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Chasing Illusions and Realising Visions: Reflections on Ghana's Feminist Experience

Mansah Prah

Introduction

In organizing my thoughts in preparation for writing this paper, I realised that I too have been chasing illusions. I had naïvely assumed somehow, that the analysis of the trajectory of women's participation in the political, intellectual and cultural life in Ghana would follow a fairly uniform, straight path, characterised by clearly defined steps and phases. But history is not linear, and the course of the feminist agenda may better be viewed as a meandering path than one that moves in a regular pattern of progression.

The path of Ghanaian gender politics – issues relating to gender hierarchies in the state, women's status, influence in politics and social life – the relationship between the state and women's organisations, (which I refer to as Ghana's feminist experience) has gone through various changes since Independence in 1957. The paper traces the feminist experience in Ghana since 1957 and attempts to tease out the main currents in the nature of women's political participation, voice and state responses to it.¹

A brief description of gender politics in the pre-colonial era may be useful for our understanding of contemporary trends.

Pre-Independence Feminism and Gender Politics

There was no unified state before the imposition of British rule on the country, and the area that is now Ghana consisted of a variety of ethnic communities with distinct systems of descent and social organisation.

Women in pre-colonial Ghana played various roles depending on the particular social organisation and historical circumstances of their society. As in many traditional African societies, a combination of factors determined the allocation of resources, power, status, rights and duties between men and women. These included descent, succession and inheritance, paternity, affiliation, residence rules, and economic potential (Aidoo 1995). Among the matrilineal Akan, for example, women had relatively high economic and legal independence, and in Akan politics, women played a complementary role to men. Other ethnic groups which had systems of patrilineal descent such as the Konkomba, Kusase, Ewe, and Dagomba were much more male dominated, and in those communities that had been influenced by Islam such as the Gonja and Dagomba restrictions on women were more pronounced (Aidoo 1995). Aidoo goes on to say that the traditional emphasis of anthropologists and other scholars on political offices and the position of the chief (who was usually a male) have eclipsed the political role of all but a few African women. In societies like the Ga, Dagomba, Nzima and Aowin where women controlled certain ritual practices and medicines as well as land, stool property and regalia, the political role of women could be considerable. Regarding the Akan, Manuh (1991) discusses the conflicting views on the status of Akan women in pre-colonial society, and cites Mikell (1985) who points out that the male/female complementarity had eroded in Ashanti between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Crucial for the future trajectory of women's political agency in Ghana, is the fact that culturally and politically, the notion of women in the public sphere was not completely alien even though it was to a large extent, eroded during colonial rule. Women in Ghana had had a long experience of organization and association in a variety of activities (Tsikata 1989; Manuh 1991) and this heralded the extent to which they rallied round the political parties during the anti-colonial struggle and later around the CPP.

The heterogeneous nature of gender hierarchies in traditional Ghanaian society might have had some implications for the future women's front. Cultural, social, class and ethnic factors are important determinants of attitudes towards gender and feminist consciousness. The recognition of group membership and shared interests, prerequisites that are essential to political action, would be more difficult to attain in such a situation. In the light of this, it is not surprising that large-scale mobilisation of women across ethnic and class boundaries occurred mostly in urban areas, sites of rapid social upheaval and dislocation, shortly before Ghana gained political Independence from Britain in 1957.

Manuh (1991) explains the context within which women mobilised in the anti-colonial struggle. The superimposition of Victorian values and morality on the traditional order by colonialism, which defined men as heads of households, allowed poor access of women to health and education, and created discrimina-

tory practices in workplaces, left women, especially those in the towns, with very few spaces within which they could manoeuvre. The prospect of self-government offered such women hope for a better life and the fulfilment of their gender interests. So women, especially those from urban areas, mobilised behind the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and later, massively behind Nkrumah's Convention People's Party (CPP) towards 'self-government now'.

