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University of Ottawa  
**Faculty of Social Science**  
(Department of Sociology)

**DEGREES OF AUTONOMY OF  
RURAL WOMEN IN GHANA'S UPPER EAST**

by

**E. Louise YAZDANI**

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for a  
Master's of Arts in Sociology

**Director: Professor Ann Denis**



University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, May 19, 1993  
E. Louise Yazdani, Ottawa, Canada, 1993



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***DEDICATION***

To the people of Tilli and environs  
who never fail to open their hearts and homes  
with grace and kindness to the stranger and traveller.

As the years pass  
And life exacts its measure  
Still the faces old and young  
Rise before me  
And the warmth of the welcome  
quickens the inmost reaches of my heart,  
and remains.

your Sumasim

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## DEGREES OF AUTONOMY OF RURAL WOMEN IN GHANA'S UPPER NORTHEAST

### ABSTRACT

Using literature, official documents, interviews, and participant observation, several dimensions of rural women's autonomy in the Tilli area of Ghana's Upper East Region were studied. The three hypotheses tested were:

1. Women have been and remain rural minors.
2. Paradoxically however, they are expected to exercise considerable autonomy in specific areas. Furthermore, they demonstrate a number of individual and collective strategies which enable them to exert their will in other areas in spite of social constraints.
3. The effects of encroaching capitalism on northern women's autonomy have not been uniform.

Communities in this area differ considerably from those in southern Ghana, and have been described in the literature as organized along patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal lines. The research demonstrated that, indeed, women were rural minors, although their particular life circumstances were also influenced by factors such as ethnicity, social strata, age, marital status, religion, and individual personality. Certain categories of women - those pregnant or breast-feeding, the handicapped, the elderly, widows and divorcees, ethnic minority women, and women resident in the subvillages - were found to be particularly disadvantaged. Yet women were far from powerless overall, nor were they apathetic or retiring.

The findings of the research both enrich the database available to development planners, policy makers, project administrators and service providers, and suggest directions for future research. At the same time, they challenge certain assumptions and generalizations about Ghanaian and African women found in both feminist and development literature.

## DEGREES OF AUTONOMY OF RURAL WOMEN IN GHANA'S UPPER NORTHEAST

### INTRODUCTION

To the casual observer, rural women living along the southern fringes of the western Sahel lead uncomplicated lives. Up with the first rays of the sun to fetch water, they then set out for distant fields and marketplaces. Some return mid or late morning to bathe, feed themselves and their children, and sweep the compounds, before beginning their afternoon's work. Others return only at dusk, carrying heavy loads of wood, water, or market goods, to begin the preparation of the evening meal.

Yet this picture of the daily toil of village women masks a complex reality. Women farm for themselves, their husbands, and sometimes even as day labourers for neighbours. They produce craft items, gather wild foodstuffs and building materials, process foods and medicines, make extended visits to their father's compounds, pound the floors of new rooms, marry and divorce...

An understanding of the many facets of women's lives and a deeper appreciation of the complexity of social relations underlying them is fundamental to the work of project planners and administrators. Given that the majority of Northerners have not received even a basic education, and speak only local languages, government and NGO's have been forced to staff their projects with outsiders, whether expatriates or southern Ghanaians. Hence, to a great extent, certain northern programmes have been implemented in an information vacuum. In addition, as these programmes have continued along with staffers scurrying just to stay one step ahead of infectious disease outbreaks, supply shortages, drought and crop failure, they have found little time to improve their knowledge of the area by conducting basic research, and instead, continue to operate on "guesstimates" and generalities. Hence, even some large, well-funded programmes have been "out of sync" with local realities, have changed directions periodically, and are still developing. Without a much better understanding of the context in which programmes are put in place, therefore, situations like the following are bound to recur:

- pedal-powered rice threshers introduced into the north for women's domestic use were taken over by men for income-generation (Personal Communication, Technology Consultancy Center staffer, U.S.T. Kumasi 1978);
- introduced food processing equipment resulted in products which were unacceptable in colour and texture for local markets (Personal Communication, CUSO Ottawa, 1991);
- technologies requiring women to take certain postures offended local ideas of propriety (Stevens and Date-Bah 1984 : 19).

To understand how such situations occur requires an examination of the actual conditions of women's existence - in particular, the degree to which women control their own lives and are controlled by others. For example, under what conditions do women work; why; has the range of tasks increased in response to encroaching capitalism and male outmigration? For which women are the constraints of daily life most rigid? What evidence is there of women's independence, suppression, submission and rebellion? Who imposes what sanctions on whom for what behaviours? These questions, and many more, were answered by the research.

Using Blumberg's "Towards a Feminist Theory of Development" (Blumberg, 1989) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis' "Contextualizing Feminism - Gender, Ethnic and Class Divisions" (1983), the following research hypotheses were developed and tested:

1. Women have been and remain rural minors.
2. Paradoxically however, they are expected to exercise considerable autonomy in specific areas. Furthermore, they demonstrate a number of individual and collective strategies which enable them to exert their will in other areas in spite of social constraints.
3. The effects of encroaching capitalism on northern women's autonomy have not been uniform.

A literature review, official documents, interviews, and participant observation were used to generate richly detailed accounts of the daily lives, views and experiences of rural women in a well-defined area of Ghana's Upper East Region (the Tilli area). The results are presented here in six chapters. The first provides background about the area, based on a review of empirical literature and five researcher visits to the area over a period

of eighteen years. The second deals with the theoretical framework and the third with the methodology of the research. The fourth presents the results of the fieldwork, the fifth, a detailed analysis of the data, and the sixth, a summary and conclusions. In addition, there are several appendices. Appendix A consists of maps of Ghana, the Upper East Region and the Tilli area; Appendix B is an artist's drawing of a small compound; Appendix C consists of examples of the original interview schedules, information sheets, consent forms, and a brief description of what was intended to be covered by Time Budget Studies and Participant Observation; Appendix D is a five compound sampling of rates of outmigration from Tilli and Tarrakom; Appendix E provides background information about the interviewees; and Appendix F gives some examples of the cost of living in the Tilli area. The final two Appendices, G and H, consist of an outline of field activities and questions for future research.

The material in this thesis enriches the database available to development planners, policy makers, project administrators and service providers; allows the identification of directions for future research; and challenges certain assumptions and generalizations about Ghanaian and African women found in both feminist and development literature.

## CHAPTER 1: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF NORTHERN GHANA

According to criteria outlined by Bernier (1989), northern Ghana cannot technically be considered part of the Sahel because annual rainfall generally exceeds 600mm<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, although area Peoples<sup>2</sup> have more in common culturally and linguistically with Peoples of the Sahelian nation to the north, Burkina Faso, than they do with southern Ghanaians, they do not appear in literature on the Sahel Region. Because they are over 540 km. from Kumasi, the heart of the politically and economically important Ashanti nation, and over 700 km. from the Ghanaian capital, Accra, and the sea coast, they have been largely ignored in current and colonial literature on Ghana as well. Given this situation, the information in this section has two sources: empirical literature, and researcher familiarity with the area, updated after the 1992 field trip.

### A. The Brief History of Northern Ghana and its People

Separated from southern Ghana by waters backed up behind the Akosombo dam, the north is also separated by culture, climate and history. North of the Volta River crossings of Yeji and Yapei (See Map1, Appendix A), the lands become quickly drier and vegetation more sparse. Southern cocoa plantations are replaced by farms of yam and, farther north, millet. Flora and fauna of the tropical rainforest give way to those of Guinean savannah woodland. Even the major parasites that afflict the animal and human populations are different. All nature responds to the annual cycles of rain and drought.

Some older maps of Ghana still in use in the 1970's did not show the regional capital, Bolgatanga, but showed Tilli. One can only speculate about past glories that may have given the village prominence. A previous Tilli Naaba (territorial chief), Awellinga<sup>3</sup>, who died in 1986, had witnessed the passage of the first British District Commissioner through the north east of Ghana (possibly a Captain Williams<sup>4</sup>) when he was a youth around the turn of the century. Nothing about the area recorded before that time is readily available. Thus the deaths of this stately personage and his contemporaries mean that much of the history of his People will remain forever shrouded in mystery. Colonel Rattray's sixty year old study of the area (1932) is therefore an invaluable source of information in spite the paternalism that reveals itself in interpretive passages.

Studies of Ghanaian languages, traditional religion and social organization demonstrate that northern and southern Peoples share little in common. However, those of the Northern, Upper West and Upper East Regions often claim to be related through their ruling houses (Rattray 1932). Most presently occupy fairly specific territories, except such Peoples as the seminomadic Fulani, who are spread all along the southern fringes of the Sahel from East to West Africa.

Armed with guns received in trade with Europeans, southern Peoples took slaves from the north during the 150 years before the British penetration of Ghana after the defeat of the Ashantehene in 1901 (Rattray 1932). The Gonja and Dagomba - themselves northern Peoples - had become tribute payers, mostly in slaves, to the Ashantis in the 18th century, and thereafter raided the more northerly Peoples on a regular basis. A Tilli informant stated that even one Kusassi outlaw, Akpana from Tilli, was involved in the capture and sale of his own People. The constant raiding and war throughout the north perhaps explains the band of low population in the Northern Region noted by Ladouceur (Harkness 1983 : 35). Until recently, the very structure of northern dwellings bespoke this turbulent history. Mirroring the walled towns of medieval Europe and feudal Iran, northern households presented a solid wall to the outside, broken by only one common entrance which was carefully sealed up at night.

Historically, not all raiding was tied to the slave trade. Harkness identified two groupings of Peoples, based on their administrative structures: those with centralized states and kingship, and those that she termed segmentary and stateless (Harkness 1983 : 36). The centralized states often subjugated the others. The Kusassi People of the Upper Region, for example, were a "slave" tribe to the Mamprussis, responsible for supplying slaves and certain goods such as basketry and leatherwork as tribute, in spite of similarities between the two in language, religion and culture generally. This relationship of subservience was preserved in modified form right up until the bloody Bawku riots in 1986, when the Mamprussi Naaba (territorial chief) at Bawku finally lost his position as the paramount chief of both Kusassis and Mamprussis in the region (Personal Communications 1975-1977,1992).

Like their "cousins", the Mamprussi, the Mossi of present-day Burkina Faso had also been invaders into their present territory (Rattray 1932:457). Perhaps because of this former might, therefore, the Mossi in Bawku in the 1970's were viewed with some unease. However, they reportedly did not become involved in the Kusassi/Mamprussi riots of

1986; hence those migrating to Tilli to avoid these clashes were received into the community and remain there still (Personal Communication 1992).

The village of Tilli lies near the Red Volta River, slightly west of the midway point between Bolgatanga and Bawku, and 15 Kilometers south of the Burkina Faso border (See Maps 2 and 3 in Appendix A). The majority People are Kusassi and speak Kusaal, a language belonging to the Mole language family (Rattray 1932 : 1). A few Frafra, Mossi, and Busanga People also live in the village, and a group of Fulani live on the other side of the Tilli farms (because of their cattle, which need to be near the river for water and grazing). These other Peoples communicate with Kusassi People either in English or in Kusaal.

## **B. Leadership and Political Organization**

In this area, chieftaincies - as conceived by Westerners - were not the rule. Instead, "Tenedan" ("priest-kings" or land chiefs) oversaw land distribution, conducted sacrifices on behalf of the community and advised in disputes (Rattray 1932 : 255-7). Their authority was spiritual, although they were not necessarily "soothsayers" (Personal Communication 1992). These Tenedan' were exclusively male among the Kusassi according to Rattray (1932: 379). At present, Tilli still has a male Tenedan', but the most visible functionaries are the male territorial chief (Naaba) and his elders, who exercise political authority. Harkness noted that in colonial times, British officials appointed Naaba to communities that previously had none (Harkness 1983 : 37). However, oral histories suggest that this was not the case in Tilli, because the institution of chieftancy predated occupation (Personal Communication 1992). The British did, however, inadvertently upset the line of succession in Tilli early in this century (Personal Communication 1992).

Neither Tenedan' (Rattray 1932 : 255-6) nor territorial chiefs directly inherit their positions in theory or in practice. For one thing, more than one individual may present himself as a candidate for a "Skin" (throne). Secondly, the government has begun intervening in the selection process by insisting that new Naaba be literate (Personal Communication 1992). Thirdly, some "Skins", such as the one at Nangodi, can still be purchased (Personal Communication 1992), as Rattray had noted six decades earlier (1932 : 259). And finally, subchiefs, or "headmen" are selected by higher ranking Naaba and answer to them (for example, the Tilli Naaba appoints the Tarrakom headman) .

Once in power, the Naaba does not exercise absolute and arbitrary authority, but makes major decisions in consultation with the Tenedan' and village elders (Rattray 1932 :

257). Yet his power and authority may be increasing: regular meetings of area chiefs are held at the Bolgatanga Regional House of Chiefs, and these consultations between Naabas and government officials give Naabas a visibility and level of political importance they did not historically possess. The outward ceremonial displays of the present Tilli court - uncommon in the later days of Awellinga's reign - and the Naaba's personal interest in community events and activities are further indications that the institution of chieftancy is in transition, and warrants study.

No mention was made in the literature of women functionaries. However, a linguistics expert, a Dr. Tony Nadon of the Institute of Linguistics resident at Gbeduuri in the Northern Region in 1978, explained the office of "magaziiya" in the following way: "In Nkrumah's time, wealthy powerful women who supported the government were given the title "Magaziiya", or "head of the women" (Gamble 1978 : Appendix V).

At the level of the compound, landlords<sup>5</sup> still regulate religious activities, household security, marriages, the distribution of basic foodstuffs, and the sale of communally-produced cash crops and livestock (Personal Communication 1992). They no longer control all labour: adults can now go to their own fields until their landlords summon them back to work on the latter's properties. According to Hay and Stichter (1984 : 4), landlords also allocate land and distribute seed to other adults in their compounds, including the women.

### **C. The Economic System and Infrastructure Development in this Century**

Historically, extensive trade routes existed in the area north of present-day Ghana. As a result, the cowry was the currency used in the Tilli area in pre-colonial times (Personal Communication 1975). According to Boutillier et al. (1977), cowries were convertible to gold.

To the British during their six decade occupation of the Gold Coast<sup>6</sup>, the Northern Territories were of little importance or interest. According to Harkness (Harkness 1983 : 20), the policy of preserving traditional societies in this area meant that little attempt was made at development. Perhaps the colonial administrators had seen little economic advantage in attempting plantation farming in an arid region over 700 Kilometers from the coast. Expatriate businessmen also showed no interest in developing northern exports, such as cotton, shea butter, groundnuts and cattle (Harkness 1983 : 40-41). Thus the north entered Pax Britannica, but remained relatively isolated from the 20th century capitalist activity (Harkness 1983 : 42).

