JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

Socio-Economic Activities of Urhobo Migrant Women in Ilorin, 1970–2023

Julianah Beauty AKPOTAIRE
History and Inetrnational Studies
Adeleke University Ede, Osun State, Nigeria
Email: akpotaire.julianah@adelekeuniversity.edu.ng
07065643362

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22833965

Abstract

This study examines the socio-economic activities, trade specialisations, and survival strategies of Urhobo migrant women in the multicultural, predominantly Islamic frontier city of Ilorin, Kwara State, from 1970 to 2023. Utilising a historical-descriptive methodology, the research relies primarily on oral history interviews with elderly women, traders, and community leaders, complemented by secondary sources to build a comprehensive narrative. Findings demonstrate that Urhobo women carved out distinct commercial niches, moving beyond traditional dependency narratives to establish dominant roles in both informal and formal economies. Specifically, they managed lucrative cross-regional supply chains: bulk-distributing palm oil, exporting dried meat (*tiko*) to the Niger Delta, transporting cassava flakes (*garri*) to northern Nigeria, and importing northern beans to local markets. Furthermore, many engaged in localised *garri* processing within the Ilorin metropolis or secured formal government wage employment. To build capital and mitigate economic marginalisation, these entrepreneurs strategically utilised traditional rotating credit associations (*esusu*) and ethnic unions like the Urhobo Progress Union (UPU) Women's Wing, Agbon Union, Urhobo Ladies Club. By successfully navigating complex socio-religious and cultural boundaries within their host community, Urhobo women maintained their cultural identity while reinforcing interregional trade resilience. Ultimately, this study challenges male-centric migration frameworks and highlights the structural agency of non-Yoruba minority female entrepreneurship in Northern-Yoruba boundary urban spaces.

Keywords: Urhobo Women, Ilorin, Internal Migration, Market Networks, Gender History.

Introduction

The historiography of internal migration in post-independence Nigeria has long been dominated by macro-narratives centred on male labour dynamics, rural-to-urban agricultural shifts, and state-led resource distribution. Within these structuralise perspectives; women are frequently cast as passive dependents who merely accompany migrating spouses, rather than autonomous economic actors with distinct commercial motivations. This gendered erasure is particularly pronounced when examining cross-regional migration flows that link the socio-ecological complex of the Niger Delta to the ethno-religious frontier spaces of the Nigerian Middle Belt. Historically, the socio-economic activities of women have been recognised as vital to the sustenance and development of African societies (Amadiume, 1987). Among the diverse ethnic groups within Nigeria, the Urhobo people have historically played a significant

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

role in economic life, with their women contributing extensively to household welfare, cross-regional trade, and community resilience through separate gendered spheres of economic autonomy (Amadiume, 1987; Nzegwu, 2006).

The city of Ilorin, serving as the capital of Kwara State and a vital socio-cultural crossroads between northern and southern Nigeria, presents a highly specialized urban ecosystem. Governed by a deep-seated Yoruba cultural heritage and structured politically by an Islamic Emirate system, pre-colonial and post-independence Ilorin developed a market landscape that traditionally favoured local, indigenous actors and northern trade networks (O'Hear, 1984). However, beginning in the early 1970s, a distinct wave of non-Yoruba, minority ethnic female migrants predominantly Urhobo women from the freshwater swamp and rainforest zones of the Western Niger Delta began establishing permanent commercial settlements in this multi-ethnic metropolis. This paper examines the socio-economic activities, market-niche strategies, and institutional safety nets developed by Urhobo migrant women in Ilorin from 1970 to 2023, tracking how their roles evolved within shifting historical, political, and macroeconomic contexts.

This research addresses a critical lacuna in Nigerian urban history and gender historiography, which has frequently marginalised the roles of women within migrant minority communities (Amadiume, 1987; Nzegwu, 2006). While the economic history of Ilorin has extensively documented the roles of indigenous traders and northern middlemen (O'Hear, 1984), the historical agency of Christian or non-Muslim minority women navigating a predominantly Islamic municipal space has remained largely unexamined. Urhobo women in Ilorin participated in a wide range of economic undertakings, including trading, localised food processing, craftwork, and formal wage employment. They managed lucrative cross-regional supply chains bulk-distributing palm oil, exporting dried meat (*tiko*) to the Niger Delta, transporting cassava flakes (*garri*) to northern Nigeria, and importing northern beans to local markets while others successfully transitioned into government wage employment.

By synthesising oral testimonies and secondary data, this paper analysed how these women navigated socio-cultural constraints and responded to macroeconomic pressures like urbanization and globalisation. Ultimately, this study highlights the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and economic agency in a non-Urhobo environment, illustrating how these women expertly negotiated host community boundaries to maintain their cultural identity and reinforce national food security.

Theoretical Framework

To critically evaluate the economic positioning of Urhobo migrant women within Ilorin's urban informal sector, this study synthesizes two foundational bodies of African social theory: the dual-gendered economic sphere model and ethnic enclave bargaining theory. This research is grounded first in the gender-complementary paradigms articulated by Amadiume (1987), who demonstrated that indigenous Nigerian societies historically maintained separate, autonomous socio-economic spheres for men and women. This institutional arrangement granted women absolute control over their production methods, processing systems, and marketing profits. Rather than erasing these traditional structures of female financial autonomy, the structural experience of migration often forces women to reinvent separate gender spheres in urban host environments to insulate their households from economic

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

vulnerability (Jayeola and Issac, 2020). In contemporary urban settings, however, this autonomous female space frequently collides with entrenched institutional patriarchies and structural exclusions that limit women's access to formal wage employment, thereby pushing minority female actors into highly specialized informal networks (Abonyi et al., 2023).

Second, this paper utilised ethnic enclave and host-migrant bargaining models to explain how minority groups secure economic survival within politically dominant host cultures. In a multi-ethnic, historically contested urban centre, the ability of an outsider group to establish an economic foothold depends on its capacity to exploit commercial niches left vacant or under-served by the indigenous population (Albert, 1999). By operating within an ethnic enclave framework, minority migrant women do not merely integrate into existing host markets; they construct an independent sub-economy. Under this conceptual lens, localised networks function as a collective bargaining unit. Migrants rely on traditional rotating credit mechanisms and cultural associations to bypass formal banking barriers, aggregate capital, and collectively contest municipal overreach or exclusionary local market union policies.

