How does development affect the status of women? Before we can answer this question, we must deal with two preliminary questions: 1—what is meant by the term "development"? and 2—what is "women's status," and how can it be measured? Only then can we ask: is there a change in women's status that comes with development? If so, is there a clear direction of change? That is, is there evidence of improvement of women's status as a result of development, or do we find a decline?

Development is a term used in a number of different ways and writers on the topic often appear to shift among them without warning. Some other words are used as synonyms for development; most frequent among these are modernization, industrialization, urbanization, and also westernization and Americanization. When development is linked to concepts such as modernization and progress, it is a "good" word, with positive connotations. As such it is akin to the optimistic, 19th century concepts of inevitable and irresistible social evolution toward newer, bigger and better things. Underdeveloped, by contrast, then becomes a "bad", judgmental term, so much so that it is not fit for use in international dealings. More often, therefore, "developing" nations are contrasted with "developed" ones. Expressions such as "North/South dialogue", with North meaning developed and South developing, appear to be the current fashion in international relations.

Underdevelopment is a word with distinctively negative connotations. Some consider underdevelopment synonymous with insufficient development, to be remedied by means of efforts at modernization through investment and foreign aid. In recent years, critics have argued that underdevelopment is the result of a relationship of dependency between countries that serve primarily as
sources of raw materials and as markets for manufactured goods, and the industrialized countries with which they have economic ties. Dependency theory has been formulated in particular by Latin American critics, who see the root of their countries' present conditions in their colonial past, as reinforced during the past century by their relationship with the industrialized countries of Europe and North America. (For a review, see Chilcote and Edelstein, 1974). Within developing countries, small, politically marginal communities are at particular risk of having large scale developments occur at their expense. The Indians of the Amazon region of Brazil are an important example of this result of development initiatives. Indeed, Davis (1977) has called them the victims of the miracle, the "miracle" of Brazilian economic development, that is.¹

Ester Boserup (1970) uses modernization as synonymous with development. She speaks of development in agriculture as involving the use of more efficient equipment, modern scientific methods of farming, leading to higher productivity and modern commercial agriculture. She also speaks of the technological revolution, of industrialization and urbanization. She links economic growth with modernization, and uses terms such as "primitive" and "backward" as synonymous with "traditional."

An apparently different definition of development appears in the publications of the 1975 International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City. Here development is defined with regards to its goal, which is to bring about "sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual and of society and to bestow benefits on all." H. Papanek, who quotes this definition (1977:21), remarks with regard to the planning involved in development: "those whose lives are to be affected by social and economic policies must have a say in these decision."
The Canadian cross-cultural psychologist J.W. Berry has looked at "development" in the context of education: "Development", he writes, "as a concept in the social sciences, has often been used in the popular sense of simply becoming bigger, wealthier, and, at the extreme, more like the western world. The ethnocentric usage has been dismissed by many in the past few years...If education is to serve the 'development' of an individual, group, or nation, it must start with the present state of affairs and work to some valued future state...Groups armed with information about their own characteristic patterns of skills, may opt for a number of goals" (J.W. Berry 1976: 225-26). Like Papanek, Berry is concerned with the self-determination of people who are the subjects of development planning. Setting of policies, in education as in other social and economic matters, involves the establishment of goals and the choice of methods of attaining the goals. As Berry suggests, an adequate understanding of the starting point for the development process is often neglected. For example, Boserup documents in some detail the ethnocentric Western assumptions by planners in the colonial and post-colonial periods alike about agricultural work and the division of labor between men and women which have had a negative impact on women in agricultural development in Africa.

The comments I have just cited refer to two aspects of the development process, planning and self-determination. Because historically development processes, at least in their initial phases, usually have had their sources outside the area under development, self-determination is a keenly felt issue. Self-determination, however, requires an understanding of the existing social and economic conditions and of the implications and consequences of change. This is particularly true for consequences in those areas of peoples' lives that are not the immediate subject of the development plans. And, of course, development planning involves questions of power, of access to the decision
making process. Are plans made by outsiders? By the most westernized elements of the society in question? By men only? Who makes the plans, and who executes them? What portions of social change are directly planned for, and which are not?

