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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

‘Edited and Approved by Women for Maximum Benefit of all Readers’: Newsprint Journalism, the International Women’s Year and the Remaking of a Gendered National Public in 1970s Ghana

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Abstract

During the International Women’s Year (IWY) of 1975, United Nations bodies made concerted efforts to ensure global awareness and understanding of the IWY aims of equality, peace and development, via the mass media. In this article, we engage with these strategies of global information distribution from the vantage point of Ghana, West Africa. Drawing from interviews with women journalists and examples from the women’s pages of the national state-owned *Daily Graphic* newspaper, we argue that the onset of the IWY presented an important opportunity for women living under the constraints of military rule. A small but determined group of journalists capitalised on a longer history of readers writing into newspapers, and on lower levels of government surveillance of women’s pages. Working with and through multi-layered forms of address, they adapted the homey, gossipy women’s pages and turned them into spaces of engagement between men and women as co-citizens. During the IWY, connections were forged between international events and agendas and ‘domestic issues’. By hosting older debates about widowhood, inheritance and polygyny, and newer debates about family planning, formal education and employment, the women’s pages positioned Ghanaian women as a key constituency in national development, but also enabled more assertive critiques of men’s privileges.

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of the World Conference of the International Women’s Year, held in Mexico City in the summer of 1975, the leader of Ghana’s official delegation featured prominently on the foreign news

page of Ghana's major national daily newspaper. The *Daily Graphic* reported on Justice Annie Jiagge's speech, in which she 'called for a new economic world order', including 'adequate compensation for [the] primary commodities and natural resources' of developing countries, and an end to the 'cut-throat prices' that industrialised nations demanded for their manufactured goods. 'Speaking about women [*sic*] liberation', continued the newspaper, 'Mrs Jiagge called on women to utilise their dynamic force to sweep away all areas of injustice including apartheid in South Africa and Rhodesia in order to bring about lasting peace'.[1]

Two days earlier, on the women's page of the same newspaper, a young journalist named Vicky Wireko had offered a different perspective on the International Women's Year (IWY). It was time, she thought, to move from talk to action on the 'obsolete customs and taboos' which 'impinge on human rights, nation building and … prosperity' in Ghana.[2] Starting with a reminder to her readers about repeated calls by the head of state, Colonel I. K. Acheampong, to deal with practices that were 'not in tune with the Revolution' (that is, the National Redemption Charter drawn up by his military government), she listed the actions that should be taken in regard to widowhood and puberty rites, marriage payments and inheritance practices.

Wireko's article is surprising for two reasons. First, any hint – no matter how carefully packaged – of a gap between the words of Colonel Acheampong, and the progress made under his government, was risky. This was a military regime: it sought to harness the mobilisation of women to a nation-building and developmentalist agenda, and freedom of speech was not, in practice, guaranteed.[3] Second, the article's forceful emphasis on the harm caused by 'obsolete customs' contrasts with the cosier feel of the *Daily Graphic*'s women's pages before the onset of the IWY. In July 1970, for example, they ran articles on a retirement party for the headmistress of the prestigious Wesley Girls secondary school, and a Ghanaian trainee teacher who had attended a royal garden party whilst studying in London.[4] Readers that month were also offered advice on their irregular periods and children who daydreamed, an insight into the growing market for cosmetics among African-American women, and 'A view from the underworld of instant sex' (about the menace of prostitution).[5]

Recent research has offered important new insights into the challenges faced by women like Jiagge, who came from formerly colonised regions of the world, and participated directly in United Nations bodies and events in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, as nominees and representatives of their respective countries.[6] Navigating the structures of the Commission on the Status of Women, the committees and voting blocs in the General Assembly, and the dynamics of international conferences and seminars, women from recently independent African nations had to be wary of attempts to incorporate them into pre-existing discourses and agendas. They thought deeply about explanations of inequality between men and women – explanations that were often cast in binary terms, either as a problem of culture (then defined as the values and norms that shaped men's and women's roles, and inflected their intimate and everyday relations) or as a manifestation of the persistent forms of racism and colonialism that underpinned a deeply unequal world economic order and perpetuated under-development. They strategised about the most realistic means of reducing discrimination against women and improving their lives in very different parts of the world, and they identified possibilities for collaboration within and sometimes across global blocs (East, West and Third World).[7] Historians know rather less, however, about women like Wireko, who did not travel to Mexico City to represent her country but was nonetheless a very active participant in the IWY.

By the time the intergovernmental conference and the parallel tribune of non-governmental organisations began in Mexico City in June 1975, several official United Nations bodies had already gone to considerable trouble to publicise three main themes of the IWY: equality, peace and development. The Department for Economic and Social Affairs began to produce the IWY Bulletin in July 1974; the Office for Public Information produced press kits; and specialist agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) dedicated particular issues of their regular magazines to the IWY.[8] Ghana was on the receiving end of this strategy of global information distribution, but women journalists there did not simply reproduce texts received from elsewhere. Drawing from the *Daily Graphic* (Ghana's major national daily newspaper), interviews with women

journalists, the records of a women's association, and other evidentiary fragments, this article shows how the IWY was interpreted and made relevant in Ghana.

We begin by tracing the trajectory of the African-owned press in colonial and postcolonial Ghana, highlighting four points of continuity and change which shaped newspaper engagement with the IWY: first, a shift from the use of pseudonyms to more direct and explicit forms of attribution; second, the increased levels of training available to journalists and the entry of graduates to the profession; third, a recurring pattern of governmental attempts to influence and control the press; and fourth, the persistence of the idea of the newspaper as a vehicle for debate, and the practice of readers writing in. Next, we show how the women's pages of the *Daily Graphic* adopted a multi-layered form of address which gave them mobilising potential. The explicitly identified readership in the early 1970s was defined around a set of feminine interests that were presumed to be shared by women and to set them in contradistinction to men. But the fact that the women's pages were situated inside Ghana's major national daily newspaper implied that their readers were part of the same national public with men and could therefore be engaged as co-citizens. The women's pages also addressed readers specifically as Ghanaians in the changing world of the 1970s, inviting them to see themselves through the eyes of people elsewhere and to aspire to become exemplars of a national womanhood on an international stage.

As the IWY took hold, a small but determined group of identifiable women journalists worked with and through these layers, and thus transformed the previously cosy and apparently innocuous women's pages into a hotspot of debates about the meaning of equality and the ways by which it might be achieved between women and men in Ghana. New connections were drawn between intimate and everyday relations (marriage, divorce, parenting, inheritance), equality between citizens, national development and the reputation and role of Ghana on the world stage. For women living under military rule, the IWY opened a narrow but significant crack of opportunity and enabled a novel form of newsprint activism.

NEWSPRINT WORLDS OF GHANAIAN WOMEN

Women were reading newspapers, and writing to and for them, for more than half a century before the period that interests us here. Indeed, the *Gold Coast Times* initiated a dedicated column for women as early as 1880, and women's columns gradually became a more established feature of African-owned Gold Coast newspapers.[9] Audrey Gadzekpo and Stephanie Newell argue that they were 'instrumental in forming a female reading community organised around the textual representation of women as readers, as writing subjects and as textual figures situated within a reformist discourse designed to educate, empower and entertain them'.[10] Gadzekpo estimates that 'more than a third of the pre-independence newspaper titles provided space specifically addressing women'.[11] Two of the most popular and enduring columns were those of Marjorie Mensah in *The Times of West Africa*, and Gloria in the *Gold Coast Times* – both written under pseudonyms.

