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Urban Experiences of Elite
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Bianca Murillo
University of California at Santa Barbara
History Honors Thesis Program
2000-2001

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Acknowledgements

This project developed from a personal interest in the history of the African continent and gender studies. It also grew from a unique curiosity about how European contact effected the most personal aspects of life among those within European colonies during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most specifically, I set out to discover how African ideas of gender identity, especially femininity, transformed in reaction to changes in this period. This project has been one of the most fulfilling experiences of my academic career. Not only was I able to explore developments of femaleness within an African culture, I was also able to witness, through studying several newspapers and personal memoirs, the emotions of women who were restructuring their feminine identities during a dramatic period of cultural change. I want to extend a special thank you to my mentor Dr. Stephan Miescher, who has not only inspired my fascination in African studies, but has been a constant supporter of my work. His continuous guidance has helped me to develop a better sense of historical perception and has improved my abilities to become closely engaged with historical materials. I would also like to thank Dr. Jonathon Glickstein who has been a constant motivator and has helped me to develop a higher quality writing style.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction **2**

Chapter 1

Historical Context **11**
Accra **11**
Literature Review **16**
Summary and Conclusions **20**

Sources **21**
Newspapers **21**
Auto/Biographical Text **24**

Chapter 2

The Silence and Marginalizaion of Women in the Early Press, 1880-1900 **26**

Rasing Consciousness and Moving Out of the Domestic Realm, 1901-1918 **31**
The Emergence of Women's Groups and Clubs **35**

A Female Voice is Heard: Mobilization, Unification, and Empowerment, 1919-1939 **38**
The Ladies Column **39**
The Women's Corner **41**
The Anxiety of Men **47**
Shortcomings **50**

Chapter 3

Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford 1868-1960 **51**
Adelaide as Wife and Mother **53**
Prejudice and Discrimination **58**
An African Identity **59**
A Female Idenity **61**
Summaries and Conclusions **64**

Conclusion **66**

Bibliography **69**

URBAN EXPERIENCES OF ELITE WOMEN IN COASTAL WEST AFRICA 1880-1939

This project explores how the colonial situation and British control altered such gendered institutions as marriage, social identity, and womanhood. It specifically focuses on the experiences of elite women in the coastal cities of West Africa from 1880 to 1939. Did changes during the colonial period provide Ghanaian women with opportunities to define their independence outside of marriage and lineage obligations? Or were their choices in fact becoming more limited? Through researching African newspapers from the period, I explore how these women were represented, what their position in society was, and what roles they played in a public sphere. Although past research has reviewed similar topics, few have touched on issues of female identity and presentation and evaluated whether these women were influential participants in the colonial experience. I have found that colonialism limited the opportunities for female social mobility outside of a domestic sphere. Because of the limits and gendered nature of female education offered to young girls, women were left in an unequal position for social advancement and economic independence. Although there was a period in the late nineteenth century where women were able to gain financial autonomy through trading, women's opportunities began to decline during the early twentieth century as a result of a stronger colonial presence. Notwithstanding the fact that they too functioned within certain boundaries, elite women owing to their social position and better educational opportunities, helped impede the space for women from closing completely.

INTRODUCTION

"It is rather depressing going over old ground again, but I cannot help but advocate that we need an education that develops character at the same time. To use a terse expression we need an education for the heart, hand, and brain.

There are many people who imagine that as long as a women is a good cook she is well equipped for life, I am glad to say that this attitude is passing away with the dead past and will soon be forgotten in the dim but brightening corridors of time.

What we need today in Africa is a form of education that compromises all the beauties and goodness of life, all that is useful and beneficial, all that elevates and expires to noble acts and deeds.

A cultured and intelligent gentlemen was saying the other day, that the girls who have had the greater opportunity to go abroad and imbibing some sort of culture do not keep it up. When once they return to Africa, they eventually sink into the dead pool of lethargy and indifference and after a year or two some can hardly keep up conversation in culture English. I am afraid my friend was rather hard, though there is an element of truth in what he said.

There is a very true saying that the world takes one at ones [sic] valuation. There is no doubt that many of our bright young things who have sunk into the depths lack character, the saving grace of life, or are unfortunate in their surroundings. Then too the African girl is too fond of gossip and talebearing and that is the reason why we are all as far as the poles from each other. The Gold Coast girl I am afraid has very little sentiment in her composition and as we are all trying to better our conditions at the expense of anything or anybody there is very little sympathy, affection or love in our midst.

This wonderful and beautiful earth of ours is or should be the place of divine harmony and sweet chords, not discords and affectations. There are so many lovely and intelligent girls in Accra, but most of them are born tired, they are always coming to visit but they never arrive, always going to a meeting but they never turn up, always being a foundation member for a new club but they are never seen...

Africa calls today for intelligent women, for good women, for useful women, for thinking women. Africa calls let us wake up!"

An African female writer named Mabel Dove Danquah wrote this commentary in the "Ladies Corner" of the *West African Times* on January 2, 1932. Although Mabel attested to the constrictions under which African women lived, her article also revealed an emerging consciousness among elite African women about their subordinate position within the colonial social order. As a result of women's lack of opportunity and equality within colonial society, the creation of a new African female identity began to appear in the coastal cities of West Africa. This identity would challenge features of both local traditions and European notions of gender that had attempted to limit female opportunity and autonomy for decades. This project explores changes experienced by women as a result of reactions to European exposure. It specifically focuses on the experiences of elite women in coastal West Africa from 1880 to 1939. It considers how European influence and British control altered such gendered institutions as marriage, femininity, and social identity during the colonial period. Did these changes provide West African elite women with opportunities to define their autonomy outside of marriage and lineage obligations? Or did their opportunities and choices become yet more limited?

Autonomy defines a woman not in relation to man, but rather as "control over her women person and activities and her meaningful contribution to society beyond breeding and feeding."[1] Focusing mainly on Gold Coast newspapers, but also using auto/biographical texts from this period, I argue that local African elite women went through three stages of development during the colonial period. At first elite women were passive participants within the emerging colonial society. They were not included

in local newspaper coverage and contributions by female writers were non existent. Beginning at the turn of the century, a female consciousness emerged. Newspapers began to include the activities of women and for the first time African females were shifting away from domestic constraints that had previously excluded them from social action. Lastly, the emergence of female writers and columns stimulated the growth of a more widespread female readership. This development led to the creation of a new female identity in coastal cities that focused on the mobilization, unification, and empowerment of West African women. Activist women, such as writer Mabel Dove Danquah, encouraged her readers to challenge the existing orders that subordinated female autonomy. In addition to the three stages of development revealed, I argue that newspapers not only reflected women's rising consciousness, but also became an important stimulus of that consciousness throughout colonial towns up and down the West African coast. Thus, elite women who were first to become socially active, identified this consciousness, challenged expected gender roles, and thereby helped impede the space for female opportunity from closing completely.

Even before the arrival of the first Europeans in the late fifteenth century, the coastal area in which Accra is situated was a center of trade and agriculture. The Portuguese were the first to arrive on the Ghanaian coast in 1471. They established one of the first European fortresses called Elmina Castle to protect the lucrative gold, ivory, and pepper trade discovered in the area from both their European competitors and what

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[1] Alice Schlegal. Male Dominance and Female Autonomy. New Haven: HRAF Press, 1972.

they believed to be "hostile Africans".[2] However, by the seventeenth and eighteenth century French, English, Dutch, Swedish, and Danish traders were also attracted to what the Portuguese named the "Golden Coast of Guinea." The initial centuries of contact between Europe and Africa were primarily ones of trade. Although early contact was very limited, it set into motion the future development of large metropolitan areas that would become centers of political and economic power along the Southern Coast of Ghana.

By the early nineteenth century, the British, through either conquest or purchase, had become masters of most of the European forts along the coast.[3] Two major factors formed the basis of British rule and the eventual establishment of a colony on the Gold Coast: first, British response to the Asante wars and the consequential instability and disruption of trade; and second Britain's increasing attentiveness to the suppression and elimination of the slave trade. During most of the nineteenth century, Asante, the most powerful interior state, attempted to expand its rule south into the coastal area of Ghana. From a coastal perspective, continuous invasions of the coastal regions disrupted trade, and threatened both the security of European forts and the safety of the coastal people. The coastal people, primarily some of the Fante and Ga, came to rely on British protection against these Asante invasions. Ongoing attempts by British merchant and trading companies to end the Asante threats were limited. As a result, the British Crown turned over their forts on the Gold Coast to Governor Charles MacCarthy of Sierra Leone

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[2] Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress. Ghana: a country study. Washington, D.C. 1994: 14.

in 1810s.[4] MacCarthy attempted to impose peace and closed the great roads to the coast as a bid to protect the people living there. These efforts failed. Although British and local forces, including the Fante and the Ga, defeated the Asante forces in 1826, MacCarthy was killed and the Asante attacks continued.

In 1830 a London committee of merchants chose Captain George Maclean to lead efforts in ending the Asante conflict. Maclean's attempts proved successful. In 1831 a peace treaty was arranged with the Asante. Those found guilty of disturbing this peace were punished in a British-style court created in the coastal city of Cape Coast. Because the Asante conflicts were successfully met under Maclean, and because attempts to exercise limited judicial power were in operation, Parliament recommended that the British government permanently control the affairs of its settlements and negotiate treaties with the coastal chiefs. Under Maclean's administration, ethnic groups had submitted voluntarily to British protection. The newly appointed governor of the area, H. Worsley Hill, therefore proceeded to define the conditions and responsibilities of his jurisdiction over the protected area. For example, in 1844 Hill negotiated a special treaty with a number of Fante, known as the Bond of 1844. This bond required local leaders to surrender serious crimes, such as murder and robbery to British jurisdiction.[5] Additional coastal and inland states eventually joined the Bond, and British influence was accepted, strengthened, and expanded throughout the area. Under the arrangement, the British

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[3] Ibid., 14.
[4] Roger Gocking, Facing Two Ways: Ghana's Coastal Communities Under Colonial Rule. Oxford: University Press of America, 1999: 37.
[5] Ibid., 18.

created the understanding that they would protect the coastal areas; thus an informal protectorate became established. In addition, the British created a Supreme Court in 1853 in which a Judicial Assessor, whose role was to advise the chiefs on the "just application" of indigenous law, simultaneously resided over the exercise of English law as Chief Justice.[6] Desires to impose a degree of law and order in the coastal towns and to regulate property relations, debt, and credit in West Africa's increasing cash economy led to the creation of British courts.

