

REWRITING WOMEN INTO GHANAIAAN HISTORY

1950-1966

By

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DECLARATION

I, Adwoa Kwakyewaa Opong, 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 and that this has neither in whole nor partly been presented for another degree elsewhere.

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DEDICATION

To my family and loved ones, especially my parents,
Mr. and Mrs. Opong.



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ABSTRACT

Ghana today enjoys the presence of a multiplicity of voluntary organisations majority of which claim to be dedicated to women's welfare and empowerment. These groups or movements operate in a rather calm and tolerant political atmosphere and enjoy the benefits of access to and a relatively easy means of information dissemination. How different was the situation in the 1950s and early years after independence when the main focus and attention of Ghanaians particularly, male politicians was on the political fortunes of the new nation and women's interests and empowerment largely remained a secondary issue?

Taking the discussion beyond the political developments in the Gold Coast in the years leading up to independence, a topic which has been the subject of immense research, this study focuses on women's organizations and how these were able to push their agenda for the enhancement of the status of Ghanaian women in the years leading up to independence and the immediate independent era.

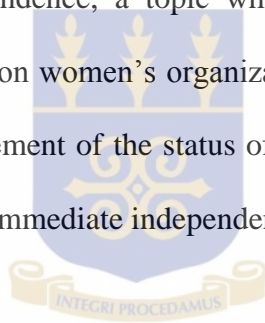


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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

With African independence comes the real struggle of planning and reconstructing societies stagnated by colonialism. The African woman is playing a vital part in this process infusing the revolution with a creative and dedicated spirit while, at the same time undergoing dramatic changes in her own development.

—Naa Adaawa, “Woman of Africa-Will She? Won’t She? She Must!,”
African Review 1, May 1965, 15.

1.0 Introduction

The story of Africa’s struggle towards independence has been told from different perspectives. In recent years, historians have found it necessary to revisit this era to explore areas that had previously been ignored but which are equally important to understanding other aspects of the struggle. These include youth and grassroots activism, women’s roles and contributions, a history of the different interpretations of nationhood and nationalism, and the anthology continues to expand.¹

This research is a study of women in the period of nationalist political mobilisation to the first decade of Ghana’s independence 1950-1966. It however focuses on the dominant women’s organisations which existed and worked within this era, namely: the Federation of Gold Coast Women (FGCW), the All-African Women’s League and the NCGW.² The argument is made for the need to consider the activities of the identified groups as part of the historical process, which should be assessed on their

¹ Examples of recent studies in these areas include Susan Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the making of Tanganyikan Nationalism 1955-1965* (Portsmouth HN: Heinemann, 1997); Frederick Cooper, “Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective,” *Journal of African History* 49 (2008): 167-196; James R. Brennan, “Blood Enemies: Exploitation and Urban Citizenship in the Nationalist Political Thought of Tanzania,” *Journal of African History* 47 (2006): 389-413; Richard Waller, *Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa*,” *Journal of African History* 47 (2006): 77-92.

² For the purposes of this study, the term women will be used although the focus still remains on the organizations. Where a distinction needs to be drawn, it will be clearly stated.

own merits as major contributions to the political and social transformations of the period.

Scholarship on Ghanaian (African) women has for the most part focused on the colonial period, exploring the social, economic and political impact of the whole colonial enterprise on the status of women. Recent publications on the subject have sought to go beyond the “impact story” to investigate the different ways of “women’s modes of adjustment, negotiation and resistance” in the colonial context.³ As expressed by Audrey S. Gadzekpo, these works have been successful “in illustrating a fuller history of colonial societies” in which “women are not passive beings devoid of any social agency or personal autonomy.”⁴

Colonialism aside, there is a wealth of literature on the nationalist histories of Ghana.⁵ However, similar to the cadre of principals that Susan Geiger referred to in her article, “Tanganyikan Nationalism as Women’s Work,” the nationalist histories of Ghana have tended to extol the contributions of a few personalities and also reiterate the major political developments of the era.⁶ Even current publications on the general histories of Ghana have also been modelled on this pattern.⁷ This largely confirms Frederick

³ See Jean Allman, Susan Geiger and Nakanyike Musisi, ed., *Women in African Colonial Histories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002). Particularly the introductory remarks.

⁴ Audrey Gadzekpo, “Women’s Engagement with Gold Coast Print Culture from 1857 to 1957,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Birmingham, 2001), 5; Sean Hawkins, ““The Woman in Question”: Marriage and Identity in the Colonial Courts of Northern Ghana, 1907-1954,” in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, 117. For examples of works on women and colonialism see Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women—A Modern History* trans. Beth Gillian Raps (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), 30-136.

⁵ Some of the seminal works in this regard include, Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana 1948-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). David Apter, *The Gold Coast in Transition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1955). George Padmore, *The Gold Coast Revolution: The Struggle of an African People from Slavery to Freedom* (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd, 1953).

⁶ Susan Geiger, “Tanganyikan Nationalism as ‘Women’s Work’: Life Histories, Collective Biography and Changing Historiography,” *Journal of African History* 37 (1996): 466.

⁷ Kofi Awoonor, *Ghana- A Political History* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1990), D. E. K. Amenumey, *Ghana- A Concise History from Pre-Colonial Times to the 20th Century* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2008). Roger Gocking, *The History of Ghana* (West Port, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2005).

Cooper's observation that the "metanarrative of nationalist victory . . . have most often been told as stories of men with a rather macho air to the narrating of confrontation."⁸

Where women are mentioned, they are acknowledged for being very loyal supporters of Nkrumah and the Convention Peoples' Party. Questions of their mobilisation particularly, and the relevance of their activism during the period under study remains to be fully appreciated. It is this gap in the historiography that this study seeks to fill.

1.1 Women in Pre-colonial African Societies

Scholars are generally of the view that women's roles complemented that of men in many facets of pre-colonial African life. This complementarity, according to Arhin, extended into political affairs as there existed alongside male stools, well defined and established political roles for Akan women.⁹ Apart from ensuring continuity in succession to the throne, the *Ahemaa's* (queen mother) authority stretched far beyond women's affairs to cover the entire matrilineage and in some cases even occupied male stools.¹⁰ In terms of the pre-colonial economy, women and children made up quite a proportion of the labour force and in some societies, "they derived their political status from the key roles they played in production."¹¹ Claire Robertson observed that Ga women assisted their spouses by providing labour on the farms and by processing and

⁸ Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," *The American Historical Review* 99 (December, 1994): 1523.

⁹ Kwame Arhin, "The Political and Military Roles of Akan Women," in *Female and Male in West Africa* ed., Christine Oppong, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 91-98.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 95. The transformations in the roles of *Ahemaa* (queen mothers) in present times have also been explored by Irene Odotei in "Women in Male Corridors of Power," in *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, Governance and Politics* ed., Irene K. Odotei and Albert K. Awedoba, (Legon, Ghana: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2006), 81-100.

¹¹ Jean O'Barr, "African Women in Politics," in *African Women South of the Sahara* ed., Margaret Jean Hay and Sharon Stichter, (New York: Longman Press, 1984), 140. See also Jean Allman, "Rounding up Spinsters: Gender Chaos and Unmarried Women in Colonial Asante," *Journal of African History* 37 (1996): 195-214.

selling farm produce.¹² Women also played very important roles in war times. Apart from mobilizing and taking charge of affairs when their men folk went out to war, women played commiserate duties in such situations.

Women's associations and voluntary groups in the pre-colonial era were organised around kinship ties, lineage membership, occupation and age and provided an arena for the development of social networks and more importantly, formed the bases for the growth of a collective—sometimes feminist—consciousness that could be mobilized when the survival of the community is at stake.¹³ In areas where women controlled such economic ventures as trading and farming, associations formed wielded considerable power which was harnessed to protect the interest of its members.¹⁴

1.2 Impact of Colonialism on Women and their Organisation

With the advent of colonialism, women's roles and status underwent very significant changes as a result of the implementation of colonial administrative policies, introduction of formal education and the development of the cash crop economy. Some scholars argue that the imposition of Victorian values by colonialists stressed male superiority in work and undermined the roles of women.¹⁵ It would however be erroneous to assume that women's lives were caught up in a changeless or frozen space during the colonial era. Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian, for instance, have explored

¹² Claire Robertson, "Ga Women and Socioeconomic Change," in *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, ed., Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, (California: Stanford University Press, 1976), 116.

¹³ Shireen Hassim, *Women's Organisations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 8. Audrey Wipper, "Women's Voluntary Associations," in *African Women South of the Sahara*, 69.

¹⁴ Wipper, 70.

¹⁵ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, 3. See also Manu, "Women and their Organisation," 110.

the complex interactions and responses by women to changes in the colonial economy in Asante in the 1920s. They argue, among other things, that despite efforts by authorities to regain control over women's productive and reproductive labour, they (women) created new opportunities in trading and cocoa farming for themselves, and these empowered them to challenge "the shifting terrain of patriarchal power."¹⁶ In keeping with the adage that the woman is the bedrock of the family, the Ghanaian (African) woman in history has always heeded the call to action to defend, if necessary, as in the case of, Yaa Asantewaa of Asante and the role she played in the Anglo-Asante war of 1900, Nzinga of Angola, Queen Amina of Zaria and many others.¹⁷

In a similar vein, women's modes of mobilisation changed as a result of changes in the wider society. According to Akurang-Parry, social change and acculturation remoulded aspects of women's indigenous organisations and institutions.¹⁸ In the coastal areas especially, there emerged some elite women's groups whose main preoccupation were socialising with others of their kind as well as strategically, involving themselves in some of the pertinent issues of the time. For example, the Native Ladies of Cape Coast—an elite women's organisation played an essential role in the Anglo-Asante war of 1873/74 by organising funds towards the war and providing labour mainly carriers for the British.¹⁹

Western education, an important element which fuelled the process of change, also became an essential tool for members of these associations as they used it to "transcend the bounded political spaces controlled by the patriarchal structures of both

¹⁶ Jean Allman and Victoria Tashjian, *I Will Not Eat Stone: A Women's History of Colonial Asante* (Portsmouth HN: Heinemann, 2000), xxxiv.

¹⁷ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, 34-44.

¹⁸ Kwabena Akurang-Parry, "Aspects of Elite Women's Activism in the Gold Coast, 1874-1890," *IJAHS* 37 (2004): 468.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

indigenous and colonial states.”²⁰ The flourishing of literary and debating clubs in the Gold Coast in the 1920s and 1930s is a manifestation of the above.²¹ In other parts of Africa such as Eastern Nigeria, Cameroon and Tanzania, women’s traditional societies and institutions were transformed into political protest groups during the colonial era. These became important vehicles through which aspects of colonial administrative policies imposed were challenged. For instance, the custom of Anlu among women of Kom in the British Cameroons was used by women to register their displeasure against rumours of land sales by the British colonial officials.²² A similar occurrence was also seen in Eastern Nigeria among women of Igbo in their protests against colonial officials’ intention of increasing taxes.²³

Numerous religious and voluntary organisations also emerged during the colonial era. These included the Girl Guide Association, the Child Care Society and the Young Women’s Christian Association. The activities of these associations were complemented by the efforts of women’s fellowships which sprung up particularly in Asante in the 1930s and 1940s.²⁴ These fellowships, which were led by the first evangelical women missionaries of the Methodist Church, and voluntary organisations, put a lot of emphasis on education, inculcating in their members Christian values as well as moulding women into proper ‘mothers and wives,’ an indication of the application of Victorian ideas concerning the characteristics of the ideal woman.²⁵ Scholars who have studied such

²⁰ Ibid., 470.

²¹ See Gadzekpo, “Women’s Engagement with Gold Coast Print,” 194.

²² Jean O’Barr, “African Women in Politics,” 146.

²³ Ibid., 147.

²⁴ Allman and Tashjian, *I Will Not Eat Stone*, 205-208.

²⁵ For a detailed study of how this was done in Asante see, Allman, “Making Mothers: Missionaries, Medical Officers and Women’s Work in Colonial Asante, 1924-1945,” *History Workshop* 38 (1994): 23-47.

attempts by European led organisations to remould women into better wives and mothers have observed that for many women, participation in these organisations was a means of connecting with broader developments which were taking place around them.²⁶

1.3 Women and the Nationalist Struggles

As the nationalist movements for independence gathered strength across Africa, women's political activism was also equally transformed. In Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Guinea and the Gold Coast women were at the forefront of the anti-colonial protests and agitations. In Zimbabwe, for instance, women were specifically trained for Guerrilla warfare and actually fought in defence of the country's revolution.²⁷ In Tanzania and Guinea, the dominant nationalist groups relied on women to spread its ideologies and expand their support base. The story was no different in the Gold Coast where women became founding members of most of the political parties that emerged. These became an important medium through which the parties mobilised and also served to encourage the interest of women in national politics.

What is more interesting in this period is the formation of both political and non-political women's organisations. In the years 1950 to 1960, there were two dominant women's groups in the Gold Coast. The first and most militant organisation was the CPP women's wing/section formed almost immediately after the CPP was founded. After independence, the leadership of this organisation formed the All-African Women's League which was later renamed the Ghana Women's League (GWL) in 1960. The other organisation, the Federation of Gold Coast Women (FGCW), was an alliance of smaller

²⁶ Aili Mari Tripp, *Women and Politics in Uganda* (Oxford: Fountain Publishers, 2002), 35.

²⁷ Tanya Lyons, "Guerilla Girls and Women in the Zimbabwean National Liberation Struggle," in *Women in African Colonial Histories*, 305-326.

voluntary groups such as Gold Coast Women's Association and market women's groups in the colony formed in 1953. Gadzekpo argues that unlike elite women's groups of the 1920s and 1930s the FGCW and other women's groups which sprung up later in the 1950s "was not so much for elite women to socialise with others of their kind, but to bring about material change in women's living conditions."²⁸

Taking the historical circumstances into consideration, this research will explore how successful the organisations understudy were in effecting changes in women's living conditions. If they were, what accounted for the inauguration of the National Council of Ghana Women by Nkrumah in 1960? These are some of the questions which will be addressed in the chapters.

1.4 Historiographical Context

There is a burgeoning body of historical research on women especially African women and their contributions to past and present developments.²⁹ Although engaged with this growing field, my research is located specifically within the context of women and the study of nationalism in Africa. Extensive insight is therefore drawn from similar

²⁸ Gadzekpo, "Women's Engagement with Gold Coast Print Culture," 194.

²⁹ For examples of such works see, Claire Robertson and Iris Berger, ed., *Women and Class in Africa* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1986); Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, ed., *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change* (California: Stanford University Press, 1976); Coquery Vidrovitch, *African Women*, (1997); Margaret Strobel, "African Women," *Signs* 8 (Autumn, 1982): 101-139; Margaret Jean Hay and Sharon Stichter, ed., *African Women South of the Sahara* (New York: Longman Press, 1984); LaRay Denzer, 'Yoruba Women: A Historiographical Study,' *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 37 (1994): 1-39; Jean O'Barr, "African Women in Politics," in *African Women South of the Sahara*, 140. In the same book, see Stephanie Urdang, "Women in National Liberation Movements." 156. Florence A. Dolphyne, *The Emancipation of Women: An African Perspective* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1991); Ardayfio Schandorff and Kate Kwafo Akoto, *Women in Ghana: An Annotated Bibliography* (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 1990). Jean Allman et al., eds., *Women in African Colonial Histories* (Bloomington: Indiana Universities Press, 2002).

historical studies done in other parts of Africa such as, Guinea, Tanganyika, Southern Nigeria, Rhodesia, and Sierra Leone.³⁰

An examination of the above historiography indicates that women's activism during nationalists struggles was influenced by different factors. One of the major factors that scholars have identified is the nature of women's social and cultural associations and the ability of women activists to transfer into nationalist political organisations the ethos characteristic of their associations. Exploring the roles of women in Tanganyikan nationalism, Susan Geiger observed that the majority of women activists recruited into TANU were members of Ngoma (dance groups). These women—whom Geiger described as constructors, embodiments and performers of Tanzanian nationalism—transferred into the party the discipline and organisational structure that characterised the nature of their dance associations.³¹

Similarly, Elizabeth Schmidt argued that whereas many of the other political organisations in Guinea had ignored women, the RDA drew support from women mainly because the party recognised and appreciated the power in women's social relations and relevance of their cultural associations.³² Although such groups tended to be ethnically

³⁰ See Elizabeth Schmidt, "Emancipate your Husbands! Women and Nationalism in Guinea," in *Women in African Colonial Histories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 281-298. Susan Geiger, *Tanu Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965* (Portsmouth HN: Heinemann, 1997). Nina Emma Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1982). LaRay Denzer, "Women in Freetown Politics, 1914-61: A Preliminary Study," *Journal of the International African Institute* 57 (1987): 439-456. Timothy Scarnecchia, "Poor Women and Nationalist Politics: Alliances and Fissures in the Formation of a Nationalist Political Movement in Salisbury, Rhodesia, 1950-6," *Journal of African History* 37 (1996): 283-310.

³¹ Geiger, *TANU Women*, 14.

³² Schmidt, "Emancipate Your Husbands," 284. The RDA was an inter-territorial alliance of political parties founded in 1946, with branches throughout the French territories of West and Equatorial Africa, and the Trust territories of Togo and Cameroon. For more on the RDA see Schmidt, "Cold War in Guinea, The Rassemblement Democratique Africain and the Struggle Over Communism, 1950-1958," *Journal of African History*, 48 (2007): 95-121.

exclusive, Schmidt observed that they were often involved in mutual support activities that tended to transcend ethnic boundaries.³³

Again, a careful analysis of the historiography revealed that different classes of women, both educated and non-educated, Muslim and Christians, have been involved in the nationalist cause depending on place and time. In Nigeria and Sierra Leone for instance, very well educated women contributed immensely by organising their fellows from different socio-economic backgrounds and more drawing the attention of male politicians to problems affecting women. Tanganyikan and Guinean women were mostly Muslim and illiterate.³⁴ Nina Mba, observed market women were very instrumental in mobilising support for the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) and its leader. In the article, “Poor Women and Nationalist Politics,” Timothy Scarnecchia argued that changes in class and gender relations in the 1950s influenced the interactions of specific groups of women; marginalised women and women of high social standing. Both groups of women attempted to apply their own struggles within a political framework which was largely male dominated.

Beyond placing women at the centre stage of affairs of nationalist movements, one basic question which feminists’ historians identify as crucial was; what happened to women nationalists after independence? In Tanzania, the women’s section of TANU and its leadership were gradually marginalised from mainstream politics with the inauguration of the *Umoja Wa Wanawake wa Tanzania* (Tanzanian women’s movement).³⁵ La Ray Denzer also identified a similar trend in Sierra Leone where she

³³ Ibid., 284-285.

³⁴ For more on the backgrounds of some of these women see LaRay Denzer, “Women in Freetown Politics.” Schmidt, “Emancipate Your Husbands,” 283-284, Geiger, *TANU Women*, 43. Nina Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilised*, 193-233.

³⁵ Geiger, *TANU Women*, 189-203.

noted that organisations such as the Sierra Leone Women's Movement (SLWM) and the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women (NCSLW), which had revived women's interest in politics, were "shunted aside as male leaders monopolised the spoils of office."³⁶

How applicable are the above studies to the case in Ghana? Women nationalists in the Gold Coast unlike those in Tanganyika and Guinea were not predominantly Muslim and unschooled. Neither were they members of dance groups or other social groups. However, the CPP like the RDA did recognise the power in such organisations as market women's groups, the Federation of Gold Coast Women and the Party's women's wing. Some writers have attributed the success of the CPP party and Nkrumah to the loyalty and support that he got from the women. Were women activists marginalised from politics with the inauguration of the NCGW in 1960? Instead of merely chronicling the history of the organisation, attempts will be made to address these issues.

1.5 Research Problem / Objectives of the study

This research seeks to investigate the roles and influence of the identified organisations on women's political and social circumstances in the period leading to and immediately after independence. The main question driving this study is; how did these groups negotiate and manipulate the changing political situation in the country to advance their agenda for women's empowerment³⁷? Some of the questions to be investigated include;

³⁶ Denzer, "Women in Freetown Politics," 451.

³⁷ There is no one accepted definition of the term empowerment. In much recent gender development literature, empowerment is used to encompass such processes as women's training and capacity building. Others also define the term as the means whereby marginalized groups, such as women and the poor, are brought into the decision-making process. For many feminist scholars empowerment must involve the process that leads people to see themselves as able and capable of occupying that decision making space. Jo Rowlands, "Empowerment examined," *Development in Practice*, 2 (May, 1995):101-

- Why were women interested in mass nationalist politics? What opportunities existed within the framework of the CPP and indeed the general political climate for the articulation of women's aspirations?
- Did the FGW and GWL all share the same goals, or were there differences in what they sought to achieve and the ways they went about it? Did the differences among them work to increase their combined effectiveness?
- What was the motivation for the inauguration of the NCGW? Was it established to empower women and increase their role in political affairs, or was the organization constructed so as to marginalize women's political role by limiting their activities to matters of social welfare? How was such a political body able to advance the cause of women?
- What happened to these organisations and their members after the overthrow of the CPP government? Although it is extremely important to reconstruct women's central roles in the building of an independent Ghana it is equally essential that issues surrounding the disappearance of these women leaders especially after the consolidation of the new nation are explored.