Despite the pressure of colonial-era libel and sedition laws, editors of African-owned newspapers tended to conceive of them as vehicles for public debate.[12] Readers' letters were published frequently, as critical responses to (as well as endorsements of) articles, editorials and letters written by other readers. Within this combative newsprint culture, the pseudonym offered women opportunities to experiment with different positions, personae and voices, whilst shielding their personal reputations.[13] However, as Newell noted in her in-depth study of this phenomena, the later inter-war period saw the emergence of new kinds of journalism, in which writers such as Nnamdi Azikiwe and I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson wanted readers to 'attribute the content of their columns to a physically present, politically active person who circulated around the colonial public sphere producing a new, assertive political agency among local populations'.[14] In the post-Second World War period, new kinds of newspapers were also emerging in Ghana, in which women were writing under their own names.

In 1950, the Daily Mirror Group of Britain established the Graphic Group as an overseas venture in the Gold Coast – much to the chagrin of African owners and editors of existing titles, who distrusted

claims that foreign investment would lead to 'competition, technology transfer, high professional standards and employment'.[15] The entry of the Graphic – and its flagship eponymous national daily newspaper – was roughly contemporaneous with mass campaigns for self-government, which led to multi-party elections in 1951, 1954 and 1956. Party-political newspapers, such as the Convention People's Party's (CPP's) *Accra Evening News*, were crucial to the mobilisation of voters in favour of independence from British colonial rule in 1957.

Those who wrote for such papers evidently linked their personal reputations to the party and its agenda. Mabel Dove had written under pseudonyms earlier in her career and was particularly prolific as Marjorie Mensah in the *Times of West Africa* (although some other people also contributed to this newspaper using the same name). She continued to write under pseudonyms, including as Akosuah Dzatsui in the *Accra Evening News*. But she was also named as the editor of the newspaper in 1951. The association of Dove's name and person with the CPP was reinforced when she stood as a candidate in the parliamentary elections three years later and won her seat to become the first ever woman parliamentarian in Ghana.[16] Regina Addae became the Graphic's first woman parliamentary reporter in the 1950s; and in 1962, Edith Wuver 'made history by becoming the first female war correspondent in Ghana', covering the Congo war.[17] With this shift from pseudonymous writing towards more direct and explicit forms of attribution, women journalists became personalities (rather than personae) in the public eye.

Some women journalists engaged in strategic switching between maiden and married names. Kate Abbam, who first wrote for the *Daily Graphic* in 1955, published her fiction – often in serialised forms – under the name of Ewura Ekua Badoe. But she used her married name, Abbam, in her role as editor of the woman's magazine, *Ɔbaa Sima* (Ideal Woman) which she established in 1971. The use of a married name and the title 'Mrs' were significant: they signalled that the user was part of a small minority who contracted their marriages under the colonial-era Marriage Ordinance, and was therefore likely to be Christian, formally educated and of relatively high socio-economic status.

Journalism in Ghana slowly became more professionalised. From 1959 onwards, the Ghana School of Journalism offered two-year training programmes to secondary school leavers and, by the late 1960s, the Graphic Corporation was recruiting university graduates to work on the *Daily Graphic* and on a sister publication, the *Sunday Mirror*.[18] Among the first crop of graduates was Elizabeth Ohene, who started in 1967 and rose through the ranks to become the first woman editor of the *Daily Graphic*.[19] A small flow of university leavers continued to reach the Graphic as national service personnel in the early 1970s, and some of them – including Wireko – were subsequently absorbed into the staff. Print journalism thus attracted a small but determined minority of women who, as university graduates, had achieved unusually high levels of formal education.[20]

The gradual trend towards professionalisation, however, ran alongside continued governmental attempts to limit journalistic freedom in the post-independence period. The Graphic Corporation was bought by the government in 1964, and Kwame Nkrumah was the first in a long line of presidents and prime ministers to limit the freedom of the press. The Graphic remained in state ownership under the military regime that toppled Nkrumah (the National Liberation Council, 1966–69). It became a statutory corporation in 1971 (by Legislative Instrument 709) under the elected but short-lived civilian administration of Dr Busia and the Progress Party (1969–72).[21] This status continued after Colonel (later General) Acheampong's coup in 1972.

Whilst successive governments sought varying degrees of control over the press, none was able to eliminate the idea of the newspaper as a forum for debate and the practice of readers writing in persisted. The educative potential of newspapers also rendered them appealing to a range of non-governmental groups. In aftermath of the military coup that overthrew Nkrumah in 1966, a group of women petitioned the National Liberation Council on how it could improve the status of women in the country and enhance their role in national reconstruction. One of their key suggestions was the creation of distinct spaces for women in newspapers and the increased presence of women in editorial decision-making: 'We suggest that all newspapers should run pages for women with well thought out, educative material, edited and approved by women for maximum benefit of all readers'.[22] The names

of the signatories to the petition included Sophia Jiagge and Janet Tay, both whom became closely involved with the Ghana Assembly of Women (GAW), which was inaugurated under the leadership of Evelyn Amarteifio in August 1969.

The GAW counted several newspaper columnists amongst its membership, including Ruby Quartey-Papafio (who had been an occasional contributor to the Ladies' Corner of the *Times of West Africa*, under the name of Majorie Mensah) and her sister Mercy Ffloukes-Crabbe (who had written for the *Gold Coast Times*, under the name of Gloria). Minutes of the Executive Committee of the GAW point to concerted attempts to engage women journalists: in February 1971, the GAW hosted women journalists at a tea party, and in April 1971, it resolved to make this into a regular activity.[23] But whilst the GAW had recognised the potential of women's pages in the national newspapers, successive governments concentrated their surveillance of the press on the front page, the editorials and the major domestic and foreign news stories. The women's pages of the *Daily Graphic* attracted relatively little governmental scrutiny and this, combined with the long tradition of readers writing in, enabled a small but determined group of women journalists to transform them into sites of intensive debate as the IWY took hold.

THE WOMEN'S PAGE: THE MAINSTREAM, THE MARGINS AND THE FOLDS

Ohene recalled that when she first joined the Graphic in 1967, there were 'two things going against me' – as one of a small minority of recent graduate recruits, and a woman to boot, she was seen by some as a new starter who might not last the distance. She was therefore very wary of women's pages as spaces into which she might be marginalised. Initially, she remembered, 'things about women were generally left to the *Mirror*, the *Sunday Mirror* it then was'.[24] In other words, 'things about women' were treated as lifestyle (fashion, recipes, advice about babies) and separated off from the major domestic and foreign news stories of the day. This made them incompatible with her ambition: 'I wanted to be in the centre of things, I wanted to learn how to be a journalist'. By 1970, a page titled Woman's World was appearing approximately weekly in the *Daily Graphic*, under the leadership of Stella Addo, who 'was free to do whatever she would put on it … there [still] wasn't an editorial policy as such'.[25] This lack of editorial policy was partly explicable in terms of lack of government interest: the women's page was one that 'nobody kept an eye on, they were not nervous about it'.[26]

According to its own title, as displayed regularly in the *Daily Graphic*, 'WOMAN'S WORLD Presents anything that's new in the feminine interest'. The pages featured reports on events deemed to be of interest to women, commentary, advice (particularly on matters of marriage, children and the family), personality profiles of prominent Ghanaian women and those who visited from abroad, fashion and recipes. Many items opened by conjuring a sense of familiarity between the journalist and her readers. For example, in a very complimentary article about the fashion sense of Ghanaian women, the writer opened with a cheerful greeting and inquiry about readers' wellbeing since the last edition:

> HELLO GIRLS! Here we are again after a long restful weekend. We hope you enjoy [*sic*] yourselves as much as we did. I bet a lot of you did, because most of the night clubs and places of interest we visited were all packed full. Lest I forget I must tell you of what a Ghanaian who has been away from the country for many years said about our girls and clothes.[27]

This writer did not merely greet her readers but enquired after them and proceeded to speculate confidently about the answers to her own questions, as if she knew her readers already, and this was just the latest missive in a longer-term communication. Thus, within the mass-produced and potentially anonymous newsprint medium, the writer created a simulacrum of intimacy with her readers.