Literature Review

Women in Nigerian Historiography and Economic Narrative

Scholarly interest in women's history in Nigeria has increased significantly, with researchers examining how gender roles are continually reshaped by culture, religion, colonialism, and macroeconomic transitions. Early historical writing routinely marginalised women by focusing almost exclusively on male-dominated formal political and diplomatic activities. However, feminist and gender scholars have rigorously challenged this approach by highlighting women's independent agency and structural contributions across Nigerian societies.

Amadiume's (1987) foundational work on Igbo society demonstrated that gender roles in pre-colonial Nigeria were fluid and complex, defying Western binary models of patriarchal domination. Similarly, historical analyses of the Niger Delta indicate that women exercised considerable autonomous influence in regional trade networks and community leadership before colonial interventions disrupted these indigenous systems (Okonjo, 1976). In urban environments, female actors historically balanced intense gendered social expectations with rigorous economic independence (Sudarkasa, 1973).

More recent scholarship explores the complex intersections of gender with ethnicity, class, and religion, offering deeper insight into women's historical experiences (Nzegwu, 2006). Colonial rule frequently weakened indigenous gender systems by introducing European patriarchal norms, cash-crop production, new land tenure frameworks, and direct taxation all of which limited women's direct access to land and capital (Amadiume, 1987). Furthermore, colonial labour policies heavily favoured male wage labour, systematically pushing the majority of women into informal trade and subsistence activities (Falola & Heaton, 2008). Despite these structural constraints, women's economic activities frequently transformed into forms of overt and covert resistance. Organized market protests against colonial attempts to regulate trade and taxation demonstrate that economic spaces regularly functioned as sites of profound political agency (Falola, 1999). Therefore, Nigerian history cannot be fully understood without centring these female narratives (Nzegwu, 2006).

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

Women's Economic Participation and the Interregional Food Economy

Women's economic participation in Nigeria has been extensive, particularly within agriculture, artisanal processing, and marketplace exchange. In the pre-colonial and early post-colonial eras, women played leading roles in farming, localised trading, and the circulation of foodstuffs and manufactured goods. Within the Niger Delta, women were central to both local and regional economies due to their structural control over the harvesting, processing, and long-distance trade of palm produce (Otite, 2003). In Yoruba and Igbo hinterlands, women similarly dominated local markets, managing the complex distribution of staple food items and household goods (Sudarkasa, 1973).

When colonial and post-colonial structural shifts restricted formal avenues for women, they adapted by expanding their footprints in petty trading, micro-farming, and artisanal production, thereby sustaining both household economies and expanding urban life. Women have always played a central role in the economic survival of households, especially in African societies where informal enterprise underpins daily life. Although formal macro-economic histories have frequently overlooked them, women's activities remain crucial to both production and regional exchange networks. Their labour encompasses both productive work and demanding domestic obligations, such as childcare and household management (Aghalino, 2004). This dual burden underscores why women's contributions must be understood beyond simple income generation; their unpaid social labour sustains the very conditions that make wider urban economic activity possible.

The Historical Context of Urhobo Female Migration to Ilorin

Ilorin, historically a vital Yoruba and Fulani cultural, commercial, and political center, experienced significant multi-ethnic migration waves throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, transforming it into a prominent regional cultural crossroads(G. G. Igbenedion, personal communication, 2025). As historiographical reconstructions demonstrate, the city's unique socio-political evolution continuously attracted a highly diverse array of migrant elements from across Nigeria, including the Urhobo, Nupe, and Hausa-Fulani populations seeking geographic security and commercial expansion (G. G. Igbenedion, personal communication, 2025). Among the migrating Urhobo population from the Niger Delta, women moved to the city for several interconnected reasons. Early movements were linked directly to long-distance trade and the proactive search for expanded economic opportunities as Ilorin rapidly grew under late-colonial and post-colonial administrations (G. G. Igbenedion, personal communication, 2025). The city's strategic geographical position as an administrative state capital and a primary commercial transit node between northern savannah and southern forest agricultural zones made it highly attractive to women seeking stable livelihoods in trading and informal economic processing (O'Hear, 1984).

Kinship and marriage also played a crucial role in shaping this migration corridor. Many Urhobo women moved to Ilorin specifically because of marriage, relocating to join husbands who had already established structural footholds in the city as traders, artisanal labourers, or public civil servants. Rather than rendering these women economically passive or dependent, this marital and kinship-based chain migration functioned as an institutional platform for economic entry (M. M. Umukoro, personal communication, April 10, 2025).Upon arrival, newly married women were integrated into existing female-run commercial networks,

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

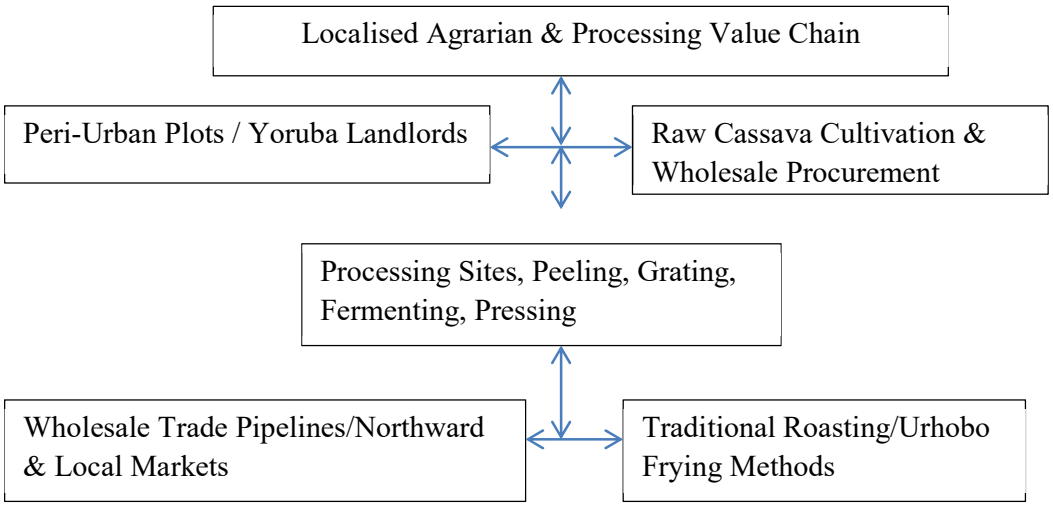
leveraging their marital households to anchor new trading partnerships and pool resources. This gendered pattern of marital relocation not only encouraged gradual inter-ethnic integration but also helped establish permanent, stable Urhobo family enclaves within the wider metropolitan space, allowing women to preserve distinct structures of female financial autonomy within their new domestic spheres (O. Onovughe, personal communication, 2025).