Acceptance of the advantages offered by the British presence continued to grow among coastal groups. Not only did the British put a permanent end to the Asante threat in 1874 by destroying the Asante capital of Kumasi capital, but they also officially declared the Gold Coast area a Crown Colony. Under British control the process of development and cultural interaction in coastal Ghana expanded. Roger Gocking found that coastal cities became crucial points of interaction between African and European culture. He added that these small communities grew into the dominant societies around which a colonial order emerged.[7] The new ideas and beliefs formed in these cities gradually established a firmer hold owing to many years of European contact. A different culture, reflecting the incorporation of both European influences and local traditions into urban life in Accra, was thereby established. One manifestation was the emergence of a new group of Africans, possessing a lifestyle and culture distinct from both traditional African and European ones. A Western-educated African elite emerged to

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[6] John Parker, Making the Town: Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000: 81.

dominate the political, economic, and social spheres of urban life in Accra. In addition, this new elite group developed a flourishing newspaper and literary culture through which to identify and interpret its experiences. Cities like Accra are outstanding examples of the consequences of decades-long European and African cultural interaction within coastal areas.

Helpful to this study has been Kristin Mann's work on nineteenth century Lagos. I have used Mann's formal definition of the "educated elite" to delineate the Gold Coast population in my own project. Mann defined the "educated elite" as men and women at the top of the growing population of educated Africans in early colonial cities. She argued that the group's elite status derived from its access to Western education and its knowledge of British institutions and culture, including Christianity. These attributes enabled the elite to perform vital roles in the new and rapidly changing colonial society. Education and occupation were the major determinants of elite status in colonial West Africa. Mann determined that the occupational elite consisted of all professionals (doctors, lawyers, ministers, and engineers), colonial servants of the First Class Clerk or above, Western-educated import-export merchants, newspaper publishers, and planters.

Mann also identified the characteristics of the female West African coastal elite. She argued that unlike elite men, whose status was set in the marketplace or the office, elite women were defined by the roles they played in the home, church, and community. She noted that these women were not only the wives and mothers of elite men, but that they also included educated sisters, wives, and daughters. Mann suggested that it was the

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[7]: Gocking, 3.

interaction between elite men and women amidst the changes occurring in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that created the foundation on which an elite African group was able to flourish. [8]

To best examine the colonial experiences of these women during this period, I have separated this project into four interrelated parts. Chapter one describes the historical context within which these women lived. How was an educated elite group formed, and what opportunities allowed this group to flourish in Accra? I also review here existing scholarly literature and introduce my primary sources, which are newspapers and an autobiographical text. Chapter one thus addresses such further questions as who provided these newspapers and the audience for which they were intended. Chapter one, finally, discusses my research methodology and describes why and how I selected these papers and how I use them as sources to explore the experiences of elite women.

Chapter two consists strictly of my interpretation and analysis of West African newspapers. It is sub-divided into three periods, each distinguished by a particular focus: 1) 1880-1900: the silence and marginalization of women; 2) 1900-1920: the raising of women's consciousness and their movement out of the domestic realm; 3) 1920-1940: the mobilization, unification, and empowerment of women. All three sections explore representations of African women within the chosen sources. In which social activities are these women included and in which are they not? Were women given an equal voice

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[8] Kristin Mann, Marrying Well: Marriage, Status and Social Change among the Educated Elite in Colonial Lagos. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985: 10.

in these newspapers, or was their participation limited? What does the portrayal of women tell us about their lives and their colonial experience?

Chapter three furthers this analysis by exploring the autobiographical writings and biography of one particular elite woman, Adelaide Casely Hayford (1868-1960). Originally from a Creole background in Freetown, Sierra Leone, she married Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford, a prominent Gold Coast politician in 1903, and established herself as an important voice for women's education among coastal elites. How do her letters and memoirs relate to the developments of women within local African newspapers? Does she encounter similar experiences? How is her life complimentary to my newspaper research?

Chapter four concludes my thesis by summarizing my findings and their importance. How accurately does the portrait painted by newspapers, as well as the example of and Adelaide's life, reflect the experiences of West Coast African elite women during the colonial period?

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Along the West African coast there are several urban trading centers which have been incorporated into the world economy for centuries, and as a result, have had much cultural contact with the Western world. The following cities, Freetown, Cape Coast, Accra, and Lagos were four of the most important centers and all experienced similar degrees of British colonization in the nineteenth century. The elites moved freely between these cities and participated in an socially extensive coastal network. To provide some historical background, the following section will briefly situate Accra.

Accra

The city of Accra is located on the southern coast of Ghana in West Africa. Starting in the fifteenth century, Accra was developed by different groups of peoples originating from a series of neighboring settlements in the area. The Ga were the original settlers in Accra. But because they lived in an area situated at the center of trade and agriculture dating back to the fifteenth century, the Ga had strong contacts with many other peoples. These contacts resulted in much intermixing and intermarriage over a long period of time. Some families of Brazilian, Sierra Lieonean, and Nigerian origins also settled in Accra and became Ga. In addition, beginning in the fifteenth century, Ga peoples had constant interaction with European traders and merchants who came to the area for trading purposes. Unions between European men and Ga women produced

offspring of mixed race in Accra.[9] For example, Carl Reindorf, a recognized nineteenth century historian of the Ga people, was the son of a mixed Danish father and a Ga mother. Those who were of mixed European and African ancestry identified themselves as members of the wider Ga community, but at the same time they also formed a distinct identity as so-called mulattos.[10] As a result, we find a people in Accra who were not only exposed to strong European influence over a long period of time, but who also intermarried for generations with other groups of people.

Starting even before the arrival of the first Europeans in the late fifteenth century, the coastal area of Accra was a center of trade and economic opportunity. The people of Accra were already participating in lateral coastal trade by exchanging products such as livestock, salt, fish, and millet. The coming of Europeans added more products to the selection of Ga people and more opportunities for trading. Not only did Accra become a center of gold trade on the African West Coast; the area also an entrepot for the slave trade. With the opening of European plantations in North America during the 1500s, the demand for slaves in the Americas dramatically increased. At one point slaves came to overshadow gold as the principle export in the area. The African West Coast became the principle source of slaves for the Americas. Ga chiefs acted as middlemen among the Europeans, the Ga people, and the peoples inland. Gold and slaves became the major commodities traded in exchange for European goods during this time. The importation of slaves into the United States was outlawed in 1807 and the increasingly strong presence

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[9] John Parker, Mankraloi, merchants, and mulattos-Carl Reindoff and the politics of race in early colonial Accra. ed. Paul Jenkins. Basel, Switzerland: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 1998: 32.

of the British in Ghana resulted in the use of British naval power to check both the slave trade by British citizens and the international trade in slaves worldwide.

In the second half of the nineteenth century economic activity expanded. Access to new opportunities began to create a differentiation among the Accra population. A number of wealthy Ga merchants and took advantage of the increasingly prosperous coffee and palm oil industry that flourished throughout the nineteenth century. In addition, female traders created a space to participate and achieve levels of economic independence. A shift in the occupations of many Ga men led to the formation of new social groups. Previously, most Ga men were farmers or fishermen. Traders and chiefs were the minority that formed the wealthy elite. These men often possessed high educational qualifications, which helped them in European trade. The intervention of the Basel Mission Society in 1857 changed this situation. The missionaries opened workshops near Accra to teach young men skills such as carpentry, masonry, coppering, and shoemaking to the population. Knowledge of these crafts resulted in the creation of a small group of European skilled workers. Ga men incorporated these new learned skills into their own apprenticeship system and Accra accordingly emerged as the primary source of skilled labor on the West African coast in the 1870s. In addition, the missionaries educated and converted many to Christianity which allowed Ga men to gain a familiarity of British institutions, traditions, and values.[11] Opportunities for social advancement within the colonial order were exclusive to males. While boys learned

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[10] Ibid.,35.
[11] Parker, 2000.

arithmetic and reading, girls were taught mothering and needlepoint. This nature of gendered education introduced by the Basel missionaries pushed women out of public sphere. Unfamiliarity with the colonial regime left them ignorant, lack of practical education limited success in trading, and domesticity became the central theme in female education. It is during the late nineteenth century that women started being left out, and unequal opportunities favoring men began to emerge.

In the twentieth century, Accra also began to play a crucial role in the development of the cocoa industry in Ghana. By 1910 cocoa had become the largest Gold Coast export. Some of the Ga created tenant-farming systems and others became buyers and small farmers. The wealth from cocoa flowed into Accra and became a major foundation for growth in the twentieth century. The expanding wealth attracted many migrants from inland and rural Akan, Ewe, and Hausa, who were in need of un-skilled labor jobs and who sought land through tenant farming.[12] The wealth within coastal Ghana created access to further economic, political, and social opportunities for Christian educated and skilled men in Accra.

In 1877 the British transferred the administrative headquarters of the Gold Coast from the city of Cape Coast to Accra. This transition furthered social differentiation among the Accra population. The increased educational opportunities given to the Ga men by the missionaries centered in Accra offered them great advantage in obtaining new civil service jobs with the British government. The Ga men held this advantage over such peoples as the Akan, Ewe, and Hausa who had arrived in Accra to fill unskilled

labor positions. As government servants, the Ga and few other members of the Western educated male African population were awarded material privileges and financial security. They now could afford the luxuries associated with a modern urban life. Stable salaries allowed many of these men and their immediate dependents to maintain a standard of living far above average.[13] Women were excluded from these positions because of the gendered educational system. The shift of the capital to Accra gave Ga men the best access to government jobs and social and material privileges after 1877. This access would allow an increase in the social status of these civil servants, and their accumulation of wealth also fostered their elite position within Accra population.

In addition to taking advantage of economic and educational opportunities, the new African elite group also adopted European cultural values and British laws. Many converted to Christianity and otherwise adopted the ideas and beliefs associated with European and Christian practices. For example, the elite adopted Ordinance marriage, which were Christian unions recognized under British statutory law.[14] Through the ideal practice of monogamy the nuclear family became more important than the extended. In addition, under British laws, wives could inherit property and control wealth in the family if their husband died.[15] Access to property ownership that had previously been denied to women was now opened up.

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[12] Gocking: 54-75.
[13] Christine Oppong, Marriage among a Matrilineal Elite: A Family Study of Ghanaian Senior Civil Servants. London: Cambridge University Press, 1974: 52.
[14] Ibid., 50.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To date, research studying the effects of change and transition on women in colonial Ghana is still quite limited and incomplete. John Parker argues that the process of urbanization and its associated social transformations have been portrayed as largely "male affairs".[16] As a result, very little research has specifically focused on the experiences of women within the urban elite communities in Africa. Past researchers have identified what changes did occur in their lives, but few have actually explored how women responded and engaged with the change brought by the colonial experience. Research on the attitudes and impressions of women during this period is important for several reasons. European influence and changes implemented by British control did not only affect men. Women, too, played a great role in the creation and maintenance of the new elite community within Ghana. Kristin Mann finds that "very few works present the African past as it really was: a world inhabited by men and women and shaped in fundamental ways by the interaction between them both."[17] By discovering ways in which women viewed themselves and their environment during this period, we can acquire a better understanding of how female members of the elite groups in colonial Ghana contributed to the development of modern West Africa.