In addition to the governments of the developing countries, a host of international agencies, governmental and private, business and voluntary are involved in development processes. Their goals and the scope of their activities vary widely. Women's involvement at the planning stage is generally low, and the impact of development policies on women is only rarely explored. This in spite of increasing concern about this issue, as evidenced in the work of the International Women's Year, on one level, and the very existence of this seminar, on quite another. Boserup's book *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (1970) was a path breaking contribution in this regard.

In the Western countries in general, and in the United States quite specifically, there exists a very high level of ethnocentrism concerning developing countries. They are seen in rather contradictory fashion on the one hand as poor and in need of help, and on the other, as exotic, glamorous and mysterious. Both points of view tend to be based on gross distortions of reality and inadequate information. The second, in particular, is fostered by the tourist industry, and the fashion industry which photographs its models against a backdrop of ruins and palm trees and smiling natives.

In this seminar, we shall be primarily concerned with economic development, its impact on women and their impact, in turn, on development. It is important to remember, however that economic development occurs in the context of social and cultural systems. That is to say, economic development is never limited to a specific process of investment, technological change, alteration of production processes or methods of distribution of goods. Changes in any of these areas
have repercussions in other aspects of the total system: they affect human beings not only as workers and consumers, but as members of families and communities, as participants in social and cultural systems.

Thinking in terms of systems, leads us to ask questions such as the following: Who makes decisions about investment and the choice of what is to be produced, and how? What is the role of government and of foreign investors? How is labor recruited? What skills are required? How are traditional life styles modified by the new types of work? Who is most likely to get the jobs? What are the implications for division of labor within the community? Within the family? Where is the work to be performed?

Anthropologists have long been fascinated by the transformation of traditional societies resulting from the introduction of even a single item of foreign culture. A fine example is provided by E.S. Hall (1971), who describes the introduction of the snowmobile, the "iron dog", to the Eskimos of Northern Alaska in the early 1960s. The people of this region are caribou hunters, who have long depended on dog sleds. With the introduction of the snowmobiles the dog population in the community of the study dropped in a period of 5 years, from 500 to 100. Where dog sleds were once the mainstay of the economy, they are now only used for short trips, to go ice fishing or to cut wood, and they are used by young men and women rather than by adult males. Because there is no need to feed large numbers of dogs during the winter months, the people no longer have to spend much time, as they used to, in catching the fish that served as the dogs' winter food. As a result, the fall season when families used to move to fishing grounds has been shortened, and with it the work load particularly for the women has been reduced. On the other hand, use of snowmobiles has required that the men learn to operate, maintain and repair them. This has meant the acquisition of new skills. The need for money to buy and keep the snowmobiles running, however, has tied the men evermore firmly to the
wage economy and the months not used for fishing may be put into longer summer wage labor seasons away from the village. Winter mobility has increased greatly and hunting methods have been transformed. Caribou hunting trips with dog sleds used to take ten days or more; with the snowmobile they now take only two days. Several towns have become easily accessible and a good deal of intervillage visiting has developed, with wives joining husbands on trips. As a result, people now have wider interpersonal networks. Hall notes that these increased contacts lead to changes in marriage patterns, since they allow individuals to find spouses in more distant communities. They also affect health conditions, because increased human contacts over a wider region facilitate the spread of contagious diseases. This is not all. Snowmobiles also are modifying the ways in which individual men achieve the prestige that comes to successful hunters: the skills needed for efficient hunting with the dog sled are not those required for work with the snowmobile. Prestige now may go to individuals with different aptitudes and skills.

