UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN IN CAPE COAST (1877-1957)

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Christabel Agyeiwaa do hereby declare that except for reference to other people’s work which have been duly acknowledged, this work is the result of my own original research, done under supervision and has neither in whole nor partly been presented for another degree elsewhere.

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DEDICATION

To parents - Prince Badu & Joyce Yeboah Badu and The Budding Historian, Priscilla Owusu Amoako.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am very thankful to the Lord Almighty for his grace through another level in my academic pursuit. May His name be praised forever, Amen! I appreciate my parents, Mr. Prince Badu and Mrs. Joyce Yeboah Badu who have supported my academic pursuit my entire life.

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ABSTRACT

Whilst the dominant narratives in historiography consider markets to be male dominated spaces in pre-colonial Cape Coast, this study contends that women became the principal agents of trading activities during the colonial period. With the increasing visibility of women in market spaces during the colonial period, women, both elite and ordinary, played an active role in the shaping of the colonial urban town of Cape Coast whilst conducting their trading activities. Through the analysis of women’s activities in the markets in Cape Coast, it is evident that women became instrumental in the conceptualization of a market space. This study also contends that market women became key agents in promoting developmental projects in the community.

Before European contact with the people of the Gold Coast in 1471, African women were prominent in economic activities such as agriculture and trade. European presence enhanced trading activities in the Gold Coast especially along the coastal areas. Cape Coast, one of the coastal towns, later emerged as a prominent centre of trade and headquarters of trade for the British residents. Prior to the British abolition of slave trade, slaves were the major commodity of trade in the coastal markets and this trade was mainly controlled by men. Women only gained access through their relationships with European merchants. The abolition of the Atlantic slave trade resulted in an increase in legitimate trade in the Gold Coast, especially along the coastal areas.

By the colonial period however, women had become active in the changing economy. They were vibrant in the spatial markets along the coast, specifically in Cape Coast. Though the transfer of the colonial capital from Cape Coast to Accra in 1877 resulted in economic decline of the town, trading activities within the spatial markets in Cape Coast did not come to a halt. Women continued to be active participants in trade in the Gold Coast. It is within this context that this study examines
how market women contributed towards the development of Cape Coast during the colonial period through their trading activities.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NLCC- Native Ladies of Cape Coast

CCTC- Cape Coast Town Council

PRAAD- Public Records and Archives Administration Department

UAC- United African Company

CPP-Convention People’s Party
GLOSSARY

Amantem nsa- latecomer’s wine

Bayerehema- queen mother or Commodity leader of Yams Sellers Association

Gua- Fante word for “market”

Koto-wuraba- “crab rivulets”; corrupted into Koto-wuraba- “crab hamlets”- name of the principal market in Cape Coast

Magajia- generically a Hausa word; which also refers to “market queen” by the Dagomba of Northern Ghana

Ntos-hemaa- queen mother or Commodity leader Tomatoes Sellers Association

Oguaa- Fante word; Traditional name of Cape Coast

Ohemaa- queen

Opanyin- Elder

Susu- a revolving loan scheme where members of a group make a daily contribution to a fund and takes turns to receive the accrued fund on weekly or monthly basis.
MAPS

Administrative regions of the Gold Coast prior to independence.

Map of Cape Coast showing the location of the Kotokuraba Market

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction/Background

Existing historiography gives considerable attention to women in Africa and beyond. The increasing historiographies on gender encapsulates women as historical actors and discusses major themes such as conjugal relations, political activism, domesticity and sexuality during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras. Overall, this corpus of works contend that women have been active in their urban space.¹ Whilst the dominant narratives in historiography consider markets to be male dominated spaces in pre-colonial Cape Coast, this study contends that women became the principal agents of trading activities during the colonial period. With the increasing visibility of women in market spaces during the colonial period, women, both elite and ordinary, played an active role in the shaping of the colonial urban town of Cape Coast whilst conducting their trading activities. Through the analysis of women’s activities in the markets in Cape Coast, it is evident that women became instrumental in the conceptualization of a market space. This study also contends that market women became agents for promoting developmental projects in the community.

This study is situated within the colonial period specifically from 1877 to 1957. The year 1877 marks the period when the colonial capital of Gold Coast was transferred from Cape Coast to Accra. During this period, the colonial government turned its attention to the development of

the new capital, Accra. It is within this context that my work examines the contribution of women towards the development of Cape Coast. The year 1957 which is the terminal date for this study marks the end of colonial rule in the Gold Coast. Cape Coast which is the focus of this study, was one of the major centres of trade during the precolonial and colonial period. Examining market women’s activities, it is significant to consider a place that is historically known for its active trading activities over the years. Within the context of this study and the period under discussion, “ordinary women” refers to all women that did not belong to the upper class of the colonial society. These women were neither wealthy, educated, wives of merchants, Euro-African women nor wives of Euro-African men. Also they did not hold a position within the traditional political system such as queens or wives of kings. Women who were highly educated, wealthy, wives of merchants and Euro-African men as well as Euro-African women are considered “elite women” within the context of this study.

Prior to the fifteenth century, African women were prominent in economic activities such as agriculture and trade. In West Africa, specifically the Gold Coast, women were known for their active involvement in trade during the pre-colonial era. The coming of the Europeans from the fifteenth century and “the rise of the Atlantic commerce in the eighteenth century drew the Gold Coast into the world system.”2 This opened opportunities for women to “engage in commercial activities though the nature of trade was predominantly controlled by men.”3

Evidence of the numerous fortifications along the coastal part of Ghana depicts European’s economic relationship with Africans. The Portuguese who arrived in 1471 were the first to

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3 Adu-Boahen, 169.
monopolize trade in these coastal areas. By the seventeenth century, the French, Dutch, Swedish, Danish and Brandenburgers had built forts to protect themselves from their trade competitors along the coast. The British, Danes and Dutch however were the only ones who were able to maintain their forts into the eighteenth century. During this period, the relationship between the Europeans and Africans was limited to being primarily one of trade. Roger Gocking postulates that these long-term effects “placed the culturally heterogeneous coastal communities in a position of importance in Ghanaian history far out of proportion to their actual size and populations.” The coastal communities grew further into dominant societies around which the colonial order materialized. These coastal communities such as Cape Coast and Accra later served as centers for trade, administration purposes and missionary activities.

By the eighteenth century, women had become vibrant in the changing economy. They were active in spatial markets which increasingly sprang up along the coastal areas such as Cape Coast, Elmina, Anomabo and Kormantse. According to Kwabena Adu-Boahen, spatial markets were “organized economic spaces where women had full freedom to trade in all kinds of goods.” These markets served as centres for the exchange of goods between the local people and the European residents. Pieter de Maree describes the vibrancy of these coastal markets depended on the market women who came to sell in those spaces. Some of the women travelled to the hinterland for agricultural produce to sell to the local people, the Europeans and the Euro-African

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6 Roger S. Gocking, 2.
community. The Cape Coast market became “a meeting place for African traders of the coast and coastal hinterland as well as the local Euro-African communities and European fort residents.”

Different items ranging from European goods such as cloth, mirror and polished beads to locally produced goods such as salt, fish, banana and millet were sold in the market. These markets were not only operated by ordinary people, but also some prominent women who engaged in trading activities. These included queen mothers who may not be seen often within the markets as they usually conducted their trading activities through their slaves.

Cape Coast is the focus of this study. It is the capital town of the central region of Ghana which is predominantly populated by Fante indigenes. As a historical town, its traditional name ‘Oguaa’ originated from the Fante word ‘gua’ meaning “market.” The area was known for its fishing and agricultural activities as well as trade with the indigenous people along the coastal areas such as Elmina, Anomabu and Kromantse. It further extended into the interior to include people of Asante, Denkyira and Assin Fosu. Cape Coast is one of the maritime towns that established an early and intricate relationship with Europeans from the fifteenth century.

It was named Cabo Corso by the Portuguese meaning “Short Cape” and few years later changed to Cape Coast by the British. With economic dominance and in order to maintain their identity, the name was changed from “Carbo Corso” to “Cape Coast”. With a great interest in the coastal trade and the success story of the early European settlers, the British first settled in Cape Coast and built a castle in 1664 to protect themselves from external attacks. The British already had built a small trading warehouse on the site prior to the construction of the castle. From Cape Coast, they spread

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9 Adu-Boahen, 179.
their influence to other coastal settlements such as Dixcove, Shama, Apam and Accra. They participated in the trade in slaves, gold and ivory. Trevor Getz highlights that Cape Coast witnessed the economic burgeoning legitimate trade which was prospering on the back of slave labour. By the mid-eighteenth century, Cape Coast had become the headquarters of British trading activities and their central depot for storage of slaves and ammunitions.

In the nineteenth century, the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade resulted in an increase in legitimate trade in the Gold Coast, especially along the coastal areas. Spatial markets within the Cape Coast community and its neighbouring towns such as Elmina, Accra and Anomabo became very vibrant. Buying and selling of slaves shifted to the exchange of European goods for locally produced goods from the coastal areas and the hinterland. The European goods, according to Adu-Boahen, were either bartered or bought from European ships by women and sold to the residents in the community on the market. Women from the hinterlands also brought locally produced goods such as salt, palm oil, oranges and sugar cane. Though the trade between the Europeans and the local people was male controlled, women had control over the local markets as they negotiated prices and regulated over the locally produced goods brought from the coast and the hinterlands.

Gradually, the European companies began to assume the areas where they traded as their “sphere of influence” or “protected areas.” In Cape Coast, the British governor of the Cape Coast Castle tried to impose laws on the local population. The Cape Coast Castle became the British

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16 Amenumey, 106.
administrative headquarters. This opportunity created conditions for an influx of migrants from nearby villages and other Fanteland such as Assin Fosu and Fetu which enhanced urban growth. In 1821, the British government decided to assume direct administration of the British settlements on the Gold Coast with its headquarters at Cape Coast. By 1874, Cape Coast had become the capital of the Gold Coast Colony. The Gold Coast Colony, established on 24th July, 1874, encompassed the coastal areas. By 1902, it had extended inland to include the Asante kingdom.

The introduction of formal education by Christian missionaries had by the colonial period produced a class of educated elites who became politically conscious. These educated elites initiated protests against British colonial influence. This is partly attributed to the loss of traditional political authority that was indirectly associated with the Bond of 1844 signed by the British officials and the local chiefs. Also, the educated elites did not want to be controlled by the Europeans. In 1877, the British government decided to relocate the colonial capital. This decision was motivated by intense protests and agitation against colonial power by the educated elites in Cape Coast. Moreover, Cape Coast was regarded as unhealthy by and for European officials due to insanitary conditions in the area.\(^\text{17}\) Samuel Quarcooopome asserts that the poor sanitary conditions of Cape Coast was as a result of the inability of traditional authorities to maintain the hygiene and sanitary conditions of the town. This inability was due to the weakening of traditional authorities by British infiltration and influences.\(^\text{18}\) Both Elmina and Accra were the alternatives to Cape Coast. In 1875, Accra was considered the best option and on 19th March, 1877, the colonial

capital was officially transferred to Accra. This ended a two-hundred year period during which Cape Coast had been the seat of British power in the Gold Coast.\textsuperscript{19}

The 1877 transfer of the colonial capital from Cape Coast resulted in economic decline of the town as the commercial centres were gradually moved to Accra and Sekondi-Takoradi. Until the building of the Sekondi Harbour in 1928, Cape Coast was the most important anchorage in the country and majority of visitors would have received their first impressions of the country with the view of Cape Coast from the sea.\textsuperscript{20} The transfer of the capital from Cape Coast subsequently shifted the colonial government’s focus of development to its new capital, Accra. Although the colonial government had its attention on developing its new capital, trading activities within the spatial markets in Cape Coast and along the coastal towns did not come to an end. Women continued to use the available trade centres to shape their society.

\textbf{Historiography}

This study is mainly informed by historiography on gender studies. Kwabena Adu-Boahen’s scholarly work on coastal women, \textit{Female Agency in a Cultural Confluence: Women, Trade and Politics in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast}, examines the nature of female participation in trade and politics in the Gold Coast during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Adu-Boahen, in spite of male control of the Atlantic commerce, some women in the Gold Coast were able to exercise remarkable agency in terms of their participation in trade. Adu-Boahen maintains that “though radical changes in the Atlantic economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth century generally consigned Gold Coast women to the periphery of the

\textsuperscript{19} John Parker, \textit{Making the Town: Ga State and society in early Colonial Accra} (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), 98.  
African-European commercial exchanges, some women found their niches in that male controlled system.”

African women, specifically women in the Gold Coast have been very active in trading activities. However some studies on women in Africa concentrate on their domestic roles as wives and mothers. Women have been active in trade prior to colonial rule, during the colonial period and in post-colonial times. Within the context of pre-colonial Ghana, women in the coastal areas were involved in trading in spatial markets until the infiltration of European traders from the sixteenth century. The presence of the Europeans and “the rise of the Atlantic world mercantile system drew the Gold Coast into the world economic system.” This opened the avenues for women to engage in profitable trading activities though it was dominantly controlled by men. Adu-Boahen’s work helps to understand the nature of trading activities along the coastal markets prior to the colonial period and serves as an entry point for this study.

Adu-Boahen’s work also gives a vivid description of the “market” which serves as an avenue for exploring the roles of women within the public sphere in this study. Women in the Gold Coast, became very active in the “spatial markets” which sprang up along the coastal areas such as Cape Coast, Elmina, Anomabo and Accra. These spatial markets, according to Adu-Boahen, were organized economic spaces where women had full freedom to trade. These markets existed prior to colonial rule and their growth was facilitated by the European trading presence. The Cape Coast market was one of the spatial markets where the active participation of women reflects the

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24 Adu-Boahen, 178.
vibrancy of the market. This serves as a foundation for understanding Cape Coast as an important centre of trade even in the pre-colonial period. This situation did not change even in the colonial period which is the timeline for this study. The participation of women in spatial markets continued to operate even within the colonial period. Similarly, this study explores the active participation of women in trade along the coastal market and its implications on the Cape Coast community.

Gracia Clark in her scholarly work, *Onions Are My Husband: Survival And Accumulation by West African Market Women*, examines the activities of market women to understand the key “social forces that create, maintain and continually reshape the shifting market dynamics.”

She examines the structure of the market and how it has been shaped by the market women who carried out their trading activities there. She further argues that though women have been economically marginalized, market women have turned this form of marginalization into accumulation and autonomy through their vigorous trading activities in the market.

With focus on the Kumasi Central Market, Clark gives a historical overview of the market by highlighting that the market is an intricate space with various structures and activities taking place concurrently. According to her, “at the structural heart of the market are the commercial operations.” The commercial activities ranges from “wholesaling of yams from the Northern regions of Ghana to retailing of pepper within the market.”

Buying and selling is done by different categories of people within the market. The crucial moment of buying and selling is the moment of purchase, when the transfer of goods for money determines the kind of value each party will get. Thus, Gracia Clark further maintains that the process of bargaining is essential to buying

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26 Gracia Clark, *Onions Are My Husbands*, 126.
27 Gracia Clark, *Onions Are My Husbands*, 128.
28 Clark, 128.
and selling in the market. Price or quantity becomes the key variable for bargaining. However, each commodity has its specific bargaining conventions.\textsuperscript{29} The description given by Gracia Clark in her work creates an understanding of the various interactions within the market. Although her study is not specific to Cape Coast, it also provides a historical and cultural context of the market which demonstrates the centrality of market women within the Ghanaian economy. Likewise, this study provides a narrative on market women’s activities within the Cape Coast markets during the colonial period.

Clark further discusses the physical organization of the market. According to her, the market has various divisions for distinct purposes. Divisions are defined by “commodity, geographical location and commercial techniques such as unit of sale.”\textsuperscript{30} She emphasizes that, each unit within the market attracts a distinct category of buyers and sellers. The divisions within the market are important as they help traders to manoeuver effectively during their commercial activities. These divisions which include the yards, mixed retail areas and retail lines are equally controlled by leaders within the market. The leaders are competent women who have exhibited exceptional traits in their occupation as traders. This picturesque description by Clark is significant for this study as it helps to understand the physical organization of markets in Ghana and how they have been shaped by market women. Similarly, this study will explore the physical structure of markets in Cape Coast and how market women operated in such spaces during the colonial period.

Clark in her anthropological study further highlights that, though the market is a complex location for economic activities, the idea of female power is strongly evident. She discusses this through the lens of commodity groups in the Kumasi Central Market. Each commodity group,

\textsuperscript{29} Clark, 128-129.
which serves as a collegial set in the market has a leader referred to as a “queen” who exercises considerable power over members within that group. At the top of the market structure is the overall market queen mother who “rules alone rather than in tandem with a male chief or lineage head.” Her authority is exercised throughout and beyond the market. Skills and values are considered very crucial for the selection of the market queen mother and commodity queens. The market queen mother’s roles are very important within the market culture. The market queens are instrumental figures in maintaining the strengths and unity of the markets. This work demonstrates the autonomy and power of women within the marketplace. It also provides an understanding on the relationship between the female-led institutions in the market and the Akan political institutions. Similarly, in her work, Market Queens: Innovations Within Akan Tradition, Clark maintains the point that market queen mothers were essential players in the economy of Ghana though they held no ties to pre-colonial or colonial traditional political systems. Equally, Holley Hansen in her work, Queen Mothers and Good Government in Buganda: The Loss of Women’s Political Power in Nineteenth-Century Buganda highlights that market associations and the office of market queens express a gendered division of political power in African societies. Thus, market queens have wielded power in diverse ways as they controlled vital aspects of the society. Likewise, this study will explore the rise of market queens within the markets in Cape Coast during the colonial period and how these leaders exercised agency through their political offices.

In studying the life histories of seven market women in Kumasi, Gracia Clark in her work, African Market Women: Seven Life Stories of Market Women argues that though market women have been economically marginalized, they are not passive victims. Rather they are determiners who use the market to ensure the sustenance of their families and individual gains. With a vantage

31 Gracia Clark, Onions Are My Husband, 251.
point as traders, “these market women have become economic experts the hard way.”

Through the life stories of seven market women from the Kumasi Central Market, her work provides a firsthand account of the economic life of African market women. Through the testimonies of the market's most accomplished retired market women, the work provides information on the regular efforts involved in distribution and selling some of Ghana’s most important household items and staple food such as palm oil, tomatoes, onions, yams and cloth. Clark draws on the traders’ narrations to explain the nitty-gritties of their activities in the market, including how their work begins before dawn, traveling long distances aboard uncomfortable and unreliable vehicles, inventing techniques to prevent perishable goods from spoiling and making difficult decisions about whether to use precious funds to keep their businesses running or to meet the nutritional and educational needs of children and grandchildren.

The market women through their experiences in the market provide information on how these long, hard work days yield small, gradual gains and how numerous misfortunes beyond traders’ control such as poor harvests, currency depreciation and illness can rapidly dissolve any accumulated wealth. This work by Clark is relevant to this study as the life stories provide detailed valuable information about historical events and trading practices as well as understanding on the nature of trade in the twentieth century. In addition, their narratives help to appreciate their struggles as market women and how they were able to overcome these challenges in the phase of turbulent economic changes. It therefore reflects the agency of African market women in the twentieth century. Although the majority of the content is economic in focus, Clark’s work further demonstrates how social structures such as kinship,
marriage, inheritance and religion affect market women’s lives. This is important as it reflects how these structures interplay in the successes and failures of market women.

Similarly, Akua O. Britwum and Angela D. Akorsu in their collaborative work, *Market Women’s Association in Ghana* discuss the significance of market organizations within the informal economy of Ghana. Britwum and Akorsu argue that in the mist of being excluded from national policies and social protection systems, women have resorted to trade associations which served as forms of support systems in guiding and regulating their trading activities. Women constitute the majority of the informal workforce within the Ghanaian economy.

Trading is the second main source of employment within the informal sector after agriculture. As such, markets serve as collection points for women traders selling all kinds of goods. Using the Cape Coast markets as a case study, Britwum and Akorsu maintain that, market associations are significant groups that represent women’s struggle for equality within the economy. Similar to market organizations in Kumasi, membership of market associations is compulsory for all traders and exclusive to women within a particular market. It includes all actors such as wholesalers and retailers. Britwum and Akorsu also contend that the internal structures of market organizations is closely related to Akan traditional systems as noted earlier by Gracia Clark. This collaborative work by Britwum and Akorsu brings to light the significance of market associations within the informal economy of Ghana. It helps to understand how market women have shown their ability to succeed irrespective of the unfavorable changing economic conditions through the market associations. Though Britiwum and Akorsu’s work is situated within the post-colonial context, their study provides a background in understanding and examining market

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women’s contributions to the development of Cape Coast through market associations during the colonial period.

In *Urbanization, Individualism and Gender Relations in Colonial Ghana*, Emmanuel Akyeampong examines gender interactions in urban communities in the Gold Coast. He explores how women and men used available opportunities in the urban centres to accumulate wealth and gained autonomy during the colonial period. He argues that men and women migrated to the colonial urban towns in search of job, accumulation of wealth and to seek an avenue for socialization. However, these experiences varied for men and women. According to Akyeampong, urban centres such as Cape Coast, Elmina, Accra and Kumasi provided economic opportunities for women in the male controlled economy. Available opportunities such as the markets, cash crop economy and social centres were used by women to gain wealth and autonomy. However this assertiveness later resulted in gender conflicts during the colonial period.