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[15] Roger Gocking, "Competing Systems of Inheritance Before the British Courts of the Gold Coast Colony", The International Journal of African Historical Studies 23, 4 1990: 601-678.
[16] Parker, 2000: xxiii.
[17] Mann, 1985: 10.

In her book, Marrying Well, Kristin Mann studies marriage and social change among the educated elite in colonial Nigeria, focusing on the city of Lagos.[18] Lagos is similar to Accra in that it too was a coastal town that developed into one of West Africa's leading centers of international trade and colonial wealth in the nineteenth century. In addition, a small Christian educated elite also emerged there and became leaders of economic, political, and social changes under the control of the British crown. Similar to the elite in Accra, the Lagos elite created a distinctive style of life built around Christianity, Western education, and British manners and customs. Mann specifically studies the marital behavior of men and women to illustrate how European influence in nineteenth and twentieth-century Lagos dramatically changed the lives of Africans there. Mann finds that Christian marriage played a fundamental role in the consolidation of elite status, and that changes in the political economy of Lagos deeply affected marriage and the relationship between the sexes. Mann further suggests that marriage created a distinctive lifestyle that united the elite and set it off from the rest of the population. It also fostered the development of a hereditary elite that would transfer elite status from parent to children.

Mann throws much light on the origins of trends in domestic life that dominate contemporary Africa. She finds that women used domestic and sexual relationships as a means of obtaining resources and access to opportunities, and of furthering their social and economic ambitions. If a particular marriage relationship failed to fulfill a woman's goals of economic prosperity or status consolidation, she could choose to leave it and

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[18] Mann, 1985: 1.

seek another more rewarding union. Mann finds that in Africa marriage and sexual relationships remain an important mechanism for fulfilling resource and social needs. She also identifies ways in which the changing colonial order changed the positions of women within marriage.

However, because her research focuses on how marital changes affected women, Mann fails to address how women responded to other changes brought on during this period, such as changes in motherhood and increasing access to the opportunities that men enjoyed. Mann leaves such questions open for further research.

In her book, Sharing The Same Bowl, Claire Robertson studies the socioeconomic history of women and class in Accra. She explores the changes in Ga women's access to the means of production through an analysis of the shifting socioeconomic structure in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. In examining the organization of trade, residence, marriage, inheritance, fertility, education, and support of dependents, she finds that during early colonialism a pattern emerged of increased autonomy and rising status for women. Male elders within a kin group had traditionally controlled the lives of their women. Increasing economic activity and opportunities during this early period undermined their power. With new access to wealth women could possess separate property in marriage and could be otherwise economically independent.[19] During the early decades of colonialism females began to gain independence from male elders. This freedom continued to be encouraged by increased trading opportunities and by British suppression of lineage power and certain social institutions that had previously limited

female economic and social independence. As colonial influence became stronger in the early and mid twentieth century, Robertson argues that the space for female opportunity began to close. European schools and other institutions, began to favor male over female advancement in the public sphere.

Although Robertson identifies changes that enabled women to become independent, she focuses on non-elite women in Accra who were less affected by cultural changes of colonialism. While useful in many ways, her analysis does not address ideas of female self-presentation, identity, and roles within public participation in which I am particularly interested. Robertson focuses on economic issues and leaves social and gender identity questions untouched. For example, elite women had more access to wealth and status than market women and therefore had a different social experience.

In her study of Akan senior civil servants, Christine Oppong argues that changes within the lives of the elite are not simply the result of either "Christian influence," "culture contact," or the "copying of European models," as other previous commentators appear to have believed. Oppong believes these changes among the elite are best characterized as adaptations within the system of domestic relationships.[20] She maintains that the redistribution of domestic rights and duties between Akan Senior Civil Servants and their wives (i.e. elite men and women), with their attendant strains and tensions, have created and defined this elite group. But although her study illustrates some of the changes that caused tension in the elite male/ female relationship, she does not uncover

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[19] Robertson: 11.
[20] Oppong, 1974: 159.

how women responded to this pressure. In addition, her research and data are more conclusive with respect to the 1960s. She does not study in depth the earlier periods that are my focus.

Summary and Conclusions

In summary, the lives of women in Ghana have changed gradually as a result of the colonial situation and of British control in particular. Past research has explored a number of these changes, including those experienced by elite Ghanian women. Some of this research has also revealed how conflict and tension between elite men and women have helped shape the identity of this elite group. Based on this prior research, the present study will explore whether the elite women in Accra acquired opportunities to expand and define their autonomy and independence outside of male association and control, or whether their opportunities and choices continued to be limited. I will consider issues of female identity, roles within the social structure, and opportunities for public participation within the colonial order.

SOURCES

Newspapers

The West African press is over 190 years old.[21] Together with the growth of a new African elite group on the coast, literary culture flourished in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Unlike the case in other parts of Africa, the West African press has from the beginning been almost exclusively in "African hands."[22] The majority of newspapers in this period were controlled by male elites and intended for an elite African audience. In her book, The Press in Africa, Rosalynde Ainslie stated

> Catering as they did for a small European-educated minority, and each the enterprise of a single vocal individual, these papers were very different from the party broadsheets that form the base of the modern Press tradition in Africa. They were political, in that arose from the need felt by the elite for a voice in public affairs: but they also aimed to instruct and entertain.[23]

Newspapers shed much light on the values and beliefs of this elite group. I used them to study the lives of elite women in particular. How are women depicted in these papers? In which articles are they represented? In what ways are they able to express themselves within the papers? In what ways are they able to participate? In what ways are they excluded? Are forms of gender conflict that have been identified by prior research evident in these sources?

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[21] Rosalynde Ainslie, The Press in Africa: Communications Past and Present. NewYork: Walker and Company, 1966: 21.
[22] Ibid., 21.
[23] Ibid., 27.

I have divided my archival work into three major periods, not only to organize and maintain consistency in my newspaper research, but also to identify certain developments and changes with greater ease.

For the first period, 1880-1900s, I will mainly be using *The Gold Coast Chronicle*. *The Chronicle* was published weekly in Accra between June 1896 to (?) and 1901 to (?). Ownership and editorship were unclear, but it was probably a revival of the *West African Gazette* started by W.C. Niblett and possibly assisted by John Vanderpuije.[24]

For the second period, 1900-1920, I used The *Gold Coast Leader*. This paper was produced in Cape Coast and was circulated weekly from December 1902 to 1933/4 (with a light question-mark). Traditionally J.E. Casely Hayford, the husband of Adelaide Casely Hayford, who is my autobiographical source of research, was identified as a founder. But W.S. Kwesi Johnston, an "eye witness" just deceased, asserted that Casely Hayford was a later-comer and that *The Leader* was founded and owned by Herbert Brown, with a Nigerian, Dr. Savage, as first editor. Other personalities mentioned in the paper's history include Attoh Ahuma, John Buckman, and Gaddiel Acquaah, Kobina Sekyi, and K. Sekyi-Armah.[25]

For the third period, the interwar period 1920-1940, I looked to *The Gold Coast Independent* and *The Times of West Africa*. *The Independent*, a more conservative newspaper, was owned and run under the "auspices" of a Sierra Leonean group that

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[24] Quartey, 95.
[25] Quartey, 1975: 96.

included Dr. J.F. Easmon, A. Cole, and James Bright Davies from Sierra Leone.[26] It was published weekly in Accra from March 1895 to January 1898. *The Times of West Africa,* or *West African Times,* was started by Dr. J.B. Danquah in 1931 and was published daily from 1931-1937 (?). It was the first West African newspaper to be published daily and to provide a regular service of international news. It also included a "Ladies Corner" by Mabel Dove Danquah; this column was one of the first African ventures into women's journalism.[27]

Ainslie commented that the great achievement of the nineteenth century Press in West Africa was that it gave a "voice to a subject people."[28] Through these newspapers a tradition of political criticism and debate served to keep the colonial administration responsive to public opinion. Newspapers also encouraged a sense of identity among the African elite; they fostered a community with similar beliefs and values. These beliefs and values would one day serve as the foundation of independence for West Africa and its people.

This public voice captured within newspapers was the focus of my research. More specifically, the rich material within these sources illuminated the experiences of elite women: how they lived, felt, participated, and contributed to change during this period.

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[26] Quartey, 1975: 95.
[27] Ainslie, 1975: 32.

Auto/Biographical Text

So far as historians know, the only African woman from the nineteenth century who wrote of her experiences in elite society was Mrs. Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford.[29] Adelaide lived from 1868 to 1960 and was an excellent example of an elite woman living through the period of colonialism in West Africa. Adelaide traveled extensively from West Africa to London and even to the United States. Her experiences in different countries and among different cultures were common to many educated elites, who received educational training in Europe or the United States during this period. Adelaide's own autobiography, Mother and Daughter: Memoirs and Poems, edited by relative, Luclida Hunter was a published collection of her memoirs written throughout her entire life. Additionally used to compliment her written memoirs was the book, An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford 1860-1960. Though authored by Adelaide Cromwell, remains largely autobiographical. The story of her life is told through letters, memoirs, unpublished and published articles, and accounts by close friends and family members. Adelaide's words are used whenever possible and the organization of the book was based on her experiences and the sequence in which they occurred. Adelaide Cromwell also added further archival research and interviews with persons who knew her, and included her own interpretations to give the

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[28] Ainslie. 1975: 30.
[29] Adelaide M. Cromwell. An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Casely Hayford 1868-1960. London: Frank Cass, 1986: 6.

reader a greater appreciation of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford and the world in which she lived.[30]

[30] Cromwell, 1986: *xvi*.