The primary use of the snowmobile has been for hunting, altering the way in which animals are hunted and the skills required to do so. Traditional hunters had to be experts in the behavior of animals and the details of the environment: the topography, the direction of the wind, the means of avoiding noise and so on. Now all that is necessary is to chase the animals until they are outrun and trapped. This makes the success of the hunt dependent more on the good working order of the machine than on the hunter's knowledge. It also raises the possibility that snowmobile hunting may put too much pressure on the animals and in the long run have a negative effect on the hunters themselves.

The snowmobile has wrought a large number of changes in the lives of the Northern Alaska Eskimo. Each of the items detailed is only a link in a chain of other, different transformations. The total culture, which includes the economy and social structure, the values and knowledge people live by, have been
altered. It has also had an impact on the ecology of the region. How much of this could have been anticipated by those who introduced the snowmobile to the Eskimo? Or by those who invented and manufactured what started out as a toy for week-end recreation?

When we speak of economic development, however, we are dealing not with a single item, but with often dramatic and massive transformations, with a long term, open-ended process. What are the trade-offs? Is planning, at whatever level it occurs, limited to specific, narrowly conceived economic goals, and the methods to attain them? Or does planning concern itself with the total system into which new elements are being introduced? For example, what is the effect on women when men leave rural areas to go to work in newly created urban industries? What is the effect on women, who have worked the land with a hoe when plows (or tractors) are introduced? What is the implication for women, who control the local market in food stuffs, when large amounts of food are imported from abroad and new tastes are cultivated? Have the consequences been planned for?

In summary, then, we shall focus on economic development and its implications for women. We shall note that much, though not all, economic development is planned, but also that it is carried on by a variety of different agencies. Also, that economic development activities have an impact on total sociocultural systems, so that we must be prepared to look for unanticipated consequences, ranging from impact on birth rates and infant mortality, to nutrition and food preferences, from language learning and literacy to religion, from family structure to community organization, from group relations to politics and warfare.

Development planning often concerns relations among governments. Most of the developing countries, however, are made up of many different ethnic groups. For example, in Africa, we find that nation states are relatively recent
creations, with frontiers arbitrarily drawn by the colonial powers at the end of
the 19th century. The people within their boundaries speak different languages,
vary in history and customs and, in many instances, are still in the process of
acquiring a national rather than a tribal identity. Development plans on the
national level may speak more effectively to conditions among some of the groups
than others. The degree of national rather than tribal orientation is likely to
vary by amount of exposure to the official, often Western language and to formal
education and literacy. It also varies by degree of involvement in the "modern"
economic sector. In both respects, men in Africa are more likely to be more
westernized than women. One result of economic development and modernization
then is a cultural gap between men and women. This is true for example in
Zimbabwe and South Africa, where men have long been recruited to work in the
mines, while the women, children and old people are largely confined to village
areas or, in South Africa, to tribal "homelands". Sibisi (1977) has discussed
how Zulu women cope with the stresses that result for them from the fact that
men must migrate to seek work. She finds that the effects of men's labor
migration range from modifications of courtship customs and marriage practices
to the development of stress-related diseases among women and the growth of
religious healing practices. Government policies that force men to migrate and
women to stay behind were established for economic and political ends. The
results of these policies, however, are felt by the Zulu throughout their social
and cultural system and include numerous unintended, so-called "secondary"
consequences.

While we must, necessarily, discuss various aspects of development
separately with regard to their implications for women, we must never lose sight
of the fact that we are dealing with a system of interrelated parts, and that
change never affects only a single part of the system. This is true whether we
deal with economic developments on a small, local scale, for example the
establishment of a women's cooperative for the production and marketing of handicraft items in a single community, or with large scale projects. An example of the latter might be the building of the high dam at Aswan in Upper Egypt. The building of the dam, which was intended as a significant element in the economic development of Egypt, had as one of its consequences the resettlement of a large population from the area to be flooded. The dam is also an excellent example of the involvement of more than a single system--that is, the overall socio-economic system of Egypt--for it has had a major impact on the ecology of the region, far beyond its immediate area.

