



African Market Women and Economic Power: The Role of Women in African Economic Development (Contributions in Afro-American & African Studies)

Felix K. Ekechi, Bessie House-Midamba

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An interdisciplinary study of market women from all parts of Africa shows how, from historical times to the present, African women have used the economic power they have derived from market activities and commercial enterprises to improve their social and political status in a man's world. They used their wealth in pre-colonial times to obtain titles and even chieftainship. Because of their involvement in trade, many women acquired considerable property, especially real estate. The authors stress the positive aspect of women's economic activities, but also point out the prevalent sexual division of labor in Africa as a limiting factor. They illustrate the concomitant struggle between men and women over certain market items traditionally associated with one or the other sex. They analyze the cultural, social, and economic barriers that restrict female involvement in some economic activities. Nevertheless, the overwhelming conclusion by all of the writers, who are Africans and Americans, is that women play a major role in the economic sector of all the regions of the continent.

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