Historically, women have always pursued to be economically self-reliant. To achieve this, they did this within the context of their relationship with men including European men. However, Akyeampong maintains that, the “expanding cash crop economy provided women the first opportunity to define their autonomy outside marriage.” This historiography on women helps to understand gender experiences in urban towns during the colonial period. It further highlights women’s involvement within the public space and its implications on social status of women within the colonial period. Similarly, this study explores how women in Cape Coast used

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36 Akyeampong, “ ‘Wo pe tam wo pe ba’(You like cloth but you don’t want children’), 223.

37 Akyeampong, 222-227
the market as an available opportunity to acquire wealth and how they were able to contribute towards the progress of the Cape Coast community in the colonial period.

Margaret Priestley’s work *West African Trade and Coast Society: A Family Study* examines the active roles played by European merchants in the Atlantic commerce and how they were able to amass wealth and elevate the status of men in the society. Using the Brew family as her case study, she discusses the relationship that existed between Africans and Europeans and how this served as an important factor for the accumulation of wealth and status within the coastal community. She further maintains that, women were able to get into the expanding trade through their sexual relationships with Europeans. These texts discuss women as passive actors in the trade along the coast. Likewise in Harvey Feinberg’s examination of the relationship between the Elminas and the Dutch, he argues that this relationship was able to maintain trade in Elmina and within the coastal markets. The people of Elmina used the relationship to build their trade and form a strong Euro-African community within Elmina and beyond. Though Feinberg gives a descriptive account of women within an economic context, these texts place men at the centre of the expanding economic activities along the coast. These works by Priestley and Feinberg adopt a male approach by discussing men as the actors of change in trade along the coast whilst neglecting the active participation of women. This study however explores women as active agents in trade along the coastal markets.

In discussing African towns and cities Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch highlights that a well-established trade centre or a market is an important feature within an urban town. African urban towns developed within a particular social and economic context. In Africa, the determinants
of a city include trade, the existence of political authority and agricultural production. Trade involves merchants who specialized in collecting and redistributing supplies, storage, transportation and accounting. This comprises the active participation of both men and women. Coquery-Vidrovitch’s work is key to this study as it serves as the background for understanding the urban town. It also highlights the market as an important feature within the urban space. Similarly, this study explores Cape Coast as a centre of trade and how women were able to shape the urban town through their active participation in trade in the coastal markets.

Finally, in discussing the roles of women within the colonial society, K.O. Akurang-Parry contributes to the literature on agency of elite women in the Gold Coast. In his work, *Aspects of Elite Women’s Activism in the Gold Coast, 1874-1890*, Akurang-Parry examines the active participation of women in the colonial society and their efforts to enhance conditions of women in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Women were engaged in voluntary associations which created social spaces for them to address their problems and issues that they encountered. Famous among the voluntary groups is the Native Ladies of Cape Coast. (NLCC). Akurang-Parry however emphasizes that, women’s voluntary associations and other groups existed in the Gold Coast, prior to colonial rule. They expanded as a response to social change and the exigencies of colonial rule. These elite women also used the media such as the Western Echo, as a platform for female empowerment. This activism by women not only took place in Cape Coast, but also in Accra and Elmina. Akurang-Parry’s work serves as an avenue for understanding the agency of women in Cape Coast during the colonial period. It also helps to understand the varying bonds that sustained

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39 See John Parker, *Making the Town: Ga State and society in early Colonial Accra* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000), xxiv; Parker draws on the individual and collective struggles of women in Accra in shaping their town during the colonial period.
women’s struggles during the colonial period. However, his work focuses only on the elite women in the Gold Coast omitting the contribution of ordinary women such as market women. This study however, will examine the agency of ordinary women by exploring their active participation in trade and how that shaped the community of Cape Coast.

**Significance of Study**

This study contributes to the existing literature on gender studies in Ghana and beyond. It demonstrates the contribution of ordinary women towards the development of Cape Coast, through their active participation in trade. By examining the activities of market women in Cape Coast within the colonial context, this work helps to understand the changes and continuities in relation to women’s participation in economic activities. Also by situating market associations and the roles of market queens in context, this study provides an excellent case study of market women’s agency and their ability to serve as political leaders within the public space. Thus, this study calls for greater historiographical attention to market women’s roles in the informal economy as well as the extent of their market associations and their significance in writing the economic history of the Gold Coast during the colonial period. Despite some negative stories associated with market women, this thesis will highlight the efforts and accomplishment of market women towards the development of Cape Coast. By this, the study departs from the overwhelming research approaches on women prior to independence that have only explored female agency through the lens of elite women in Cape Coast and the Gold Coast. Most importantly, this work shows how ordinary women were able to exercise some form of agency within the Cape Coast community through their economic activities. Finally, it provides a new approach to the study of and historiography on women in Cape Coast.
Research Objectives

This research project seeks to investigate the contribution of women towards the development of Cape Coast during the colonial period. With its focus on market women and Cape Coast as a centre of trade, the study intends to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the nature of trading activities in Cape Coast during the colonial period.
2. To explore how the rise of market associations and market queens shaped the market space in Cape Coast.
3. To assess the contribution of market women towards the development of Cape Coast within the colonial context.

Research Questions

1. What was the nature of trading activities in Cape Coast during the colonial period?
2. How did market queens and market associations shape the market space?
3. What were the major contributions of market women towards the development of Cape Coast and how did it impact the community?

Theoretical Framework

The assertions from the previous historiographical discussion show quite clearly that the roles of market women in Cape Coast have been either neglected or inadequately researched by scholars. The essence of this research therefore is to contribute to historiographical knowledge on women in Cape Coast. It is therefore impossible to answer the research questions without situating this work within a theoretical framework or concept. Thus, theories and concepts serve as framework
for explaining historical phenomena. In order to provide answers to the research questions posed by this study, the work uses mainly the concept of agency and intersectionality.

The Concept of Agency

According to Peter Seixas, Agency theory seeks to give a narrative from the perspective of the actors involved in a particular historical event. It empowers a group of people who have been historically disadvantaged over a period of time.40 Historians in recent times have sought a way to understand the “historical agency of relatively powerless groups who functioned within the constraints of their social and historical positions.”41 This theory seeks to emphasize how ordinary people participated actively in making the world in the past. The concept of Agency shows how a person or group of people have impacted the developments in history. In this study, agency theory is used to [re] construct the history of ordinary women in Cape Coast which hitherto has remained a gap in historiography.

Within the context of this work, the main subjects here are ordinary women, specifically market women. These ordinary women have been disadvantaged as opposed to elite women in colonial societies as most literature on women in Cape Coast highlight the agency of elite women neglecting that of these ordinary women. In his work Aspects of Elite Women's Activism in the Gold Coast, 1874-1890, Akurang-Parry projects the agency of women in colonial society in the Gold Coast. He discusses how women utilized voluntary associations as social spaces to address their problems that they encountered during the colonial period.42 These spaces served as avenues

40 Peter Seixas, “Historical Agency As A Problem For Researchers In History Education” Antíteses Vol.5 No.10 (2012), 539-544.
41 Peter Seixas, “Historical Agency As A Problem For Researchers In History Education” Antíteses Vol.5 No.10 (2012), 543.
for women to enhance their conditions in colonial society. Similarly, Kwabena Adu-Boahen in his work *Female Agency in a Cultural Confluence: Women, Trade and Politics in Seventeenth-and Eighteenth-Century Gold Coast* uses this concept to highlight the form of agency exercised by women in Gold Coast during the precolonial period. Adu-Boahen posits that women became active in the changing economy with European penetration of the West African economy. The presence of Europeans and the emergence of the Atlantic–world mercantile system resulted in a large-scale in trade which opened avenues for Gold Coast women to engage in profitable commercial activities though trade was tremendously controlled by men.\(^4\) Women therefore became active in markets that sprang up along the coastal areas and also participated in long distance trade that existed between the coastal areas and the hinterland. Through the analysis of the narratives of royal and non-royal women in commercial activities, Adu-Boahen emphasizes the agency exercised by these women as they became more enterprising in the Gold Coast and accumulated enough wealth in the changing economy which was male dominated.

Notwithstanding the appropriateness of agency theory as the theoretical framework for this study, it is important to demonstrate the challenges associated with the theory. Here again, Akurang-Parry’s work proves useful in this light. Though Akurang-Parry highlights the agency of women in Cape Coast, his work clearly focuses mainly on elite women in Cape Coast neglecting that of females who did not fall within the elite class in colonial Gold Coast. Thus, this work provides a new dimension to the historiography on women in Cape Coast in the colonial period. With the oral testimonies of ordinary women, my work examines the development of Cape Coast through the lens of these women such as market women in the colonial period.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the interconnections between multiple “dimensions and modalities of social categories such as age, gender, education, race, class, ethnicity, sexuality and various others.” Intersectionality seeks to examine the relationship between social structures such as gender, age, education, class, race and religion. The concept emerged to address the concerns of Black feminists who rose up against the use of women and gender as a single and a standardized analytical category. The word “intersectionality” was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her seminal critique of US antidiscrimination law and its failure to acknowledge Black women’s unique experiences of racism and sexism as simultaneous and inseparable. Crenshaw argued that there is no unified group of women that experience gender discrimination in the same way. Thus, it is erroneous to treat sexism and racism as if they could be isolated, understood and redressed separately.

At its root, intersectionality suggests that “different dimensions of social life such as hierarchies, axes of differentiation, axes of oppression and social structures are intersecting, mutually modifying and inseparable. They “fuse to create unique experiences and opportunities for all groups” The proponents of intersectionality argue that it is impossible to interact with people only on the basis of their sex, without the considerations of other personal attributes such as class or education. Accordingly, intersectionality emphasizes the use of diverse identities or

sub-categorization as the basis for analysis rather than using broad and generalized categories, so as to enhance the understanding of identities. K. Davis maintains that intersectionality is acknowledged as a very important contribution of feminist scholars for presenting a better alternative to static and one-dimensional conceptualization of identity.\textsuperscript{48} Intersectionality aims at underscoring the idea that “gender” is not a mono identity; but comprises various forms of social stratification, identities and experiences. Thus, it can be applied analytically to show the diverse ways through which women were marginalized based on their identities and experiences.

Situating this study within this framework, there are many sources of distinctiveness among Ghanaian market women based on different categorization such as gender, age, education, type commodity sold, religion and educational background. The concept of intersectionality therefore aids the understanding of market traders as a heterogeneous group with various identities and needs. In the Gold Coast, specifically the Cape Coast, class was an important identity within the society. Class was based on kinship ties, education and financial status. Educated elites, members of the royal family and merchants were considered as people within the upper class in the society. In this work, the main structures that will be highlighted are gender and class. With respect to gender, the work emphasizes the roles of women in a historical development. It is important to note however that this work acknowledges the contribution of men in historical developments as well. However, this work places emphasis on women’s contributions to the development of Cape Coast.

Looking at class, this main subjects here are the elite women versus the ordinary women. The elite women within this context refers to women who belonged to the upper class in the

colonial society especially educated elites, wives of educated elites, wives of merchants, among others. The ordinary women within this context are women who did not fall within the elite class in colonial society, mostly the uneducated women such as market women. The work highlights the roles of these ordinary women. Thus, in discussing the roles of these women, the social structures of gender and class intersect to give a better understanding of women’s experiences in Cape Coast during the colonial period. The theory of intersectionality therefore helps to identify the various social categories of market traders which are likely to produce differences among the women in the markets in Cape Coast.

**Methodology**

This study mainly utilizes the qualitative research method. This is because the qualitative research method helps to understand the social milieu of market women and their activities, without necessarily having to generate statistical data in order to do analysis.\(^49\) The analysis of this study will be based on case studies of market women’s trading activities in Cape Coast. This study also incorporates both primary and secondary sources.

Primary sources used for this study include materials from the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (hereafter P.R.A.A.D) in Accra and Cape Coast. Archival documents include Monthly and Annual Reports of Cape Coast Town Council (hereafter CCTC). From P.R.A.A.D., Accra, ADM 1/1/24: “Letter from Governor Cornwall to the British Governor, 1866” provides information on the interest of the British in economic activities in Cape Coast even before formal colonial rule. This aids in the understanding of the nature of trading activities with Europeans along the coastal markets and also projects Cape Coast as a significant commercial

centre in the Gold Coast prior to colonial rule. Also, CSO files such as CSO 20/2/9: “Kotokuraba New Market, Cape Coast” provides a detailed information on the accepted proposal by the British to construct a new market in Cape Coast to facilitate trading activities. This file is significant to this research project as it serves as evidence that indeed Cape Coast by the colonial period, had developed into a vibrant centre of trade. In addition, this document highlights the increasing interest of the British in commercial activities in the Gold Coast. It also contained relevant information on the role of the Cape Coast Town Council in getting a new market for the people of Cape Coast to facilitate trade.

Also, Monthly and Annual Reports of Cape Coast Town Council were equally employed in this study. These files labelled as CSO include CSO 20/2/2: “Monthly Minutes of CCTC, 1930-31” and CSO 20/2/6 CCTC, “Monthly Meetings of1936-1938.” The monthly minutes of the Cape Coast Town Council from 1930 to 1931 constitute progress reports on the construction of the new Kotokuraba market in Cape Coast highlighting the physical organization of the new market. Monthly reports from 1936-1938 were significant sources for this study. These records were useful as they gave information pertaining to trading activities in the new market, which was completed in 1931. The reports further highlighted the amount of revenue that had been generated through the market since its opening in 1931. I used these reports to support some of the arguments made in this study.

Moreover, Annual reports of CCTC from the year 1929 to 1935 labelled as CSO 20/1/19 “CCTC Annual Report on, from 1929-1930”; CSO 20/1/24 “Annual Report CCTC, 1930/31”; CSO 20/1/31 “Annual Report, CCTC, 1932-1933”; CSO 20/1/39 “Annual Report CCTC, 1934-1935.” These files contained yearly reports on trading activities in Cape Coast since the construction of the new Kotokuraba market in 1931. They highlighted the progress of commercial
activities in the market. Notwithstanding, these annual reports also emphasized some of the challenges that the new market faced as well as some facilities that needed to be constructed in the new market. They also contained useful information on the social structures such as health, electrification, and roads that needed to be provided by the colonial government and the Town Council. This helped me to obtain knowledge on some of the social provisions that the colonial government and the Town Council were concerned with as a way of improving the standard of living of the inhabitants of Cape Coast. This signifies that the colonial government was not only interested in trade in Cape Coast.

Still from the CSO series from P.R.A.A.D., in Accra, the files labelled CSO 20/2/23, CSO 20/2/28, CSO 20/2/27, CSO 20/2/25 and CSO 20/1/69 contained financial statements of Cape Coast Town Council Statement financial years from 1940 to 1946. I used these files to assess the amount of revenue generated in the Kotokuraba market and how much has been spent on infrastructural development in Cape Coast. Chapter Four of this study discusses how market women played a significant role in generating revenue for the Cape Coast Town Council and how these monies were channeled into developmental projects in the colonial society. This helped me to gain a balanced argument on market women’s roles in the informal urban economy as discussed by Kamuti Kiteme, Raphael Avornyo and Britwum and Akorsu. The file RG 17/1/23 has materials on the Cape Coast Market Associations, which operated as autonomous bodies within the markets in colonial Cape Coast. Juxtaposing this primary source material with Onions Are My Husband, Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women and by Gracia Clark and

Market Women’s Associations in Ghana by Britwum and Akorsu provides a balanced perspective in the understanding of market associations in Ghana. From the archives in Cape Coast, the file labelled ADM 23/1/1095 Cape Coast District Welfare Committee, 1946 was very useful in gathering information on the market’s women’s role in promoting welfare in the community.

Oral tradition methodology plays an important role in this study. According to Jan Vansina “oral traditions are documents of the present. Yet they also embody a message from the past. Oral traditions are therefore the representation of the past in the present.” 51 Subsequently I draw on a number of oral interviews as historical evidence for this work. “And of course there is no point in having an interview at all unless the informant is, in some sense, better informed than oneself.” 52 Thus, I used the snow ball sampling technique to reach my informants, specifically market women who were indigenes of Cape Coast. Through this technique, I had the chance of interviewing the current Market Queen Mother, Nana Ama Essiah and the assistant Queen Mother, Nana Wangar of Kotokuraba market. These women including their families have had long years of experience in trading in the Kotokuraba market. In addition, I also used a “makeshift” cluster sampling technique when I entered the office of the market queen mother in the Kotokuraba market. 53 These women filled in the memory gaps for one another as they narrated together the activities of the commodity groups in the market. In addition, I interviewed market women who did not hold any positions in the market to have a balanced testimony of the activities of market queens and market women in the market. As a way of having a gendered perspective on the activities of market

51 Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition as History (Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey, 1997), xii.
53 I have used “makeshift” here to indicate that I did not plan to have a group interview. However, it so happened when I entered the office of the market queen mother of Kotokuraba market as four commodity leaders decided to sit in the interview.
women, I interviewed the secretary of the current market queen mother of Kotokuraba market, Uncle Kwamina Binney.

I was aware that my interview may encounter challenges regarding particularly speaking to informants I had barely seen physically and also about the fact that I will be discussing their personal work or trading activities. Paul Thompson posits that, “most people will trust you to be discrete with what they tell you- and this trust must be respected. Do not attach their names without their explicit consent…”54 For these reasons, I carefully introduced my work to my informants with the aid of a consent form indicating the objectives of my project. My informants were willing to talk to me about any issue irrespective of how sensitive that issue might be. Most importantly, I was able to secure my informants’ consent by endorsing the consent form I submitted to them. They agreed that I could record the information given since they understood that every detail is relevant to my project. Using both open-ended and closed-ended questions, I was able to solicit for information on market women’s activities in the market and their roles in the development of Cape Coast. The Charles Morrissey’s technique was also used when introducing a new topic to my informant during the interview sessions. This technique is used when the interviewer exhibits prior knowledge of the subject matter and poses a question through it.

Oral history is a “performance.”55 As such, I paid close attention to gestures, facial expressions, intonations and silences in the “performance” of the oral interviews. According to Lynn Abrams, “the meaning or interpretation of the source lies merely in the content of what is said but also in the way it is said.”56 Since both the researcher and respondent normally put up a “performance” in the interview situation, as Lynn Abrams emphasizes, it was necessary that I paid

attention to know what extra information was embedded in the facial expressions, gestures, silences and intonations of my informants.

In addition to the primary sources mentioned above, I employed secondary sources on gender studies in colonial Ghana. The use of secondary sources helped me to understand the historical arguments made by the existing literature on gender and trading activities in the Gold Coast. Secondary sources also served as supplementary information which assisted me to make balanced arguments at the end of this study. Secondary sources that were used included books, articles and published and unpublished dissertations. Scholarly works of by Gracia Clark, K.Adu-Boahen and Akua Britwum and Angel D.Akorsu have been very useful in this thesis.

**Limitations of the Study**

I must admit that almost all the sources that I consulted for this study had their peculiar challenges. Working within a timeframe which is not contemporary, I encountered challenges with documents from P.R.A.A.D., Accra and Cape Coast. Most of the documents were in poor conditions as majority of the reports were fading out therefore making it difficult to read. However, I managed to get some useful details from them with the help of the archivist. Also, some documents were incomplete especially those containing correspondences between the colonial government and the Town Council thereby making it difficult to fully appreciate the information presented therein. In addition to this, I had challenges in locating maps or pictures of the new Kotokuraba market that was built in 1931 to enhance trade in Cape Coast. After visiting both regional archives, P.R.A.A.D. in Accra and Cape Coast, these source material were not available. However, I obtained an outline of Cape Coast indicating the position of the new market. But let me admit here also that, there were some documented archival sources on the physical structure of the new Kotokuraba market. Alternatively, I further relied on secondary literature on these issues.
In as much as I obtained useful evidence on the Kotokuraba market, there were limited archival information on other markets in Cape Coast. This is largely because the Kotokuraba market was the main market that existed in Cape Coast prior to European interaction with the people of the Gold Coast. It was also the only market that the British and the Town Council paid much attention to due to its location and the volume of trading activities that took place. As such, I had to rely on oral evidence for the majority of information on the other smaller markets such as Papratam and Anarfo markets.

As majority of the market women had barely had any formal education, I had the overwhelming task of conducting my interviews in Fante. As Paul Thompson posits, “interviews should be conducted in a familiar language.” Thus, I had to convert all my interview questions into a Twi dialect that my informant could best understand. This sometimes limited the full explicit, implicit and intended meanings of the questions. It is also important to note here the daunting task of translating the responses of my informants into the English language. However, the secretary of the current market queen mother of Kotokuraba market, Uncle Kwamina Binney, was very helpful in translating some of the Fante semantics. In addition to that, I relied on friends to help me with the translations during transcription.

The location of the interview “should be a place where the informant can feel at ease. This activates other areas of memory more easily.” With this mind, my interviews were scheduled to take place at the workplace of my informant; within this context, the market. I understood this would be appropriate because the location equally affects the kind of language that will be used. Though the interview took place in the retail stalls of the ultra-modern Kotokuraba market, which

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58 Thompson, 234
59 Thompson, 142.
is relatively a quiet space, I struggled with background noise and interruptions from customers, friends and relatives of my informant. For instance, in the case of Nana Wangar, the assistant market queen mother of Kotokuraba market, she kept responding to greetings from her customers and colleagues. The only way I could overcome this challenge was to pause the recording any time there was an interruption, and then resume thereafter and also reminded my informant of the issue at hand prior to the interruptions. I also positioned the recorder in a way that I could clearly the responses of my informant irrespective of the background noise.

