

## **Male participants in the ‘commercialization’ of aspects of the female life cycle in Ghana\***

**John K. Anarfi<sup>a</sup> and Clara Korkor Fayorsey<sup>b</sup>**

*<sup>a</sup> Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, University of Ghana, Legon.*

*<sup>b</sup> Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, Legon.*

Among African countries, Ghana, like its West African neighbours, has long had a high level of economic activity among its female population (Killick 1966:123). It has been demonstrated for many populations that when wives are working and earning outside the home, their power position is enhanced (Lupri 1969). Women from Southern Ghana have long provided an example of wives whose domestic power is enhanced by their important roles as economic providers (Oppong 1970:677). Indeed, their traditionally independent position, compared with women in other parts of Africa, has frequently caused comment, even surprise (Caldwell 1968:69).

Women constitute half of the large informal sector but only one-tenth of formal-sector employees in Ghana. Excluding agriculture, women in the informal sector are mainly found in trade and in manufacturing (mainly food processing). The few women in the formal sector are mainly in teaching, banks, hospitals, hotels and the civil service; some are in manufacturing, agriculture and commerce. Only one-tenth of employees in formal manufacturing are women whereas they constitute two-thirds of manufacturing workers in the informal sector.

In Ghana, most informal-sector workers are self-employed and depend on their own resources for survival. The Ghana Living Standard Survey observed that women working in the informal sector and their households are among the most disadvantaged groups in their access to the basic necessities for survival (Ghana 1989). The majority of informal-sector workers lack access to institutional credit and depend on money lenders and informal credit unions such as *susu* groups.

Certain socio-cultural factors lend support to the view of Ghanaian women thus portrayed. In Ghana, cultural norms encourage women's participation in the labour force. Kumekpor (1974) observed that among the various ethnic groups in Ghana, the idea of a full-time housewife is unknown. Thus, there are no customary or religious barriers to women's participation in work outside the home. Women are expected and strongly encouraged 'to develop careers of their own in order to support themselves and their children' (Peil 1979:485).

Another aspect of the culture which makes it imperative for the woman to have her own source of income and thus ensures her active participation in the labour market is the customary inheritance system, especially the matrilineal type, found in many of the ethnic groups. This inheritance system makes it futile for a woman to depend upon her husband and his resources for her own and her children's support. Under the matrilineal system, when a man dies, his property is inherited not by his wife and children, but by a relative on his

---

\* Paper prepared for the Seminar on Fertility and the Male Life Cycle in the Era of Fertility Decline, Zacatecas, Mexico, 13-16 November 1995.

mother's side: his brother or nephew. There is a new law, the Intestate Succession Law, PNDC Law 111 (1985) which seeks to correct this anomaly. But the general effect of the past customary succession laws was that the wife found it necessary to continue to work to build up some capital for herself and her children.

It must be added that the Ghanaian cultural norms and values also stress that a woman should have many children. This is couched in many sayings in Akan such as *Awoo ye* (It is good to procreate); *Awoo se wo na w'anwo ba a, yekyi* (Infertility of a robust young woman is a taboo). In fact, a woman who dies without issue is considered an abomination (*kukuba* in Akan), and is not given full funeral rites. Fortes observed that in West Africa ,

there is the deeply ingrained idea that normal men and women should continue to beget and bear children throughout their fecund years... for women, it is their fertility that is considered to be uniquely distinctive of womanhood. A woman becomes a woman when she becomes able to bear children and continued child-bearing is irrefutable evidence of continued femininity (Fortes 1978:45).

This emphasis on motherhood is observed to be as strong in Ghana today as it was in traditional society. Each subsequent conjugal liaison formed is likely to produce offspring, as marriage without children is not yet conceivable in Africa, including Ghana. But a man is unlikely to take on paternal responsibilities for children he did not beget and women not infrequently find themselves the major supporters of their children (Oppong and Bleek 1982). Back in 1977, Oppong drew attention to changes in conjugal power and resources in certain sections of the Ghanaian society:

There is evidence of inability to effectively fulfil parental duties and responsibilities among some people at the lower socio-economic levels (who constitute the majority in Ghana), due to lack of resources in money, material goods and time and also indications of unwillingness among certain individuals, even when resources are available, to invest them fully in parenthood, either leaving the total burden to the coparent, often the mother or by passing the child onto a foster parent, who may or may not take an interest in the welfare of the child (Oppong 1977:8).