The Aswan dam was built by the Russians. This leads to an important point to be remembered: while we shall be concerned primarily with Western involvement in development, we must not forget that economic development is practiced not only on the capitalist model. The Russians, the Chinese, the Cubans all are also concerned with development, both in their own countries and in the Third World. They are interested in industrialization, with increased agricultural productivity and the modernization of technology. They are concerned with literacy campaigns, and family planning and modern health care. It is not our intention to compare the communist and Western models of development with respect to their impacts on women. However, it is important to be aware that these different and often competing approaches to economic development exist.²

Having briefly dealt with the subject of development, we may now turn to the question of women's status. How can we measure it in order to be able to evaluate how it is affected or modified by development? This turns out to be a difficult, perhaps a surprisingly difficult, question. There is a widespread ethnocentric notion that the more other societies become like our own, the better it will be for their women. This is a position that tacitly assumes that women have high status in modern, industrial societies, but it is also likely to have deeper roots. It finds polygyny abhorrent and sees women's agricultural
work as exploitation. Although some feminist critics argue that "male dominance" is universal, to be found in societies of all types, others have argued that women held higher status in pre-industrial or pre-state societies. Leacock (1980) has produced much evidence to show that prior to European contact, women enjoyed considerable autonomy in many traditional societies. For example, she quotes from the writings of the earliest French missionaries in North America, who were shocked at the independence of Indian women, and at the "inability" of husbands to impose their will on their wives, to be masters in their homes. She has also argued that all contemporary societies have been massively influenced, directly and sometimes indirectly, by conquest, colonial rule, and the economic and social policies of the industrial world in the postcolonial period.

Terms such as "male dominance" and "women's status" are, at best, ambiguous. For one thing, even small-scale, egalitarian (or classless) societies include a number of different positions. Women may be distinguished by their marital status, their ritual powers, and, importantly, by age. In more complex societies, they will also be distinguished by wealth and often by the privileges of the families to which they belong. Reading any collection of papers describing the position of women in a number of different societies (e.g. Tiffany, ed. 1979, Bourguignon, ed. 1980) one comes away with an impression of very great diversity and variety, which make generalizations difficult.

Moreover, just what does low status of women or female subordination consist of? For example, are married women who live in seclusion and in polygynous households "subordinate"? Do they have low status? Saunders (1980) shows that among the Moslem Hausa of the town of Mirria in the Republic of Niger, polygyny and seclusion are associated with wealth, and therefore give women high status. Moreover, neither is incompatible with women's independent money making pursuits. Once a woman has fulfilled her household obligations, she is free to engage in various productive activities -- including trade -- the
proceeds of which are her own. Polygyny reduces a woman's domestic responsibilities, for she shares them with her co-wives. Hence, it may give the individual woman greater economic freedom. Furthermore, as economic conditions in the region have improved in recent years, the number of polygynous households and the number of secluded wives have increased. That is, modernization has led to economic improvements and also to seclusion and polygyny. Some Western-educated Hausa men favor the abolition of polygyny, which is practiced by only a minority of the men. Saunders suggests that this would, in fact, reduce the autonomy of women. At present, polygyny co-exists with a very high divorce rate. Since marriage is a social and economic requirement for a man, a woman can always be sure of finding another husband, should a particular marriage arrangement prove unsatisfactory. The elimination of polygyny would, however, reduce the demand for women.\(^3\)

Is an ideology of male superiority synonymous with low status of women? Spiro (1977:259) notes that it is "a basic premise of Burmese society that men are inherently superior to women" (emphasis in original). This belief is said to be shared by both women and men. At the same time, Spiro tells us that men and women are equal in the actual life of society. For example, daughters and sons inherit equally and all property after marriage is owned jointly by husband and wife. Women not only control the family economy, but much of the trade of the country. In marriage, they are often the dominant partner. This equality is not a recent development, for it struck Western observers as noteworthy, at a time when European women were much more restricted.