1.6 Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this research falls into three different groups. The first category consists of works on nationalism in the Gold Coast. The second examines literature specific to the research area of women's political empowerment in Ghana. In

107. For this study, the term empowerment is used to describe the process and capacity of women to organize in order to increase their internal strength, to assert their independent right to determine and make choices and more importantly the effort of the organizations at making women's issues part of the agenda for nation-building. For more see Jo Rowland, *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras* (Oxfam: United Kingdom and Ireland, 1997).

view of the fact that this study focuses on women's organisations, the third group comprises analytical and theoretical studies on women's organisations.

Some of the seminal works on nationalism in Ghana reviewed are Dennis Austin's *Politics in Ghana* (1964), *The Gold Coast in Transition* by David Apter (1955), George Padmore's *The Gold Coast Revolution* (1953) and *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (1977) by C. L. R. James. The above works mainly entail a detailed analysis of the development of nationalism in the Gold Coast, the emergence of political organisations such as the UGCC and the CPP and the political development of Ghana under Nkrumah and the CPP. The importance of mass mobilisation in the CPP is another theme that has received a lot of attention. It is here that passing references are made to the roles of women. Padmore, for instance, describes the CPP as made up of "the plebeian masses, the urban workers, artisans, petty traders, market women and fishermen" ³⁸ He continues further to describe women as the 'backbone' of the CPP. ³⁹ The essential contributions of market women to the revolution is also mentioned and described briefly by C. L. R. James. ⁴⁰ However, women's organisations and their contributions in shaping the nationalist cause have largely been obscured by the larger history of mass mobilization and involvement in nationalism. In spite of the above, these studies provide immense insight into the historical context within which the organisations under study emerged. It strengthens the argument for the need to pay greater attention to the external political, social or even economic atmosphere which shapes the focus of women's movements at any particular time.

³⁸ George Padmore, *The Gold Coast Revolution: The Struggle of an African People from Slavery to Freedom* (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd, 1953), 67.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁴⁰ C. L. R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (London: Alison and Busby, 1977), 55-56, 131.

Some attempts have been made over the last few decades to rewrite women into the history of the era. Takyiwaa Manuh, Edodzinam Tsikata, Mansah Prah and Beatrix Allah-Mensah have written on women's organisation and political empowerment in the immediate independence era through to the fourth republic. Takyiwaa Manuh's article, "Women and their Organisation during the Convention Peoples' Party Period" focuses specifically on the CPP era and measures taken by Nkrumah in the political, social and economic empowerment of women. Regarding women's activism, Manuh cautions, albeit not directly, that any study of women at the time should take into consideration the fact that the Gold Coast was in a transitional state "in which the contradictions and discontent of previous epochs were coming to the fore. Women . . . were making their voices heard and were reacting against their age-old oppression, as well as exploiting the avenues which became available to them."⁴¹ She further touched briefly on the women's organisations and some of their activities.

Edzodzinam Tsikata explored women's organisations, their relations with the state and the response of the various political regimes to these groups in the article "Women's Political Organisations, 1951-1987," Although Tsikata noted that the CPP government consciously encouraged the participation of women in politics which was evident in the number of parliamentary seats and ministerial positions which women occupied at the time, she is quick to point out that the intervention of the government in the organisation of women during the CPP era were major limitations to attempts by these groups to address some of the pertinent issues of women. A similar conclusion was reached by Mansah Prah in the article "Chasing Illusions and Realising Visions." Prah argued that the dominant ideology at the time could not tolerate any attempts at raising

⁴¹ Takyiwaa Manu, "Women and their Organisation during the Convention People's Party Period," in *The Life and Work of Kwame Nkrumah*, ed., Kwame Arhin, (Accra: Sedco Publishing Ltd, 1991), 108-134.

feminists' consciousness in the fear that it might become a platform for women to challenge the status quo.⁴² In effect, the women's organisations were not successful in pushing the agenda of women. Assessing the participation of women in politics and public life, Beatrix Allah-Mensah also observed that the CPP government encouraged the participation of women in politics and appointed women as members of parliament, deputy ministers and district commissioners. These posts according to Allah-Mensah were in recognition of the essential roles and contributions of women in independence struggles.⁴³

In all of the above works, the focus remains on the CPP and Nkrumah as initiators of women's political and social empowerment. The issue of women as initiators of their own empowerment is largely left unexplored. Also, despite the very important pointers given, none of these works provide a historical analysis of the organisations in terms of the background and context, within which they emerged, structure, leadership, strategies, interests or even their aims and objectives. This study will seek to explore those areas and undertake a detailed historical investigation of the groups taking into consideration one of the underlying principles of history, change over time.

In the historiography on women's organisations two main issues have been debated by scholars.⁴⁴ They are the elements of interest and autonomy. Regarding interest the questions that have often arisen are: Why do women mobilise and what do they seek to gain by mobilising at particular times? Mba carried out a comprehensive

⁴² Mansah Prah, "Chasing Illusions and Realizing Visions: Reflections on Ghana's Feminist Experience," in *Gender Activism and Studies in Africa*, (Dakar: CODESRIA Gender Series 3, 2004), 27-40.

⁴³ Beatrix Allah-Mensah, *Women in Politics and Public Life in Ghana* (Accra: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2005), 15.

⁴⁴ See Tripp, *Women and Politics in Uganda* (Oxford: Fountain Publishers, 2002). Shireen Hassim, *Women's Organisations and Democracy in South Africa*, 2006. Maxine Molyneux, *Women's Movement in International Perspective: Latin America and Beyond* (Palgrave: Macmillan, 2001). Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilised*, 165-192.

examination of Nigerian women's political activism in the book *Nigerian Women Mobilised: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigeria, 1900-1965*. Mba argued among other things that the women's organisations which emerged during the nationalist era were both political interest and pressure groups. These organisations sought to highlight women's issues which had not been given due recognition and in the process applied pressure. She stated although they never fully developed into political parties, such organisations sought and fought to influence government policy regarding women such as franchise for women, taxation, educational opportunities for girls and many others.

In contrast, Tripp considers autonomy as more crucial to determining the success or otherwise of women's organisations. Tripp defines autonomy as the capacity of women's organisations to determine and broaden their own goals regardless of whether or not they conform to the goals of political parties and other powerful actors.⁴⁵ Autonomy, according to Tripp, allows women's organisations to select their own leadership and directly pursue goals aimed at improving the welfare of the community. In her analysis of the Ugandan Women's Movement, Tripp argues essentially that the movement has been effective over the years because of the societal autonomy which it exercises. In effect, previous women's movements were not successful because they lacked autonomy. Shireen Hassim in *Women's Organisation and Democracy in South Africa* analysed women's political participation in South Africa. Hassim focuses on women's organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC) Women's League, the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW), the United Women's Organisations (UWO) and the Women's National Coalition (WNC). Hassim has contested Tripp's point by arguing that a high degree of autonomy may "confine women to a political ghetto in

⁴⁵ Tripp, *Women and Politics in Uganda*, 12.

which they are so marginalised from national political processes that they are unable to shape political outcomes to favour women.”⁴⁶ She further makes a key observation that women activists took advantage of their participation in the national liberation struggle to “universalize the demand for gender equality.”⁴⁷

Although the above studies are not specific to the Gold Coast, they enable a more critical analysis of the dynamics of women’s activism in the nationalist struggles of the Gold Coast. Again, in exploring the activities of the women’s organisations, the above studies suggest the need for a critical examination of the historical context, autonomy, and interests not only as concepts but also its practicality within this specific context. How important was autonomy to the women’s organisations? Could the organisations be described as interest groups or mere auxiliaries to the political parties? How successful were these groups in pushing the interests of women within the broader struggle for independence?

Since the study intends to incorporate the biographies of some of the leading members of the women’s organisations, a number of published biographies and life histories of Ghanaian and African women have been reviewed.⁴⁸ In *The Flagbearers of Ghana: Profiles of One Hundred Distinguished Ghanaians*, Kojo Vietta outlined the biographies of very important personalities thought to have distinguished themselves in the country’s history. Here, he recalled the achievements of women such as Hanna

⁴⁶ Hassim, *Women’s Movements and Democracy in South Africa*, 9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 21

⁴⁸ Some of these include; David Sweetman, *Women Leaders in African History* (Oxford: Heinemann Publishers, 1984); Sarah Mirza and Margaret Strobel, *Three Swahili Women—Life Histories from Mombasa, Kenya* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); LaRay Denzer, “Gender and Decolonization—A study of Three Women in West African Public Life,” in *Readings in Gender in Africa*, ed. Andrea Cornwall, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). Rose Mensah Kutin and Sarah Akrofi Quarcoo, *Women on the Wheel of History* (Accra: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2007); Jean Allman, “The Disappearing of Hanna Kudjoe—Nationalism, Feminism and the Tyrannies of History,” *Journal of Women’s History* 21 (2009): 13-35. Kojo T. Vieta, *The flagbearers of Ghana: Profiles of One Hundred Distinguished Ghanaians*, Vol. I (Accra: Ena Publications, 1999); and D. E. K Amenumey, *Outstanding Ewes of the 20th Century: Profiles of Fifteen Firsts* Vol. I, (Accra: Woeli Publishing Services, 2002).

Kudjoe, Sophia Doku and Dr. Evelyn Amarteifio whom he described as outstanding political activists and women's organisers. Such biographical accounts contain useful information on the personal and professional backgrounds of these individuals and are valuable secondary source material although some of them tend to study their personalities outside their proper historical contexts.⁴⁹ My research will depart from this approach by assessing their impact on the organisations they led.

1.7 Methodology

The study utilises both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources gathered range from Cabinet Meeting Minutes from 1953 to 1966 specifically the ADM 13/1/24-30 and ADM 13/2 files and Parliamentary Affairs Files most of which are held at the Public Records and Archives Administration Department in Accra. These allowed for a closer analysis of the relationship between the state and the organisations under study. Documents on the activities of the NCGW and the GWL were also accessed at the Tamale Regional Archives since most of the attention and work of both organisations were centred in the Northern part of the country. Apart from public records, documents of the FGCW accessed from the private archives of Dr. Evelyn Amarteifio, have been extremely helpful in providing new dimensions of the organisation which have not been captured in existing historiography and also provide insight into the internal private correspondence of the organisation.⁵⁰

Newspapers of the period also form an important component of the primary materials gathered. In her unpublished PhD Thesis, "Women's Engagement with Gold

⁴⁹ Jean Allman's article on Hanna Kudjoe is an exception. See Allman, "The Disappearing of Hanna Kudjoe," 13-35.

⁵⁰ These are held at the Department of History at the University of Ghana, Legon.

Coast Print Culture, 1857-1957,” Audrey Gadzekpo described the press as very instrumental in “articulating, defining and redefining the aspirations” of different groups of people.⁵¹ Apart from throwing light on major political events in the country, the press was one of the key mediums through which the women’s organisations especially the FGCW and the NCGW publicised their activities. Articles written about the organisation in the press also gives an indication of the perception that people had about the groups, their leadership and activities. Some of the news papers also contain biographic materials on some of these women leaders, making them an essential component of the sources. Newspaper articles were gathered mainly from the *Daily Graphic*, *Evening News*, *Asante Sentinel* and *The Ghanaian* most of which are held at the archives in Accra, the Balme library and African Studies library. These sources were also complimented by interviews.⁵²

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study makes a contribution to both women’s studies and African nationalism. By placing the organisations and their various histories in context, it provides an excellent case study of women and their organisation in periods of political transformations. Secondly, by using previously untapped sources, my research provokes a re-examination of women’s activism during the nationalist struggles. Here, the study calls not only for greater historiographical attention to women’s roles in the nationalist movement but also to the extent of their political accomplishments and their significance for Ghanaian political history during this crucial period of transition.

⁵¹ Audrey Gadzekpo, “Women’s Engagement with Gold Coast Print Culture From 1857-1957,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Birmingham, 2001), 63.

⁵² Personalities interviewed include Mr. Nat Amarteifio, son of Evelyn Amarteifio, and Ms. Lucy Anin, one of the few surviving women members of Parliament elected by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in 1960. She was the youngest of the ten.

In this way, this study adopts the position of LaRay Denzer in her work “Gender and Decolonisation in Africa.” Instead of dwelling on the grand failures in this process of rewriting women into Ghana’s history, the research will highlight the efforts of these strong minded women who galvanised support for the nationalist cause while at the same time pushing their agenda for women’s empowerment.

1.9 Structure

The study is organized chronologically into five chapters. This first chapter introduces the research, stating the motivations and aims of the work. A review of the pertinent historiography, conclusions drawn and significance of the study are also laid out. In addition to the above, the sources identified and methodology adopted is explained.

Titled, “Women and the Making of an independent Ghana, 1950-1957,” chapter two reconstructs women’s central roles during the nationalist struggles of the Gold Coast as a background to understanding the context within which the organisations emerged. What were the aims and objectives of the above groups? Did the organisations share the same goals? Who made up the leadership of the CPP women’s wing and the FGCW? Were women genuinely fighting for independence or they had other motives? Did the CPP and the other political parties reward women’s efforts by putting in place measures that empowered them or placing them in positions of power within the Party?

The third chapter, “A New Era: From Independence to the dawn of the Republic, 1957-1960,” discusses and traces changes in the women’s organisations after independence. The above period is very important because it saw a vigorous attempt by the organisations to consolidate their positions in the newly independent state. How did

they go about this? In answering the above questions, some major activities of both groups will be explored.

Chapter four, “1960-1966, Political Intervention in the Organisation of Women.” is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the political developments in Ghana after 1960. Austin and Apter both noted that by 1960, the political direction of Ghana had shifted significantly. There was a move towards building the institutions of government and at the same time Emergency Powers Bill gave government extensive arbitrary powers to the effect that the CPP had lost its popular appeal. It was within this context that the women’s organisations began to lose their momentum. The second part discusses how changes in the political environment affected women’s organisations in the country focusing primarily on the inauguration of the NCGW. Was this part of the attempt at controlling all social and political movements or was this body supposed to check the growing influences of the above organisations. Who made up the leadership of this body? And in what ways were they successful in advancing and empowering women in the country?

Chapter five, “Legacies” entails a summary of the key conclusions and major issues addressed in the research. An attempt will be made in this chapter to address the question of the marginalisation of women and their political roles after independence.

Chapter Two

WOMEN AND THE 'MAKING' OF AN INDEPENDENT GHANA, 1950-1957

2.0 Introduction

As noted earlier, women's involvement in politics is an age-old tradition in Ghana, with its origins in the pre-colonial era. Scholars recall the role of queen mothers in the governance and politics of some traditional societies, especially among the Akan and other groups in Ghana. Others have also reconstructed women's political activism during the colonial era as well in the anti-colonial struggles.⁵³

This chapter builds upon the above studies by exploring women's activism during the nationalist's struggles of the Gold Coast. Its importance lies in the fact that it offers an understanding of the historical context within which the organisations under study emerged. Emphasis will however be placed on the emergence of women's organisations, the essence of their support for the various political parties, and how they sought to articulate their interests on the political platform and even in their organisation. With regards to women's political activism, the focus will be on the CPP for two main reasons. First, unlike other political organisations most of which were tribal or ethnic based, it was the CPP, which had a populist appeal, was national in character and eventually led the Gold Coast to attain independence. Like other branches of the party, women members and its women's wing played an active part in the independence movement of the party. That the CPP set in motion effective propaganda machinery never experienced in the history of the Gold Coast is in a large part attributable to the numerous women

⁵³ See for example A. Adu Boahen, *Yaa Asantewaa and the Asante-British War of 1900-1* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2003); Emmanuel Akyeampong and Pashington Obeng, "Spirituality, Gender and Power in Asante History," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28 (1995): 481-508. Agnes Akosua Aidoo, "Asante Queen Mothers in Government and Politics in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, ed. Filomina Steady (Rochester: Schenkman Books, 1981), 65-77.

who strove to make this agenda possible and through whose dedication independence was realised.

This chapter adopts the term ‘activism’ to explain the organised, structured advocacy and strategies that the CPP women’s wing and the Federation of Gold Coast Women adopted in the struggle for independence and the empowerment of women.⁵⁴ In view of this, the chapter will demonstrate how both organisations engaged the political situation and manipulated it to articulate their interests and agenda for the improvement in the economic and social positions of women. Why did women identify with the CPP; how and why did women organise, and what opportunities existed within the party for the articulation of the aspirations of women?

2.1 Historical Context

In the years following the Second World War, discontent with colonial rule came to a head. Changes in the economic, social and political conditions of the Gold Coast promoted an atmosphere characterised by a new and rather militant agitation for self-rule. These included the disappointment of ex-service men with post-war conditions, public resentment at the concentration of trade and commerce in the hands of foreigners, controls, shortages and high prices of imported goods widely attributed to the conspiracy of European traders and the unfair distribution of goods in short supply by firms.⁵⁵ These problems became even more serious with the spread of the swollen shoot disease and the growing desire by educated Africans to take a greater part in political affairs and decision-making.⁵⁶ Beginning with the formation of the United Gold Coast Convention

⁵⁴ This study borrows the notion of ‘activism’ from Akurang-Parry, “Aspects of Elite Women’s Activism in the Gold Coast,” 464.

⁵⁵ Annual Report on the Gold Coast for the Year 1948, 125.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

(UGCC) in August 1947 and the subsequent appointment of Nkrumah as its general secretary, the struggle towards eventual self-government was reignited.⁵⁷ In 1949, Kwame Nkrumah broke away from UGCC to form the CPP. In contrast to the UGCC—which was very elitist in outlook—Kwame Nkrumah believed in the prospects of a mass-based organisation with branches in villages and members drawn from a wide spectrum of society including women, trade unions and the youth.⁵⁸ To create this broad-based organisation, Nkrumah recognised the need to go beyond the urban proletariat and the chiefs who were already aligned to the UGCC and reach out to the ‘masses’. With the formation of the CPP, Apter argues, “those who had hitherto been marginal men were now tantamount to effective public opinion. They had a goal, self-government. They had a devil—British imperialism; they found a God—Kwame Nkrumah.”⁵⁹ The CPP was thus able to tap into a wide section of the populace, which no other political party had successfully done.

Women’s roles in mobilising support for the party and selling its ideology in this regard cannot be overstated. Having gained the right to vote as their men folk in 1951, there had been several remarkable advancements in the lives of Gold Coast women and by the 1950s, they were at the centre of most of the political campaigns. Vigorously campaigning for one party or the other or seriously involved in mobilising other women

⁵⁷ Although the UGCC was the first post-war political organisation to be formed, it did represent in essence a long history of efforts by Gold Coasters for political self-determination. Dennis Austin describes its formation as “the confluence of earlier associations—tributaries of discontent which fed the torrent of nationalist agitation after 1945.” For a detailed study of the UGCC see Dennis Austin, “The Working Committee of the United Gold Coast Convention,” *Journal of African History* 2, (1961): 273-297.

⁵⁸ For more on Nkrumah’s political philosophy see Toyin Falola, *Nationalism and African Intellectuals* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 102. See also Dennis Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1948-1960*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 103-152. C. L. R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution* (London: Alison and Busby, 1977).

⁵⁹ David Apter, *The Gold Coast in Transition* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1955), 166.

to rally behind their leader.⁶⁰ It is however important to note that this culture of women interest in politics was not only limited to the CPP; in fact, women in other political parties were also very actively involved in the campaigns to the point of seeking participation in the elections as candidates. For instance, while the CPP nominated Mabel Dove to stand on the ticket of the party in the Ga rural Electoral District in the 1954 elections, and won massively, the Ghana Congress Party (GCP) appointed Mrs. Nancy Tsiboe to run for the Kumasi south constituency seat.⁶¹ She was known to be a woman of very high standard, well educated, a juvenile magistrate who had attended conferences both home and abroad.⁶² In one of her campaigns, she urged her fellow women to vote for her first because she was a woman who believed strongly in the prospects of her party. Secondly, that she would be “in a better position than the men in helping to shape better policies for some of the problems which face the country in health, education . . . and social services.”⁶³ At a joint rally of the GCP and the Muslim Association Party (MAP), she proclaimed, “I am fearless. And like Yaa Asantewaa I will take up the gun and lead the men into battle.”⁶⁴ All over the country women’s interest in the nationalist

⁶⁰ The 1951 elections did not discriminate against one particular sex; it was open for both sexes. Some of the requirement was that the electorate was to be a British subject aged 21 or over and payment of local tax ‘if liable there-to’ for the current or preceding year must have been made. Ibid, Austin, *Politics in Ghana*.

⁶¹ The Ghana Congress Party (GCP) was officially launched on 4 May 1952 in Accra. Headed by K. A. Busia, the party aimed to be an efficient opposition to the CPP government. The leadership of the party comprised many UGCC members such as Danquah, Obetsebi Lamptey, Akuffo Addo, N. A. Ollenu, W. E. Ofori Atta B. D Addai, H. R. Annan. See Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 181-3, 226-8. Mrs Nancy Tsiboe was the secretary of the women’s section of the National Liberation Movement (NLM). For a detailed study of the NLM see Jean Allman, *The Quills of the Porcupine: Asante Nationalism in an Emergent Ghana*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993). For a discussion of the women’s section of the NLM, see pages 102-103.