Another challenge I encountered with my oral evidence was the issue of memory on the part of my informants. Interviewing informants who were mostly 60 years and above, they struggled to recollect some of the traditions of the past. As Lynn Abrams theorizes, memory is “not a storehouse where one can search around and find a ready-formed story.” Thus, memory is “always an active process.” Due to old age, most of my informants could not recollect dates, names and some specific events that took place in the markets in Cape Coast during the colonial period. In the course of the interviews, I sometimes cued my informants in to help them remember some facts. Alternatively, I used mnemonic devices to help my informants recall which is suggested by Jan Vansina and Abrams. Above all these successes and limitations, I acknowledged the fact that oral testimonies “are not are not always 100 percent reliable in objective or measurable terms though it has a truth value for the person remembering.” As such, I supplemented these primary sources with secondary literature to me gain a balanced perspectives into the arguments raised in this study.

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Outline of Chapters

This study is divided chronologically into five chapters. Chapter One is an introduction to the thesis. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two opens a discussion on Cape Coast as a commercial centre of trade during the colonial period. It discusses the nature of trading activities in Cape Coast with focus on women’s participation in the markets. To help understand this better, this chapter examines early trading activities in Cape Coast with emphasis on women’s participation in markets prior to colonial rule. Moving on, the chapter further looks at how the market operated during the colonial period, especially after the transfer of the capital from Cape Coast to Accra. It examines the roles of the Cape Coast Town Council in enhancing trading activities in the markets that existed in the town. Subsequently, the chapter discusses the physical organization of the market, specifically the Kotokuraba market which was constructed by the colonial government. The chapter then closes with a discussion on how the market space became gendered during the colonial period as well as the processes involved in buying and selling within the market. These discussions create a pictorial understanding of how Cape Coast had developed into a vibrant centre of trade during the colonial period.

Chapter Three further starts with a discussion on the concept of market associations and market queens in the markets in Cape Coast. It explores how market queens and market associations became key players in the market space. Here, the chapter explores the formation of market associations and the rise of market queens in the Kotokuraba market specifically. The cash crop economy increased women’s visibility in the market. Consequently, market women became more active in the market therefore creating avenues for them to organize themselves into commodity groups. The chapter further discusses the roles of market queens who acted as autonomous female leaders within the market. In addition, it examines British colonial policies
and its implications on the activities of market women in Cape Coast. The chapter closes with the argument that, Cape Coast still remained as an important centre of trade and that the increasing visibility of market women in the markets resulted in the formation of market associations. These associations served as platforms for women to consolidate their positions in the market, thereby enabling them to exercise agency in the community.

Chapter Four of this study discusses the contributions of market women towards the development of Cape Coast within the colonial context. By exploring their economic activities, it highlights the major contributions of market women. The chapter explains how women became agents in conceptualizing the idea of a market space in Cape Coast. It further highlights how market women became key players in the institutionalizing market associations and the office of the market queens. The chapter further assesses market women’s contribution to the informal economy through the generation of revenue for the Cape Coast Town Council and how market women served as key agents in ensuring the supply of food for the community and beyond. In addition, Chapter Four discusses some of the challenges that market women encountered in their commercial activities, which limited their abilities in the market. The chapter ends with a concluding argument that though market women have always been a marginalized group, they were able to exercise some form of agency by virtue of their ability to consolidate their positions in the market during the colonial period.

Chapter Five gives a summary of the relevant conclusions and major issues addressed in this study. Most importantly, it projects area(s) of subsequent studies regarding market women along the coastal areas and other parts of the Gold Coast based on the findings during the fieldwork.
CHAPTER TWO

CAPE COAST AS A CENTRE OF TRADE

Introduction

On 2\textsuperscript{nd} February, 1866, Lieutenant Governor Conran responded to a letter he received from the British officials on the Gold Coast. In the despatch sent to Lieutenant Governor Conran in 1865, a petition was made to Queen Victoria to accept four ordinances passed by the Legislature of the Gold Coast as well as the regulation of markets in Cape Coast. The letter also stated that, Her Majesty needed to “empower the Lieutenant governor of Her Majesty’s forts, settlements and possessions on the Gold Coast to issue bye-laws relating to the regulation of the market in Cape Coast.” Another petition was that, Her Majesty approves “for the establishment of a Town Council in the town of Cape Coast and to amend laws relating to the sale of wine and liquor in the Majesty’s possessions on the Gold Coast.” In responding to the letter, Governor Conran stated that, “I have laid these ordinances before the Queen and I am commanded to acquaint you that Her Majesty has been pleased to allow and confirm the same.” These interactions reflected the increasing interests of the British to carry out and promote trading activities in Cape Coast and the Gold Coast. It also showed how the presence of the British on the Gold Coast increased intentions of controlling the market spaces in Cape Coast prior to formal colonization. The idea of establishing a Town Council for Cape Coast prior to colonial rule reveals European tendencies of control over the area due to its commercial importance.

\textsuperscript{63} P.R.A.A.D., Accra: ADM 1/1/24 “Letter from Governor Cornwall to the British Governor, 1866”
From these exchanges, it is clear that, prior to the colonial period, Cape Coast had become a vibrant centre of trade. European presence and interactions by the nineteenth century had enhanced trading activities on the coast. Trade between the Europeans and the Africans resulted in the establishment of markets within Cape Coast. These markets became centres for exchange of goods, both European goods and local products. During the colonial period however, women had become more visible in the markets in Cape Coast and throughout the Gold Coast. The increasing interests in trading activities in Cape Coast resulted in the expansion of spatial markets within the Cape Coast community during the colonial period. This chapter opens a historical discussion on Cape Coast as an important commercial centre. This will be achieved by exploring the early trade that existed in markets in Cape Coast during the pre-colonial period. Moving on, the chapter will further discuss the nature of trading activities within the colonial context highlighting the roles of the Cape Coast Town Council in the provision of a new market to enhance trade during the colonial period. On the discussion of Cape Coast as a centre of trade, the chapter also examines the physical organization of the markets in Cape Coast and as well as the gendered dynamics in the market space. This chapter finally discusses the acts of buying and selling, which are the integral processes within the market space, take place.

**Early Trade within the Cape Coast Community**

Gold Coast society and its economies at the beginning of the nineteenth century had been subjected to and modified by more than three centuries of European trade and contact which made a significant impact on the market. Undoubtedly, the period of trade with Europeans established patterns of markets, created steady demand for certain European imports and gave rise to vested
interests in the overseas trade.\textsuperscript{64} This implies that trading activities in Cape Coast predated the period of colonial rule.

European traders on the Gold Coast were involved in all kinds of trade including; direct trade between Europe and the Gold Coast, and local trade between the Gold Coast and the rest of West Africa.\textsuperscript{65} As part of the local trade, items such as fish and salt were traded in the market. Mode of trading was mainly barter trading until the introduction of commodity currency and the emergence of credit systems known as the ‘trust’ system. This system was an attempt to “secure the goodwill of important chiefs and merchants.”\textsuperscript{66} Middlemen were essential but they did not have complete control over the trade. European trading on the coast transformed many former fish and salt extraction coastal villages into thriving commercial centres and urban markets such as Cape Coast, Elmina and Accra.\textsuperscript{67} Notwithstanding European activities on the coast, internal trade in the Gold Coast remained very important. Markets formed an important aspect of the economic landscape of Cape Coast and the Gold Coast in general.

A market is an institution or a place where people meet on regular basis to exchange goods and services. As an institution, a market serves two main functions; markets ensure the movement of goods through exchange between areas that were not self-sufficient. Markets also serve as centres for bulking and wholesaling for traders who traded in rarer and valuable goods.\textsuperscript{68} In Ghana, there was the traditional market where foodstuff and locally manufactured goods such as pots could be obtained. Periodicity, where markets were organized on periodic bases so neighbouring

\textsuperscript{65} Reynolds, \textit{Trade and Economic Change on the Gold Coast, 1807-1874}, 7.
\textsuperscript{66} Reynolds, 15.
villages in close proximity will not have the same market days was also an important element of local African market. Periodicity became necessary in African markets due to the “relative specialization among women farmers and food processors.” The standard market days were four and seven. In the Gold Coast, seven day markets were common. These periodic markets served as centres for collecting, bulking and distributing manufactured goods.

Cape Coast, with its traditional name as ‘Oguaa’ has been one of the prominent centres of trade in the history of Gold Coast. According to Fante oral tradition, the name ‘Oguaa’ which means ‘market’ was given to the area due to the vibrant trading activities that took place there. Due to its commercial importance, the area attracted traders from neighbouring towns such as Elmina, Anomabo, Moree and Kormantse. The mobility of people from these surrounding areas led to an increase in the population of Cape Coast.

The principal market in Cape Coast is the Kotokuraba market. According to Fante traditions, one of the founding kings of Cape Coast was known for eating crabs. Catching of crabs thrived in the marshy, low-lying areas around the hills of the present day Cape Coast. Those responsible for catching the crabs named the area Koto-wuraba, which means “crab rivulets.” Subsequently, the area grew into a small settlement and the name was corrupted into Koto-Kuraba, a ‘crab hamlet’. The name Koto-Kuraba persists as the name of the principal market of present day Cape Coast. It later developed into an active centre of trade where goods such as salt, fish and other commodities were exchanged. With an increase in population, Cape Coast extended to include present day Abura, Anaful and other surrounding villages.

71 Hyland, 165.
Oral tradition also has it that, the growth of Cape Coast largely depended on trade not only among the Fante indigenes but also with people along the coastal areas and neighbouring towns such as Elmina, Mouree, Sima, Anomabo and Kormantse. Excess farm produce, surplus fish and crabs formed the basis of the market economy that emerged. This subsequently resulted in an expansion of the town and an increase in the population of Cape Coast.

By the sixteenth century, European traders had landed on the coast. Gradually, trade developed between the people of Cape Coast and the Europeans. European settlement enhanced the establishment of strong centres of power such as Cape Coast and Anomabo. Consequently, the settlement expanded as information reached the hinterland that trade deals could be more easily and openly made with the Europeans in Cape Coast than at Elmina which experienced a trade monopoly by the Portuguese. Though trade flourished, it was not until 1664 that the British built a castle as a principal form of settlement in the Gold Coast. This served as the first evidence of European activity in Cape Coast as the castles functioned as depots for trading commodities and also as a form of protection from external attacks. During this period however, there were competitions among the various European groups over control of trade over the West African Coast. These Europeans including the British, Portuguese and Dutch had colonies in the Americas and the Caribbean with plantations which needed slave labour. The change in the economy from gold trade to slave trading was in response to the changing trend of the European economy. Trade in gold and other commodities was superseded by trade in slaves to be transported across the Atlantic for labour by the seventeenth century.

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Cape Coast Castle became a depot for slaves who were shipped to the Atlantic world. The slave trade continued till the nineteenth century when humanitarian actions coupled with legal actions and financial viability led to its abolishing in the later part of the nineteenth century. Though the slave trade had legally stopped, domestic slavery persisted in the Gold Coast. After the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 by the British, legitimate trade, which was trade in commodities other than slaves, was carried out in Cape Coast and on the Gold Coast in general. The abolition of the slave trade resulted in the emergence of two forms of trade in Cape Coast namely the ‘factory trade’ and ‘native trade.’ Factory trade involved trading activities that were carried out in European forts and settlements. This kind of trade yielded more profit for the Europeans than the native trade. In this system, trading posts were established on the coast by the English companies with “a merchant resident who opened a store that allowed Africans to buy and sell goods. These merchants had fixed salaries plus a commission.” On the other hand, native trade involved trading activities that took place outside the forts and settlements of the Europeans. With this system, a merchant house put goods aboard ships under the control of a captain to sell on the African coast in exchange for the products of the country. The captain sailed along “the coast going from port to port selling his goods out of his vessel to the indigenous people.” The Fante and the residents of Cape Coast worked on maintaining their positions as middlemen in the trade with Europeans.

The long interactions between the Europeans and the local people of Cape Coast and the Gold Coast at large resulted in the introduction of new crops such as peanuts, pineapples, lemons, sugar cane, oranges, bananas, coconuts, yams, rice and sweet potatoes. These crops were initially

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74 Reynolds, 98.
75 Reynolds, 98
cultivated in gardens around European fortifications to supplement European food but gradually spread into the interior.\textsuperscript{76} European goods such as textiles, firearms, alcohol and metal ware were also introduced. These crops and manufactured goods became integral commodities in trading relations that existed between Europeans and the people of Cape Coast. European languages also became the lingua franca of trade.\textsuperscript{77} Initially this was Portuguese, which outlived Portugal's dominance on the coast. However, the languages of successor nations began to replace the former.

In 1679, Jean Barbot, a French traveler, found that “good English” was spoken by the canoe men he encountered at sea within sight of Elmina, but Portuguese was still being used in the area around Axim even though the Dutch had evicted the Portuguese thirty seven years ago.\textsuperscript{78} Eventually, notwithstanding, English and Pidgin English were the medium of communication between the local people and European traders.\textsuperscript{79} The local people however used their local languages when trading among themselves.

The presence of Europeans and the rise of the Atlantic commerce-world mercantile system drew the Gold Coast deeper into the world economic system. This opened avenues for women to engage in commercial activities though the nature of trade was predominantly by men.\textsuperscript{80} Women in the Gold Coast became active in the changing economy as they played significant roles in the spatial markets which sprang up in the coastal towns and also participated in the long distance trade between the coast and hinterland. European accounts describe the enthusiastic roles women played in the coastal markets that sprang up. These markets existed by the seventeenth century and

\textsuperscript{77} Gocking, 28.
European presence only enhanced their growth. The Dutch trader, Pierre de Maree provided an extensive description of the Cape Coast market, which he considered to be the finest market on the Gold Coast littoral. These markets were organized on periodic bases so that villages in close proximity will not have the same market days. According to de Marees, these coastal towns had “fixed market days, on which one finds more sales there than other days.”81 This implies that markets days within villages and towns were kept on specific but different days.

Spatial markets existed in the Gold Coast prior to the coming of Europeans and colonial rule. Adu-Boahen maintains that this idea could have spread into the Gold Coast through the activities of traders from Western Sudan. Market towns came into existence in Western Sudanese states very early. The rich kingdom of Ghana became wealthy through the trans-Saharan trade by the eleventh century. By the mid-fifteenth century however, trade routes had been extended southward to the Gold Coast littoral with Sudanese traders carrying out their trading activities along those routes. This route was further extended to Begho, a large and prominent market town which was founded by the Western Sudanese traders during the early years of the fifteenth century.82

The European trader de Marees, describes the Cape Coast market as “a meeting place for African traders of the coast and coastal hinterland as well as European traders and fort residents.”83 He further describes the specific spaces which have been assigned to specific goods within the marketplace. Within the market, there were separate spots for imported textiles, fruits, fish, kenkey...

and all kinds of goods. Women played important roles within these markets through their selling and buying activities. Women from both the coastal towns and the inland states gave the markets its vibrancy through their trading activities. Those from the inland towns walked long distances to bring their produce to the market. Produce such as oranges, limes, bread, millet, bananas and rice were brought to the market to sell to the European residents while women in the coastal areas or from the coast also brought to the market European items which have been bartered or bought from European ships. These included linen cloth, pins, mirrors, knives and polished beads. Local produce such as fish was also brought to the market. In describing the active participation of women in the market in the early seventeenth century, de Maree describes these women as “very eager and industrious who come to the market daily, walking five or six miles to the trading centres.” The vibrancy of women in the market indicates women’s primary roles within the economy. It also signifies the autonomy that women had to actively engage in the public sphere.

The market was a female dominated space. Wilhelm Müller, an employee of the Danish African Company described women as people who controlled the market spaces in the Gold Coast. This description was given after he observed the activities of women in market places in the Gold Coast during his stay in the Gold Coast for seven years. He also observed that “apart from peasants who bring to the market everyday palm wine and sugarcane, there are no men who stand in public markets to trade, but only women.” These women sold all kinds of goods within the market such as palm oil, dried fish, tobacco, livestock and salt. Salt was one of the important

84 Pieter de Marees, 62-63.
86 Wilhelm J. Müller, Die Afrikanische auf der guineischen Gold Cust gelegene Landschafft Fetu (1673), trans. and repr. As Müller’s Description of the Fetu Country, 1662-9, German Sources for West African History, 1599-1669, ed. by Adam Jones (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1938), 134-259.
87 Wilhelm J. Müller, 134-259.
locally manufactured commodities that women traded in the market. Salt was a significant household item which was as used for cooking, bathing, preserving of food as well as for medicinal and religious purposes.

Women’s trading activities in markets along the coast represents their ability to combine their domestic activities with public life. Their unpaid domestic services at home were merged with income which was generated through trade in the markets, accumulation of wealth and properties. The role of women in organized or spatial markets is also an indication of how surplus foods were transferred from the household to the public for commercial purposes or transactions.

**Cape Coast in the Colonial Period**

By 1874, the British had established a colony in the Gold Coast with Cape Coast as the seat of the colonial administration. Three years after formal colonial rule had begun, the colonial seat was transferred from Cape Coast to Accra. The sanitation problem in Cape Coast coupled with the massive protests from educated elites in Cape Coast accounted for the relocation of the colonial capital from Cape Coast to Accra. Insanitary conditions in Cape was as a result of the increase in population. Trading activities in the coastal markets with Europeans attracted people from the interior to settle in Cape Coast. This placed pressure on housing facilities resulting in insanitary conditions during the colonial capital. The British therefore regarded the area as unsafe for their officials. Accra was considered as healthier than Cape Coast. In addition to that, the

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colonial officials wanted to eliminate educated elites from the political scene as they continuously protested against colonial rule. Despite these political changes in the Gold Coast, trading activities continued to exist in Cape Coast. Roger Gocking postulates that the establishment of colonial rule coincided with a “significant expansion in trade between a rapidly industrializing Europe and the Gold Coast. By the end of the nineteenth century this trade was worth three times what it had been in 1874.”90 The introduction of the steamships in 1870s made it easier for African merchants to participate in this trade. This resulted in the rise of merchants such as John Sarbah and Francis Grant of Cape Coast.91 Some Africans became very prosperous to the extent that they traded privately while others became agents for the Europeans.

This colonial period also witnessed an expansion in trading activities in Cape Coast. Constant European trading activities resulted in a rise in the erection of shops and stores within the Cape Coast community. These shops were controlled by both men and women who sold European merchandise which had been imported into the colony. These included textiles and European liquor. As part of the trading activities, there were also petty traders, who sold locally produced goods such as fish, kenkey, salt and wares in marketplaces. In 1891, over 30 percent of the working population in Cape Coast were estimated to be involved in trading. 92 Trade continued to prosper in Cape Coast even in the twentieth century when the Sekondi Harbour was built in 1928 as trade was still carried out from sea ports in Cape Coast and its coastal towns. 93

The British annexation of the Gold Coast in 1874 following the defeat of Asante and the transfer of the colonial capital from Cape Coast to Accra in 1877, ushered the Gold Coast into an

91 Gocking, 42.
92 Gocking, 42
93 Gocking, 42.
era of new economic development. The transfer of the capital from Cape Coast to Accra had by the twentieth century, resulted in the decline of Cape Coast as an important commercial centre. However, indigenous markets and trading activities continued to exist in Cape Coast. These markets sprang up due to the increase in population and constant trading activities that existed prior to colonial rule. In Cape Coast, the local markets that existed were the Kotokuraba market and Anarfo market. These markets are the oldest markets in Cape Coast with their establishment prior to colonial rule.

The Markets in Cape Coast during the Colonial Period

As early as 1866, the British officials had plans of establishing a public market in Cape Coast. Four ordinances were passed by the Legislative Council to regulate the market. Subsequently, bye-laws were to be enacted by the governor to regulate the activities of the market. By the nineteenth century however, a number of markets existed in Cape Coast. These included the Anarfo market, Papratam market and the Kotokuraba market. These markets were dominated by women who sold all kinds of goods ranging from fish, salt and other locally manufactured goods to European goods which have been bought from European firms. These markets were open spaces where women traded in their goods.

Even though the colonial capital had been relocated to Accra, trading activities in markets within the Cape Coast community were very active. The Cape Coast Town Council now served as a medium between the colonial government’s office and the residents of Cape Coast. The British, being aware of the inability of the traditional rulers to effectively take over the administration of

95 P.R.A.A.D., Accra: ADM 1/1/24 “Letter From Governor Cornwall to the British Governor, 1866.”
Cape Coast, introduced the Municipal systems in Cape Coast and also in Accra.⁹⁶ Prior to the establishment of the Cape Coast Town Council, earlier attempts were made by the colonial administration to introduce the Municipal Administration. However, these attempts failed for two main reasons: the issue of financing the council and the involvement of traditional people in the council.⁹⁷ The growth of coastal towns after 1874 enhanced the need for municipal government in the Gold Coast. In 1888, the colonial government offered Africans in the three main coastal towns, Accra, Cape Coast, and Sekondi municipal councils that initially were to have elected African majorities. Controversially, however, these municipalities were to finance their activities out of local taxation.⁹⁸

In 1906, the Town Council Ordinance was applied to Cape Coast for the establishment of the Town Councils. With its long history of opposition to colonial policies, there was considerable protest by the local people. The Town Council Ordinance came at a time when the town's fortunes were in decline. Accra had become the colony's capital, and gold mining and the concessions business had moved to Sekondi. It seemed as though the people of Cape Coast were being punished for constantly opposing colonial policies.⁹⁹ Despite these oppositions from the Omanhene and the people of Cape Coast, the colonial government went ahead and inaugurated the Cape Coast Town Council on 2⁰ July, 1906. The duties of the Town Council included collection of taxes, general conservancy, sanitation, water supply and inspection of nuisances.¹⁰⁰ After inheriting the municipal system, Governor Gordon Guggisburg made some amendments to the

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⁹⁷ Quarcoopome, 84.
⁹⁹ Gocking, 52.
Town Council Ordinance. By the 1920s, the people of Cape Coast had come to accept the Town Council Ordinance. The Cape Coast Town Council provided monthly and annual reports to the colonial governor on Cape Coast.