In the anti-colonial struggle, women mobilised mainly around economic issues. For example, as far back as 1917–1918, they were active in cocoa hold-ups, and their participation in those early protests stemmed from their work as retail traders. They felt the threat posed by the monopolistic activities of the European trading firms (Tsikata 1989). The struggle around which they mobilised was not a feminist one. In terms of the situation in the country, it was a universal political problem whose solution they had vested interests in. Women traders became staunch supporters of the Convention People's Party (CPP) led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. They contributed generously to its funding and organisation, and it is through their active participation that women's sections of the party were established. In his autobiography, Nkrumah attributed the solidarity, cohesion and success of the CPP in its early days to the efforts of its women members (Nkrumah 1959).

CPP Feminism²

The women's sections of the CPP were not organised around women's specific problems or gender issues,³ they were effectively support pillars of the party. The CPP Women's League, formed in 1951, was charged with duties such as the organisation of rallies, dances and picnics, and a special day for Women, Ghana Women's Day was established. In 1953, non-political women's organisation, the Ghana Federation of Women, was formed. In 1960, the League, Federation and smaller women's groups merged under a proposal by the CPP. A new women's organisation, the National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW) which replaced the women's section of the Party, was inaugurated by Dr. Nkrumah as the only recognised body under which all Ghanaian women were to be organised to contribute their quota to the political, educational social and economic construction of Ghana. It had become an integral wing of the Party and had representation on its Central Committee.

The NCGW established branches throughout the country. It sent its younger members abroad to study, and assisted them in finding employment. The members who were market women controlled the allocation of space and goods there. The NCGW also organised rallies and built day-care centres in the towns for working women (Tsikata 1989). The NCGW was never completely independent as it was controlled by the government and limited by patriarchal attitudes towards women in government circles. The CPP General Secretary, assigned the

task of organising it, saw the NCGW as a potential threat to the position of men, and could not hide his resentment (Tsikata 1989; Manuh 1991).

The dominant ideology of the time could not contain attempts at addressing women's issues that might raise feminist consciousness and galvanise women into action, and so the NCGW died a natural death in 1966, following the overthrow of the CPP.

It has been suggested that the organisation of women during the CPP era shows recognition of their contributions to the anti-colonial struggle and the implications for development of a backward population. For the first time in Ghana's post-colonial history, the importance of women's contributions to development was given a measure of recognition. The CPP government's policies consciously encouraged the participation of women in politics and public life with the result that a few women held offices as members of parliament, deputy ministers and district commissioners (Tsikata 1989). Due to the CPP government's concern about the absence of women in politics, 10 seats were reserved for women in parliament (Manuh 1991:132; Public Agenda, February 10–14, 1997:8).

The CPP government responded to women's demands for changes in the law that would improve their status in marriage. It passed a law on the Maintenance of Children, but another one, the Uniform Marriage, Divorce and Inheritance Bill was defeated and could not be enacted as a law.

From the above, it is clear that from 1957 to 1966 under Nkrumah's CPP, the state was sympathetic to the problems of gender inequalities in social and political life, and made the first attempts to legitimise and institutionalise women's and gender issues. However, gender politics was based on actions initiated from the top down on behalf of women, by President Nkrumah, a 'benevolent pro-feminist'.

Because the mass women's organisation of the day had been initiated by government and was dependent on it for financing, it was open to control. Then, as later in Ghana's political history, the mass women's organisation was based on party lines. By allowing members easier access to control of important resources, as happened for example in the markets, membership of the party (and its women's wing) was linked to greater access to productive resources, increasing the likelihood that people would join the party for economic reasons. This has been an important factor for political party membership throughout Ghanaian political history.

Nkrumah had a vision of African womanhood steeped in high moral standards, which would form the basis of African nationhood (Manuh 1991). The coup d'état that overthrew his government in 1966 turned that vision into an illusion.