⁶² “Women’s Pride,” *Asante Pioneer*, June 9, 1954. 4.

⁶³ “Why I want to go to Assembly,” *Asante Pioneer*, June 15, 1954.

⁶⁴ Ibid. *Asante Pioneer*, June 15 1954. Mrs. Tsiboe however lost the seat to the CPP candidate Mr. E. O. Asafu Adjaye who was subsequently appointed Minister of Local Government in the Legislative Assembly.

cause had developed greatly and this reflected in their active participation and contributions to the nationalist cause.⁶⁵

Women in the CPP became particularly vocal in political affairs after the launch of the 'Positive Action' campaign by Nkrumah in January 1950.⁶⁶ Some of the women who were active supporters and participants in the 1948 riots later became founding members of the Party. Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe, for instance, led a group of women to petition against the detention of the 'Big Six' and in 1949 was present at the meeting in Saltpond which saw the birth of the new party—the CPP. Kwame Nkrumah himself, on numerous occasions urged women to take part in the political struggle. This is indicative of how important women were to the process.⁶⁷ Nkrumah recalled hiding in the homes of two women supporters during the unrest following the 1948 riots.⁶⁸

Women also carried out part of the campaign in the press. The contributions of Mabel Dove for example, cannot be overstated. Born in 1905 to Francis Dove, a Sierra Leonean and former leader of the Gold Coast Bar, and Eva Buckman of Osu, Mabel Dove acquired her primary and secondary school education at the Annie Walsh Memorial School in Freetown, Sierra Leone. She then proceeded to the United Kingdom for further studies and married J. B. Danquah in 1933. Although Dove had followed the progress of the UGCC, her political career began after she joined the CPP in 1950. Nkrumah appointed her editor of the *Evening News* in 1951. In 1954, she became the

⁶⁵ It is worthy to note that unlike the women in the CPP who just like the party were broadened in mass and organised, women in the other political parties were not as broadened in mass and organised. Hence this chapter will be limited to a discussion of women's activism in the CPP.

⁶⁶ This campaign according to Kwame Nkrumah involved the application of constitutional and legitimate means to cripple imperialist forces in the country. The only means through which this could be achieved was through strikes, boycotts and non-co-operation, based on the principle of non-violence. For more on the Positive Action campaign see Kwame Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom—A Statement of African Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1961), 18. Also, Austin, *Politics in Ghana*.

⁶⁷ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom—A Statement of African Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1961).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

first Gold Coast woman member of the legislative assembly representing the Ga rural electoral district. Through the press, Dove “furnished readers with a steady diet of political propaganda in which both the female reading subject . . . was supportive of the progressive CPP and defiant of colonialism” as well as informed educated women on some of the policies and plans the CPP had for them.⁶⁹ In one of her publications, she wrote, “The common people of Ghana must stand firm behind their invincible leader Kwame Nkrumah and his loyal and conquerable CPP . . . Hail intelligent masses on June 15 you will show the world that you planted a tree under Africa’s liberator Kwame Nkrumah and you are going to eat the fruit of your labour.”⁷⁰ Madam Akua Asaabea who earned the nickname “James Fort Prison Graduate” after her release from prison for taking part in the positive action campaigns in 1950, worked together with Mabel Dove at the offices of the *Evening News*.⁷¹ It was within this background of a renewed awakening in women’s political activism that the CPP women’s wing and the Federation of Gold Coast Women were born.

2.2 The CPP Women’s Wing

In recognition of the organisational abilities, skills and prior political experiences of many of these women activists, the male leadership of the Party appointed some women as propaganda secretaries in May 1951, whose duty was to mobilise their fellows

⁶⁹ Stephanie Newell and Audrey Gadzekpo, ed., *Selected Writings of a Pioneer West African Feminist, Mabel Dove* (Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2004), ix. For more on Dove see, LaRay Denzer, “Gender and Decolonisation: A Study of Three Women in West African Public Life,” in *Readings in Gender in Africa*, ed., Andrea Cornwall, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 218-220.

⁷⁰ “Hail Intelligent Masses CPP will Sweep the Polls.” *Asante Sentinel*, June 11, 1954.

⁷¹ Kojo Vietta, *Flagbearers of Ghana: Profiles of One Hundred Distinguished Ghanaians*, Vol. 1 (Accra: Ena Publications, 1999), 131. Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 115.

and the youth of the Party and send the campaign message to the grassroots.⁷² Some of these included Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe of Tarkwa, Mrs. Alice Appiah of Senchi, Mrs. Leticia Quaye, Madam Ama Nkrumah, and Sophia Doku, and thus begun the process of ‘making’ Nkrumah and the CPP and in effect the making of an independent Ghana.⁷³ Together with several others, these leaders toured every part of the country building a network of propaganda for the party in addition to organising women and the youth. They followed Nkrumah everywhere, introducing him at campaigns, appealing for all to participate in the struggle, feeding and housing visiting party leaders, as well as composing party songs and slogans.

Many women joined the CPP with some level of political experience that proved useful to the party as a whole. Hanna Kudjoe’s dedication and commitment in the mobilisation of women and the youth and in the organisation of the party throughout the country earned her the title ‘Convention Hannah.’ Her political career began with the birth of the UGCC where she was appointed propaganda secretary and member of the Committee for Youth Organisation (CYO) in 1947 and 1948 respectively. As a founding member of the CPP, she became one of the first women appointed to its national executive and propaganda secretary posts.⁷⁴ Born December 1 1918 at Busua in Ahanta, she obtained her elementary and middle school education at the Methodist Senior School and by 1937; she had established herself as a seamstress.⁷⁵ As the women’s national

⁷² Women had been active supporters of the Party since it was founded in 1949. Although the exact date of the founding of the women’s wing is not indicated in any of the primary documents, it is safe to assume that the women’s section of the Party was officially founded after the 1951 elections which saw not only the CPP leading but also saw a marked insistence by Nkrumah on the organisation of the all sections of the party organs.

⁷³ Manu, “Women and their Organisation,” 114. Also, Padmore, *The Gold Coast Revolution*, 115.

⁷⁴ Apter, *The Gold Coast in Transition*, 171.

⁷⁵ Ghana Year Book, 1961. A Daily Graphic Publication. “Personalities in Ghana.” 210. For more information on Kudjoe see Jean Allman, “The Disappearing of Hanna Kudjoe: Nationalism, Feminism and the Tyrannies of History,” *Journal of Women’s History* 21 (2009): 16-17.

propaganda secretary of the CPP, and later the organising secretary of the National Association of Socialist Students Organisation (NASSO), Hanna Kudjoe toured several constituencies in the Western and Asante regions canvassing votes for the party, in the 1951, 1954 and 1956 elections respectively.⁷⁶ She also toured Denkyira, Sefwi Wiawso, Bibiani, Wassaw South, Amenfi Aowin, Western and Eastern Nzema and Ahanta. After independence, Kudjoe, founded the All-African Women's League.

Like Kudjoe, Sophia Doku's political career did not begin with the CPP. Doku was a member of the Mambii Party.⁷⁷ She later joined the UGCC at its formation and became one of the party's first executive members of the Accra branch. Born January 8 1915 at Osu in Accra, Sophia Doku obtained her middle and Secondary School education at the Accra Royal School and Krobo Girls' School respectively. Like several other women, Sophia Doku joined the CPP at its formation. In 1953, she was appointed assistant welfare officer at the Department of Social Welfare and later in 1958, she became the first female camp Superintendent of the Builders Brigade.⁷⁸ Together, these women brought into the party rich political experience, a characteristic which was absent in most of the political parties and was a major contributing factor of the success of the CPP.

Through the efforts of the propaganda secretaries' women and youth wings were set up in all the regional branches of the party. The leaders of these groups were tasked with organising women in the various regions to carry out the campaign message. In all the regional branches of the CPP, the members canvassed massive votes for the party. In

⁷⁶ This was the ideological wing of the CPP. For more on this group and the role they played see, Kwame Nkrumah, *The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (London: Panaf Books Ltd, 1973), 79-82, 84-86.

⁷⁷ This was one of the first political parties formed in the Gold Coast. Its origins can be traced to the agitation over the municipal Corporations Ordinance of 1924. The party claimed to be the mouth piece of the masses. Kimble argues that the party was revived by Kojo Thompson to secure his own return to the legislative council as an elected member.

⁷⁸ Ghana Year Book 1962. A *Daily Graphic* Publication. 201.

some cases, the leaders for effective campaigning divided the regions into wards. For instance, the leader of the women's section of the party in the northern region, Madam Memuna Karanga, at a general meeting of all women in Tamale on August 24th 1954, challenged them to vote massively for the party since there was no party that could bring them full independence except Kwame Nkrumah's CPP. She further noted that in order for this to be done successfully there was the need to subdivide the region into three wards namely, the Moshie Zongo Ward, the Dagomba Section and Sabon Gidda Wards respectively. She appointed a leader and a propaganda secretary for each ward.⁷⁹

Membership in the women's wing was not limited to any class of women or an ethnically identifiable group. Like the party, the women's wing comprised women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Some of its members were opinion leaders in their communities. Nana Juaben Serwaa, Omanhene of Juaben, the Queen mother of Jamestown and Madam Mary Annan were among some very prominent public figures that openly supported the party in its fight for political freedom. The Queen mother of Jamestown was a constant figure at almost all party functions and rallies. Even during the hectic days of the conflict between the NLM and the CPP in Kumasi, Nana Juaben Serwaa lent her support and stood by her commitment to the views of Nkrumah and the CPP, a stance that almost led to her destoolment.⁸⁰ As leader of the Kumasi CPP women's section, Madam Mary Annan was at the same time the Asafohemaa of

⁷⁹ PRAAD, NP 6/9 "CPP Women in Northern Territories Throw Challenge to Men Members," *Asante Sentinel*. August 30, 1954. 2. Moshie Zongo Ward- Madam Bewa Lagos and Mata Baba were appointed Leader and Propaganda Secretary respectively. Dagomba section- Madam Hawa Kpanabia and Fatti Karangu, Leader and Propagander Secretary and Madam Hawa Tinga and Adamu Salmatta were in the same manner appointed as leaders of the Sabon Gidda ward.

⁸⁰ PRAAD, ADM 13/2/75. "Memorandum by the Chairman of the Black Star Line." On 4th April 1959, she was elevated to the status of a paramount chief of Juaben in appreciation of her services to her country.

Abandzi.⁸¹ The participation of women of such status in society stirred up the interests of not only women but also men in the political affairs of the country.

Members of the women's wing also sought to assert their worth in the political process through dressing, giving the struggle its colour. In most of their activities members were seen clad in the party colours; red, white and green and as a result of the vibrancy and militancy that characterised their activism, they earned the title 'CPP Women's Police.'⁸²

2.3 Nkrumah and the Market Women

Social networks and cultural associations are essential mediums for the transmission of nationalist ideologies. In Tanzania, women's Ngoma societies were a fundamental vehicle for inculcating and mobilizing political consciousness among the people.⁸³ In the Gold Coast, market women, mostly traders in imported European goods, staple food supplies, farmers and fishmongers played this role.⁸⁴ Arguably the most affected by the economic and social hardships following the Second World War, these women were at the forefront of the riots and boycotts that hit the Gold Coast in 1948. They were organised, and although largely illiterate, became the architects of what was to be the party that would eventually lead the Gold Coast to attain independence.

Amongst the market women, mostly traders of the Accra and Kumasi Central Markets, was an established complex system of trade networks which ran across the

⁸¹ "Kumasi CPP Women Leader Visits Evening News," *The Ghana Evening News*, Monday February 18, 1957. 3.

⁸² "CPP Women Honour Ako Adjei," *The Ghana Evening News*, Tuesday March 26 1957.

⁸³ Kelly Askew, *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 10.

⁸⁴ Fish mongers in Ghana are mainly women. Men were involved in the fishing process while women sold it.

colony and which allowed for easy distribution of their goods and food supplies. In addition to the above, a well-defined leadership structure allowed for quick and easy communication and coordination of affairs among the traders and with their fellows from other markets.⁸⁵ The above conditions gave rise to the development of a social organisation of immense power, which, according to C. L. R. James, radiated from the centre into every corner and room of the major towns.⁸⁶ Nkrumah recognized the organizational prowess of these market women that allowed them to reach their customers in the most remote places as well as the essence of their social networks and tapped into them in order to spread his politics. By creating such alliances with the market women especially the leaders of the organised commodity groups, Nkrumah and the CPP gained outreach to the rest of the country. At the height of tensions between the CPP and NLM in Kumasi around 1955, some of these women were involved in the acts of vandalism, such as throwing of bottles and publications condemning the leadership of the NLM.⁸⁷ In an interview with Lucy Anin, the youngest of the ten women Members of Parliament appointed in 1960, some of these women included Maame Akua Dei *Bodehemaa* (Plantain queen), Dedei shikinsha a flour trader at Makola Market and Madam Akosua Frema, one of the prominent traders at the Kumasi central market.⁸⁸ Prior to the 1954 elections for instance, Madam Akosua Frema—popular for her role in the 1948 boycott—went round to all heads of market women canvassing them to carry

⁸⁵ Usually very large markets in Ghana are divided into commodity groups. Each group is headed by an *ohemaa* and each market *ohemaa* added the commodity to her name. For instance, the leader of Yam sellers is called Bayerehemaa, tomatoes- Ntoshemaa and many others. These leaders possess complete authority over their members and can call on the collective support of their members. For a detailed study of this structure as it exists in the Kumasi Central Market see Gracia Clark, *Onions are My Husband: Survival and Accumulation by West African Market Women* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 248-282.

⁸⁶ C. L. R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, 55.

⁸⁷ Ms. Lucy Anin, Personal Interview, West Legon, 11 June 2010.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

the propaganda to their groups to vote only CPP. They would also embark on house-to-house electioneering campaigns.⁸⁹ By aligning themselves to the party, these women performed the nationalism needed to make the CPP successful.

In addition to mobilising support at the grassroots, women were very instrumental in sustaining the party through the mobilisation of funds, as most of them in addition to trading were also “big time cocoa farmers.”⁹⁰ Women traders in European imported goods were most helpful in this regard. With the amalgamation of the firms of Miller, Swanzy and others to form the United African Company in 1929, many of these women became some of the first credit customers of the company and by the 1950s they had accumulated a lot of wealth.⁹¹ These women organised rallies, fundraisers and provided material support for the party. In recognition of their contributions, Nkrumah and the CPP maintained a very close relationship with them, inviting them to state banquets, end of year parties and meeting with visiting dignitaries to the Gold Coast. By so doing, the Party earned the loyalty of these women traders.

2.4 The CPP ‘Courts’ Women?

In a study of women and nationalism in Guinea, Elizabeth Schmidt observed that male leaders of the RDA made a conscious effort to attract women into the party by addressing issues that were pertinent to them—a process the author terms ‘courting.’ These included policies that aimed at promoting the general welfare of women. Did the CPP adopt a similar approach or offer similar opportunities for women and could these be the reasons why women identified with the Party? Although the Convention Peoples’

⁸⁹ Ms. Lucy Anin, Personal Interview, West Legon. 11th June 2010. “Madam Frema on Campaign.” *Asante Sentinel*, 29th January 1954.

⁹⁰ Ms. Lucy Anin, Personal Interview, West Legon. 11th June 2010.

⁹¹ “Mother of Accra’s Market Women-Tribute to a Notable Ghanaian Trader,” *The Ghanaian*, November, 1958.

Party was intent on securing broader political goals such as helping other African nations that were still under foreign domination, attain independence, it did express a commitment to developing policies that promoted women's welfare in several ways.

For instance, the newly constituted Legislative Assembly—with Kwame Nkrumah as Leader of Government Business—approved an Accelerated Development Plan for Education in 1951 that was implemented in January 1952.⁹² This policy introduced free primary education for all, and by the end of 1952 enrolment of pupils in the colony, Ashanti and Trans-Volta Togoland had increased to more than 122,000.⁹³ By 1953, over 80 new approved schools were opened with twelve situated in the Northern Territories.⁹⁴ Through this policy, primary education became accessible to all, especially those in the deprived areas and parents who could not previously afford formal education for their children had a chance to send their children to school. Although Secondary school education was not free under the plan, government assisted in the provision and expansion of educational facilities and scholarships to enable needy students continue their education. Considering the fact that women were largely responsible for the proper upbringing of children, this plan helped to alleviate some of the pressures on them.

The CPP also made efforts at not only increasing the number of women employed in the civil service but also reforming policies regarding the employment and retention of married and pregnant women in the service.⁹⁵ For instance, professional women in the ministry of health were asked to resign upon marriage. This was considered a wrong approach and at a meeting held on 19th February 1959, cabinet decided that “married

⁹² Report on the Gold Coast for the Year 1952. 46.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Report on the Gold Coast for the Year, 1953. 56.

⁹⁵ PRAAD ADM 13/1 /22. Cabinet Minutes “Employment of Women in Government Service,” 20th October 1953.

female government employees, particularly those with professional qualifications in medicine, nursing . . . were posted to the same stations as their husbands and that such officers should not be requested to leave the service upon marriage.”⁹⁶ Cabinet further agreed that women who remained in government service after marriage should “be allowed to draw any marriage gratuity for which they might be eligible whenever they subsequently retire.”⁹⁷ It also proposed that pregnant married women should be given the option to resign or to stay in the service instead of being forced to leave their posts. The party introduced other measures such as the provision and expansion of health facilities. In a bid to reduce the rate of maternal mortality in the country, facilities for training midwives were expanded; there was also the provision of maternity services at health centres and hospitals. In addition, subsidies were given to midwives who worked in rural areas.⁹⁸ All of these measures held tremendous appeal to women.

2.5 Women’s Nationalist Consciousness

Why did women respond to the CPP so enthusiastically? What opportunities existed within the party for the articulation of women’s interests? Many arguments and conclusions have been reached in an attempt to answer the above questions. Takyiwaa Manuh, contends, “Women were skilful organisers . . . powerful orators and inspired by the events unfolding around them responded wholeheartedly”⁹⁹ Others are of the view that women were drawn to the party because it was “sympathetic to the problems of

⁹⁶ PRAAD ADM 13/1/28. Cabinet Minutes, “Women Employees in the Civil Service,” 19th February 1959.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Gold Coast Legislative Assembly Debates, Issue No: 3. 1st - 18th November, 1955.

⁹⁹ Manu, “Women and their Organisation,” 133.

gender inequality and made the first attempt at addressing them.”¹⁰⁰ Whereas the above are valid reasons why women identified with the CPP, they were not the only ones. In the case of Tanganyika Geiger noted that women activists used TANU ideology to challenge aspects of gender inequality within their society. In effect, TANU provided a unique opportunity for women to advance specific interests such as gender equity and freedom from colonialism.¹⁰¹

A similar trend can be deduced in the case of the Gold Coast. As organisers of a ‘socialist party’ CPP leaders were in principle open to women’s participation and stressed equal opportunities for both men and women in the political process.¹⁰² Beyond campaigning, women within and outside of the CPP women’s wing took advantage of this equality and used the political platform to articulate their interests and challenge traditional notions of the gendered roles of women. Their effort in this regard was apparent in their use of the press to articulate these ideas. Thus in a publication in the *Daily Graphic*, on 5th September 1952, Mabel Dove wrote, “Gold Coast women have played a glorious part in this struggle and it is time the men showed some appreciation. The time is past when the male swaggers in front and the female with a baby on her back, a bundle on her head . . . , walk timidly behind her lord and master.”¹⁰³ In another article, Dove, writing under the pseudonym Akosua Dzatsui, pointed out strongly that the “modern woman was an enlightened creature who was not going to put up with a good for nothing individual just because nature had made him a man.” She further reminded women that, the time had long passed when men took advantage of them “just because

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 109. See also, Mansah Prah, “Chasing Illusions and Realizing Visions: Reflections on Ghana’s Feminist Experience,” in *Gender Activism and Studies in Africa* (Dakar: CODESRIA Gender Series 3, 2004), 27-40.

¹⁰¹ Geiger, “Tanganyikan Nationalism as Women’s Work,” 469.

¹⁰² Apter, *The Gold Coast in Transition*, 203.

¹⁰³ *Daily Graphic*, 5th September 1952.

she [women] did not understand the world.”¹⁰⁴ Through the various mediums—be it on the campaign platforms, in the press—, or even in the small towns and villages, they were proving themselves capable to participate in the ‘men’s world’ and the CPP provided the context and an organisation within which they could articulate these.

