 'Wealth in people' and 'reputation', then, appear to gain a particular gendered resonance. In Ado, however, *ọla* (social esteem) is not gendered in straightforward ways. The criteria upon which the *ọla* of men and women is assessed draw attention to similar attributes: popularity, generosity, being able to assist others, being educated, having well educated children and having an influence on others, through wisdom or through being able to call on others' support. Men are more likely than women to be ascribed a high social standing, but successful women accrue status and respect in their own right.⁵⁶ Pathways to prestige are gendered insofar as the domains in which men and women achieve recognition may barely intersect, but in Ado a number of powerful and influential women are recognised as such by men and women alike: these are women who have made it for themselves, built

their own houses and accumulated their own 'people', through fosterage and other forms of patronage.

Age engenders respect, but it is wealth and the attributes that flow from it in terms of connections with others that matter for women as well as men. Among successful, prestigious women there were those who had used their education to further their careers and others who had never been to school, but had acquired wealth through shrewd business, and accrued status by their generosity and their behaviour towards others. Being the mother of children is in itself a marker of status, but it is contingent on being able to show that they have been well provided for as well as upon their future successes. Women may be just as well respected if they have made it in other areas of their lives, even if they have no children of their own. Children who make it are a source of pride and prestige to fathers and mothers alike (see Chapter 8); many women's struggles are intimately bound up with securing a better life for their children as well as for themselves. Mothers with no money may have little status while their children are growing but as they become elders, they have opportunities for gaining prestige through the multiple connections their children offer them as well as the potential they provide for care and support. Successful women with no children of their own may be just as much 'mothers' to the children given to them to train and to swell their hearth-holds with people, in itself a sign of success. But no money and no children leaves women with a fragile hold on prospects for *alafia* (see Chapter 8).

Some women find success, build their own houses, put their children through university and look forward to a future where they will be able to enjoy the fruits of their work. These are hopes shared by those who struggle to make ends meet and who crowd the churches and mosques with anxious prayers for divine assistance. But change has left in its wake shattered and shaky hopes. For the mothers who look to their sons to be their 'husbands' and provide for them in their old age, today's times are harsher than they might have expected. Some older women who made their 'patriarchal bargains' (Kandiyoti 1988) and paid the price of endurance are now left in no position to enjoy the rewards they once hoped would accrue. Placed in direct competition with the wives who divert his resources to themselves and their children, many find themselves eking out an existence from petty trade with only sporadic support, rather than at the centre of a large, loving, throng of people. And some are joined by disgruntled daughters, chased out of their marriages by young competitors or those whose 'misunderstandings' with their husbands become terminal. Faith provides security in a context where nothing can be taken for granted and where anything might happen; where friends may turn out to be enemies and where the most potent dangers may come from those from whom there may seem to be the least to fear (see Chapter 6).

Over the course of this century, opportunities for women to make it for themselves have expanded considerably. With change has come, on the one hand, a greater freedom for women to choose their own partners, pursue their own projects, to build as well as to rent

houses to 'pack out' of their marriages into and to exercise greater bargaining power within conjugal relationships. At the same time, changing expectations focus concern on women who go astray as well as the women who can no longer endure relations of co-residence with their spouses. These women are classed as *ilemoşu* ('I'll sleep in my own house'), a name that in itself connotes their agency, and are the target for criticism from an unlikely chorus of younger and older women and men alike, whose litany for the 'good old days' in which women knew their place evokes a time when harmony suffused the domains where uneasy truces and covert conflict now prevail. In the following chapters, I begin by exploring some of the contests that arise within conjugal relations and go on to situate people's commentaries on the present state of affairs historically and with regard to the subject positions they take up as members of a generation.

Chapter Four

Wayward Women and Useless Men: Changing Contexts of Marriage

Amidst the discussions on women's (mis)behaviour that feature so prominently in the spaces in which people in Ado gather, recourse is constantly made to a past in which things were very different. Elderly women spoke about a youth in which obedient, virginal brides-to-be were not even allowed to talk to their prospective husbands and where husbands were authoritative, responsible providers. These days, young women are not only 'disvirgined' but pregnant before marriage. 'The girls of today...' may seek their lovers in 'corner-corner love' (i.e. clandestine affairs), 'destroy conceptions' (i.e. have abortions), befriend 'sugar daddies' and have affairs with *fayawo* boys (smugglers with plenty of cash). And in these 'SAPPY times' - times of economic austerity in the wake of Structural Adjustment - things seem to be getting worse. Younger women are charged with 'uselessing themselves all around' by having sex with men, whilst men who cannot live up to the demands placed upon them by the women in their lives and defy expectations of what it means to be a husband are cast as 'useless'. All reserve the greatest force of their criticism for women who reject the men they have married and choose to live outside a formalised cohabiting relationship, the *ilemoşu* ('I'll live in my own house') who choose to return to their father's or mother's house *arun ko si l'ara re* (even though there is no sickness) - without a good excuse.¹

Discourses on immorality frame the problem as one of the present and one in which female agency stands out as the prime cause for concern. Moral accounting roundly places the blame for the present state of affairs with women. Two things are striking about these discourses. First, women were as voluble as men on the subject of women's waywardness and men as well as women bemoaned those 'useless men' who failed to fulfil their obligations, without identifying themselves in any way with either. There was little gender differentiation either in the kinds of commentaries I heard on the present state of affairs, nor in the kinds of contexts in which they were voiced. Secondly, the insistent complaints about morally corrupt (*işekuşe*) behaviour were not merely those of 'the older generation' about 'the youth of today'. The young frequently joined the old in an unlikely chorus, talking of 'they' rather than 'we' in their narratives of moral corruption. And all made recourse to a particular past - the 'olden days' (*igba atijọ*) - as a contrastive category to the present. Contemporary sexual partnerships between men and women were held up against the yardstick of *igba atijọ*, which told of a time in which women were not 'after money': a time when women conformed to expectations of obedient subservience and did not exercise their agency, nor displayed an active sexuality.

Older people drew on these 'olden days' to tell cautionary tales, stressing the compliance with authority people of that time had showed, their assiduous attention to duty and the seriousness with which they had taken careers as mothers, wives, husbands, fathers and workers. Recasting experiences of other times within the frame of a collective, contrastive *igba atijò* submerges the particularity of their own pasts. By reclaiming a 'traditional' past in their narratives, they were perhaps laying claim to a moral high ground that, in the wake of socio-economic change and the exigencies of modernity, has slowly slipped out of their reach. For today's behaviour is doubly troubling for those whose authority, livelihoods and reputations are also at stake in the behaviour of others. Their commentaries on change, then, also spoke about control, and with that, about agency and autonomy.

Younger people may have new opportunities and new models of interaction to draw on, but their accounts of the present state of affairs were equally saturated with disquiet. Invoking the 'olden days' in their accounts of change, younger people often returned to the moralising rhetoric of their elders. And they made reference to *igba atijò* in strikingly similar ways. Young women roundly blamed other young women for being corrupt and running after men for money; young men bemoaned the current state of affairs, blaming the greed of young women. This apparent compliance rests uneasily with their own behaviour and their own choices. For the pathways many younger people pursue are open to the charges of defiance and of moral corruption (*išekuse*) that cast a shadow over the possibilities open to them to negotiate different kinds of relationships with sexual partners.

The explicit focus on discontinuity between that past and this present in the ways *igba atijò* was used works to mask the possibility that for some people in that past things may not have been quite so different.² Court cases from nearby Badagry and Otta, stretching from a time beyond the remembered times of the oldest people in Ado into the times of their own youth, reveal numbers of women who did go astray. While such sources need to be treated with some caution, they raise a number of questions about what women's options might have been like in the olden days. Life histories provide further glimpses into experiences of other times; they have their own historicity, as tales told from the subject positions of people of different generations. From women's and men's stories of their own lived experiences of intimate relationships, as well as their accounts of the lives and times of others, details emerge that situate the recurrent themes of tales of *igba atijò* with regard to wider changes and locate them within contests, and the 'human projects' (Peel 1993:173) of their tellers as situated agents, in the present.

In this chapter, I take representations of the 'good old days' as a starting point from which to explore some of the changes that have taken place over time in the two areas that form such a focus for contemporary moralising: the growth of economic opportunities for women and the decline in their compliance with hegemonic notions of endurance and

obedience. Looking at the options available to men and women over time, I examine the implications of changes in intimate relationships for female agency and autonomy in contemporary Ado-Odo.

Pasts in the Present: Representing 'the olden days'

Contrastive pasts are part of everyday commentaries on life in Ado. And everyday events - a schoolgirl getting pregnant, a junior wife being troublesome - would spark off discussions that continually returned to how things used to be, often sighed over with exasperation. Women and men who told me their life stories, chewed over promising pieces of gossip or talked about current problems had recourse to this past, which served both to signify and reinforce their own moral position. Most of these commentaries took the shape of generalisations generated from incidents that had provoked the tellers disapproval. Sometimes, accounts of the 'olden days' accompanied tales of lived experience in the past. More often, however, the phrase *n'igba atijọ* ('in the olden days') was used to unleash a torrent of complaints about the present. Together, they portrayed an unwavering image of an age that is no more: one in which they might not even have lived themselves, but which they knew from the cautionary tales of their elders. So often were 'the olden days' invoked in conversations about contemporary affairs that they acquired rhetorical resonance beyond a description of other times: serving less to inform about what things had actually been like than to provide a vivid and potent contrast with whatever the speaker wanted to focus disapproval on. Looking first at what kind of things people said about *igba atijọ* in these commentaries, I take up the frame of reference they provide to locate the histories of change that emerge from people's accounts of their own lives and times.

The message that repeatedly emerged from discussions in which the 'olden days' were implicated was that morally and economically, things have never been so bad. In local analyses of change, the realms of morality and the economy impinged on each other in complex, sometimes contradictory, ways. Many older women and some men touched on changes in the economy as part of a wider picture of change, focusing on changes in the price of basic foodstuffs and in the patterns of provisioning. Some went further to situate economic change as the principal driving force behind other, more specific, changes: as the major factor in tipping the balance of power in the favour of women. That economic changes had brought some benefits in a more recent past emerged from the focus of a few women on the increasing number of women who were able to build their own houses, a fact that was noted with some ambivalence (see Chapter 9). But for many of those to whom I put the question 'what has changed?', their responses focused directly on changes in intimate relationships and on the moral behaviour of women. But complaints were not merely directed at young women. By implication, they extended to *any* woman who stepped out of line.

Sexual morality, compliance with parental authority and conformity with expectations are predictable aspects of discourses of the elderly on the 'youth of today' in small town settings in many parts of the globe. There is, then, little that is unusual about the general tone of older people's complaints. Yet the details that emerge from the contrasts that are drawn convey a series of ideals that constitute a potent normative version of what 'the olden days' were like, as the following examples show:

In the olden days, girls didn't ask for money from boys as they do today. If a girl was not a virgin, she can't walk in town as people will be abusing her wherever she goes. She can't enter the husband's house before marriage. Unlike today when boys will be petting girls so as to sex them in their rooms, girls will be calling boys here and there to give them money and in no time there is a pregnancy. In the olden days, women would work, work, work to get things to take to the husband's house. In those days you kept yourself clean rather than chasing after men (Iya Abiona, trader, mid-60s).

In the olden days, girls could not go near boys. Now girls don't fear anyone. They can even go to boys' rooms. Many women now have men friends, paint their lips and go to men (Kosilatu, trader, late 50s).

In the olden days, women were virgins when they went to the husband and they would collect N2. There would be dancing and singing and the parents would be proud. These days girls say 'what are you saving it for, to put on your beans?'³ (Iya Jinodu, trader, 60s).

In the olden days, they always did dowry - ten years ago you had to pay dowry before the woman would come. These days everything is free. If a girl is pregnant, the father sends her to the father of that pregnancy as he is not going to pay for the care of another man's pregnancy. Girls, they give themselves to boys free of charge, they just go to the man without him paying anything. In the olden days, girls feared their parents and needed their approval. These days, they don't bother at all (Alhaji Buari, farmer, early 70s).

In these images sex is tied to money, and money to avarice and greed rather than to independent, hard work. Virginitly becomes a focal issue, almost a barometer of change. And attention is focused on the emergence of a kind of woman who takes the initiative, demands what she wants and disregards her parents in pursuit of it. Alongside these changes, there are others: a shift from parental choice of marriage partner and the formalisation of marriage through dowry payments to young women seeking their own partners and contracting relationships that begin not with dowries but with pregnancies (see Chapters 5 and 8).

Women's agency was represented in the subtext of these discussions - what women *ought* to do - in ambiguous ways. On the one hand, women in the past were represented as almost entirely passive: women who, fearing their fathers' disapproval, went along with marriages they had not chosen and with the demands of the men they lived with. Those who asserted themselves either within marriages or by seeking their own choices were cast as behaving badly. On the other hand, women in the present were portrayed as too weak to resist the propositions of other men or the lure of money. Women who asserted themselves to rebuff men's advances and who instead 'faced the children and their work' were applauded.

This was not presented as passive, but as a choice that 'good women' should, and would, make.

Young, unmarried, people were often the target of complaints, although not the only one. What did they have to say for themselves? I surveyed the opinions of school students, to explore their reactions further with a specific question: 'how and why do you think attitudes to sex and marriage have changed since the time of your grandmother?':⁴ Their answers echoed those of older people, focusing in particular on the shift from arranged marriages that involved mature individuals who did not have sex beforehand to the loss of virginity at a young age, pregnancy before marriage, young women chasing after men, impatience, 'immorality', 'harlotry' and disobedience. Several young people focused their comments specifically on sex:

Ladies of today don't have patience. Instead of going to school straight she will cross to the boyfriend's house. Mothers were not divirgined before going to the husband's house, now people who are not even 20 know how to sex or abort (female student, 17).

Underage now get married and give birth before 15 years, girls and boys meet along the street, under the trees and even at home (male student, 19).

Again and again, the theme of 'being after money' peppered their responses:

Girls of today have a very strong affinity for money. Once they see a rich man they will try to have contact with them and by doing so she may go to the man's house and that may result in pregnancy. In the time of our grandmothers all this nonsense has not been happening e.g. nowadays a girl can easily pack to a boy's house but in the time of our grandmother all sorts of this was not happening (male student, 15).

Girls of nowadays like money too much and because of this before any boys chase them they could have been giving him a face and immediately they've got money they will useless themselves in front of the boy. Since the boy is not an impotent he too will have fun with them and as they continue they will get pregnant before marriage. In the olden days before a man could marry he would be forty, now they marry even at 10 years. This has caused a lot of problem to the country (male student, 18).

Everybody seemed to be telling me the same thing. Young women were even more vociferous in their criticisms than young men. One young woman said: 'it is the fault of girls because they are dogs.' Another commented that many young women just run when pregnant to their lover's house 'because they are disobedient, stubborn and harlot'.⁵ The almost unanimous voice of their responses, to a self-completed, supervised, individual questionnaire, indicated that they had an investment in the subject positions from which they spoke to criticise others, and by extension, themselves.⁶ Quite why this is the case is one of the questions I pursue in this and the chapters that follow.

'Civilisation' (*olaju*) was given by many of the school students as the reason for these changes:

In that time women obeyed the instruction of the husband, now it has changed. Civilisation has created a bad attitude (female student, 17).

There has been total change. There was no civilisation before and many did not go to school, they preferred farm and they were always busy no chance of man going about like today. Now the civilisation is on and many girls get pregnant and get married at any time they like (male student, 24).

In that time parents found husbands for them and there was a lot of food and land where nobody saw each other that much, but these days everybody's eye is open, everybody wants to be rich so they have to marry a rich man (female student, 20).

'Civilisation', for these students, has brought mixed blessings. A handful stressed positive aspects ranging from improved medical technology and contraception, to changes that had facilitated greater enjoyment of sex.⁷ The majority, however, cast civilisation as not only creating entirely different possibilities for men and women, but as the driving force behind a series of negative changes, particularly a greatly reduced age at first intercourse, a voracious appetite for money on the part of young women and, as one put it, 'hot love' displacing cautious choices in marriage partners. 'Civilisation' has, it seemed, brought with it other kinds of pressures.⁸ *N'igba atijò*, or so older people said, co-wives ate from the same pot, the relations of seniority that permeated sociality formed the basis for relations of respect, husbands were chosen for women who remained compliant and wives were found for men who relied on their fathers' help too much to refuse. Order prevailed. These days there is no such certainty. The changes that people pinpoint in intimate relationships between men and women parallel other kinds of changes, in other kinds of relationships: those between men and their mothers, between co-wives, between parents and their children.

Time and Change

The accounts people gave of 'the olden days' relate to a time at the borders of remembered time, from which patterns of intimate relationships continue to impinge on the options of living commentators. From people's life stories, a more nuanced picture can be painted: one that reveals a spectrum of opportunities available to different actors and that locates the dramatic transformations in heterosexual partnerships not as sudden upheaval but as uneven and partial. The past that offered such a potent reference point for moralising accounts of the present, then, intersects with but does not entirely subsume the particular pasts of some of those who drew on it to frame their narratives of change. And for others, their own lived pasts bore little or no resemblance to the *igba atijò* that was used to comment on present concerns.

Particular historical events or processes affect and are remembered by people in different ways, according not only to their own life experiences but also the points at which they intersect with moments in their life courses (Hareven 1982, Harris 1987). Events laden with significance for some have no impact at all on others; processes that offer up new configurations of power or new subject positions for some barely impinge on those of others. The histories of change that life stories tell embrace differential opportunities, different experiences: those of people born and bred in Ado and those of the immigrants who came from other towns to seek livelihoods; those of women who married a man a few years older than them and those who became the last *iyawo* (new wife) of an ageing man; those of people who may have spent all their lives in farm hamlets or who transferred from urban centre to urban centre before returning home; those of women who diversified in search of new economic opportunities, and those who followed the trade of their mothers and grandmothers; those of women who married, reproduced and remained with their husbands and those who failed to conceive and moved through a series of relationships looking for a child; those who had lovers, were inherited, or went off to do their own thing.

Telling their stories as *a* story within a chronological frame risks erasing the particularity of these experiences. And telling this story as history begs further questions. Collingwood (1965) insists that the ultimate object of history is knowledge of the present, emphasising the intersubjective character of historical knowledge. For, as Levi-Strauss contends:

History is... never history, but history-for. It is partial in the sense of being biased even when it claims not to be, for it inevitably remains partial - that is incomplete - and this is itself a form of partiality (1966:257).⁹

Questions of partiality raise further questions. As an anthropologist, my interest in the past was aroused by the significance representations of 'the olden days' seemed to play in the present. My 'historical attitude' (Nietzsche [1873]1984) was what Nietzsche terms 'critical': to interrogate the various pasts people told me about, overturning established 'truths'.¹⁰ In research, as in writing, my perspective was never *impartial*: my inclination was, and remains, to explore these representations from a *feminist* perspective (see Chapter 1). My imagination and curiosity were fired by particular kinds of women - those who had resisted patriarchal controls, rebelled against their husbands, carved out their own spaces. I began to sketch out genealogies of dissidence, grounding my approach in a history of the present.¹¹ My analytic perspective, then, arose from values that were quite 'other' to those expressed by people in Ado; and I courted the dangers of 'presentism'.

Those who told me of *igba atijo* and of their own pasts were no less partial. Indeed, it was precisely their partiality that interested me and that provided a stubborn obstacle to my attempts to tell the past from a 'critical' perspective. For to have done so would erase their situated perspectives on change. Peel argues, 'the past (*qua* representations) must be made

through an engagement with its traces: the past (*qua* antecedents) is not just the source of the categories which shape action, but exists in a dialectical relationship with categorizing agents, who make their past as they act to realise their future' (1993:175). People's attitudes to the past, it seemed, were what Nietzsche would term 'antiquarian': resisting change and its implications, expressing their sense of how things ought to be by recourse to another time distant from the present. 'Tradition', as a contested resource (Hobsbawn and Ranger 1985), becomes with this attitude a pivotal area for the expression of a dismay which is not merely *nostalgic* but is fired with the emotive concerns of actors whose concerns lie precisely in dealing with the uncertainties the present heralds for *their* futures.

Tales of marriages, arranged and endured, were told to me by women whose marriages were contracted over the decades leading up to the 1940s; after that time, the changes that had slowly begun to impinge on the marital options of women and men took firmer root, spurred by the economic and social changes brought about by colonial governance (Clarke 1981, Caldwell et al. 1991). By the 1950s, traces of what one commentator in Ado described as 'the new life' had come to permeate marital relations. The extent to which this 'new life' represented the rupture with the 'old life' that representations of *igba atijo* suggest that it did raises a number of questions about this 'crisis in marriage' (Whitehead and Vaughan 1988). Firstly, the extent to which relationships between men and women as husbands and wives *have* changed requires a close consideration of changes in terms of the capability of women and men as agents to recursively constitute 'marriage' as practice (Giddens 1984). Secondly, further issues arise concerning the nature of evidence about 'the olden days'. Studies of the impact of colonialism on marriage elsewhere in Africa have drawn on customary court records to explore the interface between the dynamism of locally constituted 'custom' and colonial attempts to define and manipulate 'native law and custom' (see, for example, Chanock 1985, Falk Moore 1987, Jeater 1993).¹² These questions concern, as Whitehead and Vaughan put it, 'how significant the cultural consequences of colonial rule were, less in imposing new ways of life than in creating new "old" ways of life' (1988:3).

In the account that follows, I look first at some of the experiences of those whose marriages conformed to the 'old life' recreated in stories of the 'olden days' and go on to trace some of the changes people commented on. In doing so, I draw on documentation produced by a range of interested parties, from colonial anthropologists and historians to elite Christian Yoruba scholars, and on the customary court archives. An analysis of the areas of dissonance and discursive practices in these accounts is well beyond the scope of this chapter, although it remains significant in my interpretation of materials. Rather, my aim is twofold. Firstly, my interest lies in the changing contexts of female agency and my focus, therefore, is on the ways in which the dual concerns that people returned to - female economic autonomy and female sexuality - figure in accounts of change. Secondly, I attempt to make sense of versions of the past told by people of different generations, less to present a coherent,

continuous historical account than to attempt to contextualise some of the struggles of the present. (Auto)biographical and historical time position individuals at different points in their own life courses in different relationships with the struggles of the present. Returning to the subject positions people speak from when talking about the past, I explore further some of the dilemmas the changes they speak about raise for them as situated agents before turning in Chapters 5 and 6 to a closer examination of their implications.

Enduring Arrangements: Marriage in the 'Olden Days'

For many of the elderly women I knew and for some elderly men, their first marriages were arranged for them by their parents or senior relatives: choices were made for them in which they had little option but to accept. Mothers could promise their daughters to their friends' sons and fathers could arrange marriages with friends or patrons who would take their daughters as wives or as wives for their sons. Betrothals could be made at any time in a girl's life, from birth onwards. Yele Akinwonmi told me that there was a widely perceived scarcity of women at the turn of the century, that had given rise to this practice: one that the British were anxious to stamp out. Over a period of years, the husband-to-be would make contributions and give gifts to the parents, usually through an intermediary (*alarena*), to cement the relationship; promises of marriage began with *isihun*, a betrothal fee which marked the start of a series of payments, made by the husband-to-be over a number of years and culminating in the ceremonial payment of schnapps, kola, bitter kola and alligator pepper along with an amount of money, that was *idana* ('dowry'). In some cases, women told me that they had not seen their husband until the day of marriage.¹³ Some were promised to men far older than them, friends or patrons of their fathers. Others were given to men only a few years older, the sons of families that their parents considered a good match or had already got ties with. Friends might arrange between themselves to marry their children to each other, to extend their relationship. In these cases the two children would grow up and then be told that they were to marry each other. Dependent on their fathers for dowry, young men were obliged to accept. Subsequent marriages might also be arranged, but in those they had more of a choice: either to ask for a daughter, or to accept one that was offered.

At that time, marriages often brought families who already knew each other closer together. Awori families were reluctant to marry their daughters or sons to Egbado 'strangers' and pledge marriage, to friends, associates and patrons secured the future of daughters from an early age.¹⁴ Young men had to rely on their parents both to arrange marriages for them and to stump up the money. Fathers allocated farm land to their sons, who remained dependents until marriage.¹⁵ This gave their fathers control over them and often delayed them from marrying until they were well into their thirties, even in their forties. By the late 1920s, changes were afoot.¹⁶ Men with means, looking for a wife, could choose themselves a girl who they saw moving around in town - unmarried girls were

forbidden to talk with men, or even to share the same bench with them - and elect an intermediary to approach the parents. They would send the *alarena* to check first what the family were like: 'whether they were wicked, whether they were using "medicines" (i.e. *juju*), their behaviour and how the house is', according to Iya Bode.¹⁷ Other people told me that the *alarena* would pay special attention to the condition of the wives of the house, to make sure that the daughter would be treated well. If all seemed in order, they would accept. Prospective husbands would pay visits to the house, leaving gifts of money for their brides-to-be, and some women were allowed to cook for them when they came. But they were not allowed to talk to them. Women were supposed to avoid future husbands if they saw them in town: 'if you saw the husband coming towards you, you would just take another road. It was very shameful to be seen together', Iya Bode told me.

Iya Sherifatu married in 1925. Her husband was a friend of her senior brother and much older than her. She had been told that he was going to be her husband and had seen him coming and going from their compound, but had never spoken to him. She told me of how she had felt obliged to her parents to do what they wanted: 'You can't leave the husband. The parents don't want you to leave because you marry through connections. They are friends so you can't divorce'. Iya Laisi was given to her husband by her father in the 1930s. She told me:

You didn't talk with anyone to marry them, they would just be pointed out to you. The arrangement would be made between the father of the husband and the father of the wife. The husband's father watched the character of the girl, then would choose one of his friend's daughters for his son... If your father agrees, he'll send for you and say I have given you to so-and-so's son. You couldn't go against what the father wanted'.

She didn't feel ready to marry, but she couldn't refuse when her father told her 'this is the husband'. And when the man came to visit, she could not say anything, she could see him but not talk to him or prepare food or anything. During this time, people told me, marriage ceremonies for first marriages were lavish affairs lasting for several days, with feasting, singing, dancing and drumming. Subsequent marriages, for women as for men, were often more low-key events (cf. Guyer 1994). Pre-marital sex was frowned upon and part of the wedding ceremony, I was told by older men and women, would be the anxious moment, late in the night, when relatives clustered in an adjoining room to the conjugal couple to listen out for sounds and to wait until the husband appeared to confirm his wife's virginity. Virginity was expected, but not always found: errant women might be punished, but were rarely sent packing (cf. Fadipe [1939]1970). For a woman to have lost her virginity before marriage, however, was, older people told me, interpreted as a sign that she was not to be trusted.¹⁸ Marriages to friends of the family or to patrons of their fathers were difficult to break away from while a woman was still fecund. Women in their 60s and above in Ado told me that while women often left once their children were grown, it was extremely rare for women to

leave in the early years of marriage if there were children. Iya Bose, who married in the late 1930s, told me: 'If you don't like it you'll still have to accept. But if you suffer, you'll endure and tell your parents "this is what you've chosen for me, that I will suffer like this"'. Going home without a good reason was not accepted by most parents.¹⁹

Iya Abiola spoke of her marriage as an interlude in her life that came and went: something she endured to have the son who she now talks of as her 'husband'. She married in the mid-1930s and like many of her peers, her marriage was arranged by her father who decided that he would give his daughter to a friend. One day she was playing with her friends, the next she was told to prepare herself to go to her husband. There was nothing she could do.²⁰ She said:

You would just be told, 'Go and plait your hair, you're going to your husband tomorrow'. You couldn't reject this as you had no power. You had to obey the parents. I didn't know my husband at all before I married. I just carried my load on my head to Ilaro to find him there. When I got there I couldn't reject him. I was just happy to have a pregnancy. That's what everyone did.

Comfort Soniyi, now in her 70s, told me:

We just had to accept. But some ran away. If she runs away then people would come to beg the father to allow her to come home. But he would not yield. He would not be pleased. He would not accept for her to come back to the compound again as she has disobeyed her father which she must not do.

Not all women endured, then. But options were limited and women had little capability to exert their own preferences. Only in the case of infertility, madness or extreme maltreatment did women have a recognised reason for extricating themselves from marriages; the practice of levirate left widows to be inherited by a relative of their deceased husband, if they were still of reproductive age. I was told that even if a woman did not conceive she would still stay with her husband: although if she chose to try another husband she was free to do so. And I knew several childless women of this generation who did remain for many years, helping to care for their co-wives' children as their own, before returning home (see Chapter 9).

Older women and men told me that they had seen divorce in their youth, but that these were extreme cases. I asked Yele Akinwonmi, a retired customary court judge in his 60s, about divorce in the 'olden days':

Before the advent of the British there was divorce. The head of the place (*bale*, the head of the compound, sometime the *oba* himself) was the judge and the parents of both parties were brought together with the *alarena*. Unless parents on both sides saw a reason why the woman had to go, it would not be easy for her to divorce because it was a contract between families. The intention of the woman was not considered important in those days. Unless the man was impotent or the woman had no issue, it was not easy for a woman to leave. Unless a woman became too troublesome - fighting, nagging - and couldn't be subdued by the family. In most cases, the man would get another woman before that one was thrown out.

I was told by older women that women who misbehaved would be brought into line by harsh punishment by their husbands, with the approval of their fathers. Those who sought to go home might be sent straight back to their husbands if they failed to come up with a good reason.²¹ Only if they were completely out of control would they be sent home for good. And those who were sent back tarnished the family's reputation and put the links the marriage had created in jeopardy.

Through a series of legislative measures, instigated through concerns both with the implications of child betrothal and polygyny, the colonial administration offered women the opportunities to seek recourse to external arbitrators and to free themselves both from betrothals and from marriages from the early days of colonial governance onwards (Fadipe [1939]1970, Mann 1985, Renne 1990).²² A court was set up in 1874 near Ado at Badagry, run at first by a colonial officer who meted out justice with reference to 'Yoruba custom': a practice that was to be formalised in later years with the institution of the native court system, managed by elders (see Atanda 1969). In accounts of *igba atijò* told in generalising narratives or situated in versions of lived pasts, defiant women were almost completely absent. Yet they appeared, in numbers, in customary court records from nearby towns from 1874 onwards. Divorce cases provide vivid glimpses of female agency that is far from the account of demure, obedient wives that accounts of *igba atijò* purvey.

Records from Badagry (1874-1906) and Otta (1908-1920s) are replete with instances of claims for refund of betrothal payments ('a consideration that failed') and of women who had gone astray.²³ Cases reveal instances where women's mothers lined up a better deal and where women wandered off and got into relationships elsewhere.²⁴ Some women were clearly less ready than others to relent, arguing that they were not interested in the husband or even finding another man for themselves. After spending years courting women, expending considerable sums of money - each item of which is faithfully listed and reclaimed in the records - men would find themselves rejected, passed over for another. Some women would just take the cash and go. Others clearly had the means to decide for themselves.²⁵ In cases of extreme recalcitrance, young women were compelled (ultimately unsuccessfully) by force to go to or remain with their husbands, who had eventually to resort to suing for the return of their gifts.²⁶ One 1908 case from Otta details an extreme case of the kind of measures needed to make more recalcitrant women stay:

One day I saw the town Ogboju sent to my father by Bada of Otta, the Bada is now dead. I was sent for to be delivered in marriage to my husband by force. My father took me over to my husband... I took only calabash when going. I was forcibly detained in my husband's place in shackles for 5 days... I stayed... for 21 days. For ill-treatment from my mother-in-law and my husband's friends I ran away... (testimony of Orisafunmi in Orisafunmi vs Akide, Otta Customary Court, 21/8/1908).

Although mention of 'divorcement' does not enter the civil court records for Otta until the early 1920s, despite an ordinance permitting the granting of divorces in 1907 (Zabel 1969), it is clear from these records that some women were dissolving marriages not only before consummation but also afterwards. It seems that it was not infrequent for women to stay for a while, then leave citing reasons from bad treatment to boredom.²⁷ Divorce implies remarriage: women would have men waiting in the wings to repay the dowry payment to the former husband, as at that time the amounts of money involved were prohibitive and beyond the reach of most women. And women often had nowhere else to go.

Images of obedient compliance, spun in stories of the first (often only) marriages of elderly women in Ado, evoke an era where women endured their lot out of fear of their fathers, absence of alternatives, respectability and resignation. Court records tell an entirely different story, invoking the agency not only of recalcitrant fiancées but also of scheming mothers. The wayward characters of the present appear to have had precedents in these cases from the distant past for whom new opportunities were provided by an increasingly monetised economy, in a time in which gerontocratic controls were beginning to be jeopardised (see Chapter 2). And the divorce cases that they, and others, may have brought to Ado's customary court from 1915 onwards heralded a period in which relations not only between husbands and wives, but between a range of other actors implicated in conjugal affairs, were being reconfigured. To reach the courts in a time where disputes were usually dissolved by compound heads (*baale*) or by the *oba* himself, these cases may well represent the extremes that were shrugged off when I mentioned them to older men and women in Ado. But they give intriguing hints of the fracturing of control over women that was to become so much of an issue in the following decades, as well as of the impact of a cash economy and colonial governance on women's options.²⁸ The marital histories of the elderly men I got to know spanned decades in which they moved from having choices made for them to marrying subsequent wives as they wished; and the wives they took, women of other generations, were those whose expectations - and options - had begun to change.

Modern Times

As Ado was propelled into the wider economy, through the opening up of trade and through the movement of young men into the waged economy, changes began to take effect.²⁹ The *bolekaja* (lorries) that had begun to ply a route to Ado by the late 1920s carried increasing numbers of male migrants from Ado to other towns in Yorubaland, principally to Lagos. The opportunities offered by cash cropping, on the one hand, and wage labour, on the other, brought changes in the fortunes of young men over the first few decades of this century.³⁰ However, for many young men the amounts they would need to spend to marry a woman according to 'traditional' marriage were still prohibitive, driven up even further in some places by the attempts of elderly chiefs to protect their interests (Peel 1983).³¹

Increasing numbers of men appear to have taken to 'seduction' as a marriage strategy.³² By 'seducing' a woman from her former husband, the new husband only had to find the money to repay the dowry to him or his family if he was dead (ie release from levirate); thus avoiding other expenses and obligations (Barber, 1991:217).³³ Some of these women may have grown discontented with their husbands, but saw no alternative to remain until another man came along; some, at least, must have been the wives of some of the older chiefs, whose resentment of young men may have arisen in part from cases such as these. Until formal divorce had been sought, a man retained rights over his wife's reproductive capacity. The dowry payment was interpreted during the late 1930s (Renne 1990) as transferring rights in any children the woman may have in the course of her marriage to her husband, irrespective of whether or not he fathered them.³⁴ If a woman left her husband and became pregnant by another man, 'adultery' cases could be pursued, incurring substantial fines. As women became aware of the opportunities jurisdiction offered them, there was a significant shift away towards the formal dissolution of marriages through the courts.³⁵ In Otta, by the 1930s, divorce had become so routinised that cases appeared as straightforward transactions, with no grounds being offered and merely recorded as 'the defendant to show cause why he should not be divorced upon payment of £X'.³⁶

New opportunities opened up for men from the turn of the century onwards which began to have a significant impact on relations with kin and with partners by the 1930s. It would seem, however, that there was little change for the majority of Awori and Egbado women in Ado either in occupational specialisation or in opportunities for capital accumulation until the 1940s (see Chapter 2). Husbands were responsible for providing staples and occasional bushmeat for the family, women for the soup ingredients. And all women worked to feed their hearth-holds. It seems that only the richest and most prominent men were able to take a number of wives: these women may well have had to fend for their own hearth-holds. The fathers and grandfathers of many of the older men I spoke with, however, often had only one or two wives. The oldest women I spoke with, some of whom must have been almost in their 90s, told me of how husbands had provided quite a lot of the food they ate and how their work was supplementary, complementing that of their husbands. Apart from a few enterprising women who had made substantial gains from longer-distance trading, most women did not generate sufficient money from their work to expand their businesses to any significant extent and, according to Egba and Ijebu women who had come to Ado in the 1940s, Ado women remained dependent on their husbands and lacked the skills to turn around a good profit. With improved transport opportunities, trade expanded. Women began to move into trading in greater numbers and started to make more money.

The structures of 'traditional' masculinity began to give way with the onslaught of the new. Men who, in the previous decades, had become 'big' through the acquisition of traditional titles and influence within the orbit of the town now had to contend with a rising,

younger, educated population of men who were not disposed towards demonstrating the kind of deference they expected. The roads to success and local importance increasingly led out of Ado to the urban centres, from which men would return later in their lives to enjoy the nests they had feathered from wage labour. Farming became less and less attractive an option, both as a result of the allure of the status that accrued to wage earners and to external economic constraints that acted to edge young men out of the farms and into the cities.³⁷ And wage earners were able to give *owo onje* in cash. Paternal authority no longer held the same weight. As regular earners, bringing home a wage that they could spend as they liked, waged workers became both sought after and respected, regarded by others as people who had money (*olowo*).³⁸ Many of those who left to seek wage labour, as clerical or skilled manual workers, were educated men; and education had come, by this time, to provide a new basis for the accrual of esteem (*ola*) in Ado, a means both to wealth and to influence.

Education in mission schools exposed young men to the discourses of Christianity, which had by then made significant inroads into the town (see Chapter 2). While many young Muslim men retained their faith, what others referred to as 'exposure' to Western ideas about conjugal relations began to have an impact on their attitudes. Entry into the expanding public sector, as clerical or skilled manual workers, also brought with it further contact - and contests - with European masculinities (Lindsay 1996), reinforcing the messages of the mission catechists and teachers. While the kinds of marriage patterns Mann (1985) describes for the Christian elite in early colonial Lagos only came to impinge much later on the marriages of men and women in Ado, attraction came to replace arrangement in marriages. And both 'endurance' and 'co-operation', the watchwords of the *igba atijọ* that is used in the present, resonate with Christian discourses on marriage.

Few, however, sought what was called 'court' or 'ring' marriage in Ado: marriage under a legal code styled on British law, which conferred on wives the right of inheritance from their husbands and barred men from taking further wives. But educated men increasingly sought monogamous marriages, even if in practice they continued to have girlfriends outside them. Conjugal arrangements in some marriages, especially those of educated Christians, came to be patterned by the ideals of the wage-earning breadwinner and his dependent spouse (cf. Lindsay 1996).³⁹ Mrs Osinowo, an educated Ijebu woman who came to Ado with her husband in 1945, told me of how she had been enjoined by her husband to abandon her career as he was not happy with the idea of her earning a salary: he wanted to be the one who was earning and was unhappy at the idea that she would be answering to someone else and coming in contact with men. Once she agreed to stay at home, he catered for her. But she continued with her own independent work, operating from home instead (see Chapter 7).

Among those men who remained in farming and local crafts work, education had less of an impact; many of these workers were Muslim and increasingly fewer were *abọriṣa*

(devotees of the *oriṣa*). Islam intersected with 'tradition', creating practices inflected by Islamic teachings that were carried into the courts through recourse to 'native law and custom'. *Oriṣa* religions represented gender as 'a multiplicity of differences and alternatives' (Barber 1991:277). Religious discourses intersected, figuring the agency of women in contrasting ways. Men and women, then, took up positions as husbands and wives within multiple, often conflicting, discourses on gender and power which offered them further, different and sometimes dissonant, subject positions in the various domains of association between which they moved (see Chapter 3). The pervasive association of Christian ideals with modernity came both to encompass and to be deployed to oppose reconstituted 'traditions', offering competing frameworks within which some men, and fewer women, could articulate dissent with the dictates of the fast crumbling gerontocratic structures.

Chief Ajuwon's account of his early adulthood in the late 1930s and early 1940s rang with the sense of freedom he and his peers began to enjoy, as they carved out their own lives independently of their parents. He told me: 'they were not able to control us... if we liked things we did them in our own way'. Younger, educated men were able to 'do and undo'. And 'doing things our own way' meant that men could now select their own wives: and pay their own dowries if necessary. He drew a vivid contrast between his own options and that of his elder brother, an Ado farmer, who married in 1944. While Chief Ajuwon chose for himself, his brother didn't know his wife before his father arranged the marriage for him and over the three years of courtship he was not even able to talk to her. But educated men were not the only ones to experience these changes. For Baṣiru, who entered wage labour in Lagos shortly before Chief Ajuwon's brother learnt that his father had a wife for him, opportunities were also different. His story gives a sense of the kinds of possibilities young men had to redefine their options in the 1940s:

Baṣiru married his first wife, an Egba woman, in 1946. They were both in Lagos. He'd been in Lagos since 1942, working as a labourer. His father died in 1928, leaving him farmland. He farmed the land, but when the second world war began, produce didn't move so he joined the roadbuilders, then moved to Lagos in 1942, where he gradually built up a career in construction. The father of his first wife was a railway worker and had a house near to the room Basiru had rented for himself. They started talking to each other and 'began to be making boyfriend and girlfriend' in 1944. He said 'that lady was a grown up as I was, so I thought that she had been meeting other boys and was corrupt, but I started to be her boyfriend anyway'. Two years later, they decided to marry.

Before he came to Lagos, he had been courting a woman in Ado before from 1940-2, but after he went to town he didn't see her again: 'Lagos life! Ah! Lagos life is different-o!', he chuckled. And at that time he did not want to have two wives, so he chose the one in Lagos. When he sent a message to his parents that he had someone who he wanted to marry in Lagos they said: 'what of the one here?'. They did not want him to marry a Lagos lady: 'those ones were considered too free with themselves, *asewo* ('prostitutes')'.⁴⁰ He had got to know a certain older man in Lagos, who he had been spending time with. He also knew an older woman. He asked them to go for him to her parents, to represent his parents. They helped him. First he did the introduction, then paid the dowry. Her father and mother accepted him for their daughter and in 1946 he was married.⁴¹

On his wedding night, she came to the house. To his surprise, she was a virgin. She was grown up and he thought that she must have gone after men. He was very pleased. There was a great ceremony the next day. People were so happy that she had not gone after men. They sang so many songs, his friends had a drum and were beating it, singing. He sent a message home that he had married a wife and that she was a virgin, but they said 'keep your wife yourself, what of the one here?' She got pregnant immediately and gave birth in February 1947. When she delivered, he sent a message to Ado and his parents came to Lagos. When they arrived, they were so surprised. They said, 'we thought you had married an old woman!'. People in Ado said at that time that when men went to Lagos they married 'harlots' or old women. On the third day after naming, his parents took her back to Ado with them and she came back to Lagos four months later.

As in Başiru's case, unmarried men were now able to seek partners of their own choice in other places and abandon the wives arranged for them at home. For the men who were already married when they started to migrate for work, their wives were left behind. Many of the migrants took the junior wife and left other wives behind, then scarcely visited them. And when men were away, as one man put it, 'you might expect anything to happen'. These wives sometimes stayed with their in-laws, but others returned to their father's house and many remarried, often by seduction.

Many older women were given a small amount of starting capital by their husbands on marriage, or used the money they were given at the naming ceremony of their first child to set themselves up in business.⁴² By the 1940s, daughters working for their mothers were able to secure small gains to amass their own capital, by selling goods for a higher price than the asking price their mother had instructed them to offer. In his account of changing marriage practices, Chief Ajuwon pointed to further changes in the 1940s; as men had started moving into wage labour and determining their own lives, younger as well as older women were moving into trade:

It was in the 1940s that ladies (unmarried women) started to do *karakata* (buying and selling) from one market to another. Before then women stayed in the town and they would be at the *eku epo* (place of making palm oil) from morning until night, or if mat making they would be at home all day and then bring their mats to Oja Osi (the mat market) in the evening.

At the night market, in the 1940s and 1950s, these 'ladies' would meet young men under the cover of darkness. And as they moved around town, or travelled on lorries, they might be spotted by a man seeking a wife. Sometimes the man would find out about the woman he had seen, then approach her parents. But, in the 1940s, it became increasingly common for him to directly ask the girl if she had any interest in him, or begin to flirt with her. Sabitu told me of how he had met his first wife during this time when he worked doing washing for people; she used to come to play with him and he would tease her that when she grew up he was going to marry her. Soon enough, they were married.

Increasingly, a woman's right to refuse a husband chosen for her was acknowledged by the parents. Iya Dayo, who married in the mid-1940s, married the brother of her father's junior wife. Her step-mother paid the dowry for her brother and was instrumental in making

the match. Iya Dayo was quite happy with it and told me that even though she had not chosen the man herself, 'if someone had asked me to marry him and I had no interest then I would have refused'. Other women of her age told me that they were asked by their fathers whether they wanted to marry the men who approached their fathers for permission to court them. For those fathers who attempted to retain the old ways of doing things, the reaction of some of these young women to the husbands they were offered was not quite what they were expecting.

Changing Fortunes

As women had begun to establish their own trade, some realised that they no longer needed to obey their fathers. There were men around with their own money who wanted to marry them, irrespective of what their parents had planned for them. Cases that were exceptional in the time of Iya Abiola now became much more common, with women refusing to go to husbands and breaking off engagements made without their consent. Arranged marriages continued into the 1960s, particularly in Muslim families, but from the 1940s onwards women started to seek and secure the right to choose for themselves.⁴³ Just as education, trade and wage labour had changed the opportunity structure for men, so too were women beginning to benefit from the loosening of parental authority. And for their parents, of a generation where this kind of behaviour was regarded as reprehensible, a generation in which women and men were not even allowed to speak to each other before marriage, let alone flirt with men in the street or the market, these shocks resounded.

Chief Kuyebi argued that, 'before the 1940s and 1950s, it was very rare for women to pack out and stay alone. It would happen only where there is a real quarrel, not economic reasons only... (as it does) these days'. But for those who contracted marriages in the late 1940s and early 1950s, opportunities in town began to offer them alternatives. The years of hardship for farmers (see Chapter 2) were a time when women were starting to make money from independent trade. When WWII ended, fortunes picked up again and trade began to flow. During the 1950s, traders in Ado began to benefit from the location of the town on routes that linked Lagos, as well as Abeokuta, with Badagry. Lorries would pass through the town, bringing traders from far afield who would rest in Ado before continuing their journey to market. The dramatic rise of cocoa prices in the late 1940s and early 1950s injected increasing amounts of money into the economy (Bauer 1954, Galletti et al. 1956, Helleiner 1966). Trade boomed and in the western region consumption of imported goods rocketed to the highest level in Africa as a whole (Galletti et al. 1956:12).⁴⁴ Traders took advantage of these new market opportunities.⁴⁵ Ado's farmers were not so lucky (see Chapter 2).

Once again, subtle shifts in the balance of economic power between husbands and wives placed those women who had become involved in the distributive sector in a better economic position than many of their husbands.⁴⁶ Prior to this time, many women had

worked in complementary occupations to those of their husbands, processing or marketing farm products for their own share of the gain. In the 1950s market relations came to play a greater part in the processing sphere in the towns. Those farmers whose wives sought other means of generating income became 'customers' for the women who were engaged in processing. Women could seek better deals and buy their raw produce elsewhere; others were no longer willing to labour for their husbands, devoting their time instead to their own trading careers.⁴⁷ But as a result, women were coming to shoulder more and more of the responsibility for catering for the family. Some women, especially those married to polygynist husbands, had to cope without even the bare minimum of assistance towards the cost of household provisioning. Meanwhile, educated men began to assume positions as providers as the new masculinities modelled on colonial expectations came to redefine male responsibilities. Like Mrs Osinowo's husband, some men wanted their wives to be 'housewives' and to stay at home, under their control; making regular payments of *owo onje* came to be equated with 'being a man' (see Chapter 5) and with a masculinity that situated husbands as the primary breadwinners (see Lindsay 1996).

As increasing numbers of men migrated to the urban centres for work, more and more marriages were contracted with 'strangers'.⁴⁸ Women from 'outside', especially from Lagos, were treated with great suspicion by Ado people who feared for their son's safety and sense. As in Basiru's case, such women were presumed to have dissolute ways. Ado women were still thought of as chaste, but what were seen as 'city ways' were creeping into the town. One man in his fifties told the tale of his mother who 'misbehaved' by going to night parties until, he told me, she was finally killed in the early 1950s by a medicine to kill her boyfriend that backfired. It became less and less scandalous for women to have lost their virginity before marriage. And pregnancy before marriage became more common.

In 1955, free primary education was introduced in the Western Region. And what followed was portrayed by many as a direct result of girls entering schools in larger numbers than ever before. School offered girls opportunities to mix freely with boys. It was this, people said, that led to all kinds of misbehaviour. With it came marriages that were contracted between individuals, increasingly without reference to the desires or designs of their parents. As Mr Akinwonmi put it: 'people saw themselves as entitled to rights. They started to make up their minds as to what they wanted and how they wanted it'. As a result, divorce began to take on a more economic character, he suggested. On the one hand, women were leaving less successful partners for richer men and going to the courts to dissolve marriages in numbers.⁴⁹ Previously, or so men of that generation told me, most men were not in a position nor of the inclination to marry more than one or two wives.⁵⁰ Chiefs and wealthy 'big men' might have taken numerous wives to swell their fortunes further (Guyer 1993, Barber 1995), but the 'ordinary man' stuck with two or so: and they tended to stay with him. It was, they said, in the 1950s that men who had money started to marry numbers

of wives, to swell their importance: a wealth in people that some did little to maintain. Iya Safuratu, a petty trader in her 60s, was one of these women. She told me,

Some women will marry the husband and be responsible for their feeding and everything. That has been my fate. But my children will repay me in time. Some may have a husband catering for them but no issue. But I have had many children and they are helping me now.

Her story illustrates the options that were open to women like her in the 1950s:

Iya Safuratu was born around 1930 and began trading independently with help from her mother in the mid-1940s, ten years before she married. She went by foot to buy and resell fish from Ilogbo to villages around at first, then collected *ifin* (reeds) further south at Ajido to sell in Ado. When her senior brother married his first wife, he went to farm on his mother's father's land and she followed him there. The man she married was a friend of his and used to visit him there. When she was 'a bit grown up' there was a man she wanted to marry, but he did something that was not good. It turned out that he was a thief. He had paid *isihun* (betrothal fee) and once she realised she didn't want him, money had to be found to repay the amount.

That's how she came to accept that friend of her brother as a husband. He paid N20 to the court to release her. That husband was in money and had three wives. She was the youngest. After her he married another seven, five of whom had no children for him and left after having spent up to five years trying to get pregnant. She had five children for him altogether, two of whom died. Her husband did not cater for his wives at all. The only person who helped was his father and only when the wives were pregnant or nursing at that.

When the husband's father died, she had one more child. At that time, she was making palm oil from the fruit her husband brought from the farm and helping her husband on the farm. Then the husband told her that she should not step onto his farm again, so she packed out. He had just married another wife and said that new wife should do everything and she should not touch the field. So she waited until the new wife had had a child and left on the day after the naming ceremony. She had to leave her children behind. She went to stay with her parents and managed to begin to trade in kola (see Chapter 7), saving small amounts of money until she had the amount ready to refund to him. She told me of the day that she went to the court herself to pay that amount and proudly showed me a receipt that she had kept all these years: from 1963.

Like Iya Safuratu, women were now in a position where - slowly, slowly - they could save some of the proceeds from their trading activities and save the amount needed to release themselves from marriages. Whereas women had needed to have another man in the wings to cater for them before they could leave, they were gradually acquiring the means in the late 1950s to free themselves from unhappy marriages and to make their own choices not only of whom they would marry but whether they would stay. Character, family and popularity had, for long, mattered more in the selection of partners than their direct wealth. As the 1960s dawned money began to make more and more of a difference.

Love and Money

By the 1960s it was fairly common for women to be pregnant before marriage;⁵¹ and by this time dowry was not paid if they were.⁵² The normative expectation of dowry payment remained, however, evidenced by one revealing case from 1968 in which the petitioner claims that nothing had been paid 'with the excuse that she loved the respondent during that time' and that she had moved in with her husband without informing her parents. The court heard this with some amazement, arguing 'how could it be possible to pack there without receiving anything' (Ado Customary Court 1/68).⁵³ But over the next few years they were to hear many more cases such as these. Although arranged marriages still took place, obligation to parents' wishes and a sense of duty had given way to more and more relationships formed through attraction and love - as well as money. Like this example, civil court records of the time contain several references to 'love': cases such as one where a woman testifies that, 'I have no love for him and I was asked to love him' or where a man talks of how he 'fell in love' with a woman, whose father testified that he was 'consulted that the plaintiff was falling in love with (her)'.⁵⁴ And in several cases, women bringing suits had moved in with or been sent, pregnant, to their husbands without parental consultation. The cases they brought spoke of changing expectations, of women who demanded that their husbands 'provide proper care' and who 'packed out' if they did not.

The meaning of marriage was changing. Once a functional bond wrought through links between families, marriage in the 1960s had become more of a relationship between individuals. Although families still influenced the shape of marriages, either through the day-to-day relationships of women with the other women of the house or through the possibilities women had for applying parental pressure to neglectful husbands, women had greater scope for entering and leaving marriages on their own terms. While this relationship was often not particularly close, let alone 'intimate' in the sense of companionship, the seeds for new kinds of conjugal arrangement, sown earlier, began to take root. These revolved, on one hand, around individual choice and, on the other, around women's desire for children and the economic benefits that might accrue from contracting relationships with wealthy men.

Like Iya Safuratu, there were a few women who sought divorce to sever ties with husbands they wanted nothing more to do with. Men could simply neglect or send away their wives: there was no need to divorce them and none of the divorce cases in Ado's court at this time were brought by men.⁵⁵ Significant differences between the pursuit of divorce by Muslim women, many of whom were traders, and those of other faiths exceed the probable proportion of women of different religious affiliations in Ado at that time.⁵⁶ By all accounts, few women bothered with divorce simply to be free unless they wanted to release themselves from levirate arrangements. Divorce was only strictly necessary if women wanted to have more children with another man; and second marriages involved no ceremony and, if no dowry

needed to be refunded, no payments either. If women left their husbands and became pregnant by another man, substantial adultery fines could be sought by their ex-husbands no matter how many years they had been separated. From court records from 1966 onwards it is apparent that some women were still running that risk. Cases of 'adultery' show that the genitor, rather than the legal husband, was considered the 'real father' of the child: paternity cases were extremely rare (see Chapter 8).

Parents came to acquiesce to their daughters returning home earlier in their life courses. Several women who left their husbands during this time told me of how they had been threatened by their co-wives and left seeking safety (see Chapter 6). By this time, some of their mothers had experienced similar difficulties and fathers' concerns for their daughters' safety, as well as their general well being, gave younger women a little more latitude. Custody arrangements provided a significant disincentive to the formal dissolution of marriages, but the option of moving out and going home if there was trouble with a co-wife was one that allowed some women to take their children with them as long as they did not set up home with another man. If women left their husbands rather than sought a safer place to live and maintained the relationship, they would have to leave their children. Men continued - and continue - to be seen as the 'owners' of children and many were reluctant for their wives to take their children to be brought up outside the orbit of their influence (see Chapter 8).

While in the 1960s, women began to look for richer men, men also became more aware of the potential offered by wives who had built successful careers (see Chapter 5).⁵⁷ Throughout the 1960s, women consolidated their economic pursuits (see Chapter 7). Many farmers maintained two residences, a house in town and a place to live in the farm hamlets surrounding the town with wives in each. If he had two wives, one might be left on the farm, spending the week with her husband, and the other in town where he would return for Friday or Sunday prayers. But as new economic opportunities opened up for women, they were more reluctant to stay on the farm and work with their husbands. Women began to take a more active part in the growing economy of the town and to move around other urban centres for trade. Under the tutelage of mothers or aunts, those women who did not go to school had already started running their own trading concerns, like Iya Safuratu, by the time they married; some, like her, continued to support themselves.

Husbands assumed and retained positions as the directors and advisers of some of the women I spoke with, helping and sometimes guiding them through their choices of occupation (see Chapter 7). Wives sought advice and sometimes permission from their husbands; and some men barred their wives from pursuits like moving around villages to trade, because of the men they might meet there. But not all of the women I spoke to who married at this time had received *owo okowo* (trading capital) from their husbands: some were helped by sisters, mothers, other female relatives. And many made their own choices. Increasingly, women were becoming completely financially independent, capable of

supporting their hearth-holds alone (cf. Sudarkasa, 1973). As they earned more money, many began to keep the amounts they gained secret from their husbands. Elizabeth, a poultry farmer in her 60s, told me that once women started earning good money, they feared that if their husbands knew how much they had they would either stop giving them assistance for household expenses or, worse still, borrow from them to pay for another wife (see Chapter 5). A number of women that I spoke to left arranged marriages during this period and sought new relationships with partners they had met in town.⁵⁸ Some of these relationships were struck up en route to markets further afield, others when men made produce buying trips to villages, others still in the houses of friends.

During the early 1960s, numbers of men became more involved in the endless round of political rallies that shaped the emerging republic, neglecting their farms (see Chapter 2). When crisis struck in the mid-1960s, the period of neglect had taken its toll. One Alhaji, who took four wives during the 1960s, said: 'I thought to myself what do I have to give these people? I have the power to feed them'. Yet many men were no longer providing adequately for their families. As Chief Ajuwon pointed out: 'if you don't cater for the wife, she will have to do something for herself'. And women, doing something for themselves, dug their heels in. Many refused to return to the farms. While their husbands were away on the farm, their wives stayed in his compound in town or 'packed' to their parents to stay there. Men who married during this time told me stories of wives who went after men and refused to obey them: the kind of behaviour which, by the 1970s, seemed to be getting worse.

Joseph, an educated man in his 60s, told me of a catalogue of errant wives whom he'd married in succession from the late 1950s onwards. Wife after wife took lovers, disobeyed his orders and had even made threats to his life. Eventually he found what he was looking for: he talked of his wife as someone who obeys his instructions and does not mess around with other men. Joseph stuck, more or less, to serial monogamy. Some polygynists had equally traumatic stories to tell, of warring wives and of a series of marriages in which they juggled each new wife with the others, losing one or more in the process. Women who had experienced *ija orogun* (fights between the wives) told me of their fears, and frustration, with the situations they were in during this period; some endured, but when there was too much trouble they 'packed' and went home (see Chapters 5 and 6). And cases that were still relatively rare in the 1960s came to be much more common.

City Ways

The growth in trade in the 1960s (see Chapter 2) offered women greater opportunities to make money and successful women had begun to build their own houses by the end of the decade. By the 1970s numbers of women had secured personal livelihoods that left them completely economically independent of and sometimes wealthier than their husbands. A substantial majority of women in Ado continued to engage in trade in local goods, principally

foodstuffs (see Chapter 2). While some women became wealthy, for many the economic gains that accrued from this work were not sufficient for accumulation on any scale (cf. Berry, 1985). Children who might have worked for them were attending school in increasing numbers, leaching profits from trade. Husbands remained responsible for paying school and medical fees, for putting down *owo onje* and providing for the family. But as women were able to contribute more, some men began to resent being required to contribute (see Chapter 5); and some did little or nothing to assist, leaving their wives to provide for the day-to-day needs of children.

For women and men alike, educating their children was an important priority. Iya Anike, a trader in her 50s, told me 'for all the money I spent on educating my children, I could have built a house. But I am happy to see them now living a better life'. Together with their husbands, some women were able to support their children through higher education. Some, like Iya Anike, did this unassisted. Of those who became successful through shrewd marketing of local commodities, and others who made their fortunes in imported goods such as cloth, *panla* (stockfish) and *galura* (dye for mats), building their own houses became not only an expression of that wealth but also a route to further autonomy. For in these houses, they could set the agenda for relationships with men secure from the fear that any day the husband could bring home a troublesome new wife, or just tell them to go. Others were able to leave earlier on in their life-courses to set up trade in nearby towns, where they could enter into relationships outside the control of in-laws (cf. Sudarkasa, 1973).

Women became increasingly unwilling to put up with being treated badly by husbands who did not fulfil their expectations or with the contests with co-wives over access to a husband's resources, that were becoming more acute with the demands of educating their children (see Chapter 6). Before this time, people told me, women would move out of one relationship straight into the next: seeking divorce, once the relationship had become intolerable, then remarrying almost immediately. Women 'packing out' to return to live with natal kin, without a husband in line, and remaining there without cohabiting with a man again - becoming an *ilemoşu* ('I'll live in my own house') - began to be seen in Ado (see Chapter 5). Regarded as 'city ways' and as due to a woman's behaviour rather than her condition, these kinds of women were frowned upon. But as their numbers grew, other 'city ways' followed. Men, recounting broken marriages of this era, reported their wives going to night parties, dressing extravagantly in beautiful cloth and taking lovers. Such wives, they said, became rude and troublesome, refusing to obey their orders and answering back all the time. As one man put it, it would be said of such women, '*o ti di eja gbigbe ko see ka*' ('they have become like dried fish, you can't bend them'): they are so set in their ways that they can't be changed. Lovers, with money, offered fun outside marriages and tempted women into them. People talk of the 1970s as a time when men with money began to amass wives, only to find that as fortunes declined in the mid to late 1980s their women went elsewhere.

The oil crisis of 1981 sent a wave of shocks throughout the economy. By the time the Structural Adjustment Programme was inaugurated in 1986, the easy life fuelled by the oil boom had started to collapse (see Chapter 2). As the economy lurched, cross-border smuggling boomed (Asiwaju 1991). For the young men who were the principal beneficiaries of this trade, smuggling offered them the chance to take as many wives as they wished. People told me how unmarried and married women alike, impressed by the conspicuous consumption of these men, began to follow them in droves. For them, marriage to Ado's farmers or craftsmen may have been far less glamorous than the chances these '*fayawo* boys' offered them to have fancy clothes and a relatively easy life.⁵⁹ With rolls of cash, the *fayawo* boys would spend and spend on girlfriends; behaviour that Mr Aroboto, an educated international businessman in his 40s, suggested as representing the dangers of having acquired the money illicitly and therefore the desire to blow it on pleasure rather than give it to their wives to cover mundane expenses.

Retired customary court judges, Yele Akinwonmi and Chief Kuyebi, situated the spate of divorces that filled the courts in the later 1980s as directly driven by the disparities in wealth that the allure of the *fayawo* boys offered. Some of the marriages contracted in this period were very short-lived. A proverb Mr Akintomide told me cautions, *iyawo ti a ba fi ijo fe iran ni yo wo lo* - the wife you met at a party will desert you at another. During this period, longer-term relationships also petered out as women sought other husbands who would provide for them better.

In the early 1990s, as austerity hit harder, people had become more sanguine about marriage possibilities. For some men the increasing economic austerity of the SAP era has brought about a situation in which they are practically dependent on their wives, with a significant impact on their bargaining power within conjugal relationships (see Chapter 5). Others are now in situations where many of their wives are earning as much as them. What effects have been brought about by a shift in the balance of economic power in favour of women, enabling them to accrue independent incomes and survive with virtually no assistance from their husbands? Alhaja Oluwatosin, a wealthy (female) contractor, noted:

In the olden days, men were the producers and women were just consumers. Women in Ado didn't have much of an idea about making money. They depended on men to feed them. If men failed to cater for the children, they would move out to another husband who would give them feeding allowance as they would be suffering too much. Out of necessity they would have to leave their children behind. These days, women do not expect their husbands to do much for them. They have many different jobs and more skills in trading. They can face the children and use their money to educate them. This has meant that there are fewer divorces, as women just put up with men due to fear of losing their children.

Women who have acquired the means of economic independence may choose to remain in unhappy marriages because of the children, a choice that may have been denied to them when they were economically dependent. 'Out of necessity' women were forced to leave marriages

and find another male partner, just as 'out of necessity' women seek 'helpers' (lovers, see Chapter 5) when their husbands are failing in their conjugal duties. And now, they can literally afford to stay. Several other commentators in Ado, including Yele Akinwonmi and Chief Kuyebi, confirmed a falling divorce rate over the last few years. Their explanation was that when there was a lot of money around, women were leaving their husbands left, right and centre and marrying men with more money. As the economic situation worsened, marriages began to fall apart as the men no longer had the means to support strings of wives. By the late 1980s, it seems, divorce had reached a peak and from then onwards it has declined.

Clearly, their explanations draw on the discourse of women being 'after money' with which I began this chapter. But their observations raise a number of intriguing possibilities. If there has been a decrease in divorce, is this necessarily a case of women-in-general putting up with their lot in life? Divorce signals an intention to remarry. It seems plausible that it is precisely this intention to remarry, or even to marry at all, that is on the decrease. A drop in divorce would certainly fit with the kind of resignation that those women who remained in cohabiting relationships to look after their children expressed. And it would fit with the women who take lovers as 'helpers', or seek satisfaction from another man outside their marriages (cf. Oruboloye et al. 1991). But it would also fit with the increasing numbers of women who have children by men without cohabiting, or 'pack out' of unhappy marriages to live without a husband: those women who become *ilemoṣu*. Quite what 'marriage' has come to mean in contemporary Ado requires further examination, raising further questions about the subject positions available to women as 'wives' and men as 'husbands' within and beyond these relationships, as I go on to consider further in the next chapter.

Changing Expectations

Talk of 'the olden days' represents female sexuality as so completely bound up with reproduction that the only reason for women to have sex with men was to have children.⁶⁰ Many older women maintained an attitude towards sex as a duty, to be endured in order to have children until the time they could declare to their husbands that they were now 'grown up' (*emi na ti dagba*), too old for sex.⁶¹ These women talked of their marriages in terms of men 'giving' them 'a conception (*oyun*)'; their children were the focus of their life energies, their love and their hopes for the future.⁶² Marriages, arranged by parents, left many women of this generation with little choice but to make the best of their situations. And marriage brought them 'under a man' until the time that they stopped having children. Even if the woman failed to conceive, she might still be expected to stay with her husband. Over their life-courses, relationships with their husbands came to matter less and less until they became practically irrelevant. When older women cautioned their juniors to do their duty, they did so from the position of having had to do this themselves: sometimes, it seemed, out of

exasperation with the fuss younger women were making. The message of 'endurance' that they gave to younger women was one based on personal experience; and it was one that was not untinged with a little bitterness at times. For life had not panned out in quite the way they expected.

For women of this generation, women who are now the mothers of adult men and even of adult grandchildren, relationships with their husband were a peripheral part of their lives.⁶³ When they told me their life histories, marriages made fleeting appearances; they talked about their work, about the problems they had having children and bringing them up. Accounts of *igba atijò* described a time in which polygyny rarely created friction, this was not the past of the lived experience of many older women I spoke with. While co-wives might have been tolerated, for lack of viable alternatives, relations were often far from harmonious. Many women stuck it out, but some took their children to live elsewhere and maintained a relationship with their husbands in which they were still his 'wives'; he would come to visit them, they could come and go from his compound as they wished and they would attend ceremonies as the mothers of his children. And for those who stayed, once their children had survived into adulthood there was no good reason to stay. When I asked older women who had separated from their husbands whether they had thought of marrying again, they looked at me in astonishment: 'What would I need a husband for?', one woman scoffed; 'why would I want a husband when I have my children?', said another; and several echoed the words of yet another, 'No, never! My children are my husband!'. The idea of remarrying for sex or companionship didn't seem to come into it.

These days, some women stay with their husbands for longer; and many leave much earlier. Companionate marriages are still rare, but occasionally a husband and wife can be seen spending time together, sharing stories about the day, enjoying each other's company.⁶⁴ Women in the prime of their lives may enjoy relationships of greater respect with their husbands. For their mothers' generation, this would be the time in their life courses when they might move out to join their children or go back to their own *idile*. For women who are now in their fifties, there are other options. And these have come to depend more on the quality of the relationships they have with their husbands. This is the time in one's life, one successful trader in her mid-40s told me, that women start to re-assess their options:

Before that time the man might be going here and there for work, living in other places. The woman can have lovers if she wants and she has her children around her to keep her occupied, to keep her company and to help her. Once they have grown up, or left to marry or to work she's got more time on her hands, is more comfortable with her business. That's the time she starts to ask herself questions and thinks about her relationship with her husband. It's a time when you'll see whether the love is there, when you'll want to be petted by him and for him to pet you. And if there's no love, then the woman can decide to pack out.

Such women might expect to enjoy the fruits of their labour together with their husbands as they grow old. Yet these hopes can be dashed when their husbands marry younger wives.