Ghanaian women had experienced a period of goodwill and state support at a time when, globally, women's work had not yet been recognised. Unfortunately,

due to the fact that the women's wing of the CPP was not made into a broad-based, coherent movement, it died with the overthrow of the government that had supported it.

Military Rule

There were several changes of government between the overthrow of Ghana's First Republic in 1966 and the coup d'état led by Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings on 31st December 1981. This was a period when political life was dominated by the military. The various regimes are listed below:

- 1966–1969 - The National Liberation Council (NLC) (military)
- 1969–1972 - The Progress Party (PP)
- 1972–1979 - The National Redemption Council (NRC) which later became the Supreme Military Council (SMC) (military)
- 1979 The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) (military)
- 1979–1981 - People's National Party (PNP)
- 1982–1992 - People's National Defence Council (PNDC) (military)
- 1992–1996 - National Democratic Congress (NDC)
- 1996–2000 - National Democratic Congress (NDC)
- 2001 to date New Patriotic Party (NPP)

Summary: civilian government (21 years, including 1957–1966, under Dr. Nkrumah's CPP); military government (21 years).

Although there were short periods of civilian rule between 1966 and 1982, for the purposes of this paper, I refer to the time as the period of military rule. The period dominated by Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings will be treated separately.

It is interesting to note that only two out of the 140 members of the 2nd Republic (1969–1972) were women, the 3rd Republic had only five women out of 140 members. The civilian regimes of this period did not show any particular interest in raising the profile of women as Nkrumah had done.

The period from 1966 to 1981 has been described as an 'apolitical' phase on the women's front (Tsikata 1989), and there is not much research to throw light on the activities of women during this era. Women's organisations during this period were largely non-political. Several professional women's groups were also formed during this time⁴. The frequent changes of government and the domination of the military could explain the low ebb of women's political activities during the period. It has been rightly suggested that militarised states reinforce male domination in political and social life (Enloe 1987; Mama 1985), and the militarised Ghanaian state during this period did not support any mass women's organisations.

While the National Liberation Council had worked towards handing over power to a democratically elected government, the National Redemption Council created a truly military government, reorganising itself as the Supreme Military Council (SMC) from 1975. This government thought the country's problems were due to a lack of organisation and that a dose of a military administration would remedy the situation. Officers were put in charge of all ministries and state enterprises. Junior officers were assigned leadership roles in all government departments and parastatals. There is very little research about the relationship between women and the state, women's voice and ways in which they coped with the militarism of this period. However, anecdotal evidence points to the fact that, during this period, women managed to survive by capitalising on ties of patronage, social networks and their femininity to 'get ahead' in trading activities, to the extent that their control of the distribution sector of the economy was eventually viewed as a threat to male dominance. It appears that large numbers of women went into the informal sector during this period. The distribution sector at the time cannot have been controlled only by the rich market 'queens'; several 'ordinary' women went into trading, but there is no empirical data to support this suggestion. Trading in foodstuffs, then, as now, was organised in networks that included women of different social classes in rural and urban Ghana.

Manuh's (1993) analysis of relations between women and the state under the PNDC is pertinent here. She points to a kind of political fundamentalism in Ghana that views women's economic activities with resentment and would wish to consign them to the home and the care of children. This political fundamentalism, she says, is in turn reinforced by patriarchal ideology within the society and its pre-determined notions of the proper role of women. As a result, Ghanaian women have been accused of immorality, prostitution and other social evils during periods of crises. This is what happened during the first years of the PNDC rule.

The 'woman bashing' that resulted from political fundamentalism actually had its roots in the 1970s during the NRC and SMC Regime under General Acheampong and later General Akuffo. Anecdotal evidence has it that women used their sexual wiles to obtain trading licences and other favours from the military officers. This was the period of 'kalabule', signifying the corrupt practices of the time, during which women were accused by the media and the rumour mill, of using their 'bottom power' to do business. These accusations were the beginning of the female scapegoating and blaming of women for the country's economic problems, which eventually culminated in the brutal assault, vilification and degradation of women traders during the early eighties, at the beginning of the Rawlings Era⁵. The attacks on women were a backlash to their immense success as traders.