Making reference to the women's low expectations of marriage, Bleek and Asante-Darko remarked:

They know that their husband is likely to provide but little for the upkeep of the family. Divorce is frequent and in half of the cases it is initiated by women. Family life often has a matrifocal character and nearly every married woman is economically independent (Bleek and Asante-Darko 1986:338).

Thus, Ghanaian women find themselves in a dilemma. Tradition compels them to have children. Unfortunately, tradition does not exert similar pressure on the men with whom they have the children to provide support for the mothers and children. The situation has been further worsened by the harsh economic conditions in the country in recent times. Over the years, women have evolved strategies for coping with the adverse conditions in which they find themselves. These have included what Fayorsey (1994) has termed the 'commoditization' of aspects of the life course of women. She explains that

This concept of 'commoditization' is abstracted from the exchange of things and services (see Hart 1982; Appadurai 1992; Kopytoff 1992). From this abstraction several forms of the process have been conceived termed variously as commoditization of sexuality and commoditization of marriage, among others (Fayorsey 1994:1).

In this paper 'commercialization' is used instead of 'commoditization'. The concern here is the manipulation of certain events and rituals by women in their life course for monetary gains.

### **Women's strategies towards some autonomy**

In spite of the constraints imposed on them by the Ghanaian economic crisis and its attendant high costs of living, Ghanaian women, especially the Ga, the Fante and the Ashanti, have adopted a number of strategies to cope with their situation. These strategies liberate them from the control of their men and ensure their economic survival within the exigencies of daily life. Some strategies adopted by urban Ghanaian women, notably among the Ga, are examined below.

The first strategy is the strong alliances against men and the mutual help given and received between matrilineal relations within matricomplexes. A matricomplex is defined as an economically based corporate kin group of matrilineally related females, such as a woman, her mother, her sisters, and their children (own or fostered). It is a set of matrikin relations with a material base that enables women to dominate other women, men and children. This group has essentially evolved from a former patrilineal structure in which men dominated women. Owing to the separation of spouses in Central Accra female matrikin relations reside together, whilst their husbands live elsewhere. Living together enables urban Ga women to engage in economic ventures. Thus, in Central Accra matrikin relations have formed economic productive units engaged in the preparation of food for sale. Living in Central Accra gives women access to adjacent markets for their wares. Women in Central Accra have together formed strong corporate alliances, as a result of which, coupled with the pressure on existing accommodation, Ga men have had to move out of the area. Men still living in the vicinity are those who hold traditional political offices or those whose occupations, such as fishing and fish selling, demand that they should reside in Central Accra. Also men who are incapable of renting their own accommodation elsewhere scramble with women and children for the cheap or sometimes rent-free family rooms in *wekushiaa* or family compounds. These men are often referred to as *yakagbemei* or 'hopeless men' because they rely on the very people they are expected to provide for. Often women in matricomplexes hurl insults at such 'hopeless men' and it has become almost impossible for Ga men without sound financial backing to remain in family compounds with their female kin. Whether such a drive has occurred consciously or not, Central Accra is now predominantly inhabited by women who form 72 per cent of the adult population. Women and children together form 88 per cent of the household population of the area. Residing together, urban Ga women have managed to turn their economic misfortunes into assets. The most valuable resource is their children, who have become an essential source of capital.

Other affiliations which may not be necessarily kin-based are also important. Most Ga women belong to one or more cults, churches, associations or co-operatives. Friendship associations play very significant roles especially with the granting of loans and general help to their members. In 1991 about 25 per cent of the 216 urban women surveyed in Central

Accra belonged to twelve different women's associations and clubs which are locally collectively known as *Yeli ke buamo kpei* (mutual help societies). These mutual help societies often rallied to the help of individual members, especially during occasions which demanded some form of donation like outdoorings, funerals and other traditional rituals.

Women's strategies are especially clear within the context of the manipulation of traditional rituals associated with pregnancy and marriage. It may seem paradoxical to state that one of the strategies of Ga women towards autonomy is to marry. It is indeed paradoxical if one defines autonomy as being 'free from the control of men'. Marriage in its traditional Ga conception does not free women from men's control.

Ga women in their efforts to survive formed strong matrikin alliances and commercialized the traditional institution of marriage and its associated rituals. Children have become essential bargaining factors for the urban Ga woman. These children are used as a 'one-shot-only' flow of wealth to the woman's family. This follows a process involving sexual relationship, pregnancy, and childbirth.