Those who have endured marriages for the sake of their children may look forward to the day when they can move out. Women often talked of the desire they had to build their own houses, into which they would move when that day came: over the last two decades, numbers of women have done precisely this. For many, however, their dreams never see the light of day; their money is used up instead, on educating children, on paying for treatment when they are sick, or absorbed by the losses of running a business in such an uncertain economic climate.⁶⁵

Women in the middle years of their life courses seem to have few illusions about men or about marriage, but have higher expectations than their mothers or grandmothers. For them, duty continues to make a difference; reputations are also at stake. Especially for those who are devout Christians, the vows 'till death do us part' make 'packing out' a choice that may be hard to countenance, courting the disapproval of others in their congregations. Yet while for older women, endurance was about getting on with getting by, often with minimal support from their husbands, women in their thirties and forties expect more. If a man begins to neglect or mistreat them, they might start to consider their exit routes and talk with friends or relatives, then make a move. Whereas their own mothers may have been chastised and sent back by their fathers if they 'packed' back home, for women of this generation establishing their own hearth-holds elsewhere is now a viable option. Some women hedge their bets by taking lovers, whose assistance helps them look after their children and whose attentions help make up for their husbands' neglect.⁶⁶ Other women express their discontent more overtly. They may argue with the husband, remonstrating him for being 'useless'. They may resort to 'packing out' for a while (see Chapter 5). Sometimes arguments can backfire and the husband drives the wife out just to teach her a lesson, withholds money and sex from her, or beats her for being 'rude'.

While their mothers or grandmothers might have accepted the arrival of a new wife with resignation, most younger women and many middle-aged women are less willing to acquiesce. Women who have suddenly become *iyale*, senior wives, have the choice of seeking to make relations as peaceful as possible to give themselves an easier life or fighting to eject the newcomer. The *iyawo* may well fight back: or initiate the battle. Older women may 'pack' in exasperation at the behaviour of young wives and younger wives can gang up and force out the women who as *iyale* (senior wife) they might once have been forced to respect: harboured resentment, suspicion and jealousy can ferment in these spaces (see Chapter 6). Men may have created the possibilities for these conflicts, but are virtually powerless to prevent them. They are also at risk.⁶⁷ As one male herbalist put it, 'when a man marries two wives, he marries an enemy; when he marries four wives, out of those two or three can be enemies'. And it is not only co-wives who can create difficulties (see Chapter 6).

Younger women, entering into or contemplating marriage, have a greater range of options available to them than those in the generation of their mothers and grandmothers. Yet

changing expectations exacerbate old tensions and give rise to new uncertainties. For their grandmothers, choices made by their parents revolved around the stature and standing of a man as someone from a family known to them; husbands gave them pregnancies and it was to their children that they looked for affection and security. For the secondary school students whose views I surveyed, the love of their partner emerged as their principal criterion for a good marriage.⁶⁸ Many expressed the intention to remain with their partner 'till death do us part', even if they were unable to bear children together (see Chapter 8). Most regarded the prospect of polygyny with horror, pointing out all the difficulties that can arise. Among the unmarried apprentices I surveyed, character (*iwa*) and education (*imọ*) were more important to both young men and young women; they too expressed considerable negativity about the prospect of polygyny. Young men told me about their 'toasting' strategies (how to successfully chat up women), making distinctions between the kind of woman that they could toast and end up in bed with shortly afterwards, a kind of 'one night stand', and those who took longer to persuade, the kinds of women who they regarded as eligible for a longer-term relationship. Who these young men ended up 'marrying', however, might depend on whether or not a woman became pregnant by them, if they weren't careful. For young unmarried women, peer group pressure, the persistent demands of their boyfriends, empty stomachs and feelings of love and desire all figure in their sexual behaviour (cf. Akuffo 1987). Much as they might desire a glamorous wedding and a respectable marriage, the risks and uncertainties of relationships may put them in situations where they simply have to cope somehow with what happens and find ways of managing (see Chapter 8).

The Good Old Days? Perspectives on Change

N''igba atijọ the idea of 'useless men' was almost unthinkable, or so it seems from representations of the 'good old days'. And the image of women of the 'olden days' as dependent, nurturing and above all faithful wives and mothers, who managed and endured, embraces fewer and fewer of today's women in the eyes of those whose complaints focus on their behaviour and choices. Encroaching into the spaces left by their disappearance are women who are cast as 'troublesome'; women whose very desires, let alone their rights, had been absolutely passed over in the 'good old days'. Expectations of what a 'husband' or 'wife' should do or be have their own historicity, bound up in complex ways with changing notions of responsibility and of agency. Over the course of this century, competing discourses on masculinity have created complex arenas for contestation over men's obligations. The impact of colonial notions of marriage, specifically of men as providers, and of the discourses drawn upon by proponents of Islam and Christianity have reconfigured the ways in which claims and contests over conjugal obligations may be played out. Recourse to 'tradition', to *igba atijọ*, frames some of the current uncertainties and conflicts over the allocation of rights

and duties within a timeless order that is invested with a moral authority that women and men, young and old, make recourse to in bemoaning the present.

The emergence of categories of women who are cast as openly defiant and disobedient (the *ẹja gbigbe* kind of character, who will not change her ways), women who are unwilling to endure (the *ilemoṣu*) and women who pursue men for sex and cash (*aṣewo*, women who 'do it for money'), has come to assume a disproportionate amount of space within discourses on change. These are categories of the present, although those who inhabit them can be imagined for the past. And these labels, attached to women who attempt to assert their prerogative, as well as those who go too far in their search for cash or for fun, are deployed to attempt to restrict the spaces women in their reproductive years might enter. *Igba atijọ* serves as more than a moral caution to these women. It comes to represent not only the resentment of ageing parents, but also their *own* longing: for a time when women could expect support from their husbands and knew that most women were sufficiently restrained from enjoying affairs to pose no threat to their livelihoods. These days, who knows who might be the lover of a husband who goes out in the evenings and returns deep into the night.

The *igba atijọ* where co-wives ate from the same pot, a pot that was partially filled with food the husband provided, and where women knew their place, describes an ideal that today's times leave far behind. Marriage has come to take on an entirely new complexion, offering diverse possibilities: from companionate relationships based on love, to emotionally distant cohabiting arrangements in which the man is not only rarely present in the house but does not provide anything towards its upkeep, to relationships existing only through a link a child provides between parents who have never lived together and whose interactions may revolve only around negotiating claims for the upkeep or custody of the child. The attention focused on those wayward women who appear to gain their upkeep from the wads of cash 'sugar daddies' or '*fayawọ* boys' offer them expresses more than moral disapproval. For they have come to represent a means of getting things the 'easy way'. For the vast majority of women in Ado, life is by no means easy.

Igba atijọ is redolent with the concerns of the present. Although women in the later phases of their life-courses are less likely to be regarded as pursuing men and money, they too are 'women of today': occupying a similar historical space, that of the present, mediated through their experiences as members of a generation. Their own thoughts and feelings on how the behaviour of others directly affects them also need to be taken into account in locating their remarks on *igba atijọ*. Their positions are taken up as not only commentators but also as actors: as mothers, protective of their children, anxious for grandchildren, concerned about being provided for in old age; as mothers-in-law, competing for a share of resources of love as well as care; as senior wives whose husbands bring obstinate new wives home, who may use their sexual allure or medicine to encourage the husband to drive them away (see Chapter 6).⁶⁹ And the men who echoed the womens' concerns spoke not only as the

men who might be giving women money or contending with wives whose expectations exceed their means, but also as fathers whose capacity to intervene has been eroded; or as elderly husbands of younger women who worry about satisfying them sexually.

For young people, too, responses are mediated by their own subject-positions that locate them in particular ways in the historical space marked by the present. The tales their elders would spin about the 'olden days' resonate with some of the concerns that occupied them at this stage in their life-courses. This may be 'the time of yuppies (who) want to enjoy their life before they go to the husband', as a woman in her 20s put it, but it also a time when the uncertainties of modern life raise complex challenges for young people. For these young people, growing up in an ever more competitive and economically uncertain environment, life is tough. Yes, young people said, girls are 'after money'. But this might be due to more than simply their moral weakness. For a start, they pointed out, if a young woman is not cared for properly by her parents, she might spend the whole day without eating and will need some money somehow. If all her friends have fine clothes, she will feel bad if she hasn't got anyone to give her those things. Young men without a kobo (penny) in their pockets see potential girlfriends going for men with money. They may try to seek romance with these young women, but find that they cannot compete with rivals who can offer them the kinds of things that their parents cannot provide. Young women, faced with peer pressure to have fashionable hairdos and expensive clothing, may succumb to other pressures knowing that gifts have their price. Looking neat, smelling nice, wearing good cloth: all of these things attract a better kind of man, one who might sooner or later become a father of a woman's children (see Chapter 8) or might carry her away from the hardships of the present. For some, this is less the stuff of romance than tactics for survival.

Discourses on intimate relationships resound with the disquiet not only of those whose sense of moral outrage is inflamed by the behaviour of women. It is easy to forget that the women who 'love money more than their husbands' or who 'do rubbish and nonsense all around', the 'harlots' who 'useless themselves' and for whom 'the next thing is pregnancy', are not only the potential recipients of the money and love of some women's husbands, brothers and sons, but also the daughters, sisters, friends and mothers of others. From the perspectives of those who join in the clamour of condemnation, changing contexts not only of marriage but also of having and bringing up children raise more immediate dilemmas. Young people speak about the uncertainties of their own futures, but also from subject positions as children left in the wake of shattered marriages to fend for themselves (see Chapter 8). Parents struggle to pay for a daughter's schooling, only to find one day that she announces her pregnancy and is off; sons may land their mothers with two more mouths to feed. Women who remain in marriages, struggling to endure, may be faced with infection with STDs or the prospect of a new wife that their husband brings home one day. Hostility from brother's wives in their *idile* may make prospects for their own fall-back positions less attractive. They

may take lovers not only for love, but for the means with which to support their children. As mothers and sisters as well as wives, women may be concerned about the *ero* another man puts on the wife with whom her husband, son or brother is sleeping, the *juju* used by their girlfriends, and now about the threat of HIV/AIDS that has begun to cast a deadly shadow over SW Nigeria (see Chapter 8, Ekweozor et al. 1994, Orubuloye et al. 1994).

Economic changes have offered women greater opportunities to make it for themselves; changes in marriage practices have given them the option not only to choose their partner but leave if they are not satisfied. But concerns about their children, as well as respectability, continue to anchor many women in cohabiting relationships that they describe as lacking in love and in money. And the very real economic gains women appear to have made in acquiring independent incomes have done little for the majority, who are left struggling with their heads barely above water. Women have had to secure not only a complementary income, but one that sustains them and their children in the face of the uncertainties of male support in the current economic climate. Success in careers as independent income earners has become even more imperative for women, who struggle to feed, clothe and educate their children (see Chapter 7). *Igba atijọ* as a time when 'big men' accumulated wives who they were in no position to feed and where hearth-holds were often left to fend for themselves rarely creeps into narratives of change. Instead, changes are framed in terms of current contests and the obligations of 'husbands' are cast in terms of their responsibilities to provide. Over this century these obligations have become an increasing cause for concern and for conflict. In the next chapter I take a closer look at discourses on and experiences of intimate relationships, situating changing expectations in some of the contexts of the present.

Chapter 5

For Love or Money

Women these days are only after money. There is no love. And because of money they are always running after men and don't obey their husbands again. (Iya Ibeji, female farmer, 50s).

I gave her N20 and she threw it back at me, telling me that I was useless and if I thought she could cook soup with N20 I should do it myself. (Bayo, male electrician, 30s).

Men in Ado-Odo have long expected subservience from their wives. But some of today's wives are no longer behaving themselves. Such women, or so people say, refuse to obey the husband's orders, fight with a man's other wives or mistresses and toy with other men. Their behaviour is cast in terms of 'endurance' (*farada*), perceived as a quality which is fast diminishing as economic austerity bites harder and thresholds of tolerance fall. While the marriages contracted by older women had to be endured until children were grown, there are younger women who vote with their feet and 'pack out', leave, if they are not satisfied. Bayo summed up the complaints of the men of his generation: '*awon obirin ma nparọ ọkọ bi eni parọ aṣọ*' (these women change their husbands as someone changes their cloth). While some of these women leave unsatisfying marriages to find another man, others live outside cohabiting relationships with men. And when they do, they become *ilemoṣu* ('I'll sleep in my own house'), women who are represented as resisting being chastened by the yoke of remarriage: neither for love nor money.

Contracted through choice, rather than by arrangement, contemporary marriages are a site for changing expectations and contested obligations. Relationships of choice offer a range of opportunities, reconfiguring intimate relationships between women and men. Research on women and marriage in other areas of urban Africa from the 1970s onwards has noted an instrumental character to the relationships 'modern' townswomen have with sexual partners.¹ In southwestern Nigeria, the behaviour of urban women has been a source of commentary and concern since the early colonial period. By the early 1970s, the errant ways of young women had become a familiar target for criticism in the Nigerian popular press;² a range of wayward female characters continue to occupy the pages of newspapers, popular comics and magazines of the 1990s, accompanied by moralising commentaries.³ The caricatured figures of the popular press - such as the *acadas* (female university students who seek wealthy lovers), 'sugar mummies' (wealthy women who take 'toy boy' younger lovers) and 'senior girls' (women who remain unmarried, pursuing careers and taking lovers) - may be more prominent in discourses on the vicissitudes of contemporary life in the urban centres, but

commentaries on the behaviour of younger women in Ado resound with similar concerns. Today's women are represented as wayward, troublesome and avaricious: women who are out for what they can get. Their pursuit of men's money is contrasted with the value of obedience and endurance -and of love.

Love (*ife*) and money (*owo*) are configured in complex and ambiguous ways in discourses on intimate relationships. *Ife* expresses as much a social relation as an affective state: it is always predicated on an-other, as its object. When women and men talked about love, they expressed it in terms of *doing something* for someone else; when they talked of 'doing something', they were talking about spending money. To 'spend and spend' on someone was, in many contexts, a sign of the love of the spender; a love that is never for-itself, but instead in itself constitutive both of the personhood of the spender and the social relations that spending enables. Expressed both as spending power and in terms of the part it plays in processes of 'self-realization' (Barber 1995:212), money is itself not merely a means but acquires an agentive character as in itself transformatory.

Money, then, is in itself a driving - and always unpredictable, mercurial - force that can transform not only social relations (Marx [1887]1954, Simmel [1900]1978, Belasco 1980) but people themselves (Barber 1995). Love is equally transformative; and the outcomes of such transformations are equally ambiguous and uncertain. The ways in which love and money are gendered offers insights into the ways in which competing discourses make available a range of often contradictory subject positions for men and women to take up (Hollway 1984, Laclau 1990). Discourses on love and money in intimate relationships counterpose the spending of money as expression of love within a relation of 'husband' and 'wife' with a pursuit of money, a love of money, that displaces 'husbands' and turns women into the antithesis of 'wives'.

In this chapter, I turn my attention to these discourses. Moore (1993) argues that much analysis of 'gender relations' turns on the husband/wife dyad, which is implicitly identified and elided with the categories 'male' and 'female'. As part of this process, other identities and relationships available to women and to men are obscured. It is precisely with regard to these other identities and through these other relationships that 'gender relations' also need to be located. This requires taking account of not only of relations within as well as between those who occupy the notional categories 'women' and 'men' (Moore 1993), but taking this further to examine the situational identities that actors may draw on or ascribe to others in interactions in particular settings and the ways that they circumscribe the agency of individual actors and impinge on how these relations are construed (Hollway 1984, Strathern 1988). Heterosexual partnerships offer a vantage point from which to explore the ways in which the categories 'men' and 'women' figure in the ways personhood and agency are construed in Ado. I do not wish to suggest that these relationships are themselves constitutive of 'gender relations', nor that they are analytically primary. Rather, I take these relationships as a

starting point from which to explore discourses on gender that ramify in other domains. Through ethnographic description, I highlight the complexity of conflicts and interests that surround heterosexual partnerships and consider some of the issues this raises about women and men, wives and husbands, love and money, marriage and morality.

Discourses on intimate relationships in Ado-Odo

Ifẹ owo ni obinrin ni ju ifẹ ọkọ rẹ - some women love money more than their husbands (Dayo, panel beater, 30s) .

There was rarely a day in Ado when I did not hear what came to be a familiar refrain: women these days are up to no good. The very pervasiveness and vehemence of these criticisms intrigued me. Situating those who passed judgement on others offered further puzzles. And, for me, these discourses offered further challenges on a more personal level (see Chapter 1). No-one spoke in defence of any of the women whose lives came up for discussion in gossip. Men blamed women; women blamed women. No-one seemed to blame men, although most women complained about them. I would ask: but what of the part played in this by men who offer women money or favours, those men who chase after women? My protests fell on deaf ears: women are to blame. What of men who seduce their friends' wives? The women are the ones who let them do this. And the '*fayawọ* (smuggler) boys' or 'sugar daddies' who tempt women with money? Those women let themselves be bought. The more I insisted on the agency of men, the more I was told that the problem lay with the behaviour of women. 'They are just selling their vaginas', said Mrs Odu. Abimbola, aged 19 and herself a lover of a married man, pronounced on the state of affairs:

These days girls are all corrupt and don't care about anything but money. The majority are just eat and run. They don't bother about love. What they need is money. They will be pretending to love the man and they need only his money.

She added that although the youth get blamed all the time, older women are also up to no good. She referred to a category of women called *ko s̄arugbo ni Ghana* (there is no old woman in Ghana⁴), who dressed up and went to parties, 'all those type of things that they are not expected to do'. And it is not only money that is at issue. Condemnation was poured on those women who were 'after sex' and 'like sex too much'.

I was offered images of women who might be expected to 'pack in and pack out' (i.e. move in and out of relationships with men) as it suited them, chasing after men for their money and then dumping them - or being dumped - when the money ran out. Yele Akinwonmi summed up the views of many men and women whom I spoke with:

These days a lot of women don't want to work. They believe that if a man has a lot of money to play with they'll follow him rather than staying with the husband who is struggling in the house.

I was told of unmarried women entertaining numerous boyfriends for the cash they provided and then, when pregnancy struck, not being able to work out who the 'real father' was (see Chapter 8). Married women maintained the face of respectability, bolstered by vigorous condemnation of the behaviour of young people. But from what others told me, the numbers of those who seek lovers not only as 'helpers', who give them money to assist with their children, but also for 'enjoyment' (*gbaadu*) and 'to have fun' (the English word 'fun' usually means sex) are legion.⁵ Cases were cited of married women who creep out at night, or take a detour from the market in the afternoon, for sessions with their lovers, remaining in marriages to be with their children and 'chasing after money here and there'.⁶ These women, people grumbled, are 'the kind who is never satisfied'. When I asked what women thought of those men who have girlfriends and 'outside wives' (see Karanja 1987, for Lagos) around town, one woman, in her 30s, said: 'that's what men are like. We can't do anything. We just have to endure'.

'That's what men are like' implied resignation about the fact that men are almost expected to have extra-marital sexual relations, something that is tacitly taken for granted. Ideas about the irrepressible sexual needs of men emerged in conversations with men in many contexts, from men who would tell me earnestly that if not for having several wives they would be forced to 'ease themselves' elsewhere, to the hydraulic model of male sexuality offered to me by one herbalist who compared the male body to a tank being continually filled by dripping water, in need of an outlet before it overflowed. Periods when women are 'unavailable' (during certain stages of pregnancy, when breastfeeding, when menstruating⁷) are often given as a justifications as well as the rationale for polygyny.⁸ According to this logic, men *have to* have 'girlfriends', especially when they only have one wife.⁹ Faced with a man's *need*, their wives are expected to 'endure'. Although women can refuse a man sex, I was told of cases where women were beaten by their husbands who interpreted their lack of interest as a sign that they were after another man. Certainly, there are periods in a woman's life when she is not able to have sex with her husband and when she is forced to 'endure' his pursuit of other women. But this convenient fiction breaks down on closer inspection. 'That's what men are like' refers less to an *unmet need* for sex in marriage, than to men's desire for *other* women.

Clearly, this implies a pool of women who are available to 'service' men's desires: women who they may well give money to since, as one man put it, 'you can't ride a woman without giving her something'. These women might be *aşewo* (lit. doing it for money), a term used to refer not only to professional sex workers but to any women who is known to take lovers. They may be *ilemoşu*, school students, apprentices and other unmarried women. But they might also be other men's wives. Stories about men approaching other men's wives were often told to me, by men and by women. 'Friends', one man muttered, 'can't be trusted. They may come to your wife when you are out and try to have something with her'.¹⁰ Lurid cases were told of such men being trapped by *leepo*, a medicine that acts as genital superglue,

causing the offending parties to stick together until they are released by an antidote. Husbands who suspect a wife to be up to no good may take the precaution of using *ero* or *magun*; if another man has sex with her, he will meet a horrible death.¹¹ Sometimes the medicine backfires and catches the husband instead. Wives also have recourse to medicines to prevent their husbands from sleeping around: *təşo*, a medicine that causes impotence when a man is with another woman. This, I was cryptically told, is rarely used and rarely given by herbalists.¹²

Hegemonic discourses on female sexuality emphasise containment: marrying and remaining 'to face their children and their work' (i.e. make these their primary concerns) rather than 'running here and there' after men, and money. Those women who had affairs were accused both of 'liking sex too much' and 'chasing here and there after money': women's sexuality was represented as unseemly excess *and* denied in the transformation of desire into the pursuit of cash.¹³ Women have a right to be 'sexed' by their husbands that can be invoked in disputes. Yet dominant discourses on female sexuality phrase this in terms of the right to be given a child. And once women have children, they are expected, and enjoined by others, to put up with unsatisfying relationships so that they can be there to look after their children. For, after all, as Peter, whose story appears later in this chapter, told me, 'that is what marriage is for, not for love or sex something or enjoyment, but to have issues'. Sex, for women, is, then, firmly tied to reproduction in these discourses; and the behaviour of wayward women is cast not only as 'unwifely', but in its dislocation of sex from reproduction is almost anti-reproductive. Over time, however, variant discourses on female sexuality have offered more of a space for the legitimacy of female sexual pleasure within a relationship (see Chapter 4). Younger women have come to expect more from their marriages; and for those in polygynous marriages, the issue of sexual jealousy and sexual satisfaction, as well as having children, can not only give rise to disputes between co-wives, but is also a concern for their husbands.¹⁴

Discourses on intimate relationships offer women a series of subject positions, many of which are residual, if not directly opposed, to the hegemonic respectable, obedient and enduring 'good wife'. Money, in these discourses, can turn a 'good wife' into a 'bad woman', whose lust for men is driven by a desire not for love but for their cash. Some of these subject positions - the *aşewo*, the *ilemoşu* - are the inverse of the 'good wife' (see Hoch-Smith 1978) and gain some of their force as negative stereotypes precisely because they imply the pursuit of money *rather than* love; others, such as mother, create ambiguities of power and control. People adopt particular situational subject positions in relation to others, positioning themselves differently according to the context. Speaking from the subject position of respectable wife, women may raise their voices in the clamour of complaint about the behaviour of those who go astray and wilfully defy the demands that the 'good wife' position makes of women. At issue for them is not necessarily that men have girlfriends, nor

even that men might feel *love* for other women but that they *spend money* on them. As mothers, they may themselves need to become other men's lovers to find ways of providing for their children or spurn offers of inadequate amounts of money rather than quietly, obediently, accepting whatever their husband offers. And as mothers-of-men, women may occupy subject positions in relation to which their sons become 'husbands' and their sons' wives are in direct competition with them over a man's resources (see Chapter 6). As I go on to suggest, it is in the slippage between other, often contradictory and competing, positions and that of 'wife' and 'husband' that further ambiguities lie.

A number of issues emerge from this discussion. Firstly, discourses on intimate relationships begin with and return to the ambivalent issues of love and of money. Money, in these discourses, is closely tied up with sex; it is also linked to the insubordinate behaviour of women who, armed with means to acquire money from sources other than their husbands, 'pack in and pack out' as they please. The association with the means of mobility with money from other men rather than with the reality of female economic autonomy conveniently masks the threat women's earnings can pose to male authority. Secondly, questions of immorality dwell on appropriate wifely behaviour and its antithesis, the unreliability of wives and of the apparent refusal of women such as *ilemoşu* to remain 'under a man'. Hegemonic discourses about 'husbands' and 'wives' make reference to models of gender in which there are elisions but there is also dissonance between discourses about women as 'wives' and as 'women', and men as 'husbands' and as 'men'. In the following sections, I take up some of these issues. I begin by taking a closer look at what 'marriage' consists of. Looking at the kinds of contests that arise in relationships around marital obligations and around money, I go on to draw on an extended case study of the disintegration of one marriage and its implications. I return, via a consideration of the ways 'husbands' and 'wives' figure in discourses about 'men' and 'women', to examine the ambiguities of love and money in contemporary intimate relationships.

Situating Marriage

Rather than considering 'marriage' (*igbeyawo* - 'taking/carrying a wife') as a stable category, the spectrum of sexual relationships between women and men needs to be situated as, in Burnham's words, 'a bundle of interactional possibilities' (1987:50) that can be drawn upon and modified by men and women in quite different ways. Some marry in the church or mosque, a very small number of people choose 'ring' or 'court' marriage, but most marry according to 'native law and custom'.¹⁵ Marrying 'in the native way' can cover a wide range of possibilities. Contemporary notions of marriage may evoke images of bridal gowns and elaborate wedding ceremonies. Among the elite, lavish marriages, like other ceremonies, continue to provide opportunities for conspicuous consumption and the display of largesse and self-importance. For many, however, today's marriages begin neither with payments nor

ceremonies but with pregnancy. Parents no longer choose husbands for their daughters, nor are many asked for their consent. Dowry is rarely paid. Many younger women simply move in with their lovers and give birth to children without any formality, as they might have remarried in the past (Guyer 1994). Few marry without having secured a pregnancy, as a potential insurance strategy on both sides: for the woman, to ensure that she will not fall prey to the malevolent designs of other women in the compound who might wish her to fail and be sent away (see Chapter 6), and for the man, to make sure his wife-to-be has not 'spoiled her insides' by having abortions or having contracted a sexually transmitted disease (see Chapter 8).

I was often told, 'there is no marriage without a child'; without a child there is no security within marriage and little hope of remaining as a man's only wife. These days, this saying has taken on a slightly different meaning as 'marriage' itself has come to refer to having a man's child. A woman who bears a man's child is often considered to be his 'wife', irrespective of whether any formalised arrangement has been made and where she lives. In the absence of a child, women are free to come and go, to try their luck elsewhere; it is accepted that all women need to have their own child (see Chapter 8). But co-parenthood creates ties that bind. Children anchor women in marriages while their children are growing, as they remain the 'property' of the man and can be claimed by him or his family at any time. Abandoning children to escape unhappy marriages is frowned upon by women and men of all ages. Mrs Odu commented that men can use this to their advantage, 'having children is a kind of way to tie her down not to leave him quickly as she won't want to leave her children'. But although mothers are often denied custody on separation or divorce, the relationship they have with the father of their children as co-parents can only be dissolved if the child - or they - die. Women who have left their husbands for other men still have access to their children, attend 'freedom' or naming ceremonies for their children as mothers, and may pay visits to the husband to discuss their children's progress.¹⁶

Just as 'there is no marriage without a child', where the father is known there is no such thing as an unmarried mother or an illegitimate child (see Chapter 8, see Caldwell and Caldwell 1994). While men may take only one wife into their homes (see Chapter 3), extra-marital liaisons may be of longer standing. If these women bear children for a man and become 'outside wives' (cf. Karanja 1987), they can make claims through these children to draw not only on his resources while he is alive but prospectively on his property on his death (see Caldwell et al. 1991, Guyer 1994). Claims for maintenance, however, are contingent on retaining custody of children and on acknowledgement of paternity by the man or his family, as well as on a man's means (see Chapter 8). This adds a further layer of complexities to definitions of marriage and conjugal obligations, for obligations are primarily towards the child rather than the woman. If a man has more than one wife, how much he cares for and caters for his children by each of them becomes an indication of his affection

for their mother: fairness is expected and favouritism can exacerbate conflicts.

As a descriptive term, then, 'marriage' is clearly rather problematic in this setting (cf. Verdon 1982, Caldwell and Caldwell 1994). As a relation of co-parenthood, conjugal relations are intimately bound up with women's and men's positions as mothers and fathers (see Chapter 8). And others impinge on this relationship, situating it within a complex nexus of other ties and locating conjugal obligations within a wider set of relationships that mutually impinge. Changing expectations within marriages have exacerbated the possibilities for conflict. And changes have had implications for contexts, as well as relations, of parenting (see Bledsoe 1990c, Chapter 8).

Licence to Leave

Despite the relative informality of marriage in contemporary Ado, the widespread non-payment of dowry and the frequency of informal separation, numbers of women continue to make use of the customary courts to formally absolve themselves of obligations towards their husbands and their husbands' families before remarrying. Recourse to the *institution* of marriage as a legal entity with associated rights and obligations continues to be made. Contests over obligations in this arena revolve around normative ideals of what 'husbands' and 'wives' are required to do or be, presided over by judges who exercise patriarchal prerogative to dictate the outcome of proceedings: their concerns are not only those of men who are themselves husbands, but also as fathers, brothers and as elders. Recourse to 'Yoruba custom' is left to their opinions and 'custom' is constantly recreated, constantly in flux, impinged upon by myriad influences from Islamic codes to the admonishments of the new pentecostal Christianities to the images of romantic love purveyed in popular culture, transfigured in recursively constituted appeals to 'Yoruba culture'. The judgements of elders recorded in the proceedings of the courts take up positions with regard to multiple, often contradictory, discourses on morality, inflected with this range of competing influences.

While 'court' marriage has specific legal implications, 'native law and custom' is almost a residual category buffeted by changing practices and by contests beyond the sphere of fixed claims and obligations. The ground rules are far from fixed (see Chapter 4). It is perhaps worth recapitulating briefly on points made in previous chapters. In 'native' marriage men and women's property remains separate; men and women retain rights over their own independent property and earnings, which their children and natal relatives inherit when they die. Any children a man has fathered can make claims on his property, which is notionally to be divided equally among units of *omoiya*, his children by different mothers.¹⁷ Divorce is a straightforward transaction, contingent on repaying a specified amount if it can be shown that dowry was paid in the first place.¹⁸ If a man grows tired of a wife, or if she behaves in a

wayward manner, he can simply repudiate or ignore her and take another. Divorces may be sought by women citing grievances against husbands, but is generally pursued for a specific purpose: to secure the peace to remarry.

Divorce signals an end to relationships which, no matter how tenuous they are, continue to be regarded as 'marriages': 'as long as a woman is not divorced and no matter where she lives, whatever the case may be, she's still a wife', Chief Ajuwon informed me. Whether or not dowry has been paid, a man may make trouble if he finds out that his separated wife has moved in with another man even if he no longer wants her himself.¹⁹ But 'once she has paid her money at the court and got her receipt, the husband can't say anything again,' said Omo Jesu, a prophet in his 40s. As divorce implies remarriage, the woman becomes another man's 'wife' and as a result usually forgoes the opportunity to have her children living with her. Not only may the ex-husband and his family refuse to allow her to retain her children once they are up to a certain age, her new husband may have no intention of 'catering for another man's child', a child whom the 'real' father can reclaim at any time (see Chapter 8). Yet while divorced women may be regarded as heartless for leaving their children, divorcees are not stigmatised - after all, divorce usually represents the movement of a woman out of the orbit of one man and into that of another.²⁰

Divorce cases may appear to offer exemplary instances of cases where expectations have been breached, but testimonies need to be treated with appropriate caution as utterances in the discursive space in which complaints are aired, and recorded (Volosinov 1985). Given that the courts function to dissolve relationships between women and their husbands, the cases brought before them describe the outcomes of these relationships often without reference to other agents involved in causing marital breakdown. Accounts of women and men who had been divorced or who had separated told other stories: many involved conflicts between *women*, in which husbands were not necessarily agentive in the breakdown (see Chapter 6). Nevertheless, divorce cases provide some revealing glimpses into the institution of marriage.

Virtually all the divorce cases in Ado's customary court in the post-independence period were brought uncontested by women.²¹ In a substantial number of these cases, custody of older children automatically conferred on the husband and his family; whether or not dowry had been paid made little difference. Courts upheld not the *legal* principle that dowry secures rights in children, but the patrilineal principle of a man as the 'owner' of a pregnancy and draw on normative ideas about fatherhood (see Chapter 8).²² While women's rights to rid themselves of a 'useless man' - a husband who fails to provide for them - in order to secure a more suitable partner were upheld in the courts, significantly women retain neither *de jure* nor *de facto* rights in their children and may keep them up to the age of six or seven but after that time may be told to return them to their fathers.²³ Release from marriages is both easy

and has now become very inexpensive: inflation has reduced the amount of dowry to be repaid on dissolution of longer-standing marriages to the price of a couple of piles of fish. In the cases that are brought before the courts, failure to meet particular expectations is offered, and accepted, as justification for divorce. Two of the principal grounds cited by women are that the husband has stopped giving the woman any financial support ('lack of proper care' or 'starvation') further compounded by paying her no attention ('neglect'): no money and therefore no love, and neither love nor money.

Contested Obligations

Ati gbeyawo ko ja, owo obe to soro - to marry a woman is not hard, it is the money for feeding allowance that is the difficult part (Yoruba proverb)

Expectations of what a 'husband' or 'wife' should do or be have their own historicity, bound up in complex ways with changing notions of responsibility and of agency (see Chapter 4). The impact of Islam and Christianity have reconfigured the ways in which claims and contests over conjugal obligations are played out in the arenas of the compound as well as the court. Competing religious discourses on agency and responsibility draw opportunistically on reconstituted 'custom', creating a potentially complex terrain for the negotiation of conjugal obligations. When it comes to the pragmatics of everyday life and survival, however, religious differences make less of a difference. Women have long been expected to make a contribution to provisioning (Sudarkasa 1973, Bowen [1858]1968). Whichever religion they belong to, all women have jobs and many are entirely self-supporting. Some support not only themselves and their children, but also contribute towards their husbands' upkeep. Even those women whose husbands support them completely - *alaboto* - still do some kind of work.²⁴

One of the most frequent complaints about young women, voiced by men and women alike, is that they get pregnant before they have established a career, a means of supporting themselves (see Chapter 8). Iya Mutiatu quoted a saying used to admonish the youth: '*Bi o ba nişę lapa, o ko ni wa ọkọ, ọkọ ni yio wa o*' (if you have your own work, you will not look for a husband, the husband will look for you). Financial security depends not on having a husband, but on being able to make it for oneself.²⁵ A man can take another wife at any time and a woman can find herself saddled with competitor for his resources or in a situation where she receives little help from him; the uncertainties of marriage require that women safeguard their positions through their own earnings.²⁶

Mrs Odu, talking to me one day of men's neglect of their wives, sighed: 'in Nigeria there are no husbands any longer. No man is catering properly for his wife and children and husbands can even send you away. Without a job, the woman will surely suffer'. Irrespective

of whether or not their wives earn enough to support the family, men are obliged to give them money for 'feeding allowance' (see Chapter 3).²⁷ Doing this makes a man a 'husband'. And where a man fails to do what a 'husband' ought to do, his right to start complaining may be challenged by wives who assert their side of the 'conjugal bargain' (Whitehead 1981). Chief Ajuwon, talking of his youth (see Chapter 4), put this explicitly: by putting down an amount every market day, he showed that he was the head of the household. Seun, a teacher in his 40s, told me that he knew that his wife pilfered from the feeding allowance he gave her. As he put it, all he saw was the money he gave her and the food on the table; how was he to know if she filtered some off? He knew that she had her own money and also felt that if he did not do what was expected then there would be trouble. But Iya Afusatu, a petty trader in her 40s, told me that no matter what the men *think* they are doing for their families, most women end up with the lion's share of financial responsibility for their children: 'these men put down money and think they are catering for you, but it is never enough. When you tell them they will say "you are earning money so you can contribute".'²⁸ Most of the women I knew received from their husbands around half of what it cost to feed the children if they were lucky; some supported their hearth-holds with no assistance whatsoever from the fathers of their children.

While men are indignant when charged with being 'useless', many rely on and welcome women's earnings. As the SAP years have worn on, a lot of men have been affected by a loss of income that has put them in a position where they become reliant on what their wives bring home. Men, talking of the way their wives scorned their efforts expressed not only exasperation, but hurt. Giving money for feeding allowance was becoming increasingly difficult, many told me. Older men muttered that in their day, women endured and would do their best to make ends meet. These days, however, they would 'pack out' on any excuse. One young mechanic told me that some women even leave most of their things at their father's house and then, when the going gets rough, they are off. What, they said, is a man to do?

Leach (1991) comments on the 'covert strategies' of Mende women who seek lovers to make up for the neglect of husbands who may tacitly accept their wives' infidelity as a way of getting by. In Ado, such 'covert strategies' may provide women with the resources for maintaining cohabiting relationships with their husbands; lovers' gifts can shore up marriages. Men may become furious if they hear of their wives having affairs and may beat them, or throw them out. But some men, too, endure. One man, now in his late 50s, told me of a succession of wives who were not only wayward but argumentative. On one occasion, he had seen his wife accept a gift of N600 from her lover at the funeral ceremony of her mother; there was, he said, nothing that he could do. Men who are unable, or unwilling, to sustain

the obligations of being a 'husband' are in a poor position to enforce control over their wives. For, as Mrs Odu wryly noted: 'he doesn't cater for you, so he can't ask where you get your money from'. That some women may gain some of the money needed to maintain their families from illicit affairs is always a possibility. But that the women who 'run here and there' may be doing so because of their children and, indeed, precisely to keep their marriages together, is eclipsed by discourses on waywardness and endurance.

Women's purchasing power earned by their own labour is as much of a concern to some men and equally one that is conveniently masked by the rhetoric of the wayward woman. Disagreements often arise around the ways in which women spend their money, where men come to resent the use of their money to subsidise the family when their wives earn more than they do. Chief Kuyebi outlined men's grievances:

A lot of men now think that women are cheating them, because they are richer than the husband. Some women build themselves a house when the husband himself doesn't have one. Some women have fine clothes and attend many social occasions, when the husband can't do this and is spending his money on feeding the wife and children. Some use the money from work together with the amount the husband gives her. She can send money home to her mother. So men will feel cheated and will caution the wife and refuse to give her money. This usually causes a fight.

It is worth noting that Chief Kuyebi drew attention to exactly those things that provide the means for women to become completely independent from their husbands: their own houses, social spending to maintain informal networks and support of natal relatives. They are also the means by which a woman can gain respect and prestige (*ola*) from others through money, as *spending* power (see Chapters 3 and 7).²⁹ Tajudeen, a recently married 28 year old revealed further concerns. He told me, in great detail, of the instalments his wife paid on cloth. This was money, he said, that she was wasting by going here and there to funerals, parties that stretch into the night with drinking and dancing. I pointed out that she was the one to earn that money. He was resentful: why should he pay for the children when she wasted her money on clothes? He went on:

Some men are not happy if their wife has a lot of money. Such women can be proud and do not respect the husband. Some women are too fond of going to funerals and can spend N2-3,000 on a dress. If the husband complains, she can say 'I have money more than you. Go away'.

Spending money on dresses for funerals is a moot point. Women's social status may be judged by other women on the quality of the cloth they wear, how fine they look. Going to funerals is part of the maintenance of their social networks (see Chapter 3). Yet, men say, it is at parties such as these that women are said to go astray, or fall under the influence of other women who 'turn their heads' and make them defy their husbands. The issue, for

Tajudeen, was clearly one of power: *her* spending power and *his* loss of effective authority; obedient servility can no longer be enforced by the sanction of withdrawing *owo onje* (feeding allowance) from women like these. Whilst the leverage financial advantage gives women is only used overtly by very few, it is tacitly acknowledged that many men may no longer be the overlord they would like to be. Alhaja Oluwatosin noted:

These days, with so many women earning even more than their husbands, moving here and there doing different kinds of work, if the man complains she can turn around and ask him who is feeding his children.

And Baba Lamidi, a herbalist in his 60s, spelled out the consequences:

In this town I've seen a man who doesn't even ask the wife what she's taken (eaten) but asks her for food. Does that man have any authority over his wife and children? If he gives them nothing? No!³⁰

Women who use this leverage or disobey their husbands in other ways may be regarded as those with what one man called a 'chronic attitude', *ẹja gbigbe* (dried fish) who will not mend their ways (see Chapter 4). Men talk of sending them away, so that they will realise that they must submit to their authority.

As women have gained greater economic autonomy, some men have adjusted their side of the bargain. Rafiu, a farmer in his early 60s, said of his wealthy wife that he could see no good reason whatsoever to give his wife any money: 'She is in money. How do you think I will give her more money? She is richer than I am'. And it is not only women who go after money. These days rich women may find themselves to be the ones who are chased by men, in search of a way to enhance their own wealth and status.³¹ For, as many people acknowledged, a wife can be the one who makes a man 'big', helping him with money to service the obligations that secure esteem (see Chapter 3), to entertain his friends and relatives and even, if they don't watch out, for him to use their money to bring in other wives or lavish on their mistresses. Many women hide from their husbands the amounts of money they earn, fearing that if they know they may try to squeeze 'loans' out of them, retract support or even use their money to spend on marrying another wife.³²

In many cases, however, women's effective economic independence from them does not deter men from exercising authority nor women from submitting to it. Money matters. Richer women are, women told me, treated better by their husbands. But even they may end up having difficulties. For men hold the ultimate sanction: they are the 'owners' of the children and they are the ones whose houses women live in. 'They can tell you to pack out. That is their weapon,' said Iya Bola. Respectability also matters, so much so that women from more prominent compounds might endure an awful lot in order to remain Mrs Important rather than be sent away (cf. Karanja 1987). Yet the uncertainties of marriage mean that women

need to be prepared for any eventuality. Iya Tunde struck at the heart of this: 'there's no security in marriage here. They can send you away at any time. A woman needs her work so she can stand on her own'. Standing on their own within marriages is almost expected of women these days; but any women who can't cope alone and, when their husbands fail to give them money, look for a lover who will be their 'helper' - or, indeed, women who leave a marriage to live alone - are 'chasing after men for money'.

Husbands and Wives

That fast-fading endurance that so many spoke of formed part of a discourse on female agency that did not completely deny female sexuality, but placed it firmly within the context of reproduction. The moral imperative to 'endure' spoke of appropriateness, of the bounding of female desire; and it spoke too of a relationship between 'husband' (*okọ*) and 'wife' (*aya*, *iyawo*) that is in itself a metaphor for agency (Strathern 1988), a relation of power within which 'wife' is subordinate to, 'under', the 'husband'. These positions are not always coincident with women or with men, but are contingently linked. Discourses on masculinity and femininity situate particular masculinities with husbands and femininities with wives, but also dislocate some of the subject positions available to women or men from females and males, making them available for others to take up (Hollway 1984, Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994).

As 'wives' and as mothers-of-men's-children, generators of wealth and social agents in other spheres, women occupy a series of ambivalent and overlapping positions that shift over their lifecourses. 'Woman' (*obinrin*) carries that sense of ambivalence, that 'multiplicity of differences and alternatives' (Barber 1991:212), and with it the veiled threat of women's agency - illustrated by some of the sayings that speak of women, such as *obinrin ko so gbẹkẹlẹ* (women are not to be trusted) and even more powerfully, *obinrin iku aiye* (women are the death of the world: the ones behind any trouble, the ones with power to destroy). Writers on representations of women in Yoruba religious performance and art (Drewal and Drewal 1983, Abiodun 1988), have drawn attention to the striking duality of images: in many of which women are represented as soft and nurturing mothers or as their antitheses, the malevolent, devouring 'witches' (see Chapter 6). Divination verses from Ifa (Bascom 1969, Abimbola 1976) and *Gelede* masquerade songs (Drewal and Drewal 1983) are replete with images of a power that in itself is gendered female, bound up not only with the generation and destruction of life itself, but with the ambivalence of women as generators of wealth: of people as wealth or wealth-in-people (Guyer 1993, Barber 1995), as well as of *independent* wealth.

Elisions between notions of 'woman' and of 'wife' create dissonance with the subject-positions available to women as they move across and within different spheres. Notions of wifeliness clearly have salience beyond situations in which actual wives obey and endure, or display insubordination. They also form a focus for contestation where the corresponding 'husband' fails to match up to normative ideals, shifting the locus of control within relationships. In some domains, women come to occupy positions of control within spheres marked out as those of 'men' as heads of households (see Chapter 3), owners of houses and of land. Of women such as these may be said, 'she has become a man' (*o ti di okunrin*): a reference less to the transition into a sociological 'male gender' in the later years of their lives, than the fact, as one man put it, that 'they can do and undo'. Women occupy other subject-positions which are equally available to men, such as entrepreneurs, contractors, farmers, owners of petrol stations, hotels or transport businesses. As a result, they may earn more than their husbands and may even support them. All *women* are expected in reality to provide for themselves and their children, itself often a source, as I note earlier, of ambivalence. As *wives*, however, they are expected to remain 'under a man'.

The relationship between 'husband' (*okoko*) and 'men' (*okunrin*) was also often elided, drawing on ideas about maleness to confirm the supremacy of husbands over their wives or to applaud husbandly behaviour.³³ The qualities of hegemonic masculinity emphasise strength and power and can be attributed to things as well as people. The term 'man' (*okunrin*) was used in contexts where commentaries were made on people's strength, courage and responsibility and could also, although rarely, be used of women (*o jo okunrin*, lit. she behaves like a man). Discourses on masculinity situate 'husbands' as 'men' and associate masculinity directly with power. Mr Aiyeteru, a well-to-do trader in his late 50s, put this explicitly:

A man is - according to how we put it - the husband and the landlord. Men marry women and they control them. They are their masters. We control our children and anything they want to do. Women suffer a lot with children yet men are the ones to control the children. If my wife wants to go I won't allow her to take them because I have power over the children than her. That is the custom, that men should be the overall head, should have overall power over wives and children. Men are the owners of the children and the wife should not do anything without the knowledge of the man. If they do we take it to be an insult. Such a wife will not agree with the husband. If the wife wants to do something and doesn't tell me, I won't be happy as she doesn't regard me as a husband.

However, by behaving in ways that were recognised as essentially the kinds of things *actual men* might be expected to do - such as exercising their irrepressible need for sex and spending on girlfriends, or spending money to beef up their image and leaving their wives to fend for their children - men could happily flout normative expectations of what they should do *as husbands* without impinging on a sense of them being 'real men'. Different models of

masculinity offer men a number of potentially contradictory subject positions. What men did as *men* - or, more importantly, didn't do as *husbands* - served to vocalise some of the frustration women felt: as Iya Ibeji, cited earlier, commented 'in Nigeria *there are no husbands any longer*. No man is catering properly for his wife and children...'. Husbandliness connotes taking control over someone else, it also has other resonances. Many husbands are not companions, but regard themselves as 'directors'. Yet women may say, referring to the company and the love of their children as well as the fact that they will provide for them in future, 'my children are my husband' (see Chapter 8); affection may be expressed by calling a person (of either sex) *okọ mi* (lit. my husband).

To explore these ideas further, I asked women and men to tell me whether, if they had the chance to choose their sex, they would like to be a man or a woman.³⁴ The majority of women and all men I asked would prefer to be male. Men dwelt on ideas about the inherent weakness of women: that they would need to be under a man's control, that otherwise they would just be running here and there after other men. Many used this as an opportunity to complain, vociferously, about the behaviour of women; as if, if they were women, they would have no option but to behave like this too. This discourse on women, one that emerged in discussions with women as well as with men, was about women-as-wives. The notion of 'women' as 'the weaker sex' had quite specific resonances. And in choosing to be a man, many men made reference to themselves as husbands. Mr Aiyeteru continued: 'I would choose to be a man because I want to continue being the controller and my wife must submit. I can punish her if she doesn't'. Another man, in his 50s, commented:

I'd want to be a man. A real man, even stronger than I am now, and to work really hard... Men usually command women as they like, if they want them to do anything, if they don't want them to go out anywhere they can stop them from going, women are under the husband's control for as long as they are in the house.

There were not many women who would choose to be female.³⁵ Mrs Adediran, a trader in her late 40s, gave her reason as the *anfani* (advantage, benefit) women have: they are able to be dependent on a man, as he is the one who should provide for her. Her daughter Maria, aged 25, pointed out the realities:

a woman works hard, doing trade and everything, but men don't do anything, they just play and go here and there, they rely on women. God made me a woman and I have no regrets.

Falilatú, a trader in her 40s, again made reference to lived experience rather than essential ideas about women, again referring to woman-as-wife:

Yes, I would like to be a woman. But in another country, maybe your country, not here in Nigeria. This place is bad. Men treat their wives badly here. They may be beating you every day and not giving you any money at all. You'll just be suffering.

Yuwe, a lively 30 year old trader, made the point that to be a woman meant being able to dress up and look beautiful; to enjoy a femininity that situates women not only as an object of male desire, but is also in itself pleasurable. The two other women who chose to be female both situated their femaleness in the subject position of mother. They dwelt on the close relationship between a mother and her children. Men, they suggested, don't experience this kind of love, this kind of closeness.

Of the women who would choose to be men, three focused on a different aspect of motherhood: biological reproduction. No-one, they said, would want to experience the pain a woman has to suffer on delivery. Two men echoed this view. But the vast majority of women located their choice in terms of power within sexual relationships with men, in being *husbands*. These women gave the reason that they, rather than their husbands, would have control; control over the children, primarily, which would give them rights over them, and over the household. Several repeated the same reason: 'I would not be under anybody as I am now'. Clearly, these women did not feel that they suffered from the kind of weakness men talked about if they felt able to take control. And none mentioned having the sexual freedom to do what many men did: to run here and there after women.

I was interested in what they would do and asked: How, then, would they behave if they could change their sex? Some described the ways in which they would show their one wife how much they cared for her by buying her fine things and by catering well for the children: behaving towards them as a 'proper husband' should. Iya Bunmi, a trader in her 30s, said: 'I would sit with my wife at one side and my children at the other and enjoy'. Others indicated that rather than make up for the wrongs they describe themselves as suffering, they would enact the role of the 'typical' man. Iya Shina, a trader in her early 40s, acted out a scenario to an amused audience of the young boys who hawk for her:

If I were a man... I would be like THIS! (puffs up her chest and puts her nose in the air) I would have many wives and beat them if they did not obey me. I would sit in my chair like this (lolls in her chair) and call them: 'Wife bring me this, do that, come here, go there!'

Medicines used to assuage worries about partners, known collectively as *oogun imoju*, offer further insights into women's and men's concerns. The effects of *imoju* on women is to turn them into the kinds of 'wives' that hegemonic discourses return to: that on men is to make them into the kinds of 'husbands' women desire. If a woman is given *imoju*, I was told, she will sit down quietly in the house, not go anywhere, obey the husband and not look at any other man. It transforms an unruly woman into the archetypical obedient wife. Men treated with this medicine, I was told, will keep on remembering the woman who gives it to them, he will be anxious to be with her and will not be able to do anything without thinking

of her. In other words, the man will *be in love* with the woman: another term for the medicine expresses this directly, *oogun ife* (lit. love medicine). *Imoju* tampers with the agency of women and men, transforming them into their partners' ideal 'wives' and 'husbands' - with their own particular, gendered, interests - and resolving the dissonance that the contingency of the multiple subject positions occupied by women and men in everyday life creates. From the perspective of those who are subject to such medicines, such a move would be disastrous and would impair, if not destroy, any means of gaining respect as *people* who occupy other subject positions that are not in themselves gendered. And there is one medicine that reverses conventional power relations, an exaggeration of the kind of solicitous behaviour *oogun ife* can bring about in men: *oogun dawoteleri*, a medicine that reduces a man to obeying only the instruction of his wife.³⁶ If a man's parents notice this kind of errant behaviour, they too may visit the herbalist for medicine to wash that one away, to restore a man's prerogative and put his wife back in her rightful position: 'under him'.

'Being under a man' was an expression many women used when describing why they did not want to remarry, whether they were widowed, divorced or separated. It was precisely the ordering around which Iya Shina acted out that Iya Ibeji reacted to when she considered the option of remarrying. She told me, with a smile on her face: 'if I don't allow anyone, they can't give me instructions'. The issue for these women was not gender per se, but the power that subject-positions - such as husband, head, director, owner - offered men: not maleness in itself but certain masculinities (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994). That women can come to occupy these subject positions outside their intimate relationships is not in itself cause for concern - although it may provoke friction. But when they dislocate themselves from the subject position of 'wife' at a stage in their life courses where they are expected to remain 'under a man' and do *what men do* - establish independent households, take lovers, obey no-one's instructions - they encroach on the space marked by *husband*.

Diary of a Misunderstanding

When women take the first steps out of cohabiting relationships and cease to live 'under a man', people often talk about there having been a 'misunderstanding' (*ede aiyede*). And 'misunderstandings' are an increasingly common feature of the landscape of intimate relationships between women and men in Ado-Odo. A convenient term to cover a wide range of situations, a 'misunderstanding' can involve a lovers' tiff that is soon mended, a stage in protracted negotiations over expectations or a polite euphemism for an irrevocable breakdown. Reconciliation and return continue to carry a whiff of possibility. Even where years have elapsed since the woman 'packed', hope continues to prevail that the woman will see sense and come back. And some women do.³⁷

'Misunderstanding' carries with it the implication that problems can be ironed out if a correct or common understanding is reached. This understanding can be figured in three ways: first, as literally not having understood the other person and, through crossed wires, having misinterpreted their intentions and behaviour; secondly, in terms of having or breaking an 'understanding', that is, a negotiated agreement; and lastly in terms of a category of 'understanding' that is akin to 'endurance'. Misunderstandings, after all, represent a breaking free as well as a break down in this setting. But women who go away are seen as going astray. They are not regarded as casualties of misunderstandings of the first kind. They are not represented as victims of a breakdown in a negotiated agreement - such as, for example, the implicit conjugal agreement that places the onus on men to take the bulk of financial responsibility for their children. Rather, censure is focused on a kind of moral weakness that is essentially female. It is implied that it is this that leads women to fail to be understanding and to cease to co-operate, and to endure. That men fail to provide for them may be the reason accepted in the court, but fails to sway anyone in the domain of gossip: for part of 'endurance' is knuckling down and getting by, no matter what.

I would like to look in detail at one such 'misunderstanding' to draw out some of the areas of contention that discourses on intimate relationships continually return to, in order to pick up some of the more subtle nuances that characterise relationships as processes in which there are continual shifts and negotiations. I present the story of a man in his 40s, a meat seller, and the woman he married, a cooked food trader in her late 30s, who I will call Peter and Iya Bose. I draw on what I observed and heard from both parties and others' commentaries on the situation over a period of some months as their relationship broke down.

Gossip about Iya Bose had strayed all over town when she left Peter. This was a woman, people later said, who was clearly corrupt (*isekuse*) and out of order. But before she left she had enjoyed their sympathy. For years she had been providing for Peter, who was unemployed and virtually penniless, and their four children. For years she had endured. But over the last few years, she had sought a 'helper' and had been having an affair with a man nearby. This was common knowledge; she had been seen creeping out at night and spotted in the compound of the man. All this was tacitly accepted. After all, her life wasn't easy. She continued to hope that Peter would change, that things would return to the days when they were first married and everything was peaceful. But he argued with her and lived off her resources. And things were not getting any better.

One day, she decided to go. She informed his family, who did nothing to resolve the matter.³⁸ And then she left, packing up her loads and moving to a nearby town with the three youngest children, telling people a familiar euphemism for a 'misunderstanding' of this kind: that trade was not moving well in Ado. Peter returned to find her gone. So too was their furniture, items that she had bought herself. He had never expected her to leave, despite the rows they had on a regular basis in which she charged him with being 'useless'. He was furious and very, very hurt. Women gathering to chat at the house talked of her with sympathy, for what she had to put up with from him, each using this as a chance to tacitly bemoan their own situation. The separation was seen by them as temporary: to teach him a lesson and to get him to mend his ways. She had just gone to cool down a bit. Then, the women said, she would return to 'face the children'.³⁹

Friends of Peter's were less sympathetic, pointing out how wayward she had been and suggesting that he was well shot of her and could find someone more suitable in future.

The weeks went by. Two of the children were brought back and lodged with relatives, the oldest went to a relative nearby to lodge and returned to eat with her father. Iya Bose came occasionally at weekends to visit the household. Whenever there was any ceremony in the extended family, Iya Bose was there helping to prepare food and fulfilling her obligations. She came into the house and in and out of their old room as if it was still hers, as if she was only away temporarily. When she came, she always looked really fine, wearing elegant guinea brocade outfits. She would walk around the quarter, visiting relatives and friends. Peter would be teased: "Look, there's your wife, she's come for you!" At night, she'd disappear. At first it seemed she was going back to her new home, but it soon emerged that she was continuing her affair with her lover from Ado. Indeed, often she would come visiting from her lovers' house; Peter's friends would track her movements and report back to him.

Iya Bose continued to come and go at weekends. She would sometimes bring food for Peter and the children, which he refused to touch in case she had put medicine in it.⁴⁰ One weekend, she came to Peter and wanted to spend the night with him. He refused. She cried, but he sent her out, saying to her: 'Why are you crying now when I am the one who should be sad? When I had money, we enjoyed life together, but when there was no money you went away'. When he told me about it, he cried with hurt and anger. He said she had accused him of wanting to find another woman, but how could he do that with no money? And anyway, he added, four children was enough: 'after all, that is what marriage is for, not for love or sex something or enjoyment, but to have issues'. She, he felt, was just playing with him and he feared that she would kill him. Maybe she was just being nice to him so as to get a chance to get close and then harm him. That, he said, is what people do here. You can't tell who is your enemy. She had tried to persuade him to come to live with her in the other town. He said: 'What would she want me to be there for? I am useless. And if I can't control her here, how would I control her there?'

Still, she kept on coming, entering the house and going into his room as if it were hers. And his friends continued to report on her misbehaviour. One day he decided he had had enough and told her, angrily, not to come back to the house. He told her to go to the court and get a divorce paper as he no longer wanted her to be his wife. Two weeks later, I bumped into Peter. He was incoherent with drink and rage. What happened, I asked? It turned out that he had heard from his friends that Iya Bose was in Ado for the weekend with her lover, but she had not even come to give her children anything to eat. But hadn't he told me last time that he'd banned her from the house? He said there were other ways she could get something to the children. Later that day I was with some friends in his compound when a storm broke out. Peter had seen Iya Bose in a compound near to his house bringing her lover some food. She had been there, quite shameless, in full view of his family. So he went over to confront her. But when he threatened to beat her, she laughed at him. He ranted, raved and then was brought back home by his brother's wife, Abeke, who wanted to save his face. The next day, a policeman came to the house to deliver the divorce notice. It emerged that Iya Bose had decided to marry her man.

Sympathies quickly shifted. Women who had murmured in her defence were now indignant. Suddenly, everyone turned against Iya Bose. Abeke, who had been quite sympathetic up to then, poured out her scorn. 'That woman', she said, 'is stupid. She leaves one man because he is useless and now she is planning to marry a man who already has two wives and ten children and even then he doesn't cater for them properly. What will he be able to do for her? Why does she have to marry again? She could live alone and face her children, even have lovers - I have no problem with that - but to leave her children with nothing like this is really bad'. She told Iya Bose not to come to the house any longer. 'Oh, she will ruin her life, she will suffer for this', cried a friend of Iya Bose's when she heard the news. 'How can she leave her children to suffer?', said another. Iya Bose's teenage daughter was full of moral outrage. Only two months before she herself had suffered the indignity of being exposed as one of those girls who, as an older woman put it, 'sells her vagina for nothing'. She had been caught having sex with a man. Because she was only 14 years old, it had been assumed that he was raping her and he was arrested. But when the doctor examined her, it became obvious that she had long since been 'disvirgined'. Now she was threatening to go to the court to denounce her mother for 'doing

rubbish and nonsense all around, renting a house and behaving like a prostitute rather than looking after her children'.

In the middle of all this, Peter was quite beside himself, shocked and indignant that it had come to this - even though he himself had solicited it. He stormed around, repeating, 'I will **never, never** go to that court!' He treated the divorce notice as the ultimate affront to his pride, the final outrage. His friends advised him to invest in some medicine to bring about her downfall: perhaps something to stop her being able to walk, or to make sure her trade failed. But he repeated, over and over again, 'that woman has given me five children, one died and four are living, how could I harm her when she is the mother of my children?'.

On the day before the hearing, Iya Bose sent a message to say she would not be going to court. As it happened, the court was on strike. It was unclear whether she wanted to reconcile. In any case, the rumour had circulated that she had been fighting with her lover, had torn his clothes and sent him away. This was seen by the women of the house as a good sign. Even without medicine, a split had taken place. Maybe she would come to her senses. Later in the week she came to discuss with Peter and they managed to seek a compromise. As he said afterwards, as she was the mother of his children it would not be right to stop her from seeing them. Anyway, as he was in no fit position to feed them, he needed her help. But he wouldn't live with her again: 'Women are not trustworthy. My children are my wife and I don't need another woman again'. And as he talked about her, he started to cry.

What was their 'misunderstanding' about and could it have been averted? They both seemed to love each other and before her patience snapped, Iya Bose had really tried. Iya Bose had made a plea for help, that was ignored, by speaking to his family and a plea for reconciliation, that was spurned, by going to him. If she had wanted to, she could have returned home to a far away state or gone to Lagos and disappeared. She chose to go to a nearby town, like several other women I knew who had separated to make a point and attain a better bargaining position. It seemed that her use of the divorce petition may have been to drive the point home even further. What was Iya Bose up to? Did she just want to teach him a lesson? Sometimes it seemed like that to me: when she came to hang around the house dressed to the nines; when she blatantly dangled her lover in front of him. And Peter? It seemed to me that he really loved her, but out of wounded pride he could do nothing but snap back at her. His rage would dissolve into tears as he spoke of her. He told me in an unguarded moment that he missed her. He seemed to be hurting so much he couldn't swallow his pride and risk telling her that. The divorce paper, even the initial separation, came out of a series of actions and reactions that deepened their misunderstanding: by provoking each other, they were driving each other further away.

What was the understanding that had been breached? They had married as Christians and Peter had paid dowry. Neither Peter nor Iya Bose had stuck to their sides of the conjugal bargain. Did Peter's economic impotence loosen the constraints of that bargain, or did Iya Bose take advantage of it? Money featured prominently in Peter's view of what she, and other women, wanted. Because he had no money, she had gone. How was he going to find another wife without any money? Yet it emerged that Iya Bose's new man was only a little less 'useless' than him; that she hadn't, after all, been 'chasing after men for money', but seemed

to be more interested in something less material. The point, perhaps, was that Iya Bose was quite capable, and had been for a long time, of supporting herself. She struggled, her 'helper' helped, but she could manage. The issue for her seemed to be less that of money than of being exasperated with him. For Peter, however, money came close to being equated with control. No money: no love: no control. Being a 'husband', for him, meant having the capacity to control his wife and for her to be 'under him'. Iya Bose clearly was not going to go along with that.

Part of that understanding extends beyond the husband and wife to embrace children, whose existence serves to affirm the marriage. Their, and other people's reactions, continually restated the link children create between a couple. Iya Bose continued to maintain family obligations, such as cooking at ceremonies, as the mother of his children. Peter refused to harm her, the mother of his children. Women, looking on and gossiping, returned again and again to the fate of the children and to the obligation, even the need, a mother had to 'face her children' no matter what else was involved. Iya Bose, then, occupied and was positioned by others in a shifting series of overlapping subject positions. Although her *actual situation* as a lover or a wife of her new man would hardly have changed, as he already had two wives and it was unlikely that she'd go to live with him, from misunderstood wife making an understandable protest she was transformed overnight into a troublesome divorcee-to-be, an irresponsible woman who put the love or money of a man before the wellbeing of her children.

It was her pursuit of a divorce that ultimately brought a chorus of disapproval down on Iya Bose. While the separation seemed to be potentially temporary and while she continued to come in and out of the house, she courted only minor concern. Admittedly she had a lover, but it seemed she might come round, might come back 'to face the children'. She had, after all, endured for a long time and maybe, for the sake of her children, could be persuaded to try again. Ultimately, her actions were judged not according to what she was doing to Peter, but her children. She was, they implied, actively choosing to abandon her children by divorcing Peter. And that, above all, situated her as a woman who had really lost all sense of propriety. She had become the kind of woman whom gossip might refer to as *aşewo*. And if she continued to live alone, she'd become yet another *ilemoşu*.

'Packing Out'

Opportunities for women to set up independent hearth-holds have expanded considerably over the last twenty or so years (see Chapter 4). These days, there are few obstacles to 'packing out', if women have made a decision to do so. *Ilemoşu* have a number of options. They may be able to return to their father's house, or go to live with their mother if she has separated

from their father. Renting a room for oneself is still not very easy, as a landlord may ask to see the husband first, but nowadays some of those who own and rent out houses are women who might also have separated from their husbands. Those with the means can slowly, quietly, build their own houses and move into them to live on their own. A few women do not 'pack in' to their husband's house in the first place, but remain with their own families and maintain a visiting relationship with their 'husbands'.

Material barriers to the formation of female-headed households (Blumberg 1993) are, then, surmountable by those who choose to go. In Iya Bose's case, finding somewhere else to live was easy enough. And like many women, she was in a position where she was effectively supporting herself in any case. Separating for a while was something that attracted little censure: it was her attempt to sever the relationship completely, by seeking a divorce, that made the difference. And it was that she chose to do this at an age when she still had growing children that ultimately provoked the most concern. Although some women do remain with their husbands and in their husband's homes after their death, separation in the later phase of women's life-courses has long had, in Esther Goody's phrase, a 'relative inevitability' (1972:48) about it in Ado. Once children are grown, women are almost expected to leave. Before then, women may go back to their fathers' or mothers' houses if they or their parents are sick, if their children die and they suspect interference by malevolent others in the husband's compound or if life as a co-wife has become too problematic (see Chapter 6): all entirely acceptable reasons which do not necessarily entail severing of a relationship with the husband.⁴¹ As long as women have no other relationships with men, they may be allowed to bring up the children of the marriage outside their husbands' compounds. Their hold on their children, however, remains fragile even in these situations unless the father of the children and his family cannot or do not wish to take responsibility for them (see Chapter 8).

I knew several women like Iya Bose who went home or rented a room for themselves after having an argument; I met many more who left after trouble or sickness in which another wife was implicated. These situations could turn into more permanent separations if women refused to give in to a man's pleas to return, if the husband did not come to ask them to come back or if pressure exerted on him by her father and other relatives failed to 'settle' the situation. 'Packing out', then, can be an extension of bargaining within relationships or a cry for help; it can also represent a situation where a woman has become so exasperated with the failure of other tactics that she tries this one. But such tactics can back-fire and a man can simply install another wife, or leave her be. Men who are dissatisfied with their wives can tell them to leave, sending them back to their parents. Several men told me that they had felt they had no option but to send wives away, because they were making so much trouble. One man in his 60s used this as a tactic to secure peace, telling both of his wives to go and only

come back once they would agree not to fight each other. As he noted, ruefully, their disappearance meant that he was left with no-one to cook for him and after a while he went to them to ask them to return. Neglect is a tactic used by some men to attenuate the relationship to the point where a woman will 'pack out' of her own accord; it is also a consequence of other women's claims on his love and his money.

Clearly, the complex issues involved go well beyond the material aspects of relationships: contests may arise around money and money may buy possibilities for release, but the ways in which money makes relationships transfigure these contests, situating them in a far more complicated nexus of interwoven concerns. Love, represented by older people in terms of 'endurance' (*farada*), is equally complex. Co-operation (*ajumọse*) featured prominently in the accounts of women who, despite difficulties with money, remained with and assisted their husbands. And love was represented by some of these women as revolving around a willingness to co-operate, to work together and to share secrets, if not pool resources. I asked Iya Soji what *ife* (love) meant to her. She took an orange, held it in an outstretched palm and said that this is what love is about. She then put the orange behind her back. If there is no love, she said, it is like this: secrets are not shared, a man may say he has no money when he is keeping it hidden, there is no co-operation.