The military did not have any specific agenda for women. Unlike the civilian governments, which attempted to maintain power and control over women's voice

and activities by co-opting them through the women's wings of political parties, the military understood the use of brute force as a management measure. The coping strategy of women traders was to use their wits, wiles and social capital to cope with military rule; the educated middle class women retreated into professional organisations and private life.

The major landmark in policy during the period that was to have important repercussions for the Ghanaian feminist experience and gender politics, was the establishment in 1975 of the National Council for Women and Development (NCWD) by government decree⁶. The NCWD was set up in response to a UN resolution calling on member-states to establish the appropriate government machinery to accelerate the integration of women in development and the elimination of discrimination against women on grounds of sex.

The NRC Decree establishing the NCWD gave it advisory and research functions as well as a liaison role between government and nation and international organisations. In 1976 the NCWD commissioned a series of studies on various aspects of the existing situation of Ghanaian women: in the family, employment, education and training, laws, customs and inequities in marriage systems and rights, and their position in agriculture and production. As a result of these studies some changes in legislation were proposed by the NCWD, and groundwork was laid for the implementation of projects that were directed at increasing women's incomes.

This account so far has not mentioned outside influences on the feminist experience. The women's liberation movement in the West had gained some momentum by the late Sixties, and the UN Women's Decade did much in raising feminist consciousness globally. This was not lost on Ghanaian women, particularly the professional middle class. It is not very surprising that the Ghana branch of FIDA (International Federation of Women Lawyers) was established in 1974 with the aim of improving the situation of women and children in the country and strengthening their position in the overall developmental process. By 1985 they had established a free legal aid programme for women. Even though the NCWD was set up through a UN resolution, the support and advocacy to see it through came from professional women including some lawyers. Legal feminist activism has continued to grow in Ghana, and will be discussed later.

The role of international donor agencies during the period (and after it) is also significant. With the establishment of the NCWD came the acceptance and implementation of the Women in Development (WID/GAD) paradigm as the main framework within which activities towards the promotion of the improvement of the status of women take place. This was the paradigm within which the donor agencies worked, and it was accepted and institutionalised probably in order that the 'much needed' funding would be obtained. This paradigm continues to dominate much state backed activities and projects for women and children today.

The problems presented by the WID/GAD framework in Ghana and other African countries have been discussed (Tsikata 2000; Mensah-Kutin et.al 2000; Mama 2000), and it has been argued that the framework stresses developmental issues instead of the more political gender equality issues and tends not to link the two.

At the time it was established in Ghana, the NCWD appeared to be a promising, non-partisan vehicle for advancing a feminist agenda, particularly where there was a non-existent political women's front. But it was not able to do this to any significant degree. By 1985, ten years after it was set up, it had been effectively silenced by the next military regime, through the machinery set up by the wife of the leader, which came to be described in the literature as 'the First Lady Syndrome' or the 'femocracy' (Mama 1995).

1982–2000: The Grand 'Feminist' Illusion

In December 1981 Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings overthrew the civilian, democratically elected government of Dr. Hilla Limann and declared a revolution. The following year, new mass political organisations such as the June 4 Movement and New Democratic Movement were formed. In response to the directives of the government, Committees for the Defence of the Revolution or CDR's were set up all over the country to express the interests and power of the people and to protect the 31st December Revolution (Tsikata 1989).

These new mass organisations were not directed specifically at gender needs although they occasionally created platforms upon which women's issues were discussed. This created opportunities for the establishment of a women's organisation, and in March 1982 the Federation of Ghanaian Women (FEGAWO) was formed. It is interesting to note that the honorary president of this organisation later became a member of the ruling PNDC, showing the continuation of a tendency that has been prevalent in the history of women's organisations since the CPP days – lack of independence from the government, leading to easy co-optation by the ruling party. The aims of the FEGAWO were clearly directed at women, and included struggling for equal rights and opportunities for women in economic, social and political matters and to fight against the structures, laws, norms and practices that oppress women.