Serving as a watchdog for the town, the Cape Coast Town Council realized that trading activities formed the basis of the Cape Coast economy. As the area was noted as an important commercial centre, the Town Council saw the need to enhance the market activities. In 1928, a proposal was sent to the colonial government by the Cape Coast Town Council for the building of a new Kotokuraba market for the people of Cape Coast. This was to enhance trading activities in the town. The old and small Kotokuraba market needed to be expanded with the increase in trading activities in Cape Coast. The old marketplace itself was a small open space without much infrastructure where, in principle, anyone could enter from any point and start selling his or her goods without paying a regular market fee or obtaining a license. This proposal was accepted by the colonial government. Despite this initiative by the Town Council, it lacked the required finances to undertake this project. Consequently, the Town Council had to fall back on a loan to build the new market for the people of Cape Coast. An approved loan of £18,000 was given to the Cape Coast Town Council from government funds at an annual rate of 2.5 % per annum interest rate to be used for the construction of the new market. The duration of the loan was thirty years in all as from the date of the first advance.\textsuperscript{101} The construction of the new Kotokuraba market was to be completed by 1930. This contract was given to Mr T.F. Mensah who assured the members of the town council that he would execute the job given to him.\textsuperscript{102} However, due to financial problems, the building of the new Kotokuraba market was not completed until 1931. With the

\textsuperscript{101} P.R.A.A.D., Accra : CSO 20/2/9 Kotokuraba New Market, Cape Coast, File No. 171/31
\textsuperscript{102} P.R.A.A.D., Accra : CSO 20/2/9 Kotokuraba New Market, Cape Coast, File No. 171/31
colonial government’s interest in trading activities in Cape Coast, a directive was issued for the new Kotokuraba market to be made a public market in Cape Coast where all kinds of goods both locally produced and European goods could be sold. This aimed at enhancing trading activities in Cape Coast.

The Organization of Markets in Cape Coast

As stated earlier, with the colonial government’s interest in promoting trading activities in the various markets in Cape Coast, a new Kotokuraba market was erected in Cape Coast. The new Kotokuraba market was an open space situated in the Cape Coast District in the Central Province bounded on the north by Governor Rowe road, on the south west by Kotokuraba road and on the northeast by the Minnow Road. The novel market was the largest market in Cape Coast during the colonial period and it still serves as the largest market in Cape Coast presently. Its size and complexity makes the Kotokuraba market an appropriate symbol of the power of the town and of the market women identified within it. Similar to other marketplaces in the Gold Coast and other parts of West Africa, the market population was predominantly female and dominated organizationally by groups of women who traded each major local food crop. Within the market was a comparable degree of dominance by one ethnic group, the Fante.

Per the contract and plan, the new Kotokuraba market was divided into sheds and stalls. General stalls for European goods were also provided in the markets. However, the construction of General stalls were left out of the contract and hoped to be completed by 1930. The colonial government and the Cape Coast Town Council paid attention to the sheds and small stores for the

103 P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/2/9 Kotokuraba New Market, Cape Coast, File No. 171/31
105 P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/2/9 Kotokuraba New Market, Cape Coast, File No. 171/3
traders in the town. The aim here was to provide market women with the needed space to carry out their activities conveniently.

The market space was divided into sections according to the type of commodity sold and the level of selling. Divisions within the Kotokuraba market were defined by commodity. The sheds were allocated for food items which were brought by market women in Cape Coast and the surrounding coastal villages and towns such as Elmina, Mouree and Anomabo. Each location attracted a characteristic set of buyers and sellers by the kind of transactions that were offered. Goods such as fish—both fresh and smoked were the preserve of the Fante women. Fishmongers brought fish from the sea to the market early in the morning. It is interesting to note that most of the fishmongers were wives of the fishermen who brought in their catch close to the Cape Coast Castle. Grains such as maize, millet and sorghum were brought in from the northern territories. Some market women travelled to these areas to purchase these produce in large quantities since they were not common along the coastal areas. Cassava, tomatoes, pepper and other food crops were brought to the market by women from the town and also neighbouring villages. Fruits such as oranges, mangoes and bananas were also traded in the market. Bananas and other fruits such as oranges were brought to Kotokuraba from the surrounding areas.

Each of the local produce sold in the highest volume had a wholesale yard along the outer edge of the market. Within the Kotokuraba market, these were economic spaces outside the structure of the market where goods purchased in large quantities from other areas of the colony were unloaded from trucks. The wholesale yard represented quite another kind of visually distinct

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location specialized by commodity within the market. Wholesale traders clustered around these areas very early in the morning as the goods were being unloaded by men. Each wholesale trader got her quantity of the commodities. Subsequently, the wholesale traders sold the commodities to retail traders at affordable prices. Most food product wholesaling took place from trucks while most of the retail food trade and some of its wholesaling took place in the sheds in the market. Nevertheless, the goods did not simply pass from a wholesale to a retail level; most goods underwent a chain of redivision and redistribution through retailers of different levels. For example, truckloads of sacks of maize and millet brought in from the north and other areas by wholesalers were sold to retailers who bought multiple sacks and resold them individually to the next chain of retailers, who resold them in the market by the bowlful and other units of measurements. Kotokuraba market with its complexity served as an important center of food trade. Kotokuraba also functions as a center where different kinds of foods and grains were transported in bulk to be broken down into smaller quantities for sale. Thus, truckloads of maize, rice, beans, millet, vegetables and fruits were brought to Kotokuraba for redistribution. Some of the commodities were then sent to the other smaller markets such as Anarfo and Papratam markets in Cape Coast for sale.

The market also had the retail spaces where goods were sold to buyers in smaller quantities and at retail prices. The retail sellers were situated in the sheds within the Kotokuraba market.

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111 Pietilä, , 4.
They sold specific commodities in small quantities to buyers in the market. Allocation of the sheds for market women were based on the kind of goods these women sold. Cassava, plantain, yam and cocoyam sellers were found along the same stretch within the market. Sellers of meat from pigs, cattle and goats had special sheds which were situated within the market. The Fish Market, Pork Market and Cattle Market were all situated within the Kotokuraba market and served as specialized retail centres where these items could be obtained. To ensure the consumption of healthy meat, the colonial government and the authorities of the Town Council ensured that regular inspection of all animals before and after slaughtering and all diseased ones were destroyed before sending them to the market. Slaughter Houses for cattle, pigs and goats were built closer to the Kotokuraba market. This helped to promote easy transportation of the meat into the market. Fruits sellers were also clustered around a particular area. The Firewood market - an open space for selling firewood in the town - however, was erected opposite the Kotokuraba market. Though the sheds were allocated for specific commodities, there were also spaces for mixed retail commodities. These were spaces where some market women sold different commodities under one shed. They placed these goods side by side each other so that a buyer could easily purchase and avoid the trouble of going to specific areas to buy those goods.

Aside the sheds which were allocated for locally produced goods, there were also stalls and offices situated within the new Kotokuraba market. The offices were for the leaders of the markets. The stalls were mostly filled with European products which were imported into the Gold Coast. Closely situated around the Kotokuraba market were European shops such as the United African Company (U.A.C.) and G.B. Ollivant. U.A.C. and Ollivant were known for the sale of European

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114 P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/1/19 Cape Coast Town Council Annual Report on, from 1929-1930, File No. 1478/30
116 P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/1/19 Cape Coast Town Council Annual Report on, from 1929-1930, File No.1478/30
textiles. Among other European shops were those who were licensed to sell wine, spirits and liquor while others also sold provisions such as biscuits, milk, toffees, among others. Some residents in Cape Coast were also issued licenses to sell European goods as liquor. Between 1925 and 1933, there was a high increase in the number of licenses issued to traders in Cape Coast to sell European liquor.\textsuperscript{118} This signifies that there was an inalienable taste for European goods by the people in Cape Coast and in the Gold Coast on the whole during the colonial period. Access to the sheds in the new Kotokuraba market was not free. Traders had to pay a subsidized amount to occupy the sheds. These monies were sent to the Cape Coast Town Council which served as a form of income for the Council.

Markets were held on a daily basis where market women brought their produce to the markets. However, they also kept “fixed market days on which one finds more sales there than other days.”\textsuperscript{119} Nearby villages had different days of the week as their market days to avoid competing directly for the same clientele.\textsuperscript{120} In the case of the Kotokuraba market, Sunday was chosen as the specific market day.\textsuperscript{121} Other days of the week were selected as market days for the other smaller markets such as Papratam and Anarfo markets.

Although the Kotokuraba market became the largest public market in Cape Coast during the colonial period, there were other smaller markets in Cape Coast such as the Anarfo and Papratam as stated earlier. These markets were usually open markets with little structures where traders usually clustered. The erection of additional sheds at the Papratam market had to be left in

\textsuperscript{118} P.R.A.A.D., Accra : CSO 20/1/19 Cape Coast Town Council Annual Report on, from, 1929-1930, File No. 1478/30
\textsuperscript{120} Gracia Clark, Onions Are My Husband: Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 43.
\textsuperscript{121} Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Women, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 2019
abeyance due to financial problems. Market women sold their produce in retail quantities to their customers within these markets. The majority of market women in these markets purchased from produce in wholesale quantities from the Kotokuraba market.

Fig.1: Location of the new Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, completed in 1931. Source: P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/2/9 Kotokuraba New Market, Cape Coast, File No. 171/31

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122 P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/1/31 Annual Report of Cape Coast Town Council, 1932-1933, File No. 1478/30
Gendering the Market Spaces in Cape Coast

Trading in the market is an economic activity which is undertaken by both men and women. However, it has been well documented that this economic activity in Ghana is dominated by women.\(^{123}\) The predominance of women in markets in Ghana has been the outcome of an interplay of historical antecedence and gender ideologies about culturally appropriate occupations for women and men.\(^{124}\) Before the nineteenth century, both men and women engaged in trading activities in the Gold Coast with men playing the more visible role by trading in imported commodities. On the other hand, women were involved in “trade in foodstuffs, locally produced consumables and other items such as beads.”\(^{125}\) The rise of women to dominate market trade in the Gold Coast was the result of the withdrawal of men from the retail sector to be trained for various positions that served colonial administrative purposes. Given the opportunities to rise economically, women gradually solidified their positions in markets and markets eventually became culturally symbolic as avenues of female entrepreneurship.\(^{126}\) Women therefore began to dominate the markets in the Gold Coast.

The spatial layout of the marketplaces in Cape Coast was gendered, as most of the retail food traders were women. Although some women were involved in wholesaling, there were more men involved in wholesaling and transporting truckloads of foodstuff from the interior. Women


were in charge of selling food items and European textiles. On the other hand, men worked in the slaughter houses that were situated within the market environs. Furthermore, men were involved in the sale of alcoholic beverages which were imported into the country. Most of the shopkeepers and bar owners around the marketplaces were men. The presence of men in the market space is a pre-colonial phenomenon. Prior to colonial rule, men controlled the market trade that existed between Africans and the Europeans in the Gold Coast and other parts of West Africa. Women only gained access to these markets through their relationships with these men. Thus, Gracia Clark emphasizes that market trading was male dominated until the cocoa boom in 1910. The shift to a more lucrative cash crop economy meant a diversion of male interests, leading to a gradual takeover by women traders in the country. In addition, many new income opportunities opened up for men with the expansion of jobs in European enterprises. This consequently drew women into the market spaces as men were involved in other ventures. Although there were some male traders at the market, at the first glance women were the loudest and most visible through their interactions with buyers and work colleagues. The market performance of both men and women should be seen in the context of cultural ideas and expectations of gender-specific behaviours. Their ways of moving about in the market reflect the gendered ways of the greater society.

Buying and Selling in Cape Coast Markets during the Colonial Period

At the structural heart of the markets are the commercial operations that ground power relations within them. Buying and selling within the market space is an integral aspect of the market. Buyers or customers were attracted by the sellers within the market. Market women presented themselves as both traders and mothers who needed income to support their household. Therefore, trading required speech, experience, intelligence and cunning. This last aspect is perhaps the most common and controversial quality that both market women and others associate with traders, especially women. While male traders were quite straightforward in their sales rhetoric, market women tried to build an atmosphere of familiarity and trust instead. This helped to attract customers during the daily activities in the market.

The central moment of buying and selling in the market is the moment of purchase when the transfer of goods for money defines the level of immediate benefit or profit each party will realize. Bargaining in the market had either price or quantity as the principal variable. Each commodity within the market had its own conventions of bargaining and units of sale. For instance, tomatoes were sold in boxes while rice, beans and onions were sold in bags as wholesale units. Retail sellers however had containers for measuring their goods. At the retail level, quantity is the point more properly negotiated not price. Clark has reported a similar occurrence of quantity bargaining in the retail sales of foodstuffs at the Kumasi market in Ghana. According to Clark, quantity bargaining is more concealed than price bargaining and it is advantageous to the seller as

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133 Pietilä, *Gossip, Markets, and Gender*, 44
it helps him or her to better control information about the transactions and manipulate the quantities bought by customers.\textsuperscript{135} This applied to Cape Coast markets as well. This is why quantity bargaining required skills and alertness on the part of both customer and traders. Sellers and buyers negotiated the prices of goods. The process of negotiation included establishing the quality and price of the goods involved, the legitimacy of the unit of sales and the “extra” given on top of the bargain.\textsuperscript{136} The appropriate units of sale enabled accurate pricing of goods. A constant topic of negotiation was the sales container, particularly for products that were measured by containers.\textsuperscript{137} This was the case especially in retail sales involving rice, maize, millet and beans.

Market women who traded in either wholesale or retail quantities had their own unit of sale. Those who sold perishable goods such as tomatoes, pepper and some other vegetables were tempted to increase the quantity given to customers in order to avoid the goods from going bad. Some also purchased some goods in high quantities, stored them and resold them at high prices when they were out of season or when prices of such goods increased.\textsuperscript{138} Though bargaining formed an essential aspect of the daily routine in the markets in Cape Coast, both market women and men ensured that profit was made at the end of each day. They tried as much as possible to persuade customers to buy their produce through their market rhetoric. In an interview with market women in Cape Coast, they stressed that sometimes, goods were offered on credit to a customer or buyer and the money collected the next day.\textsuperscript{139} These one-day credit arrangements required that both parties operated in the same marketplace and that the creditor trusted the borrower.

\textsuperscript{136} Tulikki Pietilä, \textit{Gossip, Markets, and Gender, How Dialogue Constructs Moral Value in Post-Socialist Kilimanjaro} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Madison, 2007), 49.
\textsuperscript{137} Pietilä, \textit{Gossip, Markets, and Gender}, 50.
\textsuperscript{139} Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018.
Practically, it also required that they know each other outside the market or as regular and established traders in the market. In Cape Coast, market women who sold items from European shops needed a passbook to trade in these items. According to Clark, the new passbook customers accepted less advantageous terms of trade and did not compete directly with the British firms since, as illiterate women, they had less wealth and a weaker position in local power and communication structures. The passbook holders deposited security with the European firms and were allowed to take out goods which were equivalent to the value of their deposit. They were to pay for the goods after resale of the European goods. Subsequently, they received a commission on paper which was added to their credit limit. The passbook customers could use their accumulated commissions to buy more goods from the same firm but not from other firms. This tied the passbook customers to one particular firm and minimized competitions among firms in Cape Coast.

Marketplaces are bewildering phenomena. Most market activities lasted for only a few hours. People were constantly coming and going to the extent that even the distinction between buyer and seller was blurred. This forms an integral part of the making of the market, its transactions and its people. The markets in Cape Coast further depicted places where different people met and interacted with each other. It should be pointed out that markets in Cape Coast had organized groups which controlled the activities of market women in the market.

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142 Gracia Clark, 110; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3rd April, 2018.
Conclusion

This chapter has discussed Cape Coast as an important centre of trade during the colonial period. By exploring the nature of trading activities in the existing markets, it has highlighted how Cape Coast had developed into an active commercial centre by the colonial period. This is significant because it demonstrates that though the colonial capital was transferred from Cape Coast to Accra, Cape Coast continued to exist as one of the active centres of trade during the colonial epoch.

Fante oral traditions assert that Cape Coast was an important commercial centre prior to European interactions and colonial rule. Intrastate trading activities took place in the main market, Kotokuraba - a small open space. The presence of Europeans enhanced this trading activities, resulting in Cape Coast emerging as one of the significant commercial centres along the coast. By 1929 however, the colonial government and the authorities of the Cape Coast Town Council saw the need to expand these old and small markets. However, due to financial constraints, only Kotokuraba market was rebuilt and expanded. This helped to enhance trading activities in Cape Coast. It further signifies the colonial government’s interest in promoting trading activities in the colony.

The chapter further explored the physical organization of markets in Cape Coast by the colonial period. Increasing trading activities resulted in the emergence of other markets such as the Papratam Market. By the colonial period, spatial markets that existed in Cape Coast were the Kotokuraba, Anarfo and Papratam markets. These markets were organized spaces where women traded in all kinds of goods. However, Kotokuraba became the largest public market in the community. With emphasis on the Kotokuraba market, the new market was divided into sheds and stalls. Divisions were based on the type of commodity sold. Sheds were mainly retail and mixed retail yards for the sale of food items brought into the market by market women from Cape Coast
and the neighbouring villages and towns. The stalls were predominately occupied with imported European items such as textiles and wine. Meanwhile, there were some European shops which were situated closer to the new market. The divisions facilitated easy access to goods within the new market. The proliferation of European shops in Cape Coast attracted most women to serve as customers of these shops. A passbook was required to purchase goods from these European shops. These goods such as textiles, biscuits and drinks were then resold in retail quantities in the markets. The market activities were carried out on a daily basis. However, each of the markets in Cape Coast had its own market day in order to prevent competition for customers on the same market day. Sunday was the market day for the Kotokuraba market.

In addition, this chapter also explored how the markets in Cape Coast became gendered by the colonial period. The market is a female dominated space. With European presence on the Gold Coast and the establishment of trading relationships with Africans, men tended to dominate the market by playing the more visible role by controlling trade in imported goods while women were only involved in trading the locally produced foodstuffs. However, the cash crop economy and the available opportunities offered by colonial administration created a vacuum in market spaces. This became significant as market women took advantage of this opportunity to solidify and dominate the market space. Though the market became a female dominated space, men were responsible for offloading food items from trucks brought from the interior. They also worked in slaughter houses that were situated closer to the markets. Also, they were in charge of selling specific goods such as meat, metal wares and alcoholic beverages.

Finally, the chapter discussed the processes of buying and selling within the markets in Cape Coast which is an integral aspect of the market. Food items were either sold in wholesale or retail quantities. Bargaining was key in this process. Both buyers and sellers bargained for the...
prices of commodities. In the Cape Coast market, quantity was usually the key variable for bargaining. Commodity sellers had units for measuring their food items. Therefore, trading required speech, experience, intelligence and cunning.

Though the colonial capital had been transferred from Accra to Cape Coast, and the colonial government had turned its attention to the development of its new capital, Cape Coast still remained as an important centre of trade along the coast. The approval by the British government to build a new market for the people of Cape Coast signifies the colonial government’s interest in promoting Cape Coast as an important commercial centre in the colony. The new market gave market women access to solidify their position in the public sphere [the market], through which they were able to exercise some form agency by contributing to the development of Cape Coast.
CHAPTER THREE

MARKET ASSOCIATIONS AND MARKET QUEENS

Introduction

On 22nd February, 1956, the secretary of the Cape Coast (Women) Trading Association wrote to the Prime Minister, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, who had been accepted to be the patron of the group, on a unanimous decision by the members of the group to change the name of the association from “Cape Coast Women’s Trading Association” to “Oguaa Women’s Trading Association”. This change in name was during the later days of colonialism in the Gold Coast. This group with its motto as “An organization to improve every trade” requested to meet the patron to discuss relevant issues pertaining to the group. This narrative raises the key arguments of this chapter. Firstly, it helps to reflect on the organization of the markets in Cape Coast during the colonial period. It also raises the issue of the presence of trade associations within the markets during the colonial period and the relevance of these associations to the market and beyond. In addition to that, the narrative brings to light the government’s increasing interest in trading activities in Cape Coast during the colonial period.

The previous chapter looked broadly at Cape Coast as a market centre by exploring the nature of trading activities during the pre-colonial and colonial period, as well as the roles of the colonial government and the Cape Coast Town Council in providing a new market for the people of Cape Coast to enhance trade during the colonial period. Following on from that, this chapter will explore the concept of market associations and market queens. It will do this by looking at

144 P.R.A.A.D., Accra : RG 17/1/23 Invitations (General) 1955
how market associations or commodity groups became key players within the market space. This will be achieved by discussing market associations and the rise of market queens within the markets in Cape Coast during the colonial period. This chapter will further explore the roles of market queens within the markets. Finally it will discuss how colonial policies introduced by the British affected market activities and how market queens and market women adapted to such changes.