For many women it is not merely stolid endurance but a more active co-operation, working *together* for the children's futures, that holds marriages together. And when co-operation breaks down, spouses can continue to live together and maintain almost entirely separate lives without impinging on each other. When women leave their husbands to remarry, maintenance of the children who are left behind - and sometimes even their safety (see Chapter 6) - can become a cause for contest and concern, where other mothers in new or existing relationships with the man seek to divert his resources to their own children. When women talked of 'leaving the child to suffer', their concerns were about the inequities that could so easily result if they withdrew from the position of ensuring that stake of a man's resources went to their children as well as from the day-to-day maintenance they themselves provide (see Bledsoe 1995).⁴² Women who provide for themselves can continue to do so and remain 'wives', but when they maintain themselves alone they are represented as being out of control: visibly able to supplant the position of provider by making it for themselves. To recuperate the idea of 'husbands', a man needs to be figured into the picture: independent women, then, become the voracious *ilemoṣu*.

Wayward Women?

Representations of *ilemoṣu* portray the archetypal troublesome wife who went astray, with traits both of the *ẹja gbigbẹ* kind of character and of the *aṣewo*, a woman with a gargantuan

appetite for men, money and sex, incurably disobedient. It was some months before I first heard talk about these women. And the more I heard about them, the more my curiosity was aroused. The connection between a separated, independent woman and behaving like a 'prostitute' was repeatedly made: the two are virtually coterminous in discourses on *ilemoşu*.⁴³ One day, I asked some men I was talking to about what people were talking about when they said a woman was an *ilemoşu*. One man answered, to the nods of others:

They are those women who leave their children to come home. Some say: 'No! I don't want to stay in the husband's house!'. Some will leave their children behind, others will take them with them. Some men will disagree with coming to visit the wife in her father's house. Some women can leave their children to suffer, so that men friends can come to them in their father's house: they take their father's house to be a hotel (i.e. behave like prostitutes).

I spent my days with women, but had not met any who seemed to fit the bill. So I set about trying to find them. 'Oh yes, the *ilemoşu*', said Baba Yemisi, 'there are so many in this area that they are uncountable'. He went on to tell me lurid tales of women who not only seduced men for their money, but also pimped off daughters who they had encouraged to leave their husbands. '*Ilemoşu?*' said Mrs Odu, 'too many women in Ado do this these days. They can be found everywhere.' I began to wonder what I had been missing. But over the coming days as I roved all over town, I still did not seem to meet any of these women.

It was only when I persuaded Baba Yemisi to give me the names of women he counted as *ilemoşu* that I twigged: these were women I knew, women who had told me of the misery of their marriages and why they had left. These were, for the most part, women who lived alone because they had no interest in remarrying. One woman in her 60s, cited to me as *ilemoşu*, had told me that she banned all men apart from relatives from setting foot in her house years before as she had grown sick and tired of being hassled by them. Another was a woman in her 80s. Taliatu, a trader in her late 30s, told me: 'I have been to the war front and returned peacefully. Enough is enough.' Each time I thought I had tracked one of these women down, her story revealed quite a different picture. And when they told me their stories, it became apparent that these *ilemoşu* were less the strident temptresses or 'harlots' one might be led to believe. But their stories equally revealed a twist in the tale. For many had endured, and were willing to continue to endure, marriages in which their husbands neglected the obligation to provide for their children. And most had left not because their husbands had proved to be 'useless', but for other reasons.

Afusatu, a trader in her mid-30s, told me:

Men say that women who go back to their father's house are corrupt and only interested in running after men, but women do it for their own safety as they fear having more children, their husbands won't stop sexing them and will not care if they have any more children. Men are not responsible.

Rather than 'running after men for sex', then, some of the women who leave are running away from men precisely because of sex.⁴⁴ Some flee husbands who will neither agree to the use of contraception nor let them 'rest' (i.e. remain abstinent). And the issue for them is less a breakdown in bargaining over financial obligations, than the additional strain another child would create in a situation where it is almost taken for granted that the man will fail to provide. While divorce signals an effective end to custody of children, returning with them to one's natal home - on some pretext or another - and retaining a notional relationship with the husband can occasionally provide a way of keeping them, although men can call for them to be returned at any time. These women too may be cast as *ilemoşu*.

All they want is 'peace of mind' (*ibale-ökan*). Many want nothing more to do with men: neither for love nor money. Others leave not their husbands, but their husband's compounds. For some, their departure represents the end of marriages that had long since dissolved as intimate relationships. Several *ilemoşu* told me of how relations with co-wives had soured to the point where they had had to go, fearing in many cases for their lives. For Taliatu, her return from the 'war front' was to escape the dilemmas of living with increasingly hostile co-wives in a situation where, as she put it, 'today fight, tomorrow trouble'. For her, as for many other women who told me their stories, husbands actually had little to do with their day-to-day struggles to get on and get by within or outside the compound (see Chapter 6).

As Sen (1987) suggests, the point of breakdown at which women decide they simply can't endure any longer may depend on women's fall-back positions, on the support they can call on elsewhere and on the escape routes open to them. In Ado, women create for themselves sources of security outside their conjugal relationships as safety nets for such eventualities (cf. Hill 1975); over time the possibilities open to them to live as independent women have diminished the imperative to endure. However, a focus on the conjugal relationship alone and on 'gender relations' as husband-wife relations is only part of the picture. Other 'gender relations', relations in which gender makes a difference, impinge on intimate relations and, in some cases, are more significant in determining women's strategies and tactics than relations with their husbands. Competing concerns between women who occupy similar subject positions vis-a-vis their husbands as 'wives' and other subject positions relative to each other create more complex arenas for contestation. For within these arenas, complex as well as individual agents may impinge on the agency of others. Conjugal bargaining takes place within a mesh of other relationships and a range of other interested parties have a stake in its outcomes.

Many women grumble but stay to 'face the children'. Neglect may be the outcome taken to courts to seek dissolution of marriages, but rarely provides the only reason for

marital breakdown. And numbers of women who remain in cohabiting relationships struggle and survive - and, in some cases, succeed - without much support from their husbands. Alice, who had stayed with her husband during rough patches where neither of them had much money, told me 'if the love is there and there is co-operation, then you will struggle together'. And the same opportunities that offer women fall-back positions may equally be a way of maintaining, rather than breaking away from, marriages (see Chapters 3 and 4). Focusing on conjugal relations as the principal sites of conflict may not only, as O'Laughlin (1995) cautions, underplay the significance of interdependencies between husbands and wives. It also underplays the other relations which marriage creates: not only access to the wider web of non-conjugal support in other domains of association, but also the conflicts that may arise in situations where conjugal relationships may provide their focus, but in which the agency of men as husbands is displaced.

While women may seek richer partners to enjoy a better life, the majority of women I came across who chose to leave were not women who went astray. Many could no longer tolerate - let alone 'endure' - the situations in which they were living. And most of them left not just because of their husbands, but because life in their husband's compounds had proved to be intolerable. Risking having to abandon their children is a drastic solution and one not all can face. Becoming an *ilemoşu* may have become an option that women are more able to take up, but making the break is contingent on other concerns. Courting disapproval as one derailed from the normative 'career' of a respectable wife and mother can sever other ties, relationships that may be just as or more important for women's well being as that with their husbands. As one woman told me, 'some don't bother themselves and face their work and their children, others stay with the husband and look for their satisfaction elsewhere': some carry on managing, putting their energy into their work and children as their mothers did, while others take lovers for love or for money that helps them bring up their children as well as to have the things they want. And some women stay because they simply cannot imagine an alternative and lack the courage or confidence to make a break.

The numbers of fecund women or young mothers who actually leave their husbands without there being any cause for complaint just because they would rather be in their own space and in control of their own lives, or to have unimpeded access to lovers, is probably quite small. Yet it is this latter desire, one that is suspected of all women of this age who live outside a cohabiting relationship, that serves as the primary focus for disapproval and condemnation. The myth of the morally weak female surfaces to mark out any woman who chooses to live without a man, irrespective of her reasons or even her age, as *ilemoşu*. It is precisely this expression of female agency, bound up with notions of appropriate compliance and, crucially, with women-as-mothers, that is most at issue. A model of gender that partially

relates to particular gendered relations - sexual relations between a man and a woman - is used to mark out a terrain into which women-in-general are cast. This is then rhetorically used to eclipse other variations; by women as well as by men. Their crime? 'They do not want to be under a man again,' said Iya Seun, a trader in her 60s. The ambiguous status of the *ilemoṣu* vividly represents some of the challenges and uncertainties of contemporary relationships.

For Love or Money?

Discourses on intimate relationships draw on notions of love that are bound up with how women and men are expected to behave, and misbehave. Money impinges on these notions in paradoxical ways. These cluster around a range of contradictory interpretations of the expression 'where there is no money, there is no love'. One interpretation ties the use of money to love, seen as route for its expression. If a man really loves a woman, he will spend on her rather than use his money elsewhere. It is when he does not love his wife that he gives her no money. Another regards money as productive, rather than expressive, of love. Money can buy love, at least until the cash runs out. Women love men who give them money and if the man has no money, then there will be no love any more. For some love that is contingent on money becomes love of money itself, competing with or even replacing men as an object of desire. For others, love is something entirely separate from money. If a woman really loves a man, she will stay by his side even when he can't give her any money. It is when she does not love him that money makes a difference. Women can make their own money: it is where there is no love that relationships break down.

Love as money, love of money, love or money: all reflect the perceived fragility of modern relationships, as well as the tensions within them. These are discourses on control and containment, which are fractured by the possibility of choice. Access to, and contests over the allocation of, resources forms a key component in accounts of changes in the balance of power in intimate relationships over time and over people's life-courses. Buying power is a vital index of people's status and agency, with implications for autonomy within and beyond intimate relationships. Yet negotiations within these relationships revolve not only around the possession and pursuit of money, but on the divergent ways in which money is given meaning by the actors involved (Bloch and Parry 1989, Barber 1995) and the possibilities it offers for conversion into other things (Crump 1981).

'Men believe money, not love, will buy the woman', commented Mr Akinwonmi. Iya Tunde, Iya Ibeji and others framed the relationship between love and money in terms of co-operation, where men would help women out and fulfil their obligations to their children. Iya

Afusatu commented that all men did was use the woman for sex, not treat her as a person with her own needs: 'you only see love in the bed. These women here are struggling to get money, struggling all the time. The men don't help them.' And, as Iya Tunde, Iya Afusatu and numerous other women suggested, anyway, women can make their own money: what *they* wanted was peace. If a man gave them love, they would help him. If a man spent time with them and treated them well, that mattered a lot more to them. Agnes talked of relationships around money, pointing out that they never really worked out: 'they are not from the heart'. And, 'the girls of today...', Wale told me, don't all chase men because of money: 'It is not only money that makes girls go after men. It is because they want to be loved by them. They may even give the man money and food. It is because they want a boyfriend.'

Individual women and men have affairs, for love or money. And where love as well as money is lavished is a matter of concern as well as conflict. But children transform affairs into marriages, and equally transform a relationship between individuals into one in which wives are also mothers, and in which other mothers are also implicated. Remaining in marriages requires not only negotiating a relationship with the father of the child, but also with the other women in his life. Women may leave their husbands because there is neither love nor money. But what drives women to leave often goes beyond a lack of love or of money. Tactics to manage problematic relationships with men can be disrupted when other women make life difficult in the domain of the husband's compound. Everyday struggles for money, children and peace can be exacerbated by tension and suspicion, as well as by overt conflict, between women. In the following chapter, I consider some of these contests and explore further why women blame each other when things turn sour.

Chapter 6

Making Trouble, Keeping the Peace

Èhinkule l'ota wa, ile ni aṣeni ngbe; bi iku ile ko pa 'ni, ti ode ko ri 'ni gbe ṣe - the enemy is in the backyard, the plotter against you is in the house; if death does not come from inside the house, that from outside does nothing to you (Yoruba proverb).

Discourses of disquiet emphasise and return to certain kinds of women: the *ilemoṣu*, who packs out with no good reason, the *asewo*, motivated by her desire for money as well as sex, the *ẹja gbigbẹ* who will not bend to a man's authority. Men and women alike told me '*obinrin ko ṣe gbẹkẹlẹ*' (women cannot be trusted/are not trustworthy). But defiance, lust and greed are only some of the sins attributed to women. Wayward women, it seems, are only part of the problem. For when trouble starts, women are usually suspected to be the ones behind it;¹ and trouble may come in many guises. Women's struggles for money, children and peace of mind are waged in domains where *ajumọṣe* (co-operation) may be high on the agenda. Yet these are spaces shared with others ranged in relations with them that place them in direct competition over resources and over the means by which to realise what they struggle for. When things begin to go wrong, suspicions may be raised about the intentions of others close by. The unknowability of the intentions of others, as well as tensions between obvious competitors, make the pathways women pursue over their life courses and their everyday struggles ever more uncertain and fragile.

I return in this chapter to some of the domains of association that I sketched out in Chapter 3 to explore women's relationships with other women. Women occupy situational subject positions in different domains, giving rise to a multiplicity of interactional possibilities beyond those in which they occupy subject positions in relation to men.² These in themselves give rise to shifting, sometimes contradictory, notions of what it may mean to be a 'woman' in any particular setting (see Chapters 3 and 5). For the relational subject positions of wife, co-wife, mother, daughter, daughter-in-law, sister and so on have quite different implications for agency and indeed for 'gender relations' (see Sacks 1979, Mintz 1981, Tcherzekoff 1993). And each of these positions gives rise to further variants. There is, however, more at stake. Women spend much of their lives in other, interlocking arenas in which they make it for themselves and make themselves as multiply constituted social agents who occupy a range of other subject positions (cf. Taylor 1985). While contests between women in domains of co-residence may revolve around entitlements and claims to a man's resources, tensions in other arenas invoke further complexities. Multiple relationships produce multiple, partible persons, Strathern (1988) argues. The sheer variability of relationships between women gives rise to contingent and sometimes contradictory ways of

interpreting and dealing with particular others and in particular situations. Discourses on disruption turn on jealousies and conflicts of interest between women which are exacerbated by a hidden potentiality to make serious trouble. In this chapter I take a closer look at situations in which trouble is caused and averted, exploring their implications for women's struggles for *owo*, *omọ ati alafia*.

Sites of Struggle

Women in Ado-Odo spend virtually all their time in female company (see Chapter 3). In the market, densely clustered groups of vendors sell identical goods, for similar prices. In the sites in which *fufu* is made, women sit together peeling cassava, stirring the bubbling vats, packing wads into plastic; by the river, groups of women work to transform palm fruit into *epo*. Clusters of apprentices crowd tailoring schools, photographers' studios and hairdressing salons, to learn their trade. And in their compounds, women sit together weaving mats, sorting kola, tending their children, preparing food. Throughout the week, *egbẹ* and *assalatu* meet to pray together, and to contribute small sums of money, draw lots for the common pool and discuss forthcoming events and current constraints. In all of these settings there is talk and there is laughter, but there are also tensions running as an undercurrent in women's dealings with each other. And in spaces shared with co-wives or with affinal relatives, tensions sometimes erupt.

Peace within the compound is precious and may be hard to come by. Tensions spill over to implicate those in other domains; other women - the girlfriends, sisters, 'outside wives' of husbands - may also impinge on the lives of women within the compound through their relationships with the men who live within it. Other contexts of proximity may also be the spaces in which harboured resentments turn into sabotage. The benefits of working together, saving together and generally helping each other out can serve to maintain precautions against trouble. Friends and fellow *egbẹ* members may support each other in spaces outside their compounds. But here too trouble may start. The friend advising a woman to leave her husband may be the one who plans to install another in his bed; the secrets told to a confidante may become the latest gossip that sweeps through compounds and the marketplace, relished by interested onlookers; an associate watching a woman prosper in her business may come to resent her for being too proud and look for a way to bring her down to size.

In any of these settings, women may argue openly and abusive words may escalate into physical fights - on a couple of occasions, I saw women tear off their *buba* (top), secure their wrappers around their chests with their head-ties and set to.³ Often, though, trouble is made for people in more covert ways. Co-wives can 'report the one here and there', telling tales or spreading rumours about their competitor. Those who seem to be friends may turn out to be *orẹ pepe* (friends who call and call, i.e. greet you warmly, but are not to be trusted), bad-mouthing a woman behind her back. Information can be fed into the steady stream of gossip

that trickles through and permeates every quarter of the town, carrying with it from compound to compound tales that damage and may even ruin reputations (cf. Barber 1991). Where people's secrets become the substance of commentaries all over town, returning to their 'owners' through other routes, chains of trust are broken. Malicious gossip can be just as debilitating as other forms of sabotage; it is, as Barber points out, 'more pervasive and uncontrollable than overt aggression' (1991:230). De Certeau argues, 'rumors... are always injunctions, initiators and results of a levelling of space, creators of common movements that reinforce and order by adding an activity of making people believe things to that of making people do things' (1984:107). The 'levelling of space' that de Certeau identifies is significant, for it is precisely the tension between aspirations to get ahead and expectations of equality that feature in many instances of trouble.

Ill will can transform bother into serious trouble. A woman may quietly harbour resentment rather than confront the person who has offended her, taking her time before exacting her revenge. She may equally keep her head down to keep the peace, fearing the consequences. For no-one really knows enough about anyone else to be sure of what they're really thinking and what they might do. I was often told by women that it was because women don't want others to be successful that their resentments may bubble up and turn into hatred (*odi*). The point they continually returned to was that you can never know who it may be who becomes resentful or jealous and starts to plot your downfall. It is in this sense of not knowing and not being able to control or predict the intentions of others that so many uncertainties lie: for those who may wish harm on a person may be those in the closest proximity to them. You may not know if you have offended someone inadvertently. That person would not show that they had been offended. Instead, they may continue to smile and to greet their intended victim, even perhaps move closer to them, so that they could 'do their work' with *juju*, magical medicines, or *aje*, the power of 'witchcraft'. And from the number of cases herbalists and prophets reported, the use of *aje* and *juju* was rampant in Ado.⁴

At first appearance, *juju* and *aje* seem to correspond with the well-worn anthropological categories of 'sorcery' and 'witchcraft', associated with Evans-Pritchard (1937) and used throughout the extensive literature on 'witchcraft' (see, for example, contributors to Marwick 1970).⁵ *Juju* may be used by just about anyone, for purposes that would seem entirely understandable if not justifiable; it is part of a corpus of 'medicines' (*oogun*) used to heal, resolve problems and protect, as well as to cause harm to others. *Juju* appears to restore the well being of the user, sorting out their problems: it can be used to create trouble in order to resolve other troubles.⁶ Certain configurations of circumstances and dispositions in particular situations give rise to the invocation of a model of gendered agency that situates the potential to disrupt in the figure of the 'witch', *aje*:⁷ popularly characterised as malevolent agents, invariably female, who attack those they are supposed to love, work covertly and are consumed with hatred (*odi*), envy (*ilara*) and jealousy (*owu*). *Aje* cannot bear anyone having

an easy life, enjoying themselves, succeeding or just getting along without obvious difficulty.⁸ The trouble they are implicated in ranges from sudden death to lingering illnesses that defy attempts at treatment.⁹

Representations of real wickedness and of bad *people*, rather than simply people *behaving* badly, invoke *aje*. *Juju* enables people to commit anti-social acts, to cause trouble, without being considered to be bad persons. It is almost expected to be used by men: 'a real Yoruba man', one elderly chief told me, 'has *juju* for it'. It is also acknowledged to be used by women in certain circumstances. But when bad things happen, the potentiality of *aje* transforms the user into a bad person. And usually women are assumed to be behind it all: '*obinrin iku aiye*' ('women are the death of the world'), Mrs Odu would frequently mutter when we heard of trouble. *Aje*, people told me, were most jealous and angry when someone had *owo ati omọ* and seemed as if they were enjoying *alafia*; they attacked to deprive people of all three, by targeting their offspring, their fertility and their means of making a living or holding on to the money they had. Barber suggests 'witchcraft is... something innate, something that lives within the body, connected with a woman's femaleness in a way that *juju* is not connected with maleness' (1991:236): an embodied essence. As I note in Chapter 5, writers have drawn attention to images in Yoruba religion and art that evoke the dual-sidedness of female power, as givers and takers of life, as mothers and as 'witches'.¹⁰ Yet these images are perhaps representations not of dual-sided *individuals* but potentially *dividual*, partible, persons (cf. Strathern 1988). The very partibility that representations of *aje* invoke is suggestive, as I go on to note.

While *juju* accommodates the range of difficulties people may have with each other in everyday life, providing a means to seek solutions to the anxieties and conflicts that may be provoked by others, *aje* seems to represent at first glance - again in ways characteristic of the literature on 'witchcraft' - the antithesis of what people ought to be or do (cf. Middleton 1971, Nadel 1952). But while everyday stories about *aje* in Ado spoke of their wickedness, school students and herbalists alike told me of *aje rere* (good witches) who sought to repair the damage that destructive *aje pupa* (red witches) and *aje dudu* (black witches) did.¹¹ And several herbalists commented on the *aje* of *oyinbo* (white people) who used it to make machines and other things that made people's lives easier.¹² *Aje*, then, appears to be in itself less the quintessence of evil than a morally ambiguous power that is used by people for good or bad purposes (cf. Hallen and Sodipo 1986, Jackson 1989). But I only heard two instances where people referred to *aje rere*, while my fieldnotes are packed with instances of destructive *aje*. I heard of only one case of a man who was classed as *aje*, whose legendary wickedness surpassed anything in living memory.¹³ But I heard of countless cases of wicked women. Indeed, some people suggested that a propensity for wickedness was something that was in itself a female quality.

Many writers on 'witchcraft' have begun from the assumption that it is something unreal. Thus Evans-Pritchard, in one of the most renowned works on 'witchcraft' in the anthropological canon, writes 'witchcraft is imaginary and a man [sic.] cannot possibly be a witch' (1937:119). Following his lead, anthropologists for decades afterwards strove to piece together the 'rationality' behind the puzzle, sketching 'social structures' where 'witches' lurked in the interstices.¹⁴ Shared experience of what might be characterised as existential *angst*, that which Jackson terms 'the unmanageable flux of lived experience' (1989:3), did not come into the picture. 'Irrational beliefs' like witchcraft were those Others had:¹⁵ those beliefs anthropologists as people may have themselves maintained appear to have provided few resources for trying to understand how people *felt*.¹⁶

Parkin (1985) argues that 'witchcraft is one of many perspectives on good and evil and deserves no privileged place in analysis' (1985:2). 'Evil', in Parkin's analysis, is designated as 'an area of discourse concerning human suffering, human existential predicaments and the attempted resolution of these through other humans and through non-human agencies, including a God or gods' (1985:10). Starting from human suffering, rather than from the category of belief, provides a perspective on 'witchcraft' that demands not understanding but an appreciation of the feelings it evokes in those for whom it is a part of their lived experience. For those who have watched their children die, their suffering is real enough; for those who feel *aje* are behind their troubles and are in pain, that too is real enough.

Treating 'witchcraft' as a separate or separable category takes it out of the context of everyday relations in which other kinds of troubles also figure in the ways gendered efficacy is construed. It also presupposes a difference in kind between 'witchcraft' and other everyday ways of behaving badly, one which, I argue, should not be prejudged. Contested concerns and competing interests in relationships between women may invoke particular kinds of agents whose behaviour is evaluated by recourse to waywardness rather than wickedness: bad behaviour rather than badness itself. The contingency of the ways in which trouble is interpreted and coped with militates against any neat distinctions, giving rise instead to a variety of tactics or strategies for interpreting and dealing with distress and with disorder. In the following sections I take a closer look at relationships that women have with others in the settings in which they spend their day-to-day lives and in which their struggles for ways to make a living, bear and bring up children and pursue the means by which to find happiness take place. My focus is on the implications that making or suffering from trouble (*wahala*) that is perceived to be caused by another human agent have for getting on and getting by in everyday life. My interest is less in explaining the 'why?' or 'how?' of *juju* and *aje* as things-in-themselves than in the lived experiences of people coping with the hurdles life throws up in their path.

Friends and Enemies

Women have enemies. They don't know who those enemies are. You can move with them without knowing. (Elizabeth, farmer, late 40s).

Throughout the pool of friendships that women have with others, formed out of circumstance as much as choice, suspicions may ripple. Mrs Odu talked of how some women were always creating trouble for those who had better lives than they did: 'they want others to suffer like they did. You might think that they are your friends, but secretly they just want to harm you'. One woman, a trader in her late 30s, told me:

I know a lot of women, but there is only one person who I can talk to. There was a time when I was close to a wife of a friend of my husband, but the woman started making things up to tell her husband about me. She was a homebreaker. My husband had a girlfriend and this woman was working with her to get me out of my house. Since then I have kept myself separate from these women. They only make trouble for you.

Not only do some of the acquaintances women have pose a threat to the stability of marriage, they are also conduits through which other women can have access to information which can be used to damage reputations, livelihoods or even lives. Anything connected with children or money may be carefully guarded from others. And when women have problems with their husbands, their friends may be the last people they would want to talk to. Revealing intimate matters to others is regarded as very risky: 'women', Mrs Odu told me, 'have their secrets'. When I talked with women about the kinds of things women friends in the UK talk about, they were shocked; it is positively dangerous to reveal too much of yourself to people as you never know what might happen as a result. A proverb cited by Delano warns:

Ba inu so, ma ba enia ʒo; enia ko si mọ, aiyẹ di eke: confide your secret to your heart, do not share it with people, genuine people no longer exist, everybody in the world has become a liar - do not share your secrets with others, because by doing so you may be sharing it with a great number of people and you may bring trouble upon yourself (1979:130).

Friendship means more than simply who someone knows or spends time with. A woman may see a person regularly and spend hours with them in conversation, go with them to their ceremonies and spend money to help them celebrate, buy cloth and plan things together, but still not regard her as a 'real friend' (*qrẹ gidi*, see Chapter 3). While relatives could be approached for loans or assistance, I rarely heard women talk of asking their friends for help. I knew women who would barely socialise with people outside their own compound, for whom their children were their companions. Falilatu, in her 60s, told me that she didn't like to move out further than the porch of her house. There were many people, she said, who would stop to greet her and to pass the time of day. But she did not feel that any of them were her friends. And if she needed help? She wouldn't mention anything to anyone, just cope with it alone or with the assistance of her children. 'If you ask someone for something', she told me, 'you will not see the end of it.' Better, she said, to manage for yourself.

Women's friendship networks, then, may be quite limited (see Chapter 3). But most women need to seek connections with other women in everyday life and mix with a range of women in the domains where they live, work and pray. Many women rely on the connections they build up with *onibara* (customers) to operate their trading concerns (see Chapter 7, see also Sudarkasa 1973, Trager 1981). Over time, these relationships can become friendships that develop further in other spheres of a woman's life. The risk of default on credit, however, is always there, even among people who seem to be friends. Several women told me of how their customers' failure to pay them had resulted in the collapse of their business and how they had feared making a fuss so as to avoid *wahala*, trouble (see Chapter 7 for a case of this). In this way, *onibara* can bring down a trader who seems to be succeeding. Fearing the consequences of making a fuss, she may just have to put up and shut up. Women may actively avoid making a fuss in public about anything, to avoid the attentions of others who might start to say that they are proud. As part of my 'training' in Ado, Mary cautioned me to keep cool if anything ruffled me to say nothing or else people would start to talk about me and say I was proud. When you are offended, she told me, it is best not to show people; instead it is better to behave as if nothing has happened.

Trouble in these domains can take more sinister forms. I was summoned one day by the herbalist Akala to see one of his patients. At his practice, I met a very sick woman. Her husband narrated a detailed account of the events that had led to her illness.¹⁷ One of her customers had it in for her and had, Akala pronounced, used *aje* on her; she had become jealous because his wife was doing well in her business. Now Akala was tending to her, she was slowly recovering. He, he claimed, able to use his own powers as *aje rere* (good witch) to beg that bad *aje* to leave her alone. Like the *onibara* who troubled Akala's patient, 'enemies' (*ota*), I was told, do not want to see a person prosper or get ahead of them. They are particularly rankled when someone of the same status as them seems to be getting on better than them. For women who work within and from their homes and keep other women at a distance, the *ota* outside may not be perceived to be as much a threat as those closer to them. For others, however, their day to day pursuits bring them in direct contact with a range of other people; and some of these others may be *ota*.

The market, in particular, is a setting in which there is intense competition (see Chapter 3). Jealousies can arise among those who work within this space, as well as relatives or friends who come to shop there and see a woman making a healthy profit. Customers help women make money, but there is always the risk that they might be *ota*. Herbalists reported a steady flow of marketwomen coming to them to seek 'medicines': *oogun asiki* (lit. medicine for good fortune and prosperity), *oogun awure* (lit. medicine for good luck), *oogun itaja* (lit. medicine for sales) and *oogun iyonu* (lit. medicine to avoid trouble or worry). All are to 'draw people' and to close a successful sale, but *oogun iyonu* is specifically as a protective measure against the interference of those who may wish a person ill, a medicine that is

especially associated with counteracting the malignant intentions of *aje*.¹⁸ One condition that malevolent people can bring about is *agbana*, where a person spends and spends without being able to control themselves until they are impoverished: this can be done via destructive *juju* as well as by *aje*. I was told by Akinde, a herbalist, that one way of bringing this about is to use money which has been imbued with a certain *oogun* called *anabo*. Protective incisions can be given to marketwomen to prevent them from accepting *anabo*. Akinde explained that if a customer offers *anabo*, the vendor's hand will begin to shake. If this happens, the vendor simply says that the goods are not available after all. Akinde's explanation was that the incisions help to alert vendors to *aje*: the vendor, he said, withdraws, because she's aware of the greater power of her rival.

As in this case where a vendor bows to the superior power of another, there is a distinct pecking order among women as well as men, based on age and status, which marks the bounds of appropriate behaviour. A lack of respect for elders was one of the characteristics of *aje* that people identified: an aberration that only the more powerful could sustain with impunity. When someone who is considered as a subordinate begins to behave in a way that indicates that they think themselves to be better, she'll be sharply reminded of her place. Several incidents occurred where women became furious with others for speaking to them as if they were age mates and for disregarding the etiquette of superiority. In some situations, failing to recognise superiority and to behave accordingly can have serious consequences, as in the following example told to me by the herbalist Amos Dada:

Two women were renting rooms in a house. The rooms were opposite each other. One day, one of the women spilt some water on the floor. The other one complained. The first woman said to her: 'What are you complaining about, I didn't spill water on the floor of your room did I?'. The second woman did not realise that the first was a witch and was more powerful than her. She was pregnant. The pregnancy lasted for seven years. The child had died inside her and eventually came out dead. When she spoke a bad smell came from her mouth and nose, indicating that something was dead inside her (*odeori*). He needed to use a lot of medicine. The other woman had done this because she was proud and the woman had angered her by behaving as if they were of the same status.

'Long pregnancy' (*omọ pe*) is one of the characteristic modes of attack associated with *aje*.¹⁹ In this case, speaking out rather than remaining silent was perceived to have provoked the attack. Avoiding trouble requires a constant watchful caution, staying calm, keeping people at arm's length, never giving too much of oneself away to others (Oyetade, forthcoming). While networks spun through kin and associates may bring women and men in contact with superiors or subordinates, 'moving' with people who mirror one's own standing is not merely a matter of marking out one's status. As Professor Arigberi, a herbalist, told me: 'because of jealousy the rich have their own (associates) and the poor have their own'.²⁰ And the friends who are closest are often those who are in more or less equal positions. If anything happens to a woman who has risen above her 'mates', people start to say that it was jealousy that brought her down again. Success depends in part on connections

as trading success depends on credit (see Chapter 7), but these may be the very things that cause a downfall if too much trust is vested in others. Among peers, jealousy can fester and slowly take root: trust is precious and fragile. For those who have the most to lose, along with those who have lost and cast their eyes around for the culprit, dealings with associates may be tempered with considerable caution. When others come to speculate on the cause of someone's misfortune, it may be the very friends whom a woman trusts most who are the ones others regard as those making trouble for her.²¹ A proverb highlights some of the issues at stake:

Enia bi aparo lomọ araiye fẹ - it is people like bushfowl (a bird with dirty feathers) that the world likes: people may secretly relish the failure of others.

No-one can be sure that they have no *ota* (enemies). No-one is safe. Oyetade (forthcoming) identifies a range of *ota* that highlight precisely the uncertainties people may feel about others: there are *ota* everywhere, in every possible guise.²² And, as Elizabeth pointed out (above), it is hard to know just who those enemies might be.

***Ile ni aseni ngbẹ*: Relations between Co-wives**

Bi o ba fẹ iyawo pupọ, iku aiye wa mbẹ - if you marry many wives, there is death in it (Toyin, *fufu*-maker, 30s).

Toyin's remark was echoed time after time by people, from women who had escaped malevolent co-wives to elderly men who cautioned their sons to marry only one wife if they wanted to remain alive. And it makes reference to *iku aiye*, to the death that can result from struggles between women. When I asked the herbalist Baba Lamidi one day about the kinds of relationship problems people came to him with, he told me:

The most important thing is *obinrin iku aiye*... women have many ways of confusing men. The senior wife will like to enjoy the husband, the second wife too, also the third. That's where we use the saying *obinrin iku aiye* as that is where the jealousy starts. All will want the husband to be theirs, each will go to herbalists to win his love... and that may lead to death.

The 'plotters within' who might be the most likely candidates for making trouble for each other are those who share a husband. Co-wives may be rivals for *owo* and *omọ*, both of which are a source and an expression of a man's affections: in many stories of conflicts between co-wives, hostilities revolved around tensions between competition for equal shares of a man's love and money and assertions of superiority. Contests, like the outcomes that are plotted, revolve around the capacity of women to act within constraints that can leave them relatively powerless. Actively seeking to keep the peace or remaining silent may be the best tactics for peace of mind and as much the 'arts of resistance' (Scott 1990) as more overt forms of struggle.

Some co-wives strike up harmonious relationships, joining forces to create overlapping hearth-holds: helping each other mind the children, taking it in turns to service their husband's needs, buying cloth and cooking food for others' children as if they were their own. These may be truces struck after struggle, or alliances formed in the face of yet other wives.²³ Peace may also be pursued through a sense of duty and endurance, simply to get on with getting by without any bother. I knew some co-wives who grudgingly co-existed without any arguments and others who seemed quite close. But these days, closeness is rarely expected. And it is often by moving closer that sabotage may be all the more effective. Co-operative relationships between co-wives are, then, also potential avenues for trouble and some co-wives may steer clear of each other for precisely this reason. Sometimes the age gap between wives is considerable, spanning generations. Tactics that draw on this difference may be used to seek peace, by situating the senior wife in the subject position of mother. Grace, a hairdresser in her 20s, told me that if she had a senior wife who was making her life difficult, she would go to her and beg her, 'you are like a mother to me, please leave me alone'. But, as I note in Chapters 4 and 5, senior wives may have things on their mind when a young wife is precipitously brought home. They may not be ready yet to have their position usurped by another, even if they have stopped having children. Faced with this prospect, they may be very aggrieved. Professor Arigberi, a herbalist, told me:

Some men marry a wife when he is poor and little by little he will become rich - then when he has money he will bring a 'big madam' (rich woman) inside and will send the senior wife away. That wife can go to the herbalist to get medicine to bring him down or even to kill him.

Sudarkasa (1973) describes how, in 1960s Awe, some senior wives encouraged their husbands to take another wife to have children for him, so that they could pursue their trade.²⁴ I asked Baba Lamidi what he thought of this. He said:

Any woman who says 'I want my husband to marry another wife' is not saying that of her own mind. She will not really want that he does this. She will not know what is happening in the other room where the other wife is with her husband. He will discuss different matters with each wife in each room, he will be sexing her in that room. (AC: What if the senior wife does not want any more children? What then?) She won't be happy at all. When that first one says she is tired of the man sexing her, she can instruct the husband to marry another wife. After some time, the senior wife can go around looking for *juju*.

When the senior wife has suffered with the husband for years on end only to see him take a young new wife to share him, one who will not have to suffer as she did, considerable resentment can build up. Even for those who might consider some of the benefits of a co-wife, women of a generation in which such situations were more or less taken for granted, trouble may be in store when a woman with quite different expectations moves in (see Chapter 4).

Abusive songs can be sung to put the other wife in their place or to rebuke them. These songs, sung to me by men and women who had witnessed such conflicts, reveal some of the issues at stake. One establishes the superiority of the senior wife, challenging her junior to know and remain in her place:

*Ile lo ba mi pe mi ni yale o
Ile lo ba mi pe mi ni yale o
O ba fi moto k'eru dele oko
Ile lo ba mi pe mi ni yale o*

You meet me at my home, call me the senior wife
You meet me at my home, call me the senior wife
You can carry your load to the husband by motor
You meet me at my home, call me the senior wife

Among age mates resentments may be no less acute. Both men and women suggested that the longer a man waits before installing a second wife the more the potential for trouble. But relations also depend on generational expectations and on the personalities of the women involved. Anything might happen. In some cases it does not take long before *ija orogun* - fight between rival wives - breaks out. And these can turn into wars.

Junior wives are not always compliant and far from relenting under the pressure from their seniors, they can seek the means to retaliate. The junior wife may start telling tales to wind up her husband, with the aim of getting him to throw her rival; she may use *juju* or her sexual allure to 'turn his mind'; and she may gloat over every small gift he gives her as proof that she has a larger share of the husband's love. Young women are far less willing to tolerate sharing their husband with another woman and I heard cases of younger women making the lives of their older senior wives so difficult that they became exasperated and left.

Yet junior wives may also be in situations of relative powerlessness, when faced with a senior wife who appears to have other resources at her command. In another song, a young wife calls out for help to smooth relations with a senior wife who poses a more potent threat:

*E ye e ba mi be yale mi ko ma fi mi sase je
Bo s'eniyan ni oşan, a deiyẹ bo ba d'ale
E ye e ba mi be yale mi, ko ma fi mi sase je*

Please help me beg the senior wife so that she won't make me a meal to eat
In the day she is a person, in the night she becomes a bird (i.e. *aje*)
Please help me beg the senior wife so that she won't make me a meal to eat.

In this example, not only is the senior wife perceived to be so powerful that the junior wife is in no position to put up any resistance, the route through which she most fears harm is the shared cooking pot into which her rival can put poison to kill her. And in this case, the 'witch' also uses *juju*. Fears about eating from the same pot as a rival wife extend to those

who she might most wish to harm: a woman's children. Sharing the same pot is a metaphor for co-operation. Eating together may be risky, as the intentions of the co-wife remain a source of uncertainty. And allowing one's children to eat from another woman's pot can be considered to be dangerous at times. If there are tensions within the family, children might be warned not to eat anything when they visit their relatives: adults, too, may be cautious. I was reminded of this one night at a party, when I gave the excuse of not having finished my beer when I was asked to dance. I was told not to worry, that no-one would put anything in it. One particular story was repeated to me in many different forms, as a moral tale about the risks involved in trusting a co-wife with the care of one's children:

A certain woman so much hated her co-wife that she wanted to punish her. But she did not show that hatred and moved closer to that wife of hers. One day she saw the chance to make trouble for her. She bought some poison and cooked a very fine soup, then put a portion of it in a bowl and added the poison to it. She left that bowl out and placed another bowl with soup in it on top of a shelf for her own child to eat, knowing that the child of that wife would be the first to come home to eat. But on that day, the son of that other wife went to play with his friends and her own son came straight home. He was hungry and took the soup and ate it. Then she came into the room, she saw him there on the floor rolling around in pain. Then she knew what had happened. She suffered for that.²⁵

Marriages are made and sustained through children and the fertility of the co-wife is an obvious target to weaken her position in the man's compound. If co-wives are friendly, those women who have no children of their own can become second mothers to the children another wife bears for their husband: so much so that as one man, whose first wife was infertile said, 'without telling anybody no-one can tell who is the mother of my children'. Yet where there is hostility, a more fertile rival may be thought to be up to no good and may revel in her co-wife's difficulties. The money a man spends on his children by another wife can become a focal point for conflict, as it represents an expression of his affection for her. And wives may seek to divert this money away, to their own children (see Chapter 8).

Co-wives pose a threat to the bargaining power of wives who can simply be sent away and just as easily replaced by their husbands if they create any problems. Recourse to overt action is similarly constrained by the fear of engendering the interest of others in the situation. One woman whose a husband brought home a young wife unannounced one day told me she could say nothing at all: 'when you start to complain, people start talking, talking, saying that you are jealous (*owu*)'. Being labelled as jealous has repercussions on a woman's reputation and relations outside the compound. So this woman simply endured having to share a room with her husband and his new wife. She had slept on a mat on the floor and let them have the bed. Her story saddened me so much: it was the resignation with which she told it that upset me most. She told me how, at first, she had tried very hard to

make friends with that wife and even washed her clothes for her. But the wife wanted her out. She was from a wealthy family and used her means to buy delicious food, while the other woman could only afford ordinary fish. Then she bragged about how much sweeter her soup was. Finally, a sickness the woman suspected as having been caused by her co-wife sent her home: any action she might have taken had been pre-empted by her rival, who had got what she wanted.

One day I was chatting with a couple of women my age about co-wives and they asked me what women do in London. I told them that it was against the law for a man to marry two wives, but a few men have mistresses in secret. I told them the story of a relative of mine who did this for many years without his wife knowing. The day she found out, she was angry and upset and she threatened him with divorce. Eventually, she decided not to go. She had told me that if not for the fact that she was unable to get a reasonable job, she would have left. The women nodded, using this as an opportunity to caution the two teenage girls sitting with us to get their own jobs as 'men are useless'. But, they said, her reaction was extreme. 'That's what men do here in Nigeria', said one of them. The real problem starts, they said, when that other wife starts to make trouble. A war of competing *juju* may break out. Mrs Odu described a virtual tug of war in such situations, each woman using *juju* to outdo the other:

The outside wife will make medicine to lure the man away and the real wife can then retaliate by using medicines to punish him and bring him home. Friends of mine have had this problem.

As in this case, *juju* can be used on men, to make them do what the users want them to do. It can make the husband find constant fault with a competing wife, affect his ability to have sex with the rival and make him love only the wife who is using it on him (*oogun ife*), or make the husband so devoted to his wife that he can't enjoy sex with anyone else (*oogun adodun*): to 'turn his mind so that he will only want that wife and not the others', as one woman put it. It can also be used on the co-wife to get her to leave. Some *juju* is said to cause difficulties for the co-wife so that she'll leave the man, maybe by making her miscarry or fail to conceive, or can cause her to just 'pack and go' peacefully (*oogun firaku*). *Juju* can also be used directly as an irritant or poison, to cause sickness or death to a rival's child or to harm the wife herself. Iyabo, a fish trader in her 30s, commented, 'some women want to cause trouble for those who they see as taking over their own interests'. And, she pointed out, there may be other repercussions:

Women can use *juju* to charm the man into loving them - but if he has many girlfriends then he can be poisoned as they might all give him medicine at once!

As I note in Chapter 5, *oogun ife* (love medicine) is said to turn a man into a doting husband with eyes for no-one else. Used in a polygynous relationship, it can drive a wedge

between him and his other wives, for no sex also means no children. One song laments the plight of a new wife, still childless, who waits for her husband to come to her:

Iyawo nke to ri ko rọkọ do
Iyawo nke to ri ko rọkọ do
Iya iyawo wa wo eleyi qmọ rẹ
Iyawo nke to ri rọkọ do

New wife is crying because she hasn't had sex with the husband
New wife is crying because she hasn't had sex with the husband
Mother of the new wife, come and see this child of yours
New wife is crying because she hasn't had sex with the husband

This song, calling upon a mother to come to witness the sadness of the singer, tells of a situation in which the senior wife managed to secure her own aims. In such situations, mothers can come to the assistance of their daughters to help them fight their corner. The following story tells of a campaign waged by a co-wife's mother, using *juju*, to protect her daughter's interests.

Sarah was in the second year at Ado High School when she became pregnant by her boyfriend, a fellow student. She thought about having an abortion, but friends and family advised her not to risk her life. So she went to stay at his compound. But when she arrived, she found a senior wife there. As she was of the same age, she did not expect trouble. When she saw Sarah, the senior wife said to her, 'You're a visitor (*alejo*) in this place. You cannot stay here'. In the meantime, her husband had left school and got a driving job. Every day early in the morning after the husband went to work, the mother of that senior wife would arrive. Sarah suspected that she was making *juju* and giving it to the daughter, so that there would be a misunderstanding and the husband would beat her. She became annoyed. One day she couldn't take it any more, she was so angry. She beat that woman's mother and told her to go away and leave her alone.

Juju was put in her food. She used to share a cooking pot with her co-wife, but one day that woman's mother put *juju* in the soup and it swelled up until it was huge. No-one could eat it. After this, Sarah began to cook separately. Once she left a bottle of perfume around and *juju* was put in it. She started to itch and it was very painful. She went to see her father, who gave her another *juju* to cure the rash and to combat the mother of the senior wife. And she stayed put. One day she found *juju* under her bed. She called the husband's family to come and see it and know the problems the senior wife's mother was causing. The aim of the co-wife's mother was to frighten their husband so he would send Sarah away. She had to lock her room all the time and keep her things safe, as otherwise the co-wife's mother might have been planting *juju* in her things, or even in the water pot from which anyone might drink.

She stood her ground, but continues to live in fear of what will come next. While *juju* may be used to try to send away the new wife, sometime women are in a position where they need to exercise caution. Bose, in her early 40s, revealed some of the dilemmas:

If the husband has married another wife and the woman is not being given attention by him any more she may seek to have revenge by using medicine on that new wife until she is driven away... but in other situations, like where a man inherits wives from his brother, his own wife will not be able to do anything at all because she will fear that they will be using *juju* on her.

In this case, a vulnerable new wife is easier prey than more hardened, older wives who may already be prepared for trouble. Arrangements made in order to curb the jealousy of co-wives - equal amounts of money, given openly, equal amounts of time spent with each wife, equal numbers of nights in her room - may quell tensions, but often not quench them. And if a man treats his wife too well, it is not only his co-wives who may begin to become resentful and start to make trouble.

Bi iku ile ko pa 'ni: 'Family Problems'

As Kubirat found out, having a good relationship with your husband may be the last thing that keeps the peace. Her mother-in-law used to sing this song to taunt her:

Tòkọ ba nferan rẹ yo mo niba
Tòkọ ba nferan rẹ yo mo niba
To ba yo la yo ju wa yo bọle

If you are too happy and your husband loves you
If you are too happy and your husband loves you
You will fall down

Throughout her marriage, she was troubled by her husband's mother, who resented her so much that she finally drove her away with her taunts and spite. Kubirat talked of the jealousy (*owu*) of that mother-in-law, a jealousy that was even stronger than that of her co-wives. It was, she said, because the husband loved her more than his other wives and spent all his money on her that his mother hated her.²⁶ As mothers of their sons' children, daughters-in-law occupy an ambiguous position: they give birth to the grandchildren that a son's mother so desires, but they also threaten to draw his money and his love away from his mother, to block him from taking other wives and having other children and even to 'turn his mind' so that his mother is displaced completely from the central place she hopes to occupy in his life, left in her old age to fend for herself. In this respect, a man's mother is placed in a situation that is similar to a neglected co-wife: and she may use some of the same weapons to retaliate.²⁷

The subject positions older women occupy as mothers and grandmother create a range of ambiguous and potentially contradictory possibilities. As elders to their daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law can act as their mentors and protectors, as important allies rather than enemies. A young wife can be helped by her mother-in-law to establish herself in her work, sometimes by working under her direction for a while until she can raise enough to start alone. Husband's mothers may take over part of the obligations their sons have towards their children, sometimes by taking in women pregnant with his children to cater for them, and play a vital part in nurturing and training their grandchildren. For Iya Eleja, her mother-in-law was an important ally:

She was given to her husband by her father (in the 1940s). He already had a wife and did not love the young wife. The *iyale* (senior wife) had used *juju* to stop him paying any attention to her: no sex, no love, no money and no child. She really suffered. She was so unhappy, she went to her mother-in-law in tears. That mother, she said, went to find some medicine for her to drink. Soon afterwards, the husband came to her and she conceived. She delivered a male child. The senior wife put poison in the pot in which the child's *agbo* (a herbal mixture given to newborns) was being cooked. When she saw that medicine, the mother-in-law asked her to take the baby to another compound where her father-in-law was living. She did that and brought up the child there. Later on she returned to her parents house. Her husband did not come to her and she brought up the child with the help of her parents.

In this case, Iya Eleja trusted her mother-in-law to help her and relied on her to get her out of a difficult situation: her mother-in-law acted to assist her with the problem she was experiencing with her *iyale*, to be able to have a child. However, it was not long before the *iyale* tried to sever the link the child created. Again, her mother-in-law stepped in to help. Ultimately, Iya Eleja ended up back at home.²⁸

Mothers are expected to side with their sons, but a mother may caution her son to behave himself and protect his wife and children from beatings or from being harassed by him when breastfeeding.²⁹ Some women so love their mothers-in-law that they treat them as if they are their own mothers. As members of different generations, however, the expectations of mothers-in-law can create tensions. Mothers of sons may be so eager to have grandchildren that they can encourage their sons to take more wives (see Chapter 8). Their son's existing wife or wives may be far from happy with this kind of interference. I knew of such situations that had led to lasting resentments and bitter feuds. Mothers who endured may come to expect the same of their daughters-in-law and become frustrated with their complaints; they may also, as in Kubirat's case, become jealous. And some may take offence at the behaviour of a son's wife and go all out to get rid of her.

Relations between wives and other senior female kin of their husbands are equally contingent on the potentially contradictory positions women can take up, inflected with the relationships they have with other women in the compound as well as with men as husband, sons and brothers. Senior women can act on behalf of a wife who they favour against another and befriend her. They can also introduce another wife to their son or brother to marry or act as 'husbands' and provide support by taking in a young mother who has been left in the lurch (see Chapter 8). Senior sisters can wield as much influence over their brothers as any other senior family member. Those who return pending a 'misunderstanding' may start to provoke trouble for men's wives if they perceive them to be behaving in errant ways and can intervene, advising their brother to send a troublesome wife away. Whether these women get on is as much a matter of personality, or character (*iwa*), as of the subject positions they occupy relative to each other.

When things in people's lives begin to go awry, those who look on may begin mutter that *ogun idile* (lit. war in the compound), what people referred to as 'a family problem', lies behind it. For those who have married into the compound, it may be *ogun idile* that drives

them away when their attempts to find *owo* and *omọ* persistently fail: damaging fertility and drawing away money are hallmarks of *ogun idile*, a war waged by *aje*. A woman's problems may be caused by *ogun idile*, but she may not be their direct target. Hidden enemies in a man's compound may be waging war through her to get to him. Equally, it may be enemies in a woman's *idile* may be making trouble for her. Relatives may want the best for their kin, but they may also wish the worst upon them. Spaces shared with blood relations are often those in which people feel safest. Their own kin are those who they trust with their secrets, go to with money problems and help out in a crisis; kin are the ones who, more than anyone else, will look out for and look after them. Yet even in these safe spaces, there may be *ota*. Other family problems such as disputes between men over inheritance often involved *juju*: fears of poisoning could keep potential claimants at bay. But when people talked of *ogun idile* it was often *aje* that was at work: and women who were using it.

When a woman suffers from reproductive difficulties, *ogun idile* is often suspected as a probable cause (see Chapter 8). It may be traced, retrospectively, to a range of interested parties either within her own *idile* or that of her husband. Trouble may revolve less around a direct contest between women than the implications of their relationships with others. The following case, told to me by the herbalist Baba Egudu is again a case concerning reproduction. It tells of a case of *ogun idile* in which a wife's life was the target of a jealous sister, who, by attacking her, was getting at her brother.

There was a woman who came to him because she had so many problems delivering her children. She had paid N8,000, then N10,000 and then N12,000 for operations (caesarian sections) at hospital. Then she came to him. He asked her to pay N40 and a bottle of schnapps. He gave her medicine and told her to go to the river and to rub that medicine all over her body. And he told her that that *aje* would leave the house as soon as she saw the child. Surely enough, the time came for delivery. When the baby had been safely delivered, the sister of her husband came into the house. She took one look at the baby and then disappeared and was never seen again. It was *ogun idile*. The sister was jealous because her brother was successful and she wanted him to be spending his money all the time, to pull him down.

Again this is a story of jealousy. A man's sister, someone who might be expected to have his interests at heart, turns out to be someone who cannot be trusted. And her victim was merely an instrument in her desire to bring her brother back down to size.

In cases of *ogun idile*, suspicions most often come to fall on older women as those whom popular representations of *aje* locate as the most likely sources of disruption (see Morton-Williams 1956, 1960). The trouble that mothers-in-law and older female relatives may cause is so much part of day-to-day perceptions that I heard of biomedical maternity clinics turning them away at the door, suspicious of their potential interference with labour as *aje*. For a woman in a man's compound, a mother-in-law who seems to be jealous can seem a prime suspect when things begin to go wrong. In one case told to me by the herbalist Amos Dada, jealousy and superiority are again the predominant features:

There was a woman who delivered in hospital. She left her child in a cot and went out. She spent fifteen days wandering around: people looked for her and couldn't find her. When they did find her, they brought her to him. She had become extremely fat. She was given medicine and spent six weeks with him being cured. She had been bewitched to forget the child. It was the work of the husband's mother. All the work the husband did, he gave the money to the wife. Mother was seeing this and thinking of how the woman was enjoying while she was suffering. She did this to show she was more powerful than the wife. She enjoyed the fruits of her badness - the medicine she used was sent back to her and she died.

Here her target was the relationship between her son and his wife, disrupted by distracting the new mother from the child that served to connect them. The issue here, it seems, was that the daughter-in-law was perceived as siphoning away the resources of that mother-in-law's son. And she was enjoying herself in the process. To get back at her, the mother-in-law was said to have used *juju* and to be *aje*. And she met her come-uppance when her tactics backfired.

The resentment of mothers-in-law like these is directed at women who contend with them for men whom both expect to be their 'husbands' and to provide and care for them. When these 'husbands' spend instead on their wives, mothers can turn bitter and resentful. They can suspect the wives of using *juju* to 'turn his mind', as wives can suspect the use of *juju* or *aje* to damage their relationships and chances of staying. In this regard, their resentments are strikingly similar to those of wives who feel cheated by a transfer of affection to a new wife. And attributions of blame and responsibility in these cases locates the perceived malevolence of the mother-in-law - as the co-wife - in a jealousy and a conflict of interests that appears quite understandable: one tactic among others to recuperate a position that another has impinged upon.

'Broken [patriarchal] bargains' (Kandiyoti 1988) are certainly part of a story of older women who endured only to be cheated at the point when they begin to enjoy the fruits of their compliance. But this does not explain why some and not other mothers-in-law are perceived to turn to sabotage. The concerns that arise resonate with wider themes. For the problems they are perceived of as causing can happen to anyone. In a similar case of interference with birth, another woman told me of how her mother-in-law had tried to kill her:

She had so many problems delivering her child that she was taken to the hospital. After being operated on, she stayed there for some days. Her mother-in-law was bringing her food. She had suspected her mother-in-law of causing problems for her when her business began to fail and she was afraid to mention her concerns to anyone in case of trouble. So she ate the food. And then she passed out. It was only because God loved her, she said, that she was revived. The woman in the next bed was discharged the next day began to bring food to her, so she could throw that of the mother-in-law away. When she was discharged, that woman took her to a certain church. The prophet told her that there was a witch who was causing all her problems and that it was her mother-in-law. But if she prayed and fasted, God would protect her. He rubbed her hands with a certain potion and told her to go home and put her hands on her possessions and the trouble-maker would show herself. She followed his instructions. And she saw that it was true. That day, that mother-in-law was sitting weaving a mat and a bolt of

lightening came and struck her dead. It was that woman, she said, who was responsible for ruining her sons and making so many problems for people in the compound.

In this case, faith came to the rescue and the culprit was appropriately struck down by lightning. Poisoned food was part of a string of other misfortunes that had befallen the entire family: again both *juju* and *aje* are implicated. But it was not only the daughter-in-law who perceived herself as the victim of this woman. Rather, the mother-in-law was attributed with a more generalised malevolence, one that extended to sabotaging her own sons' prospects.

When a woman's children die in quick succession, people around her may start to ruminate on her involvement or begin to implicate those others who may be targetting her as an object or an instrument of their resentment. Those who are the closest of all, a woman's children, may be expected to be those least at risk of her resentment or of jealousy. After all, these are the children she has struggled for, wanting for them a better life, riches, fertility and happiness. Yet there are cases in which even a mother can be suspected of striking out at her own children.³⁰ No-one is *really* safe. One day, Mrs Odu and I were passing the outside kitchen of an old woman. She sat shelling *egusi* (melon seed), with a small child by her side. We stopped to chat, helping her with the mound of *egusi*. An innocuous question about her family unfolded into a story that shocked both of us profoundly. This was what she told us:

She gave birth to eight children and had never had any problems with them. Those children grew up and married. One of her sons had become a goldsmith and was doing fine. Then one day this son developed a fever. For two days he was seriously ill, then he died. Shortly afterwards, her second-born son died in a motor accident. Then, within a few weeks of losing that son, the first-born child of her third-born son died. He'd just finished his school certificate when he died suddenly, for no apparent reason. It was then that people began to talk, saying that it was *ogun idile*.

Everybody suspected her. Because she's old, they said that she was the one who was killing the children. That she was *aje*. Her family would not come to see her. Friends ran from her, fearing that she would injure them. People would say, as she passed, 'Look at that one! That *aje*, she killed her own children! She has taken her children as her meat!'. She was so upset and worried. She had no idea who might be causing that problem. So she went to her junior brother, to ask him to help her. He visited a herbalist, who made medicine so *aje* would appear to confess. Soon afterwards her first-born, a daughter, left the house early in the morning to go to Ilobi. As soon as she reached outside the town she started confessing. She wandered around the town telling people the names of all of those whom she'd killed. The first name she mentioned was the first son, then the other, then the grandson. Then many other names of people she'd killed in her husband's compound.

Many people came to visit her after that. One friend came bringing two dresses to apologise, others came to visit, the junior brother of the daughter's husband came to say that they had all thought she had been behind the deaths in that compound and that she'd been giving her daughter *juju* to harm them. When her daughter began to confess, she gave the reasons for her hatred. The first brother was a goldsmith and was doing well. She didn't want a junior brother to her to be richer than her. The second was a driver. One day she asked him to lend her N10 and he told her he didn't have any, but would bring some after going to work. She said he did have money, but just didn't want to give her any. She thought he had been lying to her. Two days later, he died. And she confessed that the father of the child who died had told her that the son had a scholarship to go abroad to study, while none of her children had had that chance.

That daughter was jealous and full of hatred. She had bought the power of *aje* at Otta: 'if the mother doesn't have it, they have to buy it for themselves', the old woman said. The

daughter also confessed that she had stopped the women she sold fish with in the market from prospering, draining away their profits to build herself a house and burying their gain under her front porch: she was the one who had made business go bad for them while becoming richer and richer herself. Her father summoned her and confronted her. She said nothing, just cried and cried. The herbalist made something to stop her killing again and gave the junior brother a lot of *juju* so he would be stronger than her. These days she is still in her house and still trades in the market. But people treat her with caution, from a distance. And her mother only speaks to her if one of the children or grandchildren falls sick: to say that if one of them dies she will know who is the one behind it.

The old woman gestured at her breasts. She'd fed that girl from her own breasts and this was what she had done to her. She'd brought her up well, taken care of her. What had she done to deserve this?

Due to her age, this woman was the first in line when fingers were pointed. But confession established the culprit to be a sister who was perceived as having wrought havoc with her brothers' lives, motivated not only by jealousy of what they had but the desire to make sure that they *could not do better* than her. Once her confession streamed out, it appeared that this woman had it in for just about everyone who seemed to have a chance of getting ahead of her: not only her close kin, but also her husband's relatives and fellow market traders, people in every domain of association she moved in. Her mother, who had lost two sons and her grandson, suffered again for being thought to be the one behind their deaths. This compounding of suffering with further suffering emerged in other cases: two of widows accused by their husband's relatives of 'giving the husband to their *egbe* (of *aje*) to eat' and one of an old, childless women accused of killing the children she had been given to foster, who provided her only hope of support in her old age.³¹

Getting Even?

Accounts of resentment, resistance, retaliation and even retribution evoke and return to the theme of fairness: from the 'it's not fair!' of the co-wife whose counterpart is the one to be favoured by a choicer piece of meat, or an extra night with her husband, and the 'that's not fair!' of the mother who lavished so much care on the son who now spends his money on his wife. A man tries to calm his warring wives by dishing out identical portions of money, time, affection. A customer knows better than to go every market day to exactly the same person, never buying from those around her. Husbands and mothers buy identical cloth for those who they have responsibility over, careful not to favour one person over another. 'Where is my own?' people would ask when I gave someone something.

Yet some become so rich they can build extravagant 'storey buildings' while their relatives languish in crumbling mud plaster houses; some have ten children who grow tall and strong, others in identical circumstances suffer a spate of infant deaths and then no child at all;³² some sell pepper and educate their sons and daughters through university; others earn fabulous sums of money and start to spend and spend until all their money trickles away like an unstoppable stream until they have nothing left. An unwanted pregnancy becomes the son

who brings the most glory to the family; a woman starts by collecting fallen kola nuts from the ground because she has no other way of raising money and ends up one of the richest women in the town. Anything is possible, no-one can ever really know how things may turn out.

What happens along the way may be put down to *ayanmọ*, a notion close to 'fate' (Morakinyo 1983), that can be traced through various configurations of ideas within different religions:³³ from invocations of the will of Allah, to the popular saying 'God's time is the best', to Ifa verses that talk of how each person's spirit chooses for themselves a destiny (*ori*) before coming to the world.³⁴ It may also be ascribed to the interventions of other agents, evoking images of life as a constant struggle to deal with the uncertainties other agents purposively scatter in the way: an image that is evocative of sociality as made and remade through the intersubjective practices of agents (cf. Giddens 1984, Inden 1990), rather than a known and knowable 'nature' of people or things.

Discourses on *aje*, as on *ota* and on *juju*, return to the agency of actors in squaring situations that they perceive as unfair to them: being slighted or jilted by others, being treated in ways that fail to recognise status, getting too much or giving too little. Verger (1965) has suggested that 'witchcraft' might be interpreted in this light: essentially as a social leveller, a potent reminder to people that they should not think themselves too great, lest they be brought down by others.³⁵ As an interpretive framework, Verger's point appears to match many of the instances referred to earlier. Tensions arise in relationships between women with a stake but an unfair share of a man's resources, as well as those who contest the claims of others: as wives, lovers and mothers. Relative equality, rather than inequality, gives rise to jealousies and resentments when one contender seems to be in a more favourable position, or steps out of line by asserting herself beyond the status she is given by others within groups of women who also have similar, but by no means shared, concerns: traders in the market, suspicious of the one who gets ahead, friends whose paths diverge as one becomes better off and the other continues to suffer. In these settings, resentments flare up if women overstep the mark: a fellow market trader who becomes too big for her boots, a lodger who behaves as if she's superior, a group member who thinks she's more important than anyone else. And these are also situations in which speaking up, making a fuss, may incur risks: and where the cautious remain silent. These situations may certainly be settings for trouble. But whether that trouble takes the form of *aje* is another matter.

Verger's analysis is suggestive as a way of thinking about the ways in which people make themselves and evaluate others as persons in a situation in which overt hierarchies mark the bounds of appropriate behaviour and in which stepping over the line may be asking for trouble. The tactics women resort to in order to keep the peace include concealing their wealth, not revealing the number of children they have to others and keeping quiet in situations where there is obvious provocation, for fear that they will be labelled proud and

become a target for others' interventions.³⁶ The use of covert strategies, and the suspected use of covert weapons, underlines the pressure for overt compliance. And yet, while younger women keep quiet about their children for fear of arousing the jealousy of others, older women may exaggerate the assistance they are given by their adult children in order to maintain face. I was told by one old man that younger people have many things to fear, while older people know that they are going to die sooner or later and so have less fear of others.

The tensions between wanting to get ahead and the vulnerability that success can bring were constantly brought to the fore in the discussions I had with people, as in the accounts of those who fell victim to suspected sabotage. Pathways through life are pitted with uncertainty and mistrust: caprice can constantly undermine efforts to get by and get on. Unpredictability stretches those efforts to the limits. No matter how polite and subservient she is, a daughter-in-law can still be hated by her husband's mother; no matter how she begs, a junior wife can still be loathed by her senior. That the senior wife or mother-in-law are nasty to them may have little to do with who they are or what they do. It is that they are there at all that is at issue. They are merely objects, even instruments in other struggles. The casualties of *aje* are often also people whose own agency is entirely eclipsed.

Going back to the instances cited earlier and to the versions that school students, herbalists and prophets gave of *aje*, it gains a range rather like that Parkin (1985) suggests for 'evil': an odd job word with relatively limited analytic usefulness. It seems that *aje* are bad people (*eniyan buburu*) who use *aje* for bad purposes. Not all bad people, however, have *aje*. Some of them need to go to buy *aje* to empower themselves to be even more able to do the bad things they do. And not all bad people are women. Not all people who have *aje* are bad. Doing bad things does not necessarily make a woman *aje*. Nor do those who do bad things necessarily do so consciously. *Aje* seems a rather ambiguous quality. And while *aje* or *eniyan buburu* may be retrospectively cast as existing prior to the acts attributed to them as agents, they are named and made through practices that involve complex agents (Taylor 1985, Inden 1990). Hobart, writing on agency in Bali, makes a point that applies equally to this setting:

We are dealing with ways of classifying the social world which vary in their degree of differentiation and the kinds of distinction they draw. Such constructs are made on different occasions by different people who may invoke hierarchies of values (themselves overlapping and contested...) to organise or justify their actions (1990:101).

As the instances above illustrate, when it comes to trouble anything might happen. It could be that *juju* is used, or it could be *aje* at work: sometimes it is both. *Juju* and *aje* can have identical effects. To know which was which required detailed probing.³⁷ Even in cases that were apparently clearcut - such as, for example, fatal car crashes - it might be that the person had no protective *juju* against their enemies, rather than *aje* at work. The kinds of diagnoses that were made depended on who made them. When trouble started, people might look around and try to pin down exactly who had it in for them. If they consulted others, they

might go first to their own relatives or be recommended by a friend or relative to see a specialist. Older men and women with knowledge, the fathers and mothers of victims who are often the first line of call for those in trouble, frequently treat the matter as brought about by *juju* and give counter-*juju*. Specialists, irrespective of their religious affiliation, would often treat similar cases as instances of *aje*, sometimes with similar treatment.³⁸

Close kin may be suspected of sabotage, but so too might a customer or even a friend. Popular stereotypes inform the direction in which fingers may, covertly, be pointed when events take an unexpected turn. Infertile women, especially those who are old, are an obvious target. But those who had shown themselves to have good character (*iwa rere*) did not come in for questioning even in cases where they might be perceived to have had good cause to intervene (see, for example, the case in Chapter 8). And in the cases described to me by those who had experienced *aje* within their families or by the herbalists who took action, identifying the bad person among them was not as easy as picking out someone with an obviously nasty character. Rather, they talked of those who *seemed* to be good people, those who they had become close to and who behaved in ways that indicated that they cared for others, unobtrusive characters who just got on with whatever they were doing. Suddenly, their badness was revealed through the things that happened around them: things that were attributed to them by others, accusations of agency which transformed them into the objects of blame. There are many ways to bring a person down - and suspicion that they have/are *aje* may be one of them.

Strategies for Hope

No matter what people do, there's still the possibility that somehow, something is going to turn someone against them. And no matter how good they seem to be, there is always the chance that they will turn out to be secretly plotting other people's downfall. A proverb warns: *gbogbo l'odi, bi a l'owo odi; gbogbo l'odi, bi a a l'owo, odi* (everything is hatred, if there is money there is hatred; everything is hatred, if there is no money there is hatred). No-one knows, no-one can tell. In religious settings of all kinds, people gather to assuage the fear of others that people so vividly expressed in their commentaries on sociality; through prayers, protective *juju* or sacrifices (*eb̄*) to *oriṣa*, people grasped for ways of dealing with uncertainty and found strategies for hope.³⁹ The *alafia* (peace, well being) they sought was less a state acquired positively than one in which enemies and trouble are kept at bay.