In another instance, the writer started off a recipe section: 'A neighbour of mine just passed on some recipes to me and I think it would be a good idea if I pass them on to you'.[28] The conversational tone implied proximity and built a sense of camaraderie around a supposedly shared interest. A report on a beauty contest invited readers first to empathise with the judges in their difficult task of selecting from amongst the contestants, and then to join with the writer in bidding the winner farewell: 'now we have heard all that we would want to know about Baaba [the winner], the only thing we can wish her is good luck'.[29] Frequent slippage between first-person singular and first-person plural drew the reader in, so that she was not just an individual buyer or passive consumer of the newspaper, but shared in the experiences, opinions and emotions of the writer, along with other members of a reading community. This direct, personal form of address made the women's pages into a domain of feminine sociality.

Over the last quarter century, a rich interdisciplinary scholarship has gradually reconceptualised African newspapers and newsprint cultures.[30] Rather than being products, consumed by a mass of anonymous, interchangeable customers, newspapers are increasingly conceived in relational terms: they are constituted by and ultimately depend upon relations between people (as well as between people and things). Indeed, because newspapers address their readers repeatedly over time, they may be especially prone to galvanise them into feeling like members of particular kinds of collectivities. As Derek Peterson and Emma Hunter put it: 'Newspapers propel political movements by putting disparate events together, on the page, and making it seem as though everyone were acting in unison. They make disconnected people feel themselves to be co-travellers'.[31]

African newspaper scholarship has drawn from Michael Warner's argument that publics are constituted through the process of attending to a text or performance: 'Attention is the principal sorting category by which members and non-members are discriminated'.[32] The implication of this is that publics summoned through texts can be both inclusionary (anyone who reads the text) and exclusionary (those who do not have the means to attend – for example, if they cannot read the language or do not have the necessary prior knowledge). Thus the *Komkya* newspaper could in principle be read by anyone who was literate in Swahili in late colonial Tanzania, or even across the border in Kenya. Yet, according to Hunter, *Komkya* did not convene a unitary public of Swahili-speakers. Due to the emphasis on district-level news, and the more intensive engagement of readers from the Chagga district who wrote into the paper, the public that *Komkya* convened was segmented.[33] Language did not map neatly onto the boundaries of colonial territories or postcolonial African nation-states, and it did not therefore determine the boundaries of the public convened by a text.[34] Hence Karin Barber's emphasis on how exactly texts addressed their readers, and her observations on the prevalence and significance of multi-layered forms of address in African-owned – and particularly African-language – newspapers.[35]

In the case of the *Daily Graphic*, the explicitly identified readership of the women's pages was usually engaged via supposedly shared experiences of being wives and mothers or of seeking entry to these roles, as can be seen in advice-giving columns. A nursing sister, Elizabeth Kwofie, dispensed advice about baby feeding and sleeping habits, childhood illnesses, and menstrual problems, in a column which was initially titled 'Mother and Child Care' but was then renamed 'Sister to the Rescue'.[36] The advice was presented as a response to a problem raised by an individual reader in a letter to the newspaper, but it was displayed to a generality of readers on the women's page. This established the homey 'vernacular' through which the readers were required to 'attend', and by addressing them as mothers with the shared duty of caring for children, it subtly implied that their engagement was a moral and social imperative.

A vivid illustration of the simulacrum of a feminine collective experience can be found in a complaint about a major technical malfunction on national television in February 1970.[37] The writer narrated her ordeal, which has her blaming her children before being told by her female friend over the phone that the fault rather emanated from the television station. The title, 'When women watch in silence', gave the impression that the said muted broadcast affected only women, or that the writer was only concerned with the ways in which the malfunction had deprived women of an important

source of information and entertainment. The entire piece gave the impression of a world inhabited by women – a 'Woman's World'.

The women's pages were thus positioned as spaces that spoke specifically to women, via a set of concerns that they were presumed to share with one another, and that were presumed to be of little interest to men (fashion, recipes, babies). But these pages simultaneously reported on *national* events from a feminine perspective, in an apparent contradistinction to the perspective of men, who featured more prominently on other pages of the newspaper. Indeed Ohene identified this as one of the reasons for her wariness: '"Every page should be a women's page," was what I used to say'.[38] Women, she thought, should be brought into the journalistic mainstream, not tucked away on a page in the folds of the newspaper.

Whilst women were explicitly identified as the primary readership of the women's pages, readers' letters and responses to articles elsewhere in the paper suggest an awareness on the part of editors and contributors that some men were reading the women's pages, and that some women read well beyond them. The women's page, in other words, invoked a bounded, exclusive public of Ghanaian women, who were engaged through a cosy and intimate mode of address on matters presumed to be 'in the feminine interest'. But these pages were enfolded within a newspaper that invoked a broader national public, in which women were members alongside men, albeit in a different way. Herein lay the political potential of the women's pages, if we define 'politics' in the terms suggested by Frederick Cooper: 'persuading people to think of linkages they may not have perceived before'.[39]

In some cases, the contradistinction between the perspective of women and that of men was drawn in a direct and combative manner. Dress was a frequent a flashpoint – as was the case both in the earliest Gold Coast women's columns studied by Gadzekpo, and in the newspapers of other postcolonial African nations where women's bodies became key sites of contestation in the construction of a national culture.[40] In April 1970, when a male columnist writing elsewhere in the *Daily Graphic* criticised women's use of Afro wigs, a response piece appeared on the women's page accusing him of 'poking his nose into women's fashion once again!'. He was further admonished to mind his own business: 'We want him to know that we know what we are up to'.[41] The 'we' invoked a collective of women who would determine their own affairs.

Other entries were less combative, entering into stereotypes and advising women on how to avoid making themselves culpable. In the following excerpt, the writer offered a step-by-step guide to women in the habit of turning up late:

> Those of you who think men are not worried over such lateness should take a lesson from the preceding remak [*sic*]. A quick way of getting on time for dates is to make sure that you have everything you require ready, leaving only the make-up to the last minute … He might even find you waiting for him for a change. And he wouldn't have the excuse to pick on you or leave without you.[42]

This admonition to women about lateness was embedded in a longer article, in which the writer described her recent attendance at a party where the guests were predominantly men. To her amazement, she had discovered that men gossiped too, and she felt obliged to share this discovery with women in the habit of lateness, so that they would not be surprised when men's gossip found them out. This framing of the article, however, implied that men were not better than women after all when it came to the bad behaviour of gossiping, and thus a playful challenge to a stereotype was also made.