In another newspaper article in the *Asante Sentinel* in June 1954, the writer reminded women to rally and vote solidly for the CPP because the party had a place for them. “It will bring us several amenities which will equally be enjoyed by both men and women.” The writer therefore urged women to vote solidly for the Party so that “all the woes of women could be brought to an end.”¹⁰⁵ Clearly, this organisation was more than just a support pillar of the party, as suggested elsewhere.¹⁰⁶ Politics was an essential tool of self-empowerment for these women who saw in the CPP the expansion of opportunities for their emancipation and advancement. And they took advantage of them since the organisation saw itself as struggling against a society that was still very rooted in primitive ideas that saw women as inferior.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the leadership saw itself faced with the daunting task of changing this perception in society through their visible participation in politics. Politics was the major pre-occupation of this group prior to independence; as such, most of its activities were aimed at ensuring victory for the party and seeing an end to colonial domination. In terms of autonomy, the women’s wing was a branch of the larger political group and therefore took most of its instructions from the party leadership. The aforementioned notwithstanding, the women’s wing often devised their own forms of activism and activities.

¹⁰⁴ Akosua Dzatsui, “Are you Worthy of Respect,” *The Accra Evening News*, May 11, 1951. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Nana Akua, “Appeal to Women- Women too Have a Great Part to Play in the Struggle,” *Asante Sentinel*, June 3 1954.

¹⁰⁶ Prah, “Chasing Illusions and Realizing Visions,” 28.

¹⁰⁷ PRAAD, SC/ BAA/ 356, “Speech Delivered by Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe,” October 2, 1959.

To maintain this relationship and the loyalty of its women members, Nkrumah personally maintained very close relations with the party women, hosting them at his residence during end of year parties.¹⁰⁸ On several occasions, they were introduced to visiting dignitaries and were mostly present to welcome him on his arrivals from visits abroad. Prior to independence, the CPP women's wing was a very important propaganda machinery of the Party.

2.6 The Federation of Gold Coast Women, 1953-1957

In addition to the formation of women's wings of the various political parties, there were in existence several women's voluntary organisations in the colony, most of which were not political. Some of these included the Gold Coast Women's Association, the Presbyterian and Methodist Women's Fellowships, the Young Women's Christian Association and other benevolent organisations. Motivated by the need to create a united front that would advance the interests of women in the emerging new nation, Mrs Evelyn Amarteifio founded the Federation of Gold Coast Women which was formally inaugurated in July 1953.¹⁰⁹ The Federation, as its name suggests, was basically an alliance of several smaller women's voluntary organisations.

Like her fellow women nationalists, Mrs. Amarteifio joined the CPP at its inception.¹¹⁰ For her, the independence movement offered a unique opportunity for women to unite and "work together in trying to uplift womanhood physically, morally

¹⁰⁸ "The Party 'Mums' with Osagyefo," *The Ghanaian*, Vol. 6, No. 2. February, 1963.

¹⁰⁹ For the purposes of this study, the term Federation and FGCW will be used interchangeably. Where a distinction needs to be drawn, it will duly be stated.

¹¹⁰ Private papers of Mrs. Amarteifio and the FGCW. General Correspondence of the FGCW. The date of her enrolling as a member of the party as indicated in her CPP membership card was 31 August 1949.

and spiritually.”¹¹¹ Born in Jamestown, a suburb of Accra, Mrs Amartiefio nee, Evelyn Mansah Nunoo, came from a comfortable middle class family of social workers. As a result, she developed interest in social work early in her life.¹¹² Although trained as a teacher, she joined several voluntary organisations such as the Red Cross society and Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) and volunteered on several occasions with the above groups. It was Mrs. Amartiefio’s conviction that “people in authority would listen more to a representative body of women . . . rather than small groups” hence her idea of uniting all women’s voluntary groups in the country.¹¹³

However, the inspiration for the formation of such an organisation in the Gold Coast came from reading and discovering the existence of similar groups in Europe and Jamaica.¹¹⁴ Together with Mrs Hardy, Mrs Mary Paittoo, Mrs Ffoulkes Crabbe, and the assistance of many others the Federation of Gold Coast Women was officially inaugurated on 20th August 1953 at the Accra community centre.

Although a member of the CPP, Mrs. Amarteifio saw her organisation as outside the jurisdiction of the political party or any other political organisation for that matter. The Federation was thus non-political and non-sectarian and on that basis refused to admit women’s wings of political parties even though it was open to admitting its members individually. To ensure that it stuck to this commitment, the Federation refused the request of the women’s wing of the National Liberation Movement (NLM) even after

¹¹¹ Ibid., Minutes of Inaugural Meeting of the FGCW held at the Accra Community Centre, 20 August 1953. The executive members of the Federation were, Mrs. Ffoulkes Crabbe-President and chairman, Mrs. C. Simango-1st vice President, Mrs. M. Paittoo-2nd vice President, Mrs. E. Senalor, Mrs N. Appiah and Mrs E. Kudjoe.

¹¹² Mr. Nathaniel Amarteifio, Personal Interview, Workers College, Accra. 1st April 2010. Mr. Nathaniel Amarteifio is the son of Mrs Amarteifio.

¹¹³ Private Archives of Mrs. Amarteifio held at the History Department, University of Ghana (hereafter, Private Archives, FGCW). Talk To Wives of Diplomats On Women’s Organisation in Ghana by Mrs. Amarteifio. n.d.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. General Correspondence on the FGCW. Minutes of Meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the FGCW, 21st and 22nd April, 1955. “Clarification of the history of the federation.

this group expressed a strong desire to join its Kumasi branch.¹¹⁵ To their request the executives of the Federation maintained “theirs is political and ours a non political body.”¹¹⁶ Whereas this position demonstrates how the organisation sought to assert its autonomy, it also marks the beginning of the development of a ‘politics of alliance’ by the leadership of the Federation. Many scholars of contemporary women’s movements contend that the ability of such organisations to remain free of outside influences and pressures is an important aspect to their success. While this position holds true in many instances, in cases where such movements developed within the context of independence struggles—as the case of the Federation—the development of some form of relationship/association with the dominant political party or parties is essential to determining the future of such movements. In as much as the Federation guarded its autonomy, it appreciated the need to forge some form of cordial relationship with the leadership of the dominant political party, as such, the Federation kept the Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah, updated on its activities from its inception.

Shireen Hassim terms this relationship “a politics of alliance.”¹¹⁷ With this, the federation was able to develop a close affiliation with government and governmental bodies such as the Department of Social Welfare and the Ministry of the Interior and local government respectively. This enabled the organisation to gain access to financial and material support from government to push its agenda for the empowerment of women. In September 1954, for instance, the director of social welfare charged the federation formally with the responsibility of establishing vocational institutions

¹¹⁵ Ibid., Minutes of a Meeting of the central executive of the FGCW on the 11th and 12th August 1955. Report of the Kumasi District.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Shireen Hassim, *Women’s Organisation and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 3.

throughout the colony.¹¹⁸ By 1956, girls' vocational training centres were opened in Takoradi, Accra, Keta and several other districts in the Gold Coast. In addition to organising lessons in cookery and needlework, literacy classes were also organised for market women who wished to learn to read and write.¹¹⁹ In the years 1955 to 1957, the Federation received from the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development a total grant-in-aid of £500. With this, the organisation established its own secretariat, and was able to support its branches in the various districts.¹²⁰ The Federation also worked with the Christian Council, traditional leaders, as well as district councils in order to realise its objectives.¹²¹

Among the aims of the federation were fostering educational, cultural and civic developments throughout the country for the services of the community, improving the economic conditions of women particularly in the districts by the encouragement of village industries and handicrafts and stressing among its members and women generally, the essence of a good life family. Other objectives of the organisation included the encouragement of voluntary social services throughout the country and the improvement of the legal position of women.¹²²

In the first years of its inauguration up to 1957, the leadership of the federation were preoccupied with establishing a strong social movement in the Gold Coast, one whose interests were in the social and economic empowerment of women and the development of a collective consciousness among women. This, the organisation felt

¹¹⁸ Private Archives, FGCW. Minutes of the 1st Annual meeting of the FGCW, 15th and 16th September 1954.

¹¹⁹ Private Archives, FGCW. Minutes of meeting of national council. 16th and 17 December 1954.

¹²⁰ Private Archives, FGCW. Third Annual Report. 2.

¹²¹ Private Archives, Minutes of a Meeting of the National Council of the Federation of Gold Coast Women, Held on 16th and 17th December, 1954. "Address by Mr. Nii Amah Ollenu.

¹²² The Ghana Year Book, 1957. A *Daily Graphic* Publication. 111.

could best be achieved by a non-political movement, a position which distinguished it significantly from the CPP and its women's wing. Whereas the 'party women' saw within the CPP campaign for national independence, opportunities for both men and women, the Federation engaged itself with matters that had a direct link with women's and social welfare and where necessary contributed to issues raised by government in that direction. At the height of tensions between the CPP and other opposition parties for instance, the Federation in a letter to the Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah, the Asanteman Council and the Northern Territories Council appealed for calm. The organisation stated, "as women and mothers it is a just cause for worry and apprehension and we resolve to appeal to you for understanding and peace for there is no problem however great which the Almighty in His mercy cannot provide a solution."¹²³ The leadership also played a key role in ending the nine-day strike of the National Union of Teachers in October, 1959.¹²⁴

The Federation played a key role in educating and informing women throughout the colony on good child and maternal care practices, the essence of personal and environmental cleanliness and the establishment of vocational training for girls who could not continue their education. The Federation was also very actively involved in bringing to the notice of the public the health implications of the practice of using cement papers in wrapping food in 1954. To check the problem of nudity, especially among children, the organisation launched in 1955 a "Wear Your Child a Piotto" campaign.¹²⁵ The members of the Sekondi Takoradi branch, for instance, made underwear for distribution to poor children. However, attempts by the organisation to force some form

¹²³ Private Archives. Correspondence from the FGCW to the Prime Minister, The Asanteman Council and the Northern Territories Territorial Council. 21st December, 1956.

¹²⁴ "They Helped to End Teachers' Strike," *Daily Graphic*, October 20, 1955. 1.

¹²⁵ *Piotto* literally translates underwear.

of legislation that would ban such practices did not yield much positive response. The above is not to suggest that the organisation did not encounter challenges in its formative years. Lack of co-operation and funds from relevant authorities often resulted in the leadership abandoning many of its projects. Early in 1956, the Federation proposed the establishment of canteens which would provide food prepared under hygienic conditions for school children.¹²⁶ Although the proposal was well received, the Department of Education and Municipal Council did not provide the needed support and by 1957, the project had stalled.¹²⁷

In keeping with its objective of stressing among its members the value of family life, the Federation launched the maiden edition of its Ideal Home Exhibitions on August 14 1956. The exhibition, a joint project initiated by the FGCW and supported by the Housing Department, the Accra Community Centre and the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, was the first ever of its kind to be held in the Gold Coast.

The leadership of the federation were particularly interested in introducing women, especially 'housewives' to the use of modern equipments at home, some hygienic methods of preserving and cooking food, personal cleanliness, cookery demonstrations and the advantages of good health.¹²⁸ As such there were on display gas cookers, electrical appliances, and several other home appliances all aimed at giving housewives "more leisure hours for devoting herself to the pursuit of such activities and engagements that should lead to social and intellectual upliftments."¹²⁹ In addition to

¹²⁶ "What About Those Canteens," *Daily Graphic*, January 25 1957. 10.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ideal Home Exhibition, FGCW. Minutes of the Meeting of the "Ideal Home" Exhibition Committee, 18th July 1956.

¹²⁹ Moses Danquah, "How to Raise Our Living Standards," *Daily Graphic*, August 15 1956, 7.

home appliances, the Department of Housing also exhibited models of affordable houses, decorated kitchen which combined both modern and traditional kitchen wares and bathrooms.¹³⁰

In a *Daily Graphic* special supplement covering the event, the writer summed up the essence of the exhibition for a nation “about to enter the honourable estate of independence.”¹³¹ He wrote: “it is significant because an independent Gold Coast must strive towards the ideal. It is not to go under and be submerged, it is not to lapse into mediocrity and decadence.” He continued further stressing that “no nation can be truly great in the modern world without decent homes for its people, without homes which are always striving after the ideal and taking advantage of modern ideas and devices which are becoming increasingly available year to year.”¹³²

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the nature, character and the historical circumstances within which women organised up to independence. More than just show that women also contributed to the nationalist struggles, the chapter has gone a step ahead to explore the reasons why and how women organised in the process of helping contribute towards the larger goal—the fight for independence. From the explanations and analysis given, it is clear that women gave life to the independence movement of the CPP, while at the same time exploiting this to push their agenda for women’s empowerment.

Prior to independence both the CPP women’s wing and the FGCW were in their own ways helping develop women’s political and social awareness. Hence, most of their activities—especially the federation—were aimed at addressing the challenges and

¹³⁰ Moses Danquah, “How to Raise Our Living Standards,” *Daily Graphic*, August 15 1956. 10.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

everyday struggles of women, especially the poor, illiterates. This consciousness influenced the formation of the FGCW from its inception while in the CPP women's wing it developed rather gradually. After independence, several changes occurred in both organisations due primarily to the fact that the political circumstances under which they both operated had changed. The Gold Coast was no longer a colony but an independent nation. Mrs Hanna Kudjoe founded the All-African Women's League, as the name suggests, this organisation reflected the Pan-African agenda of the CPP and Nkrumah. The Federation changed its name to the National Federation of Ghana Women to reflect the new status of the nation.¹³³ Having gathered the needed momentum in the years prior to independence, both organisations became even more powerful and vocal after independence.

¹³³ Private Archives FGCW. Minutes of Meeting of the Delegates Conference, "Change in Name." 11-12 April 1957.

Chapter Three

A NEW ERA: FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE DAWN OF THE REPUBLIC, 1957-1960

3.0 Introduction

On 6th March 1957, the Gold Coast attained a new status within both the African continent and the world as a whole. Ghana was born as the first British Colony in the sub-continent to gain independence. Expressing the task ahead for the new nation, Kwame Nkrumah stated,

The emphasis of the struggle has now shifted from the anti-imperialist phase to the internal one of struggle against the enemies of social progress; that is, against poverty, hunger, ignorance, squalor . . . These social enemies can be compared to land-mines left on the battlefield by a vanquished army of imperialism Therefore every citizen must mobilise himself for the next phase of the struggle.¹³⁴

Having explored the emergence and development of different women's groups, the motivations behind their actions and interests during the nationalist struggles, the chapter examines their roles and contributions in combating what Nkrumah termed the 'the enemies of social progress' and their efforts at influencing political outcomes to favour women. This chapter focuses on the activities of the NFGW and the AAWL and argues that the period 1957-1960 although short, saw a consolidation of the positions of the organisations and the demonstration of their capacity for independent action and influence.

What did independence mean for the NFGW and the League? What were the differences in both groups and the ways they carried out their activities? How did government react and respond to them? The national campaign against nudity launched

¹³⁴ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 92.

by the Federation and League, the fight for the ‘registration’ of customary marriages, the pan-African and international influences, as well as changes in the character and nature of these groups are discussed into much detail below.

3.1 Towards a National Role

Women’s organisations are not homogeneous and unchanging entities. Neither do they have a singular set of demands. Such groups tend to encompass diverse organisational forms and strategies depending on the historical events surrounding them.¹³⁵ Prior to independence, the aims and objectives of the CPP women’s wing were closely bound up with that of the Party. Central to its objectives was to assist in every way possible the anti-colonial struggle by helping to project the idea of “Self-Government Now,” which the party was pursuing. Although women members of the CPP continued to support the party, after 1957, there was a decline in the activism of the women’s wing primarily due to a general decline in vigorous nationalist political activity in the country.

Convinced of the essential roles that women could play in the process of national reconstruction, Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe, with the assistance of some leading women members of the CPP, founded the All-African Women’s League (AAWL).¹³⁶ Like the Federation, the AAWL was a voluntary organisation. However, its leadership comprised women who had been at the forefront of the independence movement of the CPP and so identified very closely with the Party unlike the Federation which insisted on its autonomous and non-political position from its inception. The leadership, apart from

¹³⁵ Shireen Hasim, *Women’s Organisations and Democracy in South Africa*, 8.

¹³⁶ The exact date of the formation of the AAWL is not known or indicated in the records. However it is safe to assume that the organisation was formed immediately after independence since most its early records are dated around that time.

Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe, included Lady Korsah, Chairman, Mrs. Florence Nkumsah, Vice Chairman; the regional executives included Mrs. Rosamond Mancell, Asante Regional Organiser, Mrs Mary Adams, executive member from Northern Ghana, Mrs. J. Cross Cole and Mrs. Beatrice Dadson all executives of the League and several others.¹³⁷ The AAWL had a well-defined structure with the hierarchy of leadership ranging from National to regional and executive members. Taking advantage of the already established relationship with the Party and government and the network of organised women across the country, the AAWL concentrated its activities largely in Northern Ghana where it realised that women's social and economic living standards were much lower than in the southern, central and western regions. In consultation with the Prime Minister, the League set itself four main objectives, which were, (1) to cater, foster and promote higher economic, social and cultural standards among women of Northern Ghana, (2) to spread knowledge about motherhood and childcare among the women in care of children in northern Ghana, (3) to foster among women the spirit of co-operation and self-help as part of the economic development of Ghana. Finally, to enable it achieve all of the above objectives it aimed to work closely with government and non-governmental organisations in Ghana and abroad.¹³⁸

Like the Federation, the League also set out to develop a strong social movement in Ghana, one that was centred on women and national development. For this reason, both the AAWL and the Federation responded to the call by Nkrumah enthusiastically and seized the opportunity to make their voices heard on the national level. Mrs Hanna

¹³⁷ PRAAD SC/BAA/356. Parliamentary Affairs, "Notes of Meeting held on Saturday the 29th of August, 1959 at the flagstaff house between the Prime Minister Dr. The Rt. Hon. Kwame Nkrumah and representatives of the All-African Women's League."

¹³⁸ PRAAD. SC/BAA/356. "Ghana Women's League—Aims and Objectives."

Kudjoe's speech at the 10th anniversary of the Democratic Republic of Germany was most expressive of what independence meant for women. She stated,

The women of Ghana are currently mobilising and organising themselves to take their rightful place in our current move for national reconstruction. Our struggle is not an easy one because the primitive idea which upholds that women are inferior has still deep roots among a wide section of our citizens, nevertheless our struggle is forging ahead for we are relentless and undaunted.¹³⁹

In a similar tone, Mrs. Evelyn Amartiefio of the NFGW also saw independence as an opportunity for women in the country to work hard to overturn the notion that women "were only fit for the kitchen."¹⁴⁰ Clearly, these leaders had a vision of an independent Ghana devoid of gender discrimination. All the activities that they embarked on were largely aimed at projecting a new image of Ghanaian women not as inferior or auxiliaries to men but as visible, forceful and actively contributing to building the nation. It is in this light that both organisations launched the campaign against nudity and the Federation called for reforms in customary marriages.

3.2 Nudity

Although nudity in certain parts of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast had a long history dating back to antiquity, the move to deal with it as a 'national and women's problem' began with the Federation and League.¹⁴¹ As early as 1955, the Federation expressed concern about the issue in some parts of the Gold Coast and directed its district branches to educate mothers and members of their respective

¹³⁹ PRAAD. Ibid, SC/BAA/356. "Speech Delivered by Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe, October 2 1959.

¹⁴⁰ Regional Archives of Ghana, Tamale. (hereafter, RAGT), NRG 10/15/2. Thomas Nyaku, "Nudity in Northern Region is an Eye-Sore," *Ghanaian Times*, November 26, 1958.

¹⁴¹ For more background on Nudity in the northern territories see Jean Allman, "Let Your Fashion be in Line with our Ghanaian Costume: Nation, Gender and the Politics of Cloth-ing in Nkrumah's Ghana," in *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, ed., Jean Allman, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 144-160.

communities on the health implications of the practice. Attempts were also made to bring government's attention to the problem. In a reply to a letter from the Federation, the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Local Government, Mr Kingston, advised the leadership to "take it up with the Northern Territories Council or Members of the Legislative Assembly from the North," since it was most prevalent in those areas. In the years 1955 to 1957, the Federation embarked on a serious campaign to draw attention to the practice as it had been directed, while at the same time publishing articles in the news papers and distributing items of clothing to children in its districts branches. As stated earlier, the women's organisations were out to challenge social norms and practices that in their view impeded the progress of women and posed a hindrance to their agenda of women's empowerment. Nudity was one such obstacle that to the Federation did not help to uphold the dignity of women and reflect "favourably on the high respect and reputation this country had achieved among the nations of the world" ¹⁴²

In 1958, the Ministry of Labour, Co-operatives and Social Welfare responded by ordering a social survey to be carried out by the Department of Sociology of the University College of Ghana. The main aim of the study was to enable government to "have a better idea of the underlying social causes and extent of the problem." ¹⁴³ Meanwhile the Federation continued its fight in the various district and regional branches. After very little progress had been made by government, the AAWL, with assistance from the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, the Ministry of Health, Members of Local and Regional Assemblies as well as other religious groups launched in 1959 a serious non-governmental campaign to check nudity,

¹⁴² RAGT, NRG 10/15/2. "Itinerary of Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe."

¹⁴³ National Assembly Debates, 1959-60. Vol. 16. 1st July, 1959. "Nudity." This study was headed by the prominent Pan-Africanist and scholar, St. Claire Drake.