Unfortunately it did not succeed in spreading its influence throughout the country, and was to be completely eclipsed by the 31st December Women's Movement (DWM), which was launched in May 1982. The FEGAWO, an organisation which had its roots in civil society, could not compete with the DWM, led by the First Lady and enjoying the full support of the PNDC government.

The beginning of the Rawlings era was characterised by a massive and brutal assault on certain groups of Ghanaian women, particularly market women and other traders, who were held responsible for the economic problems of the country

and were often mishandled and prosecuted. Soldiers publicly beat up the women, shaved off their hair, and sometimes forced them to take off their clothes in public. The main market in Accra, Makola Market⁷ was demolished. Interestingly, by late 1983, when the PNDC changed its economic course from a socialist to a market economy orientation and launched the International Monetary Fund (IMF) backed Economic Recovery Programme, women's economic roles were reconceptualized to fit in with the 'women in development' (WID) approaches that had been propagated by the UN and other international agencies. This was accompanied by a more active sponsorship of women's issues and development programmes targeted at them. The Rawlings Government recognised the international institutionalisation of gender, which was taking place globally because a shift in thinking about women's roles triggered by the International Women's Movement had begun and most governments seeking aid had to show some commitment to the gender question.

The appropriation of the gender concept by the state under Rawlings was largely facilitated through his wife Nana Konadu Agyeman-Rawlings' leadership of the 31st December Women Movement. The DWM, described as an NGO, was in reality the women's wing of the government.

By 1986 the DWM had 'clipped the wings' of the national machinery for women, by dissolving and replacing it with a management committee which consisted of prominent DWM members and their nominees. From this time forth, control of the NCWD was firmly placed in the hands of the government. It was systematically deprived of resources, so that the DWM was able to eclipse the NCWD. Thus during the era of Rawlings, many people were not clear about the role of the NCWD, the state and the DWM.

Using the DWM as her Platform, the First Lady steadily rose in prominence. From 1985 onwards she was increasingly visible on radio and television. Through the DWM and the women's wing of the ruling party, the NDC, Mrs. Rawlings was active in raising votes for her husband's campaign for office in 1992 and 1996.

By 1994 the DWM claimed to have a membership of 2.5 million women. Having enjoyed strong support from the government since its inception, the DWM had good access to productive resources such as land, attracted funding from external and internal sources, and was been funded by UN agencies. By the nineties, however, some international and bilateral agencies were unwilling to deal directly with it because of its overtly political character (Manuh 1993).

Although the DWM asserted that it had a mass following from the ranks of women and had aims⁸ that could be described as pro-woman or feminist, it did not achieve any substantial changes in the status of women. The economic policies of the regime had adverse effects on women (Clarke and Manuh 1999) and the statistics from this period are not encouraging.

In 1990, the illiteracy rates were 49 per cent for women and 30 per cent for men. Under the PNDC Government, women made up 6 percent of the committee of secretaries and 3 per cent of PNDC secretaries. Women were not represented at both levels in 1990. In the first Government of the NDC government (1993–1996) there were 2 women out of 35 ministerial appointments and made up only 8 per cent of Members of Parliament.

Women's representation on the Judiciary was 10 per cent in 1982 and only rose by 1 per cent in 1994. In the 1996 elections, 18 women secured seats in parliament, an increase of 2 seats over the 16 seats women obtained in the 1st Parliament of the NDC government.