### ***Pregnancy and the 'commercialization of female sexuality'***

A woman's role as a mother is very important in Ghana. This role begins with the onset of the first pregnancy. Among the Ga in Central Accra, promiscuity is rife, and adolescent pregnancy abounds. Women, therefore, start the motherhood role at very early ages. Pregnancy is an important occasion for the paternal role to be displayed.

In Central Accra, pregnant girls are often forced to name the man who impregnated them, in order to ensure that he assumes full responsibility for the pregnancy. Generally 'a man who makes an un-betrothed girl pregnant is said to have been caught stealing, *amole dzulo*' (Azu 1974:33). A delegation is often sent by the girl's parents to inquire about the pregnancy from the man's parents. The man is questioned by his parents or relations. If he accepts responsibility for the pregnancy, another delegation including his parents or elders of his matrilineal and patrilineal families is sent to the girl's relations with some money and a bottle of gin to ask pardon and accept responsibility for the pregnancy. Thereafter, the pregnancy of the girl becomes an occasion when various demands, especially for regular cash contributions, are made on the prospective father of the child. The man is also required to clothe, feed and 'maintain the pregnancy'. *Esa ni nui le ale musuile* - 'It is necessary for the man to nurture the pregnancy'.

Nurturing the pregnancy means not only taking responsibility for the unborn child by paying hospital bills, but also meeting the needs of the pregnant girl. Another aspect of nurturing which the Ga of Central Accra believe to be necessary is to have 'regular sex with the pregnant woman to allow the baby to grow and to widen the birth canal so that parturition would be easy'. A man who refuses such responsibility is said to be very wicked. The members of the matricomplex, especially, put a lot of pressure on the man to provide sustenance not only for the pregnant girl but also for members of the matricomplex. The girl's mother and her sisters pay several visits to the man in the course of the girl's pregnancy with one demand or another involving the care of the pregnant girl. A man who impregnates a woman is expected to make regular remittances in cash and kind. A man who is capable of meeting such obligations is often a favourite of the group; a subsequent marriage to the young girl is very likely to succeed as long as such obligations are met. A man becomes a favourite of all members of the girl's matricomplex if he is generous. Even in the absence of the girl, he will be welcomed with a bottle of beer and some food.

Such expectations and demands are tolerated by the men only until the child is born, and 'outdoored', or initiated into the man's patrilineage. Many unmarried fathers cease to make contributions once the child is 'outdoored'. The honour of being a father is enough for the Ga

man who will usually boast of the number of children he has even if he does not know what they eat.

Some men do not even acknowledge responsibility for the pregnancy. When this happens, whether the baby becomes a liability or an asset depends on the strength of the mother's matricomplex. It is evident, however, that right from conception, the baby may become an economic asset to its mother and her matricomplex if the demands made on the prospective father are met. A baby may become a liability to the matricomplex if the expected responsibilities from the man are not met. This would mean the paying of hospital costs in addition to feeding and clothing the young mother.

Several strategies are adopted by the combined efforts of women within a matricomplex and, therefore, the unborn baby hardly ever becomes a liability. These women ensure that maximum profit is made out of any pregnancy and, therefore, if the man does not meet his obligations towards the pregnancy, the girl is restricted from having anything to do with him. In this case, he is branded a 'hopeless man' and the young girl may be pushed on to another man before the pregnancy is far enough advanced to be visible. Informants, men but not women (perhaps because of the slur it may cast on their reputation) lamented the fact that this has resulted in claims being made by more than one man to the paternity of some children. It became evident also that some matricomplexes intentionally make claims for financial support for the same pregnancy from different men. This can continue until the baby is born. There is then usually a fight among 'prospective fathers' for the same child. Babies are 'commercialized' right from the womb among the Ga of Central Accra. The role of a father is to take responsibility for his baby and its mother: an acknowledged and treasured Ghanaian custom. Although natural enough, the manipulation of the custom for economic gain in the midst of poverty is of concern.

'Commercialization' during pregnancy may not be apparent to a casual observer, but subsequent 'commercialization' after birth, especially with the naming and outdoor ceremony, is openly discussed by almost all Ga men and women in Central Accra. The idea of 'commercialization of childbirth' was actually suggested by these Ga men and women who saw the lavish current outdoor ceremony as a form of trade and the main reason for the fertility of urban Ga women.