Life was certainly not undisturbed, however. From both the Voltaique and Ghanaian sides of the northern border, the French and British took men by force to work the southern plantations. By 1917, the British were rounding up 15,000 men a year (Harkness 1983 : 41). Those taken south became dependent on cash for food, lodging and other goods, while those remaining in the north required cash to pay a cattle tax imposed by the colonial administration. Over time, forced labour became unnecessary, as people's need for cash had already established the pattern of Northerners migrating south for wage employment. According to Harkness (1983 : 33) this situation has since been perpetuated by successive Ghanaian governments.

Since Ghanaian independence in 1957, the nation's economy has remained dependent primarily on southern cocoa, timber and minerals (Harkness 1983 : 46), although there are rumours in the north and south that large sums of drug money are also circulating nationally and internationally. In the north, changes have not been dramatic. Large scale dry-land rice farming in the 1970's was not commercially successful, though small producers continue to make a considerable contribution to the domestic market. Yams, meat, hides, shea nuts and Bolga baskets are still the major products moving southward. However, the north's most important export continues to be cheap, largely male labour.

Although transport costs have been a perennial barrier to this movement of produce and people between the north and south, a new barrier has been added: for at least the last five years, the highway and bridges between Tamale and Bolgatanga have been in a state of advanced disrepair, reportedly because of a dispute between the government and a foreign contractor. The condition of this road exacts a tremendous toll on people, livestock and vehicles - including the fleet of new State Transport buses.

In terms of infrastructure and services, the north continued to lag far behind the south after independence. In the 1970's, for example, only Tamale, Bolgatanga, Bawku and perhaps Wa had piped water and electricity: the hydro line from Akosombo Dam has only been run north to Bawku within the last five years. Agricultural stations tended to limit their training for women to such traditional skills as sewing, gardening, and food processing and preparation. Hospitals existed only in Bolga, Bawku and possibly Wa.

Primary schools were numerous enough, but teachers frequently neglected their unsupervised rural posts and student attendance was poor. Some parents resisted sending their children to school, not wanting to lose child labour on the farms and fearing laziness

and arrogance among the girls (Harkness 1983 : 65). While nearly 20% of Ghana's population resided in the Northern and Upper Regions, education statistics for 1972-73 showed a primary and middle school enrollment of only 6% of the national total (with about 1/3 of these being girls), taught by only 7% of the nation's primary and middle school teachers. For those few students who completed their Primary education, there existed only five or six co-educational residential secondary schools in the whole of the Upper Region (Gamble 1978 : Appendix A).

#### **D. The Special Situation of Women in the Southwestern Sahel/Northern Ghana**

Among the many northern patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal Peoples, women's status has been difficult to grasp. This is in part because the literature suffers to some extent from generalizations and distortions. First of all, the Peoples of any particular area remain almost invisible, hidden behind generalizations. Texts such as "**African Feminism: A Worldwide Perspective**" (Steady 1987) and "**The Emancipation of Women: An African Perspective**" (Dolphyne 1991) refer extensively to "African women" throughout, an approach which masks the tremendous diversity among African Peoples, and the extent and rate of social change. The saving grace of the latter text is that the author's assertions arise from her familiarity with a number of Peoples in several nations. Hence her views of social realities are richly presented. Nonetheless, the ideas in such texts, including those about gender relations, must be taken as somewhat speculative because they are not always sufficiently grounded. For example, unlike Savané (1986), who notes that women in Burkina Faso were formerly excluded from cereal production, many authors refer to "the primacy of [African] women in food crop cultivation" (Nelson 1981 : 7; Bryson 1981 : 30), while failing to recognize that a considerable number of societies excluded women from cereal production. Secondly, some authors, including Western feminists, appear to make pronouncements on whole social orders by looking at limited numbers of indicators of women's autonomy or suppression, without acknowledging the complexity of social relationships. Dolphyne's book is in good part a response to the bitter exchanges between Western feminists and African women representatives at the 1980 Copenhagen mid-Decade of Women Conference. Thirdly, some analyses of the origins of women's autonomy or suppression may be more illustrative of author politics than of reality. For example, enough Western feminist authors display a sufficient degree of ignorance towards non-Western, non-white realities to provoke broad statements about the "racism of the white feminist movement" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983 : 62). In reaction to the oppression, silencing, ethnocentrism, paternalism, and even overt racism in many works, feminist and otherwise,

some authors reject existing feminist theory too quickly, preferring to ignore the diversity of feminist thought.

A significant number of authors question to a lesser or greater extent the idea of universal patriarchy (Steady 1987 : 3), by emphasizing women's rights to certain care and services (Harkness 1983 : 57); the influence and respect they may acquire with advancing age (Labrecque 1992 : 16; Steady 1987 : 6; and Stamp 1989 : 79); the importance of indigenous women's organizations (Stamp 1989 : 71); and the political positions open to women (Steady 1987 : 6). Gender roles may be seen as complementary. For example, Filomina Steady stresses the cooperative nature of African agricultural production, and suggests that there exists a parallel division of labour rather than a hierarchical one (Steady 1987). Stamp, Harkness and Steady all suggest that the "collaborative interdependence" between the sexes has, however, been upset by capitalism (Stamp 1989 : 23; Harkness 1983 : 19, and Steady 1987 : 11-13). Of the three authors, Steady's critique is the harshest; she states that the labour of Black women in general underlies the international capitalist economic order (Steady 1987 : 3-4).

Steady's ideas are, however, challenged by other authors. Sudarkasa, for example, sees the parallel domains of men and women as hierarchical (Sudarkasa 1987 : 28). Others point out that while women are in large part responsible for feeding their families (Tadesse 1984 : 12; Harkness 1983 : 165; and Sen and Grown 1987 : 57), they receive little in the way of education and inputs from agriculture extension agents (Tadesse 1984 : 12); are dispossessed by state organized irrigation projects which tend to give land titles only to men (Traoré 1984 : 25; Thiongane 1984 : 25 and Harkness 1983 : 114) ); are assigned the poorest land by the men who control its distribution (Savané 1986 : 54); are saddled with crushing production responsibilities when able-bodied men abandon the villages (Savane [sic] 1984 : 39); and, when widowed, are inherited as part of their deceased husbands' property (Hay and Stichter, 1984 : 7; and Cutrufelli 1983 : 65). Moreover, outmigration of young men and increased production responsibilities do not lead to an improvement in women's status in villages (Savane [sic] 1984 : 40). Thus seeing some of women's independent activities, such as certain farming activities, as indicators of relative overall autonomy ignores the nightmare of responsibilities women also face. Cutrufelli, in her writings about Peoples in several African nations, exposes the nature of the situation well: "...this very autonomy has disguised and thus been indulgent to the failure of the male to assume his own responsibilities with regard to family obligations, in particular, children's sustenance and upbringing..." (Cutrufelli 1983 : 4).

Although Dolphyne (1991) examines the Ghanaian government's approach to women's issues through the vehicle of the National Council on Women and Development, few other authors even mention strategies used by women individually and collectively to exert some measure of control in their homes and communities. While women in Harkness' northern Ghanaian study are not reported to participate in religious, jural or political matters (Harkness 1983 : 56), and although they move silently and unobtrusively about the compound in the presence of guests, premaritally, women indulge in gamesmanship and manoeuvring, manipulating their suitors (Rattray 1932 : 139-141). After marriage, they reportedly farm some crops independently and control their own purses (Harkness 1983 : 57); may vent their anger against their spouses by locking them out at night, as depicted in the 1991 Burkinabé film, "Tillai"<sup>7</sup>; may attempt to employ abortion and magic to their advantage (Cutrufelli 1983 : 140); and, occasionally, rebel (Wipper 1982 : 50-72). However, while such activities and events are fascinating, their significance is difficult to assess, as with few exceptions, they remain poorly documented. Moreover, Wipper (1982) notes, it is clear that women have been unable to sustain collective action for long because of the demands placed upon them as mothers and producers. Finally, she states, women's tactics, which historically were effective against individuals, seem to have been much less effective when directed against a political system, such as the colonial administration. Therefore, women's rebellions alone offer insufficient proof that the women involved commanded significant degrees of autonomy individually or collectively. It is the question of autonomy that this present study will address.

## Endnotes

1. According to the 1977 (German-Ghanaian) Agricultural Extension Handbook, the average annual rainfall at Bawku over a 36 year period was 955 mm. At Navrongo, the average over a 30 year period was 1029 mm per year.
2. The term "People(s)", as used by agencies of the United Nations and Canada's Aboriginal Peoples, is employed where possible throughout this thesis, rather than terms such as "tribe" (which is still currently used in northern Ghana) and ethnic group (which is used in sociological literature in various ways). The term "Peoples" is used to underline the importance of groups' self-identification, in spite of the fact that labelling by outsiders is acknowledged to have real and profound consequences for individuals and groups. Since intermarriage among the world's Peoples now exists on an unprecedented scale, the term "ethnic group" is becoming more fluid and may eventually have decreasing relevance. Ironically, however, for rather isolated and predominantly rural populations like the Kusassi, the term underplays the degree of homogeneity in the population that has persisted throughout this century.
3. Awellinga was the Tilli Naaba (territorial chief) until 1986, when he died at well over 100 years of age according to his family. As indicated in the text, Awellinga himself recalled seeing the first British District Commissioner transported on a palladium through the area early in this century. He converted to Christianity perhaps 30 to 40 years before his death, and his extensive kin group for many years was the mainstay of the Tilli Assembly of God church. He is recalled with awe even by many non-Kusassi from the Upper East.
4. My Tilli friends had written down their father's (Awellinga's) stories before he died. Unfortunately, during the time I was in Tilli, they did not have time to verify the details of the story about "Captain Williams" with this written record. However, in Rattray's interview with the "Nangoot" (Nangodi) chief early in this century, the Naaba also referred to a "Captain Welim" who had been based at Gambaga (1932 : 367). Rattray thought this person might have been a Captain "Wheeler", though he did not say why.
5. Landlords were male compound heads who regulated religious practice, family land distribution, cereal (millet) distribution from the family store, and marriages; they also represented family interests in the community. Landlords were men often middle aged or older. In the compound with them lived their wife(wives) and young children,

married sons with their wives and children, and - not uncommonly - elderly widows of brothers, whom they supported but did not marry. Sometimes, landlords were uncles of the younger men in the house, having taken over compound leadership at the death of a brother. In such cases, younger men were free to move out and establish themselves as heads of their own compounds, if they so desired.

6. "Gold Coast" was the colonial name was Ghana.
7. One Tilli informant stated that to avoid such humiliation, husbands now usually invite their wives to their rooms.

## CHAPTER 2: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, two feminist theories looking at divisions among women are outlined. The first presented is Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis' article, "Contextualizing feminism - gender, ethnic and class divisions" (1983); the second is Rae Lesser Blumberg's "Towards a Feminist Theory of Development" (1989).

### A. Anthias and Yuval-Davis' Theory

Although illustrating their theory of intraclass divisions among women primarily with references to Britain, Anthias and Yuval-Davis' analysis of the intermeshing of gender, ethnicity and class variables proves illuminating when applied to the Ghanaian context. "Race, gender and class cannot be tagged on to[sic] each other mechanically," they state, "for, as concrete social relations, they are enmeshed in each other and the particular intersections involved produce specific effects." (1983 : 63). By comparison, as pointed out in the previous chapter, much development literature by design or omission remains silent about these factors, and refers broadly to Ghanaian, Sahelian and African women as if homogeneity exists at local, national, and even transnational levels.

Anthias and Yuval-Davis note, first of all, that feminist assumptions of "sisterhood" and a "commonality of interests and/or goals" ignores "ethnic context" (1983 : 62). Class, gender and ethnicity interact, they assert, in particular combinations to produce social hierarchies irreducible to the dichotomous class categorizations found in the writings of many Marxists (1983 : 62-64). In fact, they assert, "marxist tradition... has been partly responsible for the invisibility of ethnic divisions..." (1983 : 63). "Classes are not homogeneous ethnically, culturally or in terms of gender in most cases..." (1983 : 65). In addition, they criticize analyses that fail "to note the differentiation within [*italics added*] the ethnic or migrant category" (1983 : 64). In general, then, the authors criticize Marxism as insensitive to "differential access based on gender or ethnic, national or racial divisions" (1983 : 64). Overall, they see Western labour market divisions and subordination as more affected by gender than ethnicity, the state having institutionalized the majority-defined, gendered subordination of women (1983 : 68,69). That is, all women's positioning is affected more by the gender than the ethnic factor. Gender divisions in the family, however, are seen as fixed primarily on the basis of ethnicity. The state is thought to have a modest impact (1983 : 68). The effects of the ethnic component impact in turn on the whole migrant

community, by determining whether women constitute a labour resource or not (1983 : 69). Hence, Anthias and Yuval-Davis demonstrate that context must be central to all social analysis, whether at the micro or macro levels.

In light of conditions in northern Ghana, where many families for generations have subsisted from one "hungry season" to the next<sup>1</sup>, the importance of Anthias and Yuval-Davis' emphasis on context becomes clear. At local and regional levels, western feminist issues such as abortion and employment equity may have little relevance to northern women at this historical juncture, as Anthias and Yuval-Davis suggest (1983 : 72). Gender issues related to the threat of famine (agricultural production) and access to essential services do, arising as they do in a specific ethnic, historical and political context (Dolphyne 1991 : xiv). Therefore, programmes aimed at improving conditions for women must be designed with specific ethnic, class, and historical factors in mind.

In their writing, in keeping with their socialist feminist approach, the authors avoid using terms such as "strata" or discussing particular hierarchies of power. This approach is both reasonable and frustrating - reasonable because it implicitly acknowledges the complexity of the enmeshing of the various factors, frustrating because some rather fluid hierarchy may still be presumed to exist, revolving around ethnicity itself and/or other factors such as immigration histories and degrees of "visibility". In addition, the authors' desire to retain a Marxist framework is rather surprising, because they expose its limitations in explaining the relationships between gender, ethnicity and class very well. Nonetheless, by demonstrating that splits among women are not simply reducible to class, Anthias and Yuval-Davis also sensitize theorists and planners to the possibility of other factors in communities that might influence women's life chances. One other which is examined in this thesis is religion. Class itself, in the Marxist sense, was not thought to have particular relevance in the context of the rural north, though intraclass divisions were.

## **B. Rae Lesser Blumberg's Feminist Theories of Gender Stratification and Development**

A second feminist text, Rae Lesser Blumberg's "Towards a Feminist Theory of Development" (1989), provides a theoretical framework for examining gendered realities at both the micro and macro levels of society . Using extensive crosscultural and ethnographic material, Blumberg lays out both a general theory of gender stratification (1989 : 163-5)

and a feminist theory of development (1989 : 169-179). Because the hypotheses of these theories are listed in Chapter 5, only a summary is presented here.

The main thrust of the general theory is economic: control of economic resources - and especially surpluses - is seen as the principal factor affecting gender stratification (1989 : 163), as measured by relative autonomy in life choices. However, the balance of economic power between women and men is seen to vary at all levels of social organization, from micro to macro (1989 : 163), along lines influenced by ethnicity and by class (1989 : 163), with the usually male-dominated macro levels (1989 : 163, 164) influencing the micro levels more than vice versa (1989 : 163). In addition, the more macro levels are male-dominated, the more women's power is "discounted" at the micro levels (1989 : 164). Women's "net economic power", therefore, is the result of many factors (1989 : 164). In response to deteriorating economic circumstances, however, women's power is apt to fall precipitously, while in response to favourable economic conditions, it rises only gradually (1989 : 164). Women's self image, self confidence and life choices follow in tandem (1989 : 165).