Additionally, the severe environmental decline, land fragmentation, and socio-political instability in the Niger Delta during the late colonial and post-independence petro-economy eras increased outward migration pressure. This structural push made Ilorin an increasingly attractive destination due to its relative geopolitical stability and growing urban informal economy. In this context, Urhobo women in Ilorin actively participated in trading, food processing, wage employment, and small-scale business. They engaged in highly market-oriented activities, particularly the processing and wholesale of cassava flakes (*garri*), the buying and selling of dried meat (*tiko*), and the interregional trade of northern staple crops like beans. These targeted commercial undertakings created vital financial autonomy for minority women while simultaneously linking Ilorin to wider interregional trade networks. Studying their experience in Ilorin explains how the intersection of migration, urbanization, and historical change shapes minority women's economic agency over time.

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

Agrarian Adaptations and Localised Food Production Systems

During the 1970–2023 period under review, Urhobo migrant women in the Ilorin metropolis strategically deployed small-scale urban agriculture and domestic cultivation as foundational components of their household livelihood and risk-mitigation strategies. Capitalising on Ilorin's unique forest-savannah transition zone ecology, these women cultivated micro-plots and residential gardens to produce critical staple crops, including cassava, maize, rice, and localized vegetables. Rather than serving as a purely isolated survival mechanism, this urban farming was integrated into a multi-tiered commercial strategy. Cultivation directly fed into their primary market activities, allowing women to supplement family nutrition, insulate households from urban food inflation, and generate immediate liquid capital through localized market sales at metropolitan retail hubs (Onomake, personal communication, 2025).



To sustain their intensive localised processing operations, Urhobo migrant women established robust agricultural procurement networks within the peri-urban fringes of the Kwara State metropolis. They directly purchased raw cassava tubers from prominent local agricultural markets, most notably *Eyekorin, Ganmo, Ote, and Alapa*, while simultaneously entering into direct supply arrangements with neighboring indigenous farmers. To maintain high agricultural output within a geographically and culturally unfamiliar landscape, Urhobo women preserved and deployed traditional Niger Delta farming methodologies, utilising intercropping and systematic crop rotation to maintain soil fertility without relying on costly chemical inputs (Onomake, personal communication, 2025).However, their capacity to expand these agrarian ventures was continually restricted by historical and institutional barriers. The structural legacies of colonial agricultural policy which systematically privileged male-dominated cash-crop syndicates and restricted women's direct access to land tenure, agricultural extensions, and formal credit lines served as an institutionalized "brooder house" for gender inequality that continued to shape the post-colonial administrative framework of Kwara State (Falola& Heaton, 2008; Jaiyeola& Isaac, 2020).

More importantly, to circumvent these structural exclusions, Urhobo women established informal leasing arrangements with indigenous Yoruba landholding lineages in peri-urban Ilorin. They combined this localized farming with the commercial preservation and storage of high-value commodities like yams. Through this strategic flexibility, the contemporary

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

generation of Urhobo women successfully balanced agricultural production with urban marketplace commerce, actively negotiating institutional constraints to secure long-term economic autonomy (O. Onovughe, personal communication, 2025).

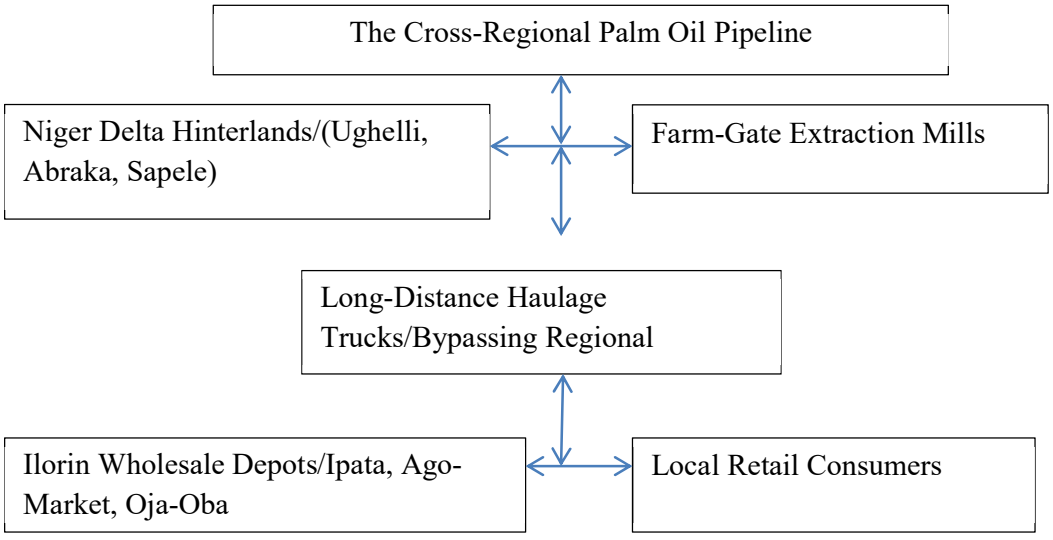
JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

Interregional Trading Networks and the Triangular Logistics Route

The definitive anchor of Urhobo female economic power in Ilorin throughout the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries was their orchestration of sophisticated, long-distance interregional trading networks. Geographically positioned at the critical frontier intersection of Nigeria's northern, western, and southern commercial corridors, Ilorin functioned as an ideal transit node (O'Hear, 1984). Urhobo women exploited this spatial geography to construct a highly lucrative, multi-directional triangular trade network that linked the sub-savannah food economies of northern Nigeria directly to the tropical rainforest and aquatic markets of the Niger Delta hinterlands.