CHAPTER 2

THE SILENCE AND MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN IN THE EARLY PRESS, 1880-1900

Representations of African women in the early press ranged from minimal to non-existent. K.A.B. Jones-Quartey noted that the history of Ghanaian newspapers has been inherently male dominated.[31] Starting in the early nineteenth century, the creation, production, and maintenance of early Ghanaian newspapers rested solely on male efforts, partly because they simply did not intend to have a large female readership. The introduction to *The Gold Coast People* read, "Our columns are open to all sorts of men for free discussion on all matters of interest to the Gold Coast news."[32]

Partially influenced by English ideals and examples, African men sought to keep their women ignorant of certain "public" affairs. Deborah Pellow noted that West African women suffered from "Victorian lady stereotypes" that had a tremendous impact in the formation of their "urban mores."[33] Furthermore, Robert Shoemaker commented that European thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was based on fixed concepts of masculinity and femininity. English society believed that women and men naturally possessed distinct and separate characteristics.[34] The separate sphere ideology was rooted in a public/ private dichotomy, positing that women were to remain in the home

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[31] K.A.B. Jones-Quartey. History, Politics, and Early Press in Ghana: The Fictions and the Facts,. Accra: Published by the author in association with the University of Ghana, 1975: 93-101.
[32] *The Gold Coast People*, 26 October 1891
[33] Deborah Pellow. Women in Accra: Options for Autonomy. Michigan: Reference Publications, 1977. Pg 11.

and tend to domestic responsibilities, such as housework, childcare, and the maintenance of religious morality. Men, on the other hand, were expected to dominate the public world, notably political and economic activity outside of the home.[35] The British carried with them to Africa a worldview that emphasized the public invisibility of women. This view was predominantly expressed in urban centers among elites where colonial administration offices and other European business enterprises resided. Thus, the patterns of behavior presented by European colonizers and West African males' interpretation and selective assimilation of these encouraged expectations of African women that incorporated European gender models.[36]

A technique used by African men to discredit female activity in other spheres was to report an occurrence happening in another country and then to compare it to the situation of women in their own society. The manner in which African men perceived foreign women illuminated their view on the position of local females within their own communities. For example, an article entitled "Why Lady Visitors Are Caged Off In the House of Commons" noted:

> Members of the House of Commons who, at various times, have complained of the indignity inflicted upon lady visitors, to the legislative assembly were in ignorance until lately as to why the fair ones are caged off. Up to 1778 they were granted access to the gallery below the bar, but upon their refusal to withdrawal upon a certain occasion at the request of the Serjeant-at-Arms [sic], it became necessary to eject them, and the business of the House was interrupted for a

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[34] Robert Shoemaker. Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?. New York: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1998. Pg. 15.
[35] Ibid.,, 209.
[36] Pellow, pg.64-80.

> couple of hours. And as a consequence the sins of these mothers have been visited upon the children of the third and fourth generations.[37]

This article reinforced the idea of separate spheres. Women should not expect to be informed of all public matters. "Lady Visitor's" insistence in hearing the business of the House of Commons was a "sin" in the view of the author. If we assume that the author of this article was an African man, then characterizations of European women in England as nuisances in government would seem to mirror African male attitudes towards the participation of African women in the public sphere.

Most early articles mentioning or pertaining to women carry an instructional tone. Some told women how to behave, others suggested that women were generally deemed incapable of controlling their own lives. One article called "Clever Mother's Children" stated:

> Mr. Fawcett recently took photographs of babies whose mothers had received a University education. His object was to prove, by the healthy appearance of the infants, that the higher education of women does not unfit them for the first duty they owe to their country. He has presented the collection to Newnhain.[38]

This article illustrated how educated women were commonly perceived as unfit mothers. Both men and women during this period actually believed that the higher education of women adversely affected the health of their children. Additionally, the article signified its agreement that motherhood is the "first duty they owe to their country." It insisted that women should first and foremost fulfill their duties to their country through motherhood,

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[37] *The Gold Coast Chronicle*, 26 September 1874.
[38] *The Gold Coast Chronicle*, 26 September 1874.

regardless of whether they received a higher education. Unlike the case with men, women did not and should not use education to find an occupation that would enhance their social opportunities. Their education was generally seen as secondary, as well as detrimental to their roles as wives and mothers.

These different social expectations are most prevalently seen in articles that described the nature of education offered to African girls and boys. One article that portrayed the gendered education at a Cape Coast Grammar school stated, "Boys are carefully prepared for the higher schools by being well grounded in sound foundation of reading, writing, and arithmetic."[39] This grammar school was identified as a co-educational institution run by Principal Rev. F. Egyir-Asaam, yet it prepared only boys with the skills needed to proceed to higher levels of education. This discrepancy suggested that it was not seen as crucial for females to excel academically, the more limited education that they received was considered to be all that they needed for their expected roles as wives and mothers.

Along the same lines, an article in *The Gold Coast Chronicle* entitled "Colwyn Bay College" described features of a Gold Coast College for men and women. It stated that male education there consisted of scholarly classes of gentlemen and was designed to elevate male students' social status. Conversely, female training at the college aimed to elevate "the moral tone of society in this country and in short prove the redemption of the Gold Coast."[40] While men were educated in ways that would allow them to rise to

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[39] *The Gold Coast Aborigines*, ? January 1898.
[40] *The Gold Coast Chronicle*, 31 October 1898.

respectable "social statuses," women were trained to preserve the moral character of the country. Morality was associated with the domestic realm, and women, this article suggests, are educated only to improve their expected domestic or maternal capabilities within the colonial order.

Towards the turn of the century, these early newspapers began to express an inchoate sense of female awareness. Advertisements for female magazines, such as *Women's World*, began to appear. An advertisement for *Women's World* announced the award of prizes to new subscribers:

> To a person of narrow ideas it seems impossible that we should be able to make such a gigantic offer, but we have the money, brains, and reputation, we know exactly what we are doing, and we can legitimately gain a million subscribers by this grand idea, we know that this million of well pleased subscribers can be induced to recommend The Women's World to all friends thereby building up our circulation still further.[41]

The *Women's World* was a London magazine published monthly, beginning sometime in the mid 1880s. It was owned and edited by Oscar Wilde and Mr. Cassels.[42] Advertisements for it in local African newspapers suggested that a female readership was becoming recognized, and African women, whom the editors of The *Woman's World* saw as potential subscribers, were participating in a new sense of female self-awareness. This idea persisted and became even more important in colonial newspapers as the twentieth century unfolded.

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[41] *The Gold Coast Chronicle*, 22 March 1900.

RAISING CONSCIOUSNESS AND MOVING OUT OF THE DOMESTIC REALM, 1901-1918

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, newspapers repeatedly reflected the development of an emerging female consciousness among African elite women on the Gold Coast. Stimulated in part by the accomplishments of women in other countries, elite African women began to work together for the greater good of their local communities and country. In this middle period, they created ladies groups and clubs and participated in public activities with men.

An article entitled "The Women's Emergency Corps," appeared in the London Gossip column of *The Gold Coast Leader*, and described a new organization gaining support in England called "The Women's Emergency Corps." The article stated that, "The Women's Emergency Corps is the biggest of all the enterprises yet undertaken by women to help women.... Women of all classes who have no special training are eager to render the most humble services."[43] Even though this article described female activity in England, it inspired many African women to believe that a common femaleness could be the basis of their own collaboration. Common female identity would encourage many elite women to over look social differences and extend assistance to poor and illiterate African females within their communities. An example of this tendency is provided in the following article.

> It is exceedingly gratifying to learn that Miss Wiba M. Sarbah is running on her own initiative, an afternoon class for such illiterate young women who desire to

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[42] Margaret Beetham. A Magazine of Her Own?: Domesticity and Desire in the Women's Magazine 1800-1914. New York: Routledge, 1996: 127.
[43] *Gold Coast Leader*, 3 October 1914.

> acquire a systematic knowledge of the Vernacular in Reading and Writing. We congratulate Miss Sarbah on her indomitable plunk, and trust our readers will bring this news home to the illiterate Sunday School girls of all denominations in town that they may avail themselves of such an unprecedented opportunity placed within their easy reach.[44]

Miss Weba M. Sarbah's attempts to teach illiterate young girls from all "denominations" suggested this realization of female identity that crossed class, religious, and educational lines. Sarbah's initiative also revealed the lack of educational opportunities for females and the failure of the existing institutional order to prioritize female education.

Newspaper articles in this second period indicated that African women were becoming more aware and critical of their unequal position within the educational institutions of their countries. Numerous articles expressed the need for improvements in female education, and also identified the lack of educational opportunities as a major reason why women could not equally engage in wage labor employment, politics, and public life. Gwendolyn Mikell referred to this connection and argued that modern gender inequality in Africa arose from the fact that African men were given increased recognition relative to women in education and income-producing activities during the process of European colonization.[45] Educational deficiencies among women were a handicap that forced them into socially inferior positions. In an article entitled "The New Woman," an anonymous female writer described the successful "advances" of European women in medicine, professional athletics, and politics. She then noted:

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[44] *The Gold Coast Leader*, 21 October 1916.
[45] Gwendolyn Mikell, "introduction", ed., African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997: 1-50.

Unfortunately, in this country the women are more backward than the men in matters of education, we wish for our part they were not because for one thing it would help our circulation very considerably, but this state of affairs will not for long remain as it is. Women in West Africa do not as yet, by a long way play the part they should--most of our men readers will say that they play quite a sufficiently important part--but we are quite sure that there is no getting away from the fact that quite a lot of us will live to see our women taking a far more active part in the affairs of the Gold Coast than they are doing today. The whole thing depends on the quality of the education taught in the girls schools, and perhaps what is most needed is something in the nature of a contact with the schools when the girls pass out in order to keep the school influence alive...In the meantime we can only join with the crowd in cheering the feats of other women and look on.[46]

This article, along with a number of scholarly studies, suggested that the defective and limited nature of female education in West Africa largely explained the lack of female participation in spheres other than the domestic.[47] Philip Foster revealed that the boarding schools established for girls strongly emphasized courses in domestic economy.[48] One advertisement in *The Gold Coast Leader* described the school subjects taught at a girl's high school and training home in Cape Coast. After learning general reading, writing, and history, girls learned

> Drill and Games, Kindergarten Occupations, Singing, Needlework, Cooking, Housework, and Laundry work. (Extra subjects include) Pianoforte Playing, Cooking, and Table laying.[49]

Boys, in contrast, were taught:

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[46] *The Gold Coast Independent*, 23 August 1930.
[47] Foster/Mikell.
[48]: Foster, 88.
[49] *The Gold Coast Leader*, 26 December 1914.

> Shorthand, book-keeping, hygiene, English-literature, and algebra and notes that boys can prepare for special examinations, such as the College of Preceptors and Oxford Locals.[50]

Foster also argued that in the early twentieth century African individuals' social status was increasingly based on their occupations and the degree to which they had adopted European patters of living. Since education provided the major means of entry to European-type occupations, it necessarily became a major criterion of status within the emergent social structure of the urban areas.[51] Because girls did not receive the same practical and academic training as men, their abilities to move within the colonial social structure were hindered. Instead, girls were introduced to new ideas about domesticity in Gold Coast schools, as well as across colonial Africa.[52]

The quality of girls' education accordingly became a critical issue addressed by men and women throughout West Africa. One author noted that The Wesleyan Girls High School in Cape Coast, Ghana which was one of the few secondary schools highly recognized on the Gold Coast, received continuous "irritating and offensive criticisms" in several local papers. The girls' school was attacked for low-test scores and students' inability to pass Standard VII Examinations. The Standard VII exam was needed to continue education to the secondary or high school level, which might then lead to enrollment in training colleges or universities.[53] Girls occasionally passed the Standard

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[50] *The Gold Coast Leader*, 14 February 1914.
[51] Foster, 98.
[52] See La Ray Denzer. "Domestic Science Training in Colonial Yorubaland, Nigeria" in African Encounters with Domesticity , ed. Karen T. Hansen: 116-139. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992, and other contributions in Hansen's collection.
[53] *The Gold Coast Independent*, 13 January 1934.