In spite of the success of some of these strategies, there are women for whom this initial pregnancy becomes a financial burden. Such women may not always get help from members of the matricomplex because of the lack of money, especially in cases where the matricomplex is not engaged in a common economic venture. When the putative father refuses to take responsibility for the child, and the girl's parents cannot help because of their own financial difficulties, the girl shoulders her own responsibility.

### ***Commercialization of sexuality***

The trend now in Ghana is for young girls to go out at night to sell their sexuality. In Accra, the most popular place is the nightclub 'Circle'. Girls in Central Accra often said they had to go to 'Circle' to make ends meet. 'Circle' is a busy place for all illicit dealings at night and prostitution is one such dealing.

Prostitution in Ghana has assumed international dimensions. Côte d'Ivoire has been the most important destination for Ghanaian women over the years. A 1975 Côte d'Ivoire census gave a sex ratio of 76 males to 100 females among Ghanaian immigrants in the country; the ratio was even lower in Abidjan, the capital: 52 males to 100 females. A survey by Anarfi (1990) revealed that over 75 per cent of 1456 Ghanaian women interviewed there were in prostitution.

Economic considerations dominated the women's reasons for migrating to Côte d'Ivoire.

Asked to give her reasons for migrating, one young woman stated: 'In Ghana men were using me for free. So what is wrong if I come here to do it for money?'. The Abidjan survey observed that the use of contraceptives was not common among the Ghanaian women; in consequence most of the prostitutes often got pregnant. One thing that is considered shameful for a woman and her maternal kin is failure to determine the paternity of a child. While the child is fully legitimate, as far as its status in the matrilineage is concerned, it carries a stigma which may be brought up in later life in a quarrel. To avoid this every woman who got pregnant tried to get a man to accept responsibility for the pregnancy. The targets could be either pimps or clients. Ghanaian male migrants act as pimps for the prostitutes who may refer to these men as 'husbands'. These 'husbands' protect the prostitutes against physical attacks which are common in Abidjan. It also appears that it is from the pimps that the prostitute 'wives' get real sexual satisfaction since their relationship with their clients is impersonal.

Somehow some of the prostitutes manage to get some of their clients to accept responsibility for their pregnancies. These men are often non-Ghanaians, either Ivorians or from countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria. Such moves by the Ghanaian women could be seen purely as 'strategic attempts by individuals to shape their familial obligations and sources of support by social means' (Bledsoe 1994:6). The support is crucial for the prostitutes because from a certain stage of the pregnancy until some time after the birth they cannot work and require other sources of financial support.

As a conjugal relationship, that between the prostitutes and both categories of men mentioned above is tenuous. This has caused controversy over who is to have custody of the children borne by prostitutes. Cultural conflict is responsible for the problem, that is, where the parties involved are from different lineage systems.

Prostitutes' children are a great problem to their mothers. There is the difficulty of what to do with them when there is a visitor. Many women, therefore, take them home to Ghana where they are fostered by their grandmothers and other relatives. When the 'fathers' are Ghanaian this arrangement is without any difficulty. It is with the non-Ghanaian 'fathers' that the prostitutes have a problem.

In the past, Ghanaian women asked leave of their children's fathers to visit home with them and left them there: most of the Ghanaian women are from matrilineal areas and by custom they have rights to their children. But even women from the patrilineal areas want to take their children home to show that they have proved their fertility, knowing that among their matrikin the children will not be illegitimate. On the other hand, the fathers of these children are mostly from patrilineal cultures and see the children as theirs: these days they take their children from their mothers at a tender age and have them fostered by relatives far away.

### ***Commercialization of childbirth rituals***

The 'commercialization of childbirth' is illustrated with evidence from the Ga of Central Accra. The extension of 'commercialization' into kinship and ritual performances is illustrated in the naming and outdooring ceremonies described below.

On the eighth day after the birth of a child, it is taken over to its father's *wekushia* or family house for the naming ceremony. A delegation of elders of the maternal line, that is both male and female relations of the baby's mother, accompany the baby to its father's *wekushia* where the naming ritual is performed. On arrival at the father's *wekushia*, the baby is given to a renowned personality or elder of the family. This elder must have an admirable reputation because it is believed that the baby takes on the character of the person who names it. Thus a baby girl is named by a woman and a baby boy by a man.