Religion of all forms, but especially charismatic and pentecostal Christianities, dwells on those who wish others harm. A miasma of constantly watchful enemies (*qta*) waiting for a chance to strike is conjured up by the images used in sermons, consultation and preaching. Keeping them at bay provides livelihoods for legions of herbalists, prophets, *alfa* and other mystically empowered intermediaries who can provide the means by which to keep a nonetheless fragile hold on *alafia*. Belief in God keeps people going. Prayer and fasting was

advocated as a way of disrupting those who would do wicked things, invoking the power of God.⁴⁰ The power of prayer, invoked with such intensity and passion in religious settings, creates a force field of security. One woman told me, 'I can beat any witch with my own power. They cannot touch me because God loves me. In the power of Jesus, alleluyah!'. I stood in churches with people around me shouting '*l'oruko Jesu* (in the name of Jesus)...', creating faith, making power.

Churches offered sanctuaries for those who felt under attack from *aje*, as well as spaces where *aje* could not only be countered but expelled from the body of someone who had been up to no good. The pastor of the Christ Apostolic Church, for example, told me of a string of cases where *aje* had come to the church and had been 'cured'. On one occasion, he said that in the previous day's service three women confessed to 'the witchcraft that is working in them': two of them were Alhajas and had converted from Islam. As penance, they were asked to buy bundles of iron sheeting for the roof. The transformative power of belief, then, is said to have the capacity to turn a bad person into a good woman. I had numerous conversations with people who assured me that if not for God or Jesus, people would be unrestrained in their wickedness: the world religions not only offer protection from *ota*, but also claim the power to transform morally ambiguous people into those who feared God and obeyed his injunctions. Among the imams, priests and prophets of the world religions, textual associations in the Koran or Bible between women, wifeliness, motherhood and power are reconfigured and reinterpreted to create diverse possibilities for dealing with such uncertainties. Many make direct reference to enemies: most advocate constant prayer and compliance with religious injunctions as a way of keeping them away.

The world religions inscribe a moral order in which a higher, potentially retributive authority actively holds people back from acting on baser impulses, keeping them in their place. The doctrine of forgiveness was frequently invoked by Christian women when we talked about trouble; one woman went so far as to suggest that without a fear of God there could be no forgiveness and then hatred would reign. I was frequently challenged on my professions of atheism. If not for God or Jesus, people would argue, what would prevent people from harming each other? *Orişa* worship was hauled out by Christians and Muslims alike as exemplifying the unrestrained badness of those who do not fear God: it is only those 'Pagans', I was told, who do bad things. I would challenge this, citing stories that we had shared knowledge of. In the process, more stories were told that merely confirmed the extent to which people of all faiths might be up to no good. But, people said, these were not real believers. Faith provides a basis for trust in a situation where there is so much suspicion, one that can extend among followers of a particular sect to unite them in fictive family ties. One young Muslim man told me:

If you are a really good Christian or Muslim and pray hard you will be able to create some protection against the forces of Satan - it's as if a kind of barrier is created to repel the evil

ones and if you are protected you can move and grow. Pagans live in fear of each other, you lose trust and confidence if you live this way.

Being able to move and grow, to engage in the lively and competitive domains of everyday life without feeling vulnerable is a form of power that people crave: and one that others look on and recognise as a sign of the person's strength. Discourses on 'Paganism' conveniently mask the numbers of people who seek recourse to protection on several fronts to ward off trouble; rigid distinctions between the faiths have blurred boundaries. *Juju* serves those whose piety is tempered with caution. And many of those with the most cause to be watchful don't run the risk. By empowering people to act boldly and without fear, *juju* - like prayer - allays the vulnerability of being without spiritual protection. One powerful, multi-purpose *juju* seems to encapsulate the everyday fears and sources of potential tension in life: *oogun iyonu* (lit. medicine for trouble or worry). *Oogun iyonu* was the remedy prescribed by herbalists for cases in which a woman's search for *owo ati omọ* seemed to persistently fail and she could not work out what to do next. It was a remedy expressly given 'for peace', keeping *ota* and *aje* at bay and giving a woman the chance of holding onto *alafia*, peace itself.

Juju can augment personal power: a power wrapped up as much in threat and insinuation, creating and exacerbating fear in others. It can shield, enabling people to assert themselves and to go out into a hostile world to do what they do. It can also work to restore peace in more covert ways: by inciting a troublesome co-wife to go without a fuss, by making a husband find his wife so repellant that he lets her go, by rendering the husband incapable of enjoying sex with anyone else. It needs to be remembered that *juju* is administered by practitioners who are, without exception, either men or women who have reached the age where they have 'become a man'. As gatekeepers of *juju*, they exercise control as much over who gets what as the ways in which trouble is constructed.⁴¹

All of those involved in the expansive and sometimes lucrative business of dealing with trouble, from Christian priests to Muslim *alfa* to Pagan *onişegun* described their role to me as mediators: as peace keepers. Using *juju* as protection or to try to dislodge a troublemaker offers a measure of control in an otherwise uncontrollable, unpredictable world full of people who are ultimately unknowable: like prayer, it literally empowers people. When things start to go wrong, making a sacrifice to appease *aje*, sacrificing or praying to summon the powers of *orişá* or God to assist creates security. To talk of *aje* evokes the feeling that life is out of control: one among other ways of experiencing uncertainty and one that is countered through the same practices that people use in their day-to-day lives to carry on coping with not knowing.⁴² As something utterly Other, invocation of *aje*, like belief in equally unknowable and Other entities like God or Jesus, restores the boundaries within which people feel secure. And yet this security is in itself built in domains where the means of empowerment against enemies is built precisely on the by now familiar discourse on women that situates them as

the architects and agents of trouble in all its forms, from bad behaviour from sheer wickedness.

Wicked Women?

Trouble may come in a range of guises and visit those who are unprepared for what it brings. Women tread a precarious path in their relations with others, a path pitted with potential conflicts and obstacles. For no-one knows who might resent the happiness of one who has made it, nor who may interfere in the struggles for success and survival of everyday life. The very contingency of women's relationships with others and the multiplicity of subject positions that they can occupy in contiguous domains situates trouble not in people but in specific situations and with regard to particular interpersonal relationships. Transcending relations of equality or stepping out of line by flouting normative expectations may be tantamount to asking for trouble and cause for efforts to keep the peace. But the sheer variability in reactions and in outcomes militates against neat structural explanations. Tactics to avert the possibility of trouble make recourse to the bounds of what can be known; beyond them lies further contingency, further unpredictability. For a woman can guard against any trouble in her life, yet still fall prey to misfortune. And whether that trouble takes the shape of *aje* seems to be less something that can be predicted of particular kinds of persons than a powerful indication of the unknowability of others, actualised *both* in those whose ambivalence may be foreseen *and* extending beyond the bounds of those who seem most likely to disrupt.

Within different domains, the subject positions women occupy can have quite different implications for the ways in which their behaviour is interpreted. The wife who is loved by her mother-in-law for her compliant obedience in her husband's compound can also be the sister who makes trouble for her brother's wife. And within the same domain, interpretations of intent are a matter of perspective: the good mother-in-law who helps her son's wife find a child may also be the nasty mother-in-law who teams up with another woman to make a co-wife's struggles for her own children more difficult. The constellation of possibilities varies from situation to situation, configured in different ways by others from their own perspective. There is no situation in which there is no risk: enemies are everywhere. Anyone who has children and money needs to be cautious.

The images of sociality and of the agency of women that accounts of trouble offer are suggestive. The target of those who are suspected of using both *aje* and *juju* is to strip a person of their wealth: in people as well as in things (cf. Guyer 1993, Barber 1995). And jealousy (*owu*), envy (*ilara*) and hatred (*odi*) are said to lie behind a resentment of the success of others and the desire to pull them down.⁴³ These are emotions that can be provoked by seeing someone get a better deal, get better treatment, have a better life: whether they turn into wickedness depends on a person's character (*iwa*) as much as their situation. Hatred (*odi*)

is an emotion associated specifically with women. It is not an emotion associated with situations in which a person is deliberately done out of what is due to them by someone else. Rather, a person who is said to experience hatred is someone who is actively nasty and cannot bear other people having an easy life or enjoying themselves. Yet hatred is closely associated with jealousy and envy, which are emotions that anyone might feel and that are not in themselves specifically associated with women: it is, in a sense, an outcome of an uncontrollable, exaggerated form of ordinary, everyday emotions. A continuum of intensity of emotion runs from the ordinary to the extra-ordinary: depending on how a person acted, I was told, you would be able to see how strong the feeling was. Women are said to experience jealousy and envy more often than men. When I asked why this was, I was told that a woman's nature is 'hotter' than that of men and they are more vulnerable to getting carried away by their emotions and less able to keep a lid on their feelings. This was why, people added, women are not trustworthy.

When misfortune strikes unexpectedly, *aje* may be invoked and with it an efficacy that is designated as feminine. This is, however, a covert force: so covert that the agent who is implicated may not even know that they are the ones who are causing the problems or whose guilt at feeling those feelings may be enough to indicate their culpability.⁴⁴ Whether or not malevolent thoughts in themselves are enough to kill is a matter of belief and not one that can simply be dismissed. What is significant, however, is that blame and responsibility fall on women *as women*. It is in the apportioning of blame, the ways emotions are construed and the possibilities for action that gender differences are invoked. Men's sexual jealousy, for example, is considered far more potent than that of a woman, stirring him to righteous rage that may drive him to beat his wife, use *ero* on her to kill her man friend or send her out of the house. For women, however, sexual jealousy is something that ought to be pushed away: the infidelity of their husbands should be endured quietly, without a fuss, for fear of attracting attention to themselves. When sexual jealousy erupts, other women rather than their errant husbands are usually in the firing line. And any variety of tactics may be used to get at them, from bad words to bad medicine. Everyone knows that co-wives will feel jealous of each other. It is what happens as a result that matters. Women who keep the peace, look to make truces and just get on with their lives behave as 'good women' should.

The ability to 'do and undo' is associated with men and with women who 'have become men'. And *those* women, the ones who become successful and influential, are not generally thought to be *aje* even if they are childless.⁴⁵ They are, however, recognised as powerful. Yet while powerful men are known to have powerful *juju* and are not considered as bad for using it, women who use *juju* are construed as behaving badly and may be thought to be *aje*. And while men may brag about their power, women use *juju* covertly to empower themselves in situations where *juju* seems to represent more the 'weapons of the weak' (Scott 1986) than the technologies of the powerful. Everyday power and control, like *aje* and *juju*, is rather more

ambiguous than hegemonic models of gender imply. And when it is precisely those hegemonic models - and the variants they produce - that are used to explain ruptures, essences are invoked. These essences figure in representations of trouble; they are implicated when things get out of control.

When wives that a man has brought together begin to fight, people say '*obinrin iku aiye*' ('women are the death of the world'). The man has nothing to do with it, he claims: he may represent himself as a victim of their struggles, trying all he can to make peace. But his capacity to enforce control is limited, as is the viability for of overt resistance by his wives as they may end up being sent away for fighting. Instead measures may be sought to keep the peace and despatch the rival: and when misfortune happens, compounding an already tense situation, it is not hard to imagine how vulnerable someone may begin to feel. A visit to a prophet or herbalist confirms these fears, measures to stoke up security may be taken just to be able to cope and to force the other party into a truce. A failing business, a sickness that simply will not go away, a husband who is always after other women: all are obstacles to *alafia* and all can make peace of mind more and more elusive. And when things go badly wrong, power may be invoked in situations in which a woman feels effectively powerless.

De Latour (1995) argues that conflicts involving 'witchcraft' in Cameroon evoked an *alter-ego*, an extra-social double, held responsible for making trouble in situations where overt conflict is actively avoided. Witchcraft discourses, in his analysis, transfer violence from the sphere of everyday life into the realm of social disorder, inhibiting action in the face of the identification of the greater power of the rival. De Latour's analysis offers valuable insights. The very partibility of *aje* as something a person uses, a super-human power attached to an intentional agent who is all too human, is in itself a vivid commentary on the constraints on female agency in settings in which normative expectations enjoin women to contain emotions, stay calm and not make a fuss.

How these difficulties figure in women's struggles for *owo* and for *omọ ati alafia* is pursued in the next chapter, where I turn to the ways in which women maintain and augment their wealth, and how they make themselves as social agents through the processes of 'self-investment' that money can facilitate, in domains in which the obstacles they face may be perceived as those deliberately strewn in their path by others.

Chapter 7

'Making It for Ourselves'

A woman should be industrious. We can't rely on our men. We need to make it for ourselves (Iya Tunde, businesswoman, 40s).

Economic power can buy you peace of mind. You can have contentment if you have money. And if you have a problem, money - or the ability to raise money or use influence as a result of your standing - can help you to get what you need (Tokunbo Akinsowon, civil servant, 40s).

So much of everyday life in Ado revolves around looking for, making, spending and displaying money. Money talks. At ceremonies, the rich will ostentatiously peel Naira notes from a large wad and advertise their importance by nonchalantly 'spraying' dancers with them, placing them one after another on the dancer's head: as if they have so much money that, without a care in the world, they can scatter it all around. Families who have to borrow the money from all around will put on lavish celebrations to mark their importance. Women who have barely enough to feed their hearth-holds appear resplendent in fine cloth when the occasion calls for it. Money confers buying power, the means of conspicuous consumption (Veblen 1924) and of creating and maintaining the social ties that establish people as social actors in the domains of association in which they move (see Chapter 3). It makes someone a 'somebody'. Transfers of resources into human or social capital are not simply calculated investments to maximise returns but are constitutive of personhood itself: money is 'the medium of self-realization' (Barber 1995:212).

Money transforms: it also enables. As an entity that arrives at one's door or passes one by (Belasco 1980), that can be drawn towards oneself or despatched by the malevolent interventions of others, money becomes the agent implicated in the making and fracturing of relations of sociality (Barber 1995). A Yoruba proverb highlights the ways in which people and money are intertwined: *Oṣi ni ije: 'Tani mọ ọ?' Aje ni ije: 'Mo ba ọ tan'* - poverty leads to 'who knows you?', while wealth leads to 'I am your relation' (Delano 1979:109). Or, as a more prosaic car sticker puts it: 'No Money, No Friend'. It is money that cements and maintains relationships, as an expression of affective bonds as well as a means that creates and services obligations. Women who have money can wield an influence over others and command respect. Those who are wealthy in their own right acquire the means to become 'somebodies', with the buying power to 'do and undo'.

Without money *alafia* is all the more elusive. Mrs Aiyeteru, a petty trader in her fifties, told me:

If someone has very good health but no money then *alafia* will be spoilt as they will be thinking too much. If you get money you will know how to enjoy it and live well, then you can have *alafia* and will be able to get yourself better if you have any sickness. Having no money can cause hypertension or other illnesses. You'll try to endure and help yourself, but if there's no money then it causes a lot of worry.

Buying power cushions the wealthy. Yet having money, children and peace of mind can arouse jealousy, invoking the wrath of *ota* (enemies) who seek to find a way to undermine someone who is getting ahead. When illness strikes or when a business fails, *aje* may be thought to lie behind it (see Chapter 6). Those who make it may be thought to have something else working for them. In churches and mosques, women pray for money, seeking divine assistance in their struggles for success and survival. At the shrines of *oriṣa*, sacrifices are made for an ailing trade or to stem misfortune that drains money away. Rich women may be thought to have used powerful *juju* to make money and to get on in spheres where others struggle to survive. Herbalists told me stories of 'cash madams' (wealthy traders) from other towns who visited them seeking charms to enhance their wealth, along with the strings of women coming to them for protective medicine to keep their enemies away from impinging on their profits. Lurid tales of wealthy, older 'sugar mummies' who capture the semen of their younger lovers to make medicine to make more money were told to me by young men.¹ This is the stuff of *Lagos Weekend*, but it captures some of the uncertainties - and the reversals - of the present (see Chapters 4 and 5).²

In the wake of the current economic crisis, men have even less money to go round and contests between the women in their lives are becoming ever more acute. For husbands, the buying power of their wives has become essential to hearth-hold survival. While men and women retain separate purses (see Chapter 3), where there is co-operation between them they can help each other out. Even where husbands make regular contributions, many women have had to take over *defacto* responsibilities for their children's food, clothing and school expenses (see Pearce 1994). And irrespective of whether or not they give their wives *owo onje* ('feeding allowance'), men can expect to be fed by their wives.³ Yet when a woman spends on herself and her own connections, rather than on a man's children or to shore up his own reputation, her spending power can become a focus for contestation (see Chapter 5). As long as a woman of reproductive age is 'under a man' gossip might spare her: if she uses her means to make a break, she can become the 'harlot' that has gone astray, her hard-earned money transfigured as the easy wealth that flows from the pockets of a rich man.

Stories of cash madams and 'sugar mummies' using *juju*, of wayward *ilemoṣu* and their

lovers, and of women 'chasing here and there after men for money' locate the source of women's wealth in 'medicine' or in men. While there are women whose lifestyles are supported by cash from rich boyfriends and there is no shortage of demand for *juju*, these representations occlude the tiresomely mundane everyday struggles that most women undergo to make it not just for themselves, but for their hearth-holds, in a situation where the prospect of male support is ever more uncertain. It is with the mundanities of making a living that this chapter is concerned, with the ways in which women manage to get by, as well as get ahead.

Livelihoods and Lifeways

Women's struggles for success and survival take place in the time of day-to-day pursuits, in biographical time and in historical time. They are waged in domains where their positions as agents are situational, provisional and contingent. They are not merely *individuals* who pursue entirely independent strategies, but members of families, associations and hearth-holds: flows of money create complex inter-dependencies, figuring women's livelihoods as intimately interwoven with those of others. This raises conceptual and methodological problems in finding an appropriate way to characterise their livelihood opportunities. Giddens draws attention to the complexities of positioning individuals in space and time:

Every individual is at once positioned in the flow of day-to-day life; in the life-span which is the duration of his or her existence; and in the duration of 'institutional time', the 'supra-individual' structuration of social institutions. Finally, each person is positioned in a 'multiple' way, within social relations conferred by specific social identities... (1984:xxiv-xxv)

Throughout this thesis, I have moved between different configurations of space and time: from daily lives to the domains in which they are lived, from broad sketches of historical change to the ways they are experienced by people at different stages of their life courses, from the day-to-day unfolding of events in the lives of particular people to the positioning of these events in the temporal frame of past and present. In this chapter, I draw on material in previous chapters as a backdrop to considering women's livelihoods as processes in and over time through situated biographies of particular women of different generations (cf. Masini 1991).

To focus on the themes of uncertainty, hazard and risk in the pathways women pursue over their life courses, I have chosen life histories that illustrate, in various ways, the kinds of opportunities as well as the obstacles that women face.⁴ In the first, I draw on the biography of a woman who has achieved astounding success over the course of her working life, almost against all odds. This case, to which I devote a lengthy discussion that draws on other women's biographies, tells of circumstance and caprice in the pursuit of money, children and peace of mind. I then turn to the biography of a woman of a generation for whom opportunities began to change, who stumbled to find herself a viable livelihood.

Through this case, I take a closer look at issues of choice and at how women start up and keep going in their economic pursuits. I pursue the theme of change over historical time further in my last case study, of a woman of my own age for whom illness and difficulties in becoming a mother plunged her into poverty, but who managed to recuperate her hopes through determination and faith. Her story, one that resonates with those of other women in other generations, is a reminder of the more concrete aspects of *alafia*, being well enough to go out and work. For her, the struggle to have children has given way to a struggle to feed them. I take a closer look through this case at the material implications of the overlapping subject positions women occupy as mothers, wives and workers at different stages in their life courses. I go on to situate these three women as members of generations and explore the implications of change for the opportunities open to them to make it for themselves, returning to some of the themes of earlier chapters. Focusing on the present, a time in which the impact of a collapsing economy has impinged in manifold ways on women's livelihoods, I conclude by considering some of today's uncertainties.

Situating Women's 'Careers'

Dennis (1991) argues that the sociological concept of 'career' has come to apply to paid employment, with reference to organisational settings in which people systematically advance through work experience and promotion.⁵ In the Yoruba context, Dennis contends, the concept of a career

needs to be modified to include those elements of personal biography which cannot be directly classified as 'work' but are crucial to the achievement of successful income generation...[and] help to determine an individual's ability to build up and manipulate the necessary kinship and friendship networks for this purpose (1991:86).

Dennis' point highlights the crucial importance of relationships across and within domains of association for women's struggles for success and survival in southwestern Nigeria. Dennis sketches out a model of the preferred career trajectory of Yoruba women that encompasses the different subject positions women occupy over time in the domains of association within which they move: a model that highlights progress through these inter-linked domains towards the 'happy ending' of old age supported by their children. With this, she vividly contrasts pathways through life that are pitted with obstacles.⁶

The concept of a 'career' usefully implies movement over time, over a life course (Harris 1987, Hareven 1982): ageing as 'life's career' (Myerhoff and Simic 1978). But it also carries with it an implication of progress. As the examples I draw on in this chapter show, this process is neither as even nor as predictably progressive as the concept of a 'career' might imply. Profession, occupation, career: all these terms carry with them resonances of industrialised settings in which the work a person does can itself come to define them as

particular kinds of people within socio-economic hierarchies.⁷ The interface between different occupational terrains is more complex than might be implied by distinctions between 'formal' and 'informal' sectors (cf. Hart 1973), or 'traditional' and 'modern' pursuits; people's livelihood strategies, equally, may involve movement between or the simultaneous pursuit of money in a variety of occupational settings.

In Ado, most people work in arenas where it is relative success within an occupational field that absorbs a wide range of people, such as farmer or trader, from which wealth (*owo*) and social standing (*ola*) accrues. As Pittin (1982) points out, the kinds of categories used in the documentation of women's work in Nigeria are so broad as to be virtually meaningless. 'Trader' refers to a wide spectrum of actors, from a wealthy businesswoman who deals in wholesale produce as a contractor to a woman who sets up a small tray outside her house to sell tiny bags of sugar, single cigarettes, boxes of matches and sweets. How trades and traders are valued and the esteem that is accorded to those who engage in trade depends not only on what they sell, but where, when and how they sell. Almost all women in Ado have engaged in trade at some time in their lives. For many their experience as children, helping parents, kin and foster parents with their work, is something that sets them up with an option to fall back on later in their lives, to supplement other jobs or to raise capital for other projects. Pathways through formal education and into public sector jobs often include the pursuit of trade. Schoolgirls help their mothers after school, minding stalls or hawking goods and, as they get older, may start doing a little trade of their own. Educated women in public service professions such as teaching or nursing may trade a little to supplement their incomes, or open a shop or start a small trading concern on retirement. For some, trading is one way among others to make some money; for others, their status, social networks and social identities are so closely bound up with their trade that it becomes part of who they are rather than simply what they do.

Women may pursue multiple income-generating pursuits that blur differentiations between distinct occupational domains. Their 'personal biographies' tell of links within and across these domains, revealing inter-dependence, rather than clearcut distinctions between the spheres of 'home' and 'work' and the responsibilities and resources associated with them (see Chapter 3). Money given as 'feeding allowance' may be used to supplement capital, products that are made or sold can be used to feed the family, children may be fed while a *fufu* pot bubbles or during a lull in trading: the domains of production and reproduction are equally indistinct (see Chapter 3). It is this very indistinctness that may pose the greatest threat to women's struggles to get on, as keeping their profits and even their capital secure from the everyday demands of members of their hearth-holds is not easy. Dennis draws attention to the increasing burden placed on women to sustain their hearth-holds, arguing that their ability to accumulate enough money to run their own businesses is 'largely determined by the socio-

economic position of their husbands' (1991:101). While this may be the case for some of the wives of wealthier men, not forgetting that some men's wives are the ones to support their husbands in their quest for wealth and prominence, this generalisation tends to underplay the significance of women's own struggles to make it for themselves. Provision of *owo okowo* (trading capital) that Fadipe ([1939]1970) describes as a husband's 'duty' may assist in beginning a business, but men rarely make any further contribution towards running costs: whether women are able to accumulate sufficient means from their initial capital depends on other strategies for supplementing and maintaining working capital. (see Chapter 5).

Connections women make through residence in their husbands' compounds, in religious settings, through peers and in the domains in which they work are vital in the pursuit of livelihoods as well as to their social esteem (see Chapter 3).

Pursuing a 'career' connotes having made a deliberate choice from the options available. As Clark (1994) notes for Kumasi marketwomen, the question for many women and particularly for those in the older generations, was not whether to trade but which trade line to pursue. For many older women in Ado, the occupation they ended up in was often less a matter of deliberate choice than a matter of following in their mothers' footsteps, or taking up the job other women in the compound did: simply finding a way to get by and sticking with it. The opportunities available to younger women open up a wider spectrum of options, but their scope to make and enact choices is limited not only by the resources they have access to (Mintz 1971, Dennis 1981), but by their capability as agents (Giddens 1984). One young woman in the last year of secondary school, for example, expressed her ambition to become a lawyer. Her parents, meanwhile, were hedging their bets and had sent her to be apprenticed as a seamstress after school. At night, in the morning and on weekends and holidays there was enough work for her to do around the house and on her mother's rice and beans stall to make studying hard. She had a boyfriend, a lad from school. What she might end up doing depends not only on her exam results and whether her parents could or would find the means to support her in college, but on whether she could manage to remain without a child (see Chapter 8, see Bledsoe and Cohen 1993).

As I go on to discuss, changes in aspirations and expectations have led to changes in the kinds of occupations women might pursue, as well as in the opportunities for making a living in the local economy. Some succeed, moving up and on. Others manage, finding a way around contingencies. Which choices are made - and whether what women do constitutes a strategic choice or tactics for managing the situations they are in (cf. de Certeau 1984, see Chapter 8) - depend on more personal elements of 'personal biographies': women's affinity as well as their aptitude for what they are doing, along with who and what they know. It can also depend on their self-esteem, how confident they are and how daring they feel able to be. Changing direction and taking up an entirely new occupation is not only risky but constitutes

for some women the kind of strategic choice that their circumstances make difficult to contemplate. Over time, experience and contacts with suppliers and customers make leaving a trade even harder, presenting a risk that some would rather not have to face. The work many women do remains a way of managing the many demands on their resources, a struggle to keep afloat rather than a strategy for getting ahead. Richer women, with capital to risk on speculation, might try out an alternative line and transfer resources into it if it shows promise. But the risks they take along the way are compounded by other uncertainties that permeate the social realm of 'the market', making their struggles about far more than simply the success of their economic strategies (Dilley 1992).

In the spheres in which the majority of Ado women work these risks and uncertainties can threaten the livelihoods of even the most skilled and confident professionals. Some individuals build up their networks and their operations in a particular sphere only to find, over time or suddenly, that they are plunged into poverty by the vagaries of the market or the suspected interference of others. A woman who is a successful trader today may be forced to start up again in an entirely different sphere: just as a wife, settled in her husband's compound, may be forced to leave when he brings home a troublesome *iyawo* and to carve out a new life for herself elsewhere. For some, then, 'career progression' is less a measured process of choices than ways of coping with a series of outcomes and with the uncertainties involved. Day-to-day tactics are needed to improvise with limited resources, to get by as well as to get on. And with structural adjustment, this has become all the more precarious. In the following sections I take up some of these themes.

Against All Odds

By reputation, Alhaja Taliatu is one of the wealthiest woman in Ado. Now in her late 60s, she has dealt in a range of commodities over the course of her life: vegetables, pepper, *gari*, palm oil, rice and beans. But from quite early on she found a niche, one that has brought her considerable fortune: trading in *galura*, the dye used for mat-making.⁹ Looking in detail at how she made it, I explore her tactics from the vantage point of an almost completed working life. Her story tells of extraordinary success, but of struggles that are all too ordinary.

As a young woman, Alhaja Taliatu sold different kinds of *gfo* (vegetable leaves) and *okro* (okra), going to villages to buy and sell. She worked for her mother at first, then started doing her own trade little by little. When she got married, her husband did not want her to be moving around to villages. The main work done by those in her husband's compound was mats, so she learnt to make mats. When she went to get the *galura* to dye the mats with she found that there were only three old women selling it. That's when she got the idea of selling *galura*. She discussed it with her husband and he agreed. So she went to Aroboto's store, the main general store for the town at that time (see Chapter 2), and bought a small tin of *galura*, then went to one of the old woman and bought one wrap as a sample to imitate. Those old women were selling from home, so she thought she would go from house to house to sell. Her husband agreed to this. People were buying and trade was moving well. But from N10 she

would gain only N1 or N2 profit. She started to buy larger tins and her profits rose.

Little by little, trade was going on very well. At the same time as selling *galura*, she continued making mats. She divided up the money from the *galura* and from selling mats and kept the *galura* money separate, in a *kplp* (like a piggy bank). In this way, she slowly built up capital to buy *galura* in larger quantities and increase her margins. She started going to Ikoga market and bought *aro* (indigo) and a red dye that women used to put on their feet to beautify themselves. She sold that from house to house as well, in Ado. Then she began going to Megun market, Ado's principal market at that time, to sell her dyes. She took *galura* and used the returns to buy palm oil, rice and beans from the market to sell in small quantities from home to neighbours, then ploughed the profits back into her *galura* trade.¹⁰

Things were going well. Then her business began to falter. People were troubling her, *aje* who did not want to see her getting on well. In her husband's compound there were people who hated her and did not want to see her progress. And there were women buying from her on credit, then telling her they had no money to pay. Slowly, her business collapsed. She asked her husband for some help and he gave her enough to start up again. But she lost her capital again because of defaulters. It was hatred (*odi*), she said, that caused all those problems for her. For it was not only her business that was suffering. She had spent a long time before getting pregnant and then delivered child after child who died (*abiku*). So she left that place and came back to her father's house. She didn't divorce the husband. He knew why she'd gone home and would visit her there. But she was not the only wife. He married two more before she left him. There was no fight between her and her co-wives: her problem was others in the compound who wanted to spoil her trade.

When she went back to her father's house, she gave up *galura* and started selling *gari*. She went to a village where there was a surplus of *gari* and brought it back to Ado to sell. She also bought pepper and other ingredients, which she sold alongside the *gari* at Megun market. Little by little she was making money. She joined the *egbe onigari* (association of *gari* sellers) and *egbe alata* (association of pepper sellers). In the *egbe onigari*, if anyone wanted to do a ceremony they would collect *gari* from each member and give it to the person. But one of their members called upon them three times to help with a ceremony, others started taking advantage too and before long they had stopped doing this.

She carried on for a while, then took up selling rice and beans from home. But people were also taking advantage of her. A person she knew well could send to her if there was a ceremony and get rice and beans on credit, then not pay. She did not want to fight with them and there was nothing she could do about it. So after a while she stopped. She noted: 'that is the manner of people here, that is their ambition: to buy and not to pay. It is a way of wrecking somebody'. Selling on credit started with the Ijebu and Ijeshas. But people didn't pay them. Some lost their capital and had to return home. Many people lost their businesses through problems with credit. Some were very successful, then people came to get credit, didn't pay and after some time all the capital was gone. Then, once the capital was gone people continued to abuse them saying, 'Oh, our friend is no more selling anything'. That's what happened to her.

After some time, she decided to go to the village where her husband's mother lived to find a way of raising money to get back into business. She started buying palm kernel on credit from women who were making palm oil. She cracked the nuts by hand and picked out the kernels: she was very quick at this. Men would come from town to buy the kernels. Then she'd repay the women. She did this every day. Little by little, she made enough money to start with *galura* again. After that she returned to town. Life in that village was hard. She was suffering a lot, working hard, walking here and there. She said: 'when someone has been handling a lot of money before, she won't be happy and will be moving here and there looking for money'. Until she had regained capital to start trade again, she worked very hard. Shortly before the Atinga people came to Ado (in 1950), she had a baby boy and he died a few weeks later. For many years, she continued to be troubled by *abiku*, the children who are born to die (see Chapter 8). But finally she went on to have eight children with her husband, five girls and three boys, bringing them up herself.

Since then, she's been doing *galura*: and, that third time, her business took off and she's never looked back. From buying tins of dye from local sources, she moved on to buy from

Lagos in larger quantities and from there to make a link with a wholesaler who imported *galura* by the drum. Once she started *galura* again, she left *gari* as it spoiled from all the dye around the house. She continues to sell palm oil and petty things from her home, as well as operating as a kola wholesaler and transporter. It is *galura*, however, that she attributes with having got her where she is today. She still sells on credit, but only to people she knows well. They come and pay when they need another one. 'It is to help them', she said, 'just to be a help to them. When they sell, they will have money'. She continues to give credit as she pities them. She experimented with the *galura* and developed a way of boiling the red variety of powdered dye to make lumps, which bring more gain.¹¹

Alhaja Taliatu built her own house in the late 1960s and has various relatives living with her, who assist her with boiling up and packaging the *galura*, and with her other business ventures. She now buys by direct order from wholesalers in Lagos and Ibadan who import dye from Germany, operating with a working capital that runs into thousands of Naira. Several years ago, she flew to Mecca and became an Alhaja. She is active in the Central Mosque and associates with groups of wealthy Muslim businesswomen. She takes pride of place in the ceremonies of her children and the children she has fostered in to train and educate, as a generous contributor. Her reputation has gained her recognition all over town as a woman who made it for herself.

Alhaja Taliatu combines the qualities of a sharp eye for business with the persistence that saw her through difficult times. Like other successful women, the secret of her success seems to lie in her capacity to make astute judgements about profitable lines and in continuing to improvise, diversify and seek new opportunities. The money she has made now secures connections that ramify out through an extensive social network of associates in business and in the mosque. Like many women of her generation, Alhaja Taliatu did not go to school. She began her working life under the tutelage of her mother and began to do a little independent trade alongside the work she did for her mother as she grew older (cf. Sudarkasa 1973). By the time she married, she was trading on her own account. From dozens of work histories of women in trade and food processing jobs, I found it was quite common for women to continue with the work they had been doing before marriage - either trading on their own account, or working in the same line as their mothers - until the birth of their first child. Many women had used money from the naming ceremony of their first child, from gifts from their and their husbands' kin, as well as from their husbands, to use as *owo okowo* (starting capital) to go into a trade line they chose for themselves. Alhaja Taliatu's husband intervened to prevent her following the job she had before marriage and it was some years before he gave her any capital for trade.¹² Following the other women of the house, she took up mat weaving.

Alhaja Taliatu started at the same level as other women in the house. But her entrepreneurial eye was soon attracted to what seemed an excellent venture: *galura*. Having secured permission from her husband, she put together a product identical to that of her competitors and sought her market out, moving up bit by bit until she was making a healthy profit. By separating her profits from *galura* and secreting them in a *kolo*, she built up her trading capital. Some small-scale traders separate out their money in this way, keeping their capital to one side. But others, especially those who are poorest, come to the market with

goods to sell and leave with goods to provide for their hearth-holds, having spent on children at some stage during the day. Calculating exactly what has been gained becomes difficult, as is keeping hold of the gain to reinvest.

Maintaining and augmenting working capital from trade alone is something that even the most skilled small-scale traders find difficult (Zdunnek 1987). Alhaja Taliatu's *kolò* was a way of doing this, similar in many respects to the daily *ajò* (savings scheme) that has become so popular in recent years (see later discussion). Alhaja Taliatu managed to keep hold of her profits and build them up until she had capital to invest further. She did this by running her *galura* business alongside a base of mat making that sustained her from day to day. Then, as she expanded, she used small-scale home-based trading as a way of generating further capital by keeping her capital moving and accruing interest at every stage. In this way she kept a fall-back position open while she experimented with different lines, using the gains from one to supplement the other. By operating in several different spheres, Alhaja Taliatu was able to make further profits from price differentials between different sites and by breaking goods into small quantities to sell from home.¹³

Then disaster struck. Selling on credit is essential for many trades to function at all. As Mr Aroboto, the son of one of the most famous male traders in Ado put it when he talked of the massive amount of debt people had incurred with his father, 'if you don't sell on credit, you don't sell'. Extending credit is an important means of securing custom in a competitive market, as well as the only viable way of making a living in a situation where many women operate with minimal capital. Some women operate entirely on credit, 'borrowing' commodities to sell and returning the capital in cash once they have sold them. For those who sell on credit, advances of goods enable people who would otherwise have no means to buy to become customers and higher prices may be charged as a result. Mat makers are among the poorest in the town, realising tiny gains from considerable labour with a negligible capital base. Alhaja Taliatu knew that selling on credit was vital for the expansion of her business. Like many traders, however, she suffered the consequences. Her customers evaded paying for the *galura* she advanced to them and she went bust on two occasions. Default is common. Fear of causing trouble can prevent people from taking any action. When a person claims to have no money the debt can just be written off. As she noted, this ruined some of the entrepreneurs from other places.¹⁴ Alhaja Taliatu simply put up with it and kept quiet. And, as a result, she quickly lost her capital.

Things were going so badly wrong that it seemed to her that someone had it in for her (see Chapter 6). She still had no children. When she finally got pregnant, the child had died. And the same thing happened again with the next one. She did not want to wait around to see what happened next. So she went home, abandoned *galura* and again used her entrepreneurial nous to work out a lucrative strategy of buying in an area where surplus had driven down the

price and selling in Ado, supplementing *gari* with the rice and beans she had been selling from home before. Both of these trades were, at that time, attached to a market association that ran a closed shop: so she joined.¹⁵ The village producers, whose *gari* Alhaja Taliatu had bought to resell at a profit, were kept out of the market for many years by Ado market women who regulated the trade in *gari* in the town.¹⁶ During the time Alhaja Taliatu was in the *egbe onigari*, it was possible to enforce a closed shop through threats of chasing other vendors out of the market: by the time I came to Ado the association had fallen apart.¹⁷ In the *egbe onigari* Alhaja Taliatu joined, members would contribute in kind when one had a ceremony to help others out. But when some members started taking advantage, co-operation collapsed. Meanwhile, others were taking advantage of her and defaulting on credit.

Within a short period of time she was virtually back to square one. And when she had fallen, she spoke of the way those around relished her failure (see Chapter 6). Almost at rock bottom, with no capital to speak of, she was really in trouble. So she went to a village to do the arduous work that only the poorest resort to. In the process, she lost yet another child. Gradually, she built up enough to return to town and to restart with *galura*. She had not let go of her dream and knew she could make it with *galura* if only she tried really hard. This time, things moved more smoothly and soon she was supplying the dozens of mat weavers throughout the town again. Business boomed. She built up *onibara* (customer) relationships both with clients in Ado and later with suppliers in Lagos and Ibadan (cf. Trager 1981), to secure her market. She continued to sell on credit, collecting the balance from women when they came to buy the next lot of *galura*, but this time she was more cautious. Over the course of the next decade or so, she continued to soar and managed, at the same time, to give birth to and bring up eight children. She was in a position where her work offered sufficient flexibility to provide few practical difficulties in child-rearing and the money she was making was enough to cater for the childrens' needs. Over time, she has been sent children by her relatives, to 'train' and to care for, who now assist her with her various business activities (see Chapter 8).

Never losing her competitive edge, Alhaja Taliatu experimented and worked out a way to make her goods both more attractive and more cost-efficient. Traders in all goods bought by the measure 'dash' their customers as a sweetener that is almost expected: by converting dye to lumps, she increased her profits further and saved the dash that can be so significant that in some trades such as *gari*, it represents the gain that successive vendors make at points in the chain.¹⁸ Despite the economic situation, Alhaja Taliatu manages to continue to make a good living. But even she was finding it tough to continue to prosper by the time I left Ado.

Alhaja Taliatu started at the bottom and worked up to a position of wealth and prestige, against all odds and despite a series of set-backs along the way. I knew many women of her generation who had started from similar circumstances and remained selling commodities like

efo, following in their mothers' footsteps, all their lives. I knew others who simply stuck with the job they took up after marriage. From life histories and from a survey of market traders, I found that many women in Alhaja Taliatu's generation only moved into other occupations as a consequence of infirmity through old age. As I note in Chapter 4, there were exceptional women before the time of Alhaja Taliatu who, like her, made substantial fortunes through their entrepreneurial skills. But, as in their marriages, many older women simply endured, continuing with the work they knew best over the years rather than breaking into new economic ventures. Force of circumstance, rather than a desire to do something different, brought about changes in women's occupations; in several cases, the lines women moved into were those they had previously had some experience with in their youth.

The fact that Alhaja Taliatu got on where so many women in her generation simply got by owes little to access to resources through her husband (Dennis 1991). Nor, it would seem, did being a mother of many children hold her back: although by the time she had her children she was already well established. She survived difficulties that can throw other women off course. As someone who realised the promise of the proverbs and adages that speak of how fortunes change and how even the poorest person can find a way to become great, Alhaja Taliatu represents the other side of uncertainty: the chance that people may seize and strive to realise, to make it no matter what.¹⁹

For many women in the trades in which Alhaja Taliatu has dabbled, trades practice by women of all ages, the everyday struggle to make enough money to feed, clothe and educate their children absorbs most of their resources. Their life histories speak less of a process over time in which they gradually accumulated money and moved up than a holding operation, managing and juggling responsibilities so that they would be able to provide for themselves and their hearth-holds and give their children the chance of a 'better life'. Finding a niche is crucial in the struggle for survival as well as for success and it is to this, and the questions of occupational choice that it raises, that I now turn.

Finding a Niche

Iya Onibata, now in her early 50s, was born and brought up in Ado by parents from a central Yoruba town. Of a generation for whom new trading opportunities were beginning to open up, Iya Onibata found her niche in an imported commodity secured through contacts in the Lagos wholesale market. For her, finding the right job took several false starts and ultimately came about by chance rather than design at a point where her options seemed very limited. Unlike Alhaja Taliatu, Iya Onibata neither moved up nor pursued deliberate choices along the way. For her, trading was a way of getting by and once she had found something that suited

her she stayed with it. Again unique in her particularity, Iya Onibata's story is one that resonates in certain respects with those of women who have simply battled on and managed rather than strategised and optimised on their way up.

As a young girl, Iya Onibata learnt how to trade by helping her mother and grandmother. Her mother specialised in kerosene and, like her mother-in-law, ran a subsidiary line of petty goods like tinned milk, tomatoes, matches and so on. Soon Iya Onibata was carrying kerosene to small markets in the area to trade on her mother's behalf, and moved from sitting at her grandmother's stall watching her sell to doing a little trading herself. When she was small, her parents sent her to school. One day, she was playing outside the school and a prefect beat her on her head. She ran home crying. From then onwards, she refused to go back to school. When free education came, she wanted to go back to school but her mother and grandmother said: 'Teachers are receiving N6. Will you go to take that N6? It is better to trade'. Her grandmother was happy when she refused to go back to school that first time as she had found someone to help her. 'She was not going to encourage me to go back and lose that help', she said.

At first she continued to help her mother and her grandmother with their trade. But after a while, she separated her own goods and slowly built up the capital to begin to trade alone. After marriage, she continued with petty trade for a while, then used the profits she had saved to start selling enamelware basins in villages around. After a while, she went out of business. So many people bought from her on credit and didn't pay her that she had to leave it. She had come almost to the end of her savings. And her husband was not happy about her moving around to villages. He instructed her to work at home. There was a senior wife of her husband's cousin who was making *adi agbon* (coconut oil). Her husband had been watching her and advised Iya Onibata to take it up. He directed her to people he knew who were selling coconuts. She began with twenty coconuts and made three bottles a day to sell. But she suffered while making the oil, cutting her hands on the grater, so she decided to leave it.

Then her husband pointed out a certain woman nearby who was making soda soap (*kongi*). She joined her to learn how to do it. Her husband gave her N40 to buy the materials and she added the little she had. She was making the soap when a duck put its beak into the soda (caustic soda), then died. The duck belonged to the husband, so she didn't bother herself about it. But on the fifth day after she started with soda soap she got soda in her eyes and couldn't continue to work. The soda dried up and she lost all that she had invested in it and all the N40 her husband had given her. She left it, as she couldn't face doing it again. With the little money she had left, she went to Idomota (Lagos market) to buy nylon bags to sell. But when she got there she found that the price was too high. She'd gone with a friend and that woman was buying shoes. So she bought shoes instead, with her friend's help. That friend was not pleased, but couldn't refuse when she asked for help to buy that time. When she came back to Ado, Iya Onibata began to sell the shoes from house to house. That was more than 30 years ago: she's been selling shoes ever since. Over time, Iya Onibata has built up a 'customer' relationship (cf. Trager 1981) with a wholesaler in Lagos, who advances goods to her partially on credit. She settles when she returns to restock, gradually repaying her debts.

While her husband was alive, she saved money with him, collecting it when she needed some more. When he died, twelve years ago, she kept her own money for a while but was struggling with her business. His junior brother was to inherit her, but she was advised by a relative to stay on her own.²⁰ So that's what she did, along with her three children. She did not learn how to keep accounts, she just put money in her purse and used it to buy what she needed for the house. But she was finding it really hard to keep her capital intact. A friend introduced her to an group of about 40 people, each of whom contributed N50 every week and drew lots at the beginning to rotate the amount to use for capital (*ajq*). For five years, she stayed with this group but she traded her turn in with someone at one stage and then when she needed the money, that person was unwilling to help her back. So she left the group and began to do daily *ajq* of N20 from the interest on her capital. She pays that N20, then the rest is for day-to-day needs. She has no other savings: her money is tied up in her stock, which is dwindling as running her business becomes harder and harder in the current economic

situation. She is happy with shoes as she now knows how to sell them and after her experience with other jobs, she does not want to risk trying something new.

Iya Onibata remarried six years ago, becoming the sixth wife of a man who has experienced a succession of disastrous marriages. It was, she said, because she wanted a 'director' to advise her in her life. The trouble this caused with her husband's family extended to turn many people against her, including her former associates in the church.²¹ But, she told them, it was up to her to feed her children and she was going to do what was best for them. Her new husband helps her out with money from time to time, as she does him: their marriage is one of the happiest I encountered. Her son and daughter are both married and her last born son is a teenager. Two of her brother's daughters live with her and help her to sell shoes at Badagry: she brought both of them up and they call her 'mummy'. She takes responsibility for all their needs, as they help her out. And when they marry, it will be her rather than their real mother who will be in the position of 'mother' to them and will have to buy cloth and do things for them.

In the prime of her life, Iya Onibata has found happiness with a husband who clearly adores her and with whom she has an unusually companionate and co-operative relationship (see Chapter 5). But things have not been easy for her. Like Alhaja Taliatu, she was forced to change her job when she married because of her husband's wishes, was ruined in one of her ventures by people buying on credit, and was helped by her husband to get back on her feet when disaster struck. And like Alhaja Taliatu, when she found her niche, she stuck with it. But rather than choosing for herself, at several points along the way Iya Onibata just fell in with whatever was going. Rather than employing deliberate 'career strategies' and getting ahead, Iya Onibata has just about managed to keep going.

In most cases a woman's working life is her own affair, although husbands may be consulted for permission to do certain kinds of jobs or for advice. Iya Onibata's husband not only intervened to keep her close to home, but chose two jobs for her and helped to set her up in them. That they were not suitable for her is clear from her account. Making coconut oil has long been an occupation of the poorest of old women, hardly a good earner. And making soda soap has become popular in these times of structural adjustment, but in that era it was pursued by very few people and was not as much in demand.²² At that stage Iya Onibata had little option as she was almost completely broke. Having lost the capital he gave her, she ended up with shoes through the credit connection her friend had established with her Lagos supplier.

Over time, she managed to maintain her business. Like many traders, Iya Onibata keeps virtually all of her money tied up in her stock. She keeps no accounts and finds it hard to keep track of her outgoings.²³ While her husband was alive, she saved with him.²⁴ But when he died, she needed to find a way to preserve her money from the encroachment of day-to-day demands. She had too little money to think about banking it: in any case, many women do not trust the banks. As I note in Chapter 3, a wide range of collectivities offer ways of saving together. Many market associations run various savings schemes to ensure a safety net of capital for members, either by accumulating a sum of money over time to loan out interest-

free to members (*ajako*) or by rotating the sum of individual contributions around members of the group (*ajo*).²⁵ *Assalatu* in the mosque often do *ajako*, saving over the course of months to cover the expenses of Ramadan and Ileya (Eid-el-Kabir). Church associations usually save for the progress of the church, rather than individual members, but women within these associations can come together to do *ajo* or *ajako*. Iya Onibata was not a member of a trade association, nor did the women in her church association do savings together. So when a friend invited her to join an *egbe* to do *ajo*, this seemed the best way to save. With a weekly contribution equivalent to a couple of pairs of plastic sandals, the potential cash payout to each member in turn was enough to clear debts and purchase a bulk of stock, or to contribute handsomely towards a ceremony in the immediate family, depending on the situation.

Ardener's (1964) overview of rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs) in different contexts draws attention to the variety of mechanisms for saving and the kinds of sanctions that may be applied to maintain the revolving fund.²⁶ She focuses on duty, honour and shame as important constraints on default (1964:216). In Ado, various measures are taken to minimise risk (see Chapter 3). However, ROSCAs have become a rather uncertain way to save these days. Some groups are so large that people save through a third party, or come late to an *egbe* started by a core group: I was told of cases where this core group stopped once they have each had a turn then continued to fob off others with excuses. When someone fails to continue paying after their turn, the most frequent problem in these groups, there is little that others can do, as Iya Onibata found when she gave up her turn to someone who needed the money. Default, coupled with spiralling inflation and the uncertainties of being able to keep up payments, has led to the gradual demise of this way of saving.²⁷

Ajako operates like an informal bank in which an individual can save whatever they are able to and offers greater flexibility. But there are also risks: the *Egbe Alaşo* fell apart some years ago when the *Iyalegbe* and *Babalegbe* absconded with the *ajako* fund. *Ajo* and *ajako* among market associations continue to operate, in most cases on a minor scale.²⁸ The timing of the meetings of a number of associations, in the afternoon on periodic market days, enables women to transfer some of the gain they have made on that day straight into savings before they have a chance to deplete it. This principle, of shifting money that could otherwise so easily be spent out of reach has given rise to an innovation that does this on a daily basis, which is also called *ajo*.²⁹ This is a scheme run by a collector who visits clients every day to collect a daily contribution from them that is refunded, minus one day's contribution, at the end of the month.³⁰ With this *ajo*, people effectively pay someone else to keep their money for them: savings accrue negative interest. But small amounts that could otherwise so easily be spent are built up to create a lump sum over time.³¹

Like many others, Iya Onibata switched to saving through this individualised daily contribution. In this way, money that Iya Onibata might give to one of her children to buy

something with when they came to ask her creates a sum that comes back at the end of the month that is enough to plough straight back into her business.³² Convenience is a further advantage. Interest-free loans against a month's contribution and business advice make daily *ajò* the popular equivalent to a service that banks are for the most part unwilling to provide small-scale investors. It is used by men and women alike, even those with higher incomes.³³ For many, these savings schemes are the only source of financial credit.

Once Iya Onibata had found a job she was reasonably proficient in, she stayed with it. And she came to it by circumstance rather than from reviewing the options open to her and selecting one that seemed to fit. 'Moving up' from low cost to higher value goods did not seem to be part of most women's trading 'careers'. While credit is a major constraint, *ajako* and rotating *ajò* can provide sufficient funds for women to move into a different line of trade: the start-up costs for comparable lines to the one a woman is currently pursuing can be met from these forms of saving.³⁴ I met a few women who had used it for this purpose. In many cases, however, the sums of money raised are used to improve a business rather than to move into higher value lines.³⁵ Credit arrangements and the establishment of a customer base constitute some of the main reasons. But there is more to it than this. As in any other setting, the availability of options is restricted by knowledge, experience, connections and resources (cf. Clark 1994).³⁶ Even in the face of a stumbling business, the poorer women I spoke to told me that they simply did not know what else they could do: working within such tight margins, reliant on credit arrangements to sell in the first place and without the experience to dare to make a break into another field, they just had to manage.

From discussions with a range of women of different generations, five principal factors emerged for staying in as well as moving into particular occupations.³⁷ Firstly, the desirability of occupations was matched, by many women, with what they would offer in terms of access to goods and returns to capital in the present economic climate. Several middle-aged women commented that in the past they might have chosen a more glamorous trade, such as cloth, but these days no-one has money to buy cloth. If they could choose, they said, they would go for something people needed every day. Selling pepper, fish and cooked food were mentioned by several women as desirable options due to the exigencies of the current situation: everyone needs to eat, they said, these are the trades that will always move.

Considerations of gain only constituted part of the picture, however. The second factor was the possibilities the job afforded for doing things for the family and for oneself. Tailoring, hairdressing and nursing all offered the family services for reduced rates or free: as well as holding higher status than market or processing work. Tailors could sew beautiful clothes and hairdressers could make themselves look fine, younger women said, which was a major advantage. The sales of provisions, cooked food and other consumables were cited as desirable as they could provide the family with things to eat from stock, although vendors of

these goods commented that in this way their capital was easily depleted. Food processing was mentioned as providing staples for family consumption, reducing dependence on having the cash to purchase foodstuffs.

Ease of work was the third factor, especially being able to sit when working and not having to do any heavy labour. Food processing and mat making were classed by virtually all of those I spoke with as *wahala* (hassle, trouble): even if women did these jobs, and defended them for the gain and for being able to do them at home, they assured me that they would not want their daughters to do the same. The fourth factor was familiarity with what was involved in the work. Several times relatively desirable jobs were ranked low by women who simply said they did not know how to do them. In some cases, this was matched by moral disdain for certain occupations like *onişegun* (herbalist). The fifth factor, and perhaps the most interesting, was the personal feeling women expressed for the jobs they did: a feeling that the choice was right. This gave women a sense of fulfilment in what they did and where it had got them, beyond explaining how it was that they had remained in this line of work for so many years, and was expressed in terms of *ife*, love.³⁸

Some jobs were ranked low because women said they did not like them and would never want to do such a job. It gave me a sense of how strongly women identified with their job: that it was not merely a way of making money, nor of gaining status, not merely something that had been handed down for them to follow. It was, rather, something that was bound up with their sense of identity. One successful trader's nickname was 'Alhaja Owope', a contraction of *owo pe ere lo ku* (the capital is correct, remains only the gain, i.e. she recoups her investment and awaits her profit), which marked her prowess in her field. As I note in Chapter 3, marketwomen come to be known by the name of their commodity: and older women talked of their trade with a fond familiarity. Iya Elefo, for example, had spent her entire life selling *efo* (vegetable leaf). She told me that she really loved it, that it was her thing and that she could never ever have left it, as it was the right trade for her. No matter, she said, that gain isn't always good.³⁹ And in any case, she told me, *efo* was what she knew.

Many women told me that while they could tell me about the relative advantages and disadvantages of different jobs, they did what they did because it was what they knew and liked. Having watched other women in action, even the poorer traders could tell me that the way to get ahead was to diversify and shift capital between different ventures to maximise gains. And the best way to find a good line of business? Try out a number of options and see which one moves the best, I was told, then expand it. It was all very well talking about these things, women pointed out to me, but what was a woman to do without the money to try something else? And if she did not know the complicated tricks of particular trades, how was she to manage without losing all her capital? Better to stay with the one you know how to do, they told me: risking capital on a range of ventures and juggling investments between them

requires not only the means, but the skill and confidence to manage the uncertainties involved. For many women the uncertainties are so daunting that it is only if business threatens to collapse completely that other options are considered.

Choice often gives way to circumstances: to doing what other women in the compound do, something that a woman picks up from the person who trains her, a job that a sister or friend is doing and can help a woman to learn how to do. Like Iya Onibata, some women struggle for a while to find the right job; they may consult prophets or healers to find out what the problem is if they are not managing to get enough money or seek advice from kin or from their husbands to work out what might be best for them. One *onişegun* (herbalist) told me of clients who had come to him to ask why their trade was not moving. He said that while *aje* were troubling some, for others it was that they were personally unsuited to the particular commodity they were working with: 'all her problems might come from the fact that she keeps on trying to sell eggs when in fact she is better suited to doing cooked food'. I also met women who were troubled by not getting on well and turned to prayer, then were struck with an idea and pursued it confidently feeling that God was behind them.

Success depends not only on finding the right job and finding a way to make it work. It is also contingent on a woman being able to work from day to day to maintain her business. Some of the women who were reduced to poverty when they failed to make enough money to carry on getting by experienced a period of illness or found their resources depleted by the struggle to have a child (see Chapters 6 and 8): both misfortunes in which *aje* may be implicated, in draining away wealth. Faith is a crucial blanket of support when adversity strikes, just as the links women form through their religious associations provide a more worldly form of assistance. For Maria, my last case study, it was her belief that somehow things were going to get better that got her through a really difficult time in which even making do was a struggle.

Coping with Contingency

Maria, a trader in her early 30s, is of the generation of women who were sent to school and who experienced greater freedom than their mothers or grandmothers to make their own choices. Things seemed to be looking up for her by the time I left Ado. But over the last decade she had so many difficulties that she thought at one stage that trouble would never stop plaguing her.

When Maria was young, her mother sent her to school so that she could have a better life. She helped her mother make *fufu* after school and started doing a little trading for herself. She went to secondary school, but was not interested in going further as she saw that teachers were not earning decent money and she had an interest in trading. So that's how she started. She had raised a little money from the work she had been doing, her mother added more and she began to do small-scale trade in foodstuffs, in *gari*, *egusi* (melon seed), *maggi*, beans and rice. And

then she met her husband. After marriage, she carried on with the trade she had been doing and was catered for well by her husband. But her mother-in-law would not stop finding fault with everything she did and would complain about her to relatives. After a year or so, she began to worry as she still had not conceived. Slowly, slowly, her mother-in-law was making trouble, telling her husband to send her away and find a wife who would give him children. She prayed and fasted, looking to God to help her. They both spent heavily on going here and there to find a way for her to conceive (see Chapter 8). Eventually, he gave in to pressure and brought a new wife to live with them. But that wife fought her and made her life so difficult that she had to leave. Without a child, she had no leg to stand on.

She returned to her mother's compound and used the little money she had to prepare some *gari*, then used the gains to buy other foodstuffs and do what she had been doing before. Little by little she managed to make enough money to start selling at the night market, to customers in need of last minute supplies. She still desperately wanted a child and she met a man who asked her to marry him. She went to church to pray. And her prayers were answered: she finally became pregnant. But she suffered seriously during that pregnancy and was sick all the time. And her business gradually ground to a halt, as she did not have the strength to carry on selling in the market. She took to selling from home, but her neighbours were buying from other women in the area and it was difficult to build up enough customers. When she gave birth, she had more problems. Her baby soon became sick and it was impossible to leave him to do any work outside the house. And then he died.

By this time, she had virtually no money. Her husband was just about making enough to feed them, but had no spare money to give her as capital. She continued to pray that God would help her find a solution to her problems. She went outside the town to collect firewood, head-loading it into town to sell to women making *fufu*. From this, she slowly began to collect money. She kept what she could to one side and gradually built up enough to put an amount towards buying a few items of children's clothes on credit from a woman she knew in the market. When she sold, she returned to repay her balance and buy more stock. Gradually, she managed to build up clients from among her neighbours and women she knew in the church. She became pregnant and gave birth to a daughter, whom she clothed from her stock. She continued to sell from the house while she was breastfeeding and managed to keep her business running. Then a friend from her church called her to join them to save together and they started an association, which grew to eighteen members. She needed a way to save money and found it hard not to spend the little she had if it was at home. So she joined. Every week, she contributes whatever she can. When she needs money, she receives the amount she has saved: it is like a bank. She started doing *ajọ* of N10 a day shortly afterwards and uses this as capital for her business.

As things were going on, she was managing little by little to save enough to start another line of business. She saw that no-one close by was selling kerosene, so she began to buy from a supplier in the centre of the town and sold it to women around her house. By this time, she was pregnant again. Once she had delivered her child, she continued to operate from home and manage her business by taking the baby on her back when she went to buy, leaving the toddler with her mother-in-law. But business dropped off and she began to lose her custom. So she started taking kegs of kerosene to the main road to sell. If her mother-in-law is not busy with her own work, then she helps her look after her children while she goes to the road. These days, she told me, she is happy. She has her children, her husband and her job. And she has now been given a title in her church association, the *Egbẹ Obinrin Rere*.

Looking for a child and then losing her child after sickness reduced Maria to rock bottom. And her education offered her few prospects for choices other than trade, no matter what her mother had hoped for her. Maria gradually managed to find her feet again after she was thrown off course by misfortune by doing the hard manual work that is the recourse of the very poorest. The kinds of uncertainties and the risks associated with the jobs so many women leave them very vulnerable when personal crises disrupt their day-to-day struggles to

make money. Few of those in the lower income bands have savings put by 'for a rainy day': some have no safety net at all. Often, only the immediate family can be relied on for support. Money to treat a sickness is something that is hard to come by even if everyone will give something to help a celebrant. Money and *alafia* are linked in more concrete ways than the kind of contentment that comes from being able to afford not to have to struggle. When people talked of *alafia*, they often referred to the ability simply to be able to go out of the house and go about everyday activities: to a state of physical, as well as emotional, well-being.

I knew several women for whom an illness had meant the effective end of their work in a certain line of business and had reduced them to virtual destitution for a while, before they could find a way of getting back on their feet - little by little - often by making *gari* or *fufu*, collecting firewood or weaving mats, substituting their labour for a little gain. Both Maria and Alhaja Taliatu had to resort to this at low points in their lives, simply to be able to clamber back into business. But for some women, this can be a blow from which they never recover. Iya Musa, now in her late 60s, told me of how she had been doing really well in her life. She made fried snacks and her work moved well. But then she became sick with *qfa* (swollen legs). For nine years she was virtually housebound. That sickness, she said, was caused by *aiye* (*aje*) who saw her working and wanted to wreck her family. 'If there is someone who is hardworking, those who are lazy and don't have a sound job have hated, so they want to bring to one down'. Before her illness, she said, she was a hardworking woman and spent as she wanted. What pained her most was that she had enough money to build a house before the sickness came, then she could not build it again. Whenever she thinks of it, she becomes sad. And, as Maria found, the other kind of trouble *aje* are implicated in - reproductive trouble - can equally reduce people to virtual ruin.

When Maria finally found the pregnancy she had wanted for so long, the line she chose to specialise in was one that enabled her to clothe her child well, using her gain in kind. She had, she said, just watched other women selling it and had got the idea from them. And it meant that her children would always look smart, which made her feel happy. Selling from home, rather than going to market, offered her the chance to open up a niche in a residential area where some of the women of her age are busy with jobs that do not take them far away from their compounds if they are not in the market, jobs like sewing, mat weaving and *fufu* making. It also meant that she could combine looking after her children herself, for most of the time, with doing business. Even when children are very small, there is little incompatibility between the work most women in Ado do and managing child-care (cf. Sudarkasa 1973, Arowolo 1978, Blanc and Lloyd 1994).

Many women work near enough to their homes to return to feed small children and some take them with them to work, although rarely to market (cf. Clark 1994); if relatives are

amenable, children over the age of about six months can be left with them during the day if women go to markets in other towns.⁴⁰ But these arrangements are becoming harder to rely on, both as a consequence of changing residence patterns (see Chapter 3) and the difficulties potential child-carers are also facing in making a living. As children grow older, they can help look after younger siblings (cf. Sudarkasa), but only after school. And as so many children now go on to apprenticeships, relying on other children for childcare during the day is no longer possible (di Domenico et al. 1987, Pearce 1994).⁴¹ Fosterage is becoming less common, as younger women - particularly those who are educated - want to bring their children up themselves (see Chapter 8). Having children, then, is not necessarily a constraint. It is clearly of assistance as they grow older and can take over domestic work, manage their mothers' stalls, help do accounts and go hawking, sometimes selling additional small-scale trade items for their mothers (cf. Oppong and Abu 1987). Yet, like Maria, many women have to fit their work around their children. And it is on their children that many women spend the most, whenever they have money to do so.⁴²

The major constraints women face are not so much the physical activities associated with mothering, but the increasing costs of putting children through school. Over the next few years, Maria will probably be able to make do with her trade if she can stay afloat. But once the children start school, she may have to branch out to be able to support them unless her husband's prospects improve. Women constantly told me that their work was because of their children: most of the money they earn is spent on their hearth-holds, supplementing and sometimes substituting for inputs from their husbands. The name of Maria's *egbe*, called *Omọ Wunmi* (children please me), reflects the concerns of the women she came together with (see Chapter 3, cf. March and Taqqu 1986). Most mothers will go to great lengths to make sure their children have whatever they need. When one *fufu* producer told me of how she manages to raise just enough from her N5 a day *ajo* to buy what she needs to keep herself and her children going, processing cassava that is 'lent' to her on credit by a farmer who is her supplier, she told me:

If one of my children comes to me saying 'Mummy I am hungry, Mummy I need such and such', how can I refuse if I have money? But if I have no money with me, there is nothing that I can do. Then when I receive my money (from the collector) I can buy what I need to buy.

And other women who had saved with *egbe* to generate large sums of money that went towards their obligations as members of their *idile* and to cover some of their children's needs, as well as to enhance their business operations, told me how hard it was to hold onto money when there were others who came to them for help.

While a woman is of an age when she is having children, like Maria, they may be able to call on support from their kin if their husbands cannot provide enough for contingencies. At the time in her life when a woman is an elder within her *idile*, or when her own children are

grown, she may be expected to make substantial contributions to the children of her siblings and her grandchildren. This may be done directly, by taking them in and becoming their 'mother', as Iya Onibata and Alhaja Taliatu did, or by spending heavily at ceremonies for them. One older woman said she had felt so pressurised by her position as a senior member of her *idile* that she had moved to Ado from another town, quite far away, because at the rate at which she was spending on ceremonies she had barely enough to manage for her children even if she was, at that time, making a good living. The subject positions women come to occupy over their life courses, then, create overlapping and sometimes conflicting demands on their time, attention and money.

Changing Lives, Changing Livelihoods?

Women's opportunities to make a living are contingent not only on the overlapping responsibilities they have as part of the subject positions they occupy in different domains of association, all of which may involve flows of resources to and from others, but also depend on the stage they are at in their life courses and the recursively constituted experience that comes through membership of a particular generation. The historicity of women's experiences, that 'definite sense of living in a social world constantly exposed to change' (Giddens 1984:xxviii) locates their biographical experiences in historical time.

For the generation born at the time when Alhaja Taliatu had been trading on her own account for a few years, a significant event marked a decisive turning point in changes that had been afoot since the early 1940s: the opening up of education through Chief Awolowo's policy of Universal Primary Education in 1955 (see Chapters 2 and 4). Education offered some women the opportunity to move into the lower rungs of government work, as teachers, nurses and lower grade civil servants, that commanded status and a regular salary (see Chapter 2). Mrs Aroboto, a teacher in her 40s and herself already a member of the elite by virtue of her place in a prominent lineage, told me that those women who pursued education during this time were 'exposed' to a different way of doing things and to new aspirations. Among the more successful women of her generation, many had attended school for some years. The growth of a female educated elite lagged behind that of men (see Ajayi 1965) for many decades, but by the 1960s women were entering primary school in numbers. And some of their teachers were members of this emergent female elite.

Iya Onibata missed her chance, but like other women of her generation, Maria was able to go to school and was sent there by her mother, who wanted to secure for her daughter a 'better life'. Considerations of status gradually made schooling and the white collar jobs that were opening up to women more desirable from the time of Maria's youth. For traders who made their money in the years when trade blossomed in Ado, the 1960s and 1970s, investing in their children's education was a priority (cf. Caldwell 1976). Many parents hoped for their

daughters to go on to train as teachers and nurses, and to move out of the small town orbit of Ado's markets and food processing sites: to give their children the chance that education appeared to offer. For Maria, like so many others, options outside the route through formal education into jobs like teaching or nursing were not that much broader than those open to her mother. And the residues of the masculinist colonial opportunity structure have constrained women's opportunities within public sector occupations (cf. Mintz 1971, MacGaffey 1987, Dennis 1991): few women are found even in the middle tier of public service employment in Ado and most women working in secondary schools are only around Maria's age or younger.