‘tribal’ marking, female circumcision, and poverty in the Northern Territories.¹⁴⁴ Ms. Hanna Kudjoe set off on a tour of the whole region starting from the April 1959. Some of the areas she visited included Tamale, Damongo, Bole, Wa, Lawra, Tumu, Navrongo, Bolgatanga, Bawku, Nakpanduri and Yendi.¹⁴⁵ Subsequently, the League launched a nationwide and international campaign collecting used clothing mostly for children and women in the ‘affected’ areas. Through the Catholic Relief Services, the League received some bales of clothing from the United States of America as well as dolls used to teach women how to clothe their children.¹⁴⁶

This organisation became a pressure group, which called for the enactment of laws to help prevent the problem of nudity from developing further. At a joint meeting held with representatives of the AAWL, it was proposed that one of the most effective ways of preventing this problem was through government intervention. Official legislation should seek not only to encourage the wearing of clothes but also to prohibit tribal markings. Male circumcision for instance was to be carried out by “qualified doctors and “native doctors” registered by Local Councils after . . . they complied with the basic requirements of skill and hygiene.”¹⁴⁷ Although convinced that the League had embarked on a worthy cause, government began to show signs of uneasiness about the attention that the organisation had drawn to itself and its cause on the international front. Earlier in 1957, Nkrumah had summarised the foreign policy of government as based on

¹⁴⁴ RAGT, NRG 10/15/2. Itinerary of Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe, Organiser.”

¹⁴⁵ RAGT, NRG 10/15/2. Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ RAGT, NRG 10/15/2. Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ RAGT, NRG 10/15/2. Main Points Arising from Discussion with Representatives of the Religious Missions, the All-African Women League, the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, the Ministry of Health and Chairmen of Local Councils Held at the regional Assembly Hall, Tamale on Wednesday, March 4th 1959.

three words; Dignity, Peace and Friendship.¹⁴⁸ Convinced that the issue had been exaggerated to the effect that it did not reflect well on the image and dignity of the country, the secretary to the regional commissioner in a correspondence to the Prime Minister stated that “an effort will be made to encourage greater publicity for such activities as the health project, nutrition work and infant welfare rather than for the anti-nudity “campaign”.”¹⁴⁹ Whereas government was concerned with the effects of the problem on the national image of Ghana, of paramount concern to the women’s organisations was “the status of women and women’s roles in the construction of that national image.”¹⁵⁰

The above notwithstanding, the activities of the League brought government’s attention to the socio-economic problems of the Northern Region and in correspondence from the Prime Minister to Hon. Krobo Edusei, October 1959, Dr Nkrumah suggested the provision of wage earning jobs “to increase the earning capacity of the people . . . in this way it is hoped that with more money in their hands poverty, which is the main reason for this form of backwardness, will be removed and people may the more readily lend themselves to advice on the advantage of clothing oneself.”¹⁵¹ Some of the actions government intended taking included the establishment of Brigade camps, the introduction of heavy machinery for agricultural purposes and the drilling of dams for irrigation purposes.¹⁵² By 1960, the anti-nudity campaign had received nationwide and international attention and it was expanded to other areas in the northern and upper

¹⁴⁸ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 97.

¹⁴⁹ RAGT, NRG 9/2/6, “Confidential.”

¹⁵⁰ Allman, “Let Your Fashion be in line with our Ghanaian Costume,” 152.

¹⁵¹ RAGT, NRG 9/2/6. Correspondence from the Prime Minister to Krobo Edusei, Minister of Transport and Communications.” 5th October, 1959.

¹⁵² RAGT, NRG 9/2/6. Correspondence from the Prime Minister to L. R. Abavana (Northern Regional Commissioner) 7th November, 1959.

regions. The anti-nudity activities was not limited to the north as the Federation launched similar campaigns in the various districts across the country and also contributed to the fight by the League. For instance the Buem branch of the Federation contributed £25 towards the efforts of the League.¹⁵³ A “Clothe Your Child” campaign was launched by the Sunyani district branch of the Federation and distributed items of clothing to children. In a meeting held with cabinet in July 1960, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah proposed that the wearing of sandals, shoes or some form of footwear for children be made compulsory by law. Cabinet further decided that legislative action should be taken to abolish nudity in the northern and upper regions and in other areas of the country.¹⁵⁴ By the end of 1960, the anti-nudity campaign initiated by the women’s organisations and seriously pursued by the League had taken on a different dimension. Throughout the 1960s government continued to devise ways of putting an end to the problem all due to the efforts of the League. Considering the strong social and cultural factors involved the ministry of social welfare began the process of an intensive organised campaign, a rigorous mass education and health extension program, enactment of bye-laws by the local authorities to sensitize people and put an end to the practice.

3.3 Marriage

Nudity was not the only ‘outmoded’ practice that the Federation took an issue with. From its inception, the organisation expressed concern over the procedure of customary marriages as they existed in the Gold Coast. Three different types of marriages were recognised in the Gold Coast, marriage according to the Ordinance, Customary and

¹⁵³ “Buem Women Give £25,” *Daily Graphic*, January 28 1960. 17.

¹⁵⁴ RAGT, NRG 9/2/6. “Memorandum on Nudity in the Northern and Upper Regions.” 3rd September, 1960.

Mohammedan marriages. The Marriage Ordinance of 1884 stipulated that marriages contracted under the Ordinance “may be solemnised under the authority of (1) A registrar’s certificate; (2) Marriage officers’ certificate, or one such certificate when sufficient; (3) A special license from the Governor.”¹⁵⁵ It further stated that “any person who is married under this Ordinance shall be incapable during the continuance of such marriage of contracting a valid marriage under any native law or custom”¹⁵⁶ The ordinance strictly recognised monogamous unions. Where a spouse died intestate, the law stated that two thirds of the personal and real property should go to the wife and children and one third should be distributed in accordance with the provisions of the native custom of the deceased.¹⁵⁷

Significantly different from the above were customary law marriages which were contracted according to the native custom of the parties involved. Among the Akan for instance, the essential element in the marriage contract is the gift of drinks presented to the head of the bride’s family by the head of the groom’s lineage.¹⁵⁸ The marriage is sealed once the custom and traditions have been duly satisfied and both families have consented to the union. However, polygamy was an accepted practice; as explained by Redwar, “the whole marriage system according to native law rests on a basis of polygamy and has nothing in common with marriage under the Ordinance which when contracted by natives makes a complete change of legal status.”¹⁵⁹ The implication of the

¹⁵⁵ Laws of the Gold Coast, 1951. Vol. 111. Chapters 89-166. Chapter 127, Marriage. 410. This Ordinance is still in use in Ghana.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 425.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 427.

¹⁵⁸ This is referred to as the “Tiri Nsa” and seals the union between the parties. See Christine Oppong, *Middle Class African Marriage—A Family Study of Ghanaian Senior Civil Servants* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981), 30.

¹⁵⁹ For more on the legal implications of such marriage see H. W. Hayes Redwar, *Comments on Some Ordinances of the Gold Coast Colony* (London: Sweet and Maxwell Ltd, 1909), 67.

above point is even further explained by Philips and Morris in *Marriage Laws in Africa*. They argue that “Whatever maybe said as to the material advantage accruing to a wife as a result of having co-wives to share her duties; it can hardly be denied that the institution of polygamy is normally associated with a social system in which there is unchallenged male dominance.”¹⁶⁰

A man was allowed to marry another woman by custom and this would not amount to bigamy. Divorce in Akan custom, for instance, involved the return of the “tiri nsa” to the family of the woman and in cases of death the upbringing and maintenance of children became the responsibility of their mothers. It was with these aspects of customary marriage that the Federation found the most problematic. Considering the fact that one of its primary aims was to improve the legal position of women, the Federation embarked on an intensive program aimed at improving the status of native customary marriages and rendering it sound and secure. In effect, the organisation was demanding that aspects of the Ordinance, such as registration of marriages, the introduction of succession and inheritance laws in cases of divorce or death and the recognition of one wife be introduced to change the nature of native customary marriages. Although there had been conflicts between European missionaries, colonial officials on one hand and some African intellectuals over attempts to define and redefine ‘marriages,’ this move by the Federation marked the first attempt by Gold Coast/Ghanaian women to initiate reforms in marriage customs. The Federation was convinced that the reforms will empower women and guarantee a respectable position for them and the children produced in such unions.

The program, an intensive educational campaign, started with the establishment of a marriage guidance council comprised of a barrister, a doctor and a psychiatrist. The

¹⁶⁰ Arthur Phillips and Henry F. Morris, *Marriage Laws in Africa* (London, NY & Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971). 5-6, 40-41.

main aim of the council was to investigate the causes of divorce and advice married couples on solutions to their marital problems.¹⁶¹ Considering the fact that the institution of marriage was one of the key aspects of Ghanaian traditional custom, chiefs and traditional authorities were not excluded from the debate. Memos were circulated to the joint provincial council of chiefs, Asanteman and the Northern Territories Territorial Council which basically sought to explain the position of the Federation and to seek their views on the matter.

After independence, the Federation nationalised its demand for marriage reforms. Working closely with the Christian Council, the issue was debated in the press where it made its case for the registration of customary marriages, the recognition of one wife and the systematisation of inheritance and property settlements in such unions. Addressing the issue in a talk, Mrs. Amarteifio argued that “the looseness of this Native Customary Marriages is creating problems in the country because it is not fitting in with the times both economically and socially.”¹⁶² The issue sparked a lot of controversy throughout the country because it had a direct effect on the social structure of Ghanaian society. By 1959, the Federation had added to their demands the introduction of divorce tribunals responsible for hearing such cases.¹⁶³ In the same year, government responded by setting up a committee comprising a joint body of the Christian Council and representatives of the Federation with the responsibility of studying native Customary marriage laws in the country with the view to make recommendations to the Government.¹⁶⁴ The Federation did not relent in its fight for legislation regarding customary marriages.

¹⁶¹ “Marriage Guidance,” *Daily Graphic*, March 12, 1955. 7.

¹⁶² General Correspondence of the NFGW. Speech by Mrs. Evelyn Amarteifio on reforms in customary marriages.

¹⁶³ “Protect Future of Children,” *Daily Graphic*, April 18, 1959.

¹⁶⁴ “Federation Wants Divorce Tribunals,” *Ghana Times*, April 18, 1959.

Meanwhile, the organisation continued its annual Ideal Home Exhibitions, introducing women to new ways of improving the quality of life in their homes. It also initiated programs aimed at improving the economic conditions of women. Here the target group of the Federation were market women and their trade with the commercial firms in the country. This was of immense importance to the Federation because the majority of its affiliates were women traders. One such group was the Accra Market Women Traders Association. This organisation, founded by Madam Kai Sasraku in 1953, aimed at promoting its members interests, as well as welfare. Madam Kai Sasraku became its first president. Popularly referred to as “mother” by the market women, Kai Sasraku began her education at the Bremen Mission School at Okyirikomfo where she was born. Very early in her life, she dropped out of school to concentrate on trading. Madam Kai Sasraku became one of the first credit customers of UAC. As a result of her integrity and dedication to her work, she had the distinction of being the first market woman to be awarded Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE). Like Mrs. Amarteifio, Kai Sasraku was an active voluntary worker outside the market and joined such groups as the Red Cross Society, Ghana Society for the Blind, Friends of Lepers and the Federation.¹⁶⁵ In 1955, she was elected the vice-president of the Federation. Being very familiar with the problems of market women especially those involved in retail trade, Madam Kai Sasraku played a very important role in organising and educating traders on matters bordering on personal cleanliness, the essence of insuring their trade and methods of accessing credit from government. The ministry of trade in a

¹⁶⁵ “Mother of Accra’s Market Women- Tribute to a notable Ghanaian Trader,” *The Ghanaian*, November 1958, 15.

meeting with representatives of the Federation and AWTA assured both organisations of governments support when and as it was needed.¹⁶⁶

3.4 ‘Internationalisation’ of the Women’s Organisations

What began as local women’s groups, addressing issues pertinent to women in the Gold Coast and actively participating in the political struggles of independence had by 1958 assumed an international character. An outstanding feature of the women’s organisations was their enthusiasm to forge links with similar groups within and outside the African continent. At a delegate’s conference, Mrs. Amarteifio suggested to members of the Federation the need to “join hands with other women’s groups in West Africa to form a West African Council of Women.”¹⁶⁷ This she argued would provide a platform for discussing specific and common problems affecting women in West Africa and with time grow to include the whole of the continent. By April 1957, the federation had taken the lead by making contacts with some women’s groups in Nigeria on the above suggestion.¹⁶⁸

Beyond Africa, the leadership of both the Federation and AAWL began to establish alliances with women’s groups in Europe and the United States of America. Some of the organisations that the league established links with included the Afro-American Ghanaian Women Friendship League (AAGWFL), Hanna Kudjoe was the secretary and organiser of the AAGWFL, The Democratic Women’s League of Germany

¹⁶⁶ Private Archives, “Notes of Meeting Held with Representatives of the Federation, AWTA and the Ministry of Trade on the Subject of the Organisation of Local Small Traders,” 4 April 1960.

¹⁶⁷ Private Archives, General Correspondence, NFGW, Minutes of Meeting of the Delegates Conference, “West African Council of Women.” 11th and 12th April, 1957

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

as well as other women's organisations in Denmark and Sweden.¹⁶⁹ The Federation, on the other hand, affiliated itself with such international bodies as the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), the International Council of Women (ICW) and the International Alliance of Women (IAW) all of which were non-political women's movements.¹⁷⁰ At a delegate's conference held in Athens from August 25 to September 4, Mrs. Amarteifio was elected to serve on the board of the IAW. The main objectives of the IAW—which was founded in 1904—was to secure enfranchisement for the women of all nations, by the promotion of women's suffrage and to urge women to use their rights and influence in public life to ensure that the status of every individual without distinction of sex, race or creed shall be based on respect for human personality.¹⁷¹

What was the significance of these affiliations to the women's organisations? How did these help in their agenda of empowering Ghanaian women? After independence, African liberation, unity and emancipation remained a major theme and vision of Kwame Nkrumah and his government. Ghana's independence according to Nkrumah was only the first stage in the process towards the liberation of the whole of Africa from foreign domination.¹⁷² He further emphasised the point that the main aim of the government was to collaborate with other independent nations to achieve an African Personality in international affairs.¹⁷³ Through these associations both the AAWL and the Federation thrust Ghanaian women into the national and international spotlight. These affiliations provided a window through which the western world could see and have an idea of the common problems and challenges facing the African or Ghanaian

¹⁶⁹ PRAAD SC/BAA/356. "Parliamentary Affairs."

¹⁷⁰ General Correspondence, NFGW. "Statement of Account," 1st July-31st December 1959.

¹⁷¹ General Correspondence, NFGW. Brochure of the IAW.

¹⁷² Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 98.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

woman. By affiliating with such international bodies, the organisations were building an international reputation for themselves, a very important element needed to consolidate their position within and outside the country. At a time when government support in terms of funding was limited, the organisations benefitted from material support from these groups. Beyond providing a platform for the discussion of women's problems and exchange of ideas, the women's organisations were very vocal when it came to discussing other political issues and spared no chance in expressing their views on subjects of that nature.

A typical example of these was the testing of the French Atomic Bombs in the Sahara in 1959 and subsequent protests which attracted a lot of attention both locally and internationally.¹⁷⁴ Africa, according to Allman became the centre of the global peace movement and Ghana became the centre of a "transnational culture of opposition" attracting prominent pan-Africanists and black internationalists such as Bayard Rustin, Bill Sutherland, George Padmore, W.E.B Dubois, Reverend Michael Scott, A.J Muste and several others.¹⁷⁵ This was not an all male affair as the women's organisations took keen interest in the events and spared no chance in condemning the act. The League led a demonstration of women against the Atomic tests in the Sahara.

In a speech read at the tenth anniversary of the German Democratic Republic, Hanna Kudjoe declared, "We women of Ghana share the noble idea that the race for the production of bread and butter and of other things that make life comfortable is more sensible and more civilised than the production of deadly weapons."¹⁷⁶ She continued,

¹⁷⁴ Allman, "Nuclear Imperialism and the Pan-African Struggle for Peace and Freedom: Ghana, 1959-1962," *Souls* 10 (2008): 89.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁷⁶ PRAAD, SC/BAA/356. "Speech Delivered by Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe," Leader of the Delegation on October, 2 1959."

“We consider it primitive to sit and plan how a whole city can be blown up in a second . . . we say down with the atomic bomb, down with oppression of all types, down with imperialist exploitation . . . up with peace and international friendship, up with the fight for more butter and bread.”¹⁷⁷ Mrs Amarteifio also appealed in a letter to the President of Conseil National des Femmes Francaises (trans. National Council of French Women) “we members of the Ghana Federation of Women at this critical moment humbly request you the women of France to use your motherly influence to persuade your government to stop atomic bombs explosion in Sahara.”¹⁷⁸ Mrs. Signe Hojer, President of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Sweden was invited to address members of the Federation on the Sahara atom bomb test inspiring the formation of a protest team by women of the Sekondi-Takoradi branch.¹⁷⁹ By adding their voices to the protests the women’s organisations were contributing—albeit not on the scale of the Sahara Protest Team—to generating and constituting the international struggle for peace and freedom.¹⁸⁰

3.5 On the Threshold of a Republic

Despite all the efforts by the leadership of both organisations to draw government’s attention to problems and issues concerning women and their contributions towards making a difference in the new nation, there was no woman member of cabinet or parliament during this time. However, in 1958, the idea of sponsoring women

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Correspondence of the NFGW to the President, Ligue Francaises pour le Droit des Femmes, Paris and the President, Conseil National des femmes Francaises, Paris. The same letter was addressed to the Prime minister of Ghana, the French ambassador in Ghana, the chairman , the anti atom-bomb committee, Ghana, the president, United Nations, USA and the press in Ghana.

¹⁷⁹ General Correspondence of the NFGW. “Quarterly Delegates Conference-First Quarter Report, Sekondi Takoradi Branch, Jan-April 1960. “She Talks of Sahara Test,” *Daily Graphic*, February 4 1960. 9.

¹⁸⁰ Allman, “Nuclear Imperialism,” 89.

candidates during elections was proposed by the Minister for Local government.¹⁸¹ Cabinet meanwhile suggested the creation of special parliamentary electoral districts which only women would be qualified to stand for in elections. In May 1960, the Representation of the People (Women's Members) Bill was introduced to cabinet and subsequently to the National Assembly.¹⁸² By June 1960, ten women had been elected members of parliament.¹⁸³

It is very important to note here that eligibility was not open to all women in the selected regions. The criteria for selection included: active party membership, ability of the candidate to speak English and vernacular on any platform in addition to the ability to command the respect of a crowd, she must also be a lady of talent and above all a seasoned politician.¹⁸⁴ Arguably, the qualities of both Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe and Mrs. Evelyn Amarteifio far outweighed the standards set by the party. Hanna Kudjoe was a leading woman nationalist from whose efforts and organisational abilities the party had benefitted immensely. Mrs. Amarteifio, although always maintaining her organisation's non-political stance, had played a central role in the process of empowering women. Ironically both leaders were not nominated.

However, the organisations especially the Federation were not daunted as they continued to organise, educate and carry out their respective activities. Hanna Kudjoe continued her activities in the north albeit in a very controlled manner. As Ghana

¹⁸¹ PRAAD, ADM 13/1/27. "Women Parliamentarians."

¹⁸² PRAAD ADM 13/1/29. "Representation of the People (Women Members) Bill." 24th May, 1960.

¹⁸³ PRAAD SC/BAA/126. "Women MPs." The ten women and the various regions they represented were; Mrs. Comfort Asamoah-Ashanti Region, Sophia Doku-Eastern Region, Christiana Wilmot-Western Region, Miss. Ayanori Ayambila-Northern Region, Ms. Lucy Anin-Brong Ahafo, Ms. Regina Asamany-Volta Region, Mrs. Grace Ayensu-Western Region, Ms. Mary Koranteng-Eastern Region, Ms. Victoria Nyarku and Mrs. Susanna Al-Hassan- Northern Region.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. SC/BAA/126. "Women MPs."

approached a Republic, Nkrumah suggested a change of name of the AAWL to the Ghana Women's League.¹⁸⁵ The Federation also changed its name from the National Federation of Ghana Women to the Ghana Organisation of Women again to reflect the status of Ghana.¹⁸⁶ In July 1960, the GOW hosted the first ever conference of Women of Africa and African Descent.

3.6 Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent

One of the tangible steps Nkrumah took towards the realisation of the Pan-African agenda came in 1958 when Ghana hosted the first Conference of Independent African States.¹⁸⁷ The main objectives of the conference according to Kwame Nkrumah was to explore ways and means of consolidating and safe-guarding African independence, to strengthen the economic and cultural ties between the independent countries and most importantly to “find workable arrangements for helping our brothers still languishing under colonial rule.”¹⁸⁸ Addressing the representatives of the independent nations Nkrumah explained “we . . . must endeavour to seek the friendship of all and the enmity of none. . . . This will enable us to assert our own African personality and to develop according to our own ways of life, our own customs, traditions and cultures.”¹⁸⁹ If Pan-Africanism meant to male leaders the total liberation of the African continent from all forms of imperialism, it meant for the NFGW even more;

¹⁸⁵ PRAAD SC/BAA/356. Notes of Meeting held on 29 August, 1959 at the Flagstaff House between the Prime Minister, Dr. the Rt. Hon. Kwame Nkrumah and Representatives of the AAWL.