In summary, then, Blumberg sees women as subordinated, to the extent that they are or are not able to acquire, control and augment economic resources. If taken at face value, these arguments could become circular. That is, women are subordinated, and face significant obstacles to enhancing their economic position. Therefore, their economic position remains precarious and they remain subordinated, and so on. Blumberg, however, though not unimpressed by the historical record of women's subordination, goes on to present a feminist theory of development having practical implications for development planners. In this theory, she re-emphasizes her concern about the continuing invisibility of gender in most development literature. The failure of many experts to recognize the internal, gendered economy of the household, she states, has not prevented programmes from impacting on gender stratification (Blumberg 1989: 162).

The theory might be briefly summarized as follows: the lower women are in the class structure, the more they are economically active, the more they contribute to family subsistence, the less they reserve for personal consumption, and the more their food contributions determine their children's nutritional status. Recognizing this, women direct their labours towards activities whose fruits they themselves control, are more responsive to initiatives that enhance production, and adjust reproductive activities to pursue income-generating activities which they deem profitable and feasible.

Underlying these hypotheses is the assumption that women invariably rise to the challenges of ensuring the sustenance of their children at significant personal cost to themselves. Such an assumption might be challenged, but for the northern Ghanaian context, I felt it to be generally accurate. Given their disadvantaged social position, then (as indicated by the general stratification theory), northern Ghanaian women would require strategies to meet the challenges, appropriate to the ever-changing context in which they were situated.

### **C. Key Ideas from the Two Theories Leading to the Research Hypotheses**

A number of key ideas can be identified from the writings of Anthias and Yuval-Davis, and Blumberg. Both texts implicitly contain the idea of universal patriarchy. Blumberg says, for example, that there is no society where women control half the economic resources (1989 : 164), and Anthias and Yuval-Davis suggest that in western societies at least, gender is the most important factor in "labour market subordination" (1983 : 69). The three authors also see women as more or less advantaged in relation to each other, although they address the subject in different terms. Anthias and Yuval-Davis retain the class definitions of Marx, and consequently resist recognition of any particular hierarchy of advantage among women, while Blumberg uses the term "stratification", implying a continuum of levels. Finally, the three authors recognize that a complex of factors affects the positioning of women in society.

The three authors develop other ideas differently. For example, Blumberg emphasizes the subjects of the gendered economy of the household, and the centrality of economic resources to women's power; she merely mentions that economic power varies by ethnicity and class (1989 : 163). Anthias and Yuval-Davis, on the other hand, emphasize ethnicity, first at the level of the state, where it is seen to affect labour market subordination but not as significantly as gender; and secondly, at the level of the household, because it determines "the internal gender divisions within the household and family"(1983 : 69). By inference, then, ethnicity determines in good part whether or not women even have access to significant economic resources, and if so, under what conditions.

The latter ideas of the three authors are not necessarily completely contradictory. Women, for example, may be denied access to resources on the basis of ethnicity, and the resultant economic powerlessness may allow their subordination to be perpetuated. Their subordination along ethnic lines may in turn affect the group. Thus, ethnicity may "discount" women's power at both the micro and macro levels. However, Anthias and Yuval-Davis see

ethnically-defined relations at the micro level of the family as affecting women's choices, while Blumberg sees realities at the level of the community and state decisively influencing micro realities.

Several important questions emerge from this discussion (1) whether or not the women in the study area are indeed subordinated, and if so, how is it demonstrated; (2) whether or not women respond with passivity to their subordination, or whether they develop strategies specific to the gendered economy of the household along lines set by ethnicity and class; (3) and finally, whether or not capitalism is impacting on gender relations in the study area, and if so, how?

#### **D. The Development of the Research Hypotheses and Indicators**

Through the optic of the theories just outlined and empirical literature on the region, research hypotheses were developed. Their selection also took into consideration CUSO-Northern Ghana project information needs identified during a meeting with an Ottawa project officer. The end result was the following three hypotheses:

1. Women have been and remain jural minors.
2. Paradoxically however, they are expected to exercise considerable autonomy in specific areas. Furthermore, they demonstrate a number of individual and collective strategies which enable them to exert their will in other areas in spite of social constraints.
3. The effects of encroaching capitalism on northern women's autonomy have not been uniform.

A wide range of indicators was developed to test the hypotheses. In keeping with the theories developed by Blumberg, and Anthias and Yuval-Davis, indicators of access and control were the focus: access to and control of the means and the fruits of production; access to services, essential and otherwise; control of important life choices; access to and control of positions of power, authority and influence; and access to and control of leisure. Indicators had the potential of demonstrating that women were jural minors (as indicated in Table 1 by JM), that they exerted some degree of autonomy (A), that they used particular strategies to achieve their ends (S), and that their lives were affected by encroaching capitalism (EC), or some combination of the four. Interview schedules were then developed around these

indicators (See Appendices C-1 and C-2) which, for ethical reasons, avoided clearly political topics and "hot issues" such as abortion. On the following page, in table form, are the indicators.

TABLE 1: INDICATORS

	JM	A	S	E
<b>1. Access to and Control of Resources</b>				
• Access to necessities (water, food, shelter, clothing and fuel), perceived needs,	x	x	x	x
• Access to land,	x		x	x
• Access to and control of labour,	x	x	x	x
• Control of the fruits of their labour, perceived needs,	?	x	x	x
• Access to technology, agricultural inputs, loans and credit; perceived needs	x	x	x	x
• Access to markets,	x	x	x	x
<b>2. Access to Facilities and Services:</b>				
• Access to electricity and mass communication,				x
• Access to formal education,	x	x		x
• Access to agricultural education and services,	x	x	x	x
• Access to health education and services,	x	x	x	x
<b>3. Women's Changing Rights, Roles and Responsibilities In Families and the Community</b>				
• Changes in agriculture, innovations,	x	x	x	x
• Changes in religious belief and practice,	x	x	x	x
• Changes in courtship and marriage,	x	x	x	x
• Changing marital relations (changing economic relations, control of sexuality and reproduction, relations with "rivals"),	x	x	x	x
• The situation of divorcees,	x	x	x	x
• The special situation of widows and their children,	x		x	x
• Changing political/legal standing of women,	x	x	x	x
• Particular positions of privilege, power, and authority,	x	x	x	x
• Changing perceptions of women's role in society,	x	x	x	x
<b>4. Leisure Activities</b>	x			x

**Endnote**

1. Evidence that northern Ghana has long been a famine area is provided in Rattray (1932 : 390). He quotes a Kusassi informant as saying that the Kusassi once sold the Mossi "for food".

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### A. The Development of the Research Project

To produce the type of grounded, rich data that might address research hypotheses, while at the same time contributing to gender and development theory and programme policy, a single research method would have been inadequate. Therefore, a combination of library research, official documents, group and individual field interviews, time budget studies, and participant observation was decided upon. The thesis advisor did question the efficiency of Time Budget Studies, but because this was a method favoured by development agencies, an attempt was made to retain it.

The field site selected was Tilli, a village of about 1,100 people in Ghana's Upper East Region. This village was selected because it was known<sup>1</sup> to be small and rural; composed of a "core" (Tilli proper) and a "periphery" (Tarrakom) as shown in Map 1 of Appendix A; until recently, ethnically homogenous; and easily reachable by road from the major northern town of Bolgatanga. In addition, Tilli had a borehole and thus clean water. There had been a cholera epidemic in the region the year before. Thus Tilli was representative of other small communities in the area, while still being accessible and offering some limited amenities.

The literature review proved somewhat problematic, for some of the reasons already outlined in Chapter 1, Section D (The Special Situation of Women in the Sahel/Northern Ghana). Only two direct references to the Kusassi People and the Upper East Region were even found, one of which was unavailable. The public sections of the CUSO and CIDA libraries offered little. Thus, texts and articles were searched for under related subject headings such as women in development, women in the southern Sahel, women in Ghana, and Mole-speaking Peoples<sup>2</sup>. Much of the literature was grounded and pragmatic, the product of U.N. conferences or of authors clearly having extensive field experience. One of the major difficulties with such literature, however, was that it often was overly general, as previously stated. Thus, books on the Sahel sometimes included articles on nations as far apart as Senegal and the Sudan.

In keeping with the indicators identified in the previous chapter, an interview schedule was developed for use with both groups and individuals (See Appendix C for the Interview Schedules). To some extent, wording of the questions reflected English usage

common to the Tilli area (where, for example, British terms for certain things are more common than American).

## **B. Ethics Clearance**

Before the University of Ottawa Ethics Committee granted approval for the research, they expressed a number of concerns. The first of these was the idea that interviewees should be volunteers. This stipulation was problematic, because of the authority invested in Kusassi men as spokesman for their communities. To have bypassed the male village hierarchy would have been offensive to many men and women, and therefore was out of the question. It was decided therefore, that I would inform village leaders first about the research, by speaking with them, and leaving them an information sheet describing the project (See Appendix C). Once their permission was obtained, I could then interview groups of women, from among whom it was hoped that volunteers would emerge. Women volunteers were each to receive an information sheet, and provide a witnessed consent (See Appendix C for a copy of the consent form). The second concern of the committee was with anonymity. Guaranteeing anonymity in the thesis itself was not problematic. However, ensuring subject anonymity and privacy during the interviewing process I considered impossible, given the nature of Kusassi architecture and family relations. To have sought the privacy of a room for interviews would have suggested to others that something about the questions asked was not "above board". Therefore, the committee suggested that by framing the questions to reflect the experiences of an imaginary woman, Hawa, the issue of anonymity would have less relevance. Research questions were therefore reworked in accordance with the suggestion. And finally, the committee was adamant that no allusion should be made to any benefits individuals or the community might gain by cooperating in the research, in spite of my past work under the auspices of CUSO and CIDA, and my contact with the CUSO-Ottawa office about the research. Therefore, included on the information sheets all village authorities and women volunteers were to receive was a disclaimer (See Appendix C). The inclusion of this disclaimer was disturbing to me personally, because I had felt it a moral imperative to choose a research topic and approach that would be of value to those with whom it was concerned. I also felt village leaders and informants needed to know this, that I was not asking for their time frivolously. The idea that the primary objective of the research was my own professional advancement was repugnant to me. After all, I could have met the requirements of the Masters programme without incurring debts for international travel. In addition, I felt the disclaimer would be confusing to acquaintances in Tilli, who knew of my past association with development agencies, and my intention to continue working in this area. However, I

reluctantly agreed to add such a disclaimer. The required changes to the thesis proposal and documents had to be made quickly before my departure for Ghana.

As an additional courtesy and precaution, I also gave a copy of the thesis proposal to the visa officer at the Ghanaian High Commission for review. On the basis of this information, the High Commission granted a visitor's visa.

### **C. Field Adjustments**

#### **1. Making and Maintaining Contact with Village Officials, Regional Government Officials, Landlords and Husbands**

On the evening of July 2, 1992, I arrived in Tilli, and proceeded to the former Naaba's compound. There I was assigned to stay overnight in a section belonging to a junior brother, in the absence of the senior brother. The Naaba summoned the senior brother the next day to see that this arrangement was satisfactory to all parties. On July 3rd, friends introduced me formally to the new Tilli Naaba. I sought permission from him - and through him, from the Tenedan' and village elders - to begin interviewing. A brief description of the project and a copy of the women's consent form were given to him.

Several village officials and friends expressed concern that an officer of the National Council on Women and Development, Mrs. Cecilia Anaba, had been in Tilli the week before, looking for a "former resident of the village", whom her superior had sent her to assist with a research project. By July 4th, it became clear to me that indeed, the foreign researcher being sought by Mrs. Anaba was me. Therefore, I agreed to the chief's suggestion to dispatch a messenger to Bawku to inform Mrs. Anaba of my arrival. In the meantime, the Tilli Naaba approved my beginning interviews.

The research was explained to individual elders on an ad hoc basis, although they had already given their support via the Naaba. Before my arrival, Mrs. Anaba's expressed interest in the research had already given it a certain legitimacy, although I was careful to explain that no official relationship existed between myself and any NGO. Several individual elders came to greet me; some even sent "welcome back" gifts of eggs and new millet to my room. In return, as had been my practice during other visits, I gave small toys and books to a friend to distribute randomly to village children.

At dawn and at sunset, old friends would drop by my room to reminisce - even if briefly - about those who had been born, died, gone south... Some expressed the desire to find a way to record Tilli's history for future generations - a desire I shared.

As the research proceeded, every effort was made to respect the authority and information needs of local leaders, government officials and functionaries. The Naaba was given updates through personal visits and messages sent through his functionaries (one of whom was a friend of mine). In addition, once Mrs. Anaba arrived and familiarized me with the structure of regional government, I made courtesy calls on the District Secretary, who lived at Tilli, and the District Administrator, whose office was at Zebilla accompanied by Mrs. Anaba. We also visited BACH (the Binaba Area Community Health Project) and the Zebilla Ministry of Agriculture to speak with personnel. Mrs. Anaba sent a message to the NCWD coordinator at Bolgatanga to inform her of my arrival.

Before visiting the subvillages, I informed the Tilli Naaba of my plans because the headmen of these communities were administratively his juniors. With his permission, I made two visits to Tarrakom and one to the Fulani settlement near the Red Volta River, where Fulani migrants from the Tiebelé area of Burkina Faso had settled about five years earlier after obtaining grazing permits from Ghanaian authorities. People from both these subvillages came to the Tilli crossroads regularly to sell small items such as eggs and yoghurt, as well to make small purchases. Although the research had been conceived to illuminate realities in Kusassi communities, the increasing heterogeneity of the village was not lost on me and could not be ignored.

## **2. The Interviewing Process**

In Tilli, I was able to move about freely and speak with whomever I met. In the Fulani subvillage and Tarrakom, I was obliged to approach women through the village male hierarchy; it was the men who called women to the group meeting.

Because patrilocal marriage patterns had brought together in the Tilli area women from different villages around Bawku West, the "chiming in" and nodding during the first group interview in Tilli suggested a significant degree of consensus among women based on common experiences in the different villages of origin. Consequently, it seemed unnecessary to conduct individual interviews to confirm information from group interviews, as originally planned. Instead, the opportunity was taken to invite for interview not only women of different age groups, from different communities and of different statuses as indicated by

different lineage, honorary roles and/or titles, but also women who were widows, handicapped, immediate relatives of handicapped people, pregnant or breast feeding. In this way, it was felt that additional dimensions of women's experiences would be revealed.

The final decision about which individuals were interviewed rested with me in consultation with friends/translators. The selection was made from among self-volunteering women and those "offered" by both male and female members of their households. Friends/translators carefully conveyed invitations to me and relayed the response back to the concerned parties. All those interviewed were informed of the research goals and procedures, and their consent obtained. These consents were witnessed and signed by the translators, who took care to explain to the women that they were in no way compelled to participate. However, to my chagrin, one translator felt the research would benefit the village and was discovered to be telling people so I asked that person to desist.