A successful trader has long been able to make more money than a woman in almost any other kind of profession in Ado. And literate women have been able to carve out niches as 'businesswomen', using their numeracy to keep accounts and deal with invoices and estimates. Nuratu, a rice and beans trader in her 50s, told me that the kind of business she saw educated women do was different: that was what she wanted for her own daughters, that they would be able to record their sales in a book and know exactly what they were doing. Yet, as many women pointed out, literacy is only one skill among others in the marketplace, where having an eye for a good purchase and the ability to strike a good bargain is what matters most: illiterate traders with razor sharp minds can quickly price a purchase and turn a profit that educated women might stumble to match.

In Maria's generation, education to primary level became almost a matter of course but the service sector was still quite small. Options were limited to the professions of other generations: trade, food processing and mat weaving. The vast majority of women in Ado continue to work in these professions. Apart from some (low value) lines that are only the work of old women, such as *ifin* (reeds), and work that is too strenuous for older women to do, such as *fufu* and *gari*, I found women of all ages across a spectrum of jobs that did not require formal education to enter (cf. Sudarkasa 1973).⁴³ The most significant age-related differences were not in what kind of work women did, but in how they had come to do it: many older women had followed their mothers or female relatives, while younger women were more likely to have chosen a certain line for themselves. In the market, for example, my survey of 70 vendors revealed that for women of 60 or older, virtually all had been doing the same job since they were young girls. For their daughters' generation, only a third had continued with the work they were originally trained in by their mothers. How and where women worked had more to do with the stage they were at in their life courses than their generation as such (cf. Sudarkasa 1973).

I knew several women of Maria's age - of my own generation - for whom access to education had meant that they were literate and numerate, but who lacked the capital to go into the kind of business where they could use their skills. One friend of my age made *gari*

when she had her first child, started doing *kara-kata* (speculating by buying whatever looks like a good bet that day and reselling elsewhere in the market) at Lusada market when cassava became too expensive and ended up relying on her father to help her set up a small business in fried meat. Another had tried to sell provisions, but ran out of money and turned instead to making *ogi* (maize paste) at home, which fit in well with being able to look after her children. Among those women a decade or so younger, prospects were not looking good. I knew several young women who had finished secondary school with reasonable, but not amazing, results and struggled to find a job. One young woman I knew had taken up *fufu* along with her mother to get a little money and was hoping to start training as a hairdresser, another ended up reliant on a far from dependable lad of her age when she got pregnant (see Chapter 8).

Other women of my generation, those who had given up on education after primary school and entered apprenticeships in Ado or in the cities instead, were in a position in their early 30s where they were able to run their own businesses for themselves. Lady Bola, whose hair salon was the first in Ado, set up her shop while she was still in her early 20s and since then has managed to make quite a good living. Her husband, who works in Lagos, had little option but to agree to her desire to relocate to Ado: she is the one to feed the children. Iya Nike, a tailor of around the same age, started off as a teenager and has now got her own shop, her own apprentices ('to help others as I was helped') and is into her second marriage, quite able to support herself and her child. One of the most significant changes in the kinds of work done by women has come over the last decade, with the mushrooming of the service sector and an ultimately unsustainable increase in the number of trainee tailors, hairdressers and jewellery makers in their teens and early 20s.

Many parents in Ado still pin their hopes on an education for their sons and daughters. Daughters who are put through secondary school to have a 'better life' share their parents' aspirations for them. Women in the last year of secondary school named careers in professions like business administration, medicine, law and government as their hopes of what they might become.⁴⁴ Whether or not they manage to fulfil their hopes may become as much a matter of chance and circumstance as it is of choice (see Chapter 8). Some parents are beginning to realise that setting them up with a fall-back position - like the would-be lawyer I refer to earlier - means that they will have some way of making a living even if they, like so many other children, fail to get the grades to get them into higher education and or secure the means to keep them there. As the costs of maintaining children at higher institutions continue to rise, the struggle to secure for them the chances of white collar work becomes even more difficult.

High value commodities once brought equally high returns and were associated with a certain status.⁴⁵ These days, austerity has brought about shifts in their viability. Exceptional

women, like Alhaja Taliatu, 'made it' from the lowest status lines. Selling pepper, for example, is generally regarded as one of the lowest status trades of all. But I heard tales of pepper traders building houses for themselves, by astute buying and selling between markets and through various tricks of the trade. One woman I knew, from an elite family, had financed university studies for herself and fed three children from pepper selling. She was criticised by others for 'lowering herself' by selling pepper. She replied, defiantly, that she made a good living from it and if it got her where she wanted to be, then why not? As I note earlier, it is not always what people sell but how, where and when they sell it that matters: both in terms of profits and in terms of the ways in which others view their status.

Education and the expansion of the service sector have broadened opportunities for some. But to what extent have options for the majority of women in Ado changed? In the middle of my fieldwork, I re-read Sudarkasa's (1973) superb study of women's lives in Awe, near Ibadan, in the early 1960s. Crammed with empirical detail, Sudarkasa's study described women's work situations in ways that seemed to be so strikingly similar to what I saw in the course of my day-to-day life in Ado, thirty years later, that I began to wonder what *had* changed. Significant changes in intimate relationships had begun to take shape in the 1950s and 60s. And major changes in the regional and national economy clearly had an impact on women's opportunities. But how much of an impact? And what difference had these changes *really* made to the everyday lives of women? I looked around me, at the domains where women worked and found, again and again, that apart from those women who had been able to pursue their education and become teachers or nurses or those who had married wealthy men, many younger women were in no better a situation than their mothers. And among these women, the stage that they were at in their life courses made more of a difference in terms of their economic status than the generation they belonged to.

For more than a decade, the economic situation of the country has been deteriorating at a pace that has put many women in a position where they are really struggling to keep their heads above water. Even if women manage to complete their secondary school education, shrinking opportunities may leave them with no more of a choice in what they do than they might otherwise have had. Where changes *have* been significant is in the amounts of money women were able to make, especially in the relatively prosperous periods of the late 1960s up to the end of the 1970s, through the pursuit of trade (see Chapter 2). Throughout the 1980s, enterprising women were able to build up successful businesses by capitalising on earlier gains. Even in the early 1990s, there were still opportunities for making good money, particularly for those who dealt in contraband goods (see Chapter 2). But by 1994, women who were once wealthy were beginning to struggle to maintain their standard of living. Several once-wealthy women I knew were reduced to doing the most menial of work, just to get by. The impact of structural adjustment policies has been exacerbated by political

uncertainties and fuel crises, dealing a death blow to the trade of some and injuring the businesses of others significantly.⁴⁶

The trade lines that were once associated with wealth and prestige were becoming unaffordable luxuries to all but the very rich by the time I left.⁴⁷ It was a grim reflection on current times when the answers I got to my question about the trade women thought was the best one to pursue these days dwelt on the basic necessities of life, the things that people have to buy every day and that they cannot go without. The fact that many market traders named cooked food as the best trade of them all reflected not a liberation of women from having to cook, as I thought at first, but the extent to which women's time has been encroached on by their struggles to make money (cf. Thomas-Emeagwali 1995).

Making It and Making Do

The ways women in Ado make it and make do offer a range of opportunities for pursuing an independent livelihood. The pathways and struggles that Maria, Iya Onibata and Alhaja Taliatu pursued over their life courses give insights into some of the hurdles women face along the way in getting started, changing course and carrying on. All three of them started up new lines of business in unfamiliar fields, but did so in very different circumstances. What is most striking about their stories is the resilience these women showed in the face of adversity and the ways they innovated to get by. For them, as many other women of their generations in Ado, the question of choice meant a choice between trades. The numbers of women like Iya Onibata who have spent much of their working lives with a single commodity far surpasses those who have diversified and changed direction along the way. For some, things turn out well. Others endure less than satisfactory gains, like they endure marriages: managing somehow to get by, struggling from day to day to feed their children and just doing what they do because the prospect of leaving creates even more uncertainty and worry.

The ambivalence that women's spending power arouses in some men goes beyond their wives' capacity to support their hearth-holds, for this has now become a necessity. In recent years, the collapse of the Nigerian economy has had such deleterious effects across the spectrum that many men were reduced to a situation where their economic power had been so eroded that they could barely feed the household without their wives' income and even the most successful women in the prime of their lives were struggling to manage and make do. Women's earning power can buy them respect from their husbands who recognise the contributions they make. But this also has its flip side. One trader who had lost virtually all her capital when her business crashed told me:

When I was in money, my husband treated me well. He used to come to me to ask me this and that about how he was going on. Now I have no money, he just does whatever he likes without even coming to me to inform me. Some men do this. They

will start making a misunderstanding every time and report you here and there. They use this as a way of marrying another wife.

That women earn money to support the children they have by a man is expected. And, like this unlucky trader, some men come to rely so much on what their wives earn that if women find themselves stumbling in business their husbands may provide little comfort. When crisis strikes, it is often members of a woman's own *idile* who come to her assistance. Even the most well meaning and caring husband can be prey to the insistence of his relatives that he do something to find himself a better wife, as one woman found when she became really sick and had to go home to be cared for. After some time her husband installed another wife, who fortunately declined to remain. When she came home, he said relatives had 'turned his mind against her': they reconciled and despite bouts of sickness, she continues to work to feed and educate her children while he does what he can.

Women's spending power and how they use it reveals dimensions of difference in which money itself can come to take on a distinctly gendered cast (Rowlands 1995). The money women give to relatives, as well as the ways they may spend on their associates in *egbe* by helping them out with ceremonies or buying cloth together, came in for disapproval from some of the men I spoke with. But it was the way women spent on cloth that they focused on. 'There are some who buy a new dress every week!' Mrs Odu exclaimed one day, 'they don't care about their capital, wasting money on dresses like this when they should be spending that money taking good care of the children'. As ever, Mrs Odu voiced exactly the complaints of men who complained about the extravagant habits of their wives (see Chapters 1 and 5). Yet, as I suggest in Chapter 3, it is precisely by looking good and taking part in ceremonies and association gatherings that a woman establishes herself as a 'somebody' in her own right. Rather than diverting money away from their children, women's social networks provided them with opportunities for making contacts and maintaining supportive links with relatives and associates (cf. March and Taqqu 1986). *Egbe* are, after all, gatherings at which women save together and help each other out; and kin are the ones to whom a woman can go if she is in need of a loan. When I spoke with women about how they were coping with the economic crisis, many told me of how they had cut back in all aspects of their lives. But they continued to do whatever they could to keep children in school or in training: by taking on extra work, making economies, going without.⁴⁸ Whatever happened, many women put their children first.

Making it for themselves enables women to establish sources of security beyond their marriages; it also sustains marriages. Unless men are very rich, marrying a wife who lacks the means to contribute to bringing up her children would be foolish. And even those who are prefer their wives to be able to do something for themselves.⁴⁹ Walking past a school building in Imasai quarter one day, I saw the following caution chalked onto a board outside

it: *okọ nini tabi iyawo fiṣe lai si iṣe gidi, lowo ibere oṣi ni* (marrying a husband or a wife without having a good job is the beginning of poverty). This was echoed by the young men Paul Fadairo and I interviewed, all of whom stressed the importance of their wives-to-be having a good job: 'in this Nigeria', one said, 'if the wife has no job you will surely suffer'.

When people complained of young women 'uselessing themselves' and getting pregnant, there was more than just morality at stake. For, as several older women insisted, in the idealised *igba atijo* women had acquired at least some skills to support themselves by the time they started having children. These days, an ill timed pregnancy can leave a young woman semi-skilled and in a position where fending for herself and her child has become all the more difficult. In the next chapter, I look at some of the issues that arise around the consequences of changing patterns of marriage and sexuality. I explore further questions of strategy and choice as they relate to the aspect of women's 'personal biographies' that is inextricably linked to their social identities and their struggles for success and survival: motherhood and mothering.

Chapter 8

Taking Chances, Making Choices

Omo ni bori owo - children are more important than money (name of women's *egbe*)

Eniti o ba lowo ti ko bimo ko je nkan - a person who has money but no child has done nothing (local saying)

Children feature prominently in the prayers and hopes of people in Ado. Like money, children are transformative; both 'make people' and together they enhance the standing of those who have both in abundance (Barber 1991). Both are a source of *alafia*. Yet *alafia* is less a goal, or even an outcome, than a state of being that is often defined in terms of an absence, a deferral of those things that can impinge on it. It is, in this sense, less a feature of positive and deliberate strategies for 'getting ahead' or even for making decisions about the ways in which goals can be attained, than an object of recuperative, protective, improvisory tactics to keep trouble and enemies at bay. For *alafia* is not something that can be chosen and pursued, but a precious, fragile state that can so easily be disrupted. Children, like money, are struggled for. Without money, it is hard to have *alafia* and be happy, people told me: without children, it is even harder.

The pathways that people move through over their lives are pitted with uncertainties, risks and barriers to fulfilment. Looking back over their lives, they may identify moments, choices, events that gain significance only in retrospect: some of their hopes may have been realised, others changed along the way by the circumstances they found themselves in. And at the end of their lives, what they have done resembles a 'completed performance' (Richards 1989:40), rather than the outcomes of a specific plan: people may have goals in mind when they begin, but constantly adapt to changing circumstances, making do and keeping going, tempering plans with contingencies, finding ways to manage. Every man and woman wants to have children, but they have them in circumstances in which eventualities are unknown and unknowable: beyond their control.

As the stories I tell in this chapter show, people who become parents are often placed in situations where they need to improvise solutions to the kinds of complex tangles they may be presented with at any particular time. To read back from the ways in which problems are solved or addressed to impute an overall strategic framework or plan, pursued by individuals for themselves, becomes highly problematic: not least because complex agencies may be involved at every stage. Living with uncertainty requires creative adaptation, making do along the way with contingencies that cannot be planned for. De Certeau (1984) suggests that

the metaphor of strategy implies a conscious, deliberate series of plans or actions which are calculated in terms of a clear vision of the potential outcomes. In the context of parenthood, this would correspond with the idea of 'family planning' and 'reproductive strategies'. Strategy, for de Certeau, implies a starting point, a position of power. Tactics, in his analysis, are more defensive, reactive practices which are defined in the absence of real power: ways of making do, getting by, coping with what comes up.

In this chapter, I draw on de Certeau's distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics' to explore contexts of parenthood in Ado. I suggest that a reading of options and outcomes of child-bearing in terms of 'reproductive strategies' may be misleading precisely because, like Richards' metaphor of 'performance' in agriculture, they involve 'a sequential adjustment to unpredictable conditions' (Richards 1989:40).¹ Questions about strategy invoke further questions about agency and choice: about the extent to which the choices that give rise to births are themselves conscious choices *about* fertility itself and about the extent to which a focus on individual agents and their strategies makes sense of the complex processes of reproduction in this context. I begin by looking at the ways in which 'reproductive strategies' figure in debates about fertility in southwestern Nigeria. Through case material, I go on to explore questions about choice and circumstance in having and bringing up children in Ado and the implications of uncertainty for women's struggles to have and bring up their children, and to find happiness and peace of mind.

Choice or Circumstance?

Where luck or precaution fails, young women who want boyfriends for love or money and the young men who 'toast' them expecting sex, not fatherhood, may find themselves in a fix.² Married women may find one day that they are pregnant with a child that is not from their husband but their 'helper' and not know where to turn. And the married men whose wives at home accept infidelities with resignation may have trouble in store when a girlfriend becomes pregnant and comes to join them or becomes an 'outside wife'. Trouble in the husband's compound can give rise to anxieties over fertility as well as over the survival of children (see Chapter 6). Co-wives can make life so intolerable for each other that sharing a space and a husband becomes risky and unpleasant: wives may 'pack out', perhaps to seek another husband, perhaps to live on their own as *ilemoşu*. When they do, they often have to leave their children behind; when they remarry, they need to have a child to confirm the relationship. Older women, eager for grandchildren, may think they are doing the right thing when they take in the woman their son has impregnated, only to find that they now have two more mouths to feed while their son is off pursuing his own life elsewhere, or come to rue their intervention when his first wife takes offence. In the midst of these and other

complications, there is a lot of making the best of things, keeping the peace, finding some way or other to salvage the situation.

Guyer's (1994) insightful analysis of changing contexts of reproduction in Ibarapa, a rural district to the north of Abeokuta, uses the idiom of kinship - descent versus alliance - to argue that a shift appears to be taking place between a 'lineal' strategy of childbearing within marriage in which women invest in longer-range returns, to the creation of 'lateral' networks through what she terms 'the logic of polyandrous motherhood' (1994:231). According to this 'logic', women cultivate ties with different men through co-parenthood which give them access to short-term gains of financial support and opportunities to build extensive networks as well as the 'bonus' of longer-term possibilities through 'lineal' pay-offs from children (1994:237). Guyer draws on the kinds of arguments advanced by Caldwell (1982) to contend

More emphasis is placed on the value of children as links in lateral networks in addition to their value as resources in intergenerational relations: as labour in their youth and as devotees of the ancestors in old age (1994:233).

Situating these changes historically, Guyer suggests that they represent not a departure from previous patterns so much as a shift of emphasis within them. She goes on to argue:

the relative informality of first unions allows the younger generation a wider variety of options without, however, dramatically breaching the older generation's expectations about sexual relationships and the fixing of parenthood' (1994:251).

Guyer's analysis is extremely useful in many respects, but it begs a number of questions. While her description of 'lineal' and 'lateral strategies' corresponds with some of the outcomes of reproduction in Ado, it situates procreation as the goal rather than one of the consequences of liaisons. As I will go on to argue, this needs to be qualified rather carefully. In Part II I explored some of the contests that arise over sexuality and child-bearing between sexual partners and within the web of wider relations in which women as mothers are situated. I suggested that the representation of 'these days' as rupture with the past may mask continuities, as Guyer suggests, but serves as a means to voice complaints about the very aspects of the present situation that Guyer draws attention to (see Chapters 4 and 5). The normative *igba atijo* used to judge the present and find it lacking, focuses concern on women's sexuality and the contexts in which children are born. These days many marriages begin with pregnancy, young women are accused of being 'after sex' as well as money and of 'spoiling their lives' by getting pregnant before they have acquired the means to support themselves. It seems that the behaviour of young women is a particular cause for concern precisely because the expectations of the older generation *are* breached. Narratives of disapproval cast young women as *lacking* foresight and as inspired by other considerations such as love and money, rather than as borne out of the kind of astute reckoning of options that the notion of 'strategy' implies.

The assumption that people pursue reproductive *strategies* continues to cast fertility in terms of conscious choices that are about children and/as resources, whether they are made by independent individuals or as collectivities (see, for example, Caldwell 1982, Lesthaeghe 1989, Bledsoe and Cohen 1993).³ Caldwell's (1982) transition theory, for example, suggests that 'intergenerational wealth flows' between children and their parents constitute a rationale for high fertility in 'pre-transition' societies; with transition comes a shift towards 'emotional nucleation', transformations of the parent-child relationship into one that is based not on economic rationality but the emotional returns of having children. Love is thus counterposed to money. Analyses focusing on 'the value of children' make this explicit; even in their most sophisticated forms (see for example Fapohunda and Todaro 1989), demand-led theories of fertility commodify the processes of child-bearing and child-rearing, invoking strategies, plans and calculations that centre around tangible gains.⁴

Lockwood (1989) points out that economic theories of fertility presuppose conscious decision-making in situations where other socio-cultural factors impinge on the scope individuals have for making reproductive choices and may play more of a part in determining reproductive outcomes.⁵ He draws attention to the significance of the response so often given to questions about preferred family size: 'it is up to God'. Lockwood argues that economists should take the validity of experience behind such responses seriously and abandon decision-making explanations of fertility. 'It is up to God' or 'God's time is the best' invoke not only unknowability but also tactics to manage and cope with uncertainty, a repository of continued hope in the face of experience for those for struggle to have a child as well as those for whom chance rather than choice brings a pregnancy. As Oppong and Bleek (1987) argue for Ghana, women and men can neither predict with any certainty how their marriages will pan out, who will support and train a child from birth to adulthood, nor who will benefit and incur costs in the process.⁶ While a pregnancy may be the outcome of an affair between two individuals, as soon as it becomes known a range of others are immediately drawn into the matter;⁷ and as the child grows up, others still are involved. The impingement of other, individual or complex, agents on the processes of bearing and bringing up a child creates further uncertainties and situates actors in positions where they have varying degrees of power. Real life contingencies militate against the best laid plans; real life uncertainties require innovation rather than blueprints.

What is also at issue, then, is not simply whether or not fertility is an outcome of choice but of what *kinds* of choices and what *other* agents are involved. These can neither be read off from outcomes nor anticipated in advance. The agency as well as the choices of those who bring a child into the world, along with the agency and choices of the child her/himself, need to be set within the more complex contexts of mothering and fathering as social practices (cf. Bleek 1987, Glenn et al. 1994, Scheper-Hughes 1993). Children do not just provide a source

of future security or a source of returns to investment, but also, like money, play a crucial part in the processes of 'self-investment' (Barber 1995) through which women and men become social agents. 'Wealth in people' (Guyer 1993) may represent the outcome of successful strategising, but it is in itself of crucial social and emotional significance at many points along the way.

Fathers and Mothers

Iya ni wura, baba ni digi eni. Ojọ iya ku ni wura bajẹ, ojọ baba ku ni digi wọmi - mother is gold, father is one's looking glass. The day the mother dies, gold becomes spoilt/valueless, the day the father dies, the looking glass is drowned (Yoruba proverb).

Being known to have 'had issue' is crucial to men's status as *men* and women's status as *women*. The metaphor of mother as gold suggests the enduring value of mothers to their children. Fathers, as mirrors, reflect likeness; children also reflect a man's status and may be part of who he becomes. Even if the subject positions 'father' and 'mother' only partially overlap with a range of other positions and statuses available to men and women, concern with becoming a parent is paramount. Everyone wants children. Despite the difficulties of the present economic situation, I rarely met anyone who wanted less than four children.⁸ Mr Akintomide told me a proverb that cautions: *omọ ko ni ayọle, eni omọ sin lo bimọ* - it is not having children that is cause for rejoicing, but to be buried by the child you gave birth to. It is only at the end of one's life that one can really say 'I have had children', he explained. For people can never know how things might turn out. Mortality has decreased, but appears to be rising again under the present harsh economic conditions (Pearce and Falola 1994, Adepoju 1993).⁹

In Ado, as in other areas of southwestern Nigeria (Caldwell 1976, Caldwell and Caldwell 1987), the survival of children into adulthood creates the possibilities for a good death. A song, sung at the lavish funeral of the mother of Chief Opaleye celebrates this:

*Eni ba ńarugbo nile
Ko sa bẹbẹ ko un gbẹhin wọn
Wulemotu kẹhin Mama
Saidi kẹhin Mama
Awọn omọ gbẹhin wọn si kẹ
Ka wa na kẹhin tawa*

Anyone who has an old person at home
Should beg to live longer than that one
Wulemotu has outlived Mama
Saidi has outlived Mama
Our children outlived her and treated her well
Let us too live long.¹⁰

If a person has no children, I was told by men and women alike, what is it worth struggling for? Such a person, they said, would always be sad: they would have no-one to make sure that they were buried well and no-one to inherit their property. Having sons is especially important. A wife without sons remains only partially accepted by her in-laws. For men, sons will be the ones to carry their name and establish them as a 'somebody'; for women, hopes are vested in sons as their 'husbands' of the future, the ones who will look after when they are older. But daughters are also important at various stages of a man or woman's life, even if they leave to establish hearth-holds elsewhere (cf. Caldwell 1976).¹¹

For men, becoming a father is such an imperative that male infertility is barely even acknowledged as a possibility. Although it is recognised that men may have 'watery sperm', those who cannot father children are known as *okobo*. This implies a 'lack of (sexual) power' and as consequent on having a 'weak or dead organ': infertility is equated with impotence.¹² So vital is fatherhood to men's identities that covert measures are taken to conceal any implication that they are *okobo*. When I raised the subject with men, they were so anxious to shift responsibility onto women that when I repeatedly dragged them back to the possibility they continued to regale me with examples where the woman was the one with the problem: only herbalists, the practitioners to whom such cases may be covertly brought, were more forthcoming.

Not being able to father a child causes a man a great deal of pain, but there are ways of getting around this: tactics to recuperate the possibility of a good death. I knew of men who had gone through a string of wives who failed to get pregnant and then moved on, but all were fathers: I knew of only one man who had no children at all and he was disabled. Arrangements may be made with other men, wives may seek pregnancies outside the marriage with the tacit support of their husbands, some means or other is sought to make sure that men become fathers. As the following story that was told to me by Mrs Odu reveals, this is a matter of utter secrecy, so as to preserve the man's reputation:

A certain man had a useless organ (i.e. was impotent). He discussed with his friend one evening that when it is time to meet the wife he'll go outside as if to urinate and that man will come and sex the woman. They did this and had five children, which he brought up as his own. One day the man was drunk and said that he was the wife's *okọ ale* (lover) as the other was only *okọ osan*.¹³ Others began to spread this rumour around the town. The rumour reached the husband. He was so angry that he took a cutlass and killed that man, his wife and his children. He said that that man had spoiled his name.

Children need fathers as much as fathers need children: not merely for support, but for social legitimacy. A child without a recognised father can be taunted with the stigma of being called *omọ ale* (bastard, see later discussion). For men and women alike, not knowing their father can provoke deep existential concerns about belonging and being. One woman who had separated from her husband in Ijebu because of a dangerous co-wife and had taken her infant

daughter with her told me of how as a teenager her daughter had beseeched her to let her go to see her father: just to *see* him and to know what kind of person he was, to know where she had come from. Baba Lamidi told me:

Omọ ale when he/she grows up will want to know who the father is. Maybe the child (if female) will want to get married and will want her father to give his consent. That child (if male) can take a cutlass and threaten the mother to get her to show him the father, can fight with her or even kill her.

Being 'fatherless' can have a range of implications for children's futures beyond those bound up with resources. Although many young women marry without seeking permission, their fathers can exert pressure on their daughters' behalf if their husbands are cruel or neglectful. If a woman becomes sick, her father may be the one to intervene and bring her home or give her protective medicine; when women leave her husband it is often to their father's house that they return. Having a known father for her child is equally crucial for a woman's reputation, irrespective of whether the father actually makes any contribution to the child's upbringing (see later discussion).

Fathers are the ones primarily responsible for disciplining children: many people moralised that the children of single mothers would be 'uncontrollable' delinquents. *Omọ ale*, I was told by a group of young men, can be recognised by their wayward character, acquired from having been brought up by a mother who was *aşewo* (lit. 'doing it for money'). And, they contended, who wants to marry the daughter of a woman like this? Men make their standing in the community through their own endeavours, but also as children of an *idile*, as the son of so-and-so (see Chapter 3). In practice, sons may activate entitlements on either their father's and mother's sides and may choose if they wish to neglect their father's side. But to be without a father not only leaves a man with fewer optative opportunities to draw on, it diminishes his sense of self.

People say *omọ ale ni omọ na ko jọ enikan ninu ebi wa* (*omọ ale* is the child that does not resemble anyone in the family). Resemblance (*jijọ*), it seems, is the key to paternity. It is frequently invoked in stories about men who initially refused to acknowledge paternity and then came round once they had recognised that 'this is my blood'. Even if another man or his family caters for a woman during pregnancy and gives the child a name, the 'real father' is the genitor (see Chapters 4 and 5) and can activate his entitlements at any stage. In cases where a woman's lover impregnated her and then stayed quiet to avoid being fined for adultery (see Chapter 5), he might reopen his claim to the child once it has grown up. And then, people said, he would enjoy the fruits of another man's expenditure. As many men pointed out to me, they already had enough on their plate with their own children. Men may be so reluctant to cater for another man's child that fathers can send out their pregnant daughters citing this as a reason and women who remarry are rarely allowed to bring older

children with them, even if their ex-husbands agree.¹⁴ Children anchor women in relationships with men, not just through the 'lateral ties' they create but because if they remarry they may be forced to abandon them (see Chapter 5). For fathers are the 'owners' of their children.

Being a father, as men constantly reminded me with their stories of what their children had achieved, is also about being the father of successful children whose glory reflects their own importance.¹⁵ Fathers are expected to pay for their children's education and to maintain them, but can bask in their successes irrespective of whether or not their material support contributed towards it. The mothers of their children, however, are the ones who are expected to benefit materially from children who become their 'husbands' as they grow old. This can give rise to contests over obligations. 'That's why', Fali, a trader in her 40s, told me, 'you see so many women running here and there trying to make money so that they can educate their children'. 'And,' she went on, 'if children come to their father for money, he'll say "Go to your mother, if you finish your education your mother will be the one to get N20 when I will get none"'. Akanmi, in his 40s, offered a father's perspective on this:

Children will know the mother more than the father when the time comes for them to grow up. So you don't kill yourself providing for them! We usually love our mothers more than the fathers. Fathers don't have the time to listen, while mothers will always be enquiring after what you do, giving advice and listening to us.

Fathering and mothering a child, as Akanmi points out, are very different activities. Fathers are generally regarded as the disciplinarians and decision-makers, the ones who can exert their influence on their children's behalf and also take them to task if they misbehave. They are generally not, however, closely involved in the day-to-day lives of their children. Children may be frightened of the severity of their fathers, to whom they are often rather distant figures, the ones who mete out beatings rather than lavish them with attention. One boy, whose essay I cite earlier, wrote of his grandmother as intervening to prevent 'any possible tyranny of my father'. The significance of fathers, however, lies as much or even more in who they are rather than in what they do for their children: by virtue of being their father a man has a connection with his sons or daughters that matters in the absence of day-to-day care or even maintenance. The 'benefits' they enjoy are not necessarily material 'intergenerational wealth flows' (Caldwell 1982), but reside in other, less tangible, attributes of occupying the subject position of 'father'.

Whereas dissimulation rescues men from being labelled *okobo*, for women it is their biological capacity alone that enables them to attain the status of one who has given birth to children. And a woman who bears many children achieves social status by virtue of motherhood itself, irrespective of whether or not she brought them all up herself (Isiugo-Abanihe 1985). Yet being a mother has a number of different dimensions, encompassing the

experience of motherhood, the social status of women as mothers, the social practice of mothering and the relational subject positions of being mother of a man or woman or a mother of a man's child.¹⁶ And while women who cannot give birth to their own children are denied motherhood, they are not usually excluded from mothering. Motherhood, however, is of such importance to women that they may spend much of their reproductive lives pursuing it if they fail to have the children they want.¹⁷

So great is the desire and the social pressure to give birth to children that women who experience infertility undergo many hardships.¹⁸ Given the concern with high fertility in policy arenas (Johnson and Nurick 1995), it is perhaps not surprising that within the substantial demographic literature on this region, so little attention has been paid to women's struggles to have *more* children. Yet it appears that a substantial number of women in this region have suffered some degree of infertility (Retel-Laurentin 1974, Caldwell and Caldwell 1983).¹⁹ In Ado, I came across countless cases of women who had experienced reproductive difficulties; a small demographic survey revealed that almost half of the sample of women over 40 had three or less children and nine percent had no children at all (see later discussion).²⁰ Infertility and being without surviving children are states that have similar outcomes, arrived at through different paths: women may *never* have become pregnant, may have had difficulties in becoming pregnant again after a child has died, may have suffered repeated miscarriages or stillbirths or may have borne many children, none of whom survived.²¹ There are, of course, many complex factors involved in child survival (Last 1992, Pearce and Falola 1994). What is significant, however, is that a substantial number of the women I lived among in Ado may have experienced some degree of difficulty in having enough children. From the accounts of the many herbalists, prophets and *alfa* I visited in the town, looking for a child absorbs a large number of the cases that are brought to them.

Being a mother clearly has dimensions beyond the entailments of biological parentage.²² A woman who gives birth to a child is not necessarily involved in mothering it as it grows up, nor is mothering an activity only associated with fecund women. A woman may give birth to a child and hand the child over to its father without playing any further part in its life. Children may be brought up by other women who they come to think of, and to love, as their mothers.²³ Few women are effectively 'childless' in the sense of spending their lives without children to care for. Everyday mothering activities are often shared between a number of women (cf. Oppong and Abu 1987, Blanc and Lloyd 1994, Glenn et al. 1994); within compounds a range of assistance with child-care is often on hand, from the help older siblings offer to the care grandmothers provide. Fosterage is not as common as in other West African settings, but it is not uncommon for children to grow up in the hearth-holds of women who are not their birth mothers.²⁴ Mothering as a social practice, then, may involve a range of different women over a child's transition to adulthood, with whom the child forms

affective ties depending on how close and caring the relationship is. Having and bringing up children are not discrete outcomes but processes that are part of as well as contingent on the other projects women and men pursue over their life courses (Blanc and Lloyd, 1994), creating and transforming other relationships over time.

To have and to hold

Mothers as well as fathers often used the idiom of the market when talking about children: the language of investment and gain, of money spent to be recouped later, of trade-offs, of ventures in which capital might be sunk to be realised with interest. Discourses on 'the value of children' in the literature on fertility draw on a similar idiom, invoking cost-benefit analyses and the selective investments of self-maximising individuals.²⁵ Yet the implications of these apparently similar discourses are radically divergent.²⁶ It would be easy to read into people's statements straightforward economic calculi. Having children can be analysed in terms of 'strategies' that offer local versions of life insurance policies and the like. But children mean more than this; and these meanings accrue from the ways in which wealth is imbued with values that are transformative, as well as transactional.

The ways in which relationships between children and those who play a major role in mothering them were described in Ado seemed close at times to the very universalistic formulation that Scheper-Hughes criticises in Ruddick's (1980) description of 'maternal thinking': the 'metaphysical act of "holding" - holding *on*, holding *up*, holding *close*, holding *dear*' (Scheper-Hughes 1993:361). Scheper-Hughes contends that 'mother love' is far from 'natural': 'instead [it] represents a matrix of images, meanings, sentiments and practices that are everywhere socially and culturally produced' (1993:341). In Ado, the ways mothers talked about their children often coupled evident affection with the projected outcomes of children as commodities that could accrue value. This represents less a paradox - children as representing *either* love *or* money - than complex relation between love *and* money in this context (see Chapters 5 and 7).

While I would echo Scheper-Hughes' concerns about the utility of any universalistic formulation, the notion of 'holding' is, I suggest, valuable. 'Holding close', 'holding dear' and 'holding on' offer ways of looking at the kinds of affective relations that women form with children over time. Children and mothers often talked in terms of the things they **did** for each other. These relationships are actively made, through maternal practices: through the day-to-day doing of mothering. The kinds of 'maternal thinking' I saw in Ado situated being a 'good mother' in Ado in demonstrating love materially: by providing for children, training them well and securing for them promising futures.

When older women declared 'my children are my husband!' they invoked 'husbands' as providers, yet went beyond this to situate children not merely as a source of material support

but of affection and pride. Women love their children and grandchildren, not merely as objects that are 'useful to invest in' (Bledsoe and Isiugo-Abanihe 1989:443) for the joy, companionship *and* support they enjoyed from them: as *their* people. Discourses on endurance constantly returned to 'facing the children', staying with a husband so as to care for one's children. This, it seemed, was less the stuff of 'lineal strategies' per se than of knowing from day to day that children were well fed, well looked after and happy; women spoke of others who left their children behind to take another husband as 'leaving them to suffer', although I met some women who continued to support their children even though they could not live with them. As Whitehead argues, pervasive notions of maternal altruism may operate 'as a brake on women's self-interest' (1994:49), keeping women in marriages 'to face the children'. But this is also an option that is contingent on other agents, on other circumstances. A woman may *want* to stay with her husband, but as life becomes more and more difficult in his compound and when her own fertility is at stake in the suspected interference of others (see Chapters 5 and 6), she may have to pursue other options and rely on other tactics to continue to mother the children she has had to leave behind. In these situations, children grow up with other mothers, sometimes at the mercy of their step-mothers (see Bledsoe 1995). And some children become so angry and upset at their mothers for remarrying that they can refuse to see them, Mrs Odu told me.

Other women, then, may play an important part in the day-to-day practice of mothering. They can become children's 'mothers', building up close and affectionate relationships over time. 'Holding' children sustains these ties; like grandchildren (cf. Bledsoe and Isiugo-Abanihe 1989), foster children can become the 'husbands' of older women, caring for them until they die. Children may be fostered out to relatives in other towns for education or training, adolescents are occasionally fostered in as househelps, grandmothers living alone may be given a child to look after them for a while and when things are tight in town, and when there is a 'misunderstanding' relatives may step in.²⁷ And children may also choose to spend some of their lives with women they like, their mother's friends or their aunts (see Chapter 7). These are often temporary arrangements. But in some cases, children spend most of their childhood with 'mothers' who are not their birth mothers.²⁸ Women who are not able to give birth to their own children are often given children by their relatives: as one woman put it 'to help them to forget'. These women not only hold their charges close and dear. They might also be able to hold on to them.

'Reproductive strategies' need to be located in terms of the complex of other options women and men have recourse to at different times in their lives and the other agents who are involved, including their own children. While becoming a parent forms a crucial part of people's lives, when and with whom they begin bearing children are not necessarily active choices about fertility. The entitlements and obligations that surround having children have

significantly different implications for women and men (cf. Bleek 1987), as do the kinds of relationships they have with their children. Looking in more detail at some of the dilemmas that surround becoming a parent, further complexities arise.

Asking for Trouble?

To those who complained so bitterly about young people's behaviour, pregnancy was consequent on a quite deliberate choice and one for which young women were accorded responsibility: to 'useless themselves' by having sexual relationships with men. The consequences of that choice were regarded as almost inevitable: 'the next thing is pregnancy', older women would say in disapproval. Men, the 'owners' of these pregnancies, were strangely absent figures in these discourses of disquiet (see Chapter 5). Young women, however, talked of the pressure they faced from their boyfriends to have sex and pointed to the failure of many parents to cater for their daughters adequately, giving them little option but to seek favours and money from men (cf. Akuffo 1987 for Ghana). In any case, they wanted to have boyfriends. For them the issue was not to avoid having sex, but to avert the possibility of giving birth before they had finished their education or training. Limited knowledge about and access to contraception increased the risks they faced.²⁹ Paramount for their guardians was that they had the means to support themselves before becoming mothers; further concerns were also at stake in terms of *who*, as well as when, their daughters and sons 'married'.

When young women got pregnant, it was often associated not only with laxity but with a kind of nonchalance about the consequences in terms of future prospects that was regarded by older women as utterly foolish. Symptomatic of this kind of behaviour, I was told, was Bimpe.

Bimpe had just turned 18 when I first met her. She had come to town to work for a friend of mine and was staying with her mother, who had been forced out by a nasty junior wife. From all accounts, she was slow to learn her job and obviously lazy. This earned her criticism, for not being serious about work and not wanting to learn how to support herself, as a woman should. One day I met her father's neighbour Iya Dayo, the one who had found her the job, in an agitated state. It emerged that Bimpe had disappeared from her mother's house. Without reporting to either of her parents, she had packed into the house of her boyfriend who was a bit of a lad, a smuggler who was only a little older than her.

Urgent action was required, or so it seemed. That day, Iya Dayo swore that she would return with Bimpe to the house of the boyfriend, seize her things and take her back to her father's house. As the person who had brought Bimpe to the town, she felt obliged to take her back home to absolve herself of responsibility. Once she had done that, Bimpe could do as she chose. Iya Dayo was doubly aggrieved as Bimpe's father had promised to pay for further education for the girl, a major sacrifice for a small-scale farmer. She was wasting her chances.

But Bimpe wasn't interested in further education; nor was she interested in her job. She was, Iya Dayo said, only after men - and troublesome at that, creating problems with her mother and disobeying her father. It emerged that she kept all the money she earned rather

than giving some to her mother to help her. She also refused her mother a small loan on the very day that she went out and had her hair done, something that cost more than it seemed she could afford. Long before it came to light that Bimpe had moved in with her boyfriend, the women in her workplace had had their suspicions about her. Bimpe was, however, nowhere to be found. Even more urgent action was proposed: to get the police to go to the house and arrest the man.³⁰ Within a day, however, the storm had settled and Bimpe was back at work. Her father had said that he washed his hands of her as she would not obey him. Her mother felt there was nothing to be done.

It was assumed that sooner or later Bimpe was going to get pregnant. I suggested giving her some advice on contraception, but this was seen as merely encouraging her to behave badly and anyway that pregnancy was what the girl wanted. 'She is selling her vagina, even giving it freely', Iya Dayo said. A few weeks before I left, I heard that Bimpe was pregnant. She had been laid off work when the business wasn't moving well and we hadn't seen her again in our part of town. The women were somewhat smug about it all: she got what she asked for, now she would have to pay the price.

The price Bimpe would have to pay seemed to be that of being forced to rely on a very uncertain source of support in order to bring up her child. Not for her a good family, nor the kind of support she might have had. Bimpe's partner was, by all accounts, one of the smuggler boys with fast fading fortunes (see Chapter 2) and not a particularly good prospect. Bimpe, it seemed, had not resigned herself to a life of poverty: she appeared to have *actively chosen it* for herself.

But would this be the end of it? If Bimpe seemed to be bent on a course that would injure her future prospects, then this did not mean that these could not be salvaged. In any case, she was in love. If the relationship did not work out, she could hand over the child to the father and find herself another husband. She could find another opportunity for learning a skill and gradually put herself in a position where she was able to support herself. She might remain in her marriage and draw on the support of her mother-in-law to look after her child, while she focused on developing her career. All was not lost. What Bimpe had given up was the chance of having her further education paid for by her father, what the Caldwells refer to as 'the route[s] into the modern world' (1994:287): she'd abandoned her journey, out of lack of interest. But this is not to say that she had lost it for good.

The moral commentaries that frame Bimpe's case dwell on the consequences for her of having a child without a proper training and with a man who has no status, and may turn out to be 'useless' to boot. This, however, was not because having a child would impede her from working. In most of the settings in which West African women work, mothers are not necessarily at a disadvantage (Arowolo 1978, Oppong and Abu 1987, Bleek 1987). Whether a woman has three or six children makes relatively little difference to her prospects once she has started having children. The issue is less whether to have children or how many children to have, but when and with whom. And this may be less a deliberate choice than an outcome that needs to be coped with or a consequence of other choices. In Bimpe's case, getting pregnant at this stage and with that man was disapproved of because it was perceived as

closing off certain options. These options were specific: having a 'better chance' through education and the prospects of marriage to a better kind of man, one who prefers an educated wife. Her folly was to begin a relationship without the fall-back position of a training that would allow her to make a 'better life' for her children in the absence of male support. By failing to assist her mother and defying her father, she had done more than offend them: she had damaged another crucial fall-back option, that of being able to return to them if things turned sour. But this could be rectified if she needed them again.

When and with whom a woman has her first birth can prove crucial in determining her future pathway through life (cf. Bleek 1987, Bledsoe and Cohen 1993) and the concern of parents and guardians is precisely with this. If a woman becomes pregnant while she is apprenticed or in the care of foster parents, her guardian may be held to account for not having kept a closer eye on her: women exhort younger women at every possible opportunity to establish themselves in a job before marrying. Demographers suggest that the average age at which women begin child-bearing in southwestern Nigeria has steadily risen (Isiugo-Abanihe 1994). The average age at first birth in southwestern Nigeria has been estimated at 20.5 years for women aged 25-49 (DHS, 1992:33), one of the highest in Africa;³¹ and less than 50 percent of those women in the age group 20-24 had a birth.³² The perception of people in Ado, however, was that it had fallen quite dramatically. *N'igba atijo*, I was frequently told, men might be as old as 40 before they married and women married when they were 'mature': when they had a means to support themselves (see Chapter 4).³³

Young women start having boyfriends, sometimes older, wealthier 'sugar daddies' but often fellow school students or local lads with unstable incomes, from their early teenage years on (cf. Makinwa-Adebusoye 1991, Oloko and Omoboye 1993, Oyekanmi 1994). Young men begin 'toasting' women at a slightly later age, consequent on puberty. By the age of 17 many if not most young people have had (hetero)sexual experience.³⁴ A significant number of young women are sexually active several years before they are ready to become mothers. When young men told me about their sexual relationships with women, a recurrent theme was their perception that most of these women do not really enjoy having sex as they are so frightened of becoming pregnant. Rather than trying to ensnare their man, they feared the consequences. Some young couples rely on a misunderstood 'safe period' (see Makinwa-Adebusoye 1991) and may be unlucky. Many use condoms and fewer use other forms of western contraception, but it seems from what people say that they do so rather erratically.³⁵ But accidents happen.

Pregnancy can spell an effective end to formal education (Gyepi-Garbah 1985, Bledsoe and Cohen 1993), although some women do manage to return to continue their studies elsewhere.³⁶ For school students, abortion is an option that recuperates their hopes and those their parents have for them.³⁷ Despite its illegality, abortion is available on demand in many

clinics in the towns and may be procured by other means.³⁸ For those without the means, raising the money for an abortion may not be easy: the cheapest option at a clinic costs around a fortnight's salary for a low-paid unskilled worker. Keeping it secret is imperative, so it is hard to ask for assistance from relatives. Some young women resort to taking tablets, or other 'home remedies' (cf. Renne 1996).

Even if a woman does get pregnant by the wrong man at the wrong time and decides to go ahead with the pregnancy, things can and do change along the way. Life is certainly harder, but this does not mean that a woman's prospects are ruined. Even if a woman finishes her training and falls in love with a wonderful, well-to-do man, the future remains uncertain. It may be that after her first child she does not get pregnant again; it may also be that other women agree that the man is a wonderful one and may inveigle their way into his bed, and, with a pregnancy, his house: like Kubirat in Chapter 6, their love may incite the hate of his mother; like Iya Bose in Chapter 5, it may all turn sour when he loses his job. Some choices can stack the odds against success; but those who do succeed may do so against all odds. Some of these choices can be cast in terms of 'strategies': the deliberate plans of purposeful agents who act from a position of power. But others might be regarded as tactics, ways of coping or making do, adopted from a position of relative powerlessness with uncertain consequences. Sometimes these tactics may be recast in terms of strategies, if they pan out. And sometimes they may be used to salvage situations in which people find themselves. In the next section, I explore a situation like this in which the agency of a range of interested parties impinges in different ways on how the outcome of a birth is managed.

Choice or Circumstance?

While Bimpe wanted to get pregnant by her lover, many young women become pregnant then look for a way to cope with the consequences. The following case explores questions of choice further.

Bose had disappeared. People told me that she had gone to a nearby town to stay with her sister. It was several weeks before I found out why. She had started to swell, to feel sick and weak. She didn't understand at first what was happening. Slowly, she realised that she was pregnant. She knew it was Dele's child. He was the first and only man she had ever had sex with, or so I was told by the women of the house. But he was already married and his wife was known to be troublesome. It seemed simple enough to find another man, so that's what she tried to do. But when they were alone together and she lifted her wrapper, the man cried out and fled from the room. He had seen her swollen belly.

Bose confided in her sister, who went to Dele to confront him with the fact of the pregnancy. He had denied it outright, saying later that even if he had had some part in making Bose pregnant, there were at least five other men who had shared in it; who was, then, to decide which of them owned that pregnancy? As male onlookers commented, that child might be a mixture of all those men. Who, then, could claim it? But without being claimed by a father, that pregnancy would be *qm̄q̄ ale*, a child without a father. It emerged that Dele had given Bose N500 for an abortion. This was taken by the women of the house as

an admission of guilt. But instead of going to the chemist and getting an injection, or going to a clinic - she was, by then, already 5 months pregnant and feared the consequences - she took the money home. Too many others had died that way. Others still had 'spoiled their insides' and were never able to get pregnant again.

I didn't see her again in Ado until the baby was born. By then virtually all his relatives were convinced that Dele was the child's father. But he continued to deny responsibility. Dele's sister and her husband had paid the release fee at the maternity clinic and had spent quite a lot on buying her the basket of items well provided for young mothers received. Dele's mother was overjoyed at the prospect of a baby, a child to help her, to lavish affection on and keep her company at home, although her happiness was dimmed by his continued refusal to acknowledge his paternity. She'd waited for this to happen, for her only son to give her grandchildren to care for and she was determined that he shouldn't throw away this chance.

Dele's reasons for continuing to refuse responsibility bemused all around him. For a start, the man had no other children and here was a wife for him who would bear him a child. Funke, the woman who he lived with, had been with him for four years and still no pregnancy. Who can blame such a man for trying his luck with another woman? And how long would that relationship last anyway? Everyone knows that without a child there is no marriage. Why did he want to stay with that woman who still had no pregnancy? No-one would call Funke his wife. Some hoped that he would come to his senses, as that one was crazy or wicked or both. She was always quarrelling with people. She would go up to women who she suspected of 'having something' (i.e. sex) with Dele and fight with them, ripping their clothes. His friends and relatives advised him to leave Funke and take this young woman, who had given him a son. And people began to refer to Bose as his *iyawo* (new wife).

The day of the naming ceremony came. Relatives gathered in the front of the house. Dele walked quickly past, accompanied by jeers: 'Your wife is here, Dele! Here is your son, Dele! Come and see him!'. The new mother, resplendent in beautiful cloth, looked radiant. Her child was given a name chosen by Dele's eldest brother, a family name. It was, the women said, only a matter of time before Dele would realise that he'd made a mistake in not claiming that child as his. Wait, they said, until the day when he comes to the house and sees that this baby so much resembles him, wait until he sees himself in the child. Then he will open his arms and take that child. And until then, it's good that the family claims the child. It's good to have another son in the family. Who knows what this new son will become? Maybe a doctor, lawyer or engineer. Children like that usually turn out to be successful, they said. Dele will come to realise what he has done. The women of the house told me story after story of men who had seen their blood and made amends.

For that day and those that followed, Dele acted as if he was oblivious to the presence of the baby. People all around berated him for his foolish behaviour. Women selling food outside his house harangued him until he had to run away, saying to him, 'look at that woman you married for four years and no issue and now this one has had a son for you and you don't recognise her again'. His behaviour was pronounced really strange, by men and women alike. In time, the women said, he would come round. But in the meantime, relatives were focusing their concern on his domestic situation. At another family ceremony a few weeks later, relatives assembled again outside the house. Discussions centred on the case of Dele and Funke. One minute they were eating, the next a group of them were gone.

I was on my way back to my house when I heard shouts. There was a fight in the yard between Dele and one of his brothers. I joined a crowd of onlookers and learnt that the family had decided to take action. A group of them had marched down to the house he rented, gained entry and cleared out his possessions to bring them back to the family compound. Among these possessions they found evidence that confirmed their suspicions: a calabash, with greasy black ingredients, cowrie shells and feathers. So that woman, the one who people said had boiled her underwear for him to drink to make him love her, was using *juju* on him. Its purpose was instantly assumed: 'so that husband can't take any other wife', I was told. She was, the women said, wicked and due to that wickedness she would never have a child

again.³⁹ Dele was furious and told them to mind their own business, snatching his possessions and storming back to his house.

This story gives some vital clues to the ways in which parenthood is regarded in Ado and the enduring patterns of relationships within which 'modern' companionate partnerships are uneasily positioned (cf. Guyer 1994). Even if he only wanted to have one wife, the fact that Dele 'strayed' was no surprise to anyone. Refusing to acknowledge paternity is a well-used tactic to avert having to cater for a child or maintain any kind of link with its mother, and one that may appease the 'inside wife'. Becoming a father is an expected part of men's life courses, yet despite being the 'owners' of children, fathers can devolve responsibility over their children onto other women, either their mothers or kin: sometimes to the extent whereby they become practically irrelevant in the day-to-day processes of bringing the child up (cf. Bleek 1987). Denying paternity is a tactic that, if successful, can block future claims by the mother of the child. But where it is admitted, a man can simply give the child to his mother to look after and carry on with his life.

It was Dele's partnership with an infertile woman that was utterly bemusing. In fact it was so odd that many people were of the opinion that Funke lay behind it. I had been told by several people that prior to meeting her he had been a very responsible person. Since she entered the picture, the women told me, 'his mind has been turned'. Suspicions had been raised and finding the *juju* provided concrete evidence. Funke didn't get on well with any of the women in the household. She fought with his brother's wife, argued with the senior woman of the house and was generally unpopular within the family. It seemed, however, that it was her *personality* - her character (*iwa*) - rather than her status as a woman who had no children of her own that made people say that she was wicked (see Chapter 6). I had heard from others that she had been chased out from her previous marriage for making trouble. She was represented as so troublesome that it was due to her that Dele would have nothing to do with Bose. Not because he loved her, it was implied, but because she would make his life hell. Those who knew her better told me of her sadness, rather than anger, at finding out about Bose's pregnancy. My impression of her was of a depressed, lonely woman. I'd see her carrying her goods to market and meet her later sitting pensively beside her stall, alone. When the family gathered for ceremonies, her absence was noticeable: even separated women would come together at such occasions, but she'd be 'working' and when she came home, she'd sit in her room alone. A woman without her own child, I was told, would not want to join in ceremonies and see other people enjoying their children.

Bose had a number of options available to her. As her apprenticeship could be resumed after giving birth to the child, she was not in as much of a fix as a teenager in the middle of formal education would be. Bose was given enough to secure an abortion in Otta at a better kind of clinic, but rejected this option as she feared the risks, which are considerable:

to life, as well as future fertility.⁴⁰ Only a few weeks earlier, a story had circulated about a young woman in an identical situation to her own who had decided to abort rather than suspend her apprenticeship: she had haemorrhaged and had bled to death. If Bose were to continue with the pregnancy, she would be able to hand the child over to her sister to take care of while she got on with her training. And if she could secure a father for her child, she might be able to count on material support from him and his relatives while the child was small, and they may take the child to look after. After all, as one woman pointed out, 'anyone who has issue for the husband belongs to the relatives of the man and can be cared for because of the children'.

Public recognition of paternity was, however, important for more pressing reasons than material support. Bose's sister was insistent that the child should not be born *omo ale*; and that responsibility must be taken. She went on to make various threats about what would happen if this was not done. To give birth to *omọ ale* carries the implication that the mother slept with so many men that she did not know who the father was. Even if a young woman only has one boyfriend, it can easily be rumoured that she slept around: this gives the boyfriend the option to deny any responsibility for the pregnancy. Dele tried this tactic, claiming he was not the only one. If this is the case, Baba Lamidi told me, the dilemma becomes more acute:

If a girl is meeting five boys and she gets pregnant, as each has done the work they cannot divide the child - everyone will reject it, it will be a problem. They (the family) will be going here and there to know how to give birth to the child (i.e. how to get a father for it). When the child is not claimed by anyone, they can find a way to destroy it. A child that has no father is a disgrace.

If a pregnant woman cannot find a father for her child, she might do what Bose first tried to do: find another man to pin the pregnancy on. While Dele's family were well known and respected in Ado, the man Bose tried to pin the pregnancy on was a young local lad who was neither educated, wealthy nor particularly well-connected. He was, however, available.⁴¹ I was told of cases where this tactic had been tried and women had arrived at the house of their husband already carrying another man's pregnancy.⁴² After all, *obinrin nilati mọ ẹniti o fun loyun* (only a woman knows who gave her that pregnancy).⁴³ This may be part of a deliberate 'lateral strategy': I heard cases in Ibadan of women with several lovers who would choose the one who was better placed as the 'father'.⁴⁴ However, not everyone gets away with this. I was told a cautionary tale by a man who had been seduced by a woman who went on to give birth to a 'premature' child, who he realised could not possibly have been his: he packed her out, with no further ado. There are further complications. Baba Lamidi went on, '*omọ ale* will show her/himself when it is time. The man's family will see that "this is not my blood"'.⁴⁵ The 'looking glass' may reflect quite a different person. If the child's looks

and character (*iwa*) do not resemble that of the putative father, the family may begin to have doubts. Whether they act on those doubts depends on the situation.⁴⁶

Once her secret was out, Bose was quite happy for Dele's family to claim her child. His family had sustained the considerable expense of maternity costs and would go on to offer her the means to defray further expenses and to take the child off her hands. Even though Dele refused to accept paternity, his family overrode his protestations. Their involvement made him effectively redundant in the proceedings. They were all too eager to claim a son for themselves; a son whose children would extend the lineage and who might grow up to become a distinguished professional whose achievements would provide a source of status and wealth to the family. By giving the child a family name, his status was assured despite the circumstances of his birth (cf. Goody 1982).

This case emphasises a wider point about the embeddedness of reproduction in the lives of a wide range of people, beyond the immediate parents of the child. *Their* choices and options are also at issue here. Bose's choice to become the mother of Dele's child was less a direct strategic decision than the outcome of other choices, to have sex with Dele and, significantly, her decision not to have an abortion. Once she had made that decision, other actors stepped in: her sister who advised her, Dele's relatives who paid for her maternity costs, and Dele's family who claimed the child. If Bose wanted, she could allow them to take the child from her once she had weaned him and continue with her training and her life without having to worry about supporting him. Dele also had choices. He chose to seduce Bose, chose not to use any contraception and made the decision to deny paternity. His agency as a father, however, was completely eclipsed by his family. Like other men in this kind of situation, Dele might successfully avoid ever having to take any responsibility for his child (cf. Bleek 1987). Or he may choose, later along the line, to take in his 'wife' and son. His capacity for making choices, or so people said, were impinged on by Funke: not enough to stop him having sex with other women, but enough to 'turn his mind' away from the possibility of taking Bose as a second wife. Her *juju* seemed to fit the picture. And her fragile security, undermined by her childlessness, was seized upon by his family and by onlookers to put pressure on Dele to leave her. By taking action, his family took matters out of his hands; by reclaiming his agency, Dele fought back. But he did so at the risk of alienating them.

Dele and Bose were lovers and are now parents. Their child is now part of a family. Neither of them need to have any further part in bringing up the child, if that is what they choose to do. Dele's mother was overjoyed at the prospect of a grandson, Bose's sister was going to look after her, Dele's sister had already contributed substantially to the costs a 'husband' should cover and could be relied on to help further, perhaps even train the child herself. The birth of a child creates a link between its parents that enables men as fathers and

women as mothers to claim certain entitlements. But these claims - and these entitlements - extend beyond individuals. For Bose, things turned out reasonably well. If she goes on to have another child by another man, she might have begun on a pathway that resembles that of a 'lateral strategy'. If not for Dele's family, however, and for the insistence of her sister on them claiming the child, things might have turned out differently.

Breaking the Link

Children create a link between a woman and a man's family that may bring benefits over time. The most direct way to end a relationship is to break that link; and the jealousies of other women in a man's compound often implicate them in attempts to sever connections. In the following case, a woman whose marriage did not work out was left with a child on her hands. Her way of coping with the situation offers further insights.

The first I knew of the woman who came to us one night with a dead baby strapped on her back was that she was troublesome. But before then I'd seen her sitting alone outside in the yard until late into the night, shrouded in silence. The lump I could dimly make out on her back must have been the baby she'd carried around all day in the boiling sun, as she went from house to house asking people to intercede and beg for her to be allowed to have the child buried. All over town the next day, people were discussing the case. And all that I heard about her came to one conclusion: she was a useless, troublesome character upon whom no sympathy should be wasted.

It seems to have started like any other romance: girl, who I will call Bola, meets a married man, whom I will call Ade. Ade has a wife, who I will call Funmi, at home. Funmi has one child and has been trying for another for too long. Everyone likes her, as she is hard-working and respectful. But Ade wants more children. So he goes to try another wife. He meets Bola and they talk of marriage. Bola's parents are against it; they don't want her to marry a married man. So is Ade's mother. But Bola continues seeing Ade and becomes pregnant. Then she moves in with him. And then the trouble starts. Bola begins to fight with Funmi and to abuse her mother-in-law. The mother-in-law did not give birth to Ade, but cared for him as if he were hers. Now the Bola taunts her, saying she has no children of her own. And that she will go to the church and burn three candles to kill her. The man's mother is upset: this is not what she wanted for her son. Funmi is unhappy. Unhappier still when she sees her husband spend on the new wife. She becomes indignant and chases Bola out.

Bola gives birth and money is spent on her. Then she starts going here and there (*kakakiri kakiri*), chasing after men; and not caring when the child becomes sick. Or so people said. And then the mother-in-law dies. Suddenly. A few weeks later, Bola arrives at Ade's compound, saying the child is sick and there is no money. His family tell her to bring the baby to them. This she refuses to do. And then the child sickens and, quickly and quietly, dies. She goes, with the dead baby on her back, to return the child to its father. But they refuse to take it, saying when it was sick they asked and now it is dead they won't take it. If they won't bury the child, then she faces a life of difficulty: she has to find someone to intercede, so the child can be buried. Then she will be free.

A child dies. And with it, the link that is created between its mother and the family of its father is severed. For many of those I discussed the matter with, it seemed like the best outcome: the family were shot of Bola, who might otherwise have turned up to try to get money out of them. And people said she did not want that child anyway and in any case she

was so rude and uncontrollable that she deserved what she got. Some people suggested that she had simply let the child die as she did not want to be burdened with it, others that the family had intervened to wash their hands of her. Ade's family would have been free to take that child when it had grown. But she would still have been their 'wife', able to come at any time to discuss matters concerning the child. And that might have caused even more trouble. But if there is no child, there is no link with the family.

In this case, Bola was sought out by a man who already had a wife at home, to have children for him. From what people said, however, Ade's affair with Bola was not just for 'fun' (ie sex) - as Dele's had been with Bose - but because he wanted to try another wife to have more children. That he did this without informing his wife was not unexpected. Marriage was discussed: the pregnancy was planned. According to several women who speculated on the case, this already indicated that Bola was no good. They placed blame squarely at her feet: she should have known better than to pursue a married man. That he had pursued her did not come into the matter. She should have refused. But she didn't. Instead, she got pregnant and moved in. Then, having defied her parents, she proceeded to make trouble for the co-wife and the mother-in-law, who she insulted and threatened to kill.

Funmi was only a few years older than Bola. She had delivered a child for Ade, which secured their relationship. But only for a while, as over the next few years she had tried and failed to conceive again. This placed her in a fragile position. Ade's mother had herself experienced infertility, but had acquired the means by which to become an attractive foster mother: her numerous charges, on whom she lavished love and affection, regarded her as their 'mummy' and continued to care for her until her death. Women unable to bear their own children have been portrayed in the literature as embittered figures who are ostracised by others in the community, either because of fear of their jealous anger - stereotyped as *aje* (see Chapter 6) - or because they are not regarded as whole people (Morton-Williams 1956, Caldwell 1976, Drewal and Drewal 1983, Caldwell and Caldwell 1987). I knew a number of women who had no children of their own in Ado. Some were indeed sad, isolated people like Funke. But others were very popular and gregarious people like Ade's mother, a far cry from the image of sour, crabbed women with lives indelibly scarred by the failure to do what every woman should do. And those who fostered a brood of children were not obviously different from women of a similar age with their own offspring. Nor did the majority of those who had no children of their own seem to be treated with suspicion or fear by others. The ways in which people related to these women seemed to depend on their conduct and status, their character. The perceived cause of their childlessness was only remarked upon when suspicious incidents gave rise to speculation about ulterior motives (see Chapter 6).⁴⁷

The insults Bola showered on Ade's mother went beyond rudeness: to taunt an infertile woman is considered unspeakably bad. And her threats of trouble might seem like provocation beyond the irritation and jealousy some mothers-in-law experience. Ade's mother would appear a prime candidate for suspicion of harming the child (see Chapter 6). Funmi, a potentially jealous co-wife, also seemed to be a possible suspect. But neither of them were implicated in the matter. Rather, Funmi was praised by others for being all that a good wife should be. And Ade's mother was a respected businesswoman, popular in the area. Instead, Bola herself was suspected by some of having just got rid of a child who had proved an inconvenience to her; by letting it die, rather than caring for it. And others hinted that the family might have taken the precaution of harming the child so as to wash their hands of her.

That the death of the child might be regarded as a beneficial outcome seemed to go against the prevailing cultural ideas that placed tremendous value on children as beings-in-themselves; and that led families to 'claim the child'. Like Dele, the compound that Ade came from was a prestigious one, a good bet for a 'lateral strategy'. But Bola was not interested, it seemed, in being a mother once her marriage had broken down. Even if she might have counted on the family for financial support, it might have been that for her the best option was to return to where she started from, as a single woman, and to try again. I came across a seriously malnourished child shortly after this incident, who had been dumped on its father's mother by a woman who had got pregnant and wanted to go to Lagos to work. The grandmother told me that her son admitted being the 'owner', but had done nothing to cater for the child; and that she had not seen the mother of the child again. 'What can I do?', she said, 'there is no money'. Soon afterwards, the child became so weak that its life ebbed away. Perhaps in this case too, it was the best thing that could have happened (cf. Scheper-Hughes 1993).⁴⁸

Looking for a Child

For Funmi, being unable to conceive after some years of trying meant she had Bola to contend with when Ade sought another child. Failing to get pregnant and failing to have more children can spell the end of a marriage; infertility often exacerbates insecurities and places women in a fragile situation with their partners (cf. Brandon 1990), and for their futures. Husbands can be very supportive, helping their wives to find treatment. But pressure from their kin can be intense, as in Dele's case. Relationships with in-laws and co-wives, often already tense and suspicious (see Chapter 6), may become fractured as tensions rise in the search for reasons for a woman's persistent failure to produce children. For numerous women, looking for a child is a process toward which their energies may be directed for year upon year until the last trickle of menstrual blood seals their hopes for good. Looking for a

child impinges upon the lives of infertile women in myriad ways, eating into their resources and making the happiness they yearn for ever more elusive.⁴⁹

For Amoke, failure to conceive caused her a lot of heartache. In her story, she tells of how her attempts to seek a child caused clashes with her family and ultimately destroyed her first marriage. Just how intense her desire to have a child was can be imagined, from the account that follows:

Soon after her wedding, Amoke had *inu rirun* (stomach trouble) and dreamt very bad dreams. She told her husband as soon as the problem started and he took her to a herbalist specialising in treating women who wanted a child. 'That herbalist didn't tell me the cause of the trouble, I just explained my condition and he started making herbs for me'. But still no pregnancy. Then she started to have serious pains in her abdomen and went to another herbalist, who said it was a problem of *iju*. The pain went away, but she remained without a pregnancy. Month after month she saw her period and cried. So they tried yet another herbalist, who diagnosed *eda* and treated her, again with no success. 'It wasn't easy dealing with herbalists', she said, 'some tried to sex me, saying that the medicine needed to be inserted by his penis. So I told my husband and stopped going to those herbalists. I encountered so many problems.'

A friend told her of a certain church, Christ Church of the Lord. She told her husband about it and after two weeks he agreed for her to go. She was told by the pastor to stay at the church. She stayed for about a year in the church, then went back home and continued to go to the church from there. Her husband started coming along with her. Because he was a Muslim, his relatives were not pleased and said that she had turned his mind. And still she didn't get pregnant. One day, she went to the sea beach with the church. The prophet prophesied that she should not go to her home town for anything, that there would be a message for her to go home but she should not go. If she did, he said, she would not have children for seven years. Amoke asked if there was anything she could do to stop this happening, but he said no, just obey and do not go home. If she obeyed, he told her, she would have a child in the following year. It was around that time that she went to see a private doctor. She had gone to many doctors and had been sent for an X-ray in Lagos at the government hospital. All to no avail. The doctor sent her to hospital to have a D&C. But still no pregnancy.

About five months later, she went to church. Those who were having difficulties becoming pregnant were asked to come for a special prayer. During that time of prayer she dreamt a dream. She dreamt she was at her mother's village and she saw a certain old man, then she dreamt about the very house and man she is with now, a man she had never met before. When she left the church and went home she saw many people there, who said that her father's mother had died at Ijebu and that she should follow them. She refused to go. Her husband told her that she should go, but she continued to reject the suggestion. Instead, she put money in an envelope and sent to her father that she was not well enough to come home. Her father sent back the money saying he needed her to come to stay with him, not the money. So she went back to the church to see the prophet. They prayed and he said that she should not go. Even if your father is annoyed, he said, later on you will be able to explain the reason. She went back and told her husband. Relatives of the husband came to him to tell him to drive Amoke away for not even going home for her own grandmother's funeral ceremony because of that church. And so she was forced to pack out. She packed up her loads and her husband took her to get a motor to Ijebu. But when she got to the motorpark, she told her husband that she was going to Ado, to her mother's family.