VII exam, but the majority who did not either applied for a Domestic Science certificate as a consolation or discontinued their education. One article, entitled "Two Thousand Boys and Girls," revealed that:

> Two thousand one hundred and twenty one boys and girls in the [Gold Coast] Colony under British mandate sat for the last standard seven examination of the Educational department, and 1,309 failed to obtain the full pass certificate. 806 out of 1,905 boys passed, while only 6 out of 216 girls passed.[54]

Not only did fewer than 3% of girls pass the exam. Very few girls had even gotten to the level (completion of middle school) at which they were eligible to take it. The primary goal of girls' education was to teach "good morals and modest behavior," not to offer training for "new jobs or in academic subjects."[55] Foster argued that African parents did not send their male children to school to meet the family's economic needs; they sent their boys to school to maximize their opportunities within the occupational and prestige structure created by colonial rule.[56] Parental expectations intersected with a gendered educational system to limit the social and economic opportunities of women within the colonial order.

Emergence of Women's Groups and Clubs

The early decades of the twentieth century also saw the emergence of female participation in literary and social clubs within urban communities. In addition, elite women were creating their own groups in order to address community concerns and

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[54] *The Times of West Africa*, 13 April 1934.
[55] Denzer, 116-139.

social issues. Through these exclusive and formal female groups, women were able to exert influence outside of their homes. The following are public notices of female group activity within local communities on the Gold Coast:

> A coterie of ladies gave a Grand Ball at the Town Hall on Saturday night which was a huge success. This is the first occasion, if we mistake not on which ladies of this town on their own initiative have launched out a ball and we trust that the idea would be improved upon in other directions.[57]

> The concert by the "Ladies Club" last week in aid of the Imperial War Fund was an epoch-making in its way, and it is a tolerably safe assertion that it was grand to the letter.[58]

> The President of the "Ladies Club" desires it to be notified that the amount realize in connection with their Fancy Dress Ball…This is very satisfactory indeed and some day the community will have to show in a tangible way its high appreciation of the great work which the "Ladies Club" is quietly but steadily doing for this ancient town.[59]

As illustrated by these notices, women's groups organized community activities and became involved in public works projects. In celebration of its twelfth anniversary in 1916, The "Ladies Club" on the Cape Coast sought to raise money to build a public hall, which was described as "one of the greatest needs in this historic town of Cape Coast."[60] The "Ladies Club" also mentioned its participation in the Gold Coast Volunteer Corps, which appeared to reflect reporting about "The Women's Emergence Corps" created by

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[56] Foster, 106.
[57] *The Gold Coast Leader*, 6 February 1915.
[58] *The Gold Coast Leader*, 14 November 1914.
[59] *The Gold Coast Leader*, 28 October n1916.
[60] *The Gold Coast Leader*, 23 September 1916.

Englishwomen during the same period.[61] In addition, the article noted that "there had been a great influx of new members during the year."[62] The club was successful in attracting new elite female members within the community. The women also commented that one of the Club's main focuses was to resolve the "social needs of the country." Like other female clubs, this one provided a framework for a large number of elite women to become active in social and public issues. For instance, in 1923 the Colonial Secretary Donald Cameron revealed that he received a petition from the Lagos Women's League, an elite women's organization in Nigeria similar to those on the Gold Coast, demanding that the government build more girls' schools that would integrate other forms of training in addition to domestic science.[63] The activities of female clubs suggested that elite women were beginning to create a common identity based not only on status, but on gender as well.

There was also evidence that women increasingly engaged alongside males in organizations open to both sexes. An article that described the activities of the Secondee Reading Club listed many of the members who attended monthly meetings. In addition to those of Mr. L.J. Muss, Mr. Casely Hayford, and Mr. Leung are the names of wives or daughters who accompanied them. But yet more revealing are the names of young unmarried women who participated independently: "Misses Anna Slaten, Sarah Krakus, Janet Conus, Mercy Blanstonn, Helena Idun, Kate Bissue, and Sekoom and Yacoba Krakue." Although they may not have been accepted into all social organizations, elite

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[61] *The Gold Coast Leader*, 3 October 1914.
[62] Ibid.

women did have the opportunity to participate in intellectual activities alongside men. It was unclear whether they were encouraged to do so, because my research failed to uncover articles or advertisements asking men and women to join clubs or participate in functions together, apart from community balls.[64] It seemed more likely that they had begun to take their own initiative.

A FEMALE VOICE IS HEARD: MOBILIZATION, UNIFICATION, AND EMPOWERMENT AMONG AFRICAN WOMEN, 1919-1939

During the interwar period women began to take an active role in the production of local newspapers. It was during this period that I saw the emergence of female columns and African women writers. These developments contributed to the inclusion of a more widespread female audience into the West African press.

Additionally, in the 1920s the formal mobilization of educational improvements for women came to the forefront. Created in the early 1920s, the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies and The Phelps Stokes Commission published general statements on British policies for colonial education. They sought to promote greater awareness of the need to expand educational facilities for women and girls. The 1920s brought the inequalities and inadequacies of female educational opportunities in the Gold

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[63] Denzer, 120.
[64] *The Gold Coast Leader*, 23 January 1916.

Coast, as well as across colonial Africa, to widespread public awareness. [65] The improvements in female education also contributed to a growing female audience.

The Ladies Column

The "Ladies Column" emerged in the 1930s as a feature of The *Gold Coast Independent*, which was one of the more conservative local newspapers of the period. The column was written by a woman living in London named Elena. It was unclear whether she was European or an African living abroad, but her experiences, her extensive knowledge of British culture, and her apparent wealth all suggest that Elena was European.[66] The main focuses of the "Ladies Column" were shopping, new consumer items, and British culture. Elena's articles extensively described everything from European hairstyles and fashion to cosmetics and recipes. She used her column to keep colonial women updated on the latest British fads. Some excerpts:

> I am giving you the names of a few new pretty things for your gramophone, "Whistling" is rather popular here just now and to be a good whistling expert seems to be the desire of a good few young ladies and a good record to buy and start practicing from is the new H.M.V. Record by Guidio Gialdini "Under the Bridges of Paris.[67]

> For evening wear long gloves are to be had in the most lovely and delicate shades. Pastel green and lemon also coffee color as well as cream and pure white. Also large straw hats are being worn with afternoon gowns, but some which I saw today in a Regent Street shop were too utterly ridiculous for words.[68]

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[65] Foster, 160.
[66] Correspondence with Audry Gazekpo, 28 February 2001, a scholar based in Accra who is working on a history of women in the Ghanaian press.
[67] *The Gold Coast Independent,* 5 July 1930.
[68] *The Gold Coast Independent,* 12 July 1930.

> It seems to me that you or at any rate most of you would like to be in London now as July sales are on. Coats and frocks are to be had at giving away prices, that is to say you can have a 25 guineas chiffon frock for seven and a half guineas, hats at prices you like, and cotton linen frocks at anything from 4/11d. Coloured Bed Linen has been fashionable now for quite a time and yellow sheets in fine linen with pillowcases to match are being sold at 42/ the set.[69]

Elena expressed European ideals and interests in *The Gold Coast Independent*, and although she used a somewhat patronizing tone, the apparent popularity of her column among elite colonial African women in Ghana suggested that they shared her interests. Elena thus wrote, "Thanks to the many readers for their nice letters and please write your name clearly. Sometimes the letters I write to you are returned through the post marked 'insufficient address'."[70] I found that some African female readers corresponded with Elena, but her instructional responses to them, such as "don't forget to print your names clearly," revealed that Elena did not consider African women to be as literate or intellectually capable as British women.

Elena's column and the newspapers of this period generally also suggested that African women played a greater role than previously within the economy.[71] Advertisements for products targeted female audiences, and women had the power of choosing their household goods. In his study of consumption in twentieth century Zimbabwe, Timothy Burke argued that women influenced African markets and the

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[69] *The Gold Coast Independent*, 30 August 1930.
[70] *The Gold Coast Independent*, 30 August 1930.
[71] Shoemaker, 118.

commodificaton of products.[72] Yet he also noted that one ironic consequence of this female influence was the reinforcement of the separate sphere ideology. Because shopping was perceived as a domestic activity, women's power in the market was power that remained within the domestic sphere.[73] In consequence, women's independence within public society still remained limited.

Elena's column illustrated both the increase in female readership of local newspapers and the fact that the influence of British culture in African society was still substantial. Elite African women reading the "Ladies Column" could learn about newly emerging consumer goods and modern products available in Europe. Even though their interest and awareness in commodities was confined to the domestic realm, the African women's role as an important consumer was being recognized. Furthermore, the emergence of the column revealed that for the first time, these African elite women were receiving attention internationally as an audience worth writing for. In earlier periods too, many elite women had been reading local newspapers, but the in inter-war period, for the first time, they now became a specialized group and targeted audience.

Women's Corner

The Women's Corner, published in *The Times of West Africa*, was a column generally written by Mabel Dove Danquah. Together with other male and female

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[72] Timothy Burke, Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and Cleanliness in Modern Zimbabwe. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1999: 56.
[73] Burke, 1999: 99.

contributors to the column, she wrote under the pen name "Majorie Mensah."[74] Mabel Dove Danquah was one of the very first African female journalists.[75] Because *The Times* was a less conservative newspaper than *The Independent*, Mabel's column illuminated both gendered debates and emerging ideas of femaleness. Additionally, because Mabel was also a black woman, the way in which she was able to communicate with her female readership revealed much about the changing attitudes and social expectations of African women during this last period of the colonial experience.

Mabel promoted a sense of female unity and encouraged women to look beyond social boundaries in order to achieve this goal. She stated, "The girl who has the privilege to go to school should not look down upon the illiterate women for that."[76] She commented that education should not cause separateness within a population and those with education should not be overtly critical of the uneducated or treat them with disrespect. She also stated:

> Co-operation is the word that seems to be the most extensively used at the present moment in all of the local journals…Some of them use it because it sounds fine and others use it because it may be large enough to contain an idea that may be as large though not as well formed. It is time that we started to import more seriousness and intelligence to our speech… Our basis is sincerity. [77]

It seemed as if efforts towards unification within African society were not being seriously made. Social divisions based on status within the colonial order and the degree to which

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[74] *The Times of West Africa*, 11 May 1934.
[75] Correspondence with Audry Gazekpo, 28 February 2001.
[76] *The Times of West Africa*, 12 Jan 1934.
[77] *The Times of West Africa*, 16 Sept. 1932.

individuals adopted European mores or maintained traditional African values differed.[78] Mabel addressed this problem and instructed women to take an active and "sincere" role in eliminating these divisions. This was the first time women were called upon to promote social change.