The primary mechanism through which Urhobo migrant women achieved socio-economic resilience in Ilorin was the monopolistic capture of specific, culturally distinct commercial niches. Foremost among these was the establishment of a robust, cross-regional bulk palm oil pipeline. Some of the Urhobo women bypassed local Southwest and Middle Belt intermediaries by traveling directly to production centres in the Niger Delta, purchasing oil at farm-gate prices, while some buy from Ife and transporting it via long-distance haulage trucks directly to major distribution depots in Ilorin, such as *Ago*-Market, *Oja-Oba*, and *Ipata* (P. A. Patience, personal communication, April 10, 2025).

This complex logistical web required significant synchronisation; as one transport coordinator noted, coordinating truck movement between the Delta extraction hubs and the Middle Belt depots was critical to sustaining the early palm oil pipeline against regional transit delays (M. M. Umukoro, personal communication, April 10, 2025). By controlling both the long-distance logistics and the urban wholesale distribution, they consistently undercut local competitors on price and quality. In tandem with the palm oil trade, Urhobo women also captured the urban market for specialised Niger Delta commodities, including dried freshwater fish, native crayfish, tapioca, and specialised medicinal herbs, catering to both the growing migrant population and local consumers seeking alternative goods.



Simultaneously, the logistics of this broader interregional trade operated through three additional, interlocking commodity pipelines:

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

The Southward *Tiko* Pipeline: Urhobo women capitalised on Ilorin's abundant, low-cost livestock markets fed by northern pastoral caravan routes by purchasing beef in bulk at metropolitan like *Idiape* (A. Ese, personal communication, April 10, 2025). Deploying traditional artisanal preservation techniques, including intensive salting, smoking, and sun-drying, they bought the processed beef made into *tiko* (shelf-stable dried meat). Because *tiko* required no refrigeration, it was packed into wholesale volumes and shipped via southward haulage trucks to the Niger Delta, where it commanded premium prices as a highly valued, preserved protein source. Confirming the profitability of this niche, a senior trader explained that the high demand for durable protein in the humid Delta climate allowed it to consistently generate reliable income streams (A.Ese, personal communication, April 10, 2025).

The Northward *Garri* Pipeline: On the secondary leg of this trade circuit, Urhobo women managed the extensive processing of cassava into cassava flakes (*garri*) within the Ilorin metropolis. Using traditional Delta pan-frying and fermentation techniques, they produced high-grade *garri*, and equally by from *Ote, Igboho* and other neighbouring states tailored for trans-shipment to far northern Nigerian markets (M. Afonso, personal communication, April 10, 2025). This trade successfully exploited the ecological limitations of the arid north, where the climate prevents large-scale cassava cultivation, creating a highly profitable supply-and-demand mismatch. Maintaining this specific quality standard required exceptional technical precision as one local processor observed, managing the distinct fermentation and roasting stages was vital to outcompeting local starch variants in distant markets (M. Afonso, personal communication, April 10, 2025).

The North-to-South Staple Corridor: After distributing *garri* to northern wholesalers, the trade utilised the returning northbound transit vehicles to purchase bulk supplies of northern agricultural staples, most notably cowpeas (beans), onions, and cereal grains. These northern commodities were transported back down to Ilorin, where Urhobo women either injected them into local urban retail markets or forwarded them directly to southern commercial contacts in Delta and Edo states (E. E. Akpubi, personal communication, April 10, 2025).By systematically linking different regional markets across vast geographic distances, Urhobo women functioned as essential structural intermediaries in Nigeria's internal food distribution system. Although these extensive cross-regional supply chains operated almost entirely within the informal economy, they were highly organised and sustained by dense ethnic and kinship-based networks (M. M. Umukoro, personal communication, April 10, 2025).

Strategies of Socio-Cultural and Religious Navigation

Survival within Ilorin’s commercial environment required Urhobo women to develop flexible strategies for negotiating the socio-cultural and religious expectations of their host society. Ilorin’s distinctive Islamic Emirate structure shaped patterns of public interaction, market relations, dress, and social conduct. As non-Muslim migrants, Urhobo women therefore had to negotiate these expectations while maintaining important elements of their cultural identity. Their experiences produced a flexible approach to cultural expression, particularly in relation to dress and bodily adornment (G. G. Igbenedion, personal communication, 2025).

Dress became an important means through which Urhobo women negotiated identity, belonging, and social interaction in their new environment. In marketplaces, public spaces,

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

and civic gatherings, some women continued to wear distinctive Urhobo attire, often consisting of two wrappers tied around the waist and paired with a tailored blouse. The continued use of these forms of dress allowed them to maintain visible connections with their cultural heritage and distinguish themselves within the wider urban community. In this sense, clothing functioned not merely as personal adornment but also as a means of preserving cultural identity among migrant women(M. M. Umukoro, personal communication, April 10, 2025). At the same time, other Urhobo women adopted elements of local Yoruba dress, particularly the iro and buba, often complemented by conservative headwraps. This adaptation demonstrated the ability of migrant women to respond pragmatically to their social environment without necessarily abandoning their cultural identity. Their choices of dress varied according to the particular social or commercial setting in which they operated. By alternating between Urhobo and Yoruba styles, women were able to negotiate cultural difference, demonstrate respect for local social and religious expectations, and facilitate smoother interactions within the marketplace (M. M. Umukoro, personal communication, April 10, 2025).