Here, there are some continuities with a pattern identified by Newell in her analysis of women's writing in popular fiction between 1940s and 1990s: 'Rather than openly challenging or subverting "masculinist" narratives, or writing from marginal, socially outcast perspectives, women writers [were] positioned within, taking up commonly acknowledged interpretive positions and exploring the flip side of male-authored narratives'.[43] It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that such writing merely reproduced a rigid set of stereotypes, because fiction authored by women 'expand[ed] upon the current range of character types and alter[ed] the definitions of ideal marriages promoted in locally

published fiction by men'.[44] Serialised fiction was not a key feature of the women's pages of the *Daily Graphic*. But a similar expansion in roles and characters was achieved through personality profiles of prominent Ghanaian women as well as foreign visitors who were found to be sufficiently inspiring (or at least −as in the case of a Canadian woman who had married 'the World Head of the Baha'is' − had curiosity value).[45] These profiles direct our attention to a third way in which the women's pages of the *Daily Graphic* engaged their readers: they were invited to look at themselves through the eyes of others from elsewhere, and thus to consider themselves as potential exemplars of Ghanaian womanhood on a world stage.

Readers were presented with several profiles of women elsewhere in Africa who were making it in a man's world (such as a Botswanan woman diplomat), and women at home who were succeeding in fields such as hotel management and advertising, where they could apparently turn feminine insights to their advantage.[46] A profile of a Ghanaian banker-cum-lawyer, Miss Josephine Asante, opened with an unusually assertive statement about women's achievements: 'It was once said that: "Any woman who dreams of emancipation is IPSO FACTO out of her mind and has lost the virginity of her heart and the health of her soul".' The author (Addo) continued: 'Since then however things have changed so much so that if the protagonist should be alive today, he would be forced to eat back his own words'. She went on to list the occupations and professions in which women were advancing, and concluded that these were 'healthy signs that women have made or are still making efforts to challenge men in every possible field'.[47]

On the face of it, this combative introduction to Josephine's educational trajectory and professional success contrasts with Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoué's analysis of roughly contemporaneous women's columns and pages in West (anglophone) Cameroon. Women such as Ruff Wanzie, Clara Manga and Nkuku Nwigwe adopted a more subtle and conciliatory tone, frontloading their advice on matters of food and fashion and playing up their own roles as mothers and housewives rather than as educated professionals.[48] But despite Addo's insistence that women like Josephine were the equals of any man in the workplace, the main point of the profile was to bring 'the story of an intelligent, charming, young, lady banker' into the homes of readers.

Observations about Josephine's recent attendance at a conference in Addis Ababa were interwoven with her views on marriage and her own hopes for a wifely future. The conference had addressed the question of population growth, and the need to increase food supply, extend education for women and 'make men responsible for their children'. Josephine explained that although her father had married six women, and was 'indeed a good husband', she herself 'will never support polygamy …. [because] there is usually not enough for each child'. Josephine was projected as a creditable representative of Ghana, whose views were something 'new in the feminine interest' – that is, a Ghanaian woman's take on issues that were being discussed on the world stage, in forums of the kind that might otherwise have been dominated by men. At the same time, she was presented as a charming and accomplished woman, and one unlikely to settle for a husband who was not prepared to make her 'his only wife'.[49]

'Smashing Josephine' was of course unusual in terms of her educational attainments (fewer than ten women per year were graduating in law from the University of Ghana in the early 1970s).[50] She was held out not as a mirror of a notionally typical woman, but as an aspiration that readers might be expected to endorse, or perhaps critique, but at least be motivated to discuss.[51] Ohene described such profiles rather dismissively, as examples of a genre known as 'the brainy beauty'.[52] And they can indeed be read as formulaic attempts to demonstrate that women's educational and professional achievements could be added to, rather than detracting from, their charm and marriageability.[53] Despite its apparently combative emphasis on equality at work, this formula recentred women's attractiveness to men. The profile hinted at a link between Josephine's high educational and professional status and her bargaining power vis-à-vis a potential spouse. But it left readers to figure out for themselves any implications for the great majority of women who had lower levels of formal education than Josephine.

Nationalist and nation-building discourses expanded the realm of acceptable achievement for women, and enabled specific kinds of critiques of men's privileges. But these discourses also

embedded particular forms of claim-making and boundary-marking that could exclude women who were deemed to be insufficiently respectable, lacking in maternal or wifely virtue, or not authentically Ghanaian.[54] Matters of marriage, parenting, and the family had been debated all through the twentieth century, in newspapers as well as in popular fiction, theatre, songs and religious pamphlets, authored by both men and women. These issues were far from new in Ghana. In the era of anticolonial struggle and postcolonial nation-building, however, they were increasingly identified as sites for political intervention and legislative action. Marriage, parenting and the family were thereby linked not only to ideas about 'progress', but also to the idea of a disciplined – and distinctively gendered – national citizenry and to the elevation of Ghana on the world stage.[55]

In the early 1970s, furious debates about polygyny raged in the *Daily Graphic*. These were prompted partly by the activities of the Law Reform Commission, which had been established under the National Liberation Council.[56] The Commission re-examined Nkrumah-era attempts to formulate a single uniform law of marriage, divorce and inheritance, to replace the multiple forms of polygynous or potentially polygynous marriage that were recognised under customary law, and the (supposedly) monogamous form of marriage that had been introduced through the colonial-era Marriage Ordinance. Whilst a single comprehensive legal reform remained elusive, the Commission did formulate two bills that passed through parliament under the elected civilian administration of Dr Busia in 1971.[57]

The Wills Act empowered the courts to make provision out a deceased person's estate for a spouse, parent or dependent child, in situations where hardship was occasioned by the failure of a deceased person to provide for them in their will. The Matrimonial Causes Act empowered the courts to order provision for a spouse and dependent children in divorce proceedings. Importantly, women who were married under customary law, as well as those married under the colonial-era Marriage Ordinance, could now ask for the intervention of the courts in these two types of cases, and benefit from new forms of legal protection and redress.[58] Thus although neither of these Acts attempted to ban polygyny in customary law marriages, they were open to interpretation as measures that would raise the direct and indirect costs of polygyny to men. Polygyny became the focus of extensive debates in the form of articles, rebuttals and readers' letters, which were published not only on the women's pages, but often in the main news sections of the paper – presumably because the potential costs of polygyny were of obvious interest to men.[59]

The Matrimonial Causes Act and the Wills Act did not address the issues of widowhood rites (that is, rituals performed by and upon recently widowed women) or provision for widows whose husbands had died intestate (that is, those who died without a will, who were in the large majority). Many groups had a stake in these issues – women's associations, churches, social welfare officers, legal practitioners and reformers – and there was a decades-long tradition of commentary upon them. Nonetheless, when Kate Abbam became a widow in 1972, her case made a particular impact, because she had a high public profile as the editor of *Ɔbaa Sima* magazine, and she used it to highlight widowhood as an ordeal.[60] Vicky Wireko, who first joined the Graphic during her national service in 1974, and wrote copiously for the women's pages in 1975, explained that Abbam's experience continued to reverberate amongst women journalists. It had become 'the talk', and 'the humiliation that she [Abbam] went through' had 'pushed all of us to take women's issues very seriously, knowing for sure that discrimination against women and women's right to inheritance were real in our society'.[61] Abbam played a crucial role in connecting some of these more specific and immediate concerns amongst women journalists in Ghana to the global agenda of the IWY.