The naming ritual is performed outside, within the compound of the *wekushia*. All the assembly of relatives go out for this purpose. Sometimes they may already be seated outside with the maternal relations on one side and the paternal relations on the opposite side. The seating arrangement usually separates males from females on both sides; this is a characteristic of the gender division which permeates all aspects of the Ga social structure. The baby's clothes are removed and the elder lifts the naked child towards the sky and welcomes him to earth. Some sort of welcome address follows. Whilst being put on the ground, the baby will be told to work hard and eat corn. Schnapps is used to pour a libation, calling the child's name and blessing it. A variety of addresses may be used, for example: *Ke oba ba hishi*, 'If you have come, come and stay'.

The elder then places the baby on the bare ground and its name on earth is spoken, for example, 'Naa'. Naa is picked up and then the elder dips his or her finger into corn-wine or *nkne-daa* and puts it into the baby's mouth three times with various injunctions: for example: *Naa, ona, onako, onu onuko, moko sane jee osane*, 'Naa, you have seen, you have not seen, you have heard, you have not heard. Somebody's business is not your business'. After this more advice is spoken by two elders from the mother's and from the father's kin. The baby is told to behave well in the world.

After the baby has been named, it is dressed up and given to its mother to be fed. Various presentations referred to as *jwelemonii*, 'congratulation gifts', show appreciation of the mother's safe delivery. They begin with a donation by the person who names the child. This may range from c1,000 to c100,000, depending on the wealth of the donor. This is often followed by a presentation by the head of the baby's patrilineage if he is not the one who conducted the ritual. A presentation by the baby's father's 'mothers' (classificatory grandmothers and grandfathers) follows. The baby's mother's parents also make their offerings. This is followed by a presentation by the father of the child and subsequently by the father's and mother's brothers, sisters, and other relations. All the donations pass through the hands of a linguist or *ostame* who loudly announces the donation to the assembled company; there is clapping and a congregational 'thank you'. Meanwhile a man and a woman will be delegated to take the naming drink, usually a bottle of schnapps, and offer drinks to all assembled.

All children born to Ga fathers must be accepted into a patrilineage, and the naming ritual indicates such an acceptance. Thereafter, the patrilineage becomes responsible for all major decisions concerning an individual's life such as birth, marriage, sickness, death and property inheritance. The Ga believe that up till the eighth day after the birth of a child, it is still partly in the world of the spirit and may decide to return. The eighth day signifies the baby's complete departure from the world of the spirit to the world of the living. It must, therefore, be welcomed home. The naming ritual is performed at dawn, a transition from night to day and from the unknown to the known. The naming ritual is therefore performed before the early morning star *Chochobi* vanishes from the sky at around 5 a.m. Thus, the naming ceremony is usually attended by very close relatives even though it is not restricted to them. Friends may attend, but most often friends join in later in the morning after the main ritual has been performed.

As noted by Meyer Fortes (1970:4), 'In the African institution of bride price, the passage of goods and valuables from the bridegroom's side to the bride's side is a constant, that is essential feature, but the valuables used and the amounts passed vary widely even in one society'. In the same way, the naming ceremony just described may be said to be the constant or essential aspect of Ga social structure. The presentations have followed the same pattern over time. The actual amounts compared to Field's account (1940) or Azu's (1974), have changed. A new development from this traditional naming ceremony has now emerged. The

newly emerged outdoor ceremony described below is not an intrinsic part of the naming ceremony. It has its foundations in the principle of gift exchange which is now being exploited by women to enhance their own well-being.

### ***The new outdoor ceremony***

The naming ritual referred to with the local name *Kpojeimo* or *Gbeiwo*, is the main ritual. However in addition, there has emerged a second ceremony. In Central Accra the fashionable new ceremony is referred to as 'outdoor' using the English word. Many different ethnic groups in Ghana also have the outdoor ceremony. It is an occasion to show the newly born baby to friends and work associates. The form it takes, however, varies from one ethnic group to the other. It is worth noting that the name 'outdoor' is used only for the ceremony of showing the baby to the public with some conviviality. In all the ethnic groups the usually small, restricted traditional ceremony is called 'naming ceremony'.