The women's front in Ghana, under the long political tenure of Rawlings, was characterised by a grand illusion of activity⁹ purported to be in the interests of the broad masses of women and spearheaded by the First Lady and Life President of the DWM. This illusion was the 'femocracy', coherently described and analysed by Mama (1995), as a postcolonial development in African gender politics. She defines it as:

An anti-democratic female power structure which claims to exist for the advancement of ordinary women, but is unable to do so because it is dominated by a small clique of women whose authority derives from their being married to powerful men, rather than any action or ideas of their own. Femocracies exploit the commitments of the international movement for greater equality while actually only advancing the interests of a small female elite, and in the long term undermining women's interests by upholding the patriarchal status quo. In short, femocracy is a feminine autocracy running in parallel to the patriarchal oligarchy upon which it relies for its authority and which it supports completely.

There were some positive developments for the women's front under the femocracy, such as the ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the passing of the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Law, and the law on Intestate Succession. It will be recalled that the CPP government had been unable to pass this law that was meant to raise the status of women in marriage. The laws probably were successfully passed due to a variety of reasons: the posturing of the state as one that recognised women's gender interests (due to international pressure), and a steady rise in legal advocacy fuelled by a global climate that increasingly fostered a 'rights' discourse.

2001 to date: Chasing Illusions or Realising Visions?

President John Agyekum Kufour took over the reigns of government in 2001 after an exciting electoral process. The atmosphere was charged, reminiscent of

the heady days of the early post-independence era. God had ‘spoken’¹⁰, and Ghanaians were full of thanks and high expectations. Ghana had now shaken off President Rawlings and his wife, and entered a new era; there was a ‘new democratic dispensation’ as Ghanaians put it. The new regime talked about leading Ghana into a ‘golden age of business’, the new government would bring about ‘positive change’, optimism was the order of the day. The media became more vibrant than it had ever been; people felt free to air their opinions and currently many contentious issues are openly discussed on radio and television. Certainly, a fresh breeze has been blowing through the country, and the discourse of rights and democracy are high on all agendas. On the women’s front, the new regime established a Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs. The ministry has absorbed the NCWD. So far, despite the glorious vision of a new Ghana, the status of women has not yet changed; women are still not prominent in the decision-making process. After the initial euphoria of the feeling of living under the ‘new democratic dispensation’ died down and nominations to political office were effected, a journalist registered her disappointment with the government in this way:

Should it not be a worry that at present, out of the 200 parliamentarians, only 19 are women? Is it fair that only two members of the country’s 16 members of Cabinet are women and that there are only four women in the 20-member Council of State and six out of the country’s 31 ministers of state are women? Women constitute only 3.5 percent of elected positions of district assemblies, and in the unit committees, they are insignificant. Out of the 15 chief directors in the sector ministries, there is no woman among them! With the directors in these ministries, only 25 women can be counted among the 138 people.

Clearly, these statistics are an indication of how we, as a country, in our individual actions and inaction, have over the years relegated women issues to the background. (Golda Armah, *Daily Graphic*, 30 August 2001)

Similar articles were published in the *Daily Graphic*, 21 and 28 June 2001, and *Public Agenda*, 30 July–5 August 5 2001.

Feminist Intellectual Experience and Activism

From the seventies onwards, there was a rise in public awareness of the importance of women’s issues partly fostered by the International Women’s Year and Decade, women’s in the international women’s conferences and other action, and strengthened by NCWD’s activities. This gave feminist research and activism an impetus (Prah 1996). Internally generated research by Ghanaian women was not done much in the Sixties and Seventies; one recalls the work of academics such Miranda Greenstreet and Christine Oppong during that time. By the Eighties

and certainly in the Nineties a more substantial body of knowledge had developed.