MEXICO CITY FROM ACCRA: THE IWY IN A GHANAIAN PERSPECTIVE

Ghana's participation in the IWY was confirmed somewhat belatedly in December 1974 with a formal announcement by the military government of Colonel Acheampong, and the establishment of a National Commission on Women and Development to lead on events. In that same month, Abbam

reported back to readers of *Ɔbaa Sima* on her participation in the sixth biennial congress of the International Association of Women and Home Page Journalists (AIJPF) in Amsterdam.[62] Explaining the various aims of the Association, she noted a commitment for 'the women's press' to become 'the transmitting agent of the great sociological, economical, ideological and cultural problems of its time: in this way, the women's press will stand out as a creator of opinion, a title which is too often denied'.[63] The fact that 1975 would be the IWY, she wrote, added to the importance of the congress: the AIJPF had to show its dynamism, importance and competence.[64]

The event was attended by 200 delegates from nineteen countries.[65] 'The delegate from Ghana [Abbam] seemed to have attracted a lot of attention because she and a lady from Zaire were the only Africans.'[66] Describing the flow of requests for interviews, and her packed schedule, Abbam positioned her attendance as an important 'opportunity to tell other delegates[,] some of whom knew very little or nothing about Africans or Ghanaians in particular, about the people and especially the women of Ghana …. they were rather fascinated for they never thought the women here were so advanced …'.[67] She also hinted at the possibility that Ghana might host a future congress of this international association.

Upon her return, Abbam became involved in three activities that ran alongside her role at *Ɔbaa Sima*. First, she served alongside Evelyn Amarteifio, secretary-general of the GAW, and Lucy Palm of the Graphic Corporation, as a member of the ad hoc IWY preparations committee established by Ghana's National Commission for UNESCO. The committee developed an elaborate programme of symposia and rallies in the capital city and regional centres; it also worked on the distribution of press kits provided by the United Nations; the sales of badges, stamps and calendars; and even arranged for the printing of an IWY cloth at a factory in Tema.[68] Second, Abbam travelled to Mexico City in the summer of 1975. There, she participated in the three-day 'encounter' for journalists that preceded the conference, and in a post-conference workshop that was held for journalists and broadcasters to 'discuss and recommend action that might be taken in the framework of the World Plan of Action adopted by the World Conference of [the] IWY'.[69]

The engagement of United Nations bodies with the media during the IWY not simply a matter of disseminating information about the conference and its goals. It was heavily charged due to the intersection of two larger struggles. The first of these revolved around the May 1974 United Nations' General Assembly Declaration on the New International Economic Order (NIEO).[70] As we saw at the start of this article, the NIEO was foregrounded by Annie Jiagge in her speech at Mexico City, and it was foregrounded again in the Declaration of Mexico that was passed by a majority vote at the intergovernmental conference of the IWY. The Declaration of Mexico recognised discrimination against women as a worldwide fact, but argued that the 'issue of inequality, as it affects the vast majority of the women of the world, is closely linked with the problem of under-development, which exists as a result not only of unsuitable internal structures but also of a profoundly unjust world economic system'.[71] It therefore argued that the implementation of the NIEO and the related Charter on the Economic Rights and Duties of States (CERDS) was crucial: by tackling the causes of economic inequality on the global scale, the United Nations could meaningfully support developing countries and help to create the right conditions in which to raise the status and living standards of women and reduce discrimination against them. Whilst most governments from the Third World and Eastern blocs backed the Declaration of Mexico, many Western governments were not prepared to support it, and thus the Declaration was separated from the conference's World Plan of Action.[72]

Governments that backed the Declaration of Mexico (and by implication the NIEO and the CERDS) tended to connect it to a second demand – a New World Information and Communications Order (NWICO) which would tackle global inequalities in the production and dissemination of information.[73] Advocates of the NWICO argued that the consequences of such unequal information flows militated against the goals of the IWY too: large regions of the world were consistently ignored or misrepresented, which was not conducive to peace; and since much of the content that flowed to the Third World was deemed irrelevant to people living there, it did not support development.

United Nations bodies therefore looked for ways of promoting the more equitable and constructive participation of the world media in the IWY.[74]

Abbam was one of the fifty media fellows who were sponsored by United Nations Centre for Economic and Social Information to participate in the pre-conference journalists' encounter, and one of sixteen who were selected for participation in the post-conference workshop, where she also served as a session chair and a rapporteur.[75] The opening speech at the workshop reminded participants of the broader context in which they were working: although only one-third of the world's population lived in the 'industrialized part of the world', the 'total flow of communication' from there to the 'developing countries is 100 times the flow in the opposite direction'.[76] The workshop, which had been jointly organised by UNESCO and the Centre for Economic and Social Information, discussed many specific measures that could be taken by media houses, national governments and United Nations agencies to help reduce inequalities between men and women in the media. These included increasing the numbers of women working in the media and removing barriers to their retention and advancement, diversifying media content, sharing information about women in a wide range of roles and contexts, celebrating women's achievements and curtailing representations that were degrading or stereotypical. UNESCO also sought to model a more varied and inspiring representation of women around the world in the two issues of its *UNESCO Courier* that it dedicated to the IWY, and it cooperated with a range of journalists' associations (including the AIJPF) in the convening of regional events.[77]

Abbam's experiences in Amsterdam and Mexico City positioned her to influence foreign media professionals' perceptions of Ghana and Ghanaian women, to contribute ideas on how the media in all its many forms and locations could support the goals of the IWY, and to engage Ghanaian journalists in the IWY.[78] Thirdly, then, she established a national association for women journalists. Vicky Wireko recalled the impact of joining this association – the first of its kind in Ghana: 'Mrs Kate Abbam was leading and pushing it. She tried to bring us together, a lot of the women journalists at the time'.[79] By the time Wireko finished her national service and joined the staff at the *Daily Graphic* in 1975, Elizabeth Ohene had agreed to edit the women's page. Wireko recalled the powerful combination of Abbam's influence with that of Ohene, who was by this time an experienced journalist with a growing voice at the newspaper: 'Her confidence gave all of us … that kind of urge also to speak up in the columns or whatever reporting that we were doing'.

Wireko became one of the most prolific writers on the women's pages and soon took over more responsibility for them. She remembered the IWY as a turning point, and an opportunity 'to discuss as a country' some of the 'issues that really confronted women in our society':

> issues like widowhood rites, issues like treatment of widows and their children when their husbands die intestate, adolescent rites, etc …. not forgetting polygamy and education on family planning; too many children, some being abandoned, no education … hey, this is our year, let's bring minds to start thinking about the issues most of which were traditional and felt that they were untouchable but were degrading the status of women.[80]

Ohene – who had hitherto been sceptical of the women's pages and carefully avoided them until she had developed a broader journalistic profile – also saw the opportunity of the IWY: '… we felt it on the paper in terms of the increased interest out there among the readership as a whole, and it manifested in the kind of letters that we got … We felt it. You couldn't ignore it'.[81]

There were subtle changes in the way the women's pages were presented. The title 'Woman's World' was replaced with 'Women's World'. And 'anything that's new in the feminine interest' was replaced with a list of what the page actually contained. 'Viewpoint' was at the top of the list, followed by fashion, the home, sex, kids, 'out of the mail bag' and 'gripe'. Wireko recalled no resistance from her managing director, Kofi Badu, who encouraged her to go out and get stories, in the same way that he encouraged the men who were her peers. She also felt that Ohene's voice had helped to 'ensure that women's stories were carried'.