The market is an institution where the exchange of goods takes place on a regular basis.\textsuperscript{145} Similar to other markets, the institution in Cape Coast during the colonial period had organized groups and leaders who ensured that trading activities were carried out fairly. These leaders were equally commodity sellers within the market. As stated earlier in the first two chapters, Cape Coast had become an important centre of trade prior to colonial rule. By the twentieth century, the increasing trading activities in the area resulted in an expansion of the spatial markets that existed in the area. The Kotokuraba market as well as other small markets became the focus of attention of the Cape Coast Town Council and the colonial authorities as commercial spaces. These markets were built to promote trading activities in the area. By the late 1940’s, in order to promote their activities within the market, women had formed commodity groups or market associations within the markets. The most vibrant groups were those in the principal and public market, the Kotokuraba market in Cape Coast.

\textbf{Market Associations in Markets in Cape Coast}

As mentioned earlier, even though the market is considered as a space for buying and selling, there was the establishment of commodity groups by market women. Market associations are

organized groups that sell similar produce within the market such as women who sell the same foods in the market. Although there have been a myriad of women’s groups in Ghana, market associations stand out as “the most enduring with the longest history of collective action.” Market union members in Huaraz, Peru, also recalled activism in their early years over taxes and community political issues, suggesting that external challenges often triggered the formalization of collegial ties. These groups represent the interest of market women within communities and on a national level. Markets serve as aggregation points for women traders to sell all kinds of goods. As clearly stated in the previous chapter, the market was a male dominated space until the 1910s with the introduction of a cash crop economy and the boom in the cocoa industry which diverted men’s interest from the retail economy. Women took advantage of this opportunity to solidify their place in the market during the colonial period.

There is a long history of traders’ associations in Ghana and West Africa. According to Gracia Clark, the emergence of traders’ associations within the markets in Kumasi can be attributed to Fante fish traders in Kumasi who wanted to access space for marketing their smoked fish in 1915. It was only in the 1930s and 1940s that these systems were formalized through efforts of market women to negotiate fee schedules and access to marketing sites with colonial officials. This implies that the presence of market associations was prominent and active in the coastal areas, specifically Cape Coast, during the colonial period. Clark and Fergus Lyon further highlight that

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150 Gracia Clark, 50.
the origin of market associations in Kumasi was linked to the “vacuum created when the colonial authorities restricted the influence of chiefs over market affairs after the 1900s.”¹⁵¹ Prior to that, specific court officials under the Asante treasury maintained order, resolved disagreements and collected taxes in the main Kumasi market in addition to those that “regulated border markets and supervised the state traders.”¹⁵² Similarly in Nigeria, commodity traders’ associations in Ibadan's Dugbe market also originated in the 1930s and 1940s in response to the need for negotiation with the colonial government over wartime quotas and new taxes.¹⁵³

Market associations became significant aspects of the market structures in the colonial period as the leaders had the power to control their members and ensured smooth transactions in the market. Due to women’s exclusion from formal colonial administrative structures and economic and social protection systems, market women therefore relied on trade associations that were seen as supportive and regulatory systems to guide their economic activities in markets while serving a vast array of customers.¹⁵⁴

The formation of market associations by traders in Cape Coast is not different from the other markets in the Gold Coast and Africa. Within the Cape Coast markets was the larger market association, Cape Coast (Oguaa) Women’s Trading Association, which functioned as the umbrella group for all traders. Within this larger market association were basic item or commodity groups. Each basic commodity group was connected to a single local market. However, only the smallest

markets had one group for all traders such as the Papratam market. Commodity groups were specialized by the commodity or range of goods that its members sold. Kotokuraba market, the largest, public market in Cape Coast, had more item groups than the other smaller markets. These groups included the Tomato Trader’s Association, Plantain Trader’s Association, Yam Seller’s Association, Fish Seller’s Association, Cassava Seller’s Association, Provisions Seller’s Association, Eggs Seller’s Association and among others. Every food item in the Kotokuraba market belonged to a commodity group. Sellers of various food items within the market belonged to one of these commodity groups.

Membership of market association and commodity groups was normally compulsory and a requirement for trading in the markets in Cape Coast. However, “continuous eligibility depended on a person’s regular payment of dues, acceptance of the association’s regulatory and disciplinary actions and rulings in case of disputes.” New members were required to pay *amanem nsa* (literally the ‘latecomers wine’) to be accepted into the commodity associations. This fee was given to the leaders of the respective commodity groups as a sign of being accepted into the group. Membership was opened to all women irrespective of religion, age or ethnicity. Membership was relatively fluid as some traders may stop for a period and then return. Before being accepted as a member of the association, traders had to demonstrate to their leaders that they would not be too quarrelsome. Group members were expected to “comply with the rules, contribute when others are in need and be aware that failing any of these responsibilities can lead to exclusion from the

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155 Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast. 3rd April, 2018.
157 Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3rd April, 2018, Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Queen Mother of Kotokuraba Market, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast. 3rd April, 2018.
Although there are outstanding differences concerning the roles of these associations between northern and southern Ghana, these associations play essential roles in both parts of the country by organizing the various markets, such as settling disputes and acting as a social safety net for the traders. These market associations and commodity groups therefore function as an “essential link in the value chain to enhance food availability and stability, which contributes to food and nutrition security in rural and urban areas.”

Market Queen Mothers and Commodity Queens-: Criteria for Selection of Market Leaders in Cape Coast.

Women selling any of the essential foods in the markets in Cape Coast had an organized commodity group with leaders who had complete authority over their members. The commodity groups in the markets in Cape Coast especially the Kotokuraba market, generally included the retailers who had sheds and stalls in the market itself; the traders, who brought goods in from various supply areas; as well as the wholesalers who received loads from the suppliers for resale to retailers. The “process of incorporating these three groups of traders into one group meant that most buying and selling transactions took place between traders answerable to the same leader.” Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that primary competitors would normally be members of the same group. Thus, the interactions which were most likely to provoke bad behavior or give rise to disputes happened mostly between two group members.

158 Lilli Scheiterle and Regina Birner, Gender, knowledge and power: A case study of Market Queens in Ghana (Germany: University of Hohenheim, 2018), 13-15.
159 Lilli Scheiterle and Regina Birner, Gender, knowledge and power: A case study of Market Queens in Ghana, (Germany: University of Hohenheim, 2018), 3.
Women traders selling each of the staple food within the market had an organized commodity group with a leader known as *ohemaa*. In the context of markets, *ohemaa* can be translated as “market queens.” Thus, the title of each commodity leader is derived from the kind of commodity sold. This implies that each market *ohemma* adds the name of her commodity to her own title, in the same place that a town or village *ohemma* uses the name of her town. For example, the leader of the traders in yams (*bayere*) or Yam Seller’s Association is called the *bayere-hemma*, and the leader of the traders in tomatoes (*ntos*) or Tomato Seller’s Association is equally referred to as the *ntos-hemma*. These offices are linguistically parallel to the office of the queen mother of Cape Coast.\textsuperscript{161}

Market commodity group leaders were elected by the elders belonging to that unit. The elders comprised all mature traders over about forty years of age. It was the responsibility of the same elders to remove a leader for misconduct to serve as a deterrent to members of the association. Qualities considered positive in a potential candidate included her long experience in the market, her good reputation among her colleagues for reliability and honesty, hard work and her demonstrated skill in settling minor disputes among her immediate neighbours as an elder. In addition to that, skills and values important in negotiation were the primary criteria in selecting new leaders and the need for negotiation often sparked the formation of the commodity group. A candidate’s financial status, for example, which enhanced ceremonial display took second place to personal qualities required for dispute settlement.\textsuperscript{162} Each commodity unit had a leader who was selected or elected by these elders in the market.


\textsuperscript{162} Gracia Clark, “Gender Fictions and Gender Tensions Involving “Traditional” Asante Market Women” *African Studies Quarterly* Vol.11, Issues 2 & 3 (2010), 46; Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen mother, Market Queen mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018.
The overall leader of all the commodity groups in the market was the market queen mother. The market queen mother was elected by a council of elders for life. However, she could be destooled for misconduct. The market queen mother needed to possess good qualities as a trader, honesty, the ability to settle disputes and long experience of trading in the market. Whilst wealth was a secondary element in considering a candidate as a market queen mother in Cape Coast, among the Dagomba of northern Ghana, it was very key in selecting a market queen, known as magajia. According to Lilli Scheiterle and Regina Birner, the economic status of the magajia was considered a reason to nominate her into office to show respect for her status. Her economic status allowed her to support a trader if the group could not. Due to her privileged status, local authorities are keener to accept her position, which is an advantage for the entire group.163

As a criterion for selecting a market queen mother, Clark further highlights that any influential connections to the palace, the government or a political party are legitimate assets because she may tap them later for group advantage.164 Above all this, informants indicated that character is key in electing a commodity leader and a market queen mother.165 A good character was an important criteria as she serves as a role model to the members of the associations in the market. Thus, she needed to exhibit positive character traits. Upon election, market leaders gained legitimacy and enhanced group discipline by adapting titles, ceremonial and court procedures from both traditional and modern models.

163 Lilli Scheiterle and Regina Birner, *Gender, knowledge and power: A case study of Market Queens in Ghana*, (Germany: University of Hohenheim, 2018), 12.
165 Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen mother, Market Queen mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3rd April, 2018; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, and Cape Coast. 3rd April, 2018; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, Retail stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 15th February, 2019.
Leadership within the market institutions integrated “organizational features from a variety of models active within the local community, most notably ethnic traditions.”\(^{166}\) A large number of the traders in the Kotokuraba market sold local foodstuffs. In most of these groups, Fante women traders formed the majority in each commodity group. Thus, from Akan culture, they drew on Fante chiefly traditions to legitimate their status. Per the Fante political traditions, the chief rules in tandem with the queen mother and a council of elders. Offices of the *ohemma* (queen mother) and *opanyin* (elder) were therefore integrated. “Western models of cooperatives with committees and secretaries supplement but do not replace those of the chiefship.”\(^{167}\) Consequently, their procedures of “dispute settlement, election and speech on official events shows values of consultation and mutual consent that were quintessential to the broader Akan culture.”\(^{168}\) Thus, leadership within the market became legitimatized and had the power to rule over a community of women traders.

It should be noted that the titles used by the market queens were not explicitly connected to the traditional hierarchy that paired male and female chiefs at each level. Upon the death or destoolment of the *ohemma*, a successor is elected from the council of elders rather than from a royal family or lineage. Unlike the town chiefs, the market *ohemma* ruled alone rather than complementing the male chief or *ohene* from the royal family. She had the power of ruling over a community of women only rather than a community of men and women. Market queens or *ohemma* therefore defined their followers by occupation rather than by residence, lineage or

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community membership. Since Fante traders predominated numerically in Kotokuraba market and the other smaller markets in Cape Coast, it was no surprise that the political offices that Fante culture reserves for women offered an influential model for market leadership.

Commodity leaders and market queen mothers were not paid wages but received items in kind. For instance, she received food items from the traders within the market on regular basis. This was done as way of showing gratitude to the leaders for their organizational strengths to maintain peace and harmony within the group and the market to ensure smooth commercial activities.

Roles of Market Queen Mothers and Commodity Queens in Cape Coast Markets

This section further discusses the roles of market leaders - commodity leaders and market queen mothers - within the market. As leaders in the market, market queen mothers and commodity queens have specific roles that they perform within and outside the market. Irrespective of the commodity unit that each leader belongs to, they are tasked to perform some important functions for the market. Similarly, market leaders within the Kotokuraba market in Cape Coast were assigned with responsibilities to execute in the market and outside of it.

Some existing literature on market queens portrays them exclusively in a negative way. According to A.B. Banful, “the current marketing system appears to be satisfactory but it is suggested that the role of market queens and commodity leaders or middle women needs to be abolished to reduce retail price.” Similarly, S. Katila also argues that the institution of market

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169 Gracia Clark, *Onions Are My Husband*, 251.
queens and commodity leaders “operates like a cartel and like all cartels presents an impediment to the efficient functioning of the market mechanism”.\textsuperscript{172} These statements by both Banful and Katila therefore denotes that market queens, commodity leaders or middle men are regarded as agents who inflate retail prices in the market for substantial earnings. Interestingly, there is little evidence to support either of these statements. The prevailing negative undertone in literature reflects the widely held perceptions about market queens and commodity leaders in the market within the Ghanaian society. However, irrespective of these claims, market queen mothers and commodity leaders or queens perform key roles within the market which supersede the negative perceptions of some existing literature.

The primary role of the market queen mother within the market is the settlement of disputes. Market women in Cape Coast rank internal dispute settlement first among the duties of market leaders.\textsuperscript{173} It is the duty of the market queen mother to exercise an impartial judgment in settling of disputes in the market. Market women consider the need for swift and impartial disputes settlement as the main reason they join groups and accept group discipline.\textsuperscript{174} Gracia Clark highlights that the loyalty and discipline that give leaders their effective power derives from their

\textsuperscript{172} S. Katila, Between Democracy and Dictatorship: The Market Queen Institution of State, Market and Organizational Ghanaian Daily Markets In States, Markets and Organizational Forms Edited by A. Bugra & B. Usdiken ( Berlin: de Gruyter Studies in Organization ,1997), 284.

\textsuperscript{173} Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen mother, Market Queen mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, and Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, and Retail stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, and 15th February, 2019.

\textsuperscript{174} Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen mother, Market Queen mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, and Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, and Retail stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, and 15th February, 2019; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 2019.
presiding role in internal settlement of differences. This ability by the market queen mother is regarded as essential to long term efficiency in market transactions.\textsuperscript{175}

Ensuring harmony is an integral aspect of the historical organization for traders. Among the Yoruba women in Nigeria, traders in small towns and villages had leaders who were responsible for settling controversies among traders.\textsuperscript{176} In Cape Coast, members and leaders of market associations both agreed that commodity queens have been needed as long as there were disputes between market traders.\textsuperscript{177} Resolving disagreements between colleagues enhances social relations and promotes the flow of business in the markets. Thus, the ability to settle disputes served as the primary criteria in selecting new market queens in the market. Inevitable quarrels among members and customers were brought to the market queen mother for settlement. In doing this, the market queens exercised their authority by interpreting regulations regarding the market. Constant consultation with all commodity leaders was also essential in settling of disputes.

Market queen mothers and commodity leaders were selected for their skills in negotiation and dispute settlement and this allowed the traders to work more efficiently and reduce their transaction costs if a third party was involved. In resolving controversies, both sides openly stated their case to the council of female elders and \textit{ohemma}, who decided who was to blame and what action or measures should be taken. As part of the settlement procedure, it was the responsibility

\textsuperscript{177} E. Amonoo, “The Flow and Marketing of Agricultural Produce in the Central Region with Special Reference to Cape Coast” \textit{University of Cape Coast Centre For Development Studies Research Report Series} No.15, Cape Coast, 1975
of both parties to accept the decisions of the market queen mother.\textsuperscript{178} This enhanced group solidarity and created a peaceful atmosphere for transactions to take place within the market.

For the involved parties, accepting the market queens’ decision was the cheapest way of enforcing a contract. Involving local authorities such as the chief, police or even the court would come with high transaction costs for all involved parties.\textsuperscript{179} It further prevented the risk of involving third parties who were not privy to the market conventions. Market queen mothers and commodity leaders had no enforceable legal jurisdiction and many commercial conventions have no legal standing. As such, market women found formal legal channels virtually useless in the settlement of disputes within the market.\textsuperscript{180}

A good leader was well respected by all conflicting parties through her ability to negotiate and resolve quarrels between them. From the oral testimonies of market women interviewed in Cape Coast, informants emphasized that the market queen mother’s functions were mainly to settle quarrels, to ensure the smooth-running of business, and to be the link between traditional and governmental authorities. Dispute settlement, however, seemed to be one of the most time consuming activities of the queen over the years. Market women also considered the need for immediate, unprejudiced dispute settlement as a main reason for being a member of a market association.\textsuperscript{181} Quarrels usually arose between farmers and traders, amongst traders and between

\textsuperscript{178} Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen mother, Market Queen mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, and Cape Coast. 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, and Retail stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, and 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 2019.

\textsuperscript{179} Lilli Scheiterle and Regina Birner, Gender, knowledge and power: A case study of Market Queens in Ghana, (Germany: University of Hohenheim, 2018), 15.


\textsuperscript{181} Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen mother, Market Queen mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, and Cape Coast. 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, and Retail stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, and 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 2019.
traders and customers. Issues included loan repayment and agreed quality and quantity of goods. Moreover, disputes also arose between traders and market-fee collectors from the Cape Coast Town Council.

Although the primary role of the market queen was settlement of disputes, market queen mothers and commodity leaders served as external representatives of their members. These leaders represented their members with external institutions such as government officials, chiefs and farmers. While resolving disagreements seem to be the daily interest of market leaders which sustained group harmony, external negotiations provided the historical impetus for starting commodity groups or associations.182 The earliest commodity groups after the British conquest in Kumasi was “formed by immigrants, specifically Fante women who sold dried fish in Kumasi markets. In addition, male traders from the Northern part of the country who sold mainly kola nuts and cattle also formed commodity groups as they needed to negotiate their guest status and loyalties.”183 In Ibadan, Nigeria, market associations in Dugbe market were formed in response to the need for external negotiations and hostile policies which were proposed by the colonial administrators.184 As part of the external negotiations, market women in Dugbe market expected negotiations to conform to general procedures of traditional customs. In response to some British market ordinances and economic policies hostile to market women and traditional practices, the market women formed an association in the 1920s. Known as the Lagos Market Women Association, these market women protested through petitions, rallies, boycotts and demonstrations against the colonial policies. “The actions and reactions of market women reinforced the reality

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183 Clark, 264
that women, especially traders, in Yorubaland were strong forces in anti-colonial struggles.\textsuperscript{185}

Market women found it unfair to be taxed by the colonial government since they were already struggling to make a living. The patriotism of the women through their activities produced heroines and great nationalists like Rabiu Alaso, Madam Alimotu Pelewura and Madam Abibat.\textsuperscript{186}

In Cape Coast, market queen mothers and commodity leaders represented their members at external gatherings and always sought the interest of their members. They served as a link between the external institutions and the market women. Since most of the market women could not leave their trading activities and attended these gatherings, it became the responsibility of market queens and commodity leaders to represent the market women at such important meetings.\textsuperscript{187} They petitioned for favourable terms of trade for their members. Also, they ensured that governmental policies such as taxes were not hostile to trading activities and market women. Moreover, market queen mothers ensured that policies and promises made by government, traditional leaders and other external institutions were enforced and fulfilled to promote efficient trading activities within the market.\textsuperscript{188} As a way of serving as external representatives on behalf of their members, commodity leaders or queens also acted as the direct link between producers or farmers in the hinterlands and the urban consumption area. They negotiated with farmers from the interior to get the right quantity of farm produce to be conveniently transported from the hinterland.


\textsuperscript{186} Olufemi B. Olaoba and Oluranti E. Ojo, “Influence Of British Economic Activities On Lagos Traditional Markets, 1900-1960” \textit{Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria}, Vol. 23 (2014), 117. Rabiu Alaso, Madam Alimotu Pelewura and Madam Abibat were leaders of market associations who became strong forces against taxation of women by the colonial government during the anti-colonial struggles in Lagos.

\textsuperscript{187} Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen mother, Market Queen mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018, Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, and Cape Coast. 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018

\textsuperscript{188} Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen mother, Market Queen mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018, Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, and Cape Coast. 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018
to the Cape Coast market at affordable prices for market women to purchase in wholesale quantities.

Moreover, ceremonial duties were among the major duties of market queen mothers and commodity leaders in Cape Coast. Market women placed emphasis on ceremonial representations by their leaders at events within and outside of the markets. These ceremonial activities included festivals, marriage ceremonies, funerals and other customary events. Members of commodity groups expected their leaders and queen mothers to give them ceremonial services. Market queen mothers served as public figures who represented market women in community events and occasions outside the market. They attended festivals, funerals and other important gatherings in the community and sometimes outside the community. In Cape Coast, market queen mothers and commodity queens attended the annual traditional festival, Fetu, which is celebrated by the people of Cape Coast.189 They were accorded with respect as prominent members of the community. As public figures representing market women at special events, they were required to act with dignity and formality. Market queen mothers and the commodity queens were expected to dress decently and behave properly with other queen mothers or leaders present at the event. This helped to enhance the status of their groups outside the market.

Market women placed a high value on ceremonial representation by their leaders especially at funerals.190 Per the Akan religious systems, funerals are regarded as very important for an individual since it ushers the living into the world of the ancestors. Thus, upon the death of a group member or a commodity leader, the market queen mother, commodity leaders and all members attended the funeral. However, the funeral of a market queen mother was a big event. All market

189 Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast. 15th February, 2019.
activities ceased on the day of the funeral as all traders would attend the ceremony. At such events, financial donations are made to assist the bereaved family with the cost of the funeral. Group members who did not contribute to funeral donations did not enjoy such benefits when they were bereaved. In their collaborative work on markets in Techiman, Ghana, C. Dennis and E. Pepprah refer to funeral donations as “cushion for unpredictability.” It was therefore the responsibility of all members of market association to make such contributions during periods when a member was deceased in order to help the bereaved family with the funeral expenses. Making a ceremonial representation by the market queen mother and commodity leaders reflected the loyalty and harmony that existed within the market associations.