Although a few younger women in Tilli spoke English, interviews were still conducted with the assistance of translators, so that communication was less stressful. Some respondents thus had the advantage of hearing the question twice before they replied. Until July 12, my translators were the local Assemblyman, Paul Awellinga, with whom I had worked previously; Otu Awellinga, a brother of Paul's, whom I had also known for several years; and two other brothers, "Hawkett" and Musah Peter, who had been toddlers when I had lived in Tilli. Yahya Awellinga, another brother of Paul's, was also an informant. Mrs. Anaba acted as translator from July 12 until July 21.

During interviews, no pressure was to be put on participants to answer questions, nor were any monies exchanged. One translator did unfortunately go beyond the research questions on two occasions, as indicated by quick exchanges between the translators and the respondents, giggles, and downward glances (signals of informant discomfort). On the first occasion that I observed such an exchange, I tried to intervene; on the second occasion, I acted more forcefully and terminated the interview. I picked up the next day where I had left off, with a (male) relative acting as translator. In general, individual respondents were allowed to answer interview questions at their own pace, in their own way, and were not led relentlessly through the interview schedule from one end to the other. Diversions into unexpected areas, such as comments on ways in which some cooperatives excluded certain categories of women, were allowed, and even at times encouraged.

Because interviews tended to be rather long (one to one and a half hours), taping proved impractical: too many batteries would have been required to keep the tape recorder operating. Secondly, both translators and I were too tired to transcribe notes in the cool of the evening by lattern-light. And finally, many women chose to talk about their personal circumstances, so the use of a tape recorder seemed "indelicate".

Questions had been constructed in such a way that women were being asked to reflect upon the life and experiences of an imaginary woman. However, most women were very frank, preferring to speak from personal experience, or about the experiences of women in general. In any case, because exogamy brought outsider women into villages, the protective device of referring to the imaginary "Hawa" may have been less important, because women were referring in good part to practices in their natal communities, not to circumstances in the Tilli area where they presently resided. I did, however, actively avoid interviewing certain individuals, and addressing certain topics with other individuals when I felt such questioning could constitute an invasion of privacy. For example, the host and his wife were not interviewed.

One case of open monitoring by a male family member did occur, but because of the nature of the subject matter (the woman's marketing activities) neither I nor the translator felt it necessary to stop the interview. The respondent showed no sign of unease at her brother-in-law's presence.

### **3. Time Budget Studies and Participant Observation**

Participant observation took on special significance, given my knowledge of the histories of certain families over the last seventeen years. In addition, it gave me unexpected access to population statistics contained in election rolls. Time budget studies, however, proved not very fruitful and noticeably intrusive. One woman politely told me on two occasions that she would see me later in the day. This statement was taken to indicate a desire on the woman's part to proceed about her work unaccompanied. A second woman seemed proud to have me observe her going about her farming chores; however, I felt shame-faced merely observing the other's labour, yet was not sufficiently acclimatized at that point in my visit to assist in any way effectively, though I tried! Instead, I observed the comings and goings of a number of women throughout the day, and travelled by lorry to both the Zebilla and Binaba markets to gain some idea of the cost in time and money of marketing activities. This way of studying how women used their time was much more efficient, given that women tended to

perform quite different tasks from one day to the next, as well as from one season to the next; simple observation, could have produced quite a distorted picture of women's work.

#### **4. Reports on My Initial Impressions**

I left Tili on July 21, 1992, and made brief courtesy calls at the NCWD and CIDA-Bolga offices. I was able to use a typewriter at the Ministry of Agriculture to prepare brief reports for the Tili Naaba, District officials and Miss Munya of NCWD, as well as for Ms Carol Kerfoot of CIDA-Accra, and Ms Alima Mahama of CUSO-Tamale. In Canada, I sent similar reports to Mr. John Lobsinger of CIDA-Ottawa and Mr. S. Puli of the Ghanaian High Commission in Ottawa.

**Endnotes**

1. I was in charge of the Tilli Mobile (Child Welfare) Clinic from 1975 to 1977.
2. Colonel Rattray (1932) used the classification "Mole group" to refer to the Mole (or Maure) language of the Mossi of present day Burkina Faso, and nine other related languages, such as Kusaal

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The electoral rolls made available to me listed almost equal numbers of women and men in Tilli and Tarrakom. In 116 compounds in Tilli south, there were 194 women and 195 men, for a total of 389 registered voters; in Tilli north, there were 170 women and 158 men, for a total of 328 registered voters; in Tarrakom, there were 186 women and 177 men, for a total of 363 registered voters. Interestingly, the figures were quite different from those of 1987, which had shown Tilli women outnumbering men about four to one. This tremendous discrepancy between the two rolls was not explained by informants. However, comments were offered concerning the accuracy of the 1992 figures: these were known to include a number of men who at that time were resident in the south; on the other hand, a number of elderly women had not been enumerated. However, the rolls were not being completely corrected because electoral officials obliged village residents to come to the enumerators at designated locations, rather than having the enumerators going to the homes, since the latter activity could have been misused for campaigning.

To get a better idea of population and the degree of outmigration from the area, I therefore asked a friend to identify the residents in any five compounds in Tilli. He gave the following accounting: of a total of 109 adults, 52 were men and 57 women. Of the men, 22 were in the south, of whom 10 were single, 8 had taken their wives, and 4 had left their wives behind. Of the women resident in the five Tilli compounds, 16 were widows. An informant in Tarrakom gave the following accounting: out of a total of 54 adults in 5 compounds, 31 were men and 23 were women. Of the men, 18 were in the south, of whom 9 were single and 9 were accompanied by their wives; no wives had been left behind. Of the women resident in the five Tarrakom compounds, 5 were widows. These results are given in table form in Appendix D.

These results demonstrated four things: that compounds continued to contain in general more than one man and his wife (or wives); that outmigration was still a significant phenomenon; that outmigration was no longer a strictly male phenomenon; and that widows were numerous in rural villages. In interviews at a later time, it was revealed that several unmarried Tilli girls had departed for Ouaga, Kumasi and Accra. Tarrakom people denied that outmigration of unmarried girls occurred from their community.

Among those currently resident in the village were some who had been toddlers, young children or youth at the time of the researcher's residence in Tilli (1975-1977). They were now adults, some with children of their own, and occupied positions of both formal and informal authority in the village. At the same time, many of the older generation of elders had died. With their passing, much of the knowledge of village history, customary law and practice has been irretrievably lost.

Three group interviews were conducted - one in Tilli, one in Tarrakom subvillage and one in the Fulani subvillage. People came and went freely, causing group size to fluctuate between twenty and forty women in Tilli, between forty and fifty women in Tarrakom, and between five to ten women (and eight to ten men) in the Fulani subvillage. As already stated, "chiming in" and nodding in response to other women's comments demonstrated that a fair degree of consensus existed among the approximately one hundred women reached through these interviews.

Eighteen individual women volunteers, including two residents of Tarrakom, one resident of Kukore and one resident of Widnaba (See Map 3, Appendix A), offered different types of information from that obtained in group interviews. These women, as noted in the Methodology chapter, were interviewed because of their special circumstances, and therefore provided insights into village life that had not been gleaned from group interviews. Among these women, seven had been widowed at least once, although two had remarried while still of child bearing age.

Those individually interviewed gained their sustenance in a variety of ways. Of the widows, one older woman farmed, and traded on an occasional basis; although blind and elderly, another farmed with assistance; another, also blind and elderly, processed shea nuts from the Binaba Area Community Health Project (Agricultural section); and two subsisted on family charity (one because she was ill and could not work, the other because she had young twins still at the breast and therefore did not go to her farm). Of the thirteen women currently married, eight farmed and traded, three farmed only, and two had no obvious source of income (again, one did not farm because she was ill, the other - unsupported by her husband who had gone south - because she had an infant at the breast). Among these same women, only one stated that she received money from her husband and had no financial responsibilities. Another whose husband was blind had all the household financial responsibilities. (For a summary of this information in chart form, please see Appendix E.)

No adult unmarried women beyond secondary school age were known to be in the village<sup>1</sup>, and therefore none were interviewed.

The individual women interviewed represented, to some extent, different social strata. Of the eighteen women, four were from the current chief's house (and therefore might be assumed to belong to a more privileged stratum), three were widows from the deceased Naaba's house (and therefore may have ceased to be part of a privileged stratum), one was the widow of a soothsayer who had owned large herds (inherited by his brother) and one was the "magaziiya" or "leading lady" of Tilli village (a traditional functionary, selected by women from the general population for her qualities of character, which made her respected by other women). The other half of the women were from houses of no particular note.

The data which now follows is derived from individual and group interviews, unstructured conversations with friends, and observations. It has mainly been organized to address issues of autonomy as they apply to the Kusassi women of Tilli and environs. However, brief mention is made of the situation of Fulani women as well. Reporting has been organized under the following headings: women's access to and control of resources such as the necessities of life (food, water, shelter, clothing and fuel) , land, labour, the fruits of their labour, technology and inputs, and markets; access to services and facilities in general, in agriculture and in health; changing rights and responsibilities in the family and the community in regards to agriculture, religion, premarital and marital relations, political/legal standing, and positions of privilege, power and authority; and leisure activities. Additional sections concern specific women's strategies for influence and control, and the general effects of encroaching capitalism on gender relations.

Care has been taken to use English expressions which are in common usage in the research area. For example, the term "rival" is used, not "cowife", "forced marriage", not "arranged marriage"; the term "to worry someone" (to harass someone) is also used. Thus linguistic clues to social realities are found even in translations to English from local languages.

## **A. Issues of Autonomy: Ideals and Realities**

### **1. Women's Access to and Control of Resources**

#### **a. The necessities of life (water, food, shelter, clothing and fuel)**

##### **i. Water**

Thanks in large part to a long term project under the auspices of CIDA and Ghana Water and Sewage (GWSC), Tilli and environs had three boreholes providing water throughout the year to a population of about 1100 people. One of the boreholes was within a five minute walk of most compounds in the center of the village. The other two were one to one and a half kilometers out from the village core - one along the Bolga-Bawku highway, servicing the scattered compounds in that direction, as well as people going to and from their farms, the other along the path to Tarrakom at a location identified as "Gbere Tilli" on Map 3, Appendix 1. An old well also existed about halfway between Tilli and the Fulani subvillage, where farmers labouring in the hot fields could slake their thirst.

The subvillages were poorly served, however. The pump at the one borehole in Tarrakom had broken down about one month earlier and repairs put off indefinitely because villagers had not paid GWSC maintenance fees. The Fulani People had neither borehole nor well, and their requests for assistance from a local NGO had gone unanswered. Thus, people in both the Tarrakom subvillage and the Fulani settlement were forced to rely on ground water. In addition, some who had the choice still preferred nearby sources of ground water in rainy season to walking to the borehole, according to a Widnaba woman.

From whatever source, women carried most of the water to the compounds on their heads in vessels weighing 15 kg. or more. However, girls and even some boys began assisting at about age eight or ten. One boy transported the water on his bicycle.

##### **ii. Food**

At the beginning of the research period, food was in short supply in the village. Many old friends, both men and women had clearly lost substantial amounts of weight; a number of widows appeared quite frail. Food consumption was irregular and inadequate in quantity and quality.

In some households, women and children appeared to be eating only an evening meal. For almost everyone, that meal consisted of Tzet<sup>2</sup> and a soup of greens, ochre and/or tomato,

spiced with cayenne, flavourings such as dawadawa, and/or protein additives such as dry fish or groundnut paste. Occasionally, rice replaced Tzet, so grinding fees could be avoided. Meat and poultry were luxuries rarely consumed.

Some women were observed cooking bean cakes or warming the previous evenings left-over Tzet around midmorning for themselves and their children. Some of the blind and handicapped had been assisted through a small food distribution from the Red Cross. They shared this grain, however, with their households, and it disappeared in less than a week. Some widows were barely subsisting on the quiet charity of others, the traditional lines for caring for such needy members of the community appearing to have broken down. One male youth used proceeds from kerosene sales to buy food at the corner "market". The NCWD worker noted that during the height of the hungry season two years before, some men in Bawku District had committed suicide in desperation, while others had abandoned their families and gone south.

A few, however, were privileged. Two wives shared their husband's regular meals, and showed none of the signs of physical suffering common to many other women (and some men).

About the second week of July, when the early millet harvest began, everyone began to eat more regularly, as well as snack in between on roasted grain. Meat and poultry still remained absent from most meals however, and the cost of the hunger lingered on: Mrs. Anaba noted sadly how women dancing at the formation of a new cooperative lacked energy.

### iii. Shelter

(See Appendix B for the sketch of a small Kusassi compound.) Within each unit of a compound, married women generally had round, thatched, mud-walled, unfurnished kitchens and sleeping rooms, which could be closed off and locked from the inside or outside (although newer wives sometimes had no sleeping rooms, and shared their husbands' rectangular, "modern" rooms for a time). The indoor kitchens were unvented, allowing dangerous levels of creosote to build up on interior walls above the simple stone hearths<sup>3</sup>. Outdoor kitchens were free of this danger.

Sometimes women had their own courtyards. At other times, the bathhouse, and rooms of rivals and the husband opened off the same courtyard. No matter what its makeup, however, each unit was shielded from other units of the compound by meter and one-half

walls, and, until recently, opened only into the central hall shared by other units of the compound. This hall, in turn, led to the single door to the outside. Now, however, many units had openings directly to the outside, allowing people to pass in and out of the compound unobserved by their housepeople<sup>4</sup>.

In a move that would have been unthinkable a decade ago, one older widow had moved with her teenage daughter into a small, new compound adjacent to her deceased husband's. Technically, the house was referred to as belonging to the son who had built it. The widow's room was furnished with a locally made bed and mattress, a small glass-fronted cupboard, a small table, a wooden chair and a two-seater couch with foam cushions<sup>5</sup>.

Few other women owned such furnishings. One individual expressed the opinion that recently, more affluent husbands were expected to provide furniture, even if it meant going into debt. Further questioning, however, revealed that use of the word "provide" was misleading: such furnishings were usually kept in the men's rooms, which wives entered only on invitation. Consequently the only articles to be found in most women's rooms were calabashes, clay bowls, sleeping mats, a few other cooking utensils and clothing brought with them on their marriage, and some aluminum cooking pots, a few spoons and wooden ladles, and perhaps two or three plates and cups supplied by the husband and his family. Women expressed little desire for more than a few additional dishes and pots.

Fulani houses were less permanent structures. Rooms were made of woven mats over poles; courtyards were dirt. To one side were unwallled shelters where the Kusassi translator said male youth slept.

#### **iv. Clothing**

Tilli women complained that their husbands no longer respected the custom of giving them cloth on special occasions, such as on the birth of a child or at Christmas, even though most possessed only one or two changes of clothes. Tarrakom women had no such complaint - that is, men continued to observe custom there.