Perhaps most important of all, however, was the ability of the women's page to capitalise on the established tradition of readers engaging with newspapers by writing in. Whereas in the early 1970s, the pages had often felt cosy, in 1975 they became a debating hotspot. As Wireko put it, the *Daily Graphic* did not hold back from the impulse of the IWY: 'We rather brought issues to the fore, and we got feedback from readers which made the discussion even more engaging'. Ohene concurred, recalling that there were many interventions from men, who seemed anxious about the potential of the IWY to 'change the status quo' and who therefore implied that it was just 'something that the white people want to bring'. A look at the women's pages of the *Daily Graphic* through 1975 bears out these memories of high levels of interest on the part of men. A similar trend can be seen in *Ɔbaa Sima*, which had a dedicated page titled 'Mainly for Men'. Articles were therefore not just finished products sold to an anonymous newspaper reader in a one-off transaction. Rather, they were reflections or positions, that acted as starting points to which readers could be expected to respond.

Assertive articulations of inequality were expected to generate combative responses from men who read the paper – responses which often defended men's privileges via references to custom. As Wireko put it, '[Y]es, international women's [year], but shut up; in our culture, the woman should not be seen to be equal to the man; the woman should be doing the things that culture says you should be doing'. An example of this kind of chain reaction in print began with an article by Wireko on 8 May 1975. Titled 'Equality in the home', the article opened with a call for true equality between men and women in the spirit of the IWY. According to Wireko, this sort of equality must apply to every aspect of life including the equitable sharing of household chores and financial responsibilities between men and women. Thus, a man should not 'comfortably relax over a bottle of beer or a tot of whisky whilst he commands the wife to hurry up with lunch or dinner'. If such a total equality were achieved, she argued, there would be no need for women to adopt their husbands' surnames upon marriage. As true equals, both husband and wife could combine their surnames to make a compound surname. Similarly, there would be no need for men to bear sole responsibility for initiating marriage and paying for the ceremony.

Despite these radical propositions, Wireko concluded her article on a note of circumspection, recognising that absolute equality (in the sense of identical as opposed to equitable treatment) was nearly impossible. After all, women employed in the public sector were allowed to seek a work transfer for family reasons (usually to join their husbands) whilst men were not. Women employees could also obtain maternity leave from work, and women paid half the basic rates that men paid. These sentiments were echoed by Wendy Asiama (another regular writer on the page) in the edition of 15 May 1975. Beginning on a similar note of underlining the significance of the IWY, Asiama cautioned that it must not be perceived as a weapon against men, but rather an opportunity for women's groups to work towards improving the conditions of women.

Within a week, it was clear that both Wireko and Asiama had correctly anticipated the reaction of some men to calls for change. The rejoinder of Willie Adjandor of Have in the Volta Region began with a polite acknowledgement of the significance of the IWY and the accompanying calls for equality. However, his main point was an admonition against the temptation to attack custom by overemphasising equality between men and women. This, he argued, had the danger of turning the women's year into an anti-men campaign instead of the progressive movement it was supposed to be. In the home, the man ought to remain the head, a position he must exercise fairly without abusing his authority. At the same time, the woman must not seek to dominate the man. 'Since two chiefs cannot sit on one stool, I for one will "pack and push" out any woman from my home before she turns out to be a man', he concluded.[82]

The following week, Adjandor was on the receiving end of a strong rebuttal from Margaret Kwakwa, who described him as one of her 'adversaries'. She had been provoked by what she described as Adjandor's indirect response to her article published in *The Mirror* on 4 April 1975. Characterising Adjandor's opinions as chauvinistic and ignorant, she argued that it was absurd to demand that men lead at all times. Leadership should not be based on sex but rather on capabilities, she emphasised. She also responded directly to her adversary's threat to throw any insubordinate woman out of his house:

'Mr Adjandor will never have the glorious opportunity to marry women like myself, otherwise, he would be amazed to find himself pushed out of the house without even "*Charlie Wote*" slippers!!'.[83] Since these are the most casual type of slip-on footwear, that Mr Adjandor would still not have time to put on when faced with the wrath of Margaret Kwakwa, the gravity of the situation was inflected by a touch of humour – a man who was too domineering would surely lose the benefits of a comfortable and harmonious home.

Occasionally, readers' letters expressed annoyance, not with the fact that another reader had disagreed with them, but because they suspected that the other reader was poorly informed on the objectives of the IWY, had exhibited a knee-jerk or bandwagon response to it, or failed to treat it with the seriousness it deserved.[84] It is possible that some of the letter writers used pseudonyms in order to take up provocative or daring positions in heated exchanges about the meaning of equality and how it might apply within the homes of Ghanaian men and women – although this seems unlikely in the case of Adjandor, because Have was a small place, and it would not have been difficult for any determined reader to establish whether it was really his hometown. Employees who wrote for the *Daily Graphic* did so under their own names. A young woman journalist like Vicky Wireko was sticking her neck out, and precisely because she was pushing a debate on issues pertaining to men's privileges in marriage and in the home, she met with resistance at close quarters:

> And I tell you what, I wrote an article on, I think it was on polygamy or something like that, and do you know what my own dad said to me? I shouldn't have written the article, when he read it the next morning, that if I had discussed it with him or if I had sought his opinion, he would have asked me not to write that kind of [article]. So now, thinking back, it's because he was guilty. He was practising it [polygyny] and he thought it was right.[85]

Undeterred, Wireko continued to publish challenging articles. A few weeks after 'Obsolete customs and taboo …. What are we doing about them?' came 'Woman, Insist on Your Rights'.[86]

CONCLUSION

In this article, we have built a bridge between the rich interdisciplinary scholarship on African newsprint cultures and recent historical research on the participation of African women in the United Nations. Our interviews with women journalists in Ghana and our analysis of the *Daily Graphic* have shown that the onset of the IWY presented an opportunity for women living under military rule. A small but determined group of women journalists recognised the potential of the women's pages as a domain of feminine sociality that government information officers did not bother to scrutinise or censor. Capitalising on a longer history of newspapers as vehicles for debate and the tradition of readers writing in, they reignited older discussions amongst Ghanaians on issues of marriage, divorce, parenting and inheritance, and opened up new lines of discussion on family planning, formal educational achievement and careers for women. The IWY was not the first time or only time that such issues were discussed in Ghana, but the IWY did provide a unique opportunity for newspapers to host debates between co-citizens and to frame these debates as contributions to a worldwide moment. By forging connections between intimate and everyday issues, and the international platform of the IWY, journalists could address women as a key constituency in national development *and* articulate more assertive critiques of discrimination and inequality.

Whilst we have focused on Ghana in this article, Ghana was far from the only country in Africa which was under military government during the IWY. According to Samuel Decalo, writing in 1976, approximately half of Africa's states were controlled by 'military and civil-military cliques' at this time.[87] Here, we have pointed to a form of newsprint activism which is likely to resonate in other African countries, and aid scholarly understanding of how people who were not physically present

at Mexico City nonetheless interpreted the IWY and made it relevant in their lives. Constraints on freedoms of speech and association in the 1970s impacted on the nature and forms of women's organisations and activism in many African countries, often making them appear very different to those that came later and were linked to the wave of democratisation at the end of the 1980s and through the 1990s.[88] Attention to women like Kate Abbam, Elizabeth Ohene and Vicky Wireko might help us to identify continuities. This is the focus of our ongoing research.

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ENDNOTES

[1] 'Mrs Jiagge Calls for Reforms', *Daily Graphic*, 28 June 1975.

[2] 'Obsolete Customs and Taboos … What are We Doing About Them?', *Daily Graphic*, 26 June 1975.