¹⁸⁶ PRAAD SC/BAA/152. “Ghana Organisation of Women,” Correspondence from the NFGW to the Prime Minister, Dr the Rt. Hon. Kwame Nkrumah, 11th May 1960.

¹⁸⁷ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 125-134.

¹⁸⁸ The participants of the conference came from Ethiopia, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Liberia and the Sudan. For more on the conference see Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 127.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

the emancipation, unity and advancement of African women. Inspired by the vision of the conference and its own objective of joining hands with women throughout the continent to discuss issues of common concern, the Federation in the same year conceived the idea of organising and hosting a conference of women in Africa and the African Diaspora, again, the very first of its kind in Africa and the world initiated by Ghanaian women specifically the NFGW. As reported in the *Daily Graphic*, the conference embraced women not only from Africa but “those in whose veins flows the African blood, who by fate have found themselves planted elsewhere.”¹⁹⁰ The conference initially titled Conference for Women of African Descent was later through the direction of the Prime Minister, renamed “Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent.”

Throughout the year 1959, plans were made and views sought from prominent Pan-Africanists such as St. Claire Drake, Mrs. Dorothy Padmore, Shirley Graham Dubois and Amy Jacques Garvey on how the conference should proceed, issues to be addressed and personalities to be invited.¹⁹¹ Shirley Graham DuBois in a letter to Mrs Amarteifio stated “I congratulate you upon this important undertaking. Negro women here in the United States are hearing of this conference with increasing *sic* interest. We must be represented.”¹⁹² African American women particularly welcomed the news of the conference as a timely event since it coincided very much with their struggle for equality and the civil rights protests. The late 1950s and early 1960s was a critical period in their history, as it marked the height of the civil rights protest movements against racial

¹⁹⁰ Edith Wuver, “150 Women Coming to Ghana,” *Daily Graphic*, July 13, 1960. 8.

¹⁹¹ Correspondence from the NFGW to Mrs. Dorothy Padmore. 11th March 1960. Mrs. Padmore then resident in Ghana was appointed as a member of the planning committee set up by Mrs. Amarteifio-General Secretary of the NFGW. Other members of the committee included Mrs. A.M Akiwumi-President of the NFGW and wife of the speaker of the National Assembly, Mrs. Mary Freeman, Mrs. Joyce-Arkhurst, Mrs. Gartha Hardy, Miss Ella Griffin, Mrs. Elsie Sowah, Mrs. Elsie Ofoatey-Kudjoe, Mr. P. du Sautoy and Mrs. K. Attiemoh.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

discrimination and segregation. This conference offered them an opportunity to share with their fellow women in Africa the everyday struggles of 'negro women' in the United States and to learn how women were confronting these obstacles. For many women's organisations in Africa, it was an opportunity to exchange ideas with their counterparts on some of the socio-economic issues confronting women in Africa and to share views on women's contributions towards the independence movements of their respective countries. The Conference with the theme "Progress and Challenges of Our Times," was aimed at (1) Promoting leadership and citizenship amongst the women of Africa and African Descent; (2) Giving Women of Africa and African descent the opportunity to discuss their common problems and how best these could be solved; (3) Promoting friendship amongst women of Africa and African Descent.¹⁹³ Although government expressed doubt over the ability of the Federation to host a conference of this nature, the group persisted and eventually got some financial support from cabinet.¹⁹⁴

In all about a hundred and fifty (150) delegates from different parts of Africa, the West Indies and the United States attended. The conference took place from the 14th to 21st of July 1960.¹⁹⁵ Some of the delegates invited from the United States were Pauli Murray, a renowned writer and historian, Mrs. Anna Hedgeman, a former assistant mayor of New York, Christine C. Johnson, President of the Afro-American Heritage Association, Shirley Graham DuBois wife of the prominent Pan-Africanist and scholar W.E.B. DuBois, representatives from the United Church Women in the United States. Also present were representatives from women's organisations in Liberia, Sierra Leone,

¹⁹³ Minutes NFGW, Conference of Women of African Descent (CWAAD).

¹⁹⁴ PRAAD, ADM 13/1/29. Minutes of Meeting held on 17th June 1960.

¹⁹⁵ Edith Wuver, "150 Women Coming to Ghana," *Daily Graphic*, July 13, 1960. 8.

Nigeria, Sudan, as well as delegates from the United Nations and the World Health Organisation. The conference brought together very prominent and professional Ghanaian women such as Mrs. Annie Jiagge, Ghana's first female magistrate and High Court Judge and women's activist. Dr. Susan Ofori-Atta, one of the first women medical doctors in the Gold Coast, Mrs. Felicia Obeng as well as the newly elected members of parliament. It encompassed several themes including the legal status of women, educational opportunities, maternal and child care issues and women in public and intellectual life.¹⁹⁶ Addressing Delegates at the opening session of the conference, the president stated;

There is great responsibility resting on the shoulders of women of Africa and African descent. They must realise that the men alone cannot complete the gigantic task we have set ourselves. The time has come when the women of Africa and of African descent must rise up in their millions to join the African crusade for freedom. . . . Women of Africa and African descent, the history you make to-day records not only the iron determination of our people to be free, but also our proclamation to the world to take note of the fact that colonialism and imperialism are a decadent force with their backs to the wall and that they must be helped to liquidate themselves. Our rich heritage must be restored to us"¹⁹⁷

Stating the duty of women in the fight against colonialism and imperialism, the president Kwame Nkrumah declared to the delegates;

Women of Africa, yours is the duty and privilege of hoisting high the nationalist banner of redemption; yours is the glory of answering the call of our beloved Africa . . . yours is the honour to fight relentlessly for the total emancipation of this great continent; yours is the task of projecting the African personality to the world of today.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Minutes, GOW, Delegates Diary, "Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent."

¹⁹⁷ Samuel Obeng, *Selected Speeches of Kwame Nkrumah*, Vol. 1 (Accra: Afram Publications Ghana Ltd, 1997), 110-116.

¹⁹⁸ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 249.

Whereas Nkrumah used the opportunity to reiterate his aspirations for a united states of Africa and women's responsibility in the realisation of that dream, the women delegates focused predominantly on women's rights issues. Addressing delegates on the legal status of Ghanaian women, Mrs Annie Jiagge was quick to point out that Ghanaian women faced no legal discriminations. She continued further to explore some of the strides that women in Ghana had made over time stating “. . . only lip-service is paid to the saying that a woman's place is in the home . . . there is hardly anywhere outside the home where she hasn't another special place.”¹⁹⁹ She also educated delegates on the kinds on marriage, family systems and inheritance laws in Ghana. In her speech on the same topic, the legal status of women, Pauli Murray took the opportunity to educate participants on the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women by the United Nations and the need for African women to be presented on the Commission. She stressed;

Women around the world having first, the foremost obligation to take care of the children feel that they should have an equal right to have custody over the children, to administer their property and to make choices equally with their husbands and this, too is a goal of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.²⁰⁰

She concluded by reminding delegates that;

. . . the problems of women everywhere, without respect to colour, or to nationality, or to religion, are common problems and they must be solved many times through common agencies, and when we have finished unifying the continent of Africa, we will then have to unify the world, and this will be done through the United Nations.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Private Archives of GOW. Mrs Annie Jiagge, “Legal Status of Women, Marriage, Property, Suffrage, Inheritance,” (speech presented at the CWAAD, Accra, Ghana. 14-21 July 1960).

²⁰⁰ Private Archives of GOW, Pauli Murray, “Legal Status of Women,” (paper presented at opening session of the CWAAD, Accra, Ghana. July 18, 1960).

²⁰¹ Ibid.

Clearly, through hosting this conference, the GOW joined the international struggle for equal rights for women and marginalised groups. More importantly the conference brought the attention of international organisations on the status of Ghanaian women. Again through this conference Africans got first hand exposure into western notions about Africa and African women more specifically.

Apart from women's rights, race featured very prominently. Here, African American women shared their experiences on the challenges and impediments that 'coloured' people face. Mrs. Christine Johnson's speech was most expressive of the extent of the problem. She spoke of how historians had rewritten African Americans out of the history and development of the United States. "From what is taught in the schools and popularly known one would think that Africa had no civilisation; Negroes never fought against the American slave system . . . that Africans and Americans of African descent-called Negroes are not human."²⁰² The GOW provided a platform where women of African descent could express themselves freely without fear of harassments or intimidation. And once again Ghana became the centre for the renaissance of the new woman.

Several resolutions covering the subjects discussed were reached at the end of the conference. To ensure that interactions among member countries and participants continued and some of the major issues were followed up with the governments of their respective countries, members resolved to make the CWAAD a biennial event which could be hosted in any African country.²⁰³ Regarding the subject matter of the legal status of women, participants resolved to make it "a subject for continuing study in

²⁰² Private Archives, GOW, Mrs. Christine C. Johnson, Afro-American Heritage Association (paper presented at the CWAAD, 14-21 July, 1960).

²⁰³ Private Archives. "Resolutions of the CWAAD." Resolution Recommending Two Yearly Meetings. Resolution (4)

preparation for the next CWAAD.”²⁰⁴ The resolution further stated that “each delegation member country be responsible to seek representation at the next United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.”²⁰⁵ Resolutions were passed on several other issues. Concerning the subject of racial discrimination discussed by delegates from the African Diaspora, the CWAAD condemned all such acts and declared its support for the civil rights movement in the United States.

3.7 Conclusion

The chapter has explored the formation of the AAWL and more importantly the difference between that organisation and the Federation. Throughout the immediate independence period to the inauguration of the republic in 1960, the Federation and the League were relentless in their fight to strengthen their positions and that of Ghanaian women. The leadership of both groups clearly envisaged a modern state where women were not constrained by custom and gender roles were defined by abilities instead of sex. This was the main motivating factor for the campaigns launched to check nudity and ensure reforms in customary marriage practices. Although the campaigns had not produced the needed results by 1960, debates continued and negotiations continued throughout the subsequent years.

²⁰⁴ Private Archives. Ibid. Resolution on the Legal Status of Women. Resolution (2).

²⁰⁵ The UN Commission on the Status of Women was founded in 1946 after the Economic and Social Council established a Subcommission on the Status of Women, a subsidiary to the UN Commission on Human Rights. In 1947, it was raised to the status of a full commission subsidiary to the Economic and Social Council. This commission was the only UN body responsible for promoting non-discrimination against women throughout the world. In 1962, Kwame Nkrumah appointed Annie Jiagge, then Justice of the High Court of Ghana, as Ghana’s sole representative on the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Justice Jiagge served as a member from 1962-1972 and as a chairperson of the Commission in 1968. She also played a pivotal role in the drafting of the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women. For more on the Commission see Margaret E. Galey, “Promoting Non-discrimination against Women: The UN Commission on the Status of Women,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 2 Special Issue on Human Rights: International Perspectives, (June 1979): 273-302. Also, Devaki Jain, *Women, Development and the UN: A Sixty Year Quest for Equality and Justice*, with a foreword by Amartya Sen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 68. For more on the biography of Justice Annie Jiagge see, Kojo Vietta, *The Flagbearers of Ghana*, 269-278.

Again the organisations did not hesitate to add their voices to other political and national issues. Most importantly, the period witnessed the most remarkable event in the history of Ghana and the Federation, that is, the hosting of the Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent. Being able to host such a conference in Ghana at a time when the whole world was in a state of flux is indicative of how powerful the Federation had become.

Were these organisations particularly the GOW able to sustain its position? The next chapter will provide more answers.

Chapter Four

1960-1966, POLITICAL INTERVENTION IN THE ORGANISATION OF WOMEN

4.0 Introduction

Several factors are known to shape women's movements and organisations. One of the key forces that both Maxine Molyneux and Shireen Hassim have identified is the nature of the external political environment in which such organisations are located.²⁰⁶ It is their contention that changes in the political environment especially in post-colonial contexts has direct or indirect repercussions for women's independent organisation. The case of the Ghana Organisation of Women (GOW) reinforces the above argument. The preceding chapters have established that the period from 1950 to 1960 was very critical in the history of Gold Coast women especially of the GOW as it marked the period of its active years. By 1960, the membership of the GOW had increased tremendously. Its affiliated societies had expanded to include groups such as the Business and Professional Women's Club, Army Wives Association, Midwives Association, American Women's Association of Accra and several others. Its district branches had also expanded to areas such as Wa, Half-Assini and Dunkwa-On-Offin, a clear indication that the organisation had, to a large extent been able to transcend some of the constraints of the period to assert itself as a formidable women's group in Ghana.²⁰⁷

However, significant changes occurred in Ghana's political scene after 1960, which changed the nature of women's organisation in the country. In September 1960, the National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW) was inaugurated by Nkrumah as the

²⁰⁶ Molyneux, *Women's Movement's in International Perspective*, 140ff. See also Hassim, "The Women's Movement in the Democratic State," *Agenda* 48 (2001): 111.

²⁰⁷ *The Ghanaian Woman*, Vol. 2. No. 3, April-June 1960.

only recognised body under which all women's groups were to operate. This chapter first examines some of the changes in the political environment in Ghana after 1960 and how these directly or indirectly affected women's voluntary organisations especially the GOW. It then focuses on the NCGW, the motivations behind its formation and the councils effectiveness in advancing the interest of women, The central contention of this chapter is that the NCGW was established mainly to project the political goals of the CPP and had very little to do with a genuine commitment to advancing the interest or empowerment of Ghanaian women.

4.1 Building the One Party State: Historical Antecedents to the Inauguration of the NCGW

In April 1960, Ghanaians voted in favour of a new constitution in the plebiscite that saw Nkrumah elected as the head of state or first president of Ghana.²⁰⁸ Subsequently, on July 1st 1960, the nation was formally declared a Republic. This ushered in another phase in the history of Ghana. A very significant feature in this phase was the renewed emphasis on developing the nation along socialist lines. "Our Party," Nkrumah declared, "is great and strong because we aim for a socialist pattern of society. We are the party of the workers, the farmers and . . . we will remain faithful to the principles that guide us in evolving our own Ghanaian pattern of socialist society."²⁰⁹ The period also saw numerous structural changes within the CPP as a political party. Scholars have argued that the late 1950s was the period of the consolidation of political control by the Party.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ For a detailed study of the 1960 elections see Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 387-395.

²⁰⁹ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 209. This is an extract of a speech by Nkrumah at the opening of the Party headquarters on 2nd April, 1960.

²¹⁰ Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 382. See also Ryan Selwyn, "The Theory and Practice of African One Partyism: The CPP Re-examined," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 2 (Spring 1970): 145-172.

Apart from passing into Order, the controversial Preventive Detention Act of 1958, some of the changes introduced within the party machinery included:

1. The strengthening of the regional, branch and constituency organisations
2. The building up of the party auxiliaries
3. The reorganisation of the party in the new party structure.²¹¹

According to Apter, the building up of the party auxiliaries was aimed at achieving two ends, namely, to rearrange significant groupings in the society along lines representative of modern economic growth, modern education and national discipline. And secondly, provide a new counterpoise taking local strength at the regional, branch and constituency organisations.²¹² This process was accompanied by a rather gradual but forceful control of such autonomous bodies as the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Farmers Union and the National Co-operative Council, hence, Austin's argument that the CPP had spun "a web of power over the country."²¹³ The new auxiliaries, which included the above groups, were supposed to represent the new organisation of Ghanaian society and most importantly the "true and practical schools" of the party's philosophy.²¹⁴

With the aim of preventing the possible development of any form of rivalry to the CPP, other social movements and voluntary groups irrespective of their political affiliations were by the same token subsumed within the party apparatus. For instance, with the formation of the Young Pioneers Movement in June 1960, groups such as the

²¹¹ Austin, *Ibid.*

²¹² David Apter, *Ghana in Transition* (Princeton, NJ: University of Princeton Press, 1972), 343.

²¹³ The TUC was the first organisation to be placed under the control of the state. Apart from revising its internal structure by statute, its ties with the International Free Trade Unions were broken. The Co-Operative Movement was the second body co-opted into the Party. Several of its boards and smaller co-operatives were abolished. The National Farmers Union was abolished on suspicion of being an opposition group and in its place the United Ghana Farmers Union was constituted. The Youth were the third to be reorganised. Apter is of the view that the new emphasis on the youth was the most significant feature of the reorganisation process. For a detailed discussion of the above see Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, 343-345. Also, Austin, *Politics in Ghana*, 382ff.

²¹⁴ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 209.

Young Men Christian Association (YMCA), the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), the Boys Scouts, the Girl Guide Association, the Young Farmers club were incorporated into the Ghana Young Pioneers Movement. The argument advanced by cabinet was that these groups or organisations were not Ghanaian or African in outlook and “not geared to the achievement of the same national and patriotic ideals.”²¹⁵ The Young Pioneers was therefore established to “instill into the youth . . . a high sense of patriotism, respect and love for Ghana” and became the only Government recognised youth association in the country.²¹⁶

By mid 1960, Nkrumah and the CPP had began rolling out their plans of making Ghana a One Party state. The TUC, United Ghana Farmers Council, the National Council of Co-operatives, and the Ghana Young Pioneers had not only been co-opted into the party, they had been made integral wings with the CPP being the central and supreme body from which the ‘wings’ derived their authority. In the words of Nkrumah, the CPP was the “political vanguard of these movements within which we can find the expression of our ideals for the economic and social well being of our people.”²¹⁷ The only group that remained to be reorganised and integrated into the mainstream of the party as per the new party structure as at June 1960, was the GOW and the other smaller women’s groups in the country.

4.2 The Reorganisation of Women

With the workers, farmers, youth and co-operative bodies all organised and integrated into the CPP, the next target was the women’s organisations. Addressing the

²¹⁵ PRAAD, ADM 13/2/75. Cabinet Memorandum by the Minister of Social Welfare.

²¹⁶ Ibid. Cabinet gave further approval for the establishment of a central youth authority for the “effective planning, co-ordination, control and direction of the combined affairs and activities of all youth organizations in the country on 16th August 1960.

²¹⁷ Nkrumah, *I Speak of Freedom*, 188.

nation in a broadcast on the 1st of July, 1960, Nkrumah outlined his vision for Ghanaian women. “The women of the country would not be forgotten. I can even now see before my minds eye . . . our women technicians in the factories, our women doctors in the hospitals, our women engineers building our bridges”²¹⁸ For this vision to be realised and the reorganisation of women to be complete and successful, there was the need first of all to ensure that the League and Federation merged since these two groups were the dominant women’s organisations in the country. Kwame Nkrumah and the CPP recognised this fact and made initial attempts towards bringing them together. As early as August 1959, Nkrumah suggested to executives of the League in a meeting at the Flagstaff House, the idea of them working together with the NFGW. Reacting to the above suggestion, Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe and her delegation maintained strongly that “they would not merge with the Federation. They stressed that the two organisations should operate separately to ensure competition in the field.”²¹⁹ Essentially from 1959 to July 1960, the leadership of the GOW and the GWL resisted all proposals advanced in that direction.

This was not to last too long as events took a different turn in July 1960. Here, the influence of the newly elected women Members of Parliament cannot be overlooked. These saw themselves as representatives of women in their various constituencies in Parliament and naturally felt the need to take over the responsibility of organising women in the country. On 9th July 1960, the MPs in a correspondence congratulating the president on his success in the elections, appealed for the formation of a national women’s movement. They suggested that “all conferences, seminars, symposiums etc.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 180.

²¹⁹ PRAAD SC/BAA/356. Notes of Meeting Held on Saturday the 29th of August, 1959 at the Flagstaff House between the Prime Minister and Representatives of the All-African Women’s League. “Mergence with Ghana Federation of Women.”

which take place in Ghana . . . be organised by the said movement.”²²⁰ They added emphatically that “any women’s organisation which does not merge into the Ghana women’s movement shall not be recognised by the Convention Peoples’ Party (CPP) government.”²²¹ This move, the MPs believed, would help the President “to achieve continued success in the administration of the country.”²²²

Following this resolution, the move towards reorganising women began in earnest. Tawia Adamafio was appointed by Nkrumah to see first to the merging of both the League and GOW and then the formation in its place a national women’s movement.²²³ Nkrumah, according to Adamafio, argued that if the TUC and the Farmers’ Council had been successfully organised and brought under the ‘wings’ of the Party, “we (the Party) must organise the women also as a distinct identity and keep them under our wings.”²²⁴ Just like the Young Pioneers Movement, all other women’s groups were to dissolve their individual identities and merge into the new organisation. Initially, Adamafio and some party leaders expressed reservations about Nkrumah’s idea. The fear according to Adamafio, lay in the possibility that the “NCGW would grow so monolithic and powerful that the party could lose control of it.”²²⁵

²²⁰ PRAAD. SC/BAA/152. “Resolution.” 9th July, 1960.