#### **v. Fuel**

As they have for generations, most Tilli women still spent the first half of their days during dry season stocking up on firewood for cooking during rainy season. One town woman,

however, was supplied with charcoal by her new husband. Surprisingly, Tarrakom women also reported using homemade charcoal at times.

Forestry officials now fined women who chopped live trees. Whether conservation education efforts were also being made or not remains unknown. The Tilli Assemblyman reported that the Fulani people needed no such education, as they were already careful conservationists.

#### **b. Land**

The smaller, cultivated plots of land around Kusassi compounds - "saman" in Kusaal - were usually referred to in English as gardens, whereas larger plots further away from the village core were usually referred to as farms or "bush farms" - "put" in Kusaal (Kusaal terms taken from Rattray 1932 : 384). Gardens and farms were controlled differently, and planted with different crops.

Virgin lands in the Tilli area have been rapidly coming under cultivation. With the ethnic clashes at Bawku in 1986, a number of families, including some Mossis, came to farm at Tilli. Families also moved in from the more-densely populated Binaba side, and at least one commercial farmer from Bolga rented large tracts that he worked with casual labourers from Nangodi and Tilli. (The conditions of this arrangement were unknown.) In addition, as already mentioned, a group of Fulani farmers/herders from the Tiebelé/Zecco area of Burkina Faso settled about two kilometers to the east of Tilli, near the Red Volta, about five years ago. Other Peoples represented at Tilli included the Frafra, Mossi and Busanga. All in all then, the demand for land use rights increased markedly because of population pressure on Tilli from all four sides.

Nonetheless, because some virgin lands still existed, women had only to contact the appropriate village functionaries to acquire new land use rights or to switch plots. The Tenedan' was responsible for the allocation of virgin lands, landlords for lands already under family cultivation. Married women often would make their requests to these functionaries through their husbands, but those temporarily living in their home village could approach their fathers directly. However, one male informant said that such requests would be resisted by brothers, who would see sisters' land use as precedent-setting, giving them future claims on the land.

Even with land being available, it was observed that the distance between house and farm was often more than a kilometer. Therefore, women who were ill, handicapped, pregnant or breast feeding usually did not farm, though they still gardened if they had access to garden plots.

"Kitchen garden" plots were controlled by compound landlords. Grains, beans and groundnuts were grown there as on the farms, and in addition, vegetables such as tomatoes, which require more care. It was hard for new wives to gain use of these plots, because stiff competition already existed among all those - both male and female - already in the compounds. Sons of the same father and different mothers competed for land for themselves, for example. Only two older widows had been able to gain sole control of land around it; however, she had to fulfill certain social responsibilities for the privilege. For example, she had to maintain clear pathways through the land. Another woman, unable to acquire a garden plot at all, had to rely on her mother-in-law for vegetables.

Whether Fulani women had more difficulty than Kusassi women acquiring land use rights or not was unknown. However, since the Tilli administration controlled land distribution, and since the Fulani were occupying lands by the Red Volta once infested by onchocerciasis-infected similian flies, it is reasonable to conclude that the People in general may not have had access to preferred areas.

### **c. Labour - Their Own and Others'**

One young woman without children was observed to have few tasks, other than preparing breakfast and supper for her husband. She did laundry, carried water, and farmed only at irregular intervals. In general, she seemed terribly bored, and spent her afternoons napping. Towards the end of my visit, however, she received goods for trade. Most other women however, appeared to work from dawn to dusk with few breaks and little assistance.

In days gone by, women were not free to go to their own farms until they had sown their husbands' and been "released". Out of spite, some men were reported to hold up this release, by delaying their own sowing. This captive labour force was never paid for its work, unlike the practice reported in some of the literature on Burkina Faso. The very idea of being paid brought laughter from the women. On the other hand, one woman reported paying her husband for his specialized services as a Muslim butcher. Tilli women worked their own farms more or less alone, and if they fell ill, the farm fell to ruin. Tarrakom men, however, sometimes offered emergency assistance to their wives.

In theory, children from about seven to fifteen worked on the parents' farms and attended school. However, men had first say regarding children's labour, and even they reported difficulty exacting it. A good number of children in fact were occupied with their own foraging and "income generating" activities, as well their own laundry, gardening and school. Several women reported that they got no help from their children. Village girls, however, were observed babysitting, carrying water, and weeding; boys babysitting, sweeping, carrying water and weeding. One trader also reported that her children had specific work assignments in her absence. However, overall, children's labour contributions were quite variable, and somewhat unreliable.

The idea that "cowives" work cooperatively also proved to be far removed from reality, except in cases where they were sisters. Kusassi women referred to other wives of their husbands as "rivals" and generally related to them accordingly. Only one junior wife was observed working with her senior, very much in the manner of a senior partner/junior partnership type relationship.

Women got irregular assistance from a number of different sources: from grandchildren, junior siblings, adult sons, elderly in-laws, co-religionists and hired labourers. These labourers tended to be girls who had dropped out of school or poor women from Tarrakom. They worked for about 200 cedis per day, or \$0.46 US (See Appendix F regarding the cost of living in Tilli area). In one exceptional case, the husband of a woman who became blind took over the care of the children, although the eldest girl was sent to relatives, as was still the custom about twenty years ago.

#### **d. Fruits of Their Labour**

Kusassi women had de jure control over what they produced and earned. However, traditionally, only men grew cereal grains for household consumption and for sale, and women grew vegetables and nuts, and collected fruits and seeds from the wild, for the soup for themselves, their children and their husbands. Only surpluses were marketed. The grains and livestock being produced recently by women through new farm initiatives, unfortunately, did not constitute such a surplus because men's cereal contributions to family subsistence have long been inadequate in many households. Therefore, women's grains tended to be consumed rather than marketed. Even elderly widows - ostensibly cared for by male relatives - were growing cereal grains for themselves, which they shared with ill and elderly female relatives, grandchildren and orphans.

In addition to these regular provision responsibilities, women also bought small necessities such as soap and kerosene, contributed towards funerals expenses in their own families, and in Tilli, increasingly paid for their own and their children's health care, education and clothing. Their stores/cash reserves were further depleted by husbands' "borrowing", older children's successful pleadings for financial assistance, and young children's pilfering (they did not dare to raid their fathers' stores).

Women involved in marketing on a regular basis had additional expenses, such as transportation, loan repayments, and payment for trading goods received on consignment. Such women also bought prepared foods more often, both for themselves and for their children because they were pressed for time.

Fulani women had similar responsibilities to Kusassi women. They were responsible for soup ingredients, clothing, tobacco<sup>6</sup>, kola, and children's educational expenses. Yet their potential cash income from shea butter and milk/yoghurt sales was very low (three ladles of yoghurt - enough for lunch - sold for 30 Cedis, or less than \$0.10 US). Therefore in dry season, men sometimes purchased soup ingredients. They also contributed toward children's educational expenses when women could not.

De jure control of produce/income belied actual conditions of economic hardship. Only one woman reported buying small "luxuries" occasionally, such as earrings. Differences in degrees of hardship, however, were observed to be greater among women from the same compound than among women from different compounds. Marked differences existed between rivals, for example.

#### **e. Technology, Agricultural Inputs, and Loans and Credit**

Overall, the technology in use in rural Tilli was simple and low cost. In most instances, variations on the same tools had been in use for generations.

##### **1. Household Technology**

Large mortars and pestles, hand-held pestles and grinding stones of various sizes were to be found in every kitchen. Some grinding stones simply sat on the courtyard floor; others were cemented into raised platforms with or without roofs overhead. Women were heard working at these every day, although a generator-powered grinding mill now operated in the village. One housewife reported that she resorted to cooking protein-poor rice

(formerly a cash crop) instead of millet at times, to avoid having to grind at home daily or pay a milling fee. Women expressed some interest in new style coal pots, smokeless wood stoves<sup>7</sup> and improvised cupboards of the type promoted by NCWD officers. Safety issues identified by the NCWD officer included the design and maintenance of gas cooking rings currently being promoted around the country, and creosote buildup in indoor kitchens.

## **ii. Agricultural Technology**

The main agricultural instruments used by both sexes in the Tilli area were those common throughout much of Africa: the short-handled hoe and the cutlass. Some women (such as widows) owned their own hoes; others used those from the household. Preparing the land, scooping out holes for seeds, and weeding were all accomplished with this instrument. Therefore, agricultural work remained very labour intensive and physically demanding. Many people, including pregnant women and women with nursing infants, were effectively excluded. No woman, however, expressed a desire for any type of improved agricultural tool.

Poughing by tractor or with bullocks was not an option for most Tilli/Tarrakom women. The one self-propelled tiller that had been Tilli communal property lay abandoned near the "market" corner, the victim of poor maintenance because of authority quarrels between brothers. As for ploughs, only a few men owned functioning ones, and these they did not lend out (in any case, women said they were afraid they could not handle bullocks). Nor could most women afford the fees of the owner/ploughmen.

A few of the elderly and some enterprising younger women did manage to pay for ploughing. In at least one case, payment for the service was deferred until harvest time.

## **iii. Agricultural Inputs**

As a rule, the purchase of other farm inputs such as fertilizer was out of the question. A variety of seeds was available from a number of governmental and non-governmental agencies, but some were inappropriate to area conditions. For example, chick peas were available from the Ministry of Agriculture; however, their successful cultivation necessitated the use of commercial insecticides, making their cultivation too costly for subsistence farmers. Cotton was seen by many as labour intensive, and therefore as an injudicious crop choice in a region experiencing regular cycles of hunger.

#### iv. Loans and Credit

Women could sometimes get loans from their in-laws. However, most had to turn to high interest rate "traditional" lenders because government and NGO low interest cash loans for farmers were few and far between. Farm programmes, such as BACH (the Binaba Area Community Health project) mainly provided seed loans at planting time, with interest-free repayment at harvest time, while NCWD's function was mainly organizational (although the animator for Bawku West had personally provided seed loans at her own risk and expense).

One Tilli woman had had a bank loan from a Bolga bank a number of years ago (possibly guaranteed by her husband, who was then chief, or a son employed by the CIDA Water Project). BACH staff pointed to the need and demand for a rural bank, noting that area women had already been duped twice by people claiming to be starting such a bank. BACH staff protected their clients by banking their money in the project account. Tarrakom residents, on the other hand, had never been involved in agricultural programmes of any kind and hence, had never received any kind of farm credit.

While revolving, low-interest cash loans to women's agricultural coop members were seen by some NGO's as central to rural development, some indication existed that the most needy had been excluded from women's cooperatives by the present "laissez-faire" approach to their formation. Tarrakom women, for example, waited for organizers to approach them. Some women in Tilli reported feeling ineligible and/or excluded because of their age and deteriorating health, their inability to make regular cash contributions to common funds, and for religious reasons.

For whatever reason(s), many women in Tilli and all the women in Tarrakom and the Fulani subvillage belonged to no coop, so had access to no cash or seed loans. The NCWD animator, Mrs. Cecilia Anaba, did make an organizational visit to Tarrakom during the research period in anticipation of an extension of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) programme starting up in the Upper West.

Women wanting to enter marketing on a regular basis had to be creative to obtain start-up funds. One gleaned corn from others' fields, then cooked it and sold it in the market. Others got loans from husbands, mothers, sisters... Still others got goods on consignment from other traders. At least two of the more successful traders in Tilli had gained trading experience while in the south.

#### **f. Markets**

The majority of younger women in both Tilli and Tarrakom were involved in at least occasional trade. Trading was viewed as more lucrative than farming, and some women attributed their ability to avoid seasonal hunger to their business acumen - knowing when to sell how much of what. Nonetheless, half the Tilli traders conducted their business only within the confines of the village, which did not have a proper market. The other half went no further than Binaba, Zebilla and Bawku, all of which were towns within Kusassi-dominated territory. The Cocoa Marketing Board's collection center for shea nuts at Zebilla was not popular, given that women either had to walk to Zebilla carrying the heavy, unprocessed nuts, or had to pay transport there, only to receive less than the current market price for their goods. The Bolga meat packing plant, the rice mill and the Zebilla BASF Fibre store had all closed or were being used for other purposes.

Only four Tilli women and two in Tarrakom were known to be involved in craft production (three made bowls and three made baskets). Most Tilli-area women reported marketing farm produce such as groundnuts, rice, dawadawa and shea butter; cooked foods; commercial goods such as batteries, mosquito coils, notebooks; and, when emergencies arose, livestock. Of these, the most commonly marketed products were shea butter and dawadawa, which were processed and sold gradually throughout the year, to give women small but steady incomes. Tarrakom women, on the other hand, said they marketed only on an emergency basis at Tilli; before doing so, however, they were required to seek their husbands' permission. Fulani women marketed yoghurt, shea butter and fowls at Tilli.

Restrictions on marketing activity were related to custom, cost, and circumstance. For example, while Tilli women could now make their own decisions about when to market their livestock, they still had to sell the animals through male intermediaries, who took commissions even if the animals were sold right at Tilli junction. Other women were prevented from marketing further afield by one-way lorry fares of between 100 and 500 cedis. Women might only make 100 cedis a day selling a little shea butter or yoghurt. Long distance marketing, including transborder marketing with its high transport costs and duties, was unthinkable for women, even though dry season saw large numbers of animals shipped south as hungry Northerners sold in desperation. One woman stated pragmatically that her choice of markets was seasonal: certain ones were unreachable by foot during rainy season.

One energetic individual had a regular trade route between Tilli, Binaba and Bawku. However, while she seemed to be managing financially, the cost in energy must have been very high. After long days of rugged travel and marketing, this woman on her return to Tilli was obliged to cook for her family over a wood fire.

## **2. Access to Facilities and Services**

### **a. Electricity and Communications**

A power line had recently been extended from Akosombo Dam, up through Bolgatanga, and all the way to Bawku. In theory, then, it was possible to have electricity in Tilli. No one did, however, except the district secretary, who had an electric generator. Occasionally, village children went to his home in the evening to watch videos!

FM radio programmes in the local languages were being broadcast from Bolga on a regular basis. At least two music programmes a week were in Kusaal, as well as some strictly educational broadcasts. "Traditional" songs recorded in the rural areas for broadcast had very up-to-date messages, concerning subjects such as the Global 2000 agricultural project, suffering and discrimination; and constituted a potent means of public education. However, it was usually men who owned the battery-operated radios, so women could only listen in if allowed and unoccupied.

No means of communication existed between Tilli, Tarrakom and the Fulani subvillages, or between them and other centers. For medical emergencies, people travelled on foot, by bicycle, or by lorry to Binaba, where there was an ambulance.

### **b. Formal Education**

#### **i. Primary and Secondary Education**

Unlike the Ashantis who had selected some of their royal princes to attend Britain's most renowned institutions of learning, the Kusassi leadership of colonial times had resisted formal education. Naabas were reported to have hidden their princes, and sent commoners to school in their place. After Awellinga's conversion, however, many princes from the royal family went to school, along with "brothers" (cousins, in Western terms) from nearby households. A good number continued their studies until they achieved at least a Middle School Leaving Certificate. Of the eighteen women individually interviewed, none over the age of 35 was literate; three of the younger women were.