Thus, dress served as an important instrument of socio-cultural negotiation among Urhobo women in Ilorin. Rather than representing a simple process of cultural assimilation, their changing patterns of dress reflected a combination of cultural retention and adaptation. Through these practices, women negotiated their identities within a predominantly Muslim and culturally different environment while sustaining aspects of their own heritage (M. M. Umukoro, personal communication, April 10, 2025).Their experience demonstrates that migration did not necessarily lead to the abandonment of cultural traditions; instead, it encouraged women to selectively adapt cultural practices to the demands of their new social and commercial environment.

This aesthetic adaptability coexisted seamlessly with functional linguistic integration. Regardless of their choice of attire, Urhobo women rapidly achieved functional bilingualism, mastering the Yoruba language to negotiate directly with host community market authorities. This strategic combination of bold visual identity retention, contextual code-switching, and linguistic integration allowed them to secure legal market stalls, settle trade disputes through traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, and avoid the xenophobic labeling or punitive taxation that often targets non-assimilated migrant communities in Nigerian cities (Albert, 1999).

Institutional Safety Nets: The Synergy of the Urhobo Union and Esusu Networks

The economic survival of Urhobo migrant women in Ilorin was supported by a network of ethnic associations, women's unions and indigenous savings arrangements. These institutions provided financial, social and welfare support, particularly when access to formal credit was limited. Among the most important were ***esusu*** **and other collective contribution schemes,** as well as associations such as the**Women's Wing of the Urhobo Progress Union (UPU), Agbon Union and Urhobo Ladies Club.** Although these organisations shared the principle of collective responsibility, their financial arrangements differed.

The ***esusu*** **system** generally operated through regular contributions into a common pool, which could be made daily, weekly or at another agreed interval. Unlike a system in which all

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

members received their money at the same time, the accumulated fund was given to one member at a time according to an agreed order until all participants had received their turn. This enabled individual women to mobilise a substantial amount of money from relatively small contributions. For traders, the lump sum could be used to purchase goods, increase stock, finance transportation or meet urgent household needs. The system therefore provided access to working capital without dependence on formal financial institutions.

Other associations operated **weekly or monthly contribution schemes** that were distinct from the rotating structure of esusu. Members of organisations such as the UPU Women's Wing, Agbon Union and Urhobo Ladies Club contributed according to agreed amounts, and the funds could be distributed to members in accordance with their individual contributions and the rules of the organisation. In some instances, the collective funds were used to purchase clothing or other items for members, while dividends from the association's financial activities were shared according to members' contributions. These arrangements show that collective finance among Urhobo women consisted of several forms of savings and mutual assistance rather than a single uniform system.

The **provision of loans to members in times of need**was one of the most important functions of these associations. Members could obtain financial assistance when they required additional capital for their businesses or faced urgent personal and household expenses. The availability of such loans reduced dependence on external lenders and provided a degree of financial security for women whose livelihoods depended largely on petty and long-distance trading. As one senior market pioneer recalled, collective savings and financial assistance were an important lifeline for women traders who had limited access to formal credit (G. G. Igbenedion, personal communication, 2025).

The associations also performed important **social and welfare functions**. Their responsibilities extended beyond financial contributions to the maintenance of communal relationships among Urhobo women living away from their homeland. Members supported one another during important social occasions and attended burial ceremonies when a member lost a relative, whether the ceremony took place within Kwara State or outside the state. Such practices provided emotional and material support and strengthened the sense of solidarity among migrant women. The associations consequently served as social networks through which members could rely on one another during periods of difficulty. The **Women's Wing of the UPU, Ilorin Branch**, provided an important organisational framework for this collective solidarity. The UPU, originally established to promote Urhobo identity and communal interests, also facilitated social and economic organisation among Urhobo people in the diaspora (Otite, 2003). In Ilorin, the women's organisation connected female migrants with an established community network through which they could obtain information, assistance and support. Similar functions were performed by other Urhobo associations, including the Agbon Union and Urhobo Ladies Club.

Beyond financial and welfare assistance, these organisations provided **collective representation** in the host community. When members encountered difficulties relating to market access, levies, trading spaces or disputes with market authorities, approaching such problems collectively gave them greater leverage, than individual action. As one respondent observed, an individual migrant woman could be vulnerable when confronting difficulties in

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

the marketplace, whereas membership of an organised union provided a stronger basis for seeking assistance and resolving disputes (O. Onovughe, personal communication, 2025). Through these institutions, therefore, Urhobo migrant women combined individual entrepreneurship with collective financial support, social welfare and representation. The resulting network of mutual assistance strengthened their capacity to withstand economic difficulties and sustain their commercial activities in Ilorin.

The financial networks and mutual-support institutions established among Urhobo women also facilitated expansion beyond traditional trading. Access to collective savings, loans and other forms of assistance provided some women with the resources to establish businesses in sectors outside the conventional marketplace. From the 1980s onward, this expansion became increasingly visible in tailoring, hairdressing, catering and transport services.

Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

These enterprises enabled Urhobo women to respond to the growing demand for goods and services within Ilorin's expanding urban economy while creating additional sources of livelihood. Tailoring businesses produced both traditional and contemporary clothing for a diverse clientele, while hairdressing and beauty services catered to everyday grooming needs. Catering provided opportunities to serve weddings, funerals, social gatherings and other large events (R. Egwevugbe, personal communication, April 10, 2025). Transport-related activities, including vehicle hire and, where women participated directly or invested in the business, motorcycle transport (okada), also provided additional opportunities within the city's developing transport economy. The growth of these enterprises demonstrated the ability of Urhobo women to apply their commercial experience to emerging urban opportunities. Rather than remaining concentrated in commodity trading, some women extended their economic activities into service provision and business ownership (R. Egwevugbe, personal communication, April 10, 2025). This shift reflected the changing nature of women's participation in Ilorin's economy and provided opportunities for greater economic independence and social mobility.