Mabel was also a strong supporter of modernity. "Modernity" in this context referred to the idea of the "New Women" portrayed in several British women's magazines and newspaper articles of the same period. The language and ideas employed by Mabel in her column suggested that images and descriptions of the "New Women" influenced her. In British society, the "New Women" image symbolized a crisis in gender identity. It challenged Victorian ideologies of gender and extended beyond discussions of 'true' masculinity and 'true' femininity to a more radical questioning of the relationship of gender and sexuality. The "New Women" exemplified the confusions about the changing socio-sexual roles of females.[79] Mabel commented, "Modernity adores the snappy and suggestive [female]. It does this because the world has experienced tremendous changes and tremendous evolutions."[80] Mabel expressed the need for changes and modernization within old colonial social ideas, especially regarding the expectations of women. She suggested that women's voices needed to be heard in order for them to have sound and respectable social relationships with men. She noted:

> The modern type of man needs a measure of force to get him to constantly remember his duty. Duty is a lovely word, I adore the darling Jade. It has a very reforming tendency on modern man; they do not like being led now-a-days; they

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[78] Gocking, 58; Parker, 161.
[79] Beetham, 1996, 116-117.
[80] *The Times of West Africa*, 11 January 1934.

> prefer to be divinely pushed. And what is more they are being pushed. I do not mean into the street. No far from it. They like being pushed into a position for compromise.[81]

By encouraging women to assert themselves in their relationships with men, Mabel was rejecting the idea of the dominant male patriarch promoted in articles from the earlier colonial period. She found repugnant both female passivity and female dependence, especially in marital relationships. Mabel fostered the idea that women should create an identity separate from that of males. For instance, she called on Accra women to take an interest in the independent financial possibilities of jam making. After receiving no responses, Mabel is disappointed. She stated:

> My standpoint is only one of getting our girls to be interested in something lucrative, something different from the beaten trail and at the same time something that will pay for the trouble and labour [sic]. And after all this is everything. I think it is just up to us to start doing something or other to balance the budget… [In England there are quite a few working women involved in their their own businesses] I am trying to cultivate similar tastes among our women out here. We must be more industrious. There is no getting away from this fact. There is [a] complaint that is becoming legion that every girl about town merely wants some gentlemen or other just to turn up and lead her off to the altar in marriage-and that is all…No one wants to marry a mere toy…. Every intelligent young man would very much delight in a girl that is of substance- apart from mere domestic duties, a girl that could suggest to the husband about setting up herself in a business and doing it with absolute self-confidence and efficiency is the girl worth any man marrying… let us turn our thoughts to business and see about doing something.[82]

Mabel promoted the idea of independent female activity for elite women outside of the domestic sphere. She rejected the values of leisure and domestic confinement extolled in many early articles, including some by Elena in her "Ladies Column." Mabel's ideas

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[81] *The Times of West Africa*, 11 January 1934.

seemed to be quite novel, since she commented in the beginning of the article that no one had responded to her ideas of women starting their own businesses. Still, her article illustrated the emergence of changing attitudes toward female roles in this period. Mabel never rejected the domestic role of the African women, but her articles did suggest that this should not be a female's only role.

In another article Mabel attempted to create an exclusive space for African women outside of European influence and expectations. Earlier newspaper reporting portrayed European and African women as sharing some of the same roles within society. African women were characterized as having the mimic-like qualities needed to follow the activities of "Westernized" women. In response to this characterization, Mabel stated, "English women are fascinating creatures; they are always such adorable critics."[83] Mabel established that European ways were not always the best. She noted that "scandals" are a part of European society. She added that the criticism of African ways by outsiders who do not fully understand African culture should not be taken so seriously.

Mabel supported the idea of modernity, a European derived notion of political, social, and economic advancement, but she transformed the idea to accord with African values and traditions. After introducing a discussion about British history and the origins of the British Empire, Mabel stated:

> When we read of the beginnings of the Gold Coast Nations: of the daring of the Ashantis; the founding of many ancient dynasties; the migration of the Gas from

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[82] *The Times of West Africa,* 8 Feb 1932.
[83] *The Times of West Africa,* 15 Jan 1934

> the Bight of Benin; the enstoolment of the first Ga Mantse...we feel a certain thrill.
> All of this means quite a lot to us. We must try to equal these people [Europeans], though in a different direction, in this age. We have the making of a fine people or race in us-- we have only to set ourselves seriously to the task. History has never been without its great women; we must repeat the past and make the present beautiful moments in our lives.[84]

This passage from the "Ladies Corner" revealed much about the changing nature of women and African society as a whole. First, Mabel displayed extensive knowledge about the history of her people along with a sense of pride and patriotism. Second, as suggested, Mabel embraced modernity, but not under Western standards. She argued that Africans must equal Europeans, but in a "different direction," thus creating a form of modernity that respected Africa's past and its traditions. Lastly, Mabel encouraged women to strive for greatness and recognize their importance in the creation of African history-"History has never been without its great women."[85] Mabel insisted that African women could adopt active roles in their communities and were capable of accomplishing anything they set their minds to.

Another tactic Mabel used to promote changing ideas of femininity was to write about issues that were also discussed in men's columns of local newspapers. She noted that men and women were capable of sharing similar interests: "Women should be interested in the same things as men. Life is not exclusive in that respect".[86] Mabel thus attempted to break down the wall created by colonialism that assumed gendered interests:

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[84] *The Times of West Africa*, 9 Feb. 1932.
[85] Ibid.
[86] *The Gold Coast Leader*. 18 January 1934.

"It is extremely fine to meet a modern African women who could discuss a car with the superior air of the accomplished motorist."[87] The focus on cars in her article suggested that Mabel was informing women about modern advances in the hopes that they would not, as they have in the past, be left behind as society evolved.

The Anxiety of Men

Despite the growth of female columns and the increasing contributions of women in newspapers during this period, there were still numerous articles by men reinforcing women's duties to be mothers and wives. Perhaps stimulated by new female columns, this reassertion of traditional gender roles suggested an anxiety among the male population that women were indeed diverging from their path of domestic responsibility.

One article entitled, "Employed Married Women," reported how the German government took drastic steps to control the conditions of female employment, because too many married women were at work instead of caring for their husbands at home.[88] The male African reporter then entered into a dialogue that compared the case to similar situations in the Gold Coast. He stated:

> I consider this [German restrictions against married women employees] reasonable and it seems to me to be practical politics and commonsense economics...As a matter of fact I am inclined to think it is not proper for a man to allow his wife to work and earn money for herself. I was persuaded to this by a friend of mine with whom I was discussing this matter and he told me that if the wife is working and earns money, she won't care a bit and will soon start to defy

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[87] Ibid.
[88] *The Gold Coast Independent*, 27 January 1934.

> the husband and to do what she likes and object to taking orders from the husband.[89]

The writer perceived working women as selfish and disobedient. That a married woman might do "what she likes" was almost unthinkable to him. A wife's position in society should instead be one of obedience to her husband. The writer ended the article by asking his audience: "But is it fair to keep the women down all the time?" With no answer to this question, this ending suggested that men during this period made intentional efforts to keep women economically dependent. It seemed as though elite men were aware that elite women's prescribed role in the domestic sphere had kept them in a subordinate or limited social position.

Claire Robertson suggested that female trading among non-elite women in colonial Accra contributed greatly to their autonomy, because non-elite women acted independently in economic transactions and were able to possess separate property in marriages.[90] Elite women did not have these options, as "Victorian ideas" of domesticity had particularly influenced gendered expectations among elites of both sexes. In effect, their lack of opportunity to participate in many economic and political activities was deliberately imposed; it was designed to maintain a male elite dominated society. Gwendolyn Mikell suggested that the colonial regime constituted a major assault on the dualistic nature of traditional African gender relationships by practicing a policy of

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[89] *The Gold Coast Independent*, 27 January 1934.
[90] Robertson, 16.

"benign female exclusion."[91] Elite African men in coastal West Africa, through examples of European culture and social structure, believed that the exclusion of females from the public sphere was acceptable and even natural.

> An editorial entitled "To the Girls of the Gold Coast" furthermore stated,
>
> Man is perhaps wholly dependent on you for the vivacity with which you will keep him supplied when he must play his material part. Your success is; however, contingent on the building up a happy home –there is no truer service you can render to your country.[92]

The article insisted that women had a duty to ensure their husband's happiness. The writer instructed the wife to "study his ways and moods and learn to respond to them."[93] This article beseeched women to stay on this "right path" of remaining loyal to their domestic responsibilities and none other.

Even though ideas that promoted the exclusion of women from the public sphere became less pervasive as female journalists were incorporated into local newspaper production, male writing reinforcing women's domestic roles did not disappear. Efforts by male writers to criticize female activity in spheres other than the domestic suggested increasing anxiety among males that females during the period were challenging traditional gender roles that had been more widely accepted in the earlier colonial period.

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[91] Mikell, 16.
[92] *The Gold Coast Independent*, 5 July 1930.
[93] *The Gold Coast Independent*, 5 July 1930.

Shortcomings

The 1919-1939 period of newspaper reporting was the most difficult to generalize about. There were many inconsistencies and contradictory notions within the female columns. These may have reflected a heterogeneity of writers. Also, both Marjorie and Elena, two of the most prominent examples, may have in fact been fictitious representations of female authors and not truly female. For instance, the May 1934 issues of *The Times of West Africa* disclosed a lawsuit filed by a former male editor, Mr. Stewart, against *The Times.* Stewart claimed that he wrote several articles under the pen name "Majorie Mensah," and that therefore the copyright of the name belonged to him and not *The Times* . The judge in the case held that because other people besides Stewart, including Mabel Dove Danquah who established herself in the trials as the most dominant columnist, also authored the column, he should not be awarded the copyright.[94] *Stewart v The Times of West Africa* revealed that both men and women wrote for female columns. The inconsistent views revealed within women's columns are reflections of this fact. Although I cannot be entirely sure because there is no written record, there was enough evidence to guide me in attempts to flesh out the contributions of women, especially Mabel Dove Danquah, in *The Times.* I found that female contributions seemed to be less conservative and playful and more serious and feminist in tone.