At the time of the research, some children of both sexes dressed up daily and walked to the nearby primary and junior secondary schools at Tilli. Unfortunately, during the research period, the teachers were not there, because they had been recruited to act as enumerators for the upcoming election. Only the volunteer-operated daycare was functioning.

Girls had equal access to schools in theory. However, in reality, only two teenaged girls were known to be attending secondary school. Because the nearest secondary schools were residential, and found only at Bawku, Bolgatanga and Navrongo, the annual fees of about 38,000 Cedis were totally out of reach of most families, and especially of women, who increasingly found themselves responsible for their children's school fees. Many young women of about sixteen were seen waiting at the crossroads early every morning, hoping for a day's work on a nearby commercial farm. To the chagrin of parents, some unmarried girls had gone to Ouagadougou and southern Ghana. One such migrant who had recently returned to the village from Abidjan died of AIDS during my Tilli stay.

The subvillages were without schools. The Fulani headman stated that some children (gender undefined) did go to Tilli schools by bicycle. As for students from Tarrakom, they were also obliged to attend Tilli schools two or more kilometers away. Some, nonetheless, had clearly done so over the years, as a few spoke English (a usual area indicator of literacy). In fact, one former resident had even completed post-secondary training and was now an education official in the district. However, because Tarrakom had no school, those who had attended could be supposed to be a minority, even if the older generation's resistance to education had disappeared.

## **ii. Adult Literacy Classes**

Adult literacy classes were offered in Tilli village by a Kusassi male youth volunteer. Although Tilli women reported attending regularly in dry season, in rainy season, such activities ceased. Not long after sunset and the evening meal, exhausted farmers went quickly to bed. Because of distance, Tarrakom women could be assumed not to attend (travel by foot after dark is hazardous because of snakes and scorpions).

## **iii. Other Types of Adult Education**

Fulani women sought agricultural skills and technical upgrading from any agency willing to work with them. Specifically, they requested assistance to enter cotton production,

so that they could recommence weaving and dying before these skills were lost altogether by the youth.

#### **iv. Agricultural Education and Services**

Because the two male Ministry of Agriculture staffers responsible for Tilli resided in Zebilla, their contact with residents was limited. Ironically, a Tilli resident employed by the Ministry worked elsewhere. No female officer was assigned to the Tilli area, and none of the Tilli/Tarrakom women interviewed reported receiving advice from the Ministry, though the station tractor had been rented more than once by individual women. In addition, the station offered demonstration seed, but it was not known whether any women had taken advantage of the seed offer.

As previously mentioned, women agricultural animators from NCWD and BACH were active in Tilli and maintained sustained contact with their women's groups. In July 1992, Mrs. Anaba of the NCWD extended her activities to Tarrakom. The Fulani settlement still remained unserved by any agency.

In general, information about improved seed, new plant varieties and fertilizers appeared to be reaching women. They interplanted several varieties of millet on their farms, and added totally new crops such as soy beans. They staggered their planting through the early part of the growing season, enabling them to get more land into production. One woman interviewed reported switching away from crops that seemed susceptible to disease. Yet in spite of agricultural education, grain supplies remained inadequate, poultry losses to disease were extreme, and farmers continued to neglect tree planting.

#### **v. Health Education and Services**

At the time of the research, a clinic was under construction at Tilli, and people hoped that a fulltime nurse would eventually staff it. Meanwhile, a mobile clinic visited the village every two weeks. Tarrakom and the Fulani subvillages did not even have visits by the mobile clinic, nor were these communities served by all-season roads so that people could catch transport to health facilities elsewhere. Their only transport options were foot, bicycles or, in cases of emergency, donkey carts.

For health education, preventative medicine, prenatal and postnatal care, supervised delivery, contraceptives at low cost, diagnosis and treatment of illness, or referrals and

ambulance transportation to hospital, people from Tilli/Tarrakom were obliged to go to the Binaba Health Post about 12 km. away, a service they preferred to the mobile clinic which visited Tilli once every two weeks. Total costs for such a visit could easily exceed 400 cedis - 200 for the lorry fare, plus 200 or more for medication. This amount was less than \$1US, but equivalent to two days wages for a labourer. Emergency treatment requiring ambulance transportation and a hospital stay could jeopardize the financial stability of a whole chain of kin. Thus, effectively, everything but emergency treatment was neglected. A letter received in December 1992 illustrated the situation: a young Tilli/Kukore mother had just died from tuberculosis - a treatable disease - because the family had attempted home remedies until too late.

Custom acted in combination with cost to further restrict women's access to health services. In the past when men paid most medical fees, women in polygamous unions were in a particularly precarious position, because husbands resisted giving monies to any one wife out of fear of being obliged to give to all. Although women often paid themselves now, some still felt the need to ask their husbands' permission before seeking Western-style medical treatment. Although they fully expected a positive response, what they were sometimes still met with were delaying tactics: lack of agreement about who would pay for what, what constituted an emergency or life-threatening condition, whether prescribed medicines needed to be purchased when local treatments were available, whether illness was brought on by immorality... Observations demonstrated that, indeed, some women and children remained deprived of essential medical care, although a few did report seeking emergency treatment and prenatal examinations. In Tarrakom, many women continued to rely on house shrines, amulets and local medicines to protect themselves and their children.

Because traditional religion and medicine were intertwined, many traditionalists in the 1970's had avoided seeking preventative medicines and treatments at health posts and hospitals, which tended to be operated directly by missions or staffed primarily by Christians. Therefore, supplementing educational efforts by health workers with local language radio programmes and health talks by NCWD social animators had special importance. For example, in Tarrakom, the NCWD representative talked briefly about contraception issues and the need for clean water, the use of illicit drugs, teen pregnancies, female circumcision, immunization, AIDS and women's education in general. Men and women present demonstrated awareness of the issues by their remarks during the subsequent discussion.

Results of health education appeared mixed. On the positive side, most children in Tilli proper appeared reasonably nourished, several latrines had been constructed throughout the village, and three pumps now serviced the village. On the negative side, parental separation and divorce seemed correlated with children's malnutrition and symptoms of emotional distress (sporadic aggressiveness, disobedience to the remaining parent, clinging behaviour and crying, unkept appearance...); existent latrines were underutilized and unmaintained; women on Widnaba side were reported still to be using ground water instead of the borehole in rainy season, in spite of a widespread cholera epidemic the year before; while women in Tarrakom and the Fulani camp had no choice but to use ground water.

### **3. Women's Changing Rights, Responsibilities and Roles in the Family and Community**

#### **a. Changes in Agriculture**

Reference has already been made on page 39 to that fact that Kusassi women had broken with tradition and now grew many varieties of millet, the principle cereal crop, like the men. Although it is not known how long women have been cultivating millet, one Tarrakom woman said that for her, it had only been two years. They also cultivated groundnuts, rice and soy beans, and expressed a willingness to experiment with new varieties and crops. Some kept fowls, pigs and goats. One man attributed these changes to the continuing high rates of male outmigration, and the ill-health and advancing age of many of the men left in the village. On the other hand, vegetables, once the province of women, were now cropped in dry season gardens adjacent to the compounds by some men. Fulani women, however, still functioned according to a gender-specific division of labour.

Women planted, sowed and weeded. They did not, however, as a rule, cut off the millet heads at harvest time. Again, as with their reluctance to use bullocks, women attributed this restriction to lack of strength, rather than to custom, taboo or religious prohibition. One woman did say, however, that she got around this restriction by pulling up the whole plant, and when it was on the ground, chopping off the heads. Although this task would seem to require as much strength as chopping off the head while the plant was in the ground, Tilli Christian women's general assertions about their freedom from taboos was given support by the fact that some of those common fifteen to twenty years ago were unknown to young women!

A limited number of restrictions seemed to apply to Muslim women and those of the traditional religion from Tarrakom. For example, women had to pay for a Muslim (male) butcher to slaughter animals for consumption by Muslims. Non-Muslim relatives of Muslims were able to keep "unclean" animals such as pigs, but at a distance removed from the common dwelling. One woman reported that Tarrakom people did not keep pigs, because they caused the water to dry up. They did, however, eat pork.

#### **b. Changes in Religious Practice and Belief**

With Christianity and Islam predominant in Tilli for at least three or four decades, many old customs and practices were disappearing. For example, little girls in Tilli no longer wore waist beads as almost all had fifteen years ago, nor did widows wear strings demonstrating their status, nor children wear amulets. Scarification was now generally limited to small "medicinal" marks on the face and/or abdomen; the long slash to the cheek which formerly marked both males and females as Kusassi was disappearing. Female circumcision was reportedly dying out, a change actively encouraged by the government.

The Assembly of God Church was still an important institution in the village. However, it did not seem to be the dominant social force it had been fifteen years before, as evidenced by the fact that the pastor was not summoned by village authorities to meet me, a visitor, nor did he appear on his own initiative (the former pastor and his family were well known to me). Islam, on the other hand, was now firmly implanted in Tilli. Although there seemed as yet to be no imam in Tilli, the new Naaba and significant numbers of men from the major houses of the village had become Muslim; the meuzzin's call was heard regularly at sunrise and sunset; and a Muslim men's counselling group constituted itself to deal with a case of domestic violence. Some expectation existed that spouses of male converts would also convert, but no direct pressure was reported to have been put on women. However, young Christian wives whose husbands had converted faced the possibility that their husbands would now take on second wives. In such cases, they would have to choose whether to accept the censure of coreligionists for staying in such a relationship, or to divorce. Older widows seemed under no such pressures, and continued to attend church along with some of their grandchildren.

Traditional religion appeared to dominate in Tarrakom. House shrines, the wearing of talismans, medicine in infants' fontanel's were all visible evidence that the traditional religion and related practices were still intact. The Fulani migrants, on the other hand, were

all Muslim, although one non-Fulani suggested they did not bury their dead according to Islamic law.

### **c. Changing Patterns of Courtship and Marriage**

One remarkable Tilli widow related how some 40 or so years ago, she had been married "by capture". The former Tilli Naaba had seen her passing to market and had kidnapped her, locking her up in his room for several days, where she had cried and cried. Eventually, her family sent a delegation of men to complain, at which point the Naaba readily paid the dowry and thus secured her.

#### **I. Arranged Marriages**

"Marriage by capture" no longer appeared to be in existence in the area even fifteen years ago. However, "forced marriages" (to use the term current in that area) were, and remain common right up to the present for a number of reasons. For example, friends could arrange the marriages of their children as an affirmation of their friendship. Sisters could arrange to bring in younger sisters as co-wives in their own marriages, a relationship that provided the women involved with companionship and workmates. In a number of cases, however, the reasons for forced marriages were baser - to bring quick cash to a family via the dowry (to give for a son's marriage, for example), or to keep resources in a family (as is the case with the forced remarriage of widows of childbearing age to deceased husbands' brothers).

Forced marriages appeared more common in outlying areas than in Tilli-proper, were more often polygamous and involved greater age spreads between the spouses. They were sometimes resisted by women for some of the following reasons: because of love for another man, aversion for the proposed husband, or because of religious differences.

According to informants, when a marriage was arranged by a woman's father and she was not agreed, she had two options: submission or flight. If she had a boyfriend ready and able to pay the dowry to her father, she could seek his protection; if not, she could run home from the proposed husband's house and throw herself at the mercy of either parent. Mothers were known to support financially their daughters' flights at times. Fathers, however, often forced their daughters back into unwanted marriages, especially if they had already paid the dowry out for a son's marriage.

## **ii. Marriage by Choice**

Many young Kusassi women - including Muslim women - had some degree of freedom in selecting or accepting their first spouse, as long as he was unrelated to either the father or mother. Marriage to outsiders, such as "Nassara" (whites) was also acceptable as long as the dowry was paid. Among the Fulani, marriage between cousins was permissible.

Young Kusassi and Fulani women formerly met perspective husbands at funerals in their home villages or at market under the watchful eyes of relatives. Now, contrary to many Kusassi parents' wishes, Kusassi women journeyed along with their brothers to attend funerals in other villages; a few even travelled to dances in Bolgatanga.

In confirmation of Rattray's observations years ago, young women could entertain several suitors concurrently, from whom they and their housepeople would receive gifts. Suitors themselves would not know the nature or degree of the competition, although they could test their intendeds' morality before marriage by having a friend spend the night next to them on the sleeping mat.

## **iii. Marriage and Religion**

Marriage among people of the traditional religion once took place by stages, with one of the most important in the series of activities being the paying of the dowry. This transaction was so important that in the 1970's, several marriages involving children were observed to have been "annulled" by parents not content to wait longer for final installments in dowry payments.

In the mid 1970's, Assembly of God parents often encouraged their children to marry coreligionists (that is, members of Assembly of God churches) from nearby villages. Many of these marriages were by choice and were formalized in the Tilli church. Church elders, both male and female, promoted monogamy in marriage by ejecting from the congregation Christians who took second wives.

The expected route by which Muslim marriage was contracted was rather specific. A young man was expected to propose to a young woman, then carry the case to the imam of his community for further action. This imam would then select elders to inform the imam and elders of the woman's community, as well as the woman's father. If the father was agreed to the marriage, he was then to verify that the daughter agreed. The imam then questioned the

woman as well. After this process was complete, the date for the marriage could be set, and the man would begin to buy clothing for his bride-to-be. At the time of the marriage, the woman's father was expected to give her cash to begin trading activities.

#### **d. Marital Relations**

##### **I. Changing Economic Nature of Marriage**

Economic responsibility in the family has shifted more and more onto women. With many husbands having gone south, some employed away from home in regional centers, and many of those left behind discouraged and farming halfheartedly, women began cropping millet to fill their own cooking pots. Distribution to the household from the landlord's central store was becoming a thing of the past. Along with these role changes had come changes in ways of thinking. While a few women called themselves simply "housewives", most called themselves "farmers" (a considerable number of these same women traded as well, as already pointed out, but they did not call themselves traders).

As already pointed out, women continued to control their own small incomes. Some individual husbands nonetheless monitored their wives' economic activities; others made requests for "loans" at frequent intervals which wives felt obliged to honour. Tilli women expressed a certain bitterness that, while their visible economic contributions to the family were rising quickly, demands were rising faster still, and their traditional rights to gifts such as wedding cloths frequently went unrespected.

##### **II. Control of Sexuality and Reproduction**

- **Fidelity:** So widespread remained the belief that women were promiscuous and inclined to "flirting" that difficulty in labour was still seen by some as proof of unfaithfulness. In such cases, senior housewomen, whose suspicions might have been aroused by a wife's "rudeness" to her husband during her pregnancy, would "conduct investigations", by questioning the woman about her fidelity. Confession was expected, and was followed by the sacrifice of a fowl if a woman was traditional religion, or by prayers, if she was Christian or Muslim. Afterwards she would be sent to hospital.

As recently as fifteen years ago, the withholding of medical treatment for women in labour remained common; I myself sent the ambulance to transport one woman to hospital who had been kept home until her uterus had ruptured. An informant reported that now

"enlightened" men recognized the possibility of fetal abnormality and malpositioning, and would therefore send their wives to hospital without undue delay.