[3] Edzodzinam Tsikata, 'Women's Political Organisations 1951–87', in Emmanuel Hansen and Kwame Ninsin (eds), *The State, Development and Politics in Ghana* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1989), pp. 73–93.

[4] 'Old Students Honour Ex-Headmistress', *Daily Graphic*, 7 July 1970; 'Miss Attah-Mills at Royal Garden Party', *Daily Graphic*, 1 July 1970.

[5] 'Mother and Child Care' and 'How to Bring Children "Down to Earth"', both in *Daily Graphic*, 29 July 1970; 'Black-is-Beautiful Theme Steps into the World of Cosmetics', *Daily Graphic*, 1 July 1970; 'The Menace of the "Ashiawos"… and Part-Time "Gyantras"', *Daily Graphic*, 15 July 1970.

[6] Jocelyn Olcott, *International Women's Year: The Greatest Consciousness-Raising Event in History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Giusi Russo, 'Contested Practices, Human Rights, and Colonial Bodies in Pain: The UN's Gender Politics in Africa, 1940s–1960s', *Gender & History* 30 (2018), pp. 196–231; and '"Freedom of Choice is a Western Concept": Equality, Bodily Rhetoric, and Feminist Fears 1964–1974', *International History Review* 42 (2020), pp. 1210–28; Rhian Elinor Keyse, '"Hidden Motives"? African Women, Forced Marriage, and Knowledge Production at the United Nations, 1950–62', *Journal of Contemporary History* 57 (2022), pp. 268–92.

[7] For Annie Jiaggie's role in drafting international women's rights declarations and conventions, see Ellen Chesler, 'Who Wrote CEDAW?', in Adami and Plesch (eds), *Women and the UN: A New History of women's International Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 104–24. For Jiagge's role in the establishment of Women's World Banking and the 'Deborah Atobrah and Albert Awedoba, 'A Trail Blazer, An Outstanding International Jurist, A Humanitarian, An Ecumenical Christian And More … The Life of Justice Annie Jiagge (née Baëta)', in Mercy Akrofi Ansah and Esi Sutherland-Addy (eds), *Building the Nation: Seven Notable Ghanaians* (Legon: The Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 2018), pp. 1–62. For a study of connections and differences between women living under forms of single-party socialism in Bulgaria and Zambia, see Kristen Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex: Socialist Women's Activism and Global Solidarity during the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

[8] Jocelyn Olcott, 'Empires of Information: Media Strategies for the 1975 International Women's Year', *Journal of Women's History* 24 (2012), pp. 24–48.

[9] Audrey Gadzekpo, 'The Hidden History of Women in Ghanaian Print Culture', in Oyèrónkè Oyěwùmí (ed.), *African Gender Studies: A Reader* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 279–95.

[10] Audrey Gadzekpo and Stephanie Newell (eds), *Selected Writings of a Pioneer West African Feminist: Mabel Dove* (Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2004), p. xii.

[11] Gadzekpo, 'The Hidden History', p. 285.

[12] Stephanie Newell, 'Something to Hide? Anonymity and Pseudonyms in the Colonial West African Press', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 45 (2010), pp. 9–22.

[13] See also Gazdekpo and Newell, *Selected Writings*, p. xii.

[14] Stephanie Newell, *The Power to Name: A History of Anonymity in Colonial West Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), p. 17.

[15] Graphic Communications Group Ltd, 'History of the GCGL', https://corporate.graphic.com.gh/about-us.html.

[16] Gadzekpo and Newell, *Selected Writings*, pp. xviii–xx.

[17] Gadzekpo, 'Hidden History'.

[18] The Ghana School of Journalism was established under the Nkrumah government. It became an Institute in 1974 by a decree of the then military government (NRCD 275), but it was not a degree-awarding institution until 2006. See Jennifer Hasty, *The Press and Political Culture in Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005) and UniMAC-GIJ, 'Our History', https://gij.edu.gh/overview/.

[19] She was initially appointed as Acting Editor in 1979 and was subsequently confirmed in the position.

[20] Interview with Vicky Wireko-Andoh, 22 February 2020.

[21] The Graphic Communications Group Ltd, 'Our History', https://corporate.graphic.com.gh/about-us-page/history-of-graphic-communications-group.html.

[22] This petition was titled: 'Recommendations for advancement of the status of Ghanaian women, the development of their potentialities and their role in the national reconstruction'. We located it in the Evelyn Amarteifio papers at the archive of the Historical Society of Ghana, Legon. Due to resource constraints, these papers are as yet uncatalogued, and thus we are not able to provide specific file numbers yet.

[23] Minutes of GAW Executive Committee meeting April 1971, Evelyn Amarteifio papers, Legon.

[24] Interview with Elizabeth Ohene, 2 February 2020.

[25] Interview with Elizabeth Ohene.

[26] Interview with Elizabeth Ohene.

[27] 'For the Fashion Crazy', *Daily Graphic*, 1 April 1970.

[28] 'Cooking with Cream in Mind', *Daily Graphic*, 14 January 1970.

[29] 'Will Teacher Tell Off the Beauty Queen?', *Daily Graphic*, 7 January 1970.

[30] This body of research, and the work of several key authors within it, is reflected in a substantial recent volume of essays on African print cultures: Derek Peterson, Emma Hunter and Stephanie Newell (eds), *African Print Cultures: Newspapers and their Publics in the Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

[31] Derek Peterson and Emma Hunter, 'Print Culture in Colonial Africa', in Derek Peterson, Emma Hunter and Stephanie Newel (eds), *African Print Cultures*, pp. 1–45 at 18.

[32] Emma Hunter, '*Komkya* and the Convening of a Chagga Public, 1953–1961', in Derek Peterson, Emma Hunter and Stephanie Newel (eds), *African Print Cultures*, pp. 283–305, here pp. 284–5, referring to Michael Warner, 'Publics and Counterpublics', *Public Culture* 14 (2002), pp. 49–90, here p. 61.

[33] Hunter, *Komkya*, pp. 294–95.

[34] Another example of this can be found in Kate Skinner and Wilson Yayoh (eds), *Writing the New Nation in a West African Borderland: Ablɔdɛ Safui (the Key to Freedom) by Holiday Komedja* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2019).

[35] Karin Barber, 'Experiments with Genre in Yoruba Newspapers of the 1920', in Derek Peterson, Emma Hunter and Stephanie Newel (eds), *African Print Cultures*, pp. 151–78, here p. 162.

[36] 'Mother and Child Care', *Daily Graphic* 29 July 1970; 'Sister to the Rescue', *Daily Graphic*, 19 August 1970.

[37] 'When Women Watch in Silence', *Daily Graphic* 4 February 1970.

[38] Interview with Elizabeth Ohene, 2 February 2020.

[39] Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 48.

[40] Gadzekpo, 'Hidden History' traces examples of combative letters about women's clothing in the Gold Coast press to as early as 1886. See also Andrew Ivaska, '"Anti–Mini Militants Meet Modern Misses": Urban Style, Gender and the Politics of "National Culture" in 1960s Dar es Salaam, Tanzania', *Gender & History* 14 (2003), pp. 584–607; Jean Allman (ed.), *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); and Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoué, '"African Women Do Not Look Good in Wigs": Gender, Beauty Rituals and Cultural Identity in Anglophone Cameroon, 1961–1972', *Feminist Africa* 21 (2016).

[41] 'The Afro Look', *Daily Graphic* 15 April 1970.