CHAPTER 3

ADELAIDE SMITH CASELY HAYFORD 1868-1960

Adelaide Cromwell's biography of Adelaide Casely Hayford, An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford 1868-1960, and Mrs. Casely Hayford's own autobiography, Mother and Daughter: Memoirs and Poems, shed much light on the experiences and attitudes of elite women in West African coastal cities between 1880-1939. Adelaide's memoirs, letters, and articles, both published and unpublished, revealed her to be an ambitious and intelligent African woman who devoted her life to raising the quality of education and the personhood of African girls.

Adelaide was an elite Creole women from Freetown, Sierra Leone, which became one of the first British crown colonies on the West African Coast in 1818. One needs to be careful about making too many generalizations regarding women's experiences based on information from different West African coastal areas. Still, Adelaide's life can illuminate the general environment that colonial elite women experienced in coastal cities during the late nineteenth century. Generalizations can also be made because elites up and down the West Coast sought and maintained contact with one another. Members from different coastal cities, including Adelaide and her husband, often intermarried and newspapers' continual updates on marriages, funerals, businesses, and travels within the elite community indicated the strong interest of the elite to maintain familiarity with one

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[94] *The Times of West Africa*, 11-15 May 1934.

another.[95] Newspapers, such as *The Gold Coast Chronicle*, which was published in Accra, had associates and offices in several other cities along the coast, such as in Sierra Leone and Elmina. Newspapers gave the elite an opportunity to maintain its group identity, exchange ideas, and consolidate its status throughout West African coastal communities. Newspaper research as well as Adelaide's life experiences can thus be used to reveal the general environment in which colonial elite women lived.

Adelaide, like many other elite individuals, was also part of the Creole community. Her mixed British and African identity played a large role in her life as well as in the lives of many other elite individuals. As was also characteristic of the African elite, Adelaide was comfortable with and knowledgeable of European culture. Although she was born in Freetown, Sierra Leone she was sent to London to receive an education and she spent most of her early years there. She also studied art in Germany and visited the United States on two occasions, seeking guidance and financial support for her schools. In her later years she devoted her life to African children, "especially girls," by establishing a girls' vocational school in Freetown, Sierra Leone.[96] Although she was considered an exceptional individual, many of Adelaide's experiences help us to understand the conditions of other elite women in West Africa. Adelaide possessed a strong-willed character; yet her elite status, education, Creole identity, and female gender created barriers for her within white and male dominated communities that continued to limit her options.

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[95] *Gold Coast Times*

Adelaide's Role as Wife and Mother

A large part of the sources collected in the autobiography consisted of letters between Mr. and Mrs. Casely Hayford, both of whom were members of the elite and Creole community in West Africa. Their interactions not only illuminated the conflict between African and European cultures, but also the struggles between African elite men and women. In 1903 Adelaide married Mr. Joseph Ephraim Casely Hayford (1866-1930), who is today remembered in Ghana as a legendary Gold Coast lawyer, editor, activist, author, and public servant. The two were married by Ordinance marriage in an Anglican Church in England. Mr. Casely Hayford had one child, Archie, from a previous marriage and he and Adelaide had one daughter, Gladys. Their marriage began as an intense loving relationship but, developed into a cooler, less intimate partnership in later years. The correspondence between Adelaide and her husband revealed much about both her expected position as a wife and her attitudes towards those expectations. That is to say, the correspondence revealed much about the attitudes of men and women concerning expected marriage and gender roles. This conflict, also revealed within previous newspaper archival research, proved to be a characteristic pattern among elite men and women during this period.

Many of Adelaide's memoirs addressed the double identity of Creoles and the mixture of African and European culture among elite men and women. For instance, although Adelaide had married Joseph in a Christian ceremony, her memoirs indicated

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[96] Adelaide M. Cromwell. An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford 1868-1960. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1986: 157.

that he had entered customary Fante marriages as well. Adelaide's memoirs showed that Joseph had other "domestics" or non-Christian married wives.[97] Her close friend, Miss Graves, also indicated that there were "always other women". Adelaide suggested that she was at times unhappy with the situation. The intermixing of Ordinance and customary marriages within elite nuptial unions was a common practice.[98] Many male members of the elite still had numerous customary wives and concubines in addition to the one wife who was the true "Mrs." by Christian tradition.[99] This hybrid practice created much tension and confusion within the lives of elite African women and made it difficult for them to identify with a sure form of African womanhood.

In letters to her husband Adelaide also expressed opinions about political and public issues, including Joseph's business affairs. Whether he approved or not, Adelaide kept close tabs on Joseph's business relations and felt free to advise him where she felt necessary. In a July 1906 letter, she stated, "Have you settled up the Jersey bootmaker's account? You promised to do so, but if you like I will send them a cheque."[100] In addition, some letters revealed Joseph efforts to sway his wife's opinions to coincide with his. For example in a letter of July 1906 from Cape Coast he stated, "I want you darling to think matters over. Hadn't we better keep out of the Council for the present? Events must shape themselves out in that direction sooner or later but the present political

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[97] Ibid, 77.
[98] Mann, 54.
[99] Ibid, 70.
[100] Ibid, 79.

situation between the pros and cons."[101] He goes on to seek her reactions. This suggested that Joseph did not entirely dismiss his wife's opinion. However, it appeared that he attached only limited importance to it. It seemed as if he felt free to discuss with her general social and political issues, but was quite hesitant in applying her opinion to his own public activities. Biographer Adelaide Cromwell showed that Joseph wrote very little of his public activities to his wife. As revealed in newspaper articles throughout the period, Europeans and educated Africans who returned to Africa after living in Europe brought with them ideas about the separate spheres of men and women. Joseph's efforts to keep his own personal public activities from his wife suggested that he embraced this idea of keeping women confined to the domestic sphere by limiting their knowledge of the public.

Adelaide inquired of her husband's business and other public issues anyhow. On many occasions she spoke to his friends to find out what was happening. For example, in an August 1904 letter to Joseph she wrote, "Tom told me that you had a case on the 24th which he was quite sure the judge would not adjourn as in such a tremendous hurry to get to the other side and he was afraid you would have to pay the costs if you didn't turn up in time."[102] Adelaide's interest in her husband's public life and his reluctance to keep her uninformed on some issues created conflict between them. Similar to Mabel Dove Danquah's efforts in the "Ladies Column," Adelaide challenged her expected gender role, which contributed to future problems within her marriage. Kristin Mann argued that

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[101] Cromwell, 77.
[102] Ibid, 71.

elite couples during the colonial period continuously conflicted over domestic roles and changing martial norms. [103]

Although they were never officially divorced, Adelaide and Joseph separated in 1915. Long time friend Miss Graves commented about the couple's relationship: "The truth is that both were dominating characters and neither could bear the other's domination."[104] In addition to the clashing of their strong personalities, the levels at which the two identified with either their European or their African cultural identities caused conflict. During their marriage Adelaide did not have a strong connection with her African- Sierra Leaonean origins and identified more with her European identity. Even though he had "white blood," Joseph, on the other hand, identified more with Fante customs. Miss Graves also noted that "He wished to spend all or almost all on Archie and on defending his people in their system of land tenure. Adelaide felt that she and her daughter were not getting their share."[105] Adelaide believed that she and her daughter deserved equal encouragement, both financial and emotional, from Joseph. She believed more generally that African girls deserved equal educational opportunities to those of men ones that would allow them fully participate within the colonial social structure. Adelaide's strong ideals, which challenged both Joseph's beliefs and the existing social order, combined with her dominating character to cause much conflict in her marital relationship.

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[103] Mann, 1.
[104] Ibid, 89.
[105] Ibid, 88.

Adelaide never officially divorced Joseph because of the consolidation of her status that she derived from the relationship. Kristin Mann argued that educated women found divorce an unattractive option because it was in the marital relationship that their status as ordinance wives was protected.[106] By remaining married to Joseph, Adelaide could enjoy recognition and acceptance in the elite community, which she would never have enjoyed were she an elite single woman. In addition, she was somewhat economically dependent on her husband. She wrote numerous letters asking for financial assistance, "Dear Casely, would you kindly in your reply state clearly what your money situations are so that I may know how I stand."[107] Mabel Dove Danquah, who called on elite women to take initiative to achieve economic independence, critiqued this dependence. Mann similarly noted that elite women were economically vulnerable owing to their dependence on males for income. Yet elite society fostered such vulnerability and dependence; it looked down on those women who worked outside the home. The Victorian norm that most elite men and women alike shared was that of females' devotion to running the home and not pursuing independent economic activities.[108] These women were never taught to be economically independent, and this circumstance caused many to stay in relationships with men for whom they did not care for. This limit on Adelaide's autonomy would encourage her to create the first girls' vocational school in Sierra Leone, the purpose of which was to promote economic and social independence among Gold Coast girls.

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[106] Mann, 87.
[107] Cromwell, 94.

Prejudice and Discrimination

Another important component of Adelaide's memoirs was her experience with and attitudes towards discrimination, these were reflective of her race and elite status as well as her gender. Her experiences on a passenger boat back to England illuminated an important element of her life as a member of the female African elite. Adelaide was not completely comfortable in West Africa and could not identify with many of the surroundings or the inhabitants of non-coastal urban areas. On the other hand, Europeans did not identify with her either. She experienced discrimination both because of her dark skin and her gender. She described:

> We boarded the *Eleanorie Woermann* – a German passenger boat- and my husband was so anxious that I should get good accommodations that he booked a first class cabin the steamer's outward trip. She [the boat] remained a very short time in the port, but when I caught the chief steward's Neopoleonic eye, I knew I was doomed . He took me to the worst second-class cabin on the boat. There was no stewardess, no bell, and no sofa for Gladys…The adjoining cabin was a bit better, because there was a sofa which would have accommodated Gladys. But the Chief Steward told me it was booked. So I marched right up to the Captain's private deck, and had it out with him. He was flabbergasted when I spoke to him in German, but condescended to let me use the larger cabin, although if the ship became full I might be turned out again. My baby came in the afternoon…my baby arrived stillborn.
>
> A lady doctor visited me as I lay there and she said, 'I can't understand why you are here at all, because when I boarded the ship at Calabar, I was told that at Sekondi I would share my cabin with a Mrs. Hayford and child'. So the combination of a black skin and an English name can provide a terrible handicap.[109]

Adelaide further indicated that it was also because she was a woman that she was treated in this manner. She implied that had her husband been along the cabin change

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[108] Mann, 79.

would not have been made.[110] Her position and education gave her a sense of courage, self-assurance, and pride, but it also gave her an understanding of how others viewed her. It was experiences with discrimination at home and abroad that led Adelaide to reconnect with and reconstruct her African and female identities.