Education and Health: Professional Advancement and Community Investment

Alongside entrepreneurial activities, education became an increasingly important pathway to economic and professional advancement. From the 1980s through 2023, more Urhobo women in Ilorin pursued secondary, post-secondary and higher education, enabling some to enter professions such as teaching, nursing, midwifery, healthcare and the civil service. Education consequently expanded the range of occupations available to women beyond informal trading and small-scale enterprise. Educational and professional advancement also encouraged investment in the wider community. One notable example is **Mrs. Emeteakevwe**, who owns and manages a school in Ilorin. Her involvement in education illustrates how individual achievement could extend into institution-building and community development (M. M. Umukoro, personal communication, April 10, 2025). The school served children from both Urhobo families and the wider population, demonstrating the contribution of Urhobo women's investments to the socio-educational development of Ilorin.

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

Urhobo women in the health professions similarly contributed to community welfare. Nurses, midwives and health educators participated in the provision of medical care and health education, extending their contribution beyond household and commercial activities. Their professional involvement strengthened women's presence in public institutions and increased their contribution to the well-being of the wider community (M. M. Umukoro, personal communication, April 10, 2025). The movement from traditional trading into entrepreneurship, professional employment and community investment marked an important transformation in the economic experiences of Urhobo women in Ilorin. While commerce remained significant, expanding access to finance, education and professional opportunities enabled some women to pursue a wider range of economic and social roles.

Contemporary Dynamics and Economic Resilience (2000–2023)

The expansion of entrepreneurship, education and professional employment discussed above provided Urhobo women with a broader economic base as they entered the twenty-first century. Between 2000 and 2023, however, changing economic conditions presented new challenges for women who remained engaged in trading and small-scale enterprise. Rising transportation costs, inflation, currency depreciation, fuel-price increases and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic placed considerable pressure on informal businesses across Nigeria. For Urhobo migrant women in Ilorin, these pressures were particularly significant for those whose businesses depended on the movement of palm oil and other commodities from Delta State (R. Egwevugbe, personal communication, April 10, 2025).

The rising cost of transportation increased the expenses associated with moving goods to Ilorin, while the depreciation of the Nigerian naira reduced consumers' purchasing power. As wholesale acquisition and transportation costs increased, traders faced narrower profit margins and greater uncertainty. These pressures made exclusive dependence on long-distance palm oil trading increasingly difficult and encouraged some women to draw on their existing business experience and financial networks to develop additional sources of income (R. Egwevugbe, personal communication, April 10, 2025). Consequently, some Urhobo women expanded their activities into urban retailing, beauty services and provision stores. Others established permanent shops in commercial areas of Ilorin, allowing them to combine traditional trading experience with the growing demand for urban consumer goods. Some entrepreneurs also moved beyond bulk distribution by investing in the packaging and marketing of palm oil for local consumers. These developments represented adaptations to changing market conditions rather than a complete abandonment of the traditional trade (F. Osai, personal communication, April 10, 2025).

The expansion of tertiary education in Kwara State also created additional opportunities. Institutions such as the University of Ilorin and Kwara State University generated demand for accommodation, food, transportation and other services. Urhobo women responded by participating in activities such as property management, student accommodation and catering, thereby extending their businesses into sectors associated with the growing student population (F. Osai, personal communication, April 10, 2025). These activities complemented the entrepreneurial ventures discussed earlier and demonstrated how women continued to adjust their economic strategies to the changing urban environment.

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

The period from 2000 to 2023 therefore represented a phase of **adaptation rather than economic withdrawal**. Although inflation, rising operating costs and disruptions to established supply networks placed pressure on traditional trading activities, Urhobo women responded by drawing on their commercial experience, financial networks and social connections to develop alternative and complementary sources of livelihood. Their economic resilience was consequently reflected not simply in their ability to preserve traditional businesses, but in their capacity to modify them and participate in the expanding service-oriented economy of contemporary Ilorin.

Socio-Political Exclusions and Structural Market Barriers

Despite their important contributions to Ilorin's interregional food distribution networks, Urhobo migrant women between 1970 and 2023 operated within an urban environment in which migrant status, ethnic difference and limited political representation could restrict access to economic and social opportunities. As a minority community in Ilorin, they sometimes encountered barriers to accessing prime trading spaces, formal credit and institutional support. Market structures and local networks could favour established indigenous groups, making it more difficult for migrant women to secure lucrative trading locations and expand their businesses (Abonyi et al., 2023).

Access to capital was another significant challenge. Women whose businesses depended on informal trading often had limited access to formal credit facilities and government support programmes. The difficulty of obtaining suitable collateral, combined with their migrant status and limited connections to local institutional structures, encouraged many to depend on family networks, women's associations, ethnic unions and collective savings schemes. These networks provided loans, financial assistance and other forms of support that helped women sustain their businesses despite limited access to formal economic institutions (E. E. Akpubi, personal communication, April 10, 2025).

Political representation also presented a challenge. Urhobo women had limited participation in local governance and decision-making structures within the host community. Consequently, their ability to influence decisions concerning markets, infrastructure, security and other issues affecting their livelihoods was constrained. Their minority status could also make it difficult to establish the same level of influence enjoyed by longer-established local groups (E. E. Akpubi, personal communication, April 10, 2025).

Social integration presented additional challenges. Differences in language, customs and religious background sometimes created social distance between Urhobo migrants and sections of the host population. Such differences could affect access to informal networks, which were often important for obtaining information, developing business relationships and navigating the local market environment (G. G. Igbenedion, personal communication, 2025). Nevertheless, these barriers did not prevent Urhobo women from developing relationships beyond their ethnic community or participating actively in the wider social and economic life of Ilorin.

Rather than responding to these constraints through isolation, Urhobo women relied on a combination of **kinship, ethnic associations, religious organisations and commercial**

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

networks. These institutions provided social support, financial assistance and opportunities for collective action. The same networks that helped women cope with economic difficulties also strengthened their sense of identity and enabled them to negotiate their position within the host community.