Amoke wept all the way from Lagos to Ado thinking about her problem. She went to her grandmother at the village, who exclaimed "*Okọ mi* (my husband)!, why are you here?". But she couldn't explain anything before she started to weep and weep. The wife of the junior brother to her mother came to her to comfort her, begging her not to weep. She couldn't even eat as she was so worried. That woman's comforting helped a lot. Using the little money she had, she bought cassava and made it into *gari*, then took it to Ado to sell. But there were so many *gari* sellers in the market, selling at such a low price that she couldn't sell it. She started weeping

again in the market. Then she took the *gari* back to sell to her husband's neighbours in Lagos, so she could get some money to live on. In the meantime, her husband had gone to her father in Ijebu, who had told him to bring her home by force. Her husband gave her 'proper care' (i.e. supported her financially) and she did not want to leave him at all. But she couldn't stay in Lagos, because of his relatives.

She went back to Ado. Her mother's junior sister told her that she had found a man she should marry. But she didn't want another man, she wanted her husband. But as time went on, he didn't come. So eventually she gave in. She went to the Christ Apostolic Church in Ado to pray and asked the prophet to tell her whether this man was her 'real' husband. He said yes. Three months later she became pregnant. At first, she was not at all happy with the man as she really didn't want anyone apart from her husband. She had hoped and hoped that he would come to Ado. Then, after she got pregnant, she started moving with the new husband and acting as a wife to him.

'It was the husband's relatives who created the problem between us and it was them who got the husband to drive me out. They didn't like me. My husband didn't have such a good job and was earning little money, so they thought that I was spending all his money on me', she said. I asked her if she felt that the husband's relatives were the ones to cause the problem. 'No,', she said, 'that problem was from my own family. When I wanted to marry that man at Ijebu, relatives said no, I should not marry, as they are related. I felt that I should do whatever I wanted, rather than the relatives directing me here and there. The same thing happened with my sister. She had *abiku* 13 times. I don't know how they harmed me. It could be *juju*. Some have hatred. If you offend them once they don't forget and forgive. They will carry on punishing you. They have very hard minds'.

In Amoke's case, agency for her reproductive misfortunes was attributed to her own family, but the suffering that she endured in having to leave a man she loved was brought about by his family, for whom the fact that she had no child and therefore was not really a 'wife' undermined her position. Perceived as a drain on his resources by his family and unable to produce the child that would secure her position, the husband's relatives were able to force her out. The experience of having to leave him and her continued childlessness coupled with the additional instability that the rift with her own father had created, left Amoke at rock bottom when she arrived in Ado: appropriately captured in the way she tried to support herself, making *gari*. Yet she managed, somehow, to create for herself a new life. And when a new husband was found for her, she became pregnant and salvaged her hopes for a child. It is interesting to note that not once did she report any suspicion that it was her husband, rather than herself, who suffered impaired fertility. Her involvement in the church, the route she chose to seeking a child, provided the lever for the husband's relatives to force her out. But if she'd stayed, she might never have been any the wiser. She might have continued to struggle for years, failing time and time again to have a child.

If a woman fails to conceive, it may be put down to a number of causes. These depend on how people perceive her behaviour. If she is known to be wayward, it might be suspected that she has 'spoiled her insides' by having abortions or by having contracted a sexually transmitted disease (STD).⁵⁰ If she is considered respectable, it may be put down to God's will or to 'nature'. And in some cases, people suspect that *aje* are at work (see Chapter 6). Amoke and her sister both perceived their affliction to be due to *ogun idile*, to trouble caused

by their own relatives: both were without a child. But her sister suffered repeated infant death and was unable to hold on to the children she gave birth to. Infant and child death may be attributed to disease or to *aje*, but is still commonly attributed to *abiku*, of a spirit child who only comes to play for a short time.⁵¹

In Amoke's case, the conditions she suffered from were attributed to the malevolence of others. When she first married, Amoke had bad dreams - one of the classic symptoms of *ogun idile* ('war in the compound/family', see Chapter 6). Then she started to suffer from pains in her abdomen, that she spoke of as *inu rirun*, a general term for 'stomach trouble'. *Inu rirun* was described to me by herbalists as disease that causes pelvic pain, sometimes with a fever: it seems to overlap with the biomedical category of pelvic inflammatory disease, one of the principal causes of female infertility.⁵² The first herbalist gave her no diagnosis, but the second classified her condition as *iju*.⁵³ Descriptions of *iju* partially overlap with the biomedical category of fibroids, benign intra-uterine growths.⁵⁴ Some herbalists classed *iju* as a disease, while others represented it in terms of excess: all fertile women have *iju*, several herbalists told me, but when it becomes too 'strong' (*agbara ju*, too much power) it can cause problems.⁵⁵

After treatment, the pain went away but Amoke was still unable to conceive. The next herbalist diagnosed one of conditions that I found to be the most common among women who had or were looking for a child: *eda*. Descriptions of *eda* given by sufferers and by herbalists refer to a backflow of semen (*ato*), described as being 'chased' out of a womb (*apo omo*) that is too hot. Some women told me of a discharge, others described how as soon as they had sex the semen just ran out again and 'did not stay to make a child'.⁵⁶ *Eda* appears to be a catch-all category that explains the otherwise inexplicable (see Erwin 1993): it speaks as much of the disappointment of seeing menstrual blood month after month, and the frequency with which I heard women say they had suffered from it indicates the scale of their concern. Depending on the situation, *inu rirun*, *eda* and *iju* may be cast as the work of *aje*, a result of imbalance within the body (cf. Buckley 1985) or seen as the consequence of having affairs. Whether a condition is regarded as sexually transmitted depends not on the behaviour of the man, but the woman: even *atosi* (gonorrhoea) may be said to be caused by innocuous enough behaviour, conveniently detracting from the agency of men as carriers.⁵⁷

Like Amoke, many women seek a range of forms of treatment, looking for something that works. Not having any children of one's own only becomes 'never' at the end of a woman's reproductive life, only once she is in her late forties. Some women spend most of their reproductive lives attempting to become pregnant, going from herbalist to alfa to prophet to doctor: making sacrifices, saying prayers, taking medicines, having operations, and, for some, moving from man to man in hope.⁵⁸ It is recognised that in some cases 'the blood does not agree' and a woman is free to 'try her luck' elsewhere.⁵⁹ For some, these

efforts pay off and they become pregnant: in one case, I heard of a woman finally finding a pregnancy in her early 40s, having tried a number of other husbands. For Amoke, this proved to be the solution by default. First of all she tried herbalists, but ended up exasperated. Then a friend took her to church, which proved decisive in bringing about the situation that led to her leaving her husband. Churches play an important part in treating reproductive health problems, often with fasting and prayer but sometimes also with herbs. Amoke, like many women in this situation, put her trust in her faith. But she pursued also biomedical treatment alongside visiting the church, having a scan and then a D&C. All to no avail. Finally, reluctantly, she found another man and, with him, the children she had been looking for. Some women continue to attend the same church, others move around different religious institutions, sometimes attending special services at the church or visiting prophets or *alfa*, sometimes continuing to fast and pray as they tried other alternatives: 'God's time is the best', people say.⁶⁰ And some women can stay with their husbands for many years, praying and hoping. It is almost expected that a man will bring in another wife, as Ade did, but if the wives get on then infertile women can mother their children (see Chapter 6).

Amoke went to great lengths, risking her relationship with her family and leaving a husband whom she really loved and who provided for her, in order to have the child she so craved. For her, like so many women who struggle to find a child, having a child mattered more than anything else. If a woman fails to have any children at all, despite all her efforts, there are still ways to salvage her situation. As in the case of Ade's mother, there are ways in which hopes for children can be recuperated through fosterage. But this is a fall-back position, one sought only if all else fails. As all else, it is one that is both contingent and uncertain: for the doing of mothering requires resources and becomes all the more imperative when a child can turn round and say 'you are not my real mother'. Some foster mothers, however, not only hold dear but hold on to their charges. And when they die, as Ade's mother did, their foster children can celebrate their life as well as their death in style; at Ade's mother's funeral, people came from all around, dressed in identical cloth to represent themselves as her children.

Taking Chances, Making Choices

Reproductive strategy implies *reproductive* choice. But Bimpe chose love, Bose found herself pregnant in a situation where it was the agency of others that mattered in salvaging her prospects and Bola, it seems, let her child die. For Amoke, her desire to have a child overrode all else: it was a plan pursued against all odds, but one that left her virtually destitute at one point and which wrenched her away from a man she loved and from the security of his care. Returning to Guyer's argument about a shift from 'lineal' to 'lateral' strategies, I would like to consider some of the implications of these cases.

'Lineal strategies' have certainly become more risky. The endurance that so many older women talked about displaces present happiness with duty, holding it in deferral for the future: as one woman put it 'my children will repay me in time'. As is clear from previous chapters, those who await benefits may find themselves left in the lurch: neglectful sons and the other women in his life may be the cause of these 'broken bargains' (Kandiyoti 1988:284), but some sons may be so hard pressed for money that catering for their mothers is something they simply cannot afford. But to situate having children in terms of a long-distant realisation of investments alone significantly underplays the emotional and social importance of motherhood along the way. Amoke did not crave a child and go through so much hardship purely to have the means of realising a resource-oriented strategy. Like other women without their own children, she might have been able to generate sufficient income to place herself in the position of an attractive foster mother and, by establishing affective relations that are made and remade through practices of mothering, buy into longer-term 'lineal' benefits. Clearly, there is more at stake in becoming a mother.

'Lateral strategies' pursued through children fathered by different men can open up the possibility for diffuse claims on 'husbands' and their families; claims that may ensure not only that the children are clothed, fed and schooled, but are also able to provide points of entry into multiple kin networks which may offer children a range of possibilities in terms of future options. Yet such 'lateral strategies' present significant risks. Uncertainties give rise to a number of options, in which women have different degrees of control - in the sense of being able to anticipate and intervene in unfolding scenarios, or to avert potential risks - over the ramifications of the choices they make and, indeed, in whether they or the fathers of their children have any choice in the outcome at all. What may seem like a 'strategy' might turn out to be a tactical move, the best option possible under the circumstances rather than a deliberate plan. Taking a closer look at 'lateral strategies', further issues arise.

Pathways to 'polyandrous motherhood' may be a *consequence* rather than a goal of liaisons with lovers. Women may have a number of boyfriends, all of whom give them money. Rumour certainly give the impression that the numbers of these women are legion (see Chapter 5). But quite a few of the women I knew who had children by their boyfriends had not intended to get pregnant at all. For them, it was because they were pregnant that they ended up having children with a particular man. Some, like Bose and Sarah in Chapter 6, got pregnant and then had to find a way to manage. Others, like Bola, might start off thinking a marriage was going to work and end up back where they started with a baby in tow. Others still might be like Nuratu, who told me of how her boyfriend had swanked around town in a car that he pretended was his and was full of promises, but when she became pregnant it emerged he was only a driver and had no money at all: she was left literally holding the baby. Their next child might be fathered by another man, but this time they and their parents

would probably hope for marriage and some respectability. To have a series of children by different men is regarded as very loose behaviour ('*asewo ni*', men would say with derision - 'she is a prostitute'), bringing shame on the family.

Children may be an outcome of affairs, but are hardly the only reason for having them. Young women want boyfriends, for love or money. They do not usually want pregnancies until the time that feel ready to settle. Along the way, they might fall pregnant, fear having an abortion, find a way of coping with the consequences. Some may be chased by their fathers to the 'owner' and find his co-wife or mother so difficult to live with, or they may be stropky women like Bola who start to make trouble and are sent away. If they keep their children, they have the possibility of negotiating support. But this is contingent on their marriages lasting outside the space of the husband's compound. Those women who leave with their children because of trouble may maintain visiting relationships with their husbands which can be severed if they have other children by other men, in which case their children can be taken away from them by their first 'husband' or his kin. And those whose 'husbands' don't care either way are not likely to see much support from him. Bola, who found herself in this situation, sought other lovers and, by all accounts, simply let her child die. Managing children by different men may be not so much 'lateral strategies' as survival tactics: and they are made ever more fragile by the lack of rights women have in their children. Even if they can get pregnant by a well-off man and bring up his child in their own house, many women in Ado still prefer marriage. What these women might be trying to do is to find a husband: and failing time after time.

Lagos Weekend, and the popular magazines *Hints*, *Affairs* and *Love Story* frequently feature stories in which young women manage to secure pregnancies as the mistresses of wealthy businessmen, which offer them a route not only for present financial support but future claims, both on his inheritance and on the opportunities his networks might afford their children by him.⁶¹ Such 'sugar daddies' are rather thinner on the ground in Ado-Odo. Bose and Bola were in situations where, although the prospects were far less glamorous, their children would be assured a place in a prominent family. This did not seem to be their primary consideration. Bimpe's child, born to a 'useless man' hardly offered her these benefits. While some women do manage to find themselves rich men, who will install them as their mistresses in rented rooms and furnish them with elegant dresses and fancy hairdos, such 'success stories' are few and far between. More often, the 'owners' of their pregnancies are less attractive an option. They may be *fayawo* boys (smugglers) whose transient wealth glitters then goes, fellow school students who are in no position whatsoever to provide much in the way of support, or men with other wives: and it may be love that matters most to the young women who fall for them.

For those women who get involved with wealthy men hoping for a comfortable lifestyle, there are further risks. Sexual behaviour associated with the pursuit of 'lateral strategies' places women in a situation where risks to their fertility and their lives are increased. Caldwell et al. (1991) argue that opportunities have long been available for 'sexual networking', but in recent years wider, overlapping sexual networks have increased the risk of sexually transmitted disease and with it HIV/AIDS.⁶² By moving from man to man, women may run the risk of ending their chances altogether. STDs can have further consequences for reproductive success. Caraël notes:

the presence of undetected and untreated STDs among pregnant women can lead to miscarriage or false pregnancy, premature onset of labour, placental infection of the foetus, premature birth, infection of the newborn at the time of childbirth, or increased risk of maternal mortality (1994:257).

Children create the possibility for enduring links between a woman and a man's family, but the benefits that may be anticipated are contingent on recognition of paternity. A woman may become pregnant only to find that the 'husband' she has lined up to father her child turns around and denies it, or puts the rumour around that the pregnancy is from a number of men. Then she will be an *ilemoşu* landed with an *omq ale*. This is hardly to her advantage. In fact, in such a situation women might choose instead to abort: they might try out a potential partnership, then recoup their prospects by not having the child. There are, as I suggest in Bose's case, more compelling reasons to seek acknowledgement of paternity than present or future gains. But if this is taken to be a consideration, questions need to be asked about precisely what these gains might be. Where paternity is acknowledged, women may be forced to relinquish custody over their children. The father is the 'owner' of the child and women may take children to them or be pressurised to return them to their 'real fathers', to be brought up by their grandmothers. Children brought up by well-to-do families can offer their mothers opportunities to benefit from their children's future status and success. But even if a man is well-to-do, the 'inside' wife or wives may be far from keen to see him lavishing money on the child of another woman (cf. Bledsoe 1995).

Handing children over to a man's family provides limited opportunities to build affective ties and gives a mother little purchase on any further claims on a man. As the mother of his children, she can visit them and build a relationship with them over time. But this equally depends on how her children feel about the situation. Children are not just objects that can be used to make ties or to realise resources through, they are also agents. Rather than offering a 'bonus' to the 'lateral networks' women can form through 'polyandrous motherhood', having a series of children by different men can jeopardise women's relationships with their children. Children who are older can get upset and may take

exception to their mother's behaviour (see, for example, Iya Bose's daughter's reaction in Chapter 5). And when children are fostered out to a man's relatives, other mothers not only take them on, but may take them over.

Money Matters

'Lateral strategies' are contingent for their success on women making the right choices in their selection of lovers. But all too often they don't. 'Girls these days useless themselves all around' (i.e. sleep with many men), I was told. Many have affairs with men who cannot be counted on to provide either the support needed to bring up a child, or a route to future prosperity. Young women, or so their elders say, have a choice not to run after men, to wait until they have found a good husband before having sex, to refuse the advances of married men. It is because they *lack* a sense of strategy, of an overall game plan, that they 'useless themselves'. The harsh reality for so many young women who become pregnant is that they either have to face having an abortion, or cope with the consequences that having a child presents them with.

No family wants their daughter to marry a 'useless man'. Nor do they want their sons to marry the kind of women who 'chase after men' and 'do rubbish and nonsense all around' or to take wives who cannot give them children. These days, it seems, parents have little option but to resign themselves to a situation beyond their control. But there are tactics that family members can use to rectify situations. Some of these tactics completely eclipse the agency of those at the centre of contests. Bose and Dele, for example, became virtual bystanders as the drama unfolded. And other tactics create sources of security to claw back some agency in situations where the pressures families can exert threaten to overwhelm. These are ways of managing, of coping with contingency, in situations where multiple interests and complex agents intersect and mutually impinge.

Some women marry and have children with men who have no money because of love, others stay to look after their children despite a lack of financial assistance from their husbands because they care too much to leave them and others still leave men who give them love and money because their desire to have children overwhelms all else. Fosterage is as lateral an option as any other. But even if they can foster children and bring them up as their own, women want their *own* children. Not just one or two, but at least four. The desire to have children speaks about more than simply the resources they offer: it is bound up with women's and men's identities as social agents and with the emotional significance and satisfaction of having one's own children. People experience being parents in different ways, depending on their personalities and their circumstances as well as the cultural dimensions within which parenthood and parenting is located (Scheper-Hughes 1993).

For women who are unable to bear their own children, there are ways in which they can recuperate their hopes through fosterage. Yet while children are more important than money - *omọ ni bori owo* - money matters. Women with means can attract children to them to whom they become mothers-of-choice. And without money, demonstrating love as well as acquiring children to foster becomes much harder. Afusa, an impoverished and infertile woman in her 60s, told me about those women who could become 'sugar mummies' because they had money: not the glitzy middle-aged cash madams of *Lagos Weekend* who take younger lovers, but wealthy women who tempt children, she alleged, to come to them by giving them fine things and making the children love them as if they were their real mothers. 'Those women steal the children from their real mothers', she said, 'then they cater for the foster mother and neglect the real mother, leaving her to suffer'.

Afusa was an only child. She had no siblings to give her a child 'to forget'. Neither did she have the means by which she could become an attractive foster parent. The position she spoke from was as someone who had lost out on the chance to have or to hold any children at all: I could see tears in her eyes as she talked and felt the bitterness of her words resonate with a deep sadness. For Afusa there were no children or grandchildren. She eked out her existence in considerable hardship. No children. No money. And, or so it seemed to me, hardly much of a chance for *alafia* either.

Chapter 9

In Search of a Happy Ending

Sitting in a *danfo* in a motorpark in Ibadan one day, my gaze fell on the vehicle in front. The rear window was emblazoned with bright coloured stickers. Their aphorisms offered a view of the world in microcosm. 'No money, no friend', captured both the ambivalence of social relations and the ways money enabled connectedness between people. Another offered both a warning and a reprieve, summing up the quixotic nature of fate and fortune: 'No condition is permanent'. A third, 'Downfall of a man is not the end of his life' offered some hope in the face of adversity. 'To be a man is more than a day's work' provided a reminder of the need for endurance in the quest for ways of making it and managing. And 'No success without struggle', seemed to say it all.

It has been my aim, throughout this thesis, to situate the everyday struggles of life in Ado-Odo in as much complexity as this kind of analysis permits. Ethnographies of particular people and particular struggles constantly disrupt any attempt at generalisation (Abu-Lughod 1991); the linkages between different aspects of people's lives and the multiple subject positions that they occupy in different domains of discourse constantly undermines attempts to consider their lives in segments. In tracing some of the pathways pursued by people in Ado over historical time and over the time of their own life courses, in different domains of association and with regard to different aspects of their lives, I have tried to offer a picture of just how complicated and uncertain their struggles for money, children and peace may be.

People pursue these pathways and engage in these struggles in search of a happy ending, to find the things that they pray for and to live the last years of their life in the security of being provided and cared for. Along the way there are many obstacles and diversions, unexpected events and unanticipated dilemmas. While strategies may be pursued in the quest for future goals, everyday life requires tactics for managing, getting by and coping with contingency. Arriving there is a process characterised by making the best of whatever comes along and finding ways of sorting out the difficulties that may threaten at times to snatch away the prospect of a good life as well as a good death. But life is also about laughter, enjoyment, affection and play: about finding happiness and about feeling at peace with oneself and with others. These are struggles that we all engage in, uncertainties that we all share and pleasures that we all enjoy; they may be figured in different ways, made salient within different discourses, struggled for and coped with by different means, but ultimately

they are about being human in a world that is constantly in flux. In Ado, I learnt about the dilemmas people faced in their lives; living in Ado I experienced my own fears and concerns, worried about my own future and sought my own sources of security. And I experienced laughter, joy and love that came not from the process of studying what people did, but from *living* in Ado. This thesis represents as much a part of my own life as an account of the lives of others. It is easy to forget how inextricably bound the two are in the process of distancing that academic writing requires.

In this brief conclusion, I return to the principal issues and themes that emerge from my analysis and to some of the reflections on the process with which I began this thesis. I explore some of the areas for further work that my account may suggest. I conclude by examining the implications of an approach to engaged anthropological practice that starts from the perspective that the people we work with not as 'Others' but those with whom we share our humanity, yet does not lose sight of differences inflected with multiple, layered forms of oppression in the contexts within which our practices are always situated.

Context and Complexity

In this thesis, I have attempted to take up themes in Yoruba ethnography that have tended to be treated as separate and indeed separable aspects of people's life-worlds. Peel's review of the predominant tendencies in the literature on 'the Yoruba' draws attention to two features that are salient in situating my account. First, he comments on the 'tendency to fragmentation' (1983:8): the wealth of studies on single institutions or particular aspects of 'Yoruba life' and yet the curious absence of classic holistic community studies. Second, he argues that

'Yoruba society' cannot be more than a sociological lowest common denominator, the label for a bunch of the cultural traits which occur more frequently in the area... it does not denote a real, concrete unit for sociological analysis (1983:9).

One of my concerns has been to situate people's lived experience in locales that are lived spaces in which they interact with others and in the lived time of their own histories.

Basing my account in a particular small town, Ado-Odo, one that has its own peculiarities and that is far from culturally homogeneous in and of itself, I try to retain a sense of specificity of time and place that is sometimes lacking in ethnographic writings on 'the Yoruba' (Peel 1983). My aim is less to weave together fragments into wholes than to illustrate the complexities of inter-linkages between people and domains. Without a sense of people's own histories or of the multiple sites in which they make themselves as agents, the 'tendency to fragmentation' can mask the lived complexities of people's lives. My account of

the lives and livelihoods of people who live in Ado remains insistently tied to the everyday realities of life in this particular small town. It has its own historicity, set in a time of economic austerity when uncertainties were exacerbated by political unrest.

I began my ethnographic narrative with an account that situated Ado as a place. I explored pathways of change and their ramifications on the lives of the heterogeneous inhabitants of Ado, setting their livelihoods within a larger regional historical frame. From Ado as a place I turned in Chapter 3 to the domains in which people live their everyday lives and make themselves as social agents. I drew attention to the cross-cutting linkages between people and places, made through connections of kinship, work, worship and friendship. These connections, I argued, give rise to a series of different subject positions in different domains of association with quite different implications for agency. In that chapters that followed I took up the discourses that I drew attention to in the preface to begin to explore the ways in which money, children and peace are configured. It is to these discourses, to changing expectations and opportunities, that I would like to return in drawing together some of the threads of my analysis.

For Love or Money?

Discourses on endurance draw on the idiom of love (*ife*) to invoke a powerful normative critique of women who leave not only their husbands, but their children. 'If love is there', Sherifatu, a trader in her 40s, told me, 'the husband and wife will struggle together'. Even if there is no love and no money, women are expected to endure and 'to face their children and their work', biding their time until they have done their duty. Love between husbands and wives is both expressed through and displaced onto ensuring the well being of children: a man can demonstrate his care by providing 'proper care' for his children as well as signal his nonchalance through neglect or by diverting resources to other children, through other mothers (cf. Bledsoe 1995). Women talked of motherhood in terms of putting their children before all else, making sure that they had whatever they need and working to give them the possibility of a better life. But when younger women's marriages break down, it is not love but money that forms the focal point of a chorus of dismay. The women who go away are represented as having gone astray, defying expectations of buckling under and making the best of things to 'run here and there after money' and 'do rubbish and nonsense all around', 'leaving the children to suffer'.

Participation in criticisms of women's behaviour goes right across the spectrum, from younger women who blame their peers for being 'harlots' and 'dogs', to the young men who talk of young women as only interested in cash, from middle-aged women who voice their disapproval by focusing on the callousness of women who leave their children to 'go here and

there after men' to middle-aged men who moan about disobedience and the suspect behaviour of women who leave struggling husbands to find themselves men with money, to older men who sigh *obirin ko se gbekẹlẹ* (women cannot be trusted) and tell tales of wayward wives who fought, argued and finally went. The picture they paint is one of chaos and disorder, of troublesome women driven by avarice and lust who simply will not stay in their place. And, in an unlikely chorus, they invoke 'olden days' (*igba atijọ*) when women knew their place and where peace and harmony prevailed. Responsibility and blame are placed firmly at the feet of women, irrespective of their circumstances.

Discourses on love and money in intimate relationships counterpose the spending of money as expression of love within a relation of 'husband' and 'wife' with a pursuit of money, a love of money, that displaces 'husbands' and turns women into the antithesis of 'wives'. These discourses make available a range of contingent and contradictory subject positions for men and women to take up in different relational domains (Laclau 1990, Henriques et al. 1984), that intersect with but are not subsumed by discourses on gender. The subject position of 'wife' is one in which female agency is occluded, almost entirely eclipsed by that of the 'husband' who directs, controls, provides and decides. Yet wives are expected to work and to provide a substantial contribution to hearth-hold expenses. And they do so as mothers, because of their children. The contingent subject positions of wives, mothers and independent earners give rise to ambivalences in the ways in which female agency is figured in different domains. In relation to husbands, women as wives are enjoined to assume positions of subservience and to remain 'under a man'. Those who become their own controllers and providers in the absence of a marital relationship encroach on the space occupied by 'husband' and are cast as *ilemoṣu*, the epitome of wayward, unwifely women. And yet the contributions women make to day-to-day provisioning within marital relationships situates them in ambivalent positions as *defacto* providers with the spending power to make themselves as social agents in other domains.

In the compounds where they live, women are located as mothers of men's children within relations marked by hierarchies of seniority, in positions as daughters-in-law, sisters-in-law, junior or senior wives, and as mothers to their children. As the 'wives' to a man's family, status accrues gradually over time as they remain and as their children grow up. Yet they retain membership of their natal compounds (*idile*) in which they occupy different positions with different possibilities for agency: as daughters of the family, as sisters and sisters-in-law to their brothers' wives and, as they grow older, as elders within hierarchies marked by generation rather than gender. In the domains where women earn money in independent enterprises, women can come to be known by their trade and by their success in

business pursuits. Some women earn more than their husbands and gain positions of prominence marked by their own achievements. As titleholders in women's associations, in their trades and in religious domains, women gain positions and accrue followers that situate them further as agents in their own right. For those who have attained success in business and positions in institutions, their social esteem (*ola*) and wealth (*owo*) may outstrip that of their husbands, gauged by others in terms of their achievements as independent actors. The situational subject positions that women occupy in different domains mutually impinge, constituting them as agents who move within spatially discrete domains threaded through with the interactions through which they make themselves as people.

Discourses on gender make available certain subject positions for women and men to take up, but do not in themselves circumscribe the range of other available positions. By casting endurance in terms of the restricted relation between husband and wife, rather than in the actual complexity of relations in compounds where a range of other actors impinge both on the husband-wife relationship and on the day-to-day lives of women within them, the subject positions women occupy as the sexual partners of men become pivotal in commentaries on women-in-general. This occludes the threat that other subject positions occupied by women, significantly those in domains beyond the compound in which they gain the means of exercising economic autonomy, poses to male authority within marriage. By casting younger women who leave their husbands as wayward women in pursuit of sex and money, men themselves become objects or instruments and even victims of women's wiles. But they are not the only victims.

Many women stay 'to face the children and their work', support their hearth-holds and bring up their children in contexts where economic support from their husbands is often never quite enough and may be completely absent. Their struggles for money, children and peace of mind are waged in domains where men barely feature in their day-to-day lives and where it may be contests with other women, rather than neglectful husbands, that may pose the greatest threat to their well being. While men may be cast as 'useless' for failing to provide adequately for their families and as irresponsible for continuing to pester their wives for sex when there is no money for another child, the other women in his life may be the irritant that finally proves the last straw and causes women to go. And those women who are blamed for being 'after money' may be the very women who are the recipients of the money and love of other women's husbands and sons, diminishing their own claims to resources, the new wives (*iyawo*) who may arrive precipitously to jostle for space in the compound at any time.

Relations between women in the domains in which they live their everyday lives give rise to tensions between those who share similar concerns, but have mutually antagonistic

interests. Over their life courses and in different domains, women's prospects depend on the relationships they create and negotiate with other women and the opportunities open to them to make it for themselves as much, and often more, than on their relationships with their husbands. Changing expectations and changing opportunities permeate relationships in these contexts; women of different generations occupy relational subject positions within them that are challenged by the struggles of everyday survival. Competing concerns and conflicting interests breed suspicions, fears and tensions between those who have a stake in the finite - and shrinking - resources of men, as fathers of their children, sons, cousins and brothers and ambivalent interests in the pursuits of other women in their quest for sources of security through their children and their work. Among women of the same generation, these concerns may be transformed into struggles between those who occupy subject positions that directly impinge on each other, as among co-wives, or in the competitive arenas where struggles for money are waged. Women of different generations have concerns shaped as much by their experiences in historical time, as their expectations at certain stages in their life courses and in subject positions as mothers-in-law and mothers-of-men they may be in direct competition with other women in his life for their son's love as well as his money.

'After Money'?

Representations of women as being 'after money' tend to obscure the everyday struggles to make enough money to feed their hearth-holds that play such an important part in the lives of the vast majority of women in Ado. In changing times marked by a climate of worsening economic austerity, these struggles are all the more arduous. Marketwomen, faced with steep hikes in transport prices and a drop in demand for their goods, may find themselves struggling to keep their businesses afloat. Those who travelled to Lagos to restock every few days before the crisis bit harder were spacing their visits to a couple of times a month; a few were able to form buying groups with friends, but others feared the potential for dispute and continued to go it alone. Goods that were once associated with high returns had, by the time I left, become virtually unaffordable to all but the wealthy. Some women had found niches in new markets opened up by the substitution of local produce for manufactured or imported goods, but for numbers of the women I spoke with moving out of a familiar trade into a new venture was a neither a risk they could afford to take, nor one that they felt confident and informed enough to attempt. Public sector workers, faced with shrinking salaries and with months of stalling on wage payments, were facing difficult situations. Patients complained of rural nurses being away from their posts trading in town; female teachers took to trade or home-based snack production and male teachers to farming or transport, just to get by. Men complained that they simply could not afford to support their families, while women talked of

how they were expected to make do with contributions that in the present time represented a fraction of day-to-day costs or indeed to cope with hearth-hold expenses without any support at all (cf. Emeagwali 1995).

The day-to-day struggle to make enough money to maintain hearth-holds has meant that many women have had to cut back on personal and social spending. Ceremonies for a new birth, graduation or burial still absorb a large amount of money, but economies need to be made. With less money to go round and less time to engage in social activities, the shift from collective rotating savings and credit *ajọ* (ROSCAs) to individualised daily *ajọ* represents not only the shrinking of savings in real terms but also the diminution of social networks built around *ẹgbẹ* and the 'social collateral' (Ardener and Burman 1995:9) they represent. Significantly, many women talked of how they had dropped out of ROSCAs because of a lack of trust between members and the difficulties of keeping up fixed payments over time. Within the market, some *ẹgbẹ* have abandoned collective savings and credit schemes and others have been sundered by disputes over money. And with the demise of *ẹgbẹ*, some women are left in a position where they have no safety net at all beyond their own families. In this situation, religious associations (fellow *oriṣa* worshippers, church *ẹgbẹ* and mosque *assalatu*) have become all the more important as a source of social support beyond the compound and natal *idile*.

Further research on tactics for coping with the current economic crisis might focus on the extent to which safety nets are undermined by hardship: patterns of switching from collective to individual *ajọ*, proportional drops in savings over a period of time, the extent to which flows of resources to and from and the expectations of *idile* members for assistance have changed, alongside more detailed hearth-hold budgeting information. Clearly, to do this at the level of the 'household' would be highly problematic. A disaggregated approach that takes account both of hearth-hold responsibilities and supra-household resource flows as applied to both men and women would be required. While it is difficult to assess actual amounts of money earned and spent, the ranking of expenditure priorities and relative levels over time might give an indication of approximate changes. It would be interesting to explore in greater detail the impact that economic change has had on the range of relationships women and men have in different domains of association, through a focused study of cohorts of individuals of particular generations.

As Brydon and Legge (1995) point out, assessing the extent of change presupposes a starting point of knowing what things were like 'before'. Discourses on change in Ado reflect on the miseries of the present from the perspective of an idealised 'olden days': presenting the current state of affairs as rupture. Guyer's (1992, 1994) insightful analyses of change and continuity in the spheres of work and marriage draw attention to the complex patterning of

persistence. She argues

persistence... has a changing shape, and that shape reflects the kind of work and life practices by which person and collectivity are mutually constituted in particular places in particular eras of history (1992:483).

Situated life histories give glimpses into processes of continuity as well as change; although they are told from the perspective of the present, the traces of the pathways people have pursued through their lives offer revealing insights into the persistence, and indeed the resurgence, of older lifeways in the domain of work. Exploring further the ramifications of persistence in some domains of association and change in others would provide a way of contextualising everyday struggles in terms of the complexity and multiplicity of inter-locking aspects of women's and men's lives.

Taking Risks

While persistence and continuities permeate the sphere of work even in these changing times, the arena that emerges in people's narratives as the site for the greatest change is that of heterosexual relationships. Guyer (1994) suggests that shifts may represent not a break with the past, but a gradual reconfiguring of previous patterns: changes of emphasis, rather than entirely new possibilities (see also Caldwell et al. 1991). Where changes *have* been most significant, however, is in the emergence of discourses on romantic love and in the recognition of active female sexuality and desire. The complaints of women and men alike on the state of affairs in the present focus on a contested relation between love and money. Love and sexual desire are transformed by discourses on waywardness into the pursuit of money; the 'eat and run' girls and the women who 'love money more than the husband' exemplify the characterisation of affairs as driven by an instrumental approach to men. And this undoubtedly tells part of the story.

Orubuloye et al. (1991) illustrate the spectrum of sexual networking in Ekiti, arguing that the term 'prostitute' has little meaning in this context. Yet the term *aṣewo* and its local translation 'prostitute' or 'harlot' often features in discourses on women and money in Ado. It connotes a woman who takes lovers outside marriage, one who lives alone and has a lover or an unmarried woman who has several lovers; it is used to indicate any woman who deviates from the archetypal enduring and faithful wife. Censure is heaped on women who abandon husbands who are struggling to find themselves a richer man, on the school students who allow themselves to be 'bought' by wealthy married men or dally with the smuggler '*fayawo* boys': '*owo l'obinrin mọ*' (money is what women know) is said with disparagement. Money features in these discourses less as something women *need* than something that is bound up with other desires. Yet male lovers are talked about as 'helpers', whose gifts enable women to manage. And unmarried women may look to their lovers to give them the things

parents cannot or will not buy for them. Money is bound up with love in complex ways; and discourses that displace female desire and focus simply on a pursuit of cash obscure these complexities.

Hegemonic discourses on immorality, as well as the more submerged voices of young women and their boyfriends, return to the 'problem' of the sexuality of unmarried women and its all too common outcome: 'the next thing is pregnancy'. Derived from others of their age and from the little they glean from school and literature, young people's knowledge about sexual health and fertility control is generally not only fragmented but sometimes plainly erroneous (cf. Makinwa-Adebusoye 1991). One young man, for example, told me: 'I know that if I leave her for five days after her menses and then wait one or two days to make sure, then she will not become pregnant'. It only takes a little reckoning to work out that twelve days into her cycle means that the chances his girlfriend *will* become pregnant sooner or later are dangerously high. And if she does, she might try a home remedy to 'bring down the pregnancy', go to the pharmacist for an injection or tablets of menstrual regulants or, if the pregnancy refuses to budge, visit a herbalist or try to find the money for surgical abortion. If she seeks treatment in Ado, she might end up at the clinic where a woman bled to death shortly before I left the town or at the 'hospital' where a nurse touts himself as a doctor. She may end up at home, haemorrhaging. She might end up with the crippling pains of an infection that scars her so badly that when she marries she'll spend years looking for a child. She might end up dead.¹ Meanwhile, abortion remains officially 'illegal'.²

Some young women, like Bose in Chapter 8, decide to go ahead with their pregnancies and face the consequences, knowing that they can rely on their kin to help them out. Many young women, like Bose, get pregnant before they are ready to become mothers. They get pregnant because they simply do not know enough, or do not know what they need to know. All too often their partners are equally ignorant. While there are some young women who sleep with their lovers so as to maintain a source of gifts and to keep up with their peers, some have sex with their boyfriends because if they don't, their partners will find someone else. And others have sex because they are in love. What they want is to enjoy having a lover for a while before facing the responsibilities of parenthood. Yet sex involves risks that can mar sexual pleasure. Outside the major cities (and even within them) access to contraception and to the kind of sex education that could really make a difference is limited. Clinics attend to *family* planning and to married women (see Okonofua and Ilumoka eds. 1991). Young women would barely even dare set foot inside them to look for contraceptive advice. Only those who go as far as secondary school are taught about reproduction and are able to read the English language health magazines that are in any case very scarce in Ado.

Young women know about pills, but often not about how to use them effectively. They know about condoms and that to present their boyfriends with one might mean the end of

their relationship. They know about *atōsi* (gonorrhoea) as a disease men have and about *inu rirun* ('stomach trouble') as something married women looking for a child might suffer from, but seem not to know enough about the risks to their own fertility that unprotected sex may pose. They also know about AIDS, but as a disease of prostitutes, a disease associated with sin and the city. As HIV infection rates continue to rise in southwestern Nigeria, and as 'sexual networking' (Orubuloye et al. 1991, 1994) continues to involve a pool of highly mobile actors with multiple partners, the risks are ever more deadly. And as women move from partner to partner, the chances increase of them contracting an infection that remains without a sign for year after year, leaving them desperate for a pregnancy.

In the domain of sexual and reproductive health, virtually all the issues that come to mind as topics for research following on from the work I have done are issues in which an action component, or action itself, would be the beginning of further work. Issues around adolescent sexual health invite not the action of a lone anthropologist, but a collaborative project in which young people themselves devise their own strategies in partnership with health professionals and assess the best ways of tackling the issues at hand. Okonofua (n.d.), reviewing the findings of a study of factors in adolescent pregnancy in Gbongan (near Ile-Ife), notes the extent to which young women lacked appropriate knowledge about the prevention of pregnancy. He concludes that early completion of formal education is the principal risk factor for adolescent pregnancy. Poverty exposes young women to older men who are regarded as better able to provide for their economic needs, although as he goes on to note some of the sexual partners of female adolescents are of a similar age. Okonofua advocates intervention in the provision of counselling and opportunities for training for adolescents, together with the provision of comprehensive health information and contraceptive services.

Clearly, as those most at risk may also be those least likely to have completed a secondary school education in biology and those for whom English-language materials may be difficult to understand, appropriate health promotion strategies are required that begin from what young women *and men* know and are rooted in local idiom. Given the incidence of abortion, it is equally important that appropriate information is made available more widely on the risks of unsafe abortion. As gossip and the telling of stories are so much part of day-to-day conversations in Ado, acting as a moralistic caution to warn women about particular clinics or methods of abortion, the possibilities of using similar oral narratives to talk of the risks associated with certain practices could be usefully explored. Rather than bald statements of fact, vivid and dramatic stories of young women *and men* faced with dilemmas that reflect the kinds of situations others can identify with would provide not only a means of informing but also a way of exploring further some of the issues at stake.³ It is, however, only through political struggles in other arenas that the risks unsafe abortion poses to women's lives can be

reduced: by a change in the law and the introduction of safe, accessible methods of terminating pregnancies at the level of primary health care.⁴

Addressing the risks of HIV/AIDS, and the attendant risks of infertility, equally requires an action research approach that involves actors from different segments of the community in addressing the appropriateness of interventions. What is clear is that the public health campaigns waged through the media and posters are not reaching numbers of people: a more pro-active strategy is required that starts from and builds on initiatives at the local level. The kinds of initiatives that the Lagos NGOs EMPARC (Empowerment and Action Research Centre), StopAIDS and SWAN (Society for Women and AIDS in Nigeria) and the Zaria-based NPTA (Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance), to give some examples, are involved in facilitating offer creative and innovative possibilities for community-level work.⁵

'Real sex' is cast as penetrative sex. Making condoms more acceptable and countering some of the myths about them causing diseases is clearly a priority. Yet if fertility is a means by which women secure otherwise unstable relations with their sexual partners - no marriage without a child - then condom use is clearly at odds with such strategies (Bledsoe 1990d). Yet parenthood may be a consequence rather than a goal of such liaisons. Given the degree of extra-marital sexual activity in which pregnancies are *not* desired, the extent to which young women 'want to enjoy their life before going to the husband' and the prevalence of misinformation about condoms, it would seem that the focused promotion of condoms continues to provide prospects for the reduction of the risks of abortion, STDs and HIV/AIDS, and to offer strategies for hope.

Towards eclecticism

My approach in this thesis has been deliberately eclectic. In some of the theoretical and disciplinary domains I have strayed into along the way I have sought to borrow and benefit from the insights, methodologies and methods they offer. Faced with the dilemma of epistemological incompatibility - from subject positions to surveys - I have chosen a deliberately pragmatic pathway. Understanding the complexity of people's everyday lives requires a multi-perspectival approach which draws opportunistically on whatever methodological tools that are at hand. It is necessarily, perhaps even emphatically, 'impure' in the sense that it involves an awareness of plurality and contradiction at the same time as it strives for the means of synthesis.

Making sense is an active process, one that involves continual shifts and accommodations to define and redefine terms of engagement. And these terms are set as much by the personal and political underpinnings of choices of focus or of theory as by the intellectual appeal a particular way of seeing may offer. In choosing to approach different issues from different perspectives, I have aimed to retain a focus on nuanced particularity

while attempting to sketch a wider picture. I have no desire to choose between *either* a theoretical approach to 'gender' in which differences are figured as situational, transitive and provisional *or* an activist position in which my concerns lie directly with an unashamed use of the strategic essentialism 'women' where it is appropriate. What I do wish to avoid, however, is falling into the analytic trap of presuming an ahistorical, atemporal category of 'Woman' (Mohanty 1988). The eclectic neo-pragmatism that Fraser (1995) so staunchly defends offers me the space to engage in different worlds in different ways.

Goodman (1978) argues that a 'truth' is true and a version is right for a world it fits; we make and remake worlds as we come to understand them, and each version has its own particular frame of reference. For Goodman, it is the precisely the plurality of worlds and of knowledges that unseats any simple distinction between different ways of knowing. All 'data' are thus created products, made from already described worlds that are at hand (Goodman 1978). The methodological implications of Goodman's argument appear to support an approach to learning that seeks to explore social worlds from multiple vantage points and in respect of different frames of reference. Any account of the lives of others is necessarily partial; and this partiality, the sense of incompleteness as of an understanding that is situated, is a vital property in an emphatic disavowal of any claims to tell things 'how they are'.

If how we come to understand is a product of intersubjectivity, of a dynamic engagement with others, it is equally the case that occupying different subject positions in these interactions can give rise to qualitatively different understandings. What we come to know is always inflected with the multiple, sometimes contradictory, standpoints we may take on particular issues. I believe that engagement is about celebrating diversity and dissonance *within* (Moore 1994), rather than attempting to stifle the vitality of contradiction into a straitjacket of coherence. It is about valuing 'permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints' (Haraway 1985:72) as the precondition for connecting with others and for finding a responsible voice.

NOTES

Notes to Preface

1. This is the subject of extensive debate and raises complex issues that are beyond the scope of this chapter, or indeed this thesis. Among others, Kessler and McKenna (1978), Strathern (1988), Gatens (1983, 1996) and Butler (1990, 1993) offer compelling arguments that disrupt taken for granted ideas about gender, identity and the body. Theoretical and political dimensions of the implications of recent work in feminist theory are explored further in Scott (1988), Fraser (1989), Weed (ed. 1989), Connell (1987, 1995), Flax (1990), Nicholson (ed. 1990), Collins (1990) and Benhabib et al. (1995).

Notes to Chapter 1

1. The post-structuralist critique had further consequences both for anthropology and feminism (see Strathern 1987, Mascia-Lees et al. 1989). Feminist debates circled around the politics of difference and implications of the destabilisation of foundational theories of knowledge for feminist politics (see Hodge 1989, Fraser 1989, Flax 1990, Nicholson 1990, Butler 1990, di Stefano 1991). Challenges to a feminism that remained articulated through the concerns of white, Western, middle-class, young, heterosexual women (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981, hooks 1982, Lorde 1984, Rich 1984, Mohanty 1987, brought about shifts from a singular 'feminism' to an appreciation of multiple, situated 'feminisms' (de Lauretis 1986). These debates deserve greater attention than this chapter has scope for.
2. See, for example, Harding (1987), Haraway (1988), Stanley and Wise (1990), Gorelick (1991), Stacey (1991) and Fonow and Cook (1991). Fabian's (1991) makes similar points about process, emotion and the intersubjective nature of anthropological understandings. But not a single reference to any of the work feminists have done on these issues appears in his text. Instead, he makes the rather curious observation in a footnote that he does not feel ready to discuss convergence of his ideas with feminist approaches.
3. Space precludes a fuller discussion of Collins' argument. Politically, I feel that what she has to say is of crucial importance.
4. 'Full' participation can jeopardise this process. One of my greatest regrets while doing fieldwork in Brazil was becoming as riotously drunk as the group of people I was talking with. That night we talked and drank for hours, touching in detail on the very things I had found it difficult to find out about before. When we parted company to stagger home, I was in a state of elation but was unable to do more than babble to my flatmate about how amazing it had been before I passed out. I woke up the next morning with a roaring hangover, unable to remember a single thing anyone had said.
5. Hsiung (1996) talks of the dilemmas she faced when her observer role that demanded that she smile and remain silent when sexist jokes were made in her present became untenable, and of how she felt unable to allow these jokes to be told unchallenged.
6. At first, women did not even want to mention how many children they had. This, I was told, was because of fears of *aje* ('witchcraft'). Some women told me of how they would not tell anyone apart from their husband when they were pregnant and how, towards the end of their pregnancies, they kept themselves to themselves, even to the point of going to deliver alone for fear of others intervening (see Chapter 6).
7. 'Health' is more closely translated as *ilera*: some people drew a distinction between *ilera* and *alafia*.
8. Before I studied anthropology, I stumbled on action research in Zimbabwe. A political concern about the lack of appropriate information for women to make an informed choice about contraception grew into a research project. I worked closely with local research assistants who became enthusiastic co-

researchers, ran workshops and used a range of approaches from Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to drama in the process. I found the process exhilarating and imagined that this was how I would do my PhD, now that I was older, wiser and had learnt something about anthropology. For the last few years I have been working as a PRA trainer and was eager to use this methodology in my own research.

9. Some of these worked out. I managed to secure a donation for surgical equipment at the clinic, use my links with the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture to bring crop scientists and pathologists down to Ado for a training which promised further collaborative links between farmers and IITA's research activities, organise a trip to IITA's post-harvest technology unit and secure condoms, films and leaflets for HIV/AIDS work from Lagos NGOs, IPPF, PPFN and the Society for Women and AIDS in Nigeria.
10. I drew up a list of criteria and travelled extensively around Ogun and southern Oyo States, close to the border, visiting various towns to work out whether they were suitable places to work. Of all those I had seen, I liked Ijio the most, a very small town in Oyo State near the Benin border: and it fit all my criteria. I had more or less decided to go there by the time I came to Ado.
11. I eventually made it to Igbessa over a year later, taken by my friends Mary and Irene to visit their friend the Oba. Already primed with all the things Ado people had told me about the place - that it was where wicked people lived, people who were mixed up with all kinds of bad things - I found it a very unappealing town and would, no doubt, have ended up in Ijio if I had gone to Igbessa as I intended.
12. I found using a tape recorder uncomfortable, as it put people off. I did not feel it was right to do it secretly, so after a while I gave up. I recorded interviews in shorthand and wrote them up later in the day. When I had conversations in bars or in the street, I was able to recall quite well what people had said. If the conversation was particularly illuminating, I would go home swiftly to write it all down. My life seemed to revolve so much around 'work' at times that even when I was 'playing' and having a cold beer at the end of a hard day I could never really switch off.
13. If I offend anyone by doing this, then I am very sorry. Of course, anyone who knows the situations that I write about intimately will immediately be able to identify the protagonists, but I have taken some precautions to conceal their actual identities.
14. At one stage, early on, I had met a potential research assistant, a woman in her thirties who, by all accounts, was a thoroughly wayward type. She ended up going off to Lagos, while I mused on the implications of being associated with her. I am sure this thesis would have been completely different if I had worked with her.
15. On one occasion, we were sitting with a group of women of different ages when an older woman came to report the next stage in an ongoing dispute. It turned out that a woman had refused her husband sex the night before and he had beaten her, and that the older woman had come to settle the matter. Mrs Odu was swift to comment on how she should have done her duty. I was asked what happens in London in such cases. I replied that in London doing such a thing is a crime and that if a man rapes his wife then she can take him to court if she wants. I added, quite unnecessarily, that if my husband tried such a thing I would leave immediately. There were gasps from the older women, but I thought I caught a hint of a smile on the faces of the younger ones. Later, one of them said to me with obvious approval 'you have a government for women, we have a government for men', and after that I had several discussions with her on some of these issues.
16. I was also all too guiltily aware that a packet of the brand of cigarettes I smoked cost as much as enough *gari* (a staple, roasted cassava flour made into starchy, granular *eba* and eaten with soup) to feed a family for several days.
17. This was as much because of a personal antipathy to the work some missionaries do as anything else: previous encounters with evangelical Christian missionaries elsewhere in the world had left me with a very negative attitude towards them.
18. Again my not quite so strangeness was mediated by Mr Akinsowon, the only other atheist I knew in Ado. Everyone knew that he had returned from the USA an atheist; I merely cited his example, joking that as a child of the Akinsowon household I should follow the religion of my 'father' (as is the case for most children).

19. That I had not quite become an 'honorary male' became apparent when a prominent chief introduced me to his friends with, 'this is Mrs Cornwall, the wife of my friend Mr Cornwall from London'. He had met Ian once and I had been a regular visitor for the best part of a year.
20. On using life histories in social research see Berteaux (1981), Geiger (1986), Kerzer (1991) and Masini (1991); see also Katz and Monk (1993) on a life course approach.
21. Sample selection was done by lottery from a bag of names of all the houses in the quarter.
22. I do not think that my gender actually made any difference in what men were willing to tell me.
23. See RRA Notes, IIED (1988-present), for descriptions of these methods.
24. See Grandin (1988), Scoones (1995), Kaufman et al. (forthcoming [a]).
25. I worked with Jay Kaufman, an epidemiologist from Loyola University in Chicago, on a short experimental study of the social factors in hypertension in Ado. Due to the difficulty of gathering socio-economic data, I proposed this technique as a way of stratifying Jay's sample, while at the same time giving me insights into men's and women's relative wealth, well-being and status (see Kaufman et al. forthcoming [a]).
26. Some of these narratives tell my version of particular events, others weave together strands of other stories, others still are transcribed accounts told to me by particular people. In these accounts, I translate freely rather than literally from Yoruba into English, in order to present narratives that 'work' in English. The niceties of linguistics are, therefore, side-stepped: my intention is less to explore the nuanced meanings of words than to convey the stories people told me in a way that maintains the immediacy of their telling. Translation is, in any case, a process fraught with difficulties. It is not my intention in this thesis to deal with these questions. My aim is more modest: the quotes and accounts I draw on may distort the original Yoruba, and indeed the intention of the speaker, but they appear here as I heard them and form part of a narrative that represents only my account of things, not 'how things are'.
27. This was a case of a celibate woman who received artificial donor insemination at a Midlands clinic that was leaked to the press. It caused a furore, converging with moralising debates about lesbian parenting and single mothers.
28. In a discussion about difficulties in marriage with a group of married young women of my age, for example, I talked about a friend of my mother's who had a violent husband. One day, she decided that she was not going to take it any more. So she called a removals van and 'packed out' while he was at work (little did I know at the time that this was just about to happen to a man I knew, but more of that in Chapter 5). We then had a lively discussion about just how far a woman can be pushed before she 'packs'.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. See Farias and Barber (eds., 1990) and Peel (1983) on the influence of Yoruba cultural nationalism on the production of texts on 'the Yoruba', and Lloyd (1962) and Apter (1993) for examples of the ways in which fashionable theoretical models of their respective eras have been used to construct their versions of 'the Yoruba'.
2. There are a variety of opinions on when Ado was first settled. Two prominent Awori chiefs and local historians, Chief Z.A. Opaleye and Chief Benedict Adekunle, suggested that Ado was founded in the fifteenth and the fourteenth century respectively. Both trace the original settlers directly to Ife and both name Onitako as the first settler. Gibbons suggests that Ado had 18th century origin, from southern Yoruba and Bini people and that offshoots from the first migration went on to found Ado in or around the middle of the c18th (Intelligence Report on the Central Awori Group in the Ikeja & Badagry District of the Colony, 28/2/1935. NAI CSO 26.29979); a similar date is given in the Ilaro Annual Report of 1936-7 (NAI Abeprof 6/2). Newington considers various local claims and counter-claims about the antiquity of the town in a report that reveals the kinds of political machinations involved in claims to greater superiority among the towns of the area (Intelligence Report on the Administrative Areas of Ado and Igbessa, 17/12/1940. NAI Abeprof 2/ABP.1626). In one such claim, a petition from the Ilobi dated 1931 (enclosed in Intelligence Report on Ilobi, Okeodan and Ajilete Groups of the Egbado People in the Ilaro Division, JH Ellis, 20/9/1935, NAI CSO26.30435),

Ado people are said to have come to ask the Olobi for land to settle on in around 1533, going on to approach the Ilobi hunter Onitako who had first settled there. Newington concludes that Ado was around 200 years old in 1940. He goes on to argue: 'like all other Yoruba communities they possess an Oduduwa shrine and there is no doubt that they came originally from Ife' (p4). However, the Oduduwa shrine is not like those of central Yorubaland. In Ado, as in Jabata and Porto Novo, this shrine is to a female creator Goddess rather than to the male Oduduwa. Shared ritual practice in these areas leads Adediran (1994) to suggest that Ado was founded prior to the migration of Awori people to the Savé area in the 16th century. Smith (1969), Morton-Williams (1964a) and Asiwaju (1976) confirm a Bini influence. Morton-Williams (1964a) suggests that the Olofin of Ado received his crown from Benin, possibly before 1700. Ado was never subject to the Oyo Empire at its zenith (Law 1977) and may have been one of the subject towns founded through the westward expansion of Benin in the 16th century (Smith 1969, Bradbury 1973).

3. A large literature explores the dimensions of indigenous religious practice and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to review it (see, for example, Verger 1960, Idowu 1962, Morton-Williams 1964b, Bascom 1969, Abimbola 1976, Barber 1981 and 1991, Drewal and Drewal 1983, Gleason 1987, Barnes 1989, Olupona 1991, Apter 1992, Matory 1994). Folayan, drawing on CMS missionary sources (Church Missionary Intelligencer, Vol IV, 1853, p133-4, p274) suggests that in the early nineteenth century: 'Ado was a great religious centre as the seat of Oduduwa and during the annual festival, the town was always filled with people from Badagry, Lagos and even Porto Novo' (1967:80-1).
4. Various versions of this story are told. Onitako, many say, was a hunter from Ile-Ife who came in search of a place to settle when Ile-Ife, the 'cradle of Yoruba civilisation' and site of the origin myths of the Yoruba people (Idowu 1962, Bascom 1969, Abimbola 1976), became too crowded. He consulted the oracle, Ifa, who told him to place a soup plate (*awo*) on the river and to follow it until it sank. At this place, where the plate sank (*awo ri*) he should settle and found a town. And so, at the place by the river (*ado odo*), the town was established. Other versions tell other tales. But all confirm the antiquity of the town.
5. See Peel (1983, 1989) and Farias and Barber (1980) on the making of a Yoruba ethnicity. Peel details the process of Yoruba ethnogenesis over the course of this century, illustrating the emergence of a category 'Yoruba' through intersecting political projects driven by nationalism and the agendas of Yoruba Christian missionaries. He argues 'that we study a people called "the Yoruba" at all is due largely to them' (1989:198).
6. There are eight biomedical maternity centres in Ado, two of which had a doctor attached to them in 1993-4. Numerous independent churches offer maternity services, some managed by trained or experienced midwives, others by prophetesses who claim to have learnt their profession through dreams sent by the 'Holy Spirit'. Adetunji's (1992) study of church-based obstetric care in a Efon Alaaye, north of Ibadan, reports half of recorded births from 1983-1990 as being delivered in 'faith clinics' associated with independent or charismatic Christian churches. These church clinics were run by midwives who came to the job after experiencing 'the divine call' and relied on prayer and on 'guidance from the Holy Spirit' (1992:1171). In Ado I would imagine that the figures are much lower than this, due to the presence of a reasonable government maternity and the Omolayo maternity which is very well regarded in the town.
7. Newbury (1961) reports that Badagry was first mentioned as a slave mart in 1740 and, subsequent to being sacked by Dahomey in 1784, it remained a small market town until the end of that century, growing in importance in the early years of the following century as an outlet for Oyo and then Egba trade.
8. Akinjogbin (1980) cites the report of a French slave trader, N., in 1719, attesting to extensive markets, internally organised with rows of commodity specialists. N. details the goods sold: tobacco and pipes, dyed and white cloth, cloth of cotton and tree bark, mats and baskets, boiled fish, palm oil, cooking pots, fruit and vegetables, along with stalls to buy refreshments.
9. Arguments have been made (see, for example, Hodder 1962, 1969), that women's engagement in trade dates from the period of insecurity that persisted throughout the nineteenth century, as a consequence of frequent wars. Hodder suggests that women 'enjoyed relative immunity from attacks'

(1969:24). Sudarkasa (1973) challenges this thesis, noting that it seems an unlikely explanation for a gendered division of labour that was in any case primarily a localised affair involving occupational specialisations that arose independently from the nineteenth century security situation. Further, there does not appear to be historical evidence to suggest that women were any safer than men from attack. Nineteenth century accounts refer to the large caravans in which traders, both male and female, moved (Bowen 1968, Clapperton 1829). Valentine Faulkner, a CMS missionary, records conversations with men in Ketu in 1875, who reported that they kept their women hidden from visitors as the Egba had carried their wives and children when they attacked the town (Journal of Itinerancy from Ebute Metta via Ojo, Badagry, Addo, Oke Odan and Ilaro to the Ketu territory, July 21 - Aug 13th 1875, CMS CA2/037). This would suggest quite the opposite to the explanation put forward by Hodder.

10. Folayan reports that at this time, 'politically, Ado had gradually come to establish some position of great importance, if not of ascendancy yet, in southern Egbado. This position was acquired not by any military conquests but partly through the economic and religious importance of the town' (1967:81).
11. Folayan's (1967) extensive account of relations between neighbouring polities in this period reveals the tremendous complexity of the balance of powers and shifts over time.
12. Bowen estimates that: 'the whole number of people destroyed in this section of the country within the last 50 years, cannot be less than five hundred thousand'. (1968:113). A Methodist missionary, Mr Martin, describes a journey along the trade route to Abeokuta:

.. on Tuesday we proceeded [from Mowo, about 8km from Ado, in the direction of Abeokuta] on our way with the company of about 60 or 70 Egbas, who had been at Badagry, trading... passed through a number of ruined towns... the journey on Wednesday... was a dangerous one, as was part of that on Tuesday; the road passing through an enemy's country. The country we passed through today, once occupied by the Otta nation, was, a few years since, completely swept by the Egbas; not a town remaining. The remnant of the spoiled tribe, who have taken shelter among strangers, show their vengeance by attacking, and murdering or capturing their enemies, as they pass to and from the Coast, on trading visits (Annual Reports of the Wesleyan Mission, 1848:97).

Talbot cites a letter from Consul Campbell, dated 1855, that details the extent of the devastation of Egbado towns:

I have a list of more than twenty five of the Towns and large villages on the Dahomean frontier which have been swept from the face of the earth and their inhabitants slain, or taken captive, by the Egbas prior to the Dahomean attack on Abeokuta [of 1851, Johnson 1921:313]; and another list of more than 20 large Towns and villages that have met a similar fate at the hands of the Egbas, since the Dahomean attack on their town, independent of the long siege by the Egbas of the fortified town of Addoo, which town Dahomey considers as the key to his Dominions on the Eastward, and to the territory ruled over by his relative the king of Porto Novo' (1926:135).

13. The siege of Ado is mentioned by almost all writers on this period. The Egba responded to attacks by Aworis from Otta on merchants passing through to Lagos by razing Otta in 1841, then marching on Ado. Law (1970) suggests an earlier date for both attacks. He cites Townsend's journal entry for 1/2/1845 (CMS CA2/O/85b) as recording that the siege had lasted 'upwards of six years' and refers to Thomas Birch Freeman's Journal of Various Visits to the Kingdoms of Ashanti, Aku and Dahomey (1844), where he mentions having been told in December 1842 that the siege of Ado 'had now lasted 3 years without intermission' (1844:218). It was an intermittent siege, carried out through the presence of insufficient forces to wage a substantive attack on the town: with the hope of starving people into submission (Freeman 1844, Biobaku 1957). Bowen (1968) reports that, in the 1840s, the people of Ado continued to farm on the western side of the town, while the Egbas farmed on the east. As Ayandele (1979) points out, farming and trade continued throughout these wars. This was a time, however, when people of Ado suffered a lot. Madam Keku Olulana told me:

If any man went to his farm he would have to use medicine to be invisible so he could bring palm fruit home. Women would make *ogi* and others would take the waste to grind and use for their children because they couldn't go out. People would take unripe pawpaw with salt at that time.

14. Biobaku (1957) reports that in 1845 a Badagry slave dealer, Domingo Martinez, sent to the Egba with lavish gifts, to urge them to re-open the route through Ado. The CMS missionary Townsend also asked for safe passage through the area and shortly afterwards he passed through to Abeokuta (Biobaku 1957:33). In the late 1840s, the Egba returned to continue the siege until Townsend intervened in 1853, extracting from Ado the promise to keep the route open.
15. Interviews with Chief Adekunle, Mr Alagbe and Chief Olabintan in Ado.
16. S. Crowther, Journals 29/7/1853, CMS CA2/O/31.
17. A treaty of protection was signed on the 27/6/1863, procured through Thomas Tickel, a day after the governor of the Colony visited Ado. The original treaty is in the Ibadan Archives (CSO 5/1). In return for being shielded from their aggressive neighbours, the three kingdoms agreed to accept British guidance in relations with the Egba and Aja, to prevent the passage of slaves to Porto Novo and to open up their territories to all traders for 'lawful commerce' [ie in palm products] (Folayan, 1967:115). This enabled the British to extend the Colony as far as the Yewa (Newbury 1961). The treaty was to prove ineffective.
18. Letters and Journals of the Reverend James White at Ota, CMS CA2/O/87.
19. Annual Reports of the Wesleyan Mission, 1863:122.
20. Folayan writes:

Ado, like Oke-Odan, continued to take part in the Egba-Porto Novo slave trade. In fact, in 1869, to further this trade, Ado constructed a new route from Otta to Ilegbo [Ilogbo], thence to Mujuba and on to Ado whence the route crossed the Ado river to Munfo; thence to Ajarah and Porto Novo. In collaboration with Otta, Ado also constructed in the same year, another route from Otta to Erinja and across the Ado river to Oke-Odan' (1967:132; drawing on Tickel to Captain Cooper, 20/2/1869, NAI Badadiv 5/1 1866-71).

Agiri (1974) notes the extent to which domestic slaves featured in the economy of the area and mentions Ado as one of the markets for the sale of the strangers who were occasionally kidnapped and sold by Otta chiefs.

21. During the period 1832-6, Egba launched repeated attacks on Egbado towns and refugees fled to Oke-Odan, which was attacked by the Dahomeans in 1848 (Newbury 1961, Asiwaju 1976). From here, refugees may have come south to Ado either soon after their towns were destroyed or after the siege was lifted in 1853. One of the towns from which immigrants fled to Ado was Isaga: attacked first by the Egba in 1851 (Johnson 1921) and destroyed by the Dahomeans in 1862 (Talbot 1926, Asiwaju 1976).
22. Journal of Itinerary to the West and Northwest of Lagos, January 23 to March 1st 1877, Valentine Faulkner, CMS CA2/O/37.
23. The Imekko people came first, settling at the edge of the central Awori area. Then a wave of immigrants from Isaga arrived, following the destruction of Isaga in 1862, establishing their own settlement further out from this area. Thereafter came refugees from Iboro, Imasai, Igbogila and Aiyetoro, who established the Imasai/Iboro quarter.
24. For the British, control over the trade of the area had become a priority by the late 1880s. Letters from Government House to Sir Henry Holland in 1887 (NAI CSO 1/1 12 2629) note the loss of revenue due to smuggling of tobacco and spirits through the Ado river (20/6/1887) and that the complete control of imports into the Ado river 'is of considerable moment to this colony' (20/9/1887).
25. Denton to Knutsford, 15/3/1889, NAI CSO 1/3, Vol 2, Confidential Despatches to the Secretary of State 17/12/1888-21/11/1893. See also Bowen (1968), who notes that by 1850 the local economy had become monetarised to the extent that the use of barter was 'virtually unknown' in Badagry's markets.