[42] 'When Men Meet – They Gossip!', *Daily Graphic*, 21 January 1970.

[43] Stephanie Newell, 'Making Up Their Own Minds: Readers, Interpretations, and the Difference of View in Ghanaian Popular Narratives', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 67 (1997), pp. 389–405, here p. 397.

[44] Newell, 'Making Up Their Own Minds'.

[45] 'A Woman of the Baha'i Faith', *Daily Graphic*, 11 March 1970.

[46] 'Woman Diplomat', *Daily Graphic*, 4 March 1970; 'Breaking the Sex Barrier' (on Women in Advertising), 15 September 1971; 'The Top Women in the Hotels', 19 June 1975.

[47] 'Money is Her Trade', *Daily Graphic*, 25 March 1970.

[48] Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoué, 'Intellectual Housewives, Journalism, and Anglophone Nationalism in Cameroon, 1961–1972', *Journal of West African History* 3 (2017), pp. 67–92; 'Housewives at Husbands' Throats: Recalcitrant Wives and Gender Norms in a West African Nation, 1961–72', *Gender & History* 29 (2017), pp. 405–22.

[49] Here, we are riffing off the title of a recent novel about a young woman considerably less privileged than Josephine. See Peace Adzo Medie, *His Only Wife* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2020).

[50] Interview with Dorcas Coker-Appiah, 8 December 2019, who was called to the bar in 1972, having graduated in law at the University of Ghana, Legon. She recalled that there were seven women in her cohort, which was the largest of any cohort up to that point.

[51] Similar appeals to gendered forms of aspiration were noted by Holly Ashford in her analysis of the promotion of family planning via newspaper images of well-heeled nuclear families with fewer children than the statistical norm. 'Modern Motherhood, Masculinity, and Family Planning in Ghana, 1960–75', *Journal of West African History* 6 (2020), pp. 61–91.

[52] Interview with Elizabeth Ohene, 2 February 2020. See also 'Brains and Beauty Go Together', *Daily Graphic*, 11 February 1970.

[53] For another example, see 'Josephine – Talk of the Town', *Daily Graphic*, 25 February 1970. This was a profile of a Kenyan beauty queen, who was also a lecturer in sociology. Coincidentally, she was also named Josephine.

[54] In a recent article which explored Ghanaian newspaper reports on the entertainment scene between 1966 and 1979, Alison Okuda concluded that sexualised images of Black diasporan women performers had the effect of distinguishing them from

their Ghanaian counterparts, and emphasising their national non-belonging via a politics of authenticity and respectability. 'Performing Ghana: The Politics of Being a Black Woman on the Stage, 1966–1979', *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* 12 (2019), pp. 32–48.

[55] Examples of work that highlights these ideas include: Ashford, 'Modern Motherhood'; Kate Skinner, 'Gendering Citizenship and Decolonizing Justice in 1960s Ghana: Revisiting the Struggle for Family Law Reform', *American Journal of Legal History* 60 (2020), pp. 257–87; Carina Ray, *Crossing the Color Line: Race, Sex, and the Contested Politics of Colonialism in Ghana* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2015) [particularly chapter 7]; Jeffrey Ahlman, *Living With Nkrumahism: Nation, State, and Pan-Africanism in Ghana* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2017) [particularly chapter 5]; Gadzekpo and Newell, *Selected Writings*. This, however, is not an exhaustive list.

[56] National Liberation Council Decree 288.

[57] Republic of Ghana, *First Report of the Law Reform Commission* (Accra: Government Printer, 1971).

[58] Republic of Ghana, *First Report of the Law Reform Commission*.

[59] See for example 'Make Mine Monogamy – Not Polygamy' by Carlton Ashun, 5 June 1970; 'Polygamy – Is It Uncivilised?' by Peter Akwesi Bediako, 12 July 1971 (written in response to Helen Oppong); Polygamy versus Polyandry' by Tetteh Nettey, 13 July 1971; 'Polygamy and Society' by Gladys Kotey, 30 August 1971.

[60] For a short biographical profile of Kate Abbam, and a copy of one of her articles on the ordeal of widowhood, 'We Shall Overcome', see Esi Sutherland Addy and Aminata Diaw (eds), *Women Writing Africa: West Africa and the Sahel* (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2005).

[61] Interview with Vicky Wireko-Andoh, 22 February 2020.

[62] The acronym refers to the French name, Association Internationale Journalistes de la Presse Feminine.

[63] *Ɔbaa Sima*, December 1974, p. 18.

[64] *Ɔbaa Sima*, December 1974, p. 18.

[65] *Ɔbaa Sima*, December 1974, p. 19.

[66] *Ɔbaa Sima*, p. 22.

[67] *Ɔbaa Sima*, December 1974, p. 22.

[68] Some of the minutes of this committee are available in the Evelyn Amarteifio papers, because Amarteifio herself represented the GAW on the IWY preparations committee.

[69] UNESCO, 'Media Workshop for Journalists and Broadcasters, Mexico City, 3–4 July 1975'. COM.75/WS/29. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000016819. See also Olcott, *International Women's Year*: 101 and note 59.

[70] United Nations General Assembly (Sixth Special Session), 'Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order'. A/RES/S-6/3201 (1 May 1974). http://www.un-documents.net/s6r3201.htm.

[71] United Nations, World Conference of the International Women's Year, 'Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace'. E/CONF.66/34 (2 July 1974). See particularly principle 14.

[72] Judith Zinsser, 'From Mexico to Copenhagen to Nairobi: The United Nations Decade for Women, 1975–1985', *Journal of World History* 13 (2002), pp. 139–68.

[73] M. Shamsuddin, 'The New World Information Order', *Pakistan Horizon* 40 (1987), pp. 80–94.

[74] Olcott, 'Empires of Information'.

[75] UNESCO, 'Media Workshop for Journalists and Broadcasters, Mexico City, 3–4 July 1975'. COM.75/WS/29. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000016819.

[76] UNESCO, 'Media Workshop', see particularly annex III – page 3.

[77] UNESCO General Conference (19th session), 'UNESCO's Contribution to the Improvement of the Status of Women: Report of the Director-General on the Results of UNESCO's Participation in the International Women's Year and New Programme Proposals for Future Biennia'. 19 C/14 (Nairobi, 30 September 1976). https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000022873; copies of relevant issues of the *UNESCO Courier* can be found at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000108360 and https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000074845.

[78] It is clear that Kate Abbam remained in contact with the Women's Information Network, since several updates and excerpts from Ɔbaa Sima can be found in the network's publication, *WIN News*. For example, *WIN News* 4 (1978) featured an update on Ghana's new Maintenance of Children Decree.

[79] Interview with Vicky Wireko-Andoh, 22 February 2020.

[80] Interview with Vicky Wireko-Andoh.

[81] Interview with Elizabeth Ohene, 2 February 2020.

[82] *Daily Graphic*, 22 May 1975.

[83] 'Charlie wote' is an anglicisation of *Chale wote*, which means 'Friend, let's go' in the Ga language.

[84] 'Don't Mislead Other Women', *Daily Graphic*, 7 August 1975.

[85] Interview with Vicky Wireko-Andoh, 22 February 2020.

[86] *Daily Graphic*, 26 June and 7 August 1975.

[87] Samuel Decalo, *Coups and Army Rule in Africa: Studies in Military Style* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990 [first published 1976]), p. 2.

[88] Aili Mari Tripp, 'Women in Movement: Transformations in African Political Landscapes', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5 (2003), pp. 233–55.

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