In 1989 the Development and Women's Studies Programme (DAWS), the only teaching programme in women's studies in Ghana¹¹ was launched at the Institute of African Studies. During its planning stages there were consultations between academics, NGO's and other interested civil society members. The programme has now settled into a more academic routine but still maintains contacts with activists. Academic feminism and activism appear to have so far had a fairly productive partnership, cooperating with each other over issues such as the national campaign against domestic violence, which saw both activists and academics working together on research reports, (Prah 2000), demonstrations against serial killing of women, and more recently, activities to sensitise the public on the domestic violence bill. The last activity appears to be exposing differences in strategy; some academics would prefer that the public debate on the bill continues over a longer period, due to a contentious point about marital rape, which is being touted by many as a 'Western' cultural construct. Others, mainly activists, would like to see the bill passed soon, before the next election in 2004. Despite such contradictions, the partnership between activists and intellectuals so far seems to be a fairly productive one. This is due perhaps to the fact that feminist researchers are very often activists and vice versa, straddling the two roles.

The partnership between activists and academics appears to have developed naturally, with the main actors sharing a middle class social background and common perceptions about rights. Historically, activism directed specifically feminist issues in Ghana has originated from the legal arena, and has yielded the most tangible results. Local political realities, coupled with the global ideological environment within which the donor community operates have contributed to the current status quo. The 'civil society' essentially has a middle class social character and aspirations, and one of the greatest challenges that face all the parties interested in social transformation, including gender activists, is to transcend the barriers imposed by middle class interests.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to trace the path of gender politics and women's political participation in Ghana. The account has hopefully shown how from the outset, the civilian regimes have consistently co-opted women and excluded them from political power and decision-making. Some military regimes did not co-opt women but clamped upon their activities with the use of brute force. The femocratic type of government, of the Rawlings Era, also co-opted women's power.

The current Kufour regime appears to be following the path of all other civilian governments but the difference is the existence of a more vibrant civil

society, which is constrained by its middle class character. The women's front has chased illusions and is yet to realise its vision. Some of the great challenges faced by Ghanaian feminists is that of transcending its middle class nature and achieving a sustainable movement or capable of achieving change that will transform the lives of women.

End notes

- 1 I am very conscious of the limitations of this paper, particularly of the fact that the account tends to be oversimplified, leaping over chunks of history and omitting an analysis of global and local economic processes, including women's economic activities. I have relied on anecdotal evidence for the section on military rule. There is a gap in research on women's activities during this period.
- 2 'Feminism' in this context refers to the recognition of women's specific interests and activities to realise them
- 3 'Gender issues' refer to the relations between women and men as they are expressed in terms of power, economics or status, within the context of social and economic relations which define the positions of men and women.
- 4 Issues of the women's magazine 'Obaa Simaa' that appeared in the Seventies abound with reports of inaugurations of women's groups based in organizations such as banks, insurance companies and parastatals.
- 5 Interestingly, the National Reconciliation Commission that began operation in 2003, has had several submissions from women who were victims of 'female scapegoating' during that period.
- 6 Apparently, negotiating the establishment of the NCWD was difficult. It took several meetings and a very strong, unbending position by the women activists before the SMC accepted to have it set up. (Personal communication from the late Justice Annie Jiaggie, a women's activist).
- 7 See Manuh (1993) for a more detailed discussion on the scapegoating of women traders.
- 8 Its early objectives were to involve women in the on going revolutionary process (particularly during the PNDC era), to raise women's political consciousness about national and political affairs; and to raise living standards of women by supporting them in their income-generating activities. It lists social issues, health, environmental protection, childcare, education and training of women, income generation, and peace as its concerns (Manuh 1993; Personal communication with former DWM officials;) see also its Internet website (www.africaonline.com.gh/31dwm/programme.html).
- 9 At the conference, Zenebeworke Tadesse rightly remarked that what I term a 'grand illusion of activity' is also actually a situation in which the broad masses of women are made to put in more and more work while deriving little for their efforts.
- 10 This is a reference to an Akan hymn that became a symbol of the NPP campaign '*Ewurade Kasa*' literally meaning 'God, speak'.

- 11 The University of Cape Coast will shortly launch an undergraduate concentration in Gender Studies in the Department of Sociology.

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