26. This included efforts to buy off the Olofin of Ado and the hoisting of the French flag in Ado in 1887, later to be torn down by the people of the town (NAI Badadiv 1883-5, Bowland to Lagos, No 157 of 11/6/1887). Some months later, the Olofin of Ado formally offered the kingdom for British Protection, primarily in response to Aja pressure (Folayan, 1967; NAI CSO 1/1. Vol 12: Moloney to Holland, No 386 of 2/11/1887).
27. In this treaty, dated 8/8/1891, King Ashada Awopa of Ado and his chiefs signed an agreement 'in consideration of protection... [we] pledge to abandon human sacrifice and prohibit slave dealing' (NAI CSO 5/9:20).
28. The new Olofin, Ashade, may not have realised what his predecessor had let him in for by asking for protection some four years previously. In 1891, when he resorted to the old tactic of blocking up the Yewa in response to rows with Badagry traders over the alleged murder of a Bagadry woman by 'fetish priests', the British stepped in with a heavy hand, carted him off to Lagos and considered deporting him for slave raiding, before a committee headed by James Johnson pointed out that the British were overstepping the mark (NAI CSO 7/1 Vol 2 and 3, minutes of 8/3/1891, 18/5/1891).
29. Export opportunities for the 'traditional' crops - oil palm and maize - of the southern forest belt emerged from the 1860s on (Geary, 1965). The trade in oil products from palm was stimulated in the south west after 1860, with trade incentives from the British, to supply European demand. Famine to the west, in the Gold Coast and surrounding areas, encouraged maize exportation in 1877. In the early years of the twentieth century exports of maize to the UK offered a more lucrative alternative to cocoa and coffee and some enterprising farmers secured a UK market from 1905. The potential for maize exports was, however, fairly short-lived, peaking in 1908 (Agboola, 1980). Within a small area of the regional agricultural economy, distinct specialisations emerged along with markets for locally produced goods. Otta's poor soils supported neither yam nor maize, but indigenous *cola acuminata* flourished; with the introduction of *cola nitida* to the area, the farmers of Otta were ideally placed to expand production (Agiri 1972, Agboola 1980). Badagry's sandy soils hindered production of staples and meant that Badagry required a regular supply of foodstuffs from its hinterland. Supplying foodstuffs not only to Otta and Badagry, but also to the expanding urban centre of Lagos accounted for a proportion of Ado's internal agricultural exports.
30. *Cola nitida* (kola) was hardier, more suited to the soils and more lucrative in the early colonial period (Agiri 1972, Agboola 1979, 1980). It was introduced into plantations in Agege in 1910 and rapidly diffused throughout the area, as far as Owode (Agboola 1980). By the 1960s, kola accounted for 40% of the land under cultivation in the Otta, Ilaro and Ifo area and some 2/3rd of tree crops (ILO 1966). Galletti et al. (1956) note that many cocoa farms beyond their prime were abandoned in favour of kola in southern Abeokuta province: Ekundare (1973) suggests that kola was encouraged in this region in the 1930s. Agboola (1980) suggests that by 1881, cassava became one of the most important crops to be grown in the vicinity of Lagos.
31. In their extensive survey of cocoa farming, Galletti et. al. (1956) suggest that the area around Ado and Otta remained marginal for cocoa because of acidic sediments in the soils and high rainfall. Pockets of the area around Ado, however, especially towards Ilaro, favoured cocoa production (ILO, 1966). Uptake of cocoa was patchy, although by 1940 cocoa was said to account for a major part of Ado's cash crop output, with palm kernels (Newington, op. cit.). Cocoa production in the Abeokuta area had already begun to fall by the late 1930s, spurred by a drastic fall in the price of cocoa during the depression years (Ekundare 1973). By the late 1940s, the acreage planted to cocoa in this province had dwindled to less than 3% of the land area under cultivation for cocoa a decade before, around twelve times less than the area that was by then given over to cocoa in Ife-Ilesha (Galletti et al. 1956:626, Appendix Table IV). This was possibly due to the greater profitability and suitability of *cola nitida* over cocoa (ILO 1966, Agboola 1980). In the early 1950s swollen shoot disease swept through the southern area, wiping out many cocoa producers (Agboola 1979). Chief Ajuwon told me that while not all farmers had gone into cocoa, those who had invested in it were ruined in the 1950s.
32. During the 1930s, colonial agricultural services set up an oil palm experimental plantation (1938) and an experimental maize station (1935) close to Ado, presumably to further strengthen Ado's two principal crops.
33. Interviews with Chief Adekunle and Madam Keku Olulana, Idobarun Compound, Ado.

34. Work on rail links from Lagos to the interior began in 1885, as part of the British project to curb the demand for domestic slaves (Biobaku 1957). By 1897 the railway reached Sango-Otta (Agiri 1972), the closest it was to come to Ado, and by 1912 it stretched as far as Kano (Ekundare 1973). Trade activities sprang up at loci along the rail routes.
35. The railway could be joined at Ijoko, near Otta, by 1915 or Idogo on the extension between Ilaro and Ifo that was completed in 1930. Both took the best part of a day to reach by foot.
36. Newington, op. cit.
37. Islam came to Ado comparatively late. One reason for this might be that the pattern of earlier conversion had followed Oyo hegemony over the towns along the route from Old Oyo (Gbadamosi 1978), connected both to prominence in trade and to the presence of numbers of people from Oyo: Ilaro, for example, was known to have a Muslim population by the early nineteenth century by the latest (Gbadamosi 1978). As noted earlier, Ado was outside the orbit of Oyo influence. Moreover, Ado was a major centre for the Goddess Odudua and other Awori deities right through the nineteenth century.
38. Interviews with Mr S.A. Adagunduro, Chief Olabintan and Chief Z.A. Opaleye, Ado.
39. Interview with Chief Olabintan, Chief B. Adekunle and Mr Alagbe, Ado.
40. In 1924, dissent within the Methodist church centring around the injunction to marry only one wife led to the founding of the UAMC Eleja church by six prominent townsmen, soon followed by the opening of the Eleja Primary School. Other independent African churches began to be founded, such as St John First Evangelist in 1925. By this time, the Salvation Army had a following in Ado (Asiwaju 1976, interview with Captain Unachukwu of Ado's SA church). A Baptist delegation, led by Ogbomoshos, visited the town in the 1930s and set up a church soon afterwards. In the late 1930s, the African Apostolic Church was established by Ijesha traders and soon afterwards, the CMS established a mission and a primary school. The last mission church to set up a base in Ado was that of the Catholics, who had stationed a priest in the town by the mid-1940s who set up a primary school soon afterwards.
41. See Ajayi (1965) and Ayandele (1966) for the impact of mission education and Christian ideology on southern Nigeria.
42. By the late 1930s, several people told me that two or three lorries were arriving in Ado every market day from Abeokuta and lorries were used by Ado traders to transport farm produce handled mainly by women to markets in the region.
43. 'Iya' is an appellation used for all adult women and means 'mother'. Women are often known by the name of their first born child, i.e. Iya Bola. Others may be known by the name of their trade, i.e. Iya Alata (mother, who sells pepper). Some men are known as Baba (father) of their children or their work: i.e. Baba Peter, Baba Elemu (father, who sells palm wine). If a woman has been to Mecca, she is known as Alhaja; men who have been to Mecca are known as Alhaji.
44. The traditional title system offered some opportunities to older Awori women who had come to command respect within the community. Chief Olabintan told me of four titles that were available to women in the domains of caring for the *qba* and his children and in conflict resolution: *Iya Qba*, representing the position of mother of the *qba* (not his actual mother) and responsible for settling disputes between his wives; *Iya Asoju Qba*, who acted as a kind of personal assistant, carrying messages and sorting things out for him; *Iya Abiye Qba*, like a nanny, took care of the *qba*'s children, represents the *qba* in providing for the children; and *Iyalode*, who had the responsibility for settling and arbitrating disputes, before they reached the level of the *qba*. The most powerful of these titles was that of *Iyalode*. The last *Iyalode*, Yewande Akinlade, died in the 1930s according to Chief Olabintan. See Awe (1977) for a historical account of the role of the *Iyalode* in governance; see also Falola (1978) and Denzer (1994).
45. See Curwen's Intelligence Report on The Awori People of Badagry (NAI CSO.26/4 30030 S2, 1939). See also Yakubu (1989).
46. Cited by Ekundare (1973) from Colonial Report No 1569, 1931:57.
47. Poll tax had been extracted from men in the SW region since 1922 (Ekundare 1973). Attempts to extend this system of taxation to women were roundly resisted in the west and caused riots in the east of the country (Ifeka-Moller 1975).

48. The first man to own a vehicle in Ado was an Ijebu man, G.F. Oluyadi, who traded in palm produce and bought a lorry in 1936 (Asiwaju 1976, oral evidence). Many Ado people recounted the rising fortune of a Kwara immigrant, Alhaji Aroboto, who came to the town in the late 1920s and established a huge general store, selling every imaginable commodity. Aroboto's wealth and influence in the area has become legendary.
49. Interviews with Chief Olabintan, Ado. See Peel (1978) on *olaju*.
50. The situation in 1920 was said to be 'delicate'. Colonial officers reported that Ado and Igbessa had arranged to defy orders and pay 2/- a man and 1/- a woman rather than 5/- and 3/-, by only declaring half of the people in the compound and not declaring those on the farms (Taxation in Ilaro 1920: Unrest in South of Division, NAI/Abeprof 4/4; 10/1920).
51. The post office was opened in 1940 (Annual Report, Ilaro Division, 1940-1 NAI/Abeprof 6/2) and a dispensary was mentioned in the Annual Report for Ilaro Division of 1937 (NAI Abeprof 6/2).
52. Smuggling has been a mainstay of the local economy for the last century. Despite the attempts of the colonial regimes and, since independence, of national governments, illicit cross-border trade has featured significantly in the development of towns in the area (Asiwaju 1976, 1991). Asiwaju writes: 'By 1945, nearly all young men living in frontier villages were involved in the business; and in both areas, smuggling had given rise to a class of wealthy men and women...' (1976:201).
53. In Chapter 5, I tell the stories of some of those who left and many who stayed in Ado during this period; a time when changes in marriage and in the economy of the town started to have a discernable impact on people's lives.
54. Galletti et al. (1956) describe the extensive out-migration typical of small towns in the region.
55. Handing over notes, Abeokuta province, 9/11/1934, NAI Abeprof 2/ABP.670II, report that Otta-Ajgunle road opened end of November 1933 - continuation of road to Ado not yet approved because it is said that it might compete with the railway. Ado NA were permitted to widen the existing path next year (1935) and render it suitable for pedal cycles. The state of Ado-Ilaro road was deemed poor. Newington (Intelligence Report, op. cit.) reports that there was no motor road apart from Ilaro - Ere ferry main road and recently completed branch to Igbessa from Ado. A letter of 21/10/1945 to the Resident at Abeokuta (NAI Abeprof 2/ABP.1626) reports great demand for a bridge to carry the road to Otta via Ajgunle.
56. Letter from WFH Newington to Resident re Intelligence Report (NAI 15/5/41: ABP 1626/23).
57. Interview, 10/5/94.
58. See footnote 30.
59. The Annual Report for Ilaro Division of 1948 (NAI Abeprof 6/12:16) reports for Ado-Igbessa Native Sub-Authority that increased produce prices in cocoa areas had driven up other prices, as a result of a surfeit of money and a shortage of consumer goods (p4).
60. At one point public dissatisfaction erupted. Fuelled by anti-government anger, Ado people set to and burnt all government buildings in the town, captured the Hausa guard at the house of a prominent politician and beheaded him as a sign of their fury.
61. Prior to the 1930s, all tailors were men. When the first immigrants from central Yoruba towns arrived in Ado, some took to tailoring: Ogbomoshos moved from house to house sewing clothes, Ijebu women and men brought in machines and started setting up businesses, Ijesha women and men associated with the cloth trade also became involved in making clothes. Ado people learnt from them and since the 1960s the number of women involved in tailoring has grown. These days, women tailors outnumber men by about 2:1. There are now two 'lady photographers' in Ado, both women who trained in the 1960s.
62. Agboola (1980) reports that cassava was already cultivated in Ouidah in the eighteenth century, but knowledge of processing techniques probably spread to Yorubaland much later with returnees from Brazil, through Badagry and Lagos to the towns of Egbado and to Abeokuta. By the mid-nineteenth century, the sale of cassava in the markets of Badagry and Abeokuta had been reported by travellers and by the 1870s *gari* had become a staple in the cities (Agboola 1980). Old women in Ado told me that they had not eaten cassava in their youth, but that it became popular around the time of WWII and that *gari* was produced in town in some quantities by the 1940s. An enterprising Ijebu woman, I was told, brought the technique of making *fufu* to Ado and in the early 1960s other women began to

learn how to make it. Today *fufu* processing is one of the most popular processing professions.

63. During this period, the southwestern part of Abeokuta province became an important supplier of food for Lagos (ILO 1966). From the late 50s onwards, agricultural policy had transformed the area around Ado into a primarily food producing area, partly due to the agency of the Ado indigene who joined the federal assembly in 1956 and became minister for agriculture, Chief Z.A. Opaleye.
64. This is in part due to smuggling, given Ado's proximity to the border with Benin (Asiwaju 1991).
65. After the expressway between Lagos and Badagry was opened in 1974, the flow of traffic through the town was drastically reduced. Ado's market, had, however, grown sufficiently by that time to attract specialist traders buying mats to sell in Lagos and a few enterprising women bringing produce from northern Egbado down to sell; and the volume of trade at the local level sustained the place of the market in Ado's economy. In the early 1980s a new market opened at the junction of roads leading via Agbara to Lagos: Lusada. And Lusada market grew to take a prominent position in the regional marketing system, both as a depot for wholesale trade and bulking, and as a place where Ado traders could go to buy items for breaking in Ado, as well as to do *karakata*. While Lusada, to some extent, displaced Ado's market, it also offered opportunities to Ado traders for subsistence trade as well as for accumulation.
66. Fashoyin (1993) reports that oil accounted for 2.6% of revenue in 1960, rising to 57% in 1970 and 96% in 1993, while agriculture fell from 86% in 1960, to 4% in 1970 and further declined to 1% in 1980. Expressed as a proportion of foreign exchange revenue, the decline in other sectors of the economy relative to oil is even more marked: oil accounted for 57.6% of forex earnings in 1970, rising to 98.2% in 1982; and, proportionate to other sources of government revenue, oil had risen from a mere 26% in 1970 to 81% by 1980 and 95% thereafter. Prices and production of oil plummeted in 1981, with exports falling to slightly less than half the amount in 1979. The scale of the crisis can be imagined from Fashoyin's report: from June to December 1981 alone, external reserves had been cut by half. By 1986, oil was worth just over a third of its value in the late 70s.
67. From the Alma Ata Declaration's slogan of 'Health for All by the Year 2000'.
68. With reservations about the utility of a data set of this size, it is worth noting the principal occupations among current adult male residents of 55 houses in Imasai quarter.

	farmer	trader	vehicle related	other skilled manual	tailor	white collar	priest, alfa & herbalist
> 60	10	3	1	1	1	4	4
40-60	10	3	11	4		5	1
30-40		10	4	4		2	
< 30		5	8	5	1	1	

69. With reservations about the size of my sample and about single occupational categories like these (see Chapter 7, see Pittin 1982), it may be worth including here data on women's principal occupations among current residents in a sample of 55 houses in Imasai. 'Other modern' refers to skilled manual work in fairly recent occupations like hairdressing. I have not included apprentices. The relatively high proportion of women in professions like teaching, nursing and clerical work reflects a higher educational level overall for this quarter relative to other such areas (Kaufman, pers. comm.). Mat weaving is rarely the main job of women in this quarter, but in other parts of town substantial numbers of women are mat weavers.

	farmer	trader	tailor	food process.	white collar	other 'modern'
> 60		23				
40-60	1	43	1	3	6	2
30-40	1	10		1	1	
< 30		18	3	3	4	5

70. Hairdressing is a fairly recent occupation. There is a distinction between salon hairdressers, who offer services in perming, hair extensions and hair straightening, and *onidiri*, hairdressers who plait hair in traditional styles. Younger women and members of the elite prefer the more fashionable permed hairstyles to plaited hair. Lady Bola's salon, the first in Ado, opened in 1985. By 1994 there were 17 hairdressing salons, many run by apprentices who had graduated under Lady Bola and an association of hairdressers had been set up.
71. The currency of French-speaking West Africa, convertible into hard currency and pegged to the French Franc.
72. The *Egbe Agba* (lit. society of old people) is one example of an Awori tradition that still holds strong. It consists of descendants from the four original Awori quarters: Odo Osi, Oke Osi, Odo Ijanna, Oke Ijanna. They come together in two teams that perform at funerals by dancing and singing songs which ritually insult the other 'side'. Members of the association contribute money to buy cloth and towards the costs of the burial. Songs are directed at embarrassing incidents that members of the lineage would rather hide and are sung directly at the senior members of the lineage. They are often quite rude. The recipient is expected to lavish money on the performers and remain smiling throughout, even when they are accusing him of failing to bury his mother, telling tales about members of his family or relating embarrassing stories about things the family would rather forget. The four groups once referred to compounds of families. As genealogies are traced through mothers as well as fathers, over time, as women married out, the lineages were dispersed throughout the four quarters: these days, a compound can have people in it who trace their genealogies to each of the four quarters.
73. Odudua and Ogun are the most prominent deities in the town. Odudua's ancient shrine is carefully maintained and draws a group of worshippers to pay homage to her on feast days. Many of Odudua's followers are old women, although significant numbers of younger people, especially women seeking children, were visible at celebrations. Ogun, on the other hand, has an enthusiastic following of younger men who may also be Muslims. As god of iron, and of transport, it appears that Ogun has attained increasing popularity relative to other deities over time (see Barnes ed. 1989), perhaps due to the a disproportionate number of small businesses oriented towards servicing transport.
74. I counted 27 churches and 10 mosques (I was told there are 17). Most Muslims attend the huge Central Mosque.
75. Traditional titles are of two kinds: those passing directly to members of the four ruling *idile* of the Awori, and those acquired by individuals in recognition of their own achievements and the glory they have brought to the town, as well as for particular things they have done within the community. The latter may be given to *Egbado* as well as Aworis and to exceptional women as well as men. These titles are of most significance to older men: younger, educated men are less interested in them than in the other bases for power and prestige.
76. Both candidates for the vacant *obaship* are men who live outside the town and can draw on bases of support within it, as 'big men'.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. According to local reckoning, 'five days' (*ojo marun*) includes both the starting and finishing day of the sequence. In the UK, to say 'see you in five days' on a Monday would imply that we'd meet on the following Saturday: in Ado, it would mean we'd meet on Friday.
2. Earlier writings by European anthropologists (i.e. Bascom 1942, Lloyd 1966) tended to place the patrilineage in a pivotal position in social organisation, focusing on unilineal descent groups as their unit of analysis. However, in the writings often used as a baseline for sociological work on 'the Yoruba', that of Yoruba writers Johnson ([1889]1921) and Fadipe ([1939]1970), the starting point was the co-resident compound rather than the lineage. These studies have their own historicity: something that tends to be submerged in references made to them in texts describing situations many decades later, yet their emphasis on the *idile* draws attention to the complexity of relations between residents of a compound as people who both share a space and may have different claims over it as members of lineages.

3. Some compounds consist of a single house, in which as few as three adults people, others up to over twenty adults may live. Where houses are clustered into a compound, there may be up to thirty or forty people living in the houses themselves at any one time.
4. Children can elect to become members of *idile* through their father's father, father's mother, mother's father or mother's mother; sons may prefer to live with the mothers they adore than the fathers they have more distant relationships with (see Chapter 8). See Eades (1980) for regional variation in kinship patterns. Lloyd (1966) argues that southern Yoruba sub-groups have predominantly cognatic kinship patterns, drawing a distinction between these groups and those with agnatic kinship in the northern areas. As Eades (1980) and Peel (1983) point out, the fluidity and opportunism that is evident in kin affiliations tend to undermine such attempts at classification.
5. See Lloyd's (1962) account in Yoruba Land Law of different patterns of inheritance and the opportunities afforded to women to inherit land; see also Afonja (1986) for changes in access to land for women.
6. There is no linguistic distinction between an elder brother, for example, and a senior female first, second or even more distantly related cousin: all would be *egbon* to the junior person, who would be their *aburu*.
7. People often used the expression 'same mother, same father' to denote those they were especially close to; and people would comment that a certain person had behaved as if they had the same mother and father if they had done something especially generous or thoughtful. Half-siblings, the children a woman has by another man or a man by another woman, are not considered as close or indeed as trustworthy.
8. In one instance, a woman I knew sided with her husband in a dispute he was having with her brother. Her behaviour was judged strange and also foolish. Strange because it seemed quite inexplicable why a wife would stick by someone who had tried to hurt her own brother. Foolish because, as one commentator noted, when the marriage ran into difficulties, who would she run to? Her family. And by doing such a thing, she was putting her own future security in jeopardy. The women I discussed this further with were unanimous in their opinion. It was considered absolute folly to damage an escape route, or a source of pressure on your own behalf, just for the sake of a husband. Who knows, they said, when that husband will say he's tired of the wife?
9. Eades argues that kinship must be seen not as a set of ascribed and fixed relations, but as relations in which 'the actors themselves may put forward different versions of their kinship ideology to support their own interests, and which one becomes generally accepted will relate more to the present distribution of power than to questions of historical truth' (1980:51). See also O'Laughlin (1995) on the straitjacket of structural-functionalist notions of descent.
10. This especially affects claims to land and houses. With regard to the former, several people suggested that *juju* had been or would be used when they tried to claim their share. And the reason why so many family houses fall into disrepair is because multiple claims can be activated if they are worth inheriting. As one man said to me, 'if I build up this house to make it look fine, then others [his immediate as well as more distant relations] will come and say "this is my house"'.
11. Some of the immigrants who came to Ado from central Yoruba towns have built themselves substantial houses on the land they came to occupy; others remain as lodgers in makeshift circumstances, in houses they neither decorate or maintain, waiting for years, even decades, to return home. In one of the poorest looking houses in Imasai Quarter lived a woman who had built her own house in Ilesha and had a son in the USA.
12. There are so many permutations that typologies are difficult to construct without a host of categories (see Brydon 1987). In a sample of 55 houses in Imasai quarter, selected at random, only 3 houses accommodated brothers and their families together. There were 11 houses which were occupied only by a monogamously married couple and their children, 10 by polygynists and their wives and children, 4 houses in which there were only women, 16 in which a nuclear unit was extended by either the mother of the man, other relatives of the man or woman, or a couple's married sons and separated or unmarried daughters, 5 polygynous households where sons and their wives or other relations were co-resident, 3 houses containing lodgers and 5 in which the male head lived without a co-resident wife, with his sons or daughters or with unmarried junior relatives, plus other

complicated combinations. Clearly, household type also depends on where people are in their life courses (Goody 1969). As the sample is so small, these figures are merely illustrative.

13. Mann (1985) provides an account of the impact of mission Christian ideals on Yoruba marriage in early colonial Lagos, which reveals some of the tensions that arose between elite respectability and actual practice, which resonate with practices in Ado in the present.
14. The mainstream and pentecostal Christian churches strongly advocate monogamy and have been doing so with some success for over a century (Mann 1985). Other variants of Christianity are more permissive and orisa cults place no restrictions on the number of wives a man may have. Islamic religions (mainstream Islam along with the sects of Ahmadiyyah, Shamsudeen, Nawarudeen) permit a man up to four wives.
15. I have no precise figures on religious affiliation in Ado. I would hazard a rough guess, from estimates given to me by different people in the town and my own observations, that numbers of Christians and Muslims are roughly equivalent, with a small minority of mainly older people devoted to particular *orisa*. It is not uncommon to find Muslims who also practice various aspects of the *orisa* religions; nor to find people going from church to mosque to shrine in cases of personal crisis, looking for something that works. Children usually follow the religion of their fathers and wives are expected to do so too, unless crisis strikes and they convert in search of help. I met only one atheist, Mr Akinsowon. I discuss religious associations later in this chapter.
16. My survey data from Imasai Quarter suggest a high number of monogamously married men, just under double the number of polygynously married men. However, this represents less of a shift in practices than might be imagined as I knew many of the men to have had other wives who had left them for these reasons or had been chased by their husbands for being quarrelsome.
17. Debates about 'the household' have spawned a huge literature - see for example Guyer (1980, 1981, 1988), Folbre (1981, 1986, 1994), Harris (1981), Whitehead (1981), Fapohunda (1987, 1988), Brydon and Chant (1989), Roberts (1991), Peters (1995) and contributors to Kabeer and Joekes (1991), Guyer and Peters (1987), Dwyer and Bruce (1988) and Bryceson (1995). Reviewing these debates is beyond the scope of this chapter.
18. Abu notes a similar situation in Ashanti marriages, remarking on 'the separateness of spouses' resources and the overtness of the bargaining element in their relationship' (1983:156). 19. There is, again, a huge literature on female-headed households. See, for example, Buvinic et al. (1978), Dwyer and Bruce (1988), Brydon and Chant (1989), Folbre (1991), Blumberg (1993), Mencher and Okongwu eds. (1993). Peters (1995) offers a compelling critique of the pervasive tendency to equate female-headed households with poverty, rather than exploring the ways in which such households may emerge out of choice and the linkages that connect their members into other spheres. She makes the important point that: 'Too myopic a focus on female-headedness has led analysts and policy-makers to ignore the lesson that gender differences intersect with other social differences and these, in turn, with household structures. To fail to conduct such an analysis is to confuse both problem and solution' (Peters 1995:100). As Peters points out, policy interest in female headed households is tended to be equated with a concern with 'gender', yet fails to take account of the way in which gender relations, those other relations mediated in part by gender rather than simply husband-wife relations alone, are constituted. I explore these issues further in Chapter 5.
20. In this regard, Becker's attempt to redefine the new household economics model to take account of such situations raises similar problems to earlier formulations. Becker argues: 'in my approach the "optimal reallocation" results from altruism and voluntary contributions, and the "group preference function" is identical to that of the altruistic head, even where he does not have sovereign power' (1981:192).
21. This emerged when I asked Baba Yemisi to collect information on a sample of households in Imasai and to underline the household head in each case. In several cases, he marked out wealthy women traders as household heads, many of whom lived with less prestigious husbands.
22. Blumberg's five universal pre-conditions for the formation of female headed households hinge primarily on economic factors such as independent access to resources, control over one's own property, possibilities for earning as much as or more than men. Two further aspects are the compatibility of women's work with childcare and a factor she includes as a subset of independent

access to subsistence, giving it no further attention, that women are actually permitted and able to set up their own households. 'Culture' only features in her analysis as a marginal 'additional variable[s]' (1993:24), although one of her conditions is explicitly associated with cultural factors, namely the possibilities open to women to be allowed to head a separate residence.

23. For example, a woman selling *ate* ('provisions'), which include sweets and biscuits, told me that she'd decided to move into another line as her children were of the age where they'd come to her, hungry, from school and start snacking into her market. She found it hard to refuse them.
24. Some relatives will give kin extra amounts, reduce the price or even dash them items for free; this eats into their profits. If relatives are concerned about the success of the marketwoman's business, they can send someone else to buy from her who will be charged the real price. Equally, for those who want to disrupt a woman's trade, striking at her market is an effective way of bringing her down, especially when it seems she is getting proud (see Chapter 6). This can be done through medicine or witchcraft, it can also be done by those who take advantage of social links to 'eat' or 'spoil' the market of others. Handwerker reports a similar situation for Monrovia: one trader told her, 'some friends and relatives come to lure you to poverty. They will break down your market by asking for this and that which they would pay for' (1973:293).
25. I knew of only one market association run exclusively by men: the meat sellers association which operated a closed shop with a high level of co-operation.
26. See Ardener (1964), Ardener and Burman eds. (1995) for rotating credit associations in other places, see also Sudarkasa (1973) and Bascom (1952) for other regions in southwestern Nigeria. I discuss savings further in Chapter 7.
27. In cases where one or two outsiders tried to undercut prices, marketwomen told me that they would buy up their goods to get rid of them and then continue selling at the price they wanted to. This seems to be the way people are dealing with the village *gari* sellers (see Chapter 7).
28. These two successful traders were appointed by the late *Qba* Akapo in 1988, with the task of arbitrating disputes within the market and encouraging the progress of the market within the town. Prior to this time, there were only association leaders. During the late 1980s, a series of disputes broke out within the market when traders attempted to force outsiders who undercut their prices out and fix their prices. The townspeople objected. The *Iyalqja* and *Babalqja* were appointed and charged with the task of maintaining a free market. As the *Babalqja* told me, it is in any case hard to keep 'outsiders' from the surrounding villages out of the market even in the absence of rules as in recent years they have flooded the market in numbers.
29. This is not to say that there are no economic advantages in cultivating relations with a trader, nor that close relationships between people are always secondary to market relations.
30. Whether this is connected with securing a better price for goods, as Balogun's (1991) detailed study of dress on prices suggests, also depends as he notes on the bargaining tactics that are used (see Chapter 7).
31. This struck me most forcibly one evening, when I went down to a funeral ceremony in the quarter where I lived and saw, together, so many familiar faces. Some were neighbours, but others seemed quite out of place. I slowly pieced together the connections between those who I'd got to know in so many different contexts: schoolkids I'd taught, women I knew from the market or from houses in the quarter, old men and women I'd recorded life histories from in various parts of town, attendants from the clinic, men I'd met in the yards of a mechanic or electrician and the Sisters and Father, lay preachers and others I knew to be connected with the Catholic church. They'd all come to the joint 'final burial' of an Ogbomosho Catholic from the neighbourhood.
32. In the social ranking exercise I carried out (see Chapter 1), people took into consideration the position of husbands relative to their wives' incomes as well as vice versa. A few women were placed in higher categories due to the wealth of their husband. But, for the most part, women were assessed according to what they had done for themselves. Several women emerged with higher ranks than their husbands. Those women who were members of women-only houses spanned the spectrum of wealth, from the richest to the poorest: designated not according to the presence of a male household head but by their achievements as individuals.
33. One man attributed his wife leaving him directly to a friend of hers who, he said, 'turned her mind

against me'; another told me of how his wife had been encouraged by a friend to join an *egbe* (women's association) and from then on she 'did rubbish and nonsense all around' (i.e. went to parties and, he alleged, had lovers). As I note in Chapter 6, the intentions of friends in giving advice or encouraging women to take action may be suspect - and may also be suspected.

34. Jay Kaufman asked our sample in Imasai to rank sources of security. I am grateful for being able to use his data to perform the following simple computation, weighting ranks by rank order in order to compute totals. Overall, results were as follows:

		God	Education	Family	Money	Land
WOMEN	weighted total	177	143	99	115	44
	overall rank	1	2	4	3	5
MEN	weighted total	195	137	112	95	62
	overall rank	1	2	3	4	5

35. Churches varied in their gender composition. All but one were dominated by women members: the exception was the Church of Christ whose preacher extracted the most damning bits of the bible to preach about women's place and in which women were not allowed to make any sound. This church had a very small female following, for obvious reasons. More men attended mission, independent and gospel churches than charismatic churches.
36. The mission churches have fewer associations than some of the others. In the Cherubim and Seraphim church, for example, a lot of people hold titles and are involved closely in church organisations. In others, associations cross a range of interests. To take one example, in the Apostolic Divine Church there are 6 associations, *Egbe Akorin*: choir, mixed sex; *Egbe Imole* (light): only women, 10 members all under 40 made up of regulars who come together to pray, if the church needs reps. at other ceremonies, choose from them; *Egbe Ogo Oluwa* (glory of God): not functioning at present, due to lack of members, no particular age, mixed sex; *Egbe Irawowuro* (morning star): 8 people, mixture of men and women, up to 32yrs, come to clean the church, chosen from regulars; *Egbe Qdq*: 15 people, mixed sex, do things together; *Egbe Idagbasoke* (development association): 12 members, mixed sex, no particular age come together to discuss the progress of the church, how to expand and develop and plan activities.
37. One *assalatu* that I knew consisted of a group of women who were all highly successful traders in particular commodities (cloth and jewellery), who made the most of these linkages in their commercial pursuits. The network of one of these women included other Alhajas, members of different *assalatu*, and other high status traders with whom she came together at different times in a savings *egbe*.
38. In the sample of 40 women over 45 in Imasai (see earlier description), 33 belonged to a religious association of some kind, 3 were members of revolving credit associations and 4 were in market associations. 2 women belonged to all three kinds of association: they were both among the wealthiest women in the quarter. 9 women belonged to no association at all (see Chapter 7).
39. The African Apostolic church, for example, was established by an Ijesha man, in 1939, and the majority of church goers are Ijesha. So significant is the Ijesha presence, that the church has an association of those dealing in cloth, a characteristic Ijesha trade (see Peel 1983).
40. Many prominent businesswomen and men, like the two market leaders, are Muslims who have been to Mecca and are recognised by the titles Alhaja (female) and Alhaji (male). They may meet in the mosque or be part of associations of other Alhajas or Alhajis who come together to pray and also to talk business. Christian businessmen's fellowships come together for pentecostal prayers and for mutual assistance in making connections with clients.
41. This is not to say that people did not have attitudes about others based on their affiliation with particular churches. Mission church members generally thought of themselves as being more 'civilised' than those who attended the charismatic churches and as occupying a higher moral ground than the born-again. Many were members of the educated elite (see Ajayi 1965, Ayandele 1966). Some of the established independent churches, such as Eleja, African Apostolic and First John Evangelist drew from a wider clientele, including better and less educated people. Charismatic church

members were often more poorly educated. Their form of Christianity was regarded by members of the mission churches as too wrapped up with 'superstition': their use of *juju* was commented on by several people, including herbalists who supplied them, as a sign that they were not really 'civilised'. Members of gospel churches were often younger people, many of whom were well educated. They were regarded with some suspicion by many people I knew, partly because many were seen as hypocrites for going on and on about Jesus and then being untrustworthy themselves, partly because of their intolerance towards other religions and their attitude that only they were 'real' believers.

42. In their survey of women's informal associations, March and Taquu note that many such associations are 'forged in the name of their children and children's needs' (1986:36).
43. Trade associations are often single-sex, by virtue of the sexual division of labour; notably, only one of these associations, the tailoring association, had both male and female membership. Savings and social associations tend also to be single-sex, except in the case of those in which seniors, male and female alike, come together. The associations formed under the auspices of the world religions are also often single sex, while 'traditional' religious groups draws followers from both sexes.
44. The extent to which women and men were known by and knew of others was an interesting indication of how visible people were in the quarter. Among the eighty men and women who were ranked, men were able to identify almost all the men but did not know some of the women. Those they did not know were mainly women who did a little home-based work and some market trading, but were not very visible around the quarter. Among women, those who spent much of their time at home did not know some of the men in other parts of the quarter and equally failed to recognise the names of some of the women. I used the names people were known by rather than their full names in some cases - ie few people might know Iya Alata (of pepper) as X, but would quickly recognise who I meant even if several women sell pepper in the area. If people did not know people by the various names I knew them by, I would give clues (i.e. the one with light skin, the one whose compound is next to so and so's house) and usually they would be able to picture the person, then form an assessment of them. I avoided naming a person's profession unless this was part of the name they were known by. In the case of some of the unknown women, a series of clues still left informants unsure who I meant and it was clear that they couldn't picture them at all.
45. Drawing on ideas developed by Epstein (1961), Mitchell (1969) and Boissevain and Mitchell (1973), I explored social networks among women using combination of two PRA techniques, 'pair-wise ranking' and 'venn diagramming' (IIED 1994): I asked women for symbols for their friends if they were not literate and marked a set of cards with the symbol, I then drew three cards at random and asked what two of the three women had in common, then asked the woman to place the cards around a card representing her, indicating their proximity to her and overlaps with each other. This only worked with older and more popular, outgoing women as many of those I asked told me they had only one friend or no friends at all.
46. To be more precise about their commonalities:

	years of friendship	same age	same work	same religion	same quarter	shared a house or related
A	25	yes	yes	no	yes	husband's brother's wife
B	20	yes	yes	no	no	no
C	15	yes	no	yes	yes	no
D	12	no	no	no	yes	brother's wife
E	5	no	no	no	yes	fellow lodger
F	15	no	no	yes	no	no
G	8	no	yes	no	yes	fellow lodger
H	25	no	yes	no	yes	husband's brother's wife

47. Various components contributing to social integration, drawn from anthropological work, were used by Jay Kaufman to create a scale by which the degree of social integration could be assessed (see

Kaufman et al. [b], forthcoming). Spearman rank order correlations performed on the outcomes of focus group social ranking and questionnaire work on social integration with the Imasai hypertension study sample suggest a strong association for men between social integration and owo ($p < 0.001$), and social integration and alafia ($p < 0.001$) with a marginal, statistically insignificant, association between social integration and prestige, but no significant association between social integration and these variables among women (Kaufman et al. [a] forthcoming). Given the small sample size, these results are merely indicative but may merit further investigation.

48. Barnes' (1986) account of relations of patronage and clientage in Mushin, a neighbourhood of Lagos, especially pages 205-219, offers a vivid picture of the nature of relations in this domain. See also Peel (1983), for the complex dynamics of political positioning among aspiring men in Ilesha.
49. Both candidates for the vacant obaship are men who live outside the town and can draw on bases of support within it, as 'big men'.
50. Traditional titles are of two kinds: those passing directly to members of the four ruling idile of the Awori, and those acquired by individuals in recognition of their own achievements and the glory they have brought to the town, as well as for particular things they have done within the community. The latter may be given to Egbado as well as Aworis and to exceptional women as well as men. These titles are of most significance to older men; younger, educated men are less interested in them than in the other bases for power and prestige.
51. For example, one influential actor in this union had associates within it drawn from different occupations who provided him with a wide client base. These linkages offered him both personal contacts into the professions for work he wanted done and also consisted of smaller groupings, who came together for other purposes. A vigilante group, formed to protect the town from thieves stealing electrical insulators from the power lines, brought together some of these clients; a political grouping ranged on ethnic lines drew on linkages with others within the association; a further group based around party political interests in the Babangida period featured a number of people who were members of these overlapping circles.
52. Better Life for Rural Women in Ado is a prime example of the ways in which those with means are able to strategically position themselves to be the recipients of benefits: from an initial grouping that brought together a range of women, the group shrank to a clutch of richer businesswomen once grants and loans were available by creating an entry fee for membership that left poorer women out. It became 'Better Life for Richer Women'.
53. In-marrying wives are junior to wives who came before them, irrespective of age (cf. Fadipe [1939]1970, Sudarkasa 1973).
54. Sudarkasa (1981) stresses this point in her analysis of the options of Yoruba women. Marris (1961) makes similar points for metropolitan Lagos which, in the period of his research bore significant resemblances to the situation I found in Ado over 30 years later.
55. While the larger crafts associations have a membership numbering up to or over a hundred, market and savings *egbe* generally have no more than thirty or forty members and religious *egbe* or assalatu are smaller still.
56. As part of the ranking exercise referred to earlier, I asked people to define *ola* and rank others in the neighbourhood. The criteria given by men and women were almost identical. While (five) men were the only people who made it into the top category, eight women were ranked in the next group, along with 15 men: these, without exception, were successful traders or businesswomen and four of them were not up to the age where they might be considered elders. Among them, three were placed on par with their husbands and the others were the wives of men in category one: however, other wives of these men, women who had not made it for themselves, ended up with lower ranks, some near the bottom.
57. Kandiyoti's (1988) analysis of bargaining processes between different parties within multi-layered households suggests that women, as agents with particular vested interests, may make 'bargains with patriarchy' with prospective benefits that accrue over the life-course; this corresponds with the 'lineal' reproductive strategies that Guyer (1994) identifies, through which women pursue longer-term interests through their children, which require that they remain married and, in turn, exact from them the price of endurance and compliance (see Chapter 8).

Notes to Chapter 4

1. If a woman is seriously ill, it is common for her to return to her father's house to seek treatment from her kin. This may be because her husband is unwilling to pay for her treatment, because she fears the sickness may have been caused by ill feeling within her husband's compound or because she expects to be cared for better by her own kin. In such cases, women may remain at their natal home after recovering unless the husband makes an effort to bring them back to his house. It is expected that daughters will return home if one of their parents is sick, to nurse them, and this can also extend into a separation. Goody (1972) notes similar cases among Gonja women. See Chapter 5.
2. Caldwell et al. (1991) argue that 'sexual networking' has long been a feature of 'Yoruba' life and that changes are in the degree and scope of liaisons.
3. Here the blood of a broken hymen is compared with the red palm oil (*epo orun*) used to make beans tasty.
4. 100 school students (50 women, 50 men) aged 15-24 in the three secondary schools in Ado were surveyed using a self-completed anonymous written questionnaire.
5. Out of the total sample of 50 young women, only one suggested that the intentions of men might play any part in things: 'men of nowadays use money to attract girls'.
6. Only 16% of young women and 6% of young men answering the survey stated that they had had no sexual experience. Oloko and Omoboye (1993), reporting on a similarly self-completed survey with students two or three years below these SS3 students, estimated that at least 36.4% of them had lost their virginity by the age of 15-16; and of the 26.4% who did not answer the question, more may have had sexual experience.
7. Interestingly, several mentioned that while the older generations had only experienced 'face to face on the bed' sex, young people had a range of styles to choose from. In a survey on sexual practices, conducted by Paul Fadairo, informants identified 17 different sexual positions. I did not directly solicit this information, which came about when Paul misunderstood the question: I had asked him to ask people to list the sexual practices that were risky in terms of HIV transmission, without clarifying what I meant by practices. A source of ideas were imported blue movies that circulated among young men and large posters of pneumatic white women and well-endowed men engaged in a range of sexual positions that were sold in the market. Local published sources of information ranged from *Lolly* magazine's pornographic stories, health magazines and the problem pages in some of the dailies. Informal chats with groups of lads in bars and on the street, brought further elaboration, as well as insights into young men's attitudes to women who initiated sex and other practices such as oral sex. For these men, the only thing that counts as 'sex' is penetrative sex. Fellatio is regarded as a practice of prostitutes and, one young man told me, 'girls who do this are seen as harlots. Men will reject them and say "where have you been to learn this?"'. It is worth noting that the way men approach having sex with women also seems to have changed. A survey of young men revealed distinctions not only between kinds of women, but the ways men would 'romance' them i.e. whether they would engage in foreplay. Educated young men suggested that it was only those who had education and 'exposure' who would do this.
8. See Peel (1978) for discourses on *olaju* in the 1970s; the contrasts between a positive, optimistic view articulated in the 1970s and the views people expressed to me in 1990s Ado are striking.
9. I am grateful to Kevin Latham for drawing my attention to this quotation.
10. Nietzsche ([1873]1984) distinguishes three modes of historical attitude: monumental (a history that, by blurring and generalising, serves as an example of what can be achieved again), antiquarian (a history that permits the conservation of tradition, placed within an unchanging social order) and critical (a history that searches for truths, rejecting established certainties, offering possibilities for liberation and change).
11. This was a project clearly inspired by the work of Foucault (1981, 1984).
12. During the colonial era, British administrators, spurred on by missionaries, made a number of attempts to codify 'native law and custom' relating to marriage in SW Nigeria (see Ekundare 1969,

Zabel 1969). Arriving at a systematic list of rules that could be enforced over a region was, however, difficult: administrators were, in addition, reluctant to legitimate forms of marriage that they found morally repugnant (see, for example the documents relating to questions about marriage under the Egba Native Administration, dated 29/5/1949, NAI AbeDist E.D. 544/1). Several measures were taken, however, to establish set principles and to simplify proceedings (Renne 1990).

13. Sometimes, Mr Akinwunmi told me, the girl would be sent to the husband's house before she had 'matured' - less a case of physical than attitudinal maturity and readiness to be able to support herself - to be under the direction of the future husband, who would teach her to do things his way.
14. This form of marriage was a source of alarm for the colonial administration, who equated it with a form of domestic slavery (*iwqfa*) and sought to outlaw it (Mann 1985). See Johnson (1921) and Fadipe ([1939]1970).
15. See Peel (1983) for Ilesha; see also Fadipe ([1939]1970).
16. Mr Akinwunmi associated pledge marriage of girls from infancy with a shortage of women, something others commented on for the distant past and which was attributed to polygyny. Although several older people insisted that in the past men did not have large numbers of wives, this was often in the context of complaints about the kind of rampant 'polygyny' of the post-independence period where men who had acquired money through rather dubious means installed numbers of wives, who left them when the going became tough.
17. The *alarena* would also check whether there were any hereditary diseases in the family and how they treated their wives. One of the reasons I was given, by Chief Basiru Ajose, for why Egbados and Aworis did not intermarry for some decades was that Awori families had no way of knowing the medical histories of the Egbado strangers.
18. The emphasis placed on virginity by Ado's elders is at variance with the reports of colonial and missionary writers in other parts of the country (see Ward 1938, Caldwell et al. 1991). Talbot, for example, writing of 'the Yoruba' in the mid-1920s, however, suggests: 'It is probably rare for a girl to be a virgin when she is wedded. .. Considerable licence is often allowed, though occasionally more after, than before, marriage' ([1926]1969:426). Care needs to be exercised in extending observations culled from one part of the country to another. Insights can, however, be derived from some of their observations. As Renne (1993a) points out, for Ekiti, the changing value of virginity is closely bound up with shifting issues of fertility over time. Looking at what writers in the early colonial period had to say, provides insights into the concerns of parents of the past. The colonial ethnographer Ellis, writing in the late 1890s, argued:

Virginity in a bride is not valued per se, but because it is a proof that the betrothed has not infringed the exclusive marital privileges of the husband in futuro; and non-virginity in a bride is only a valid ground for repudiation when the girl has been betrothed at a tender age, for unbetrothed girls can bestow their favours on whom they please... for until she is married or betrothed she is perfectly free and mistress of her own actions... most girls have lovers in secret ([1894]1964:183-185).

Ellis' distinction between the sexual licence allowed to betrothed and non-betrothed women is significant in this respect, where betrothal constitutes a stage in the process of the transfer to the husband-to-be of genetricial rights in the 'issue' from unions rather than jural rights in the woman herself. Acknowledging this transfer by demonstrating obedience to the parents' wishes was, for commentators in Ado, crucial: loss of virginity prior to marriage constituted not only 'spoiling' but also a kind of defiance, a disobedience, that was to be discouraged at all costs as it augured ill for the future of the relationship. After all, if a woman could behave in this manner before marriage then what was she going to be like later? And the proof was ready to hand in the behaviour of the disvirgined 'youth of today'. Johnson's account of '(Oyo) Yoruba custom' of the same period makes reference to the disappearance of a practice whereby young women and men would play house together, due to 'the degeneracy of the present age' ([1921]1973:102). It is a possibility that the importance people placed on carefully monitoring and controlling unmarried women in their accounts of Ado in the 1920s and 30s, may represent measures taken to counteract precisely the kind of 'immorality' Johnson refers to.

19. Caldwell et al. (1991), writing about historical changes in sexual relations in Ekiti, emphasise the importance of women's natal lineage connections in offering them a place to go. In Ado, returning home was not a viable option for younger women unless they were sent by the husband or they had very good reasons (see later discussion) until at least the 1950s.
20. Fadipe ([1939]1970), writing some years later, described marriage as a crisis for women, as they moved from a safe supportive environment to a harsh new one. Many older women talked in these terms. One told me that the unhappiest day of her life was the day she married.
21. Clearly, the extent to which this happened depends on the attitude of the parents and the circumstances. However, that many older people in Ado told me that this was the case *igba atijq* raises some questions about Caldwell et al.'s (1991) analysis, in which the possibilities for 'Yoruba women' to return to their own *idile* is given central place. This needs to be qualified rather carefully, located both historically and with regard to the periods in women's life-courses when this was considered acceptable. It was precisely because younger wives in Ado were often not allowed to return home that they may have remained in marriages.
22. Caldwell et al. (1991) and Peel (1983) detail the impact of legislative and economic change on marriages during this period, for Ekiti and Ilesha respectively. Atanda's account of a revolt in Iseyin and Okeiho following divorce reforms gives a vivid impression of the resistance to the implications of enabling women to divorce their husbands. Atanda argues: 'The [traditional] socio-judicial system did not give much freedom for divorce on flimsy grounds. Thus the menfolk regarded the traditional system as a check on the loss of wives through divorce. This was one of the securities which the Native Court system inaugurated by the British in 1914 destroyed' (1969:501).
23. The customary court in Ado was established in 1915, but unfortunately the records have perished and I was only able to find those from 1964-5 in the Obafemi Awolowo University customary court archive, and from 1966 to the present in Ado's customary court. I draw on cases from Badagry (NAI Badadiv 1/2/1) and Otta (OAU Archive) with the following reservations. The Badagry cases appear to consist of a larger number of suits brought by Egun than Yoruba women. As Ado had and still has strong links with Badagry, some inferences can be made from these cases. However, the place of Badagry in trading and its connectedness with other areas might imply that women there had a greater scope for their options. The Otta cases involved people from Otta town and the surrounding area which borders on the Ado area, therefore may be suggested to include principally Awori, Egba and Egbado peoples as the major inhabitants of this land area. It is therefore possible to extend some observations from these cases to complement oral historical evidence as this mainly takes the form of idealised stories of virgins and trouble-free marriages up to the point that women are able to tell their own life stories. The women I spoke with married no earlier than the mid-1920s.
24. One case tried at Badagry in 1892 is interesting in terms of what it reveals about the character of one of these 'wayward women'. The woman, Abesi, had been promised to a Lagos trader from whom money and assistance had been demanded by her parents. After some time, he asked her to go to Lagos with him, but she refused. He testifies that, 'hearing that the girl had become a prostitute in the country, I wrote to her parents... asking them to repay me... the girl said I was too old and she did not want to be my wife'. The woman opens her testimony by cross-examining him: 'When I agreed to be your wife did not my father tell you that I had had connection with a man?... When I returned to Badagry and you asked me to go back with you to Lagos, did I not tell you that I did not like your ways, so would not go with you?' Abesi, the 'prostitute', had lost her virginity to another man and then refused to accompany her husband. For this, she was termed 'wild' (Badadiv 1/2/1: 2/8/1892).
25. A case, from 1888, concerns a woman who, having decided not to marry her fiancé offers to repay him herself (Badadiv 1/2/1: 21/6/1888). Another, from 1893, contains a huge list of expenses lavished on a woman who then ran off with another man, taking her former fiancé's money with her. Yet another, in the same year, reports a woman taking the money, then going to someone else and refusing to marry her fiancé. She was captured, then ran home to cohabit with yet another man.
26. A 1905 case describes how a woman lost her virginity before marrying, then had a child and four years later went off 'ostensibly on other business and never returned', only for her husband to hear that she was with another man. Her mother explained: 'before this she had led a rather dissolute life for two months until I tied her up and took her to the petitioner' (Badadiv 1/2/1: 21/11/1905).

27. In a case from 1908, a man sought damages 'for the defendent refusing to be the plaintiff's husband'. In her defence, the woman merely said: 'I am tired of staying with him, I would like to get another husband' (Talabi vs Taiwo of Otta, 10/7/1908).
28. For accounts of Yoruba women in the pre-colonial and early colonial period, see Johnson (1979), Awe (1975,1977), Falola (1978) and Denzer (1994). See also Robertson's (1984) study of Ga women in Ghana.
29. Fadipe ([1939]1970) suggests that the three most important changes as a result of trade opening up were: a) the popularisation of marriage without parental consent and payment of dowry; b) abandonment of infant betrothal; c) popularity of divorce. Mann's (1985) analysis of early colonial marriage reports major changes in marriage taking place in Lagos around the turn of the century.
30. See Peel (1983) and Berry (1985) for other areas.
31. The dowry payment itself only made up a proportion of the total amount, a proportion that in some of the cases from this period accounted for under a quarter of the total outgoings. While some of these payments may have been made during the marriage, many were made prior to its consummation and constituted a fairly significant amount. To illustrate this, in one divorce case from Otta in 1922, of a total amount claimed of £28/10/3, only a sixth made up the cash component of the dowry itself: the remaining amount was made up of gifts made to the woman, animals, drink and money given for various religious obligations (which made up the largest single amount), money contributed at various funerals, gifts such as cloth, a mirror and a case (Case 246/22, 29/7/1922, Otta Customary Court).
32. Fadipe ([1939]1970) writes of seduction as a way of saving money for young men in the late 1930s, noting that in some places the principal payment for marriage was ignored and women were abducted, leaving their parents in a position where they had to try to extract dowry as debt (1970:93).
33. This was still a problem for some. The difficulty some men had in finding the cash to do this emerges from one case, from Otta, in 1920:

Case 109/20: 'Defendent is required to show cause why she should not find another husband'. Man calls upon his wife to find another husband because he's not able to refund the former husband's dowry expenses. He's been imprisoned for this before. Woman testifies that she was seduced from her former husband and that that man should hold himself responsible: 'I take no other husband'.

34. See Chapter 8 for more details on this rather complex issue. Renne (1990) argues that such a rule was established by the British, formalised in the divorce reforms of 1937. It is worth mentioning here that up to the present, cases of 'adultery' (where the woman becomes pregnant by another man after separation and before seeking a divorce) are distinguished from cases where a woman who is pregnant and still living with or only recently separated from her husband seeks a divorce. Such cases are usually thrown out of court. Since blood tests became a possible recourse where paternity cases were contested, some have taken this up. Bravado, however, may make a man refuse.
35. To give an indication of this, a comparison may be offered between cases culled from the Otta records. For the entire year, in 1908, out of a total of 101 cases, 33 were claims for dowry, 1 for adultery, 2 for seduction damages, 1 for breach of marriage contract, 1 claim for clothes from ex-husband, 1 damages for 'refusing to be wife'. The remaining cases concerned land, debt (46 cases) and property. In a period of two months in 1922 and 1934, the breakdown of cases was as follows:

YEAR	1922	1934
debt	18	26
adultery	10	2
dowry	6	4
divorce	8	21
cancelled engagement		3
property loss/theft/damage	7	2
assault	1	
land	1	

36. Only in the case of disputes were further details given, and these were invariably less concerned with reasons than with the itemisation of expenditures.
37. The post-WWI boom crashed in 1920, with serious effects on the palm kernel trade. The depression of 1921-3 and 1930-5 saw the a dramatic fall in export prices, although production continued to rise (Crowder, 1968). The introduction of tax in the early 1930s coupled with the attractive prospect of regular salaries encouraged younger men to seek employment in towns. With the outbreak of the second world war, export commodities were once more adversely affected, bringing more farmers into the waged labour sector.
38. Regularity of wages continues to be a marker of status in present day Ado, even if the actual annual income of wage workers has diminished miserably in proportion to the earnings of traders.
39. See Lindsay (1996) for the kinds of contests that arose between railway employers' notions of husbands and that of their employees, reconfiguring masculinities.
40. This echoes the remarks made by Fadipe on Lagos in the late 1930s. He contends that in the past 'there was no room for a class of people who would like the indulgence of sexual intercourse without its responsibility' (1970:66), going on to note that it has become 'very familiar' to see women in towns who demand money from rich boyfriends.
41. The dowry at that time was: 40 *obi* (kola), 40 *atare* (alligator pepper), 2 schnapps, £10, 1 bottle of honey, salt and sugar.
42. Fadipe describes this as a 'duty' (1970:87).
43. Akanmi Ilo, a teacher in his 50s, told me that arranged marriage became less common from the mid-1960s onwards due to girls poisoning themselves when they were promised to men they didn't love.
44. Schofield, the resident for Abeokuta wrote, in 1952: 'One is still struck by the immense waste of productive man and woman-power involves by the processes of local retail trade' (NAI CSO 26/2 11875/S1 Abeokuta Province Annual Report, 1952). But, in his comments on Schofield's report, the lieutenant-governor of the western region, H.F. Marshall observed:

As one drives through Abeokuta one cannot help but be struck by the amount of capital that must be tied up in stock of every kind which is displayed in the many small shops and stalls on one's route. But the Yoruba - and the Egba is no exception - is a shrewd trader and one may be sure that the vast majority of these traders has a reasonable 'turn-over'.

45. Galletti et al. (1956) note that returns from trading, in this period, would have been at least equivalent if not greater than those from any other occupation.
46. Galletti et al. (1956) note that for the western region as a whole - from which inferences may be problematic, given the different circumstances of the various areas - nearly 40% of women concentrated on their own occupation and didn't help on the farm and a further 20% didn't even expect the husband to provide them with food. Only 4.9% of women in their study relied on the husband for everything.
47. As Sudarkasa (1973) notes for 1960s Awe, the bulk of traders were and continue to be involved not in long-distance but local level trade. Galletti et al.'s (1956) observations on the implications of longer-distance trade might, however, equally be extended to local economic activities as women turned to processing and trading in their own right, devoting less time to their husband's work:

Wives who trade are apt to be away from home much of the time, and their services will be less available to the husband, who may either have to pay them to induce them to do his work rather than their own or have to engage other women to prepare his gari and palm oil or carry crops from the farms (1956:76).

48. Quite a lot of people from Ado went to, and remained in, Agege and Mushin in Lagos. The ILO survey of the Ifo, Otta and Ilaro districts of 1966 reports that in the mid-60s 61.1% of migrants from the area went to Lagos, followed by 8.7% to Abeokuta and 7.8% to Ibadan. Between the 1952 and the 1963 census counts, the population of Ado fell from 16,381 to 11,393 (Aradeon et al. 1986).
49. Sofoluwe (1965) argues, for Igbo-Ora, that women were pursuing richer rather than younger husbands, remarrying men of the same age but greater means as the husbands they had left behind. Okediji and Okediji (1966) reported for Ibadan that 92% of divorce cases were brought by women,

contrasting the situation with a past in which divorces were instigated largely by men. Lloyd's (1968) study of 300 Ibadan cases of this period suggests that by this time women believed they should marry whomever they wanted, but their parents were still betrothing infant daughters to men for favours. The situation in Ado seemed to be that arranged marriages had started to break down from the 1940s and were only found among Muslim families by the time of Lloyd's study; infant betrothal had begun to wane from the 1920s at the latest. See also Olusanya (1970).

50. Galletti et al. (1956) offer a general picture for Abeokuta province as a whole that suggests that only a tiny minority of men were able to afford four or more wives by the mid-1950s and the modal number of wives was 1:

Wives	0	1	2	3	4+
Abeokuta Province	0.6%	48.7%	30.7%	17.5%	2.5%

(Table 26, 1956:73).

51. Chief Kuyebi suggested that by the 1960s only around half of the 'ladies' (i.e. unmarried women) in Ado were virgins on marriage.
52. The details recorded in court cases in Ado varied considerably over the records available from the period 1966 to the present. However, where details were given - principally from the early 1980s onwards - I was able to track back cases to the year of marriage and deduce from this the proportion of marriages ending in divorce for which dowry was paid.
53. The record does not give further details on the length of the marriage. Divorce was sought for ill-treatment and lack of care.
54. Ado Customary Court, Records 129/64 and 177/64. Lloyd (1968) notes, of Ibadan, that more specific grounds than 'no love' or 'no care' were not sought in cases of this period.
55. By 1965, the earliest complete records I could find for Ado, divorce made up the principal matter of the courts accounting for 70.4% of cases in 1965. Of these a further 15.6% were adultery cases, 5.4% were for recovery of betrothal fees and the remaining amount were for debt, land and other civil cases.
56. In cases from 1966-7, 64% were brought by Muslim women, 16% by Christians and a further 14% by orisa worshippers (with a further 6% unspecified). Out of these cases, 42% cited cruelty and ill-treatment, 38% lack of financial support, 28% desertion and 2% infertility, with a further 18% representing release from levirate (more than one mention for some cases, therefore the total is over 100%).
57. These careers were built primarily on trade, I found from the many life and work histories I collected. As the authors of the ILO survey of 1966 point out, 'female economic activities are, in fact, very difficult to differentiate into such major occupational groups like sales activities, processing and farming because of their high degree of interdependence in the woman's economic life' (1966:118, see also Pittin 1982). However, the breakdown of primary occupations offered by various censi offers some general insights, although these must be treated with some caution. The 1963 census for Egbado division offers a general picture of the proportion of women who had, by this time, moved into the trade sector: 80.7% of women and 36.5% of all workers were absorbed in trading; 75.2% of men and 8.9% of women were engaged in farming, fishing, hunting and logging; while only 7.6% of women and 10.8% of men were recorded in crafts and processing (Aradeon et al. 1986). In Ado, the proportion of women engaged in processing was - and remains - substantially higher than this figure suggests. The ILO survey recorded figures for 1966 that would seem closer to the distribution of female occupations in Ado: 62.4% traders, 28.6% crafts and processing, 3% farming.
58. Court records in Ado show that seduction accounted for a large share of these marriages. Galletti et al. suggest that 'unscrupulous young men who cannot afford virgins' (1956:78) often resorted to this strategy in the 1950s.
59. The term *fayawo* refers to the action of creeping along on one's chest: a reference to the clandestine activities of smugglers of long ago (Asiwaju 1991).
60. This emerges vividly in interviews that Barbara Lloyd conducted with women living in the

'traditional' quarter of Oje in Ibadan in 1971, many of whom would be around the age of elderly women in Ado today. I am extremely grateful to Dr Lloyd for allowing me to have access to her unpublished interview material.

61. For some, this was when their children had become adults; for others it was the time when the last trickle of menstrual blood had left them. I was told that some women continue to have sex beyond the time of social or physiological menopause (using medicines to clean their wombs). But those older women with whom I discussed this subject talked with evident relief about no longer having to have sex. One older man told me, ruefully, that his wife had told him he was too fat and that he could do whatever he liked outside the house as long as he didn't bring a wife home with him: as far as she was concerned, she wasn't going to have sex with him again.
62. Ladipo (1987) reports discussions with maize co-op members in Ife about their feelings about their marriages. Among 26 women, 15 of whom were over 40, half of them expressed disappointment with their positions as wives, a third of whom commented on the stress of having to support their children. Among those who were not disappointed, children were mentioned as compensation for their suffering. Ladipo reports 'there was a remarkable acceptance of what women clearly describes as men's irresponsibility' (1987:107).
63. Once a woman had started to bear children, she spent considerable amounts of time apart from her husband. Sex during pregnancy was not considered harmful after the first trimester, but in order to safeguard the health of the child women would abstain for up to three years after birth (see Caldwell 1976); during this time, the mother-in-law would act as a buffer to keep her son from pestering his wife and some women spent some of these periods of abstinence in their natal compounds.
64. See Mann (1985) for the historical antecedents to this kind of marriage in colonial Lagos.
65. Several women told me: 'if not for my daughter...', 'if not for that sickness...', 'if not for problems with trade...' they would have been able to build that house after all.
66. If they become pregnant by their lovers, they are faced with a choice: to have an abortion (see Chapter 8), to pass off the child as belonging to their husbands or to quickly seek a divorce from the husband so as to 'marry' their lover. Once dowry has been paid, a woman is not free to have another man's child until the amount has been returned to her former husband; 'adultery' cases refer not to the fact of infidelity but to its tangible consequences - a pregnancy - and the amounts that can be claimed are extremely high. As dowry is so rarely paid these days, such fines are no longer a consideration for many (see Chapter 5).
67. Men regaled me with tales of wives poisoning their husbands to get back at them and of men dying as a result of love medicine that backfires.
68. Coming from a good family remained important, however. I asked 50 young women and 50 young men to rank the following attributes of potential marriage partners, elicited as criteria from informal interviews. Ranks are expressed in order of significance, with 1 = most important and 10 = least important.

	rich	same faith	s/he loves you	you love him/her	same town	good looks	s/he is serious	good family	educated	kind
M	9	7	1	6	10	8	3	4	2	5
F	9	6	1	5	10	8	4	3	2	7

It is worth commenting a little on these results. The relative importance of religion emerges from an aggregate of ranks, where those who are born again Christians or fundamentalist Muslims, especially, rated religion as a high priority; while for many others it was relatively insignificant. Over the other criteria, however, there was greater agreement. It is interesting to note how unimportant wealth was both to young women and to young men, and how much more important other considerations of status (family, education) and behaviour (degree of seriousness) were. While both women and men considered it less important to be in love with their partners-to-be, all placed a premium on their partners loving them.

69. Most vehement, perhaps, were the commentaries of those who based their remarks on bitter

experience in the past or in the present: elderly women who suffered poverty and struggle to bring up the sons whose wives now bask in what they perceive to be luxury; mothers whose sons had brought home wives who abused them when they attempted to issue instructions and for whom these wives had an unacceptable degree of freedom, compared to that they themselves had had; and men whose younger wives had disobeyed them, even tried to use medicine to get rid of them, or upped and left them for other men.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. See for example Little (1973), Obbo (1980), Abu (1983), Dinan (1983) and Karanja (1987).
2. Frequent reference appears in editions from the 1970s onwards of the weekly *Lagos Weekend* (LW), the Nigerian equivalent to the British *News of the World*, to the kinds of women who are 'never satisfied' and who use their 'bottom power' to gain access to wealthy men and their money. The titles of some articles are suggestive of the general tone: 'Stop this lust... or we'll all soon become marriage drop-outs' (LW, 6-10/8/1975); 'Looking for a virgin? Are you nuts!' (Jason Pini, LW 5-7/9/1975); 'Girls' wrong approach to marriage' (LW 6-8/2/1981); 'The importance of the other woman' (LW 13-15/2/1981) - and, one of my personal favourites, pointed out to me by Dr LaRay Denzer, 'Wife's Pant Probed - court told' (LW 29-31/5/1981), the story of a woman whose husband ordered her to submit her pants for inspection after she returned from a party.
3. These include the weekly newspaper *Lagos Weekend*; the true life romance magazines, *Affairs*, *Intimate Affairs*, *Hints* and *His and Hers: Stories from the Heart*; and the comics *Super Story*, *Super Chik*, *Super Story* and *Lolly*. Some titles include: 'Sixteen years old, two kids down, pregnant again. When will my problems end?' (*Hints*, 24/1/94:22-25); 'Attracted by wealth, confused by glitters, I wish I hadn't married for all the wrong reasons' (*Hints* 24/1/94:31-7); 'Weep not, my friend, young men are users. They take your money, they use your body' (*Hints* 21/2/1994:6-9); 'My replacement boyfriend seems ever better than the original' (about a sugar daddy) in *Super Chik* (1992).
4. This refers, perhaps, to the fact that most of the prostitutes openly operating in Ado were Ghanaian.
5. One elderly woman launched into a spontaneous tirade, as I sat with her friends, telling story after story about the misbehaviour of the married women who rented rooms from her. One night, she said, she was taking her bath on the verandah and a man came, calling out the name of a woman who lived in her house. She despatched him, in no uncertain terms. Shortly afterwards, she had opened the window to throw something out and it landed on a woman, who had been sent by the boyfriend of another woman in the house to call her for him. What kind of behaviour was this?, she asked.
6. Orubuloye et al. (1991) report a survey from Ekiti that sought to establish why married women have affairs. They found that 1/3rd of respondents cited 'fun' or 'enjoyment' as their primary reason, with 2/3rds talking about such relationships in terms of the help they received from their lovers.
7. While sex during pregnancy only appears to be actively avoided in the first trimester, in case it dislodges the forming foetus, after giving birth women are expected to 'rest': to remain sexually abstinent while they breastfeed. Some still believe that semen can endanger the health of the child (Caldwell 1976). But while older women 'rested' until the child was up to three years old, younger women wrestle with the uncertainties involved. During this time, it is expected that their partners will seek other women. Funmi, a friend of about the same age as me with a six month old baby, told me of how her husband pestered her for sex and how she chased him away, knowing that he would be off sending messages to another woman to meet him for sex. Sooner or later, she felt, she would have to give in. The hazards of holding out for too long pose the threat of a man taking another wife 'outside', the possibility that he may impregnate one of his girlfriends. Most younger women resume intercourse within a year of giving birth.
8. The extent to which masturbation is considered as a viable alternative seems limited, from the conversations I had. Clearly, my gender did not make raising the issue easy - although once I had begun doing HIV/AIDS awareness work in public spaces, younger men would talk freely to me about sex and a few older men also talked to me about their sexual experiences and feelings. The men I talked to told me that masturbation was artificial, not the 'real thing' and that it is impossible for a

man to stay without having sex with a woman. It was only suggested by one married man that a way of coping with his sexual needs while his wife was breastfeeding was to masturbate. It is interesting to note that the idea of a woman masturbating seemed totally weird to people: several people, women as well as men, expressed the view that it was simply not possible and that they had never heard of such a thing.

9. Orubuloye et al. (1991) note, for Ekiti, that polygynous men are only marginally less likely to have sexual partners outside their marriages than monogamous men; and, in any case, there are times when even a man with three wives may find them all 'unavailable'. Clearly, there is more at stake than this.
10. Adelanwa, a farmer in his 60s, recounted a telling story about a friend. He heard a rumour about a certain friend of his and his wife. To test that friend, he called him and told him that he had put money in a nylon bag and was going to bury it, because he did not want his wife to see it. Nine days later, the wife refused to eat anything and was miserable. He called her and asked her what the matter was. She replied that he didn't trust her if he had to go to hide his money. He laughed. Then he asked her what was going on with his friend. This led to divorce.
11. *Magun* (lit. do not mount) causes instantaneous death: the offending party is said to be thrown off the woman with force, somersault and then die. *Ero* may take immediate effect, but can also cause a lingering death or kill someone when they did a particular everyday activity. I was told of numerous varieties of *ero*. Some caused the offender to jump around (*ero lokiti*), crow like a hen (*ero kukuruku*), bark like a dog (*ero alaja*) three times and then die; others would kill a person if they saw red earth (*ero marilepa*), saw a ceremony going on (*ero madawujọ*), drank water (*ero mamumi*), ate salt, yam, papaya, fresh maize or meat (*ero majeyo*, *ero majeyan*, *ero majebepe*, *ero majegbado*, *ero majeran*) and covered just about every day-to-day activity. Some brought on other sicknesses: *ero jerijeri* caused the penis to have small holes in it for 40 days, after which the man would die; with *ero jedojedo* the man would not be able to defecate or urinate and would die; with *ero eleje* the man would pass blood rather than urine and die. And there are more.
12. Given that all but three herbalists in Ado were men and those three exceptions were post-menopausal women, this is hardly surprising. Herbalists gave me the normative version that they were only there to make sure that couples stayed together and would not do anything to harm anyone, then, when talking of actual cases and their own personal experience, several revealed their own agendas: one herbalist, a polygamist who had had 'countless' wives, told me, with a smile, of how he'd used medicines on his wife to stop her running here and there and that neither he nor other herbalists would condone women getting their own back by using *teşo*.
13. See Pellow (1990) for a useful review of the literature on sexuality in Africa which echoes similar concerns.
14. One polygynously married man told me of the pressure he felt to make sure that he could satisfy his wives, even when he did not feel like having sex. His concern echoed that of others: if not, they might run off with another man. Chief Kuyebi, a retired customary court judge, commented that some women have boyfriends because of sex -if her husband has four wives, she'll only have a chance of having sex for five days in twenty, while her lover may have one or no wife, so will be more sexually available. It may also be, he said, that the other man is richer. That's why men fear their wives having boyfriends, as they may lose them or even lose their own lives, or catch diseases.
15. As I note in Chapter 4, 'court marriage' - what was known as 'ordinance marriage' in the colonial era (see Mann 1985) - consists of a statutory legal agreement modelled on British marital law. The conditions of 'court marriage' have never held much appeal to men or their parents and even among younger, educated women it is still not the type of marriage they prefer; most couples marry, and some go on to divorce, according to 'native law and custom'.
16. Chief Kuyebi told me that if a man is not bothered about a wife leaving him he may continue to attend ceremonies at her natal compound, as the father of her children, and present her family or his wife with gifts. If her new husband is there, however, he will not sit in the same circle as him or speak to him as the two men are supposed to be enemies.
17. Notionally, male and female children should receive equal shares. In practice, land and assets often tend to be passed on to sons. Lloyd (1962) and the ILO Survey of 1966 both draw attention to changes that have taken place as more women have activated latent claims to inherited property.