Small ceremonies were also organized within the market. The out-going market queen mother and commodity leaders were expected to be present at the installation of new market queens. Their presence signified that the new leader had been accepted by the market and therefore she has been given the mandate to operate as a commodity leader within the market. Above all, market queen mothers and commodity leaders met to celebrate festive seasons such as Christmas. During such events, all commodity leaders gathered to discuss the progress of the commodity groups and the market as a whole. The gathering became an avenue for discussions on achievements, challenges and solution for the coming year. In addition, issues concerning wholesale yards, sanitation problems, waste management issues and storage problems were discussed at these gatherings. Prayers were also offered for stability and prosperity of the market.

The final responsibility of market queens to be discussed in this chapter is commercial regulation of prices. Despite the widespread controversy and allegations that market women

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manipulate prices, Gracia Clark and E. Amonoo in their respective works argue that, the commercial regulation of prices by market leaders is rare and minor.\textsuperscript{192} In trying to find out the price manipulation by market leaders in Kumasi Central Market and Cape Coast markets, Clark and Amonoo respectively argue that this is very uncommon among market leaders. Rather, their main function was to settle disputes among traders in the market.\textsuperscript{193} This idea was reiterated by market women in Cape Coast. In an interview with commodity leaders and market queens, it was emphatically stated that price legislation has never been their role. However, they had the power to ensure that customers were not cheated by traders in the market. They ensured that market women in the market do not charge exorbitant prices above the regulated prices.\textsuperscript{194} Price legislation is solely the duty of governmental authorities. However, in adhering to the prices given by governmental bodies, they ensured that substantial profit is obtained from their daily transactions for their upkeep and to keep the trade flowing. Lilli Scheiterle and Regina Birner also emphasize that they do not leverage their power to set market prices, but instead provide an important informal safety net.\textsuperscript{195}


\textsuperscript{193} Gracia Clark, \textit{Onions Are My Husband: Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 248-249; E. Amonoo, “The Flow and Marketing of Agricultural Produce in the Central Region with Special Reference to Cape Coast” \textit{University of Cape Coast Centre For Development Studies Research Report Series} No.15, Cape Coast, 1975

\textsuperscript{194} Interview with Nana Wangar, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018’ Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen Mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018’ Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 2019; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Retail stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 2019.

\textsuperscript{195} Lilli Scheiterle and Regina Birner, \textit{Gender, knowledge and power: A case study of Market Queens in Ghana}, (Germany: University of Hohenheim, 2018), 1
Colonial Policies and the Markets in Cape Coast during the Colonial Period

Having discussed the roles of market queen mothers and commodity, this section examines how colonial policies affected the markets in Cape Coast during the colonial period and how market queens and market women were able to handle such changes within the market. Prior to the official partition of Africa by the major European nations known as the Scramble for Africa, African economies were advancing in every area, particularly in the area of trade. One of the aims of colonialism was to “exploit the resources of an area to the interest of the colonising nation.” Colonialists therefore pursued this interest by promoting the development of a commodity based trading system and a cash crop economy as well as provision of a trade network that would link the total economic output of the colonised nation to the demands of the colonising state. By 1874, colonial rule had been formally established in the Gold Coast by the British. In order to develop its new colony, the British implemented several policies which had both positive and negative effects on the markets in Cape Coast.

In the twentieth century, the colonial governor, Sir Gordon Guggisberg, introduced the Ten Year Plan (1919-1929), which aimed at providing the country with physical structures that would promote economic development. This post-World War I period experienced a boom in cash crops within the British colonies. Guggisberg’s predecessors had encouraged a cash crop economy as a way of improving the colony’s revenue. Economic policies of the colonial period placed emphasis on the cash crop economy, which consequently affected the existing traditional market system during colonial rule. While the pre-colonial market was a holistic and communal

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197 Settles, 1.
participatory system, the colonial economy promoted an individualistic and capitalistic market system in the Gold Coast. The colonial economic policies therefore only aimed to meet the desires of the colonisers.

The formal establishment of colonial rule in the Gold Coast in 1874 impacted on and modified the existing functions, operations and values of the traditional markets in favour of the colonial economy. These changes were as a result of massive importation of foreign goods, development of a cash crop economy, introduction of British currency, colonial market administration, colonial ordinances, taxation and infrastructural facilities such as roads, rail systems and harbours. The activities of European firms and the introduction of mechanized farming also contributed to the changes in the traditional market systems.

The first significant change to occur in the trading patterns during the colonial period was an increase in demand for foreign goods in the Gold Coast. For example, between 1929 and 1935, there was a rapid increase in the demand for European liquor and spirits. The majority of the residents in Cape Coast were given licenses to sell these European products in the markets. Subsequently, the sale of local liquor was abandoned in the market. Also, the people of the Gold Coast developed an inalienable taste for European goods such as imported rice, flour, processed can foods, biscuits, foreign confectionaries, beauty products and toiletries. The local products lost their value and paved way for European products, which were deliberately presented to the people of the Gold Coast as better than the local goods. Thus, the patronage of local goods in the

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200 Olufemi B. Olaoba and Oluranti E. Ojo, 115.
202 Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3rd April, 2018.
markets suffered a significant setback in comparison to the European goods sold in European stores.

As part of enhancing local trade in Cape Coast, the new Kotokuraba market made provisions for stalls which were mainly for the sale of European commodities such as textiles, alcoholic beverages and biscuits. The allocation of these stalls within the new Kotokuraba market consequently resulted in competition between the demand for local goods and European goods.²⁰³ While most of the traders switched to trade in imported goods, market women who sold locally manufactured produce had to compete for customers to purchase their goods.²⁰⁴ This subsequently affected the amount of revenue that market women obtained in the market in a day.

Moreover, the trading patterns and modes of operation in European stores established by foreigners differed from the local methods. The prices of items sold in these stores, for instance, were fixed and comparatively expensive. Indeed, it was a “‘deaf and mute’ or speechless market system where haggling of goods and public poetic advertisement were not permitted.”²⁰⁵ Prices of European goods were relatively high and buyers did not have the right to bargain since the prices were fixed. This was a deviation from the local markets in the colony. Also, the usual social interaction between buyers and the sellers did not exist in the European shops. Most importantly, goods bought in European shops could not be returned if found unworthy, unlike what operated in the local markets. In Cape Coast, some market women obtained a passbook in order to trade in European items from European shops such as United African Company (U.A.C) which were resold.

²⁰³ Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast. 3rd April, 2018.
²⁰⁴ Interview with Wangar, 3rd April, 2018.
in the local markets. The acquisition of a passbook came with its own conditions which limited market women from trading from other firms in Cape Coast.

As a way of meeting their economic needs and exploiting their colonies, the British introduced the production of cash crop economies into their colonies. By the latter part of the 1920s, the British had introduced the cultivation of cash crops on a larger scale into the Gold Coast. The cash crop economy largely depended on the production of cash crops such as cocoa and oil palm for export. The introduction of the cash crop economy aimed at making the colony an exporter of raw materials needed in the New World and Europe. By the later part of the twentieth century, cocoa had accounted for larger percentage of the Gold Coast’s exports. This subsequently diverted the local people’s attention from the cultivation of foodstuff to cash crops. The majority of farmers therefore began to produce for export outside the Gold Coast during the colonial period. This caused a significant change in the trade pattern within markets in Cape Coast and the Gold Coast in general. The diversion of farmers’ interest into the cultivation of cash crops consequently affected the prices of local foodstuff in the market. Prices of local staple food shot up due to the minimal interest in cultivation of local foodstuff. At this point, market queen mothers and commodity queens therefore served as a link between the farmers of the foodstuff from the interior and the market women. They ensured that enough farm produce were transported from the interior to the market, which were sold to market women in wholesale prices and quantities. Market women then resold the goods to customers at retail prices in the market.

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206 Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen Mother, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast. 3rd April, 2018.
In addition to that, the introduction of a cash crop economy into the colony by the British enabled market women to consolidate their positions in the markets during the colonial period. Male traders turned their attention to this new economic venture as it was very profitable. Others also left the markets to secure jobs with the colonial administrators. Market women in Cape Coast and the Gold Coast in general therefore stepped into this vacuum and solidified their status. It was during this period that market women became more visible in the markets that existed in the Gold Coast. Prior to that, men dominated the markets as they controlled the trade that existed between Europeans and Africans. Access to these markets was only through their relationships with these men. The market was therefore male dominated until the introduction of the cash crop economy when male traders diverted their interest to the lucrative avenue. This resulted in the rise of women to dominate the markets in Cape Coast and throughout the Gold Coast. Becoming visible in the market enabled women to trade in all kinds of goods. Within the Kotokuraba market in Cape Coast, women gained access to sheds and stalls to sell all kinds of goods though the market was flooded with imported goods. However, local foodstuff were still produced and sold within the market.

In terms of administration, the colonial government introduced various ordinances and policies which eventually sought to place autonomy in the hands of the Town Council.

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210 Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3rd April, 2018; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Retail stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 15th February, 2019.
Consequently, authority in the market was reassigned to the Cape Coast Town Council and authorities of the Council became responsible for collecting levies and fines to finance the development of Cape Coast. The Council was equally responsible for the management, security, judicial matters and maintenance of the markets. Though market women had solidified their positions in the market, they acknowledged the status and roles of the Town Council.

With respect to physical and structural transformations, the colonial government expanded the markets and provided basic infrastructural facilities in Cape Coast. By 1931, the colonial government provided the people of Cape Coast with a public market, which replaced the existing small market prior to that period. Upon its completion, sheds and stalls were provided for market women. However, by 1944, new license fees had been introduced by the Cape Coast Town Council, which were approved by the colonial government to be imposed on traders within the market. Hawkers license fees increased from 1 shillings to 2 shillings while market stalls increased from 2 shillings to 5 shillings.²¹¹ Licensing fees for the sale of liquor also increased. This was aimed at generating revenue for the town. Though this served as a form of revenue for the Cape Coast Town Council, market women had to accept these new changes that were introduced by the colonial government and the authorities of the Town Council irrespective of their economic status. They had no option than to pay these new fees to maintain their activities in the market.

As a way of ensuring that food was safe for consumption by the people of Cape Coast, the British in conjunction with the Cape Coast Town Council introduced health measures within the new Kotokuraba market from the latter part of the 1930s. As part of the new public market, some members of the Cape Coast Town Council were appointed to inspect foods that were brought to

the market before they were sold to the public. Slaughter Houses were inspected daily to ensure hygiene. All animals were inspected before they were sent to the slaughter houses. All diseased animals were destroyed. Similarly, the meat was inspected before being sent to the market.\textsuperscript{212} Every market produce was also inspected to prevent unwholesome commodities on the market. Moreover, sanitary structures such as lavatories were also provided around the market and damaged ones repaired.\textsuperscript{213} Drainage systems were built and dustbins were provided within and around the market to ensure the proper disposal of waste in Cape Coast. All these measures introduced by the colonial administrators and the Cape Coast Town Council aimed at promoting the health of the local people. This saved the colonial government the cost of spending money on imported medicines into the colony to treat illness in the colony.

By 1935, the Electrification programme had begun in Cape Coast. Street lighting was an important exercise that was carried out by the British government throughout Gold Coast. Prior to that, the people of the Gold Coast used traditional means of lighting such as fire and lamp. This consequently affected market activities as trading activities could only be carried out during the day. The provision of streetlights in the Gold Coast therefore enhanced many economic activities. Some traders could extend their trading activities into the evening, as happened in Cape Coast.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter has discussed the concept of market associations and commodity queens in markets in Cape Coast during the colonial period. By exploring the formation of market associations, it has highlighted how these associations or commodity groups became key players within the market

\textsuperscript{212} P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/1/19 Cape Coast Town Council Annual Report 1929-1930, PRAAD, Accra; CSO 20/1/39 Cape Coast Town Council Annual Report, 1934-1935
\textsuperscript{213} P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/1/31 Annual Report of Cape Coast Town Council, 1932-1933
space. This is significant because market associations or commodity groups served as support systems for market women in Cape Coast. Organized women’s commodity groups or associations had the mandate to coordinate market activities within the markets which promoted economic productivity.

The formation of market associations is not a postcolonial phenomenon. Market associations have been in existence prior to the independence of the Gold Coast. They have survived as integrated groups though they consisted of different divisions. This is clearly evident in the different divisions of retailers and wholesalers who competed against each other within the market. Market queens drew from Akan traditional political structures to maintain and manage their groups effectively. This enhanced the status of market women as they had the power to exercise control over their members and the activities in the market. Members of the commodity groups accorded leaders the necessary respect by accepting the regulations of the group. Members of the associations also expected their leaders to be firm and fair in the settling of disputes and representing the group in negotiations with external bodies.

The presence of market associations also challenge the view that women had limited access to decision making power which inevitably affected their ability to lead and manage groups effectively. The survival and successes of these groups is attributed to their fluid objectives which are mostly in contrast with governmental or external agencies.

This chapter has also examined the implications of British colonial policies on the markets in Cape Coast. It has been established that colonial policies such as the introduction of cash crop economy, infrastructural development and administrative policies affected markets in Cape Coast and the Gold Coast as a whole. The introduction of a cash crop economy into the Gold Coast diverted men’s interest from the markets into the new lucrative avenue. Significantly, this helped
women to solidify their positions in the markets as well in the public sphere. In addition to that, market women became more visible in the markets during the colonial period. The construction of the new Kotokuraba market provided an enabling environment for market women to trade in all kinds of goods. This helped them to gain access to economic avenues which were formally restricted as the market was controlled by men. Though taxes served as a form of revenue for the colonial government, the introduction of taxes and its subsequent increment however limited the income that market women obtained from their activities in the market.

Though the colonial capital had been transferred from Cape Coast to Accra and the colonial government had turned its focus to the development to its new capital, it is still evident through this chapter that Cape Coast remained an active centre of trade. The increasing visibility of market women in the markets in Cape Coast and the need to ensure smooth trading activities resulted in the emergence of market associations. These associations served as backbones for women traders in the market. Market associations provided the avenue for women to act as unified body through which they were able to consolidate their positions within the markets and contribute to the development of Cape Coast.
CHAPTER FOUR
CONTRIBUTIONS OF MARKET WOMEN TOWARDS THE
DEVELOPMENT OF CAPE COAST

Introduction

Women are active participants and “invaluable contributors in the process of national, human, and economic development.”\(^{214}\) In an interview with the current Assistant Market Queen Mother of the Kotokuraba market, she narrated the stories of some wealthy market women in the Kotokuraba market who helped the needy in the community to earn a livelihood through trade during the colonial period. “Maame Ayeashe, one of such women, was a plantain seller for over fifty years. She had acquired so much wealth through trading such that she owned thirty eight sheds within the Kotokuraba market. With her empathy for the deprived in the society, she trained young needy people to acquire the skills of trading, which served as means of living for such people. I am happy to say that I am one of such children.”\(^{215}\) Maame Ayeashe serves as an example of a market woman who impacted the development of her community. This narrative of Maame Ayeashe highlights the main arguments of this chapter by providing a foundation for examining the contributions of market women to the development of Cape Coast during the colonial period. Her narrative further brings to light the agency exercised by market women in Cape Coast through their activities in the market in the colonial era. In addition, her story highlights the fact that women served as actors within the society during the colonial period.


\(^{215}\) Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 8\(^{th}\) May, 2019.
The previous chapter explored broadly the rise of market associations and market queens in Cape Coast during the colonial period. The increasing visibility of market women in Cape Coast throughout this colonial epoch facilitated the formation of market associations with leaders known as market queens. The market queens served as external representatives on behalf of their members and settled disputes among members in the market. In addition to that, they were also responsible for performing ceremonial functions and commercial regulations. Following on from that, this chapter will examine the contributions of market women to the development of Cape Coast town during the colonial period. This will be achieved by analyzing the narratives of some key market women within the Kotokuraba market and how they exercised agency irrespective of their status in the market.

As discussed earlier in the previous chapters, by the colonial period, Cape Coast had developed into a vibrant centre of trade. The principal market was the Kotokuraba market which had been expanded to promote trading activities. The rise of market associations and market queens signifies women’s solidified positions in the market by the colonial period. Women have been very active in trading activities. Increasing trading activities resulted in the rise of other markets such as the Anarfo and Papratam markets. Market women in Cape Coast were noted for the extent and strength of the markets. The markets served as social meeting grounds where women of different ethnicities gathered and worked together to control and advance their common interest in maintaining a successful market.\textsuperscript{216} As part of their activities in the market, women dominated “business transactions involving farm products, consumer goods and a multiplicity of foodstuffs.”\textsuperscript{217} The presence of commodity associations and market queens created an avenue for


market women to impact the development of Cape Coast. According to Michael Todaro, development is a “multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic, political and social systems which aims to secure a better way of live.”\footnote{Michael Todaro, \textit{Economic Development In the Third World} (London: Longman, 1981), 56.} Within the context of this study, development therefore includes improvements in economic, social and political systems in the society. Thus, this chapter explores how market women in Cape Coast were able to contribute to the advancement of economic, social and political structures in their community through their trading activities, which will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

**Market Women and the Conceptualization of the Market Space**

Market women in Cape Coast have played a vital role in conceiving the idea of a market space. The market space in this context refer to the area where all trading activities took place. Prior to colonial rule, women only traded in economic spaces. These economic spaces were small open areas where market women traded their goods. Though the market had economic spaces for trading, there were allocated slots for the commodities sold in the market. In depicting the Cape Coast market in pre-colonial times, the Dutch trader, Pieter de Marees in a painting, shows the specific spaces in the market space apportioned for the sale of particular items. “There were separate sites for fruits, meat, palm wine, chicken, fish, maize, rice, sugar cane, kenkey, among others.”\footnote{J.O.Hunwick, ‘Songhay, Bornu and Hausaland in the Sixteenth Century’ History of West Africa Vol.1 Edited by J.F.Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 62.} The market was therefore an area where virtually every household staple food could be obtained.

In the case of Cape Coast, the Kotokuraba market was a small open space where petty trading was carried out. As stated earlier, the coming of the Europeans and their settlement on the
coast exposed them to the vibrancy with which market women in Cape Coast traded. The market women were “very eager and industrious in their trading activities to the extent that some walked five or six miles to the market centre to trade their goods.”

Though the Kotokuraba market was a small open space, the continuous trading relationships that existed between the Europeans and the people of Cape Coast resulted in the need for an expansion of the market. In 1928, a proposal was sent by the Cape Coast Town Council to the colonial government for the construction of a new Kotokuraba market to facilitate trading activities in the area. This proposal was accepted by the colonial government. The new market was completed in 1931.

The idea of physical demarcations was incorporated into this new market. The new Kotokuraba market was divided into sheds, stalls and wholesale yards. The sheds were mainly for retail purposes while the stalls were specifically designed for the sale of European goods such as textiles. The allocation of sheds for market women was based on the type of commodity sold. Thus, similar food crops were found on the same stretch. The wholesale yards were areas outside the structure of the market where women usually clustered very early in the morning for their goods which were brought from the interior. The physical demarcation of space in the market is significant because it helped traders to easily access specific goods without having to wander through the whole market. Market women in Cape Coast therefore played a significant role in ensuring that having the physical demarcations within a market was a concept integrated into the new market when it was constructed by the colonial government in 1931. This is significant as it enhanced commercial activities within the area.

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The institutionalization of market associations and market queens

Another major contribution to the development of Cape Coast by market women in Cape Coast during the colonial period is their key role in the institutionalization of market associations and market queens. The formation of market associations was a significant change in the market because it provided the avenue for women to exercise some of agency in the community. The main market association in Cape Coast was the Cape Coast (Oguaa) Women’s Trading Association. This organization functioned as the umbrella group for all market women within the Kotokuraba market. Members of this association belonged to smaller commodity groups in the market such as Tomato Trader’s Association, Yam Sellers’ Association and Fish Association, among others.

By the colonial period, market women had become more visible in the market by taking advantage of the vacuum created by men whose attention had been drawn to the cash crop economy and new job opportunities created by the colonial administration. This gave the women the opportunity to form market associations, which further aided them in solidifying their positions and status in the market. The leaders of these groups are known as market queens who acted as independent leaders within the market. As able leaders, they were incorporated into their structural organization. From the time of inception, these market associations, commodity groups and the rise of market queens became an established institution within the market. As a result, members accorded their leaders the necessary respect.

These associations provided women with an avenue to exercise their authorities as political leaders within the market without any restrictions from the Cape Coast Town Council. Subsequently, they exercised control over traders within the market as responsible political leaders.