An African Identity

Adelaide was very "Victorian" in nature. Her father was British, she had spent many of her early years in Europe, and she was both quite familiar and comfortable with European traditions. After her marriage to Joseph, Adelaide spent about three or four years in London seeking medical attention for her daughter Gladys' hip malformation. When she returned to Ghana around 1910-1914 to be reunited with her husband, she expressed an acute feeling of disconnection. Her husband's new home was located in the mining town of Twarka, about fifty miles north of the coast. Adelaide felt extremely uncomfortable in this area, first because it was not like the coastal cities she was used to, and second because she had no contact with other elite families. Adelaide complained, "The house itself was a wretched affair. But most of all there was no companionship whatsoever...I was entirely surrounded by illiterate peasants who spoke a different language all together."[111] In her memoirs she further expressed her distaste for rats, barbed wires, and the fear of thieves in her home. She was unhappy in these unfamiliar surroundings and returned to England months later.

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[109] Cromwell,87.
[110] Ibid, 87.

Adelaide's unhappiness reflected the earlier noted tendency of some elite individuals to identify more with European than with African culture. Her husband, Adelaide contended, felt at home in these local surroundings, while she, although also of mixed race, felt like a stranger. Although Adelaide's European education was formative in her upbringing, her early feelings of alienation from African culture caused her to later criticize excessive European education and influence. She stated,

> I am sure that it is a drastic mistake to bring black children up entirely in Europe or America. They lose touch with their home environment, they find that they don't fit in and are therefore unhappy. England, too, is not their home so they become more or less rootless.[112]

Adelaide's remarks suggested the hardships and confusion experienced by many Creole and elite individuals, including herself. They to some effect are a reaction to the substantial racism that she experienced in Europe and the United States because of her dark skin color. Adelaide's changing attitudes towards European influence mirrored those found in African newspapers from the inter-war period. Pre-twentieth century articles praised the European ways as something which an elite African culture would do well to emulate if it hoped to flourish. In contrast, articles from the inter-war period called for unification among all African men and women that stressed the importance of forming a culture separate from European mores and focused on reintegrating "traditional" African culture.

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[111] Ibid, 85.
[112] Adelaide Casely Hayford and Gladys Casely Hayford, Mother and Daughter: Memoirs and Poems, ed. Lucilda Hunter. [Freetown ?]: Sierra Leone University Press, 1983, 21.

A Female Identity

Aside from her changing attitudes about the importance of her African heritage, Adelaide also began developing a sense of her femaleness. Just as a rising female consciousness was indicated in newspaper articles and notices promoting female social groups from the early twentieth century, so Adelaide also became an active participant in female social clubs and in efforts to provide more opportunities for Gold Coast girls through educational endeavors. Her later involvement in female groups, her visits to the United States, and her increased awareness of the female position in other parts of the world motivated her to seriously implement in Freetown her ideas for the education of young women.[113]

In her memoirs Adelaide spoke about one of the first meetings of educated women on the Gold Coast, "There were about a dozen of us, and we formed a social club, which met once a week for music and games."[114] Through these groups elite women were developing not only an elite consciousness, but a distinctly female one as well. They began participating in activities outside of male and domestic constraints and could begin deliberating and exchanging ideas with one another.

After she separated from her husband and returned to Freetown, Adelaide's charismatic and dominant character enabled her to become president of one of the largest women's organizations in Sierra Leone, the Young Women's Christian Association, in 1919. Cromwell noted that Adelaide often used the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* (SLWN),

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[113] Cromwell, 96.
[114] Casely Hayford, 31.

a fairly liberal newspaper, to invite young women from ages sixteen upwards to join and take classes in the Bible and in Domestic Services.[115] Adelaide relied on the *News* to increase female membership and provide guidance to girls from all social backgrounds. Adelaide became more activist in support of African nationalism and female independence when she later became president of the Women's Branch of The Universal Negro Improvement Association. This organization, led by Marcus Garvey, started in 1914 in Jamaica. Its basic creed was that racial identity was the most important value for Negros, that Africa was for Africans, and that the solution to the continuing subordination of blacks in the United States was their migration back to Africa.[116]

Adelaide's position within the Young Women's Christian Association allowed her to do two things: first, to become highly active in community affairs, and second, to establish a Technical Training School for Girls. Adelaide made frequent public addresses to the Freetown Community. The *SLWN*, for example, announced: "A Popular Address by Mrs. Casely Hayford to be delivered at the Wesley Church."[117] Her topic was "The Rights of Women and Christian Marriage." Cromwell stated, "this was undoubtedly going to be the launching of a new career, a new image for her in Freetown, not as a daughter or a wife, but as a women in her own right."[118] In early April of 1920, Adelaide announced the plans of her Technical Training School for Girls. The press reported :

> Mrs. Casely Hayford, the highly gifted Sierra Leone woman who is clearly under divine impulse and inspiration respecting her country and her people but whose

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[115] Ibid., 96.
[116] Ibid., 212.
[117] Ibid., 91.
[118] Ibid.

> gifts for service are being criminally neglected by a people who are only half awake to their own best interests, declared at the meeting on Tuesday last that the purpose underlying the idea of the Technical training School for girls was to enable the female section of our country to get their livelihood by honorable means and independently.[119]

Adelaide expected that the elite component of the African population would fund and support her ventures to help the community at large. She was mistaken. Cromwell noted that a tug of war arose in the community over the girls' school. Adelaide's ideas may have been too progressive, and she and her school endured constant criticism.[120] Regardless, Adelaide struggled for years with the British colonial government of Sierra Leone, particularly the Education Department, and with many men and women in her community to gain support and funding for her project. Adelaide never abandoned her efforts to advance the rights and independence of women in African society.

Other scholars have highlighted women's lack of opportunities to earn a decent livelihood as a major cause of their subordination in colonial West African societies.[121] Adelaide herself saw her school as a way to alleviate these handicaps and barriers by teaching girls how to survive on their own. She noted,

> I was concerned about the girlhood of Freetown. For beyond their rather spars book knowledge there was nothing to occupy their time or to fit them for the battles of life- absolutely no practical training whatsoever. We felt we must do something to better conditions.[122]

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[119] Cromwell, 96.
[120] Ibid., 97.
[121] Mann, 89.
[122] Cromwell, 101.

Adelaide believed very strongly in the practical teaching of girls beyond the formal book knowledge taught to both boys and girls in early childhood. She advocated that girls like boys deserved secondary training that would qualify them to enter jobs other than domestic work. Her ideas promoted the autonomy of all women and challenged practices that excluded women from the public life of the community. She wrote in her memoirs, "The Government would not sponsor my leadership of the school, but I kept hammering the Educational Department till they offered me a yearly grant of forty pounds."[123] Adelaide's determination was driven by her knowledge that the government neither approved of such training for girls nor approved of a female head of the school.

Summaries and Conclusions

Adelaide was forced to close her school in1940 because of constant "financial struggle" and old age.[124] Adelaide was an exceptional woman, but she could not avoid many of the personal and social barriers imposed by traditional roles that faced elite women who sought independence or autonomy. In one of her last memoirs she noted,

> As I look back on my long life.... Infinitely worse has been the hard-baked criticism, the cold-blooded indifference, the deliberate schemes to put spokes in the wheels of my progress, the abnormal jealousy, the deep animosity, and the utter lack of appreciation on the part of my own people.[125]

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[123] Casely Hayford, 50.
[124] Ibid., 141.
[125] Ibid., 29.

Adelaide was an educated elite woman, determined and independent, but many in her community could not support her goals. She had the leadership ability to pursue brilliant ideas and dedicated her life to the progress of women's education. Yet her attempts to fulfill these dreams were undermined by prevailing norms and prejudices, specifically among men in the elite community of Freetown. Following the separation from her husband, she was vulnerable to the attacks of what Cromwell calls "community jealousy".[126] Separated from her husband, an elite woman like her faced the greatest suspicion and hostility. For example, C.D. Hotobah-During an African male lawyer, frequently criticized Adelaide and her work in local newspapers.[127] Adelaide was in many ways ahead of her time, but she was also a product of her Victorian upbringing and the colonial situation. Although elite women during this period had some opportunity, their choices were still limited, owing to the nature of colonial education and their exclusion from the influential social roles monopolized by males.

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[126] Cromwell, 204.
[127] Ibid., 204.

CONCLUSION

The historical study of African women has been extremely limited. Because there is a lack of recorded material, academic research in this field has been minimal. In this thesis I have attempted to paint a portrait of the experiences of African elite women in coastal West Africa during the colonial period (1880-1939). At times I have found this effort extremely challenging not only because my resources were limited, but because my Western background made it frequently difficult for me to evaluate all the subtle actions and attitudes of women from different cultures.

Throughout this thesis I have been cautious about making too many generalizations based on Western ideals. I realized that these African elite women negotiated and manipulated gender relationships in different ways from those prevailing in Western culture. Women in the coastal settings had deep connections with older, locally rooted concepts and ideals of femininity. For example, Gwendolyn Mikell argued that "Africans tend to fuse nature and culture in their traditional perception of women's roles." [128] Such tendencies led many African women to privilege their reproductive tasks, to celebrate their ability to give birth, and to refuse to subordinate biological roles t to other roles within their societies.[129] What it meant to be an African woman must have been extremely different from the conceptions of femaleness within Westernized societies.

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[128] Mikell, 8.
[129] Ibid.

The colonial period was an extremely turbulent time for elite women in coastal West Africa, as well as across the African continent. European influences and the sacredness of local traditions caused these women to renegotiate gendered ideals and develop new images of female identity. The varying degrees to which elite women adopted European mores or maintained older local values caused major conflict among both men and women in these elite communities. By researching newspapers from the period, especially women's columns, and by exploring the memoirs of Adelaide Casely Hayford, I uncovered many of the attitudes and challenges that these women were faced with. Elite women were effected by major economic and political changes. Their education and experiences abroad enabled them to develop voices within local newspapers and their communities. Their writings would for the first time promote a sense of female consciousness and make visible the lack of opportunities available to their sex within the colonial order. Newspapers during the period not only reflected this emerging consciousness, but also became an important stimulus of that consciousness. Although never rejecting the importance of domestic responsibly, Mabel and Adelaide supported the idea that women should strive for autonomy through both expanded female education and economic activity.

In coastal West Africa the colonial experience inspired elite women to recognize the importance of a common female identity and to establish an activist voice that would prevent them from being excluded within the colonial social structure. At the same time, experiences with gender subordination and race discrimination caused many of these elite women to resist European influence on their identity, while also respecting their "new"

found sense of femaleness different from local traditions. The colonial situation aroused women like Adelaide and Mabel to create new ideas on African womanhood that would be foundational in the development of modern African feminism years after they had pasted.

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Disscussions

Correspondence with Audry Gazekpo, 28 February 2001, a scholar based in Accra who is working on a history of women in the Ghanaian press.