- **Birth spacing:** Public ridicule directed at pregnant nursing mothers provided a strong incentive to Kusassi women to ensure that their children were spaced a minimum of two to three years apart, as had been the case historically. Although it was unclear how such spacing was achieved, prolonged abstinence, prolonged periods of breast feeding and perhaps even malnutrition certainly affected overall fertility rates. Of late, birth control pills had been available from the Binaba Health Post to the few who could afford them, but one woman stated that instead of birth control pills, she used the herb "pelik" to bring on her menses (that is, presumably, to provoke abortion). During the interview, she displayed some of the herb stored in the thatch of her roof.

- **Limiting the total number of births:** One Christian woman had had an agreement with her first husband to limit the number of children she bore to four because she found the work of being the only wife great. However, when the first husband died, she was obliged to bear more children for her new husband.

During a community discussion in Tarrakom, one man vociferously resisted the idea of women limiting the number of their pregnancies beyond what was practised traditionally, suggesting that even if a man had two children, they both could be killed at once by witchcraft. Other men and women countered, however, that any number of offspring was no insurance for his old age - all the children could go south and effectively abandon him; therefore the man should rethink his position.

### iii. Relations among Rivals in Polygamous Marriages

One social animator referred to a discussion she had had with Cameroonian Master's programme classmates concerning use of the term "rivals". The classmates had felt the term harsh and disrespectful, but the Ghanaian officer had asserted that in her home area, women in polygamous marriages were indeed "rivals", and to use another term would be less than honest. Non-related wives generally did not cooperate in farming, livestock rearing, or cooking, although rivals in one household seemed to have a cooperative junior partner/senior partner work arrangement as already mentioned. Individual wives and their children did not even eat with rivals and their children as a rule. Competition existed among women for husbands' monies and attention.

The marriage of sisters to the same man, however, was thought to lessen rivalry and to offer specific advantages to the women involved. Such relationships were expected to be more harmonious; a junior sister could receive protection and advice from the senior in exchange for labour; and the two could help each other out in difficult financial times.

#### e. Divorce

Although some male informants in the village stated that marriages were relatively stable, the number of children in the village core being fostered suggested otherwise. Women desiring divorce did not necessarily confront their husbands, but rather removed themselves, and sometimes their children, to their own parental home. This circumspect style of separation was approved of by some parents because it allowed women to keep custody of their children by not closing the doors on reconciliation. During such times, some parents counselled their daughters to "be patient".

Women could take the initiative and divorce. However, divorce often created serious financial problems for women's families - especially if the dowry cows had already been paid out for brothers' marriages. In such circumstances, daughters received little family support unless they were "barren"; they were Christian and were protesting husbands' taking on of second wives; their dowries had not been paid in full; or their husbands had proven unable to maintain them.

Irregularly-occurring physical abuse by husbands was not totally unknown. However, informants stated that abusers tended to be mentally ill or substance abusers. Men desiring divorce did not as a rule abuse their wives. Some simply "sent the women out".

Muslims, however, were expected to notify their fathers-in-law in writing, with copies to the imams in their own and their wives' villages. Female relatives retrieved the women, who were maintained by their former husbands for three months after the separation to be sure they were not pregnant. (If they were pregnant, they would have to be maintained through their pregnancy).

Regardless of who initiated the divorce, women generally were only allowed to take with them the property they brought to the marriage and goods they had purchased during it. Infants at the breast were allowed to accompany their mothers temporarily; older children remained in the fathers' houses. Only children who had been "given" to maternal relatives with husbands' permission could not be claimed by husbands' families.

#### **f. The Special Situation of Widows and Their Children**

When men died, their property, their widows and their children all passed to the control of close male relatives ("brothers"). Widows of childbearing age had little choice but to enter forced marriages with in-laws, in order to remain in the households with their children. Not all were unhappy: one woman stated that her maturity had allowed her to have a reasonable relationship with her second husband. Others, however, were "worried" by their new husbands for money, and they and their children neglected.

Occasionally, the misery of second marriages precipitated women's flight to their parental homes for long periods. Their parents could provide alibis to inlaws for the long absences, but if the inlaws were not mollified, children were quickly "repossessed". Sometimes, however, inlaws judiciously failed to investigate women's absences in dry season when food was short.

In Tilli, at least two older widows were de facto heads of households, although in both cases, now-absent sons had built the compounds and were the titular heads. These women controlled the land immediately around the compounds and farmed millet there. The elder one realized that as she aged, she would no longer be able to support herself; instead of finding refuge with a son or daughter, she hoped she might find it with the other independent widow, who was related to her. Most widows past menopause, however, had few choices. They stayed in their deceased husbands' households, and were ostensibly under the care of the landlords and their own eldest sons. Given high rates of male outmigration, the division of responsibilities among different sons, the general material poverty of the area, and the vagaries of individual personalities, such arrangements for the care of widows were

frequently inadequate. For example, financial assistance from southern migrants was rarely forthcoming. Charity was not always generously or kindly given; often it was irregular and surreptitious, so that the donor's generosity would not become known to other needy.

Some of those frail and ill were indeed pitiful. Their hopeful obsequiousness to strangers sometimes came close to begging, and their excessive gratitude for any small assistance was testimony to their suffering.

#### **g. The Political/legal Standing of Women:**

Traditional authorities and courts in Tilli were "paramount" to those in Tarrakom. Permission to proceed to Tarrakom, for example, was granted from the Tilli Naaba and elders. Official appointments of headmen and magaziya in Tarrakom were the province of Tilli officials.

#### **i. Status and Age**

Older people in general received respect from the young. When greeting, the deeper people kneeled, the greater was the respect they demonstrated each other. Even young men kneeled to older women. Older men, however, showed deference primarily to those in positions of power and authority who tended to be men, unless they were foreigners.

Certain older women were well respected, and were consulted by insiders and outsiders about community affairs. In the case of one woman, however, similar respect had been shown her when she was younger. Therefore, it was probably due at least in part to her particular personality.

Overall, older women did not appear to possess particular power or authority. Rather, the situation of elderly widows referred to earlier demonstrates the opposite. To be consulted on community affairs, women had to be physically active in order to get themselves to community meetings. One woman said she was never consulted on community affairs or informed of important decisions **because of** her age. When she did hear of important matters from her daughter, the woman would send her back as her delegate to community meetings.

## **ii. Women and the Dowry**

Dowry of four cows was still being practised; however, government workers were attempting to get fathers to accept two cows as full payment<sup>8</sup>. Dowry could be paid by installments if all parties agreed. However, as already mentioned, fathers sometimes became impatient when full dowry had not been paid after several years, and would take their daughters and their children back.

## **iii. The Resolution of Disputes Involving Women**

It is noteworthy that during the three weeks I was in the Tilli area, few signs of overt hostility or aggression among community members were observed. Even raised voices were uncommon.

When disputes did arise, however, there were some matters that women could take to their husbands, who then might approach the Naaba or police. For other matters, women could go instead to the magaziiya or the pastor (if she was Christian). However, if disputes were between husbands and wives, the wives could go to their fathers, who might in turn threaten to expose the husbands publicly for their behaviour.

In the traditional court, witnesses to quarrels were called, including women themselves. Women's testimony was said to be given at least equal weight to men's, regardless of religion. In fact, some thought women's testimony to be more weighty, because it was not given frivolously. In any case, because of the nature of local architecture, the history of disputes was often well known to the Naaba and elders, so fact-finding did not tend to be a difficult process.

## **iv. Traditional Sanctions**

Traditional sanctions for antisocial behaviour did not seem in most cases to be great; a token payment of kola nuts to the chief and elders was sometimes all that was required. If the crime was against property, the offender could also be required to pay for any damages at times; if violence was perpetrated against a person, medical costs had to be paid by the offender. The mentally ill however, were not usually punished. Perhaps because sanctions were not usually severe, one case involving misappropriated funds went unresolved for many months, until an outsider threatened to take the matter to civil court. An "out-of-court" settlement was then reached.

#### **v. The Political System**

The system of district assemblies which existed until late 1992 included special positions for women representatives; however, the election late in 1992 allowed for only one representative - male or female - per area. Because almost no women were even running for office, representation of women in the new system would be very reduced from representation in the old.

#### **vi. Ghanaian Law Reform**

Sections of Ghana's proposed draft constitution dealt directly with the conditions of women's lives, inheritance rights and child custody. For example, the consultative assembly said that widows should inherit land rather than the brothers and sisters of the deceased. How the new system would operate in areas where land was held in common and only its use delegated remained unknown. The chief felt that the law would have no particular relevance, because men would continue to marry brothers' widows, according to custom. He further stated that under Muslim law, girls were supposed to inherit one-third of the father's property; however, they lost land use rights when they married out anyway<sup>9</sup>.

Women lawyers travelling through northern Ghana in July of 1992 also informed community workers that the government wanted to encourage marriage registration. However, the NCWD officer felt that such registration could meet with resistance in the north from men embarrassed about registering more than one wife.

#### **vii. The National Council on Women and Development**

This government agency has been in existence for about two decades, and recently, all NGO's working with women in Ghana were requested to register with it. NCWD personnel in the north were highly motivated, experienced, and professional, but few in number. Given, then, the Council's mandate of encouraging, educating and organizing rural women, personnel experienced difficulty reaching women in all parts of their vast territories. Even with the support of CUSO and the United Nations, personnel accomplished their work at considerable personal sacrifice<sup>10</sup>.

## **h. Particular Positions of Privilege, Power and Authority**

### **i. Senior Wives**

Senior wives each had their own rooms. However, because junior wives (who were usually younger) initially shared the husbands' quarters, they were able to cater to their husbands and seek their ears more frequently; thus they were seen as having more influence than senior wives, whose only chance for private conversation with their husbands was when they made conjugal visits. Some husbands refused even this forum of expression to their wives.

Junior wives also had the "privilege" of cooking on a regular basis for their husbands. Because husbands were obliged to provide ingredients for their own meals, junior wives thus often had privileged access to "richer" foodstuffs. Some husbands openly favoured junior wives in other ways, such as by obliging children of other wives to carry water for them, purchasing charcoal for them so that they would not have to gather firewood, and by allowing them to accompany them to the south.

In the absence of their husbands, senior wives received the "honour" of caring for their husbands' elderly mothers; such honours were rather dubious, because they involved labour and provision responsibilities which were difficult for senior wives to meet.

### **ii. The magaziiya**

The magaziiya was a traditional women's leader responsible for keeping elders informed of women's opinions on important matters; keeping unity among women for community projects; adjudicating disputes between women or between women and their adult children; and character training of girls in preparation for marriage. She was chosen without nomination or campaigning by the village women for an indefinite term of office. She came from no particular family or age group, and was responsible for counselling women of all religious backgrounds. The current magaziiya was a young woman, chosen for her qualities of character, chief among which was patience. She recently took over her duties from an elderly woman who had been unable to perform them for some time. In Tilli, any outsider wishing to see the magaziiya had to go through the chief. For example, when officials came to Tilli from Accra to discuss with male village leaders the location for the proposed Junior Secondary School, the results of the meeting were conveyed to the magaziiya, to be conveyed to village women.

No magaziiya existed at Tarrakom. The new Tilli magaziiya was responsible to nominate her. Women's disputes in the meantime went to the headman.

### iii. Chiefs' Wives

By custom, applications for headman positions were to be passed to the Naaba through his senior wife and mother. However, some "lobbyists" preferred to bypass official channels, and deal with the frequently more-favoured junior wife. Women in the current Naaba's house, however, were unfamiliar with such common political manoeuvrings, being as new to their roles as Naaba's wives as the Naaba himself was to the role of chieftancy.

### i. Changing Perceptions Concerning Women's Role in Society

Mothers realized they were increasingly central to their children's survival and education, and they defined their roles in society as "very important", especially their farming role. They were encouraged in this vision by social animators working in the region. The magaziiya's role was very limited, given that she was new to the office, had had no "orientation", and was herself rather young and therefore inexperienced.

Male leaders recognized NGO interest in women, and cooperated with service personnel, although in Tarrakom, men expressed concern about subjects such as birth spacing. Local women's leaders, however, were new to their roles and unclear about what they entailed. Like other women in Tilli, they had probably been further confused by women *political* activists who had been recruiting in the region. At the time of the research, therefore, they were not central figures in helping women to explore their changing roles in society.

### 4. Leisure Activities:

Small boys occupied themselves at times with slingshots; small girls pretended to grind millet with smooth stones. Small boys and girls also wrestled, and larger boys played soccer. Some young women went to Bolgatanga for dances occasionally.

Married women laughed, however, when asked about leisure activities. They had little time for leisure, though they paused at times to rest (while sales were slow at market, for example). Some attended evening and Sunday church services several times a week. Others played a dice game called Ludo, or the southern game, Aware, with their housepeople during dry season. One informant stated that older women would spin in leisure time. Some

travelled to visit relatives. Some danced, but with little energy after the long "hungry season".

On the other hand, one woman trader who had to sit at her post most of the day saw going to the forest to collect firewood as pleasant exercise. Nonetheless, trips to market for women were "work", while trips for men were often social occasions.

## **B. Specific Strategies for Influence and Control**

Many of women's strategies to exert some measure of influence and control are readily identifiable from the preceding information. Therefore, this section is rather brief, to avoid unnecessary repetition.

### **1. Financial Strategies of Women**

Women borrowed money and tried new crops, when these risk-taking activities held out the promise of increasing food production. A few, especially those with southern trading experience and some education, were also able to build up enough capital to make their supplementary marketing activities economically important. Most, however, marketed only to obtain enough cash to purchase certain important goods, such as soap and kerosene, and services.

### **2. Innovations by Women Agriculturalists**

As already indicated, women appeared ready and anxious to try new methods and crops. Those around Tilli were growing soya beans, and several varieties of maize and millet, in addition to familiar vegetables like tomatoes and aliefi (greens). They were also processing soya beans in the same way as a wild seed, dawadawa, for use in local recipes. Tilli women expressed some reservations about the cash crop, cotton: high cotton production was associated in people's minds with low food production. Moreover, cotton was felt to be highly labour intensive, with low economic returns. Fulani women, however, expressed an interest in combining cotton production and weaving. They also expressed interest in the U.N.-contributed looms which were in storage at the Zebilla local administration offices. Tarrakom women were anxious for agricultural education, so that they could follow Tilli women's agricultural initiatives.

Gleaning from commercially-harvested fields and the wild provided women with produce of economic importance. However, extensive cultivation and practices such as dry

season burning and the chopping of live trees for firewood were impacting negatively on the environment, and adversely affecting the viability of important women's economic activities, such as the collection of roofing grasses.

Women farmers also attempted to build up equity by raising chickens until they could be traded for larger animals such as goats and sheep. This strategy had been unsuccessful, because (1) hawks and disease took much of the poultry, and (2) hungry season and family illnesses forced women to sell their animals to buy food and pay medical bills.