18. Many court cases over the last 30 years feature contests between the claims of the husband and the wife as to the actual amount paid: where an *alarena* (middlemen or women) was appointed to act as a go-between (see Chapter 4), their testimonies were sought. The means of estimating which aspects of the payments made should be returned changed over this period, from a sum encompassing other payments to a straight refund of the money marked aside as *idana*. The complexities of these changes are beyond the scope of this thesis.
19. One woman told me of how her husband had so neglected her that she moved out. He then turned round and told her that he would not tolerate her marrying anyone else in the town. To show him that he couldn't tell her what to do, she remarried.
20. Some men, I was told, prefer *adelebo*, 'second-hand wives', women who are experienced in domestic duties, rather than younger 'new' wives who might be more stropky.
21. I examined the entire records from 1965 onwards. The grounds and the outcomes of divorce proceedings have scarcely changed over a thirty-year period, with the exception of a fall in the number of levirate wives seeking release. To give a fuller picture, it is worth commenting in detail on a selection of these cases. I analysed 50 cases from 1991:

* most cases were brought by women: by women 96%, by men 4%.

* many marriages were of relatively long standing: 16% of women were married for less than 5 years, 28% for 5-9 years, 22% for 10-14 years, 26% for 15-19 years, 8% for more than 20 years.

* in the majority of cases, no dowry was paid: no dowry paid 74%, dowry paid 26%.

* dowry payment is not significant when it comes to keeping older children: no dowry paid, 1/3rd of women kept all children and 2/3rd of men; dowry paid, 1/2 women kept children, 1/2 of men. [These figures represent custody at the time of the hearing. No ages were given for children, so I had to make deductions that may be faulty. In most cases, women retain the care of younger children until they are 6 or 7 and considered old enough to join their father. For this reason, if women were taking care of the last-born children and the elder ones were with their fathers, I counted custody as with the man. But in cases where women retained custody, without exception those in which only one or two children were involved, these may well have been young children who might be claimed by the man when they grew older. These figures, then, serve only as a rough indication.]

* most women sued for divorce on the grounds of non-fulfilment of marital obligation to provide financial assistance: % mentioning lack of proper care 86%, neglect (usually incl. no sex) 50%, domestic violence 42%, no issue 14%, no love 10%, husband packed woman out 8%, 'problems in the house' (i.e. with family, co-wives) 4%. [n.b. more than one mention for each]

* men also sued for breach of expectations: in one case, wife is accused of going out at random and flirting too much, court restrains her from visiting his house; second case, the wife hated the plaintiff's brother and wife, fought with his co-wife, cursed them, fought with the plaintiff and packed out, causing the second wife to pack out too.

* in 7 cases of 'no issue': 3 marriages more than 5yrs duration and 3 contracted in the last 3 years (one forced to marry the man), 5 mention 'no proper case', 3 neglect, 2 domestic violence, 1 no love. In one case, both children died. In another the plaintiff blames problems with the mother-in-law and senior wife.

22. Mr Akinwonmi, a retired customary court judge, told me of the grounds for awarding custody to men. First, he said, 'in our culture we believe that children need to go to the man as their mother cannot give them proper training; if you give a male child to his mother then he will become unruly. Children don't fear their mothers because of familiarity. The mother is indulgent and can't beat them seriously like the father. Children fear their fathers and behave better'. He added that it is believed that most delinquent children are those who live with single mothers. Judges also, however, look at the living conditions of the man and find out whether he's in a position to take adequate care of the child.
23. Lloyd's (1968) analysis of 300 divorce cases in 1960s Ibadan, suggests that in most cases women did assume custody over their children. In Ado, even if this turns out to be the case over time, the right of the father of the child or of his family to claim them at any time remains significant and the very unpredictability of the outcome is at issue.
24. Sudarkasa (1981) notes for Awe, near Ibadan, that even those women who consider themselves to be 'housewives' (i.e. supported by men in a position similar to the western 'housewife') earn some

money for themselves.

25. See Robertson (1984) and Abu (1983) for strikingly similar situations of women in Ghana in the 1970s and 1980s.
26. Writers on other areas, such as Marris (1961) on Lagos, Sudarkasa (1973) on Awe and Dennis (1991) on Ife, have drawn attention to the importance of bases of financial security outside a marital relationship. See also Ekejiuba (1995).
27. See Abu (1983) for the significance of 'chop money' among Ashanti couples in Ghana, an account which parallels, in significant ways, the ways in which feeding allowance is given value in Ado.
28. See Schoepf and Engundu (1991) and Abu (1983) for similar scenes in urban Zairean and Ghanaian households, respectively.
29. Alhaja Oluwatosin, a successful contractor in her 60s, told me of the criteria on which she judged whether a woman was successful: doing her own work, not running after men, looking after her children herself, building a house herself and wearing good clothes.
30. One divorce case brought against a wife is worth citing in some detail, as an extreme example of this. In Case AD2/129/93 of 18/8/1993, a man sued for divorce on the grounds of 'lack of control, uncontrollable wife, fornication' after four years of marriage. The couple had no children, he paid N200 dowry for her, he was a civil servant and she a trader. He charges: 'She is too troublesome. She used to fight me and my friends to the extent that we were driven out of the first house I hired. Beside she is adulterous. Although I have been hearing of it when I was at school at Ipeme that she is fornicating about, but I do not believe, but when I came I caught her with the act directly, hence I decided to leave her because she continued to do the fornication... She is also molesting all about town and where I reside she is threatening my life and that of my landlord with *juju*'. In her defence, the woman pointed out that she had even bought the schnapps he had given to her parents as part of the dowry: she'd spent N1,000 on him during his training, bought furniture, beds and electrical equipment like a TV and fan for his house.
31. I was told a story by several people of a certain man that I knew, a herbalist, who was visited one day by a rich woman. She was having problems with her husband and had come to find medicine. The herbalist gave her a certain medicine that made her forget the husband. Later he married her. She was a very rich woman and one day, she brought one of her friends, also a rich woman, to the house. The herbalist made medicine for that woman and she came to join them and become his wife. Now the herbalist has a very good life. People telling me the story were offering a commentary on the behaviour of herbalists as much as men who manage to marry rich wives, who raise their standard of living. This aspiration was echoed in an Ifa oracle consultation I overheard at the house of another herbalist one day. A man in his 60s had come to find out what the future held for him and the herbalist told him, with some satisfaction, that he would meet and marry a rich woman and that she would provide for him so that he would live a happy and comfortable life.
32. Iya Alakara told me that some women keep a fund of money outside with someone else in case of trouble. They might take it to a friend or relative to keep, put it in the bank, invest in kola or palm oil to resell when prices rise and keep this outside the house. She went on, 'I can never keep my money with the husband as he might use it to marry another wife'. This comment was echoed by a number of women.
33. In one example, a man who had spent a serious amount of money trying to make his wife better was applauded by Mr Akala, the herbalist treating his wife, and Mrs Odu: '*okunrin ni! okunrin ni!*'. I asked what he had done that made him a 'man'. They replied that he'd been responsible, he'd catered for her well and that most men would just leave her to suffer. By taking care of her in this way, he'd behaved like a husband should.
34. I am grateful to Mark Hobart for this idea. I asked twenty five women and fifteen men.
35. Six out of twenty five.
36. Of such men it may be said *o ti fun n'inkanje* (she's given him something to eat); for their co-wives and mothers, this may be the greatest threat of all.
37. To give an example, Joseph, a man in his 50s, told me of a wife who went astray and drifted back almost a decade later after a string of failed relationships.
38. In this kind of case, it is a normative expectation that the elders of the family will call a meeting to

discuss the issues and to caution the party found to be at fault. Such cases can be taken to important male or female figures in the community to be 'settled'. In this instance, there was no effort made to reconcile the couple.

39. 'Facing the children' means sublimating her own desires to the need of the children to be in a stable family set-up. It is also used by women to indicate that they have given up on their husbands as a waste of effort, yet remain with them so that they can be with their children and make sure that the children are provided for.
40. There are countless magical preparations to deal with situations like this. Some make the husband so loving, he forgets all previous problems and lavishes affection on the wife. Some make him impotent with other women. And some can kill. See Chapter 6.
41. Goody (1972) describes exactly the same reasons for Gonja women in Ghana.
42. I came across one situation where precisely the opposite was the case. A woman told me of how she had decided to divorce the father of her children because he gave her no money at all for the children and made her life miserable, as she was so worried about how to feed them. When she moved in with her new husband, she was forced to leave all her children behind. But from the money the new husband gave her, she was able at last to feed and clothe them.
43. One young woman told me of a woman in her 40s who she knew: 'there was a certain woman who was a prostitute because she had separated from her husband for a long time' (my emphasis). It turned out that this woman had a long-standing lover.
44. Even for those who are accused of chasing after men - perhaps especially those women - fear of pregnancy is a very real issue (see Chapter 8).

Notes to Chapter 6

1. This is not always the case. Sometimes ex-husbands, ex-lovers and even brothers were figured as those intending harm. Men, however, are more likely to be associated with protecting their own interests, through the use of 'medicines' (*juju*), than with the creation of havoc and harm that women are believed capable of.
2. A tendency of the very 'classic' anthropology that the 'anthropology of women' set out to rectify in the late 1960s and early 1970s (see, for example, Rosaldo and Lamphere eds. 1974, Ortner 1974, Reiter ed. 1975), summed up in Malinowski's designation of the discipline as about 'man embracing woman' (Moore 1988:1).
3. This is to avert the risk of the other woman tearing their tops by the sleeves and to stop them pulling their wrappers off, leaving them undressed. It's done very quickly, a bit like pulling one's sleeves up to prepare for a fight.
4. Accounts were collected from *onişegun* (indigenous medical specialists), *alfa* and Christian prophets on a fairly regular basis of the cases they had handled that week. The vast majority of those they reported concerned conditions that they ascribed to *aje*.
5. Evans-Pritchard (1937) defines 'sorcery' (*ngwa*) as the use of tangible magical medicines by ordinary people who are driven by understandable, even if disapproved of, motives that are part of everyone's experience and 'witchcraft' (*mangu*) as psychic, mystical powers that are possessed by people who are considered bad, weird or tragic figures. For him, *ngwa* is a 'real' part of everyday life and *mangu* is something entirely imaginary. See Harwood's (1970) reinterpretation of Evans-Pritchard's account.
6. As a defensive measure, *juju* can be to ward off those who prey on a person's vulnerabilities; it might be hung from the doorway of a house, or placed inside a vehicle, rubbed on the body or worn in amulets. It may come in the form of soap impregnated with herbs (*oşę dudu*), powdered herbs to put in food or to drink or packages wrapped in white cloth. Some forms of *juju* are more elaborate, involving calabashes full of a greasy black substance with cowrie shells, red feathers, kola, bitter kola and alligator pepper, which may be placed under a person's bed as protection or as a source of power.
7. Hallen and Sodipo (1986), drawing on interviews with *onişegun* note that they talked of *aje* as something a person has, rather than a kind of person in itself. In Ado, however, these distinctions were frequently blurred.

8. Versions of the popular negative stereotype of *aje* in Ado, gleaned from a wide range of men and women, presented with a great deal of coherence a familiar image: a person, invariably a woman, consumed by hatred and anger, who leaves her body at night to do her evil deeds; owner of a witch bird (*elẹiyẹ*) into which she transforms herself to fly around; a member of a coven whose organisation mirrors the *egbe* of everyday social life; someone who attacks those closest to her; a cannibal who feeds on the flesh of others, draining their blood from within and giving up her own children to the *egbe* as a joining fee; the possessor of a substance hidden in their stomachs, under their fingernails and in calabashes; usually older, often barren, women; anti-social, disrespectful, vengeful and vindictive characters who specialised in attacking fertility. I asked around eighty school students to write me an essay on 'witches'. They came up with a similar set of images, but with a twist: many referred to 'white witches'.
9. Sudden death may follow a high fever, fainting or headaches or may be caused by a car accident, significantly one in which none or few of the other passengers die. Some conditions were held to be directly caused by *aje* with no other causative agents (i.e. *apṛnkun*, similar to generalised oedema; *olobutu*, large boils on the body; *warapa*, epilepsy), others could arise 'naturally' as well (i.e. *iju*, similar to fibroids and *eda*, backflow of semen; see Chapter 8), others still were cases where an ordinary sickness had failed to clear up. In some cases, an early death from a disease spoken about in biomedical terms - i.e. a stroke - could be attributed to malevolent interference. In others, the fact that an identifiable disease like malaria had quickly killed the person was enough indication to know that something was behind it.
10. Yoruba religion is replete with images of female power, invoked as a duality of procreative and nurturing, and destructive and threatening efficacy (see also Abimbola 1976, Drewal 1977, Hoch-Smith 1978, Apter 1991, Matory 1994). See Verger (1965), Thompson (1976), Drewal and Drewal (1983), and Abiodun (1988).
11. *Aje rere* were talked about in English as 'white witches'. See Buckley (1985) on the symbolism of red, white and black in Yoruba medicine. *Aje pupa* are associated with blood, specifically with destroying a person by sucking their blood from within. They are associated with wasting disease and several herbalists associated them with AIDS. *Aje dudu* cause any kind of generalised misfortune, ranging from car crashes to infertility to sudden death.
12. Drewal and Drewal (1983) also report this.
13. The man was nicknamed Ewe Obaja (lit. the leaf that makes things go bad) and was the nastiest, most horrid kind of person. What I heard about him from men who had been boys during his time, reminded me of the tales of Strumpelpeter I read as a child. Chief Olabintan and Baba Yemisi told me the story in full. It was during the time of the Atinga witch-finding cult in 1950 that he was rumbled. Baba Yemisi told me, 'the *alatinga* (people of Atinga) got a clue that he was a witch, then went to his house and found the heads of people he killed, carried him down to his farm and found more. People had known he seemed to be wicked, but didn't know what he had done until the *alatinga* came. He killed those he hated, those who were richer than him. Ewe Obaja had a herb. If a pregnant woman crossed it on the floor she would never deliver until she went to pay him as a sacrifice. If not she would die during childbirth. People would run from him'. Like other families who lived close by, Baba Yemisi's father had barred his children from walking through the man's compound. Shortly afterwards Ewe Obaja was struck by a bolt of lightning and died instantly.
14. The literature on witchcraft is enormous, spanning decades of work. Some accounts dwell on psychological aspects (e.g. Malinowski 1954, Field's 1960 study of witchcraft confessions is the most detailed example of this), others seek to explore its functions (e.g. Krige 1947, Kluckhorn 1944) or logic (i.e. Gluckman 1944), to elucidate social structures by using witchcraft as an instance of weak points, strains or ruptures (e.g. Nadel 1952), analysing relations between accuser and accused in terms of social structural tensions (e.g. Marwick 1952, 1970), as inversions of ideal social behaviour (e.g. Middleton 1971, Mair 1969), exploring the structural implications of witchcraft (e.g. Douglas 1970, Jackson 1989) or attempting to make systematic cross-cultural comparisons (see Parrinder 1970; see also Hallen and Sodipo's 1986 excellent critique of Parrinder). Studies specifically dealing with Yoruba witchcraft include Morton-Williams (1956), Prince (1961), Verger (1965), Hoch-Smith (1978) and Hallen and Sodipo (1986).

15. The so-called 'rationality debate' has spawned a huge literature. See, for example, contributors to Hollis and Lukes eds. (1982) and to Overing ed. (1985).
16. Overing (1985) argues that in order to understand the beliefs and actions of other people on any level beyond the most trivial, the anthropologist as a person must be able to react to others' reactions using his or her capacities to feel and imagine, not only to reason. Renato Rosaldo (1989) makes this point in a deeply moving account of how he came to understand the rage that death provoked in the Ilongot head-hunters he worked among through the loss of his wife.
17. He also told me, in extensive detail, of the amounts of money he had spend on her to make her well. He'd taken her to hospital, to the Cherubim and Seraphim church, to an Islamic healer and another Christian prophet along the way. Nothing had worked.
18. See Belasco (1980) on associations between witchcraft and the market.
19. 'Long pregnancy' appears to be equivalent to prolonged amenorrhea, as well as phantom pregnancies: I heard of numerous cases that prophets and herbalists had cured, but did not meet anyone who had suffered from this condition. In some cases, I was told, *aje* press the pregnancy down so that it does not show; in others, they prevent the woman from giving birth.
20. Many Yoruba proverbs warn of the perils of others' envy for those who succeed. One specifically cautions against mixing with those who are less fortunate: *aja ti o yo ki iba aiyo sere* (a dog who has just eaten does not play with one who is hungry: a successful person is likely to be envied and must take care in their dealings, Delano 1979:124).
21. I knew one old woman who was very close to two friends of a similar age, who spent most of their days together and helped each other get by. One day, Mrs Odu and I were at her house. She began to tell us about her two sons, both of whom had run mad. Mrs Odu began to warn her about her friends, suggesting that they may be the ones behind it because they were jealous of her for having sons. Later on, the woman called me and told me not to bring Mrs Odu when I came to visit her as she wanted to make trouble.
22. Oyetade (forthcoming) distinguishes between two sets of *ota*: one that makes direct reference to the term *ota* and another that implies them. The sheer range of enemies that Oyetade identifies alludes to their constant threat: enemies within (*ota ile*), enemies outside (*ota ode*), enemies at home (*ota idile*), enemies at work (*ota ibi-iṣe*), secret or hidden enemies (*ota ikokọ tabi ota ibaba*), *a-mọni-ṣeni* ('one who knows someone well and does evil to him'), *a-faimọni-ṣeni* ('one who does not know someone too well but still does evil to him'), *a-ṣeni-bani-daro* ('one who, after doing evil to someone, comes to sympathise with him'), *a-fọju-fẹni-ma-fọkan-fẹni* ('one who appears to love someone to his face but who does not love him from the heart'), *oju-la-ri-ọre-o-denu* ('one who appears superficially to be a friend but is not') and more. Oyetade's fascinating paper shows the extent to which suspicion and fear permeates social relations.
23. I came across a number of cases in which co-wives had ganged up on others to force them out, or had 'settled' between themselves to cope with a nasty third or fourth wife.
24. Marris (1961) also makes this observation.
25. One man, Dovi, told this as a gripping story of his own, with a twist to the ending; I was not able to establish whether it was true or not as it was set in a village nearby. When the son of the co-wife died, people began to gather. They took the other co-wife and began to beat her and throw stones at her. He arrived home to find her and her co-wife crying. He had the cutlass he'd removed from his bicycle in his hand. Before he could do anything, neighbours rushed up to him and started telling him what had happened to the son. He was so angry, he would have cut her in two with the cutlass if the neighbours hadn't taken it away from him. He resolved to send her away. Later on she died from the beating and stoning. The incident drove him away, to Ado.
26. One tale, told to me again and again, recounted the time that a mother in law visited the house of her son and returned with the bone from the huge fish her daughter-in-law has bought in her honour, as proof that her son is wasting his money and her daughter-in-law is enjoying the life of luxury that she herself never had. In some variations, she brings home a large chunk of meat to show people that the husband is wasting his money to the extent that the wife doesn't need to chop up the meat into tiny pieces. In another version, the man's father goes to see for himself and the wife, incensed by reports from home, gives him only *gari* and water. He returns to complain even more about the way the wife

- treated him.
27. Staewen and Schonberg (1970) draw attention to the intense closeness of the bonds mothers have with their sons and to the ambivalence this relationship creates when other women enter the scene. Kandiyoti (1988), in her analysis of 'classic patriarchy', remarks on the significance of sons as resources for older women as mothers-in-law and on their strategic interference in blocking romantic love between partners.
 28. That she was allowed to retain the child in her care, a son at that, was due to the threat the co-wife posed to his safety; it might also be seen as an indication that the man really did not care at all (see Chapter 8).
 29. One of the assignments I set my English students was to write about their grandmothers. The essays that came back resounded with love. Grandmothers provide the things that parents can't or won't afford, protect and cherish their grandchildren and shield them from difficulties, sometimes by intervening in marital strife to resolve problems. One boy wrote: 'I love my grandmother because she is the one to protect us from any possible tyranny of my father'.
 30. See also Prince (1961), Verger (1965), Hallen and Sodipo (1986) and Matory (1994). *Lagos Weekend* is full of accounts of witches attacking those they should love most. A regular column in 1987, for example, reported the confessions of witches to the powerful alfa Alhaji Balogun. A couple of titles from one month in 1987 read: 'I enjoy killing babies - 80 year old witch' (killed four of her children in case they became great, *Lagos Weekend* 2/1/87:2); 'I'm responsible for my children's headache' (witch confesses to hating her seven sons, *Lagos Weekend*, 9/1/97:12).
 31. In the case of the two widows, circumstances were different. One had lost her husband in a car accident, the other's husband had died suddenly following a headache. They were ostracised before they had even had time to come to terms with their loss. In the second case, other implications were read into the case by some observers: they said the husband had died of *ero* put on an errant wife with whom he was having an affair. To his relatives, however, his wife was the one behind it. In the case of the childless old woman, a string of deaths in close succession left her completely ostracised - even I was warned not to go anywhere near her when word got back that I had been giving her money.
 32. See Last (1992) for an intriguing account of this phenomenon.
 33. Morakinyo (1983) explores the concept of *ayanmo* further, tracing fascinating parallels between Ifa and existentialism. Drawing on Ifa verses and myths, Morakinyo relates *ayanmo* to Heidegger's concept of *dasein*, of 'being-in-the-world': each person enters the world and embarks on a process of self-actualisation, of realising a destiny that is chosen freely and deliberately prior to their birth. Ifa myths and verses tell of how each person chooses for themselves a 'head' (*ori*) before they enter the world: if they choose an imperfect one (*ori aisan*), their efforts to succeed can never be fully realised. Where the philosophy of Ifa departs from existentialism, Morakinyo argues, is in positing essence as prior to existence. Being precedes becoming: a being chooses her/his *ori* but enters the world ignorant of the implications of this choice.
 34. See Abimbola 1976; see also Barber's (1990) brilliant analysis of the use of Ifa in the practices of an African Christian church.
 35. Thomas advances a similar functionalist explanation: 'In a primitive society... witch-beliefs help to sustain a rough egalitarianism. They are a conservative force, acting as a check upon undue individual effort' (1973:643).
 36. I came across many cases at first where women would simply not mention how many children they had. Even towards the end of my fieldwork, there was still sufficient suspicion among those who did not know me personally to make it hard to ask - and gain trustworthy answers - to questions about fertility.
 37. One of the main distinguishing factors between the two was that a person who was attacked by *aje* would have certain dreams, of fighting, being chased by masqueraders and of having sex (cf. Prince 1961): this would indicate that the 'witches' were doing their work, threatening a person's life, draining their energy, disrupting their fertility. The most important difference between the two seemed to involve a temporal sequence of apparently unrelated events contrasted with one-off or focused attempts to harm a particular person. *Aje* was attributed retrospectively, to cope with inexplicability; *juju* prospectively or currently in a known situation to temper potential disruption.

38. This depended on their particular religious leanings. To give some examples: the prophets of the Christ Apostolic Church or Spiritual Church of God treated *aje* with holy water and prayer, offering the church as a sanctuary for victims to live in until things were sorted out. Another couple of prophets were from the Cherubim and Seraphim church and worked as independent practitioners. They would combine prayers with the use of protective medicines to keep the witches at bay (either imbuing white soap, like Lux, with prayer or 'black soap', *oşę dudu*, with herbs). *Onişegun* had a range of religious affiliations. A couple of Methodist *onişegun* that I knew used herbs ingested orally or used in the form of *oşę dudu* to heal the person and fend off the witches; one, Akala, claimed to go out at night and fly to meet them, to call them off. One *onişegun*, a Muslim by religion, made sacrifices to the witches and gave *oşę dudu* to wash with. The dividing line between Muslim *onişegun* and *alfa*, Muslim healer was rather blurred and I relied on how people identified themselves. One *alfa* used *oşę dudu* only; another gave Koranic verses in the form of charms to ward off *aje* and stop them doing their work. Another *alfa* called on the *orişá* Osanyin to tell him who the troublemaker was, then made a sacrifice and *oşę dudu* to counter *aje*. Another still used a series of balanced pots to indicate whether a witch was at work (they'd fall down if so) and gave herbs orally. I could go on: the range was enormous.
39. It need hardly be pointed out that specialist discourses on *aje* are those of people whose speak from the position of claiming to be able to counter or defuse this power: for Christian prophets, Islamic *alfa* and 'traditional' healers alike, the work and the fear of *aje* also provide them with a lucrative source of business.
40. The vivid images evoked by the TV soap opera 'The Mightier Power' are resonant of the force of protection that faith offers. In one episode, a Christian couple have a baby, who is a witch. She leaves her body to meet up with her colleagues, plotting to crash her father's cars. The Christians pray and pray and the power of prayer is so strong that she is sucked back into her body and prevented from doing any wickedness at all.
41. On several occasions, I was told by *onişegun* or *alfa* that if a woman comes to them looking for medicine to harm her husband they will refuse to give it to her. This may merely have been rhetoric, but they talked about this in the context of their efforts to mend marriages and keep the peace. One case was told to me by an *onişegun* of a woman who came to him to get *tęşę* (medicine causing a man to be impotent with another woman). He sent her away, then called her husband to tell him his wife wanted to make trouble and that he had better settle with her (i.e. sort out the problem).
42. The title of Margaret Field's (1960) study of witchcraft confessions in Ghana is illustrative of this: *Search for Security*.
43. I translate these term directly into English with some caution, not wishing to presuppose congruence (cf. A. Rorty 1980, Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990). The contexts in which I heard them were sometimes also contexts in which the English terms were used.
44. Some may find that they have done bad things without even realising it, where *aje* has been slipped into their food or where they've inherited it.
45. See Barber (1991) for a significantly different picture: in her account of witchcraft in late 19th and early 20th century Okuku, she describes how it was precisely those women who succeeded who were thought to be witches. In Ado, witchcraft was associated less with success and more with a resentment of those who succeeded: successful women were more likely to be targets than witches themselves.

Notes to Chapter 7

1. One young man graphically described the way in which a 'sugar mummy' can insert a container into her vagina to capture semen without the man knowing: by taking semen to use as medicine, the repercussion for the man can be impotence, he said. I asked Paul Fadairo to interview his friends on, among other things, 'sugar mummies'. He came back with stories of toyboys sought out for sexual satisfaction, of their semen being used for medicine and of older wealthy women who go after young men as they think that they can give them a child. A couple of young men talked of how the 'sugar

mummy' would support a man without money and raise his living standard. Most of his interviewees had experience outside Ado. Several of those who had not said they had heard stories about these women but had not met any.

2. See, for example, 'Young men are winning', *Lagos Weekend* 13/10/89, which features toyboys and an older woman who says, 'I don't demand any financial favours from him so he doesn't feel threatened... it is good as these egocentric men are given keen competition by young men'. Such stories are, however, rarer than those featuring 'senior girls', 'wayward 'housewives' and 'sugar daddies'.
3. Cooking for and feeding a husband maintains a relationship and husbands who eat 'outside' in the evening are assumed to have outside women. This is very similar to the situation described by Abu (1983) and Clark (1994) for southern Ghana.
4. These cases are not intended to be representative. I gathered dozens of work and life histories and chose the ones I use in this chapter to illustrate generative themes.
5. Marris (1961) for example, writing on the incomes and expenditures of Lagos couples in the 1960s, talks of women either trading or pursuing a 'career'.
6. Dennis (1991) relates this directly to a woman's class position. I would argue that there are more complex issues at stake.
7. The complex issues involved in this generalisation are beyond the scope of this thesis, I merely want to make a simple point. What 'class' and 'status' come to mean in these settings is the subject of an enormous amount of sociological literature from Marx and Weber onwards. That these categories are neither static nor all-encompassing even in the UK, with its complex and awkward apparatus of social differentiation, is obvious; they are equally inflected with how actors are positioned by others relative to their own situated values.
8. In many ways, the situation MacGaffey describes for Kisangani, Zaire echoes that of women in Ado: 'some [businesswomen] rely on men at some point in their careers, but such assistance does not constitute continued dependence' (1987:171).
9. *Galura* is a chemical dye, imported from Germany and other European countries, that comes in three colours: red, yellow and green/blue. The colours are combined to make black. Mat-makers dip bunches of reeds in bowls of dye to create strips of colour to decorate their mats. Formerly, people used *dute* (ginger) and *aro* (indigo) to dye mats. Mat-weaving is an art that Ado is especially renowned for and people come from far around to buy Ado mats. These days, few people make the elaborate Awori mats Ado was once famous for, but numbers of women of all ages are engaged in mat production all over town.
10. Diversifying in this way while gradually shifting more money into a major line as capital was a strategy that several successful women commented on as the best way to get ahead, as it is optimally risk-averse allowing the trader to shift money between trades as their market potential dictates.
11. She has found that people prefer the lumps, they are more economical as she does not need to dash people extra powder when she sells and once water is added the volume increases, making the powder go further. The other two do not dry properly, so have to be sold as powder.
12. While many women received a lump sum from their husbands at some stage in their marriage to use as *owo okowo*, generally consequent on having children and given to them as a means of supporting the children rather than themselves, I met some who had not received anything and whose *owo okowo* had come either from their own kin, from saving up in savings groups or by daily contribution (cf. Pearce et al. 1988) or from the work associated with the poorest, collecting firewood or making gari, to generate just a little to start up (cf. Sudarkasa 1973).
13. Convenience shopping enables busy women to send children to buy from a neighbour when they need something. Goods bought in quantity at the market can be broken into small amounts to sell at a profit. By the time goods are sold from the house, they may have passed through the hands a whole chain of vendors, each extracting their profits along the way.
14. Ijeshas had an innovative solution to this in earlier times, the *oşomaalo* system whereby a debtor would wake up one day to find a 'visitor' in the house, who would proceed to make a nuisance of themselves until the person paid up: *oşomaalo* is a contraction of 'I will squat down until I'm paid' (Peel 1983:152). Making this much of a fuss, however, can be a way of courting trouble.

15. In my survey of twenty market *egbe* across a range of commodities in late 1993, just over half (11) of the associations managed to maintain a closed shop and a fifth fixed prices.
16. In the 1980s they started coming into the market to sell directly, undercutting the town traders and causing disputes that were only resolved when two market leaders were appointed (see Chapter 3).
17. Size is one factor in the success of an association, but much depends on inter-personal relations and leadership. Igben (1985) argues that the existence of associations is positively related to the size of initial capital investment in trade, suggesting that in markets where capital investment is small no union existed or, if one did, its impact was minimal. In Ado, in contrast, lower value commodity associations such as those of *efo* (vegetable leaf), *ata* (pepper) and *ifin* (reeds) appeared just as if not more stable than those of higher value items like cloth or shoes or those with significant price fluctuations over the time I was in Ado, particularly *gari* and *epo* (palm oil). Igben bases his argument on the economics of trade arguing if capital outlays in goods are larger, unionisation is easier to maintain. In contrast, it might be argued that it is precisely those lines that are least profitable and require the least capital input that would be the domain of the poorest, those who are most likely to benefit from mutual aid. Economic arguments such as these disregard the social basis of *egbe* as collectivities of people that form over time and exist for other purposes than merely those of maximising profits. While arguments could be made about 'free riders', much of whether an association works boils down to social ties and mutual trust as well as capacity to enforce or even set regulations. Variability is such that there is no fixed generalisation that can be made about how *egbe* work.
18. Profits are made from *gari* by manipulating the measure, by heaping and by dashes, along the chain in the following manner. The producer carries the *gari* to town to sell, sometimes selling it all on straight away to turn it over quickly. I saw scenarios where a virtually powerless village woman watched while an adept market trader took the bowl in her arms, heaped *gari* to overflow, catching an amount with her forearms and transferring it to a sack with a dash of an extra bowl worth on top. The buyer might then take the *gari* into the market, where another trader could insist on using the bowl herself and there may be a bit of a dispute over how much she could heap or whether she could use her arms, but she would get a bit extra this way and a dash on top. Then this buyer sells, using the bowl herself and piling it high, adding a dash. Then the next buyer resells, using the bowl and shaking it a bit to disperse the extra on top and adding a pinch as a dash. The next buyer might either use a much smaller measure or tie the *gari* into lots of small plastic bags to sell in units. At each stage, enough money is made from the differences in quantity to make a living.
19. Many of the proverbs gathered by Delano (1979) make reference to the qualities of patience, hard work and faith and to the importance of small, steady gains in getting where a person wants to be.
20. The further dimensions of Iya Onibata's story, important as they are for understanding her life, are so complicated that space precludes me from discussing them in more detail. Her refusal to be inherited was not because she did not want the man to be her husband, but because she was fearful of the consequences if anything happened to him as she had been blamed for killing her husband (see Chapter 6). Within months, the man died. If she had been with him, she would really have been in trouble.
21. This is a very long and complicated story. The reason, however, was not so much that she remarried but that she chose a relatively poor man from a different ethnic group.
22. As I note earlier, whereas only the poor used to use *kongi* (only the very poorest used *ose dudu*, 'black soap', unless it was used as part of a herbalist's treatment) these days many have switched to locally-produced soaps. As a result, the number of producers has grown from around three or four in 1990 to more than seventeen in 1994.
23. For this reason, as well as women's reluctance to talk about how much money they made, it was difficult to work out how much women earned.
24. This is something few women do and a testimony to the trust Iya Onibata had in her husband.
25. *Ajo* is known as *esusu* in other areas (see Bascom 1952, Ardener 1964, Ardener and Burman 1995; see also March and Taquu 1986). Sudarkasa (1973) notes that rotating savings and credit associations were also called *ajo* in 1960s Awe.
26. I am aware of the extensive development literature on savings and credit, which is beyond the scope

of this chapter to review. In Nigeria, there have been a number of development initiatives that attempt to promote ROSCAs and co-operative ventures, with varying degrees of success.

27. One group of young men had a solution to inflation: they joined together to buy motorbikes to use to transport people and each time a turn came round, the group contributed their shares of the cost of a bike.
28. Of the associations I surveyed, eleven operated *ajọ* or *ajakọ* in some form, 7 of them those with a closed shop. Only one, however, raised significant sums of money: the *ẹgbẹ onimaggi* (soup seasoning and salt), who each contributed N200 a week, raising N2,000 capital. Others rotated capital of no more than N500. *Ajakọ* contributions ranged from N5 to N20 each meeting and would continue for varying lengths of time, generating enough to supplement capital, but not to switch to a higher value line.
29. *Ajọ* started around 15 years ago. Quite how much money this brings in can be seen from the large storey house the man who started *ajọ* off in Ado has built for himself.
30. To my knowledge, only one of these collectors is a woman - an educated Ijebu woman. She told me that there were now around twenty people doing this business in the town, although others told me that a number of them had gone bust from failed ventures that used savers' capital. One man, who started his contribution business in early 1990, had 250 customers by the time I left Ado and made about N2-3,000 a month gain. This was almost double his salary in his public sector job.
31. Some people do cumulative *ajọ*, saving over several months for a particular purchase or expensive event like a funeral ceremony.
32. Contribution collectors have also been known to default, blowing the money on ill-advised ventures, so building up a relationship of trust and operating through contacts and recommendations - the personal touch - is crucial (see Chapter 3).
33. One collector estimated that around two thirds of his clients were women and one third were men, of these 90% did daily contribution and the remaining number saved weekly or every market day. Contributions ranged from N3 to N250 a day.
34. With the exception of cloth and provisions, which require considerable capital, I was told that women can start selling a number of the main market commodities with relatively modest amounts of money. And even if a woman has virtually nothing, there are ways of getting enough money to start something small by transforming labour into capital by collecting firewood or kola, or making *gari*.
35. Clark (1994) surveyed the responses of Kumasi market traders to a hypothetical windfall gain that was sufficient to start up in another line. 67% told her that they would plough the money back into their business and only 12% indicated that they would use it to change.
36. Although several women told me they had picked up the ways of a particular trade by observing friends or relatives at work, this too constitutes direct experience. Much of women's knowledge came either from being trained as a child and exposed to different kinds of commodities this way, or from being taken under the wing of a sister or friend. Some women told me that they had taught themselves just by doing a trade as they saw others they bought from doing. Clark (1994) discussed Kumasi marketwomen's training in some detail, painting a picture that is very similar to that I found in Ado.
37. I go on to explore generational differences later in this chapter. Alongside interviews and informal discussions, I asked a range of women from 15 to 70 years old to rank occupations according to desirability, gain and what they would like their daughters to do. I did this by drawing pictures symbolising the occupations on cards, which I then explained one by one to the women who could not read. Then I laid them out on the ground and asked them to pick the one that was most desirable. Then the least desirable. Then the next most. And so on. I then relaid the cards and asked them to tell me which one gave the most gain and so on. Previously, I had attempted to use matrix ranking with a couple of groups of women and had found it useful for generating criteria, but as the exercise had taken so much of their time I was unwilling to use this method again. The card ranking method was much quicker, less complicated and more fun.
38. Guyer (1992) also talks about the ways farmers talked about their particular practices in terms of *ife*.
39. As might be expected, *ẹfọ* is a commodity with substantial seasonal variation in quality, quantity and price and at some times in the year the gains are minuscule.
40. I heard of women who dosed their babies with phenergan to make them sleep while they were busy.

In one case, a young woman had left her child with her husband's mother and sisters-in-law while she went to another market and found out that they had given her nine month old baby valium as it would not stop crying. Pearce (1994) reports the use of such sedatives in day-care centres.

41. Grandmothers and sisters may take charge of the children for some of the time, sometimes fostering them for a while, but some women have no option but to take their children with them until they are old enough to go to school.
42. Mintz (1971) suggests that this is for lack of other viable investment possibilities: I would contend, as I argue in Chapter 8, that there is more to it than this.
43. Sudarkasa argues, 'any statement linking age to commodity line is bound to be subject to so many qualifications as to be vacuous... women of all ages deal in farm produce and all types of imported goods' (1973:157).
44. In a questionnaire distributed to a sample of 50 young women in 3 secondary schools, 84% were the daughters of traders, 4% of farmers and 12% of white collar workers of some kind. Only 10% wanted to follow their (successful) mothers into trade. 40% wanted to work in medicine (16% as doctors, 20% as nurses, 4% as pharmacists), 20% wanted to work in finance or business administration, 12% wanted to go to university, 4% wanted to work in law and 8% in government or the police, 4% wanted to be secretaries and only 1 wanted to work in education, as a professor.
45. On a 5-yard length of guinea brocade bought from Lagos, a trader can mark it up by N100 and needs only three or four sales on a market day to make as much as the monthly salary of a menial worker. A vegetable trader might come away from the market with N50 after a whole day's trading. Comparing these profits to the kinds of amounts women received from their husbands is salutary: some women received only N20 or N50 every market day from their husbands to feed the family. Even the basic of meals prepared at home for a family of six cost almost N50 (the cheapest fish @N20, pepper and tomato @N12, gari @N15 for half a bowl, maggi @N1).
46. Assessing the impact of structural adjustment raises issues that clearly go well beyond the scope of this thesis as does a review of the now substantial literature on gender and structural adjustment (see, for example, Elson 1991, Due and Gladwin 1991, Sahn and Haddad 1991, Sparr ed. 1994, Afshar and Dennis 1992, Thomas-Emeagwali ed. 1995, Brydon and Legge 1995). As I suggest in Chapter 9, these issues merit further research.
47. The queen of all trades, cloth, began to take a fall during the time I was in Ado. Whereas when times were good, women were able to dress well and many bought cloth on credit regularly. By mid-1994, people told me that they had even begun recycling last years' finery at festivals because there was simply not enough money to buy anything new.
48. Pearce (1994) conducted a ranking exercise with 365 women in Ife on the problems they faced as family caretakers. Paying for children's education emerged as the highest by far, followed by getting sufficient food.
49. A well-to-do businessman in his 40s told me how he had tried to find himself another wife after his wife had died. What he wanted, he said, was not someone who would sit around in the house all day but a respectable kind of woman who was 'quite alright with her work' and could help him bring up his four children. He met a number of suitable women. But all, he said, wanted a child from him. The prospect of putting four children through higher education was quite enough without worrying about another child at his time of life. So he remained unmarried.

Notes to Chapter 8

1. Richards' (1989) account of 'performance' relates to the patterning of crops in a field over time. I realise that drawing on an account of intercropping to invite parallels with women's lives may seem a little unusual, but I feel that Richards, like de Certeau, draws attention in his analysis to an issue of much wider theoretical significance.
2. Barker and Rich (1992) note the reports of school girls in Ibadan of being forced out of their homes, punished by parents who refuse to send them back to school, young men denying responsibility. Young men said that few would accept paternity and most would blame it on another man.

3. In situating reproductive choice in 'pre-transition' societies at the level of the extended family or community, Caldwell invokes structural-functionalist arguments about 'culture' to explain the persistence of the desire for large families among Yoruba. Bledsoe and Cohen (1993) review three dominant strands in the literature on fertility in Africa: the assumption that reproductive patterns are largely culturally determined and explanations of change that draw on changes in production and in property transmission between generations, in both of which reproductive decision-making has a strong collective component residing in strategies of families or communities rather than isolated individuals, and a third strand that focuses on assessing the costs and benefits to individuals. They suggest all three themes are relevant for their analysis and their report focuses on common ground between the three, highlighting changes in social organisation.
4. See Lockwood (1989) for an excellent review and critique of these theories.
5. Lockwood argues: 'it is easy to see that the question "why children?" or "how is fertility chosen so as to maximise utility?" only makes sense in a world where couples or individuals have a great degree of control over their reproduction' (1989:26). While his analysis is undermined by the absence of an account of human agency, focusing instead on 'communal controls', Lockwood's point about choice is an important one: it undermines the kind of simplistic economic thinking around fertility that is so prevalent in the demographic literature. Where his analysis is more problematic is in the implication that 'modern contraception' provides a means for control where none such means existed before.
6. It is, they argue, hardly possible to imagine how anyone in this context can make a plan about fertility over their life-courses and follow it through with any certainty nor how they could establish and weigh up the costs and benefits involved for them as individuals. And, they go on to suggest, factors influencing decisions over fertility at any time may go well beyond the attitudes of individuals about their preferred family size.
7. For reasons connected with the potential malevolence of others, women do not announce their pregnancies publicly and may remain cautious throughout their pregnancies. If they later experience problems with delivery, others may be implicated in creating trouble. For this reason, nurses often bar older women from attending births with the women they bring to clinics.
8. Even amongst secondary school pupils, those whose desired fertility might be expected to be comparatively lower than other groups according to conventional thinking on the impact of education on desired fertility, the wish to have at least four children persists. Of a sample of 50 young women and 50 young men, from 15-24, only 10% wanted two or less children while 81% wanted four or more. The modal number of children desired was two boys and two girls, with 58% of young women and 24% of young men stating this preference (a further 24% of young men would prefer three boys and two girls).
9. See the Human Development Report (1994) and the 1990 Demographic and Health Survey (1992) which estimate infant mortality at between 87 and 97 per thousand and under 5 mortality at 155/1000 for Nigeria as a whole. The level of aggregation undermines the usefulness of such statistics and the reliability of these figures is questionable: I cite them as the best available evidence.
10. In another song, reference was made again to the old woman having outlived her sons, but in a more sinister sense. One of the lines went '*ko p'omọ egbon ko pa t'aburo iya dada ni ya wa*' - 'she didn't kill the senior brother's child nor that of the junior brother, our mother is a good mother'. If any of these children had died, I was told, aspersion may have been cast on her. Her sons' relief at having outlived her stemmed from her unsullied reputation. As the case in Chapter 6 shows, other women may not be so fortunate.
11. One couple I knew wanted only four children, but kept on trying for a daughter when they had son after son. After eight male children, one of whom died, they gave up. Herbalists claim to be able to treat such cases, using a medicine that enables a woman to have a child of the desired sex.
12. Characteristic of demographic surveys in general, studies of male infertility in Nigeria are few and far between (Caldwell and Caldwell 1981). However, it is estimated that in up to 40% of cases of infertile union, the male partner is the one afflicted (Adadevoh 1974, Chukwudebelu 1974, Obafunwa et al. 1993).
13. This is a play on *ale* (lover) and *alẹ* (night): he claimed he was the women's lover while the husband was only the 'afternoon husband' (*okọ ọsan*).

14. This is an important contrast between Ado and the situation Guyer describes for Ibarapa where she suggests, 'throughout her life a Yoruba woman may leave one husband for another, either taking her small children with her or giving them to her mother to care for' (1994:245) and where men can be responsible for the children of current wives by previous husbands. Small children are thought to need their mothers but as soon as they are old enough, the father or his family can claim them.
15. When a man refuses to accept responsibility for a woman's pregnancy, people may say of him, 'he is wasting his chance'.
16. Rich (1977), in an influential book on motherhood as experience and as institution, draws attention to some of the ambivalences involved in these multiple dimensions. Hey (1989) draws attention to the different aspects involved in women's desire to become mothers, both as bodily and social experience. As Chodorow (1978) and others have pointed out, the desire for motherhood as well as the associations that are made with it are socially constructed. See Scheper-Hughes' compelling account of mothering and infant death in northeastern Brazil (1993).
17. Hallgren cites a poem from Tutuola's *The Witchherbalist of the Remote Town* that nicely sums up the implications. It is recited by an *abiku* child, one who comes into the world only to die, : 'And when a woman is fed up with being barren, she prays for a "born and die baby" so that people may not call her barren. But what is the use when the baby is dead and then she becomes as barren as before?' (Tutuola 1981:134, cited in Hallgren 1988:178).
18. Infertility refers to the state whereby a person has the 'incapacity to impregnate or to conceive a pregnancy to live birth', while sterility refers to 'the absolute incapacity to reproduce' (Adadevoh 1974:2). As Adadevoh points out, in the case of infertility it may be assumed 'that infertile persons could be fecund and have the biological capacity to reproduce' (1974:2). Primary infertility relates to 'persons who have never demonstrated the capacity to impregnate or to conceive and carry a pregnancy to live birth', secondary infertility to 'persons with a known history of previous live births but not able subsequently to impregnate or to conceive and carry a pregnancy to live birth' (Adadevoh 1974:2). Definitions offered by the WHO (1991) add a further category of 'pregnancy wastage', of women able to conceive but unable to produce a live birth.
19. Caldwell and Caldwell (1983) report, using 1973 data from Ibadan, an incidence of primary sterility of 3-4%. Only 2% of women over 40 had voluntarily limited their children to less than five overall. They suggest that some degree of infertility prevented two fifths of Ibadan women and almost a third of women in Western and Lagos States from having as many births as they wanted to. Other studies have found an even higher rate of impaired fertility. Olusanya (1974) reports results of a rural survey in the Western region that indicates some two thirds of women as having three or less children in spite of a long duration of marriage.
20. Caldwell and Caldwell (1983) suggest that women had at least four births by the age of 40 unless they suffered from some degree of sterility. In my Imasai sample of 109 women over 40, 51% had four or fewer children, 47% had three or fewer, 9% had only one child and a further 9% had no children of their own at all. I give these figures as illustrative, with the following reservations. First, the sample size is extremely small. Secondly, in some cases women were unwilling to state the number of children or it was inappropriate to ask directly where they were thought to be childless, so triangulation from personal knowledge and the testimony of others was needed which diminishes the potential accuracy of the data. Thirdly, the data were gathered for other purposes, so cross-checking was not as thorough as it would have been had the data been collected to study fertility.
21. The authors of the 1991 WHO report on infertility note the difficulties in accurately assessing primary infertility, which may be indicated by any of the following: never pregnant, no live birth, no child born, no child alive (1991:7). They also point to the incidence of under-reporting in the data, suggesting that fosterage and adoption practices may mask actual numbers.
22. In their classic feminist deconstruction of the notion of 'reproduction', Edholm et al. (1977) distinguish between biological reproduction, social reproduction and reproduction of the labour force. As Moore (1994) argues, this distinction is helpful but ultimately fails to adequately explain how people are reproduced as particular kinds of persons with differentiated social identities.
23. Goody (1982) draws a distinction between 'status reciprocities' and 'reciprocities of rearing': she argues that the birth status of a child is something that is immutable and hence no matter if a parent

fosters the child out, links cannot be severed by this. I would suggest this is the case for fathers, but not necessarily for mothers.

24. See Schildkraut (1973), Brydon (1979), Goody (1982), Isiugo-Abanihe (1985), Page (1989) and Bledsoe and Isiugo-Abanihe (1994) for fosterage in other West African contexts. Clearly, fosterage is related to the demographic cycle; it is also affected by changing ideals of child-rearing. Educated young people in marriages usually prefer to bring their children up themselves; those who have children without establishing a cohabiting relationship often remain in their parents' houses as sons or daughters and bring their children up there. In a small survey of 102 hearth-holds in Imasai quarter, I found that only 11 of them (ie under 10%) had foster children living with them: in four cases the hearth-hold head was over 60 and in seven cases between 40 and 60. Two of these were young people fostered in specifically as househelps. It was relatively common for children and their children to share a house with their parents; in only three cases were grandchildren living away from one of their parents with a grandparent, in one case only a female household head had her granddaughter with her.
25. The demographic literature is vast and a review is beyond the scope of this chapter. For a critical review of economic approaches to fertility see Oppong and Bleek (1982) and Lockwood (1989). For illustrative examples of the 'value of children' approach in other Yoruba areas see Caldwell (1976) and Orubuloye (1981).
26. As Strathern (1988) notes, the distortions that a way of thinking set within western commodity logic offer a very different version of personhood.
27. Bledsoe (1990a, 1990b) argues for Sierra Leone that parents may seek to consolidate ties with others through the placement of foster children, to enable their children to achieve the aspirations they have for them. Children, in Bledsoe's analysis, become the means by which fathers as well as mothers can pursue similar strategies to Guyer's lateral networking. This is also the case in Ado.
28. Goody (1982) argues that 'adoption' is a term that has limited salience for Gonja in Ghana. Most of the cases that resemble adoption in Ado are where one member of a family helps another out by taking in or giving out a child on a more or less lasting basis: the child retains membership of the idile of her or his mother and father.
29. Contraceptive services are not offered to unmarried youth in Ado. Women cannot just go into a shop and buy condoms, for fear of others seeing them, nor can they present their partners with them. They can sneak the pills of other family members or buy them in another town, or use indigenous methods (see Dopamu 1977, Giwa 1990). But limited access and reluctance to provide services exacerbates the problem. I read through the archive of letters sent to PPFN (Planned Parenthood) in Lagos and was repeatedly struck by the level of misunderstanding young people had.
30. This is a course of action parents quite often resort to, as one Nigeria Police superintendent told me with some weariness.
31. Over the cohorts of women between 25 and 49, there is minimal variation with a slight increase among women under 29. Median age at first birth for these cohorts are as follows (source DHS 1992:33):

25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
21.3	19.6	20.4	20.6	20.6

32. One of the major limitations of demographic data of this kind is the level of aggregation. In the DHS, disaggregation by variables such as religion, rural/urban differences are performed on data for the country as a whole. With over three hundred ethnic groups, an estimated population of around 100 million and huge inter-cultural variation, these figures are quite meaningless when taken at aggregate level. For the southwestern region, it needs to be remembered that of the 20 or so million people in this area a substantial proportion live in Lagos and Ibadan, and other major towns. Recent census figures are so notoriously unreliable that I would not venture to quote them.
33. Older women would often cite 30 as the average age at first marriage; from their own marital histories, I found that many of them were over twenty when they went to their husbands.
34. Anecdotal evidence suggests that girls may start having sex as young as 12 and some can even start before their first period, I was told by young women (as well as by the older people who complained

- about this). Among the 100 secondary school students I surveyed, 16% of young women and 6% of young men between 15 and 24 reported that they had not begun having sex. Of the boys, all were under 17. Oyekanmi (1994) reports for Ilesha that 74% of women and 70% of men under 30 had had sex before the age of nineteen (compared with the significantly lower 38% and 36% respectively for those over 30). See also Feyisetan and Pebley (1989) and Oloko and Omoboye (1993).
35. In my survey of school students, almost half of the young women reported having used condoms to prevent pregnancy, 25% relied on coitus interruptus and 14% had ever used the contraceptive pill (some of whom took it in handfuls, not daily). A small number used indigenous contraceptive methods, such as rings (see Dopamu 1977, Giwa 1990). Only one young woman currently having sex reported never having used any form of contraception. Among the young men, condoms were the favoured method of contraception accounting for 68% of responses. See Nichols et al. (1986), Makinwa-Adebusoye (1991) for other areas. Informal interviews with young men confirmed a high awareness of AIDS but ambivalence about condoms: several young men suggested that they caused diseases, others said they prevented enjoyment and others still said they could split or slip off and were not reliable. All the young men interviewed informally said that if a woman presented them with a condom they would regard her as asewo (prostitute) and suspect that she had some illness to do such a thing. Apprentices were even more ambivalent about condom use with many confirming the myth that they caused illnesses. See Bledsoe (1990d) and Renne (1993b) for a review of attitudes to condoms in the popular press in other areas of Africa and in Nigeria respectively.
 36. I asked students what they would choose to do if they, or their girlfriends, did become pregnant by mistake. Only 6% of girls and boys suggested that marriage was the best choice in such a situation. The majority (50% of boys and 60% of girls) chose the option of having the child, then continuing with education. 44% of the boys and 30% of the girls indicated a preferred choice of abortion. Nichols et al. (1986) report an Ibadan study among never-married 14-25 year old women among whom the majority who admitted inducing abortion did so to remain at school. Gyepi-Garbah (1985) cites references to abortion as a 'schoolgirls' problem' by hospital staff at the Lagos teaching hospital. Okagbue (1990) found that 55% of cases of abortion and correction of incomplete abortion involved women under 20 in Ogun State, with only 10% of women over 35 years old. Nichols et al. (1986) note that adolescents formed a substantial proportion of admissions and deaths from illegal abortion in Ibadan. Odejide (1986) suggests that abortion is the preferred course of action in 90% of pregnancies among unmarried working women. Caldwell and Caldwell go so far as to argue that, 'abortion can be an important means for individual women to achieve their wider life and marital goals' (1994:274). Although abortion is usually connected with unmarried women, married women may abort pregnancies conceived with lovers or seek abortion when they are unable to face having another child.
 37. In my survey of secondary school students, 26% of women reported having had at least one abortion: two thirds had used injections, nearly a third had been operated on and one alone had used herbal methods. Of the 50 boys surveyed, 16% reported that their girlfriends had had abortions, again with the majority reporting the use of injections. By using anonymous self-completed questionnaires, I hoped to elicit reasonably reliable data (see Oloko and Omoboye 1993). Nichols et al. (1986) report that 34.6% of their sample of 14-25 year olds in Ibadan secondary school students had terminated their first pregnancy.
 38. Abortions may be attempted pharmaceutically, by the use of menstrual regulation treatments (i.e. menstrogen, gynaecosid, clomid), or medicines such as M&D tablets (headache tablets containing sulphathiazole), Andrews Liver Salts which are taken with Schweppes or 7-Up (see Renne 1996, for similar methods in Ekiti). Menstrual regulants are used to 'kick start' menstruation and used medically for amenorrhoea, hypomenorrhoea and dysfunctional bleeding (i.e. no periods, scanty periods and irregular periods). Both contain high doses of pharmacologically similar compounds to those in the oral contraceptive pill (i.e. progesterone or norethisterone and ethinylestradiol). Menstrogen is the most popular pharmaceutical abortifacient in Ado. It is administered by intra-muscular injection for pregnancies of up to three months. I was told: 'the injection works up to 1-2 months [of pregnancy] and if the blood is thick then you can use it up to 3 months and it will come down when you inject twice. If the blood is thin then it will not come down easily and you will need to do D&C'. Herbalists told me that herbs (taken orally or inserted into the vagina as pessaries) would work up to 3 months,

but beyond that it was risky as a heavy dose would be needed. These are losing popularity as western medical options such as vacuum aspiration or dilation and curettage (D&C) have become more accessible. At least two maternity clinics in Ado performed abortions and women would also go to Otta or Lagos. Attendants at one unofficial pharmacy that stocked the largest range of drugs in the town told me that they regularly dispensed tablets and injections of menstrual regulants to women of all ages, but especially to younger women. Herbalists were initially reserved about their practices, but as I got to know them better several admitted administering abortifacients to married and unmarried women alike. See also Caldwell and Caldwell (1994) and Renne (1996) for Nigeria, and Bleek's (1978) study of abortion in Ghana which bears a number of similarities to the southern Nigerian situation.

39. She had given birth to one child by another man, but it had died.
40. The risks are considerable. A 1971 study found 51% of all deaths from maternal mortality attributable to complications following abortion (Akingba 1971). See contributors to Okonofua and Ilumoka (1991) for a review of the services available and the consequences of badly performed abortion. See also Okonofua (1991) and Konje et al. (1992) on other consequences of septic induced abortion.
41. His reaction to her swollen belly hints at concerns beyond having to pay for the child. People say that if a man sexes a woman who is carrying another man's pregnancy, then that man might earn money but it would run from his hands; he would be poor until the child has grown and is earning.
42. Mrs Odu told me that among certain families, they made a woman who came to live with their son wait until her first menstrual period in their house before they allowed the son to have sex with her just in case.
43. This saying is also used to denote something secret.
44. It is customary to give the 'real father' the placenta, which he then buries in a secret place. This is both in case of any future dispute over paternity and as a protective measure for the child. I was told in Ibadan that women who wanted to pass off a lover's pregnancy as their husband's or to pin it onto a different, wealthier, father would claim the hospital had incinerated it.
45. Since around the 1960s, blood testing has been a way in which men can find out if they are the 'real father' and in several cases in Ado's customary court testing was recommended in the resolution of paternity cases (see also Renne 1990).
46. One man I know named one of his children Odunlami ('there is a certain mark') to indicate that he was aware that, as he put it, 'I was not the only one'. However, he brought the child up as his own. Another told me of a case where a mother had brought her sick child to him. His observation that 'the blood was different' prompted her confession; subsequently, he said, she sent the child to the 'real father'. Some people believe that if a child gets sick away from its father it must be returned to him or else it might die, and the woman will be blamed for it.
47. I knew of only one case in which an infertile woman was branded *aje*.
48. As soon as I saw the state the child was in, I tried to do something to help: giving money and then food to the grandmother. But people said that I was being foolish: did I think she would spend the money on the child when she had none herself, did I think she would give that child the food? When the child died, I was wracked with guilt about not having done more, but realised that she may not have wanted it to live. Scheper-Hughes' (1993) brilliant and moving account of infant death in northeastern Brazil explores the dilemmas poverty poses for child survival.
49. Women may spend large amounts of their income on attempts to become pregnant. Adadevoh (1974) cites an article in IPPF News of June 1968 on sub-fertility in Ilesha. The author found that some women had paid up to a year's total earnings for various cures during their first five years of their infertility.
50. Empirical evidence suggests a strong causal association between impaired fertility and sexually transmitted disease, predominantly gonorrhoea and chlamydia (Retel-Laurentin 1974, Caldwell and Caldwell 1983, Frank 1983, Larssen 1995).
51. See Verger (1968), Okri (1991), Last (1992) and Nzewi (1994). Parents who have such children do everything they can to plead with them to stay, by petting them, pampering them in every way and by attaching amulets and chains to the child's limbs, so as to prevent them from leaving as others have.

52. It has been estimated that between 40-85% of cases of sterility among women in Africa can be traced to pelvic infections arising from gonorrhoea or other bacterial infections (Meheus et al. 1986). Some forms of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) are brought about by gonorrhoeal infections (salpingitis, for example), some by infections following induced abortion or miscarriage and some can arise in association with infection with other micro-organisms. Pelvic infections can cause scarring of the fallopian tubes, rendering a woman prone to ectopic pregnancy or to a failure to conceive.
53. See Adekunle and Ladipo (1992), Erwin (1993), Oyekanmi (1994) and Okonofua et al. (1995) on reproductive tract infections in other areas. See Green (1992) on ethnomedicine, STDs and implications for health policy. Maclean (1971), Simpson (1980), Oyewumi (1989) and Buckley (1985) offer accounts of local categories from other areas that only matched up partially with what herbalists in Ado told me: there is significant variation in practices and diagnoses between herbalists themselves, as well as between regions.
54. If fibroids become large, they can cause pain and heavy bleeding, and prevent implantation (Newell 1974, Dr Fiona Sanders, pers. comm.). *Iju* appears similar to fibroids, but in the cases I investigated women did not have heavy periods, nor did they pass lumps. Simpson (1980), writing on healers in Ibadan, describes *iju* as 'overdue pregnancy'. None of those I spoke with in Ado connected *iju* with this condition.
55. Several herbalists drew 'body maps' for me, to show me where *iju* was: they represented it like a round ball, located close to the cervix or higher up in the abdomen. There are several kinds of *iju*, some more troublesome than others. Treatments are given to expel the growth. *iju* is not always thought to cause infertility, or pain. Several herbalists told me that a woman needs *iju* to conceive. If it is *abqju* ('female' *iju*) it is not problematic; *akoju* ('male' *iju*) is the one that causes pain and problems, as it 'has power'.
56. *Eda* has been glossed as leucorrhoea (Abraham 1958), which is a non-specific thick, white discharge (Dr Rachel Jewkes, pers. comm.), but seems to have significance as a sign of a failure to conceive in itself (Dr Lanre Johnson, pers. comm.). Some cases in Ado were associated with pelvic pain and fever, from which it might be suggested that infertility may be due to pelvic infection.
57. *Atosi*, which corresponds symptomatically to gonorrhoea, has variants that are sexually transmitted and others that are caused by having sex on a hot day in the afternoon or other circumstantial causes. There are many different varieties of *atosi*. To give a few examples: *atosi oloyun* (mucus comes out), *atosi eje* (blood comes out), *atosi egebe* (person becomes lean all the time), *atosi aja* (caught from urinating in the same place as a dog, painful urination, white discharge). It is often asymptomatic in women and their husbands may or may not tell them if they infect them: some may give her medicine for some other ostensible reason, others may own up and take her with them for treatment (see Orubuloye et al. 1993).
58. Religious adherence did not strictly determine which strategies women pursued for seeking assistance. What mattered was that something worked. As one person put it, 'you can see an Alhaja going to the church at night and know that when she has found what she wants she will take her beads to the mosque to pray'. Healers of all persuasions, from those dealing in prayer and holy water to those wielding scalpels or boiling herbs, were consulted by women to find a 'conception' (*oyun*). Many women sought help from herbalists. For some, visits to a herbalist were only sanctioned by their husbands if they themselves or their mothers accompany the wife: for fear that she may be seeking other kinds of medicines, or may be seduced by the herbalist. Some men would go to those with experience in treating infertility to find medicine to bring back to their wives. Women also attended services and healing sessions given by prophets in numbers. Some went to Muslim *alfa*, some to hospitals for tests and treatment. Those who have the means may travel long distances to see specialists who have been recommended by others. In the process, thousands of Naira may be spent on treatment.
59. This appears to correspond with medical accounts of antibodies against a man's sperm, preventing conception (Wingate 1984, Dr F. Sanders pers. comm.).
60. In the survey I conducted among secondary school pupils, this was the most frequent response to a question asking what they would do if they or their partner didn't conceive after some time together (44% of women, 48% of men). A further 18% of young women said they would remain with their

husbands, no matter what happened. Only 8% of women and 8% of men said they would go for tests or treatment and then divorce. 10% of young women said they would try their luck elsewhere and 8% of young men would divorce. 6% of young women said they'd accept a polygynous set-up and 20% of young men said they would seek this. The remaining responses mentioned finding out whether the partner was still interested, waiting until pregnancy before marriage (4% of young men mentioned this) and being unhappy.

61. Things may be changing, however, as children by 'outside wives' are increasingly marginalised (Bledsoe and Cohen, 1993).
62. The incidence and prevalence of STDs in this region remains poorly documented, but is and has long been a serious problem (Caldwell and Caldwell 1983, Frank 1983, Orubuloye et al. 1993, Adekunle and Ladipo 1992). Studies generally indicate only those cases treated in western medical clinics, which are a tip of the iceberg. Many people self-treat with antibiotics or go to herbalists; among women, cases often remain undetected and untreated for some time (Erwin 1993).

Notes to Chapter 9

1. This shocking possibility is matched by hard evidence (Briggs 1991, Okonofua 1991, see Chapter 8). Figures are obviously hard to obtain on the incidence of abortion. Renne (1996:485) cites estimates of 200,000 - 500,000 terminations of pregnancy and 10,000 abortion-related deaths annually. Nearly a quarter of gynaecological beds in the hospitals of southern Nigeria are occupied with patients with complications of abortion (Briggs 1991).
2. Providing and procuring an abortion is a criminal act under sections 228, 229, 230, 232 and 235 of the Criminal Code of Nigeria (Okonofua and Ilumoka 1991), arising directly from the UK 1861 Offences against the Person Act (Ilumoka 1991:70), overturned by the 1967 Abortion Act. Debates on the legalisation of abortion in Nigeria reached a climax in early 1993 when it looked as if the government would be able to resist the pressure of religious groups and go ahead with legislation. This would have meant the opening up of abortion services within government institutions and regulation of private clinics carrying out abortions. Quite how this would be implemented is another question. Despite the illegality not only of providing but procuring an abortion, prosecutions have rarely been brought (Renne 1996).
3. The magazine *Hints* does precisely this, reworking contemporary news stories into narratives: it has run features on AIDS and on the issues around contraception. As they are written in English and are now quite expensive relative to other things, magazines like this are becoming less accessible.
4. Renne (1996) advocates trials of RU486, the controversial French 'abortion pill', which she argues is a culturally appropriate means of terminating pregnancies safely: corresponding to the wide-spread use of patent medicine to 'bring down' pregnancies. As she points out, RU486 is expensive (£75 a treatment) and Roussel-Uclaf will not market it in countries where abortion is illegal. Furthermore, the possibility of abuse and attendant health risks, as well as the need for supervision and back-up point to further problems. While Renne suggests these obstacles are surmountable, I would contend that they pose considerable risks precisely because of the ways in which western pharmaceuticals are presently abused. Manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) is a low-cost, new technology which is relatively straightforward to learn how to use, does not require anaesthesia and carries fewer risks than conventional vacuum aspiration or D&C (Tubi 1991).
5. For example, EMPARC recently organised street performances in Mushin, Lagos on reproductive health issues (Toun Ilumoka, pers. comm.) and NPTA have been using theatre to explore issues of sexuality for HIV/AIDS prevention and reproductive health issues such as VVF (Oga Abah, pers. comm.).

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