Socio-Cultural Preservation, Religious Spaces and Inter-Ethnic Relations

Migration to Ilorin also created a need for Urhobo women to preserve aspects of their cultural identity while adapting to a new social environment. As women were central to household socialisation, they played an important role in transmitting the Urhobo language, customs and traditions to younger generations. The use of the Urhobo language within the home, at family gatherings and during ethnic association meetings helped maintain cultural continuity among families living outside Urhobo homeland. Women also preserved cultural practices through marriage ceremonies, funerals, festivals, traditional dress, hairstyles and other forms of cultural expression. These practices provided opportunities for younger generations to remain connected to their heritage while living in an increasingly urban and culturally diverse environment (F. Osai, personal communication, April 10, 2025). At the same time, cultural preservation did not prevent interaction with other ethnic communities. Through trading, neighbourhood relationships, religious activities and other forms of social interaction, Urhobo women developed relationships with Yoruba, Hausa, Nupe and other residents of Ilorin. Their participation in the marketplace placed them in regular contact with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and required them to negotiate these differences in their everyday activities (F. Osai, personal communication, April 10, 2025).

Religion also provided an important avenue for both adaptation and community organisation. Christianity was significant among many Urhobo women, and church membership and women's fellowships provided spaces for worship, social interaction, mutual assistance and community activities. These religious networks complemented ethnic associations by providing additional forms of emotional, social and, at times, financial support. At the same time, attachment to Urhobo cultural traditions remained important, allowing women to maintain aspects of their cultural identity while participating in the religious and social life of their host environment (G. G. Igbenedion, personal communication, 2025).

The experience of Urhobo women in Ilorin therefore involved a continuous process of **adaptation and negotiation.** They encountered economic, social and political barriers associated with their position as migrants and members of a minority ethnic community, but they also developed mechanisms for responding to these constraints. Through ethnic unions, collective financial arrangements, religious organisations, family networks and commercial relationships, they combined the preservation of cultural identity with participation in the wider social and economic life of Ilorin.

Discussion: Structural Gender Inequality and Strategic Agency

The historical and empirical experiences of Urhobo migrant women in Ilorin between 1970 and 2023 reveal the interaction between structural gender inequality and women's capacity for economic agency. Nigeria's economic development has been strongly shaped by a capital-intensive petroleum sector and by gendered inequalities in access to productive resources and

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

economic decision-making. Research on the Niger Delta shows that crude oil extraction, has adversely affected women's traditional livelihoods, particularly those dependent on farming and fishing, while the political economy of oil has often privileged male-dominated structures and forms of economic participation (Mai-Bornu, 2023; Omorodion, 2004).

For Urhobo women whose livelihoods had traditionally been connected to agricultural processing and commodity trading in the Niger Delta, these changes were accompanied by environmental and economic pressures that encouraged occupational adaptation and, in some cases, migration. Studies of women in the Niger Delta have documented the ways in which oil-related environmental degradation has disrupted established livelihood systems and increased women's economic vulnerability (Mai-Bornu, 2023). In Ilorin, however, migration did not eliminate the constraints they faced. Instead, they encountered a market environment in which access to trading spaces, formal credit, paid employment and decision-making could be influenced by gender, migrant status and membership of established local networks. Research on women and paid employment in Ilorin similarly identifies structural factors contributing to women's exclusion from formal employment opportunities (Abonyi et al., 2023).

The findings nevertheless demonstrate that these constraints did not determine the economic outcomes of Urhobo women. Rather, they responded by creating and strengthening their own commercial and financial networks. Their significant participation in interregional palm oil trade enabled them to establish durable connections between producers and consumers across state boundaries. Through these networks, they transformed migration from a consequence of economic displacement into an opportunity for commercial adaptation and livelihood reconstruction.

Their use of collective financial institutions further illustrates this agency. Esusu arrangements and associations such as the UPU Women's Wing, Agbon Union and Urhobo Ladies Club provided mechanisms for savings, loans, mutual assistance and welfare support. These institutions reduced women's dependence on formal financial institutions and provided resources for business expansion and emergency needs. This finding is consistent with wider evidence that Nigerian women entrepreneurs face significant barriers to formal finance, particularly because conventional lending frequently relies on collateral and other requirements that disadvantage women (Gruver et al., 2024). The operation of these associations therefore demonstrates that informal financial institutions were not merely survival mechanisms but important forms of collective organisation through which women mobilised capital and managed economic risks.

The experiences of these women also reveal an important dimension of Nigeria's informal economy. Although informal economic activities may receive limited recognition within formal development frameworks, research on Nigerian markets shows that women constitute a major part of informal trading and can face gender-specific disadvantages within market and taxation systems (Akpan&Cascant-Sempere, 2022). The experience of the Urhobo women similarly indicates that informal commerce could involve organised systems of finance, commodity distribution, entrepreneurship and social support. Their economic agency was therefore expressed not through the absence of structural constraints but through their

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

capacity to negotiate those constraints and develop alternative mechanisms of economic security.

Implications for Post-Oil Economic Diversification Policy

The experiences of Urhobo women in Ilorin also have implications for Nigeria's continuing search for alternatives to petroleum-dependent economic development. National responses to economic shocks have increasingly recognised the importance of non-oil activities and small and medium-sized enterprises. For example, Nigeria's Economic Sustainability Plan included measures to support informal businesses and MSMEs through credit, business support and simplified procedures, particularly in response to the economic disruption caused by COVID-19 (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2020). Nevertheless, the experiences documented in this study suggest that policy should build more deliberately upon the informal institutions and networks through which women already organise their economic activities.

The experience of Urhobo women demonstrates the value of recognising existing informal networks as part of Nigeria's economic infrastructure. Their ability to maintain interregional trading connections, mobilise collective finance and adjust their businesses in response to changing economic conditions illustrates the contribution of women-led enterprises to food distribution and urban livelihoods. Their movement into retailing, catering, beauty services, transport, property-related activities and other enterprises further demonstrates their capacity to respond to changing market conditions.