²²¹ Ibid. The resolution was signed by the MPs for Asante-Comfort Asamoah, Eastern-Sophia Doku, Western-Christine Wilmot, Volta-Patience Agbemanu, Upper, Northern, Central-Grace Ayensu and Lucy Anin-Brong-Ahafo regions respectively.

²²² Ibid., PRAAD SC/BAA/152. “Resolution.”

²²³ Tawia Adamafio was the General Secretary of the CPP. Among the names proposed for the new organisation was National Association of Ghana Women, the Ghana Women’s Movement. However Nkrumah was of the idea that the term Council had a better political impact. The new organisation was therefore named the National Council of Ghana Women.

²²⁴ Tawia Adamafio, *By Nkrumah’s Side: The Labour and the Wounds* (Accra: West Coast Ltd, 1982), 115.

²²⁵ Ibid., 118.

The above uncertainty was overridden by an even greater worry which Adamafo does not highlight, and which probably drove the party to pursue the merger. The GOW was arguably the largest and only women's association in the country that was not under the control of government. Its popularity went beyond the boundaries of Ghana or even Africa to the United States of America, and other European countries. Mrs Amarteifio, founder and General Secretary was also acknowledged well beyond the boundaries of the country. In 1958, she was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters by the President of Western College in the United States of America. The award was a tribute to her great qualities of leadership in the field of social services.²²⁶ Her organisations' popularity was manifested in the local and international publicity that the Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent (CWAAD) attracted.²²⁷ The merger was perhaps aimed at not only breaking the autonomy with which she worked but also controlling the growing influences of the GOW.

This is not to suggest that similar concerns were not raised about Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe and the GWL. By the end of 1959, the Prime Minister, Kwame Nkrumah had made it quite clear that the anti-nudity campaign launched by the League in Northern Ghana was tarnishing the image of the newly independent nation.²²⁸ Nkrumah attributed this to the fact that Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe had been allowed to carry out her activities in a largely independent and unsupervised manner and therefore directed that a committee be set up by the regional commissioner of the Northern Region, which would oversee the co-ordination of the campaign and the distribution of clothing.²²⁹ By January 1960, the

²²⁶ Wilhermina Campbell, "A Great Social Worker," *The Ghanaian*, August 1958, 36.

²²⁷ See chapter three for more details.

²²⁸ Also see chapter three for the some of the arguments that arose in that direction. 49ff.

²²⁹ NRG 9/2/6. Confidential Correspondence from the Regional Commissioner, Tamale to the Prime Minister, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. 19th August, 1959. 3.

party began taking practical steps towards controlling Mrs. Kudjoe's campaigns in the North. At a meeting of regional officers and representatives of the ministries of Health and Social Welfare, the regional commissioner, Mr. L. R. Abavana, proposed that:

Mrs Kudjoe should be asked to assist in the educational programme in the North and while she might as well distribute the clothing which she had, it should be suggested to her that she should not ask for more, since firstly much of it was unsuitable, secondly it drew attention overseas to the problem and thirdly it did not solve the long term problem of what to do when the clothing wore out.²³⁰

Furthermore, the Regional Commissioner directed that Mrs. Kudjoe "should also be asked not to give publicity to the nudity problem to the same extent as she had been doing" ²³¹ Considering governments' reaction to the Leagues activities in the north, perhaps the party felt that the merger was the only permanent way of bringing an end to the Leagues project in the Northern region and all the attention which it had drawn to itself. The above concerns most probably led the party to pursue the agenda despite the uncertainties expressed.

The proposal to merge the two organisations became a source of intense conflict between Mrs. Kudjoe and Dr. Amarteifio on one hand and the General Secretary of the party on the other hand.²³² In his book, *By Nkrumah's Side: The Labour and the Wounds*, Adamafo describes into detail events as they unfolded between the two leaders during deliberations on their merger. He writes:

²³⁰ RAGT, NRG 8/2/152. Meeting of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare with the Director of Social Welfare and Representatives of the Ministry on Nudity in the North held at the Regional Commissioner's Office, Tamale. Monday 18th January, 1960.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Actually, proposals for the formation of the new women's movement began before the Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent in July 1960. However, due to the fact that the Council had not been formally inaugurated, the GOW was allowed to host the conference.

The first step was to call a meeting of the various women's groups The response was very encouraging. I opened the meeting and outlined our programme of fusion. There was an uproar. Mrs Hanna Kudjoe, leader of the women's League and Dr. Amarteifio, leader of the Women's association, were locked up in wordy combat. We deliberated for hours and got nowhere.²³³

“At the second meeting” he continued, “the fireworks were greater than before. There was no agreement in sight and it was most disgusting. The meeting made no progress again and we dispersed.”²³⁴

As leaders of individual organisations pursuing essentially the same goals, Dr. Evelyn Amarteifio and Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe were from all indications rivals.²³⁵ Their rivalry revolved around both personal and political differences although scholars have often emphasised their political differences. Basing her position on Adamafo's account, Takyiwah Manuh argued that the conflict revolved “around the incorporation of the organisation (that is, the GOW) into the CPP as an integral wing and the position of people like Dr. Amarteifio who disagreed fundamentally with the CPP.”²³⁶ Whereas the above contention was key and might have contributed to the conflict, the tension, this chapter suggests went far deeper than a mere refusal to join the CPP or a power struggle between two dominant personalities. There was the very fundamental issue of real differences in the personal orientations and educational backgrounds of both leaders and how that informed their ideas about how women should be organised. As an Achimota trained teacher from a fairly wealthy family, who joined and worked with several international voluntary groups such as the YWCA, Red Cross Society, IAW, ACWW and most importantly having gained extensive exposure on how to organise women from

²³³ Adamafo, *By Nkrumah's Side*, 118.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Mr. Nathaniel Amarteifio, Personal Interview, Workers College, Accra. 1st April 2010.

²³⁶ Manuh, “Women and their Organisation,” 125.

her affiliations and numerous visits to the United Kingdom and the United States, Mrs Amarteifio had a western and elite perspective of herself and her organisation. Even if she did not express it outwardly, that seems to have been the perception about her within the circles of the GWL and the CPP as a whole.²³⁷ In contrast, Mrs. Kudjoe was very typical of the rank and file of the CPP. She was a standard seven graduate, trained as a seamstress and prior to going into full time politics, earned her living sewing padded covers to keep the contents of tea pots warm. There was bound to be disagreements and conflicts over any idea of merging the two leaders and their organisations.²³⁸ These differences in their personal and educational backgrounds also fuelled the conflict.

With mounting pressure particularly on the GOW, from political leaders including the president, Dr. Evelyn Amarteifio and Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe – together with six executive members of their organisations – signed the merger declaration that dissolved the identity of the organisations they led. The properties of both groups were subsequently checked by the Department of Social Welfare and handed to the council.²³⁹ The merger according to Miss Sophia Doku was “effected in the interest of national unity.”²⁴⁰ The National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW) was formally inaugurated on 10th September, 1960 by the President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah at the CPP national headquarters in Accra.²⁴¹ Addressing a gathering at the inauguration of the Council, Nkrumah stated:

In Ghana we have come to recognise how capable our women are One of the greatest ambitions was to see Ghanaian women in the front ranks of our national-

²³⁷ Ms. Lucy Anin, Personal Interview, West Legon. 11th June 2010.

²³⁸ Allman, “The Disappearing of Hanna Kudjoe,” 16.

²³⁹ “Women’s Groups Sign Merger,” *Daily Graphic*, September 15 1960. 3.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ “We Cannot Afford to Ignore Women,” *Daily Graphic*, September 12 1960. 4.

life. This could be done by giving them equal opportunities with the men and by helping them to the highest degree to develop the qualities inherent in them.²⁴²

The NCGW became an integral wing of the party charged with the organisation of women throughout the country. It was supposed to work closely with the other wings in the discharge of its duties and also, provide an avenue “for joint consultations and joint action on a national level in social, cultural, economic and political affairs of Ghanaian womanhood.”²⁴³

For the Party, the formation of the Council completed its restructuring and reorganisation process whereas for Mrs. Amarteifio and the GOW it was the beginning of a long period of political marginalisation. A careful examination of the formation of the NCGW reinforces Kathleen Staudts argument that “women face a political system whose agenda they neither control nor influence systematically.”²⁴⁴ With very little influence over the process of policy-making concerning women’s welfare and empowerment at the national level, there was no room for either Hanna Kudjoe or Dr. Amarteifio to challenge some of these decisions taken by the party concerning the organisation of women in the country. Essentially, the prevailing political climate had become unfriendly towards independent movements. In the new socialist state, the supremacy of the Party could not be challenged by anyone or group, under these circumstances the GOW had no choice but to agree to the arrangements since refusal to join the CPP put ones loyalty to the nation under great suspicion.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ghana, *An Official Handbook*, 1961. 104. Published by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The first batch was published in 1961 and it sought to provide a continuous record of development and progress in Ghana during the past year.

²⁴⁴ Kathleen Staudt, “Women’s Politics, The State and Capitalist Transformation in Africa,” in *Studies in Power and Class in Africa*, ed., Irving Markovitz, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). 205.

4.3 State Hegemony in the New Council: Structure and Membership

With the inauguration of the council, branches were opened in the various regions and an elaborate and rather rigid structure adopted at both national and regional levels to ensure its objective of reaching out to women throughout the country and coordinating the activities of the Council at all levels. The leadership structure of the Council at the national level was constituted as follows: a National Executive Committee (NEC), which comprised a National Chairman, National Treasurer and District secretaries. In all, the NEC was made up of twenty-two officers who were responsible for the management, administration and the formulation of policies and programs for the Council. The NEC was sometimes assisted by Special Committees, whose duty it was to investigate problems and plan other activities of the council that required detailed work. The tenure of office of the National Chair lasted for two years and her duties involved presiding on all annual and special conventions and at all NEC meetings. The National Treasurer also doubled as the administrative head of the National Council Secretariat. However, the NEC derived its overall authority from the Annual Delegates Convention, which was made up of representatives from the local or regional branches of the Council. It was at the convention that annual reports and plans were received and approved.²⁴⁵ This elaborate structure was also replicated at the regional and district levels. Apart from the Member of Parliament, there were regional organising secretaries and chairpersons appointed in each region. All of these were supposed to work very closely with representatives of the other integral wings.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Ghana, *An Official Handbook*, 1961. 104.

²⁴⁶ Some of the Regional Organising Secretaries were Mrs. Nancy Woode-Central Region, Mrs. Janet Boadi-Brong Ahafo Region, Miss H. Serwaa Anim -Ashanti Region, Mrs. Lucy Kpakpa Quartey-Greater Accra, Mrs. Agnes Tahiru-Upper Region, Mrs. Mary Adam-Northern Region, Mrs. Paulina Sernanu-Volta Region and Mrs. Susanna Halm-Western Region. See NRG 8/6/48. Ghana Women Council. "Delegates," 2-3.

Like the GOW and GLW, the Council had patrons who were selected from ‘distinguished personages of the public.’ At the time of its formation the Patrons of the Council were Madam Fathia Nkrumah, First Lady of Ghana, and Lady Akiwumi, who was president of the dissolved GOW and wife of the former speaker of the National Assembly. Mrs. Sophia Doku, was the first National Secretary; she was later succeeded by Mrs. Stella Abeka, and then Mrs. Margaret Martei. Mrs Martei held the position of National Secretary until the coup d’état of 1966.²⁴⁷ Other executives of the Council were Mrs. Ruth Botsio and Mrs. Nkumsah-trustees and former executives of the GWL, Lady Korsah and Mrs. T. A. Casely Hayford National Chair and Vice Chairperson respectively.²⁴⁸ A careful examination of the choice of leadership of the Council reveals that the majority of the leadership positions were offered to either women MPs or wives of leading party activists. Once again, Mrs. Kudjoe and Dr. Amarteifio were sidelined. In this way, the selection and appointment of the leadership of the council was intended more or less to phase out completely the influence of Mrs. Kudjoe and Dr. Amarteifio in the organisation of women. By placing the responsibility of organising women in the hands of MPs and Party loyalists, the party had created an atmosphere in which all recognised that their loyalties lay first and foremost with the Party and the person of Kwame Nkrumah. Thus addressing members of the Tamale Branch of the Council, Mrs. Susanna Al-Hassan urged them to “set good example in defending any action of the party and government.”²⁴⁹

Membership of the council, though not restricted to a certain class or ethnically identifiable group, mirrored that of the party and it is here that that influence of politics

²⁴⁷ Manuh, “Women and their Organisation,” 126.

²⁴⁸ “We Cannot Afford to Ignore Women,” *Daily Graphic*, September 12 1960. 4.

²⁴⁹ RAGT, NRG 8/6/48. “Monthly Progress Report, August 1963. NCGW, Northern Region, by Mrs. Mary Adam, Regional Organising Secretary.”

played out even more. The membership was divided into two categories: the Youth Section comprised of young women between the ages of 14 and 21, and Adult members, 21 years and above. In both categories especially with regards to the youth, ideological education was a key component of its activities. In a report on the Council in the Northern region, Mrs. Mary Adam, the Northern Regional organising secretary, intimated that a young group of fifty-three girls had been formed in the Kusawgu district, and stated “I have started them with party songs and literacy classes.” At the second annual meeting of the council for instance, delegates were advised to “cultivate the habit of reading objectively books written by Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah such as Guide to Party Action, the Dawn Broadcast, What I Mean by Positive Action, Biography of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and his occasional public and ceremonial speeches.”²⁵⁰ This, the leadership of the council believed would serve to remind members of their party ideology as well as improve their general knowledge.

Here the argument concerning the extension of the ideological reach of the party through the integration of voluntary organisations is given more clarity. The NCGW was supposed to be the medium through which the philosophy of the Party was extended to Ghanaian women. To make this possible courses and seminars in ideological training were organised for the leadership so as to continuously educate and update them on some of the decisions and principles of the party and most importantly ensure a smooth transmission of the philosophies of the Party to women in their various regions. These seminars were often held at the Kwame Nkrumah Institute at Winneba and were attended by all national executives, women members of parliament and one representative at the regional level. In an article on the NCGW written by Christine Oduro in the monthly magazine *The Ghanaian*, the writer described the essence of the seminars. She explained:

²⁵⁰ RAGT, NRG 8/6/48. “Correspondence from the Assistant National Secretary of the NCGW to all Regional Commissioners and Women MPs.” in the same document see “Report on the Second Annual National Delegates’ Conference of the National Council of Ghana Women,” 8-9.

Seminars and residential courses are run for members . . . to know about their civic rights in the development of the state. This is where the average Ghanaian woman plunged into the struggle for socialism for our children and husbands. With unity and determination, Ghanaian women are devoted to the struggle for socialism as a result of the tremendous work of organisation carried out by the Party which unites and guides the effort of the women in the council and in Ghana as a whole.²⁵¹

Lucy Anin in an interview also threw more light on the membership component of the NCGW. She recalled:

The council was made up of very professional and distinguished women such as Lady Korsah wife of the Chief Justice Sir Arku Korsah and Mrs. Margaret Martei. We had lawyers and our own legal team headed by Justice Annie Jiagge who offered the legal alternatives and educated members on some of the implications of the decisions we took concerning women.

The NCGW was not made up of only educated women. One category of women that the council did not play with was the market women. After every meeting, we held rallies in our various constituencies and explained to them some of the decisions that were taken. Anytime Nkrumah visited our meetings and rallies he met with them, sought their opinions and talked about some of the problems that they faced in their work. It was through such meetings that the decision was taken to establish day care and community centres in the markets to cater for the children of the women while they worked.

As already indicated, market women formed an essential component of the NCGW. These had been very faithful supporters of the CPP and Nkrumah from its inception and in order to sustain their loyalty to the party at a time when the CPP itself was growing very unpopular they were always made to feel a part of the party structure. In Apter's view, the market women were of such importance to the Council because of their command over the consumer goods distribution system all over the country. Their authority and enormous power lay in the fact that they could easily paralyse the major towns and cities by closing their markets.²⁵² With the inauguration of the Council, a

²⁵¹ Christine Oduro, "Women in a Socialist Ghana," *The Ghanaian*, March 1964, 16.

²⁵² Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, 345.

quasi leadership structure was established among them. Market women were registered and leaders elected to oversee the organisation of their fellows in the markets.²⁵³ By the end of 1962, over 60 constituencies had been inaugurated and about 206 branches opened. The membership of the council had also increased from about 6,565 in 1960 to about 124,143 by the end of 1962.²⁵⁴

Considering the fact that women's organisation had been subordinated to the authority of the state, the question that arises is; How effective was this new movement in advancing the interest and empowerment of Ghanaian women? Did the NCGW subordinate women's interest for the broader political goals and interests of the CPP?

4.4 The State and Women's Organisation: The Case of the NCGW

The above questions cannot be addressed adequately without an engagement with the broader issues of the relationship between the state and women's organisations. Scholars have often argued that the successful women's movement is that which has complete autonomy from the state.²⁵⁵ The advantage, according to Aili Mari Tripp, lies in the fact that women's organisations are able to expand their agenda to become a political force in the country when they are free from any interventions from the state. This position has been contested by Shireen Hassim who takes the view that women's organisations may make enormous gains by aligning themselves with other political parties.²⁵⁶ She cautions that a high degree of autonomy might "confine women to a political ghetto" in which they may not make the expected impact on influencing

²⁵³ RAGT, NRG 8/6/48. Ibid. Report from the Northern Regional Organising Secretary of the NCGW to the Regional Secretary of the CPP Tamale District. May 1962. 2.

²⁵⁴ RAGT, NRG 8/6/48. "Membership," 11.

²⁵⁵ See Aili Mari Tripp, *Women and Politics in Uganda* (Oxford: Fountain Publishers, 2000), 8.

²⁵⁶ Hassim, *Women's Organisations and Democracy in South Africa*, 9.

political outcomes to favour women.²⁵⁷ The case of the NCGW was quite unique. As already stated, in the context of the immediate postcolonial nation, Ghana's women's organisations were affected directly by events occurring within the external political environment. As such, when Nkrumah and the CPP decided to roll out their plans of making Ghana a one party state, it affected all sections of society including women's groups. The GOW and the GWL, both of which had operated with a certain level of autonomy, ceased to exist with the inauguration of the NCGW. The NCGW was basically a creation of the ruling CPP, responsible and dependent on it for direction. It is important to note here that the Council was treated just like any other wing of the Party. And Nkrumah's treatment of the integral wings, according to Ryan Selwyn, suggests that he had no intention of letting them dictate the pace and direction of policy changes.²⁵⁸ This had some implications for women's organisation and the fight for the advancement of women's interests in the country.

In the first place, unlike the GOW which developed its own plan of action and objectives independent of any interference from government, the Council was unable to do so since control and direction of its agenda did not lie with them as an independent body but with the Party. This meant that the Council could not push any agenda in the interests of Ghanaian women that were at odds with the priorities of the CPP government. As such, women's interest became subservient to the interests of the ruling party. In a period when the focus of the CPP government was on developing Ghana along socialist lines, the NCGW and indeed all the other integral wings were supposed to rally behind the banner of socialism as propagated by the party. For instance, during the second annual delegations conference, the National Secretary of the Council, Mrs. Margaret Martei related to members some of the achievements in the previous years.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Selwyn, "The Theory and Practice of African One Partyism," 151.

Apart from stressing their contribution to the cultural, social, political, industrial and the educational reconstruction of the country, she added above all that the council,

In co-operation, fraternal relationship and concerted effort, with the constituent units of our dynamic party successfully, propagated through our meetings, rallies, conferences and inaugurations throughout the length and breadth [*sic*] of the country, the laudable ideas and ideals of our great leader, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah in the building of a socialist state in Ghana known as Nkrumaism under the leadership and banner of our Party.²⁵⁹

In another report the writer stressed the contribution of the Council to the Socialist agenda of the Party.

With unity and determination, Ghanaian women are devoted to the struggle for socialism, as a result of the tremendous work of organisation carried out by the party which unites and guides the effort of women in the council and Ghana as a whole. With the party behind women's mobilized organisation, the building of a socialist society, Ghana is sure to enjoy the fruits of the struggle for socialism.²⁶⁰

Beyond Ghana, the executives of the Council were actively involved in the promotion of Nkrumah's concept of African unity and the creation of a political union among African states. In 1962 alone, executives of the council attended over ten conferences. Some of these included the Council of Women of African States held in Accra from 5th to 7th February 1962, the World without the Bomb, Accra Assembly; Mrs. S. Al-Hassan represented and read a paper on behalf of the Council and expressed the Council's concern over the state of world peace. Mrs. Margaret Martei led a delegation of 5 to the Conference of the Council of Women of the Union of African States from 14th to 17th June 1962 in Guinea. Miss Emilia Aryee also represented the council on the Preparatory Committee of the All-African Women's Conference in Mali. She later led a delegation of

²⁵⁹ RAGT, NRG 8/6/48. "Report on Second Annual National Delegates' Conference of the National Council Of Ghana Women Held at Accra on 3rd and 4th December, 1962. 2.