Should we give primary attention to the ideology of male dominance? or the reality of "the husband's control by and dependence on the wife" (p, 283)? To understand the particular Burmese (or indeed, more generally Southeast Asian) situation we need to study both. But when we compare societies, how do we rate the Burmese?
M.K. Whyte (1978a, 1979b) attacked this problem directly. Using a carefully chosen sample of 93 pre-industrial societies from all parts of the world, he tested a variety of hypotheses concerning various aspects of the status of women. To do so, he identified 52 different measures for investigation. One of his most important questions, and the one that concerns us here, was whether or not there is such a thing as "a status of women" a unitary phenomenon that can be defined consistently cross-culturally. This would make comparisons among women's over-all positions in different societies possible. The findings were negative. He writes: "Most of the aspects of the position of women relative to men are not closely related to one another...It is perfectly possible for women in one society to have important property rights while being excluded from key religious posts and ceremonies; they may also do most of the productive work or have an important role in political life while suffering under a severe sexual double standard." (Whyte 1978b214).

We are now ready to address our original question: how does development affect the status of women, and again, we find that we must reformulate it on the basis of our discussion so far. We must deal with specific aspects dimensions of status, such as property rights, access to economic opportunities, or decision making. And we must have information on what women's positions were, compared to men, in these particular regards at specific points in time, both before and after the impact of development schemes.

Note that Whyte's study deals with the status of women relative to men in a given society. This is quite different from comparing women in a particular developing society with Western women in regard to a specific aspect of status. We may ask, for example, as a result of the transformation of their societies, have women lost any authority they previously had, even though that loss makes them more like Western women.
As one example we may take the important role of women in the system of internal markets in West Africa and in the non-Spanish speaking regions of the Caribbean. This question has been discussed in an important paper by Mintz (1971), a long terms student of internal marketing systems. In Haiti and Jamaica, as in West Africa, women engage in extensive trading activities, with complete independence, making their own economic decisions and taking risks. Mintz (1971:265-6) notes that in these societies "the idea that a woman conducts at least a major portion of her economic life independently is deeply embedded and generally accepted by all." Nowadays, these women traders invest much of their profits in the education of their children. Educated daughters then do not follow in their mother's footsteps but take jobs as teachers, nurses, welfare workers and so on. In contrast to their mothers, they are literate, and clean, and wear shoes. But, Mintz notes, low level salaried jobs do not provide women with economic independence and do not foster individual enterprise and risk-taking. We may ask, what has been lost, and what has been gained? Yet with the current substantial increase in imported food stuffs and consumer goods, and with the large scale trade concentrated in the hands of men, the definition of women as economically independent actors in these countries is put in doubt.

As we discuss various aspects of development in the course of this seminar, we shall want to watch for evidence of change as it affects women, both in regard to the change of their position in relationship to men in their own societies, and in regard to the similarity between women's position in developing countries and in our own. These are in many ways different questions and we must take care not to confuse them. We must keep in mind that women's position may improve or decline because of changes affecting their society as a whole. Are women worse off now, because everyone is worse off? Or has the position of women deteriorated in relation to the men of their own society
because they have lost opportunities or rights that were available to them in earlier times? Have they now more or less economic independence? More or less authority in the family and in the community? Have they gained or lost means of redress? Have they gained or lost sources of support as a result of changes in the structure of the family, resulting from economic transformations?

At this initial stage of our discussion, we want to raise questions and be alerted to basic issues: the notion of systems, the lack of a single unitary status of women, and the pitfalls of ethnocentric judgements. Keeping these in mind, we can now turn to the individual topics of the seminar.

NOTES

1J.H. Bodley Notes (1982) calls tribal peoples throughout the world "victims of progress."

2For China, see Dernberger, ed., 1980

3For a new approach to the complexities of polygyny, see Clignet and Sween 1981.
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