Currently after the close family relations have named the child, the ceremony continues with a party, or as is now often the case, another date is set for the outdoor party. A Saturday or Sunday a month or two after the child has been born is fixed and intensive preparations are made. It is in this second naming, or outdoor ceremony, that childbearing is being 'commercialized'. Sometimes the function is repeated a third time. It is significant that the same child could be outdoored on three separate occasions. It could be asked if this is to give the child three different names. Perhaps the child is being inducted into three separate spheres of social life: acceptance into the father's lineage, into the mother's lineage, and into the matrilineal kin group of its mother. The child is first of all named by the father, then shown publicly to its mother's matrilineal relations and friends, and again publicly outdoored for the benefit of its mother's mother's friends and trading associates. Two outdoors may be acceptable given the fact of separate residences of husbands and wives, but why a third? The issue is not as simple as it looks. The baby has become a commodity which has to be 'traded' in the guise of traditional naming rituals.

The assertion that the Ga outdoor is different and newly emergent is based on the fact that the traditional gift exchange system, evident at most naming ceremonies in Ghana, has moved beyond a stage of simple reciprocity into the sphere of commercialization. Unlike the traditional naming ceremony which is the responsibility of the couple and the child's father's relations, this ceremony is often organized by the child's mother and her matrilineal relations. It is notable that women have become the organizers of the new outdoor ceremony. It was explained that men do not organize this ceremony because they do not often belong to the trade associations and women's organizations which usually help to make them a success.

The characteristic feature of this second type of 'outdoor' is that it is organized in a business-like way. It is the responsibility of matrilineal relations to invite their friends and business associates to the ceremony of their female kin. Invitations are sent either by word of mouth or through invitation cards about a fortnight before the function. The members of the matricomplex, church and associations are expected to attend and donate lavishly. This is unlike the traditional naming ceremony which is purely a family affair, usually on a very small scale, and is given little or no publicity. The sole aim of the traditional ceremony is to induct the new baby into the lineage. Any payments made are considered as gifts and are often mere tokens, the specific amount often prescribed by custom.

In the new ceremony, the mother's or her mother's important business associates are invited, and when they are unable to attend, they send their donation through a delegate. The mother of the baby and her matrilineal relatives decide who should be invited. The father of the baby may bring his friends if he is responsible enough and can ensure that his friends are

not *daa toloi* or 'drunkards'. The notable absence of men of no importance from these ceremonies indicates that the women organizing the ceremony are careful about the category of men to invite. The few important men who are able to attend the function are given a seat at the high table and served well. The unimportant men and women who are incapable of donating money stay on the fringes and scramble for food with the nonentities.

On the day of the function several food items are prepared by the concerted efforts of matrilineally related females and their friends who rally to help. The food is provided by the leader or organizer of the function. Friends and relatives sometimes donate food.

The ceremony begins with an announcement by an eloquent woman designated by the leader, that the mother's 'mother' is overjoyed at the birth of her grandson or granddaughter and wants to congratulate her daughter for her safe delivery by donating about c20,000, a bucket, baby clothes and other items. This is followed by gifts from other donors. Each time a donation is given, the donor is served with food and drink, of which the quality varies with the amount of the donation. A significant change has occurred in the mode of presentation and the serving of drinks and food to guests, unlike the former naming ceremony when all guests were served with corn drink and the gin used for naming the child. Why should the Ga of Central Accra now give drinks and food varying in quality and sophistication in relation to the size of the donation?

There is a great display of new dresses and cloth. The *jala yeloi*, market associates of the women in the matricomplex, come dressed identically, usually in white cloth with either blue or red designs. They give lavishly, especially if the outdoorings is for the daughter or sister of a prominent trader whose matricomplex members frequently attend other people's outdoorings. There is carefully monitored reciprocity, and often very keen competition among peers. If, for example, someone donates c1,000 at your outdoorings, you should donate more than that at that person's outdoorings.

On the whole women have found outdoorings a thriving and lucrative business. The danger, however, is that many girls are tempted by its attractions, and consequently become pregnant with the hope of having an outdoorings. However, not all women who organize an outdoorings make some profit. The outdoorings ceremony, like trade, is an art that has to be learned. One has to weigh one's probable income against expenditure and act accordingly. A woman who has mastered the art would want to practise it more often than one who had previously lost. The ceremony and its new trends continue to be popular because some women gain from it. These women, therefore, become the examples to be followed.

There are some variations in the outdoorings ceremony described above depending on religion, membership of an association or matricomplex. All of these ceremonies, however, take into consideration the profits to be accrued. Essentially, it is those women who belong to an association or women's organization who benefit from the elaborate outdoorings, because the association members will always contribute large sums of money for fellow-members. Such associations and the women within them gain public recognition by the amount of money that they are able to contribute to the commercialized functions such as outdoorings and funerals. Their reputation in terms of group purchases and of public recognition is also enhanced. Thus outdoorings should be seen as an aspect of economic activity, particularly as a source of trading capital.