Policy interventions should therefore seek to **strengthen rather than marginalise existing informal economic systems.** First, financial inclusion programmes should recognise collective savings and credit arrangements such as *esusu* as important components of women's financial practices. Rather than relying exclusively on conventional collateral requirements, appropriately designed and regulated financial programmes could work with established women's associations to improve access to affordable business credit. This recommendation is supported by evidence from Nigeria showing that women-led enterprises face greater difficulties in accessing formal finance and that cash-flow-based lending can reduce some of the collateral barriers they encounter (Gruver et al., 2024).

Second, governments should improve the infrastructure that supports interregional trade. Better roads, reliable transportation systems, secure marketplaces and appropriate storage and processing facilities would help reduce the costs and risks associated with moving agricultural commodities. Attention should also be given to the security of traders and the reduction of multiple and unofficial charges that increase the cost of moving goods between producing and consuming regions. Research on Nigerian female traders has shown that market-related taxation and enforcement practices can have gendered effects, reinforcing the importance of designing market regulation with women's economic circumstances in mind (Babajide et al., 2022).

Third, diversification policies should recognise women's existing entrepreneurial capacities. Training, business-development services, digital financial access and appropriately designed credit programmes could help women move from small-scale trading into more sustainable

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026 E ISSN: 3156-5336

enterprises without requiring them to abandon the networks and knowledge that already support their livelihoods.

Ultimately, inclusive post-oil diversification requires more than replacing petroleum exports with other large-scale commodities. It also requires investment in the **women, enterprises and informal distribution networks that already connect agricultural production with Nigeria's growing urban markets.** The experience of Urhobo women in Ilorin demonstrates that economic resilience can emerge through collective finance, entrepreneurship, social networks and adaptive commercial practices. Recognising and strengthening these forms of economic agency would make diversification policy more inclusive while building upon economic systems that women have developed and sustained over several decades.

Conclusion

This study has examined the socio-economic history of Urhobo migrant women in Ilorin from 1970 to 2023, demonstrating their transformation from migrant traders into important participants in the city's economic and social life. Through the trading and distribution of **palm oil, *garri* and *tiko***, as well as small-scale processing, entrepreneurship and, increasingly, professional employment, they adapted their livelihoods to changing economic conditions. Despite barriers associated with gender, migrant status and limited access to formal institutions, they developed collective financial and social networks through ***esusu*, the UPU Women's Wing and other women's associations**to support their businesses and households. Beyond economic activities, Urhobo women played important roles in preserving their language, customs and cultural identity while participating actively in Ilorin's multi-ethnic society. Their involvement in community associations, religious organisations and inter-ethnic mediation demonstrates that cultural preservation could coexist with social integration. **The study therefore contributes to Nigerian women's economic history by showing that migrant women were active agents who created livelihood opportunities, sustained commercial networks and negotiated social and institutional constraints.**

As Nigeria pursues economic diversification, the experience of Urhobo women highlights the importance of recognising and supporting informal female enterprises, collective financial systems and interregional trading networks. **Their history demonstrates that women's economic agency and community-based institutions constitute important resources for inclusive and sustainable economic development.**

References

Abonyi, S. E., Onu, J. C., &Arinde-Simeon, T. O. (2023). Women and undue exclusion in paid employment in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria: Implications for social work practice. *Ilorin Journal of Administration and Development, 7*(2), 1–13.

Aghalino, S. O. (2004). Notes on the economic impact of colonial rule on the Isoko people of the western Niger Delta, 1900–1960. *Alore: Ilorin Journal of the Humanities, 14*, 161–179.

Akpan, I., &Cascant-Sempere, M. J. (2022). Do tax policies discriminate against female traders?
A gender framework to study informal marketplaces in Nigeria.*Poverty & Public Policy, 14*(3), 287–306. https://doi.org/10.1002/pop4.349

Amadiume, I. (1987). *Male daughters, female husbands: Gender and sex in an African society*.
Zed Books.

Falola, T. (1999).*Violence in Nigeria: The crisis of religious politics and secular ideologies*.
University of Rochester Press.

Falola, T., & Heaton, M. (2008).*A history of Nigeria*.Cambridge University Press.
https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511842603

Gbobo, P. I. (2020). Women and the environment in Nigeria: The experience of women of the
Niger Delta. In M. C. Green & M. Haron (Eds.), *Law, religion and the environment in Africa* (pp. 63–78). African Sun Media.https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv17kk988.8

Gruver, A. R., Koroknay-Palicz, T., Papineni, S., Shaikh, S. A., &Zottel, S. (2024). *From collateral to cashflow: Expanding access to finance for Nigeria's female business owners*. World Bank.https://doi.org/10.1596/41416

Jaiyeola, E. O., &Aladegbola, A. I. (2020). Patriarchy and colonization: The "brooder house" for gender inequality in Nigeria. *Journal of Research on Women and Gender, 10*, 3–22.

Mai-Bornu, Z. L. (2023). The oil extractive industry in the Niger Delta: Impacts on the livelihoods of women. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 15*(1),
91–105.https://doi.org/10.5130/ccs.v15.i1.8354

Nzegwu, N. (2006). *Family matters: Feminist concepts in African philosophy of culture*. State
University of New York Press.

O'Hear, A. (1984). *The economic history of Ilorin in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: The*
rise and decline of a middleman society [Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham]. University of Birmingham eTheses.

Okonjo, K. (1976). The dual-sex political system in operation: Igbo women and community politics in Midwestern Nigeria. In N. J. Hafkin& E. G. Bay (Eds.), *Women in Africa: Studies in social and economic change* (pp. 45–58). Stanford University Press.

Omorodion, F. I. (2004). The impact of petroleum refinery on the economic livelihoods of

JOURNAL OF ARTS OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, KONTAGORA (JASSK)
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, KONTAGORA, NIGER STATE-NIGERIA
Vol. 1, No 2 September, 2026
E ISSN: 3156-5336

women in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. *JENDA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies, 6*.

Otite, O. (2003). *The Urhobo people* (2nd ed.). Shaneson Corporate Press.

Sudarkasa, N. (1973). *Where women work: A study of Yoruba women in the marketplace and in the home*. University of Michigan, Museum of Anthropology.