²⁶⁰ "National Council of Ghana Women in the March to Socialism," *The Ghanaian*, March 1964. 24.

three to the Constitutional Congress of All-African Women's Conference held in Dar-es-Salaam from 27th to 1st August 1962.²⁶¹ Addressing a gathering of undergraduates of the University of Ghana, Mrs. Martei said as a result of the activities of Council, Ghanaian women "were now proud to think and behave first as Africans and secondly as Ghanaians thus projecting the African personality."²⁶² A careful examination of the above shows that the CPP used the NCGW as an instrument for the realisation of the goals of the CPP government.

Another implication of being directly under the control of the party was that Council was unable to initiate new programs towards the advancement of women's welfare in the country. This was not due to the lack of initiative among members but as a result principally of the challenges that they faced. Three main areas seem to have been the major focus of the activities of the council and these had been initiated by the GOW and the GWL. These were the problem of nudity in certain parts of the country, the establishment of workers' canteens and day nurseries and the fight for reforms in marriage and inheritance laws. The Council worked primarily through committees established and often supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Some of these committees included the National Committee for Social Advancement, whose duties involved the organisation of campaigns against nudity and all other undesirable social practices throughout Ghana. Mrs. Margaret Martei and Mrs. Susanna Al-Hassan were the Council's representatives on the board. The committee, which was formed in August 1964, had made very little progress as at September 1965. Other committees through which the Council worked were the Committee on Establishment of Canteens

²⁶¹ NRG 8/6/48. "Conferences."

²⁶² "Our Women Council makes Big Progress," *Evening News*, Vol. IV. March 19, 1963. 7.

and the Advisory Committee on Day Care. The debate on reforms in marriage and family law was also pursued by Mrs. Susanna Al-Hassan with Cabinet.²⁶³

Even in continuing what had already been started, the Council faced enormous challenges in its efforts. The major challenge was with funding. Unlike the GOW, which had sourced funding from other partners and affiliations, the NCGW was totally dependent on the CPP for both material and financial support. The major complaint by executives at the second annual delegates' conference was the lack of finance and transport facilities to enable a smooth implementation of their activities. They complained that "the Party vans they were supposed to be using in their rounds were not always available" and as a result they experienced great hardships in carrying out their duties.²⁶⁴ In 1963, members of the Council in the Northern region began to put in place measures to help raise funds for its activities by cultivating co-operative gardens and using the proceeds for other projects.²⁶⁵

The Council also encountered some difficulties with its structure, especially at the regional and district level due mainly to the improper demarcation of roles between the regional organising secretaries and the women members of Parliament. At the second annual delegates' conference, one of the major concerns that representatives wanted addressed by the Party was the relationship between the duties of the Regional Organising Secretaries and the Women Members of Parliament. Essentially, the regional secretaries felt that their roles were being usurped by the MPs, an issue which always resulted in confusion and misunderstandings. The Executive Secretary of the Party

²⁶³ Mrs. Susanna Al-Hassan was first appointed Deputy Minister of Education in the latter parts of 1960. On February 1st 1965, she was appointed Minister of Social Welfare and Community Development. For more on her biography see Vietta, *Flagbearers of Ghana*, 121-125.

²⁶⁴ RAGT, NRG 8/6/48. Report on Second Annual National Delegates Conference. "Open Forum Discussion."

²⁶⁵ RAGT, NRG 8/6/48. Monthly Progress Report for June 1963. NCGW, Northern Region.

explained, arguing that although the regional secretaries were responsible for the activities of the council in their various regions, they should cooperate with the MPs. This problem was not limited to the NCGW. In fact Ryan Selwyn suggests that the disorganisation affected all sections of the party especially after the attempt on Nkrumah's life in 1962 and the subsequent replacement of those who had began the process of effective reorganisation.²⁶⁶ For the Council, the above problems were compounded by the fact that sometimes, members preferred to report problems of the Council directly to national executives of the party bypassing in the process the hierarchy of the Council's leadership established at the regional and national levels. For instance, the Tamale Women's section of the Party held a meeting at which they complained of feeling neglected and ignored by the leadership of the party in their district.²⁶⁷ Copies of the minutes were sent directly to the Regional Commissioner, District Commissioner, the Regional Secretary and Chairman of CPP in Tamale.²⁶⁸ The National Secretary of the Party, Mr. N. A. Welbeck, cautioned members that all matters affecting women generally should in the first instance be referred to the National Secretary of the Council who is the head of women Organisation in Ghana.²⁶⁹

Taking the position of the Council in the party structure and the challenges emanating thereof into consideration, the question still remains as to whether the Council advanced the interest of women or not. Dzodzi Tsikata and Mansa Prah both cite the lack of autonomy as the major challenge of the Council.²⁷⁰ Another weakness they identified

²⁶⁶ Selwyn, "The Theory and Practice of African One Partyism," 154-155.

²⁶⁷ RAGT, NRG 8/6/48. Minutes of Proceeding of Meeting held by the Women's Section of CPP Tamale at the Chairlady's residence on Monday 2nd July 1962.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ RAGT, NRG 8/6/48.

²⁷⁰ See Prah, "Chasing Illusions and Realising Visions," 27-40 and Tsikata, "Women's Political Organisations, 1951-85," 80.

was the negative attitudes to women in government circles. Takyiwah Manuh however goes a bit further to suggest that the leadership of the Council considered its political roles more important and was therefore not successful in advancing the interests of the majority of Ghanaian women. According to Manuh, issues such as the subordinate positions of women in the Ghanaian society and the expansion of economic opportunities for women in the rural areas were not addressed by the Council.

Despite the varying views expressed, this chapter suggests that it is inadequate to describe the decline in the influence of women's organisation after 1960 as a failure or success. In the first place, the very fact that Nkrumah and the CPP felt it necessary to incorporate women's organisations into a subordinate branch of the CPP state shows that the women's organisations had achieved a level of economic importance and political influence comparable to the other groups integrated into the party. By the second quarter of 1960, their accumulated accomplishments, demonstrated by the GOW success in organising and hosting the Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent, appeared to Nkrumah and the CPP as potential challenge to their power equivalent to other economically powerful bodies such as the Trades Union Congress and the Farmers Council. Again, the inability of the groups to merge as a result of their own differences indicates how successful they had been, since their emergence, in reaching out to a broad audience and the extent to which they had become national movements, rather than simply auxiliaries of elite groups.

It is also important to consider the circumstances surrounding the inauguration, tensions and challenges that the council faced as important illustrations of some of the characteristics of women's organisations in periods of political transitions instead of concentrating on their successes or failures.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored in detail, events leading to the inauguration of the NCGW. It has thrown light first and foremost on the political motivations behind the establishment of the Council and some of the controversies and implications it had for the GOW. Here the chapter established that although Nkrumah and the CPP professed to empower Ghanaian women, that was not their main aim. The overriding aim of the party was to control and influence all sectors of the country and consolidate the One-Party agenda of Nkrumah. The inauguration of the NCGW was a means to an end and not an end in itself. The end here had very little or nothing to do with a genuine commitment to empowering Ghanaian women. The process of negotiating for women's interests under these circumstances did not in any way change once the Council was established and neither was the task of the executives any easier once they were under the direct control of the Party. The emphasis on women's development that became popular after the declaration of the republic was therefore mere rhetoric.

Chapter Five

5.0 LEGACIES

It is important to note that the process of subordinating independent women's movements under the authority of a state controlled body was not limited to Ghana. In other parts of Africa, similar steps were taken by the respective governments during the consolidation of their one-party state agenda. In Tanzania, for instance, the *Umoja Wa Wanawake Wa Tanzania* (UWT) was inaugurated in 1962, after the Constitutional Congress of the All-African Women's Conference, to unite all existing women's groups under an umbrella organisation.²⁷¹ Like the NCGW, it was tasked to seek the 'emancipation and rehabilitation of women' to enable them participate in all aspects of national development. This organisation according to Geiger was not in any way a natural development of the TANU's women's activism "nor a product of their imagining."²⁷² Likewise, in Sierra Leone, women leaders "experienced a rude awakening" after independence.²⁷³ Male leaders according to Denzer did not honour their election promises and commitments to their female activists who had been at the forefront of the political process.²⁷⁴

This apparent marginalisation of women from politics in the post colonial state has been debated by many scholars. The arguments have often been over the contrast in women's activism in the period of nationalist mobilisation, when women played frontal roles in the anti-colonial struggle and were often urged to canvass votes for the various political parties, and in the post-colonial state when all of a sudden women became ". . .

²⁷¹ Geiger, *TANU Women*, 189-201.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Denzer, "Women in Freetown Politics," 451.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

targets and not actors and initiators in development.”²⁷⁵ As explained by Swantz, “women’s roles in political mobilization preceded that of mobilising them for development. In the efforts to get women’s votes they were not regarded as ‘ignorant’. Only after independence did the problem of how to organise women arise.”²⁷⁶

In effect, women’s continuous participation in politics, their ability to form and lead both political and independent interest groups was increasingly determined and redefined by the state in the immediate postcolonial context. And where the state failed to consolidate its authority, such movements also collapsed alongside as was the case with the NCGW. What happened to the Council and women’s organisations after the overthrow of Nkrumah and how did the subsequent political situation affect women’s modes of organisation. This final chapter explores events after the 1966 Coup d’état that resulted in the overthrow of the CPP government and its legacies on women’s activism in Ghana. It further summarises some of the key issues that have been addressed in the research by way of conclusion.

5.1 The 1966 Coup and Its Aftermath

After the attack on Nkrumah’s life in 1962, the party and its integral wings were in a state of complete disorganisation. The Party’s inability to remain united and confront these challenges led to its eventual collapse in a coup on February 24 1966. Many officials including ministers, district commissioners and Members of Parliament of the former CPP government found themselves before the numerous Commissions of Enquiry

²⁷⁵ Marja-Liisa Swantz, *Women in Development: A Creative Role Denied?* (London: C. Hurst and Company, 1985), 159.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

set up by the new military government, the National Liberation Council.²⁷⁷ All the wings of the CPP were dissolved and their leaders banned from holding office or being elected into any public office under the Elections and Public Offices Disqualification Decree, 1969 and the Political Parties (Amendment) Decree.²⁷⁸ Due to the fact that the mass women's organisation which existed at the time, the NCGW, had been initiated and inaugurated by Nkrumah, the organisation suffered the same fate as the other sections of the party and was hence disbanded. Describing the ordeal of some of the women during the coup, Lucy Anin retorted,

All the women party functionaries were imprisoned, including the fish mongers in Kumasi. Many of the functionaries were lucky to have been released soon but some of the MPs and District Commissioners were in prison for as long as two years.' On top of that they disqualified us from voting for ten years by an NLC Decree.²⁷⁹

This basically marked the collapse of the NCGW.

5.2 Women's Organisation Beyond 1966

The Coup ushered in a new political atmosphere in the country, one that was filled with tension especially after the abortive coup of 1967.²⁸⁰ This notwithstanding, it also provided a fertile ground for the emergence of several independent women's pressure groups. Examples were the Association of Women Civil Servants (AWCS) and

²⁷⁷ Lucy Anin, Personal Interview, West Legon, 11th June 2010. Many of them were accused and imprisoned for embezzlement of government funds. One of such commissions of enquiry was the Jiagge Commission, which was appointed under the Commissions of Enquiry Act 1964 (Act 250) and the NLC (Investigation and forfeiture of assets) Decree, 1966, NLCD. 72 to Inquire Into the Assets of Specified Persons.

²⁷⁸ These documents basically entail a list of positions and offices from which members of the CPP were banned.

²⁷⁹ Lucy Anin, Personal Interview, West Legon, 11th June 2010.

²⁸⁰ This was led by Lt. Samuel Arthur. He was however not successful and was sentenced to death. For more on the backgrounds of the leadership of the NLC and events after the Coup see Vieta, *The Flagbearers of Ghana*, 134-152.

the Committee on the Status of Women.²⁸¹ The main aim of the AWCS for instance, was to champion the cause for the elimination of irregularities in the working conditions of women and to fight for more leadership positions for women in the Civil Service.²⁸² The Committee on the Status of Women also sought to remind the NLC government about Ghana's commitment to the provisions under the United Nation's Commission on the Status of Women and to lobby the government for improvements in the living conditions of Ghanaian women in all sectors of national life. Although many of these associations had a very short lifespan, their emergence underscores a clear attempt to ensure that women's issues remained a paramount concern of the new government.

By March 1969, Mrs. Amarteifio had also begun efforts towards reviving her organisation, the Ghana Organisation of Women (GOW), which had been inactive since the inauguration of the NCGW in 1960. The organisation was formally inaugurated on the 9th of August 1969 and was named the Ghana Assembly of Women (GAW). Added to its aims and objectives were to co-ordinate women's work regardless of race, colour and creed for the promotion of their common interests, to provide a common meeting ground for the exchange of information on matters of interest to the women's organisations and to afford facilities for co-operation between women's organisations.²⁸³

Unlike the GOW, Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe could not revive the GWL most probably due to her own political history and her organisations politicised nature. Like many other CPP front liners, Kudjoe was not spared in the anti-CPP sentiments of the time. In December 1970, as reported by the *Daily Graphic*, Kudjoe was found guilty of

²⁸¹ Private Archives of GAW. Mrs. Amarteifio, "Talk to Wives of Diplomats on Women's Organisation in Ghana," *n.d.*

²⁸² Private Archives GAW. Minutes of the first Meeting of the Association of Women Civil Servants held at the Regional Education Office. Wednesday 27th April, 1966.

²⁸³ Private Archives of Mrs. Amarteifio, "Constitution and Rules of National Federation of Ghana Women," Clause Two-Aims and Objectives.

possessing diamonds without lawful authority. She was fined NC40 or in default, serve a three month prison term with hard labour. Fortunately, in 1971 she won an appeal against the sentence. Kudjoe like many other women leaders of the Council basically kept a low profile in the subsequent years although she continued her work in the north.²⁸⁴ The GAW on the other hand continued to work in collaboration with other women's groups as the central women's organisation in Ghana.²⁸⁵ By 1976, it had about 25 affiliates across the country. The organisation played a key role in the events which eventually led to the establishment of the National Council on Women and Development in 1975.²⁸⁶

Beyond the GAW and the other professional women's groups that emerged, there was not much in terms of women's political activism or organisations. Indeed the period 1966 to 1981 has been described by many scholars as the apolitical phase with respect to women's organisations. The expectation that the progression towards the consolidation of independence and the nurturing of democracy, according to Allah-Mensah, would see a corresponding progression in the number of women in politics and public offices did not materialise as a result of democratic disruptions and the subsequent ushering in of successive and intermittent coup d'états.²⁸⁷ The only political women's groups that existed were the women's sections of the various political parties, for example the Progress Women of the Progress Party. The absence of political women's groups according to Tsikata "was a reflection of the state of paralysis that characterised mass political activity during the 1966-81 periods."²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ D.A Okine, "Hanna Kudjoe Wins Appeal," June 1, 1971. 3. Allman, "The Disappearing of Hanna Kudjoe," 18.

²⁸⁵ Tsikata, "Women's Political Organisation," 80.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Allah Mensah, *Women in Politics and Public Life*, 15.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 81.

5.3 Rewriting Women into Ghanaian History, 1950-1966

Women have been actively involved in the major events of Ghanaian history. However, many of their accomplishments have not received the needed attention from historians. As a result, women have been written out of history. As expressed by Allman, this disappearance or apparent erasure of women from the historical records, must force historians to reflect critically about the fate of women, especially women nationalist activists in the context of the consolidation and centralisation of state power in the post colonial era.²⁸⁹ A task which goes beyond merely identifying that ‘women also contributed to the national liberation struggle’ to a more comprehensive understanding of the forms in which the contributions took, how central these were not necessarily for the various political groups but for women as actors in a political process and changes or continuities in women’s activism in the post-colonial state. It is with the above intention that this research was undertaken arguing basically that the women’s organisations contributed substantively to political activism in support of national independence while, at the same time, working effectively to advance women’s interests.

The study began with one clear question: how were the women’s organisations able to manipulate and negotiate the changing political situation to advance their agenda for the empowerment of Ghanaian women? It is very important to note here that the study does not in any way claim that the women’s groups which emerged were the first in the Gold Coast. The introductory chapter established the long history of women’s organisations and their transformations over time in the different epochs of the country’s history. Perhaps, what makes the organisations under study significant is the historical context within which they emerged and how they shaped and were shaped by that context. This thesis therefore started off by exploring women’s political activism in the

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 31.

nationalist struggles for independence as a background to understanding the context within which the organisations emerged and worked.

Chapter two “Women and the Making of an Independent Ghana, 1950-1957,” investigated how Ghanaian women conceptualised independence and how this further informed their political and social engagements. In order to give more clarity to the above point, a detailed examination of the CPP women’s wing and the Federation of Gold Coast Women was undertaken. Unlike the CPP women’s wing or women’s sections of the various political parties that emerged, the FGCW was independent of any political organisation and tried constantly to maintain its autonomy. However, to sustain its existence and gain access to resources, the FGCW developed an alliance with the CPP, a relationship referred to as a politics of alliance by scholars of women’s movements. This could be seen in the numerous correspondences between the organisation and the Prime Minister, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, officials of the Department of Social Welfare, Members of Parliament and other government agencies. Despite differences in their social and political objectives, both organisations and their leadership contributed to mobilising women of different economic backgrounds in support of independence and also laid the foundation for building an influential women’s movement in the country after independence. These became essential vehicles through which women’s interests and concerns were addressed.

Having gathered the needed momentum in the pre-independence years, the women's organisations moved to consolidate their positions within the new nation. The attainment of independence in 1957 therefore marked a turning point in the history of the FGCW. A very significant step in this direction was a change in name from the FGCW to the National Federation of Ghana Women (NFGW), a move which demonstrated the preparedness of the NFGW and its leadership to take advantage of new opportunities

which the new Ghana would provide. This was not limited only to the NFGW, as women front liners of the CPP women's wing led by Mrs. Hanna Kudjoe, organised the AAWL. While both the NFGW and the AAWL generally supported the government's agenda for development, modernisation and Pan-Africanism they also exhibited the capacity for independent action and influence. The Anti-nudity campaigns launched by the AAWL, the campaign for reforms in marriage and inheritance, their international ties and affiliations and most importantly, the hosting of the Conference of Women of Africa and African Descent by the Federation showed the organisation's growing capacity and influence even beyond the boundaries of Ghana. Aside these social activities, the AAWL and NFGW were very vocal on major political issues, one of which was the French Atomic Bomb Tests in the Sahara. Within this short space of time, that is, 1957-1960 the organisations especially the NFGW underwent significant transformations regarding their interests and structure. By the end of 1960, the organisations had initiated several projects towards the enhancement of the positions of women in Ghana. Were the NFGW and the AAWL able to sustain their momentum after 1960?

To answer the above question chapter four explored some of the changes in the political environment in Ghana after 1960 and how these affected both the NFGW which had been renamed the Ghana Organisation of Women (GOW) and AAWL which was also renamed the Ghana Women's League (GWL). It provided a detailed account of the CPP government's effort to restrict the growing influences and independence of both organisations and their leadership by incorporating women's groups into a single organisation, the National Council of Ghana Women (NCGW) under the control of the Party. This era, 1960-1966 saw a decline in the influence of women's groups in the country. Weakened by their own differences, both the leadership of the GWL and the GOW were unable to fight against government proposals. Chapter four also argued for

the need to consider some of the practical difficulties that accompanied the subordination of women's organisations under the control of government and to see these difficulties as some of the characteristics of women's organisations during periods of political transitions. In the case of the NCGW these included financial and material difficulties and also the lack of attention from government on issues which affected women. Otherwise, this research argues that the mere fact that women's organisations were targeted among groups such as the Trade Union, National Co-operatives and Farmers Union were clear indications that the organisations had been successful in building a kind of reputation for themselves as a possible force in the government's agenda of making Ghana a One-Party State.

In sum this thesis has not merely given greater historiographical attention to women's roles, it has called for an examination of the extent of their accomplishment and their significance for Ghanaian history during this period of political transition. These organisations were an important component in the forging of the new nation and as this thesis demonstrated, they ably marshalled the political and social conditions to effectively negotiate aspects of their own empowerment.

This becomes even more crucial considering the fact that the issues which they engaged with, especially the fight for the standardisation of customary law marriage, continued to spark debates among both government officials and the general public after the first republic.²⁹⁰ Even though the anti-nudity campaigns were not prioritised by the military regimes, it does not belittle the fact that "Kudjoe and those who worked closely

²⁹⁰ This resulted in the passing of the Customary Marriage And Divorce (Registration) Law, popularly referred to as the P.N.D.C.L. 112 of 1985. The provisions of this law made for the registration of customary marriage and the registration of customary divorce. See Government of Ghana, PNDC Laws 102-151, 1985. 86. Even though it may be misleading to conclude that it was all due to efforts of the GOW, it is important to recognise that the organisation laid the foundation for others to follow and build on.

with her throughout the Nkrumah period, did an extraordinary job of asserting the centrality of women's issues to the new national project."²⁹¹

²⁹¹ Allman, "Let Your Fashion be in Line with our Ghanaian Costume," 156.

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