At this juncture, the place of the father of the baby in the scheme of things must be clarified. The role played by the father from pregnancy to birth and naming is determined by his financial status. A very rich man may not hesitate to accept responsibility for a girl's pregnancy. A poor man, on the other hand, may have to be pushed a little. Whatever the situation, acknowledging paternity gives the father a certain control over the baby. For example, he has authority in certain aspects of the child's life such as marriage, death and

property inheritance. What makes this possible is the traditional naming ceremony. A man establishes his authority over a child by giving him a name. Every man is, therefore, compelled by custom to perform the naming ceremony of his child.

For the father, all rituals concerning the induction of the newly born into the family and life in general, end with the traditional naming ceremony. As explained earlier, the new outdoor ceremony is mainly the concern of the mother of the child. It is true that the father has the power to stop the outdoor of his child; but that would mean he has enough financial resources to meet the demands made by the woman. Not many men can meet the financial demands of their female partners beyond what is culturally prescribed. Therefore, they may or may not contribute at the outdoor of their children. It is purely a moral decision and there is no legal obligation to do it. However, most men may put in an appearance and may donate reasonably well for the sake of their reputation.

### **Men's perceptions and reactions**

Although it has been suggested that some men are aware of the manipulations of traditional rituals by women for economic gain, evidence has so far remained anecdotal. An attempt was therefore made, in a survey of 300 long-distance truck drivers, to analyse men's perceptions of such manipulations and how they would react if they were involved. The survey was part of a larger study on the sexual behaviour of truck drivers in relation to HIV infection. A majority (64%) of the men felt that it was possible for women to manipulate men for economic gain under various circumstances. Most of them felt that women can do so 'When they have sex with the man' (22%). Others felt that women can manipulate men by enticing them through conversation, cooking and washing for them, and having a child for them (19%). Still others felt that women can do that by pretending to be pregnant or sick (12%).

Underlying men's aggression in their sexual relationships with women is a certain amount of anxiety and fear of women which borders on fear of the supernatural. Men's fear of women emanates from two main sources which often appear in life stories. They are (1) the tendency of women to consult occultists for the spiritual solution of their marital problems; and (2) the belief that the woman's sexual organs and particularly her menstrual blood possess supernatural powers which an aggrieved woman can invoke against a male aggressor. A man is said to be more vulnerable to these powers if he has ever had sexual relations with the aggrieved woman. Our own friends and relatives told us anecdotes of wives who consulted occultists or who appeared to be attempting witchcraft practices.

The reactions of the interviewed men to the perceived manipulation of women for economic gain were interesting. Nearly half of them said they would stop seeing a woman if they realized that she wanted to have a baby for monetary gain. Others felt strongly about it and said they would feel cheated (20%). Traditionally, a man must dominate his wife and must not show any signs of weakness. A man who is dominated or openly manipulated by a woman is referred to as *obaa barima*, 'a woman man'. In the commercialization of childbearing described above men appear to be passive and feel trapped when they realize the mischief. As has been described for Ga men above, a majority of the men (56%) stated that they would accept and love the resultant child. Some of them said: 'The child is my own blood'.

However, the men's reactions about relationships with prostitutes were not very favourable. Nearly 56 per cent said they would not accept it if a prostitute they had ever slept with should implicate them in a pregnancy. Only 36 per cent said they would accept the resultant child. As elsewhere in the world, prostitution is strongly stigmatized in Ghana, so men who go to prostitutes keep it a secret. So strong is the stigma that in the survey for this paper a quarter of the respondents refused to answer the question on prostitutes. Nearly six

out of ten of the men said they would not care if the prostitute wanted to keep the resultant baby away from them. The main reason given was that the child belongs to the mother; others added that they could not take such a child home as it would be an embarrassment.

### **Discussion and recommendations**

Although there is evidence of fertility decline in Ghana (Ghana 1995), the level is still high and we cannot be fully certain whether the trend will continue and be irreversible. The high level of fertility in Ghana, as elsewhere in Africa, is said to reflect a high demand for children. There is also the view that men are domineering and are generally indifferent to fertility issues. As a result, not only are fertility studies disproportionately centred on women, policies are also predominantly female-specific. The solutions suggested to change the situation include policies that will empower women, such as improvement in girls' education, enhancement of women's legal rights and making family planning services available to more women.