221 P.R.A.A.D., Accra: RG 17/1/23 Invitations (General), 1955.
leaders. In addition, their well-defined structure accorded them the authority to settle disputes among traders as well as between customers and traders. This role of the market queens was very important to members of the market associations as they regarded it as the cheapest way of settling disputes in the market and in the community. In an interview with the market women in Cape Coast, they emphasized that involving the police, the chief or the court in settling a dispute came with high cost which most of them did not have the means to pay.\textsuperscript{222}

Despite market queens not having any legal jurisdiction, market women chose to go to them as they regarded the legal channels as virtually useless in the arbitration of cases in the market.\textsuperscript{223} Disagreements between commodity members in the markets were very frequent. Thus, this seemed as one of the most time consuming activities of the market queens.\textsuperscript{224} The organizational ability of the leaders of the market associations to settle their differences without any external influence served as a form of agency exercised by these market women. They also exercised agency by playing a significant role in the reduction of hawkers’ license fees between 1936 and 1938. Market women in Cape Coast found it unfair for them to pay 2 shillings as hawkers’ fees while 1 shilling was paid by their fellows in other parts of the Gold Coast.\textsuperscript{225} Thus, Dinah Korsah and Adjuah Anfuah, both market women, acted as representatives on behalf of their colleagues and sent several petitions to the Town Council for a reduction in the hawkers’ license fees.\textsuperscript{226} The argument here was that a reduction in the hawkers’ fees would not result in loss of revenue. Rather, it would increase considerably the number of licenses that would be obtained by

\textsuperscript{222} Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 8\textsuperscript{th} May, 2019, Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba market, Cape Coast, 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 2019.
\textsuperscript{224} Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen Mother, Market Queen Mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018.
\textsuperscript{225} P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/2/6 Cape Coast Town Council, Monthly Minutes of 1936-1938.
\textsuperscript{226} P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/2/6 Cape Coast Town Council, Monthly Minutes of 1936-1938.
the market women. Consequently, the hawkers’ fees were reduced from 2 shillings to 1 shilling per month.\textsuperscript{227} Although market queens operated under the Cape Coast Municipal Authority, the office of market queens became independent and autonomous without any interference from the chiefs or the Town Council.

\textbf{Market Women as Mentors in the Community}

Market women in Cape Coast served as mentors to younger generations in the community. This was done by training younger people to acquire the skills of trading. Trading within the market was an integral aspect of the market space. In this process, market women built an atmosphere of trust and familiarity with their customers in the market.\textsuperscript{228} Moreover, buying and selling required speech, experience, intelligence and cunning.\textsuperscript{229} This expedited the process of attracting customers during the daily activities in the market.

Market women trained younger females in the community to attain these expertise. Skills such as attraction of customers, bargaining and selling were also taught. The art of bargaining in the market was very essential to buying and selling in the market. It required intelligence and alertness on the part of both the seller and the buyer. As part of serving as mentors to younger women, these skills were taught without having any adverse effects on the buyers. This helped them to gain marginal profit from their activities in the market at the end of the day.

The period for training was not fixed for all trainees. Market women in Cape Coast stressed that a trainee was ready to trade independently if she was quick enough to learn the skills associated

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{227} P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/2/6 Cape Coast Town Council, Monthly Minutes of 1936-1938.
\item \textsuperscript{228} Tulikki Pietilä, \textit{Gossip, Markets, and Gender: How Dialogue Constructs Moral Value in Post-Socialist Kilimanjaro} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Madison, 2007), 44.
\item \textsuperscript{229} Pietilä, 38.
\end{itemize}
with training within the shortest period.\textsuperscript{230} It is interesting to note that almost all informants interviewed emphasized the fact that they were apprentices of wealthy market women in the Kotokuraba market.\textsuperscript{231} The Queen Mother of Kotokuraba Market, for instance, was trained by a relative since her parents lacked the means to support her education.\textsuperscript{232} However, she did not regret being trained as a trader since she has been able to cater for her children through to the tertiary level thanks to her career as a market woman.\textsuperscript{233}

Though most market women served as trainers of other younger women in the community, this work focuses on three prominent women in the Kotokuraba market who were exceptional among these women. Maame Ayeashe, Mana Wukua and Madam Appea exemplify market women who looked beyond their status and exercised agency in the market and in Cape Coast community as a whole. These were well-known market women in the Kotokuraba market who served as mentors to younger ones in the Cape Coast Community. Maame Ayeashe, an indigene of Cape Coast’s Queen Anne’s Point, was a plantain seller in the Kotokuraba market. She had traded in the market for over fifty years before her death in the latter part of the 1980’s. Her fortunes, eagerness and activeness were recognized by all traders in the market. She was introduced to trading in the market at a very young age by her parents. Through her regular activities with her mother in the market, Ayeashe grew up into a responsible and intelligent market woman who had developed the skills of trading. Maame Ayeashe was one of the market women who ensured the regular supply

\textsuperscript{230} Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Queen Mother, Queen Mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 8\textsuperscript{th} May, 2019; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba market, Cape Coast, 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 2019, Interview with Madam Mary, Market Woman, Retail stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 2019.
\textsuperscript{231} Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Queen Mother, Queen Mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 8\textsuperscript{th} May, 2019; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba market, Cape Coast, 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 2019.
\textsuperscript{232} Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Queen Mother, Queen Mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018
\textsuperscript{233} Interview with Essiah, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018
of plantain from the interior to the Kotokuraba market. Through her trading activities, she was able to amass wealth to the extent that she owned thirty eight (38) sheds in the Kotokuraba market. As a benevolent trader in the market, she offered some of her sheds to other people especially the younger women she trained to trade in staple foods in the market.  

Similarly, Mana Wukua and Madam Appea were also among the women who accumulated significant wealth through their trading activities in the Kotokuraba market. Mana Wukua and Madam Appea owned thirty five (35) and thirty (30) sheds respectively in the Kotokuraba market. As a way of giving back to the community, these three, trained young needy children, specifically females, who did not have access to schools in the Cape Coast community. These trainees learnt the skills associated with trading and how to make profit in the market. When they noticed that the apprentices had acquired enough skills on their own, they offered them some of their sheds within the market to sell their products. Three of the market women interviewed in the Kotokuraba market were products of these wealthy women who served as mentors in the community. This helped to reduce unemployment in the community. It also reduced the rate of teenage pregnancies among young females in the society as the females were busily occupied with commercial activities.

Aside inculcating in their trainees the skills of trading, senior market women also provided domestic training to younger girls in the community. Junior market women were taught to be hard working and responsible ladies within the domestic space. Skills such as dressmaking and cooking

234 Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Queen Mother, Queen Mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3rd April, 2018; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 8th May, 2019; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba market, Cape Coast, 15th February, 2019, Interview with Madam Mary, Market Woman, Retail stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 15th February, 2019
235 Interviews with Essiah, 3rd April, 2018; Wangar, 8th May, 2019; Ekua, 15th February, 2019.
were taught through the market associations.\textsuperscript{236} This helped to prepare younger girls for their dual roles as wives and mothers in domestic spaces as well as market women in public spaces such as the market. Dressmaking served as a form of employment to these younger ladies upon completion of the training. This subsequently helped to curb teenage pregnancy and unemployment within the community. Regardless of their status in the society, market women therefore exercised a form of agency within the Cape Coast community through their ability to help younger people gain their livelihood. This further served as a way of promoting a sense of self-fashioning among younger females and also prepared them to be responsible members of their families and the society.

**Market Women as Political Agents**

The struggle for independence brought a “solid and visible alliance between Gold Coast nationalists and market traders.”\textsuperscript{237} Social networks and associations were necessary avenues for dissemination of nationalist ideas. In Nigeria, women became politically active with the development of three different market women’s associations in Lagos that mirrored ethnic and class divisions present in the city.\textsuperscript{238} Similarly in Tanzania, women’s Ngoma (female dance groups) societies were important channels for inculcating and mobilizing political consciousness among the people.\textsuperscript{239} Likewise in the Gold Coast, market women played this role during the colonial period. As a distinct group responsible for selling staple foods and imported European products in the market, they became the victims of the economic and social hardships associated with the post- Second World War epoch. Thus, these market women were at the “forefront of the

\textsuperscript{236} P.R.A.A.D., Accra : ADM 23/1/1095 Cape Coast District Welfare Committee, 1946


riots and boycotts that hit the Gold Coast in 1948. Although largely illiterates, market women were organized and became the architects of the party that eventually led the Gold Coast to gain independence.\textsuperscript{240} This therefore places significance on market women as they were quintessential in the attainment of independence for Ghana.

Among the market women in the Gold Coast, specifically, Cape Coast, Accra and Kumasi, was an established complex system of trade networks which allowed for easy distribution of goods. As mentioned earlier, large markets had commodity groups with leaders addressed as \textit{ohemaa} or queens. The leaders of the commodity groups possessed complete authority over their members and could call on the collective support of their members. The organized market associations and commodity groups had a well-defined leadership structure that ensured swift and easy communication and coordination of affairs among the traders and with their fellows from other markets. This provided the conditions for the development of a “social organization of immense power which radiated from the centre into every corner and room of the major towns.”\textsuperscript{241} Nationalists therefore relied on the leadership abilities of market queens to promote their political ideologies.

In the 1940s, one of the prominent nationalist leaders, J. B. Danquah praised market women as “heroically devoted mothers, hardworking and underpaid workers.”\textsuperscript{242} Market women returned this support by collecting and contributing money for the nationalist parties, making speeches at their rallies and mobilizing their market colleagues and commercial contacts to support the

\textsuperscript{241} C. L. R. James, \textit{Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution} (London: Alison and Busby, 1977), 55.
\textsuperscript{242} Gracia Clark, “Gender Fictions and Gender Tensions Involving “Traditional” Asante Market Women” \textit{African Studies Quarterly} 11:2 & 3 (2010), 51.
In addition, Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of the Convention People’s Party (hereafter CPP) relied on market women to mobilize support for his party in the attainment of independence for the Gold Coast. Subsequently, Nkrumah’s CPP continued to draw on market women, among others, for financial and political support. Thus, market women became the medium through which political support could be easily mobilized.

The CPP was a mass party with its support base covering a wide spectrum of the population. It included various classes of people such as workers, ex-service men, farmers, fishermen, market women and the unemployed youth. By 1955, Nkrumah became the patron of the Cape Coast (Oguaa) Women’s Trading Association. The Cape Coast (Oguaa) Women’s Trading Association was the umbrella group for all commodity groups in the Kotokuraba market, the largest market in Cape Coast during the colonial period. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the commodity groups were smaller organized groups of women who sold similar goods in the market. The title of each commodity leader was derived from the type of commodity she sold. Thus, each commodity leader added the name of her commodity to her title, ोहेमा. For example, the commodity groups included Plantain Sellers’ Association, Cassava Sellers’ Association and Tomatoes Sellers’ Association.

Kwame Nkrumah recognized the organizational prowess of these market women that allowed them to reach their customers in the most remote places. Nkrumah also acknowledged the relevance of their social networks and tapped into them to spread his political ideologies. Subsequently, Nkrumah created alliances with the market women especially the leaders of the

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243 Clark, 51.
244 P.R.A.A.D., Accra: RG 17/1/23 Invitations (General), 1955.
organized commodity groups.\textsuperscript{245} Together with the Convention People’s Party (CPP), Nkrumah gained popularity and support all over the country. Prior to the 1954 elections, market women had aligned themselves to the party and performed the nationalist campaign needed to make the CPP successful. Through these market women, Nkrumah and the CPP mobilized support at the grassroots for the 1954 and 1956 elections. Nkrumah then maintained this relationship with the market women in Cape Coast as a way of promoting his ideas as they became agents for promoting political consciousness in the Gold Coast.

**Market Women and Revenue**

Market women are vital contributors in national and economic development. Through their contribution of revenue in the form of daily payment of taxes, market women contributed to the development of Cape Coast. Revenue is “an increase in the net worth resulting from a transaction.”\textsuperscript{246} There are four main sources of revenue for general government: taxes and other compulsory transfers imposed by government units; property income derived from the ownership of assets, sales of goods and services; and voluntary transfers received from other units.\textsuperscript{247} Revenue in this context focuses on the amount of money generated through the payment of taxes by market women in Cape Coast during the colonial period.

From a financial point of view, it was the avowed policy of the British colonial government that its colonies should be financially self-sufficient. As such, the budget of the colonies should be balanced annually.\textsuperscript{248} The Gold Coast was no exception. Apart from large scale projects such as

railways and harbours which were financed by loans from the colonial government, any schemes for economic development in the colony were dependent on financial support from the colony itself. Such money for the government which served as a form of revenue could be raised within the territory by means of customs duties, license fees and taxes.\textsuperscript{249} In Cape Coast, the new market provided the colonial government with a key source of revenue which served as means of financing the colony.

Prior to the opening of the new Kotokuraba market, the Cape Coast Town Council and the colonial government anticipated the success of the new market in raising revenue for Cape Coast and the colony. In 1931, the Kotokuraba market was completed to facilitate trading activities in the Cape Coast community. A few months after the market was opened in 1931, the Acting Governor addressed the Legislative Council and highlighted the importance of the market to the sustenance of the Cape Coast Town Council. He stated that “the new market at Kotokuraba, Cape Coast, is now open and its advantages are greatly enjoyed by the local people. The revenue derived is considerable and should in time place the municipal government in a sound financial position.”\textsuperscript{250} This reflects how the new market became a key source of revenue for the Town Council and the colonial government.

The increasing trading activities in Cape Coast attracted women from surrounding towns and villages to participate in business within the new market. With the demarcation of the market space into shed and stalls, market women were required to pay to occupy these spaces in order to trade their goods in the market. Within the market, the Cape Coast Town Council was responsible for receiving taxes and rents paid by market women. The taxes were in the form of market tolls

\textsuperscript{249} T.C., 140.
\textsuperscript{250} P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/2/9 Kotokuraba New Market, Cape Coast, File No. 171/31
commonly referred to as “tickets” whilst the rents were paid to the Council for using the stores and stalls provided for the traders.\textsuperscript{251} The taxes and rents paid by the traders were major sources of internally generated revenue for Cape Coast Town Council. This was collected by the Market Fees Collectors appointed by the Town Council.\textsuperscript{252} The tickets were issued on a daily basis while the rents were paid monthly. At the end of the day, the total money collected was sent to the Town Council.\textsuperscript{253} These monies served as a form of income for the Council in order to be used for developmental projects in the society. It should also be mentioned that though one main source of revenue for the colonial government and the Cape Coast Town Council was from the taxes and rents paid by market women, the colonial government also obtained revenue through the issuing of licenses to sell beer, spirits, liquor, wheel rates and dogs as well as house rates.\textsuperscript{254}

The revenue generated from taxes and fees paid by market women in Cape Coast were channeled into developmental projects within the community. Between 1934 and 1935, the Town Council used the revenue generated from the market and other sources to provide the community with twenty four (24) standing pipes.\textsuperscript{255} This ensured the abundant supply of water to the people living in the Cape Coast community. Furthermore, the Town Council and the colonial government had begun the Electrification Project by 1932. In 1933, the first phase of the project had been completed with financial assistance from the revenue generated from the markets within Cape Coast, mainly Kotokuraba and Papratam markets.\textsuperscript{256} Moreover, the Town Council provided sanitary facilities within and around the markets while damaged ones were repaired.\textsuperscript{257} Provision

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{251} Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 15\textsuperscript{th} February, 2019.
\textsuperscript{252} P.R.A.A.D., Accra CSO 20/2/6 Cape Coast Town Council, Monthly Minutes of 1936-1938
\textsuperscript{253} Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3\textsuperscript{rd} April, 2018
\textsuperscript{254} P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/1/39 Annual Report, Cape Coast Town Council 1934-35, File No. 1478/30
\textsuperscript{255} P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/1/39 Annual Report, Cape Coast Town Council 1934-35, File No. 1478/30
\textsuperscript{256} P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/1/31 Annual Report of Cape Coast Town Council, 1932-1933.
\textsuperscript{257} P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/1/31 Annual Report of Cape Coast Town Council, 1932-1933
\end{flushleft}
of dustbins and drainage systems ensured proper disposal of waste in Cape Coast, subsequently enhancing the health of the populace. “An amount of £200 was disbursed from the market fees collected for the construction of a urinary in the market. This saved market women the trouble of leaving their wares to pilferers to walk to a latrine some 60 yards from the market for that purpose.” Evidence from the monthly minutes of the Cape Coast Town Council also shows that a donation of £100 from market dues was made towards the construction of the Maternity Ward at the Infant Clinic, Cape Coast in 1937. All these infrastructural provisions enhanced the standard of living of residents in Cape Coast.

Table 1.1 shows the amount of revenue received by the Town Council in Cape Coast during the colonial period. From the table, it is evident that the amount of revenue collected from market women within a few years of the construction of the new market was remarkable. This is significant as it reveals clearly that the amount of money received from the market women in both markets, Kotokuraba and Papratam markets exceeds the other sources of revenue for the Town Council.

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258 P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/2/6 Cape Coast Town Council, Monthly Minutes of 1936-1938
259 P.R.A.A.D., Accra: CSO 20/2/6 Cape Coast Town Council, Monthly Minutes of 1936-1938
Table 1.1  Cape Coast Town Council Financial Statement of Revenue from 1940/41- 44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1940/41</th>
<th>1941/1942</th>
<th>1942/1943</th>
<th>1943/1944</th>
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<tr>
<td>Spirit License</td>
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<td>182</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>256.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wine &amp; Beer License</td>
<td>130.0</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkers’ License</td>
<td>198.0</td>
<td>207.13</td>
<td>241.10</td>
<td>255.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs License</td>
<td>59.15</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>13.10</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Dues</td>
<td>1792.15.11</td>
<td>2005.13.9</td>
<td>1984.8.5</td>
<td>2354.10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slaughter House Dues</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>176.6</td>
<td>191.6.6</td>
<td>192.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Extracted from CSO 20/2/23 Cape Coast Town Council-Statement of Revenue and Expenditure, with Certified Copy of the Auditor’s Reports for 1940/41 – 1943/44, P.R.A.A.D., Accra.

**Market Women and Food Security**

Market women’s role in ensuring food security and sufficiency in the urban areas is irreproachable. This is due to three main things. Firstly, market women were essential in the transportation of the foodstuffs from the remote areas to the urban consumption centres. This helped to reduce the post-harvest losses that farmers encountered regularly. Consequently, it encouraged farmers to continue production of food crops in the remote areas due to the ready market made available by the market women. Secondly, the financial assistance given to farmers to invest in their farming activities had allowed the hitherto subsistence farmers to commercialize their activities.\(^{261}\) Thirdly, market

\(^{260}\) The financial statements of the Cape Coast Town Council for the financial years 1940/41 -1943/44. The symbol ‘£’ stands for Pounds , ‘s’ for shilling and ‘d’ for pence.

women were key preservers of foodstuffs during periods of excess production. Excess food was stored for the future or during the lean season. This was mostly done by women who sold food items such as maize, rice, yam and beans. Preservation methods was mainly drying of food items such as maize. All these efforts by market women in Cape Coast contributed towards the attainment of food sufficiency and security in Cape Coast and its surrounding towns and villages during the colonial period.

The Assistant Market Queen Mother of the Kotokuraba market has highlighted that, the regular transportation of foodstuffs from the interior to Cape Coast resulted in the establishment of a group to facilitate this process. The group known as Techiman, was responsible for ensuring that the necessary and sufficient foodstuffs are available on the market. Market women belonging to the Techiman group were usually mobilized to travel to Techiman to purchase foodstuff from the farmers. These women were assigned to specific farmers and traders in Techiman from whom they bought all the necessary goods before returning to Cape Coast. This group has existed in the market since the formation of the market association in Cape Coast. As a way of ensuring food security and regular supply of food in Cape Coast, the current Market Queen Mother of Kotokuraba, Nana Ama Essiah played a key role in that. Today, market women remember that Nana Ama Essiah, in her early years of trading in the market, was the only one who transported tomatoes to Cape Coast on a large scale during a period of shortage in the 1950s. As a result of this, the leaders in the market appointed her as the leader of the Tomatoes Seller’s Association in

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262 *Techiman* was derived from the name of the town “Techiman”, which was known as an area for the cultivation of diverse food crops in the country as well as a vibrant market centre.

263 Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 8th May, 2019.
Market women in Cape Coast were therefore important actors in ensuring the regular supply of food in the market for the inhabitants of Cape Coast.

**Challenges faced by the market women in Cape Coast**

Despite the significant contributions of market women in the development of Cape Coast, their operations were engulfed by several challenges. This section discusses some of the difficulties that market women encountered during the colonial period.

**Lack of education**

The majority of market women in Cape Coast were denied equal access to education with men. This is partly attributed to the socialization process that both sexes were introduced to. In the Gold Coast and other parts of Africa, women were perceived to be homemakers and therefore they were nurtured to care for the home and children. Men, on other hand, had access to education with the perception that the man is superior to the woman.**265** “Most women have been marginalized in terms of education and equality. For some of my colleagues who have passed away and myself, , our mothers didn’t send us to school because we were trained as helpers in the kitchen and traders in the market while our brothers went to school and became prominent in the community, explained Nana Wangar, the current Assistant Queen Mother of Kotokuraba Market.”**266** Market women who were fortunate to have had access to education had very little compared to their male counterparts.

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264 Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen Mother, Kotokuraba Market, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3rd April, 2018; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, 3rd April, 2018; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 19th February, 2019; Interview with Kwamena Binney, Secretary of the Market Queen Mother’s Office, Kotokuraba Market, 3rd April, 2018.
265 Interview with Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, 3rd April, 2018
266 Interview Wangar, 3rd April, 2018
The lack of education and low literacy level among market women limited their ability to acquire vocational skills for self-employment and access information on support services for improving their business.\(^{267}\) This subsequently affected their ability to keep records of the foodstuffs they traded within the market. Thus, profits or losses were not easily noticeable by the market women. Inevitably, this lack of or limited access to education further hindered their ability to measure the performance of their business.