Some Ghanaian women may have achieved a certain measure of autonomy. As part of their survival strategies, however, they are using pregnancies and births to extract economic benefits from men and from their own associates, a practice which may have a positive effect on fertility. The main force behind the women's action is poverty, which is exacerbated by harsh economic conditions and austere economic policies embodied in structural adjustment programs.

Poverty is compelling women to remain subservient to men or to indulge in rituals which directly affect their fertility. In the manipulation of the otherwise acceptable traditional rituals, men are completely left out. However, there is anecdotal evidence that they are aware of the manipulations by women. Given the much-discussed domineering attitude of African men, why are they not objecting to these activities of women? It appears that they are compelled to accept them because the issues involved accord with culturally accepted norms and mores. In spite of that, Ghanaian men do not appear to like the idea of being manipulated by women for financial gain, and will resist it if they become aware of it. But when a relationship results in pregnancy, the resultant child is still very welcome for cultural reasons.

We still need to empower women through improved education and enhancement of their legal rights. But these improvements will not have a meaningful effect if they are not linked with women's economic emancipation. In a situation where children have become the means for creating links to men's resource networks and those of other groups formed specifically for the purpose, the family planning message will continue to have little effect. Women's economic rights should be improved to give them several alternatives to children as sources of working capital and old age security.

To ensure that children are not seen merely as means to economic ends, there should be policies that raise the costs of children relative to their benefits. Men, for example, should be compelled by legislation to fully support their children whether or not they are born in wedlock.

### **References**

- Anarfi, J.K. 1990. International migration of Ghanaian women to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire: a demographic and socio-economic study. PhD dissertation, University of Ghana, Legon.
- Appadurai, A. (ed.). 1992. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Azu, O.G. 1974. *The Ga Family and Social Change*. Leiden/Cambridge: African Social Research

- Documents, Vol.5.
- Bledsoe, C. 1974. Introduction. Pp. 1-22 in *Nuptiality in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. C. Bledsoe and G. Pison. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bleek, W. and N.K. Asante-Darko. 1986. Illegal abortion in Southern Ghana: methods, motives and consequences. *Human Organization* 45,4:333-344.
- Caldwell, J.C. 1968. *Population Growth and Family Change in Africa: The New Urban Elite in Ghana*. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Fayorsey, C.K. 1994. Poverty and the commoditization of the life cycle. Paper presented at University of Ghana Research and Conference Committee Seminar on Poverty, 19 September.
- Field, M.J. 1940. *Social Organization of the Ga*. London: Crown Agents.
- Fortes, M. 1970. *Time and Social Structure and Other Essays*. London: Athlone Press.
- Fortes, M. 1978. Family, marriage and fertility in West Africa. Pp. 17-54 in *Marriage, Fertility and Parenthood in West Africa*, ed. C. Oppong, G. Adaba, M. Bekombo-Priso and J. Mogyey. Canberra: Australian National University Press.
- Ghana. 1989. *Ghana Living Standard Survey*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.
- Ghana. 1995. *Second Demographic and Health Survey 1993 Report*. Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.
- Hart, K. 1982. On commoditization. In *From Craft to Industry: The Ethnography of Proto-Industrial Cloth Production*, ed. E. Goody. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Killick, T. 1966. Labour, a general survey. In *A Survey of Contemporary Ghana*, Vol. 1, ed. W. Birmingham *et al.* London: Allen and Unwin.
- Kopytoff, I. 1992. The cultural biography of things: commoditization as a process. Pp. 64-93 in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. A. Appadurai. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kumekpor, T. K. 1974. Mothers and wage labour employment. *Ghana Journal of Sociology* 7,2:68-91.
- Lupri, E. 1969. Contemporary authority patterns in the West German family: a study in cross-national validation. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 31:134-144.
- Oppong, C. 1970. Conjugal power and resources: an urban African example. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 32,4:676-680.
- Oppong, C. 1977. A note from Ghana on chains of change in family systems and family size. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 39:615-621.
- Oppong, C. and W. Bleek. 1982. Economic models and having children: some evidence from Kwahu, Ghana. *Africa* 52,4:15-33.
- Peil, M. 1979. Urban women in the labour force. *Sociology of Work and Occupations* 6,4:482-501.