**Transportation of foodstuffs to the urban centre**

Other factors limiting market women in the effective performance of their roles were the problems they faced during the transportation of foodstuff from the interior to the markets in Cape Coast. Popular among them was the limited availability of vehicles for the transportation of goods from the interior to the urban centre during the colonial period. One of the interviewed market women emphasized the fact that one main challenge faced by market women in Cape Coast was transportation. “Vehicles were not in abundance. I remember my mother went to Techiman every two weeks for foodstuffs because the trucks that were used to convey the goods operated once every two weeks.”\(^{268}\) Thus, the limited availability of vehicles restricted the weekly supply of farm produce form the interior.

Closely related to the above problem is the frequent vehicular breakdown experienced by the market women. This resulted in the perishing of some of the foodstuffs such as tomatoes and plantain due to the produce staying in a vehicle for a long time as a result of vehicular breakdown. The frequent failure of vehicles was attributed to the poor roads and absence of adequate vehicles used to transport the commodities from the farm to the market centres. Moreover, the issue of

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\(^{268}\) Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 19th February, 2019
security was a challenge that market women had to grapple with in the process of transporting farm produce to the market in the urban centres. “Our job is very risky especially for the women who travelled to the hinterlands for agricultural goods. Sometimes, we were scared of being attacked by robbers and even wild animals due to the thick vegetation. My mother and I usually didn’t have inner peace until we returned to Cape Coast.”

Though market women ensured the security and regular supply of farm produce on the market to feed the people in Cape Coast, their lives were at risk in performing this role.

**Lack of Financial Support**

Financial capital is necessary in starting and expanding the businesses of market women. Market women in Cape Coast emphasized that a lack of financial support was among the major challenges of market women in Cape Coast during the colonial period. The market women had limited access to credit support systems to help them expand their business. From interviews conducted with market women in Cape Coast, it is evident that the majority of market women received their starting capital from relatives while others achieved their status as traders through their kin. Even though the market women in Cape Coast generated revenue for the government through their daily payment of taxes, there were no credit support systems from the government to help market women expand their trading activities. The only form of financial support for the market women was the ‘susu’ system which existed among the commodity groups in the market. The ‘susu’ system was a “revolving loan scheme introduced by commodity group members where members contributed a daily fee to a fund and took turns to receive the accrued

269 Interview with Wangar, 19th February, 2019.
271 Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen Mother, Kotokuraba Market, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3rd April, 2018; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, 3rd April, 2018; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 19th February, 2019
fund on [a] weekly basis." This helped commodity group members to access loans or credit without any collateral or interest. It was not, however, enough to support market women’s activities.

Market women also highlighted the difficulty in getting loans from the banks to support their business. With the establishment of the Bank of Gold Coast in 1953, customers of the bank such as farmers could access financial assistance in the form of loans. However, market women did not enjoy this opportunity because they lacked the necessary collateral required for the acquisition and repayment of a loan. Furthermore, the bureaucracy involved in acquiring a loan was too complex and overwhelming for most market women especially those with little or no educational background. Thus most women were denied access to formal credit and were therefore not able to improve upon their economic activities via bank loans. Instead, they relied on the ‘susu’ system which most often than not was not adequate for the expansion of their activities.

**Male Perception of Women**

Pre-colonial African societies witnessed an era of gender parity. Prior to colonial rule, women’s economic activities were complementary to those of men. Colonialism and activities of Christian missionaries redefined the African concepts of “daughter,” “wife,” and “mother,” to conform to the Victorian notions and interpretations of the social positions of females. The redefinition of these concepts enhanced men’s gendered status in the Gold Coast and Africa in general. Thus, men

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272 Akua O.Britwum and Angela D.Akorsu, “Market Women’s Association In Ghana” In *Women’s Activism in Africa* Edited by Baghis Badri and Aili Tripp(London: Zed Books), 57.
273 Interview with Nana Ama Essiah, Market Queen Mother, Kotokuraba Market, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 3rd April, 2018; Interview with Nana Wangar, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, 3rd April, 2018; Interview with Auntie Ekua, Market Woman, Retail Stall, Kotokuraba Market, Cape Coast, 19th February, 2019
274 P.R.A.A.D., Accra, ADM 7/18/12 The G.C.B.’s 10th Anniversary.
in authority, husbands and fathers welcomed this opportunity and exercised greater control over women in the society and households. Consequently, men gained more recognition and status than women during the colonial period. The work and place of women were relegated to the background. Women were only seen as wives and mothers though they played the dual role of producers and reproducers in the society. Men were considered to be as the head of the household and the community. Meanwhile, the activities of women became only respected within the domestic space. Women’s activities in the public spaces such as the market were therefore not recognized with much importance.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the contributions of market women towards the development of Cape Coast during the colonial period. By exploring their economic activities, it has highlighted that market women were key in the conceptualization of the market space. Also, market women in Cape Coast served as political agents, mentors and vital agents in facilitating developmental projects. The formation of market associations in Cape Coast enhanced market women’s status during the colonial period. This helped them to consolidate their positions in the market which enabled them to contribute to the progress of Cape Coast. These associations and the rise of market queens became significant institutions within the market which were recognized by the colonial government and the Cape Coast Town Council. The office of the market queens was autonomous and acted without any restrictions from the colonial government. This signifies the ability of women to lead and manage groups effectively within the public space.

277 Jean Allman, Susan Geiger and Nakanyike Musisi, 6.
The chapter has further argued that market women were key agents in conceiving the idea of the market space in Cape Coast. The active nature of market women in trading activities and continuous trading activities resulted in the construction of a new market for the people of Cape Coast. Being exposed to the physical demarcations of goods within the market by market women, the colonial government and the Cape Coast Town Council integrated that concept into the building of the new market. The physical demarcation of spaces within the market is important as traders could easily access specific goods and avoid the trouble of walking through the whole market to locate an item. Furthermore, as a way of contributing to their community, market women served as mentors in the society by training younger females to acquire the skills of trading. The wealth accumulated by market women through their trading activities in the market offered them the opportunity to help needy children in the community. By introducing them to trade, their trainees became equipped with the skills of trading. This is significant because it helped to reduce unemployment in the society.

Market women in Cape Coast served as vehicles for mobilizing political consciousness among people in the colony. Though largely an illiterate group, market women became key players of the party that helped Ghana to attain independence from British colonialism. Their well-defined leadership structure provided an opportunity for Kwame Nkrumah to draw from the organizational abilities of the leaders of the market associations in order to spread his political ideas. This helped Nkrumah and the Convention People’s Party to reach a majority of people to solicit for support to gain independence for the Gold Coast.

Moreover, this chapter has also highlighted that market women were instrumental in generating revenue for Cape Coast Town Council through their payment of taxes and rents as well as other levies. The construction of the new Kotokuraba market helped to generate revenue for the
Town Council. The daily payment of taxes in the form of “market tickets” and monthly rents accrued huge sums of revenue for the Town Council. The revenue generated from the market was channeled into developmental projects within the Cape Coast community such as provision of pipe borne water, electricity and provision of dustbins in the community. These helped to improve upon the standard of living for people in Cape Coat during the colonial period. Also, market women were key agents in ensuring food security in Cape Coast. They were responsible for the constant supply of foodstuff in the markets. They did this through the regular transportation of farm produce from the interior to the market centres. They also preserved foodstuff during bounty harvest and made them available during lean seasons or periods of shortages.

Finally, this chapter examined some of the challenges faced by market women in Cape Coast in their activities as they contributed to the development of Cape Coast. It has been established that lack of education hindered the abilities of market women to gain access to information on support services for the improvement of their business. Lack of or limited access to education affected their ability to measure the performance of their businesses as they could not easily keep records of the items they traded in the market. Consequently, market women could not easily notify their earnings and losses.

In addition, market women also had challenges with the transportation of foodstuffs from the hinterlands to the urban centre. Regular breakdown of vehicles affected the quality of their commodities as most foodstuffs would perished before arriving in the market centre. This subsequently reduced the amount of profit that could be gained from selling those commodities in the market. Furthermore, market women lacked access to credit institutions during the colonial period. Significantly, this restricted them from expanding their trading activities in the market. It is interesting to note that male perceptions of women in the society equally were challenges for
market women in the development of Cape Coast. Patriarchal systems, activities of Christian missionaries and colonial rule placed much recognition and importance on the roles and status of men in the society. This consequently relegated women to the background and limited their abilities to have significant impact on development of Cape Coast.

Despite the fact that Cape Coast was no longer the colonial capital after 1877, it is highly evident through this chapter that Cape Coast still remained an important centre of trade during the colonial period. The increasing visibility of market women helped them to consolidate their positions and status in the market during the colonial period, which led to the rise of market associations. The rise of these associations made them autonomous as they were able to act independently, which impacted the developments in Cape Coast by contributing to the social, political and economic structures in the society. Though a marginalized group in the society, they were able to exercise some form of agency through their trading activities in the market which projects them as significant historical actors in the community.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Women have always been historical actors. Thus, adding to the historiography on women in colonial Cape Coast, this study considers the contributions of market women towards the development of Cape Coast during the colonial period. The study argues that though the markets in pre-colonial Cape Coast were mainly male dominated, by the colonial period however, market women had consolidated their positions in the market due to the economic changes that swept through the country. This enabled them to exercise some form of agency which contributed towards the development of Cape Coast. This thesis is situated within the colonial context, specifically from 1877 to 1957. The year 1877 marks the period when the colonial capital was transferred from Cape Coast to Accra. It was at this point that the colonial government turned its attention to the development of its new capital.

Women were noted for their vibrancy in trading activities prior to European presence in the Gold Coast. The coming of the Europeans from the fifteenth century opened more avenues for women to participate in commercial activities though this was male dominated.\textsuperscript{278} By the eighteenth century however, the British, Danes and Dutch were successful in maintaining their fortified trading warehouses along the coast. European-African relationship during this period was primarily one of trade. The long term implications of this European-African economic relationship resulted in the emergence of important commercial centres along the coast such as Accra, Cape

\begin{footnotesize}
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Coast and Elmina. These areas later became the centres of colonial administration as well as missionary activities.

By the eighteenth century, women had become vibrant in the changing economy. They were active in markets which increasingly sprang up along the coastal areas such as Cape Coast, Elmina, Anomabo, and Kormantse. The Cape Coast market became a meeting place for African traders living in the coast and coastal hinterland as well as the local Euro-African communities and European fort residents. The market became an avenue for the exchange of all kinds of products, locally manufactured and European goods.

Cape Coast, the focus of this study, is predominantly populated by Fante indigenes. Its traditional name ‘Oguaa’, originated from the Fante word, ‘gua’, which means “market”. This signifies how the area had developed into an active centre of trade prior to colonial rule. The nature of trade that existed in the area was intrastate trade. However, European presence in the Gold Coast enhanced trading activities in the area and by the mid-eighteenth century, Cape Coast had become the headquarters of British trading activities and their central depot for storage of slaves and ammunitions. In the nineteenth century, the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade resulted in an increase in legitimate trade in the Gold Coast, especially along the coastal areas. Spatial markets within Cape Coast and its neighbouring towns such as Anomabo, Elmina and Accra became very vibrant. Though trade between the Europeans and the local people was male controlled, women regulated over the local markets as they negotiated prices and controlled the locally produced goods brought from the coast and the hinterlands.

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Gradually, the European companies began to assume the areas where they traded as their “sphere of influence” or “protected areas.” In 1821, the British government decided to assume direct administration of the British settlements on the Gold Coast with its headquarters at Cape Coast. Cape Coast became the capital of the Gold Coast Colony, which was established in 1874 and comprised the coastal areas. By 1902, it had extended inland to include the Asante kingdom.

The introduction of formal education by Christian missionaries led to the rise of educated elites who had become politically conscious by the colonial period. These educated elites protested against British colonial influence partly due to the loss of traditional political authority that was indirectly associated with the signing of the Bond of 1844. These protests triggered the relocation of the colonial capital from Cape Coast to Accra in 1877. Also, Cape Coast was regarded as unhealthy by and for European officials due to insanitary conditions in the area.

The 1877 transfer of the colonial capital from Cape Coast resulted in an economic decline of the town as the commercial centres were gradually moved to Accra and Sekondi-Takoradi. This subsequently shifted the colonial government’s focus of development to its new capital, Accra. With these changes, trading activities within the spatial markets in Cape Coast did not come to a halt. Women continued to be active in the markets. It is within this milieu that this study explores how market women contributed towards the development of colonial Cape Coast through their trading activities. The historiography on women in Cape Coast focuses on the agency of elite women while neglecting that of ordinary women such as market women. Thus, this study provides a new approach to the narrative on women in Cape Coast.

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In line with my first research objective to discuss Cape Coast as an important centre of trade, Chapter Two argues that though the colonial capital was transferred from Cape Coast to Accra, Cape Coast remained as one of the active commercial centres during the colonial epoch. By examining the nature of trading activities in the existent markets, Cape Coast had developed into an important centre of trade. According to Fante oral traditions, Cape Coast was an important commercial centre prior to European interactions and colonial rule. Intrastate trading activities took place in the main market, Kotokuraba - a small open space. The presence of Europeans enhanced these trading activities, resulting in Cape Coast emerging as one of the significant commercial centres along the coast. With trade as one of the important sources of revenue for the colony, the Cape Coast Town Council and the colonial government constructed a new market which was completed in 1931 to facilitate trading activities in the area. This signifies the colonial government’s interest in promoting trading activities in the colony.

Chapter Two further argues that increasing trading activities resulted in the emergence of other markets such as the Papratam and Anarfo Markets by the colonial period. However, Kotokuraba was the largest public market in the community. Whilst sheds in the Kotokuraba market were mainly retail and mixed retail yards for the sale of food items brought in by market women from Cape Coast and the neighbouring villages and towns, the stalls were predominately occupied with imported European items such as textiles and wine. The proliferation of European shops such as United African Company (UAC) and G.B. Ollivant and their proximity to the Kotokuraba market attracted women to serve as customers of these shops. A passbook was required to purchase goods from European shops which were then resold in retail quantities in the markets. It is interesting to note that though market activities were carried out on a daily basis, each of the markets in Cape Coast had its own market day in order to prevent competition for
customers. Sunday was the market day for the Kotokuraba market with buying and selling forming an integral aspect of the market space.

Chapter Two concludes with the argument that the markets in Cape Coast became female dominated spaces during the colonial period. With European presence on the Gold Coast and the establishment of trading relationships with West Africans, men dominated the market by playing the more visible role as they controlled trade in imported goods while women were only involved in trading the locally produced foodstuffs. However, the cash crop economy and the available opportunities offered by colonial administration created a vacuum in market spaces. This becomes significant as market women took advantage of this opportunity to dominate and solidify their positions in the market. Though the Cape Coast market became a female dominated space, men were in charge of selling specific goods such as meat, metal wares and alcoholic beverages. This shows how the market became a gendered space during the colonial period.

Chapter Three of this study responds to my second research objective to explore how the rise of market associations and market queens shaped the market space in Cape Coast. This chapter argues that market associations and market queens became instrumental players within the market space. Significantly, market associations or commodity groups served as support systems for market women in Cape Coast similar to other market associations in Kumasi and Accra. Organized women’s commodity groups had the mandate to coordinate market activities within the markets which promoted economic productivity.

This chapter maintains that, the formation of market associations is not a postcolonial phenomenon. Market associations have survived as integrated groups though they comprised different divisions. This is clearly evident in the different divisions of retailers and wholesalers who competed against each other within the market. Market queens drew from Akan traditional
political structures to maintain and manage their groups effectively. This enhanced the status of market women as market queens had the power to exercise control over their members and the activities in the market. Members of the associations expected their leaders to be firm and fair in settling of disputes between members. Market queens represented their groups in negotiations with external institutions such as chiefs and governments. The presence of market associations further challenges the view that women had limited access to decision making power which inevitably affected their ability to lead and manage groups effectively.

Chapter Three also examines the implications of British colonial policies on the markets in Cape Coast. This work asserts that colonial policies such as the introduction of cash crop economy, infrastructural development and administrative policies affected markets in Cape Coast and the Gold Coast as a whole. The introduction of a cash crop economy into the Gold Coast diverted men’s interest from the markets into the new lucrative avenue. Significantly, this helped women to solidify their positions in the market as well as in the public sphere. In addition, market women became more visible in the markets during the colonial period. The construction of the new Kotokuraba market further provided an enabling environment for market women to trade in all kinds of goods. This helped them to gain access to economic avenues which were formally restricted as the market was controlled by men. Though taxes served as a form of revenue for the colonial government, the introduction of taxes and its subsequent increment limited the income that market women obtained from their activities in the market.

The chapter concludes with the argument that since the relocation of the colonial capital from Cape Coast to Accra, the colonial government paid much attention to the development of its new capital. However, it is still evident through this chapter that Cape Coast remained an active centre of trade. The increasing visibility of market women in the markets in Cape Coast and the
need to ensure smooth trading activities resulted in the emergence of market associations. Market associations provided the avenue for women to act as a unified body through which they were able to consolidate their positions within the markets and contribute to the development of Cape Coast.

Chapter Four responds to my third research objective as it assesses the contribution of market women towards the development of Cape Coast within the colonial context. By examining their economic activities, the chapter contends that market women contributed to the conceptualization of the market space in Cape Coast. Being exposed to the physical demarcations of goods within the market by market women, the colonial government and the Cape Coast Town Council integrated that concept into the building of the new market. The physical demarcation of spaces within the market is significant because traders could easily access specific goods and avoid the trouble of walking through the whole market to locate a specific item.

This chapter further argues that market women served as mentors in the society by training younger females to acquire the skills of trading. The wealth accumulated by market women through their trading activities in the market offered them the opportunity to help needy children in the community. The trainees became equipped with the skills of trading. This is significant as it reduced unemployment in the society. Market women in Cape Coast also served as vehicles for mobilizing political consciousness among people in the colony. Though largely an illiterate group, market women became key players of the party that helped Ghana to attain independence from British colonialism. Their well-defined leadership structure provided an opportunity for Kwame Nkrumah to draw from the organizational abilities of the leaders of the market associations in order to spread his political ideas. This helped Nkrumah and the Convention People’s Party to reach a majority of people to solicit for support to gain independence for the Gold Coast.
In achieving my third research objective, Chapter Four further contends that market women were instrumental in generating revenue for the Cape Coast Town Council through their payment of taxes and rent as well as other levies. The revenue generated from the markets was channeled into developmental projects within the Cape Coast community such as provision of pipe borne water, electricity and dustbins in the community. These helped to improve upon the standard of living for people in Cape Coast during the colonial period. Also, the study maintains that market women were key agents in ensuring food security in Cape Coast. They were responsible for the constant supply of foodstuff in the markets as they preserved foods during bounty harvest and made them available during lean seasons or periods of shortages.

Chapter Four concludes by asserting that market women faced challenges in their activities to contribute to the development of Cape Coast. Lack of education hindered the abilities of market women to gain access to information on support services for the improvement of their business. Lack of or limited access to education also affected their ability to measure the performance of their businesses as they could not easily measure their earnings and losses. Furthermore, this study argues that market women lacked access to credit institutions that restricted them from expanding their trading activities in the market. It is interesting to note that patriarchal systems, activities of Christian missionaries and colonial rule placed much recognition and importance on the roles and status of men in the society. This consequently relegated women to the background and limited their abilities to have significant impact on the development of Cape Coast.

This study argues that whilst Cape Coast ceased being the colonial capital in 1877, it remained an important centre of trade during the colonial period. The increasing visibility of market women helped them to consolidate their positions and status in the markets during the colonial period, which led to the rise of market associations. The emergence of these associations
made them autonomous as they were able to act independently, which impacted the developments in Cape Coast by contributing to the social, political and economic structures in the society.

This work sets out to employ the theories of agency and intersectionality to consider a marginalized group of people within a larger society. I argue that women in Cape Coast were able to exercise some form of agency through their trading activities and leadership roles in the markets. This aligns my work with that of Gracia Clark and Adu-Boahen who argue that despite women being economically marginalized, they were not passive victims but rather remarkable agents in terms of their participation in trade. The concepts of agency and intersectionality are crucial in appreciating the struggles of market women and how they were able to overcome their limitations in the midst of a male-controlled economy. By situating market associations and the roles of market queens in a colonial context, the study foregrounds the actions of market women and their potency to serve as political leaders within the public space. The theory of intersectionality has been key in navigating the junctures at which this work is located: women in colonial Cape Coast. This work applied intersectionality through the understandings of women as a heterogeneous group by classifying them as “elite women” versus “ordinary women.” Situating market women within the larger category of “ordinary women,” this work argues that market women were instrumental in contributing towards the development of Cape Coast.

By combining agency and intersectionality as the conceptual frameworks of this study, it has been possible to reconstruct the history of ordinary women in Cape Coast which hitherto has remained a lacuna in historiography. This helps to appreciate women as actors in historical development. As a result, this study has successfully departed from the overwhelming research that circulated during the pre-colonial and colonial era in which female agency was only explored through the lens of elite women in Cape Coast and the Gold Coast. It is important that scholarly
attention is given to the roles and contributions of ordinary women in historical developments in African colonial societies. This study makes its only contribution by exploring the lives of market women in Ghana’s informal economy. In addition to bringing the experiences of these women into light, continued historiographical attention should be given to women in other informal sectors of the economy such as mining and arts and craft industries. These narratives will create a pristine reflection of women’s contributions to the socio-economic development of colonial and post-independent African societies.
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