### **3. Strategies in Marriage**

Open squabbling was not permissible and usually brought quick intervention before a marriage completely broke down. However, a woman could implement a number of strategies. If upset, she could address her husband in a joking fashion. She could refuse to cook for him and/or refuse him sex (although she no longer had the opportunity to lock him out, as men now generally required women to come to their rooms to avoid such embarrassments). She could join with cowives to drive out a new wife or assist her desertion. She could return to her father's (or mother's) house for an extended period because it was usually not far away.

One case of wife abuse occurred just prior to my stay in Tilli. Rather than ignoring or suppressing knowledge of the incident, a number of actions were taken by men in the village. A delegation of Muslim men went to "advise" the man and confiscate the weapon. This delegation literally paraded to the offender's compound, so sanctioning was a very public event. The Naaba counselled the offender, but did not levy a kola fine. Overall, the main punishment appeared to be public exposure and disapproval. The woman's response to the violence directed at her was unknown.

In general, violence against women was said to be rare, occurring when husbands were drunk, mentally ill or had used hemp. One informant said rather disparagingly that women were not generally considered worth arguing with.

### **4. Women's Alliances**

Women were said to have better relationships with younger sons than with the older sons who were to see to their welfare. Young sons depended on their mothers for support in village discussions, while the mothers in return counted on receiving sustenance in return.

Women also allied with sister-rivals, other female relatives married into the same village, women's cooperative members, co-religionists, and occasionally, rivals.

Cooperative alliances recently forged have depended upon rural women's own initiative in presenting themselves to social animators and coop members. This "laissez-faire approach" to membership appeared to have excluded two main groups of women: (1) non-members resident in places where coops already existed - these women reported not seeking inclusion because they felt unwelcome because of age and infirmity, poverty and/or religious affiliation; and (2) those in more isolated areas, who waited for social animators to approach them.

### **C. General Effects of Encroaching Capitalism**

Again, this section is brief because much of the relevant information has already been presented in the first part of the chapter. Therefore, only a limited number of general observations will be presented here.

Tilli area people still relied primarily on subsistence agriculture, and on the whole, were distanced from town life. Yet about two decades of development efforts had produced changes in people's thinking and behaviour, especially in the areas of agriculture and health, and these changes were now proceeding by geometric, not arithmetic progression.

Innovation had become the hallmark of women's activities. Their movement into staples production for consumption, for example, constituted a social revolution of sorts, producing ripple effects throughout the communities. Their involvement in cooperatives and marketing holds out the possibility that they will be increasingly drawn into the cash economy through loans and banking.

## Endnotes

1. Girls tended to marry soon after leaving school.
2. Millet flour is soaked overnight in water to produce "sour water". In the evening of the following day, the "sour water" and flour are brought to a rapid boil. Then the cook begins to add more millet flour - all the while stirring rapidly - until the mixture thickens to a semi-solid consistency. It is cooked for a short time more, then turned out into bowls. Voilà: Tzet!
3. The hearth usually consisted of three stones cemented into the floor. Firewood was pushed between these, and the round-bottomed cooking pots set on top.
4. The term "housepeople" refers to all relatives and their dependents living in the same compound.
5. How this widow came by these furnishings is unknown.
6. Who used the tobacco is not known.
7. The idea that smoke in the rooms was necessary to kill insects in the thatch ignores two facts: (a) rooms could be smoked out on an occasional basis anyway by blocking the stovepipes from smokeless stoves; and (b) fires were never built in sleeping rooms to drive out insects.
8. The likelihood of landlords readily accepting two cows as dowry payment in full is unlikely, because such a transaction would imply that wives were only expected to bear two children each. Traditionally, in cases of divorce, if a woman had borne less than four children to her inlaws household, a certain number of dowry cows had to be returned to her former husband's household. For example, if only one child was left behind in the former husband's house, three cows of the original four would have to be returned to the husband's family; if she left behind two children, two cows would have to be returned, and so on.
9. This last statement reflects the Naaba's own, current understanding of Islamic and civil law, and their relationship to each other.
10. In response to CIDA funding cuts in 1993, CUSO was obliged to terminate its work with the NCWD a year earlier than planned.

## CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

### A. Factors Impinging on the Analytical Process

Collection of data and the analysis itself were both enhanced and complicated by researcher knowledge of the area. The knowledge of individual personalities and family and village histories heightened my sensitivity to discrepancies between ideals and realities; moderated the tendency to see observed individual and household patterns of behaviour and thought as necessarily constant across families, communities, and Kusassi society in general; and thus allowed a complex picture of the directions of social change to emerge.

However, my mind was active on more than the level of formal logic: vague memories of downcast eyes, giggles, a barbed aside from a familiar person in a familiar environment - such was the passively-absorbed, subjective material secreted away in the recesses of my mind that meant the difference between assurance and doubt about certain subjects, and that opened windows onto people's hopes and pain.

Drawing such details about the total research milieu into the realm of the conscious was a difficult and delicate task: how could they be brought into the conscious for examination when they were never consciously recorded in the first place?

### B. Analysis Using Anthias and Yuval-Davis' "Contextualizing Feminism..."

The idea that Kusassi women would demonstrate some commonality of interests and goals with other women in general; with African, Ghanaian or Kusassi women; with age mates; or rivals (euphemistically termed "cowives" in much of the literature) is challenged by the research findings. In the context of Tilli and environs, women functioned for the most part as isolated, vulnerable individuals unless melded into some social collectivity under the guidance of the religious community or social animators. Hence, Anthias and Duval's skepticism about false assumptions of "sisterhood" among women is supported. Splits among women followed ethnic, and religious lines, and were associated with, though not reducible to class or economic strata. Strategies vigorously pursued by women to assert themselves and protect their interests and those of their dependent children reflected, but did not perfectly parallel, these splits. In addition, *individual* women appeared to use age (especially youth) and/or beauty to their advantage *periodically*.

## 1. Intra-ethnic Divisions among Women

At the local level, the data clearly demonstrates that Kusassi women in Tilli/Tarrakom, by virtue of their (female) gender, were jural minors as hypothesized, the particular dimensions of this status being defined by their ethnic group (or "tribe") membership. For example, being Kusassi, women had (1) insufficient, unequal access to foodstuffs of adequate quantity and quality; (2) spartan accommodation; (3) access to land only as delegated through the male hierarchy; (4) limited access to vitally-important kitchen gardens; (5) only partial control of their own labour; (6) access to the others' labour almost solely on a paid basis; (7) limited housewares and tools; (8) financial responsibilities always greater than income; (9) restrictions on the highly lucrative economic activity of marketing because of the limited distances some women were allowed to travel, even with husbands' permission; (10) difficulty accessing health and education services; (11) restricted rights in marriage, divorce and inheritance; and (12) difficulty participating in family and community decision-making because the existence of only a few, ill-defined positions of power and authority for women.

Those particularly disadvantaged were many, and included women who were pregnant, breast-feeding, ill, widowed, divorced (or desiring divorce) and/or elderly. Social mechanisms presumed to ensure their sustenance in fact did not; some lived in a state of de facto abandonment. The interwoven layers of female/male and male/male responsibility allowed self-interest to dominate the actions of "caretaking" males, who frequently chose to suppose that someone wealthier in the "responsibility chain" would pick up their slack. Thus many of the physically-disadvantaged faced yearly hunger as a matter of course, especially if their principal "caretakers" had gone south, while out-marrying widows and divorcees were deprived of their children and marital property. Even the suffering of elderly women was met with a certain indifference or resignation; these women's ability to make themselves seen and heard in the community often determined their individual fates.

Although the historical origins of such behaviour remain unknown, the behaviour itself was not new: it was observed nearly two decades ago. At the present time, women were turning increasingly, collectively to social animators from organizations such as NCWD, for assistance to throw off the respectable, but threadbare mantle of the family social welfare system, which has caused so many so much grief.

While women's disadvantage in the conjugal unit and the compound was quite clear, their position before local courts deserves special attention. Because women were said rarely

to bring frivolous cases before the courts, traditional functionaries were felt by male informants to be more sympathetic to women's complaints. One government worker scathingly remarked, however, that some men would say that women's opinions were "not even worth listening to".

Certainly then, men viewed women with some ambivalence, though none denied their overall disadvantaged position. Given these realities, one might suppose that perhaps only desperate wives dared to bring complaints to local courts which were composed of their husbands' male relatives. And when complaints were brought, traditional functionaries could be expected to experience difficulties striking that delicate balance between "mercy" to their brothers and "justice" for in-marrying women. This idea is given some support by the fact that in one known case of wife abuse (or threatened abuse), sanctions were "modest" by Western standards: a man who had attacked (or threatened) his wife with a hammer was counselled by his religious fellows/brothers - not reported to civil authorities - and the hammer confiscated.

In any case, the very physical structure of local compounds acted to ensure individuals' safety (including women's): the interconnected, open courtyard structure militated against verbal and physical attacks on anyone, by favouring **immediate** intervention by other adults. Moreover, such intervention was the "norm": on buses, in the market, at the roadside and in households, disputes between individuals always quickly drew in everyone within earshot, who loudly offered their opinions, tried to calm the situation, and physically separated the involved parties.

Authority structures, by their very nature, were tilted in men's favour. As a last resort, abused women could seek and gain the protection of their parents in their natal villages.

## **2. The Geographical Variable: The Situation in Tarrakom Subvillage**

Tarrakom differed from Tilli in three important ways: (1) the traditional religion, and not Christianity or Islam, predominated; (2) functionaries of local government were not independent, but were appointed by Tilli officials and responsible to them; and (3) the community was located at least two kilometers from the nearest all-season road. Therefore, it is possible to look at how religion, custom, the political structure and isolation acted in concert to shape the conditions of life in the subvillage. In general, the evidence suggests that the lives of Tarrakom women were more circumscribed by restrictions than those of Tilli

women, and that their community offered little in the way of infrastructure and services options.

Religious affiliation and the consequent world view impacted on gender relations, agricultural activity, health strategies, and possibly, educational opportunities. Tarrakom women, for example, still found themselves more often in "forced" marriages rather than in monogamous unions of choice, as was increasingly the case in Tilli. In such marriages, they could not call upon co-religionists to restrain husbands wishing to acquire additional wives. They remained subject to greater restrictions on movement than Tilli women, which in turn limited economic activities such as marketing, which in turn limited their ability to pay medical and school fees. They remained outside religious circles whose members might have invited them to participate in lucrative endeavours like women's farm cooperatives organized under the auspices of religious NGO's, or assisted them with communal labour or food in times of need. They were largely deprived of Western-style medical treatment options because of suspicion, cost and isolation. Unlike Tilli women, they did not report using the Binaba Health Post, suggesting that the 1970's patterns of use/nonuse along religious lines had been maintained. Their menfolk had not attempted to construct either a health post or a school in the hopes of attracting government service people to the community. Tilli, on the other hand, had been served by both a school and a mobile clinic for at least 20 years. Women there had long had the option of availing themselves of clinic services with the agreement of their housemen, some of whom have even worked for the clinic.

Political hopefuls, officials and service workers often ignored Tarrakom. They preferred to consult only with Tilli officials, who were easy to reach, and more likely to resemble themselves educationally and religiously. The net effect, then, of certain religious and customary practices, the dearth of religiously-defined support networks, geographical isolation, weak local political institutions, and discriminatory treatment was a community that recognized itself to be isolated and undeveloped. Thus, although materially, women's lives appeared quite similar in villages and subvillages, Tarrakom women recognized that their life chances were unequal.

The vulnerable, such as children and pregnant women, would be most affected from such disparities. Mortality rates for these groups could be expected to outstrip those in better serviced areas such as Tilli proper. In addition, Tarrakom women could be expected to continue to work as labourers for their "brothers" and "sisters" at Tilli as long as illiteracy and travel restrictions limit their horizons. Therefore, in spite of real cultural differences

and physical barriers, officials and service providers will need to be proactive in their approach to isolated populations such as that found in Tarrakom if the cycle of suspicion, resistance to agricultural, health and formal education, and deprivation is to be broken.

### **3. Inter-ethnic Differences and Divisions among Women**

Although the research was not designed with the seminomadic Fulani People in mind, information from interviews was still enough to demonstrate that Fulani women from the Tilli settlement area were economically more dependent on their husbands than Kusassi women. While some men and male youth were observed to have cash to spend (even for cigarettes), women's income from yoghurt sales was nominal. In addition, the Fulanis' ill-defined legal status in Ghana probably handicapped women more than men, as they lacked the tenuous institutional connections with the Kusassi administration that their menfolk had established.

From a regional perspective, small communities like Tilli would be seen as backwaters, where people remained what might be termed rural peasants. They were exploited not because they were Kusassi, but because they had little more than their labour and land use privileges to sell, even Kusassi women married into the Tilli royal family. However, the ethnic factor may have been what kept Kusassi women from attempting to enter the more lucrative market trade at Bolgatanga: all the women interviewed conducted their trade in towns where Kusassi language and culture dominated.

Looking from a national perspective, the whole north remained a source of "reserve labour" for the south. Thus, Kusassi men and women, along with other Northerners, continued to migrate in large numbers to the south (see Appendix D), usually to work as farm labourers or domestics. Only a portion of the active male/female labour force remained to see to the needs of dependents in the villages. Faced with this reality, social animators have successfully encouraged women to move into the farming of millet, the major cereal crop. The reaction of southern populations to the steady stream of migrants from the north is unknown. It is possible to imagine, however, that stereotypes about northern Peoples would exist; if these are widespread, they could certainly be expected to influence government policies toward the north, given that the majority of Ghanaian government officials and service personnel are Southerners.

#### 4. Strategies of Women in the Context of a Rural Kusassi Village and Environs

As suggested in research hypothesis 2, women have had, and continue to develop strategies to deal with their position as rural minors, with varying degrees of success. Before marriage, young Kusassi women, for example, were said to "flirt", encouraging the wooing of young suitors met at funerals and markets. The fact that they could receive several suitors at a time unnerved young men, who went to considerable expense during courtship, even though they knew they might be passed over. Women could turn to these suitors for rescue if threatened by their families with "forced marriage". However, in the end, the uncertainties of the courtship process generated an enduring mistrust between the sexes before any marriage was ever contracted.

Contrary to Stamp's assertions about the pervasiveness and power of indigenous women's organizations (Stamp 1989: 70-73), none were reported by area women. However, loose and shifting alliances of various sorts were. Women allied with mothers, sisters, junior sons, daughters, lovers, other market women, churchwomen, and, occasionally, "rivals". In addition, they took in and supported junior siblings or grandchildren, who in turn, helped them around the house and farm. They also looked to NGO's for organizational and credit assistance. These social arrangements and activities allowed women to exert some measure of control over the labour of some others, gave them companionship in villages in which they would forever remain outsiders in some significant measure, and allowed them to keep some control over at least some children in the case of divorce. Most did not count upon their husbands, fathers, in-laws, adult brothers or "rivals" for appreciable degrees of assistance. The system reputedly fostered competition and mistrust to such a degree both before and after marriage that some individuals continued to state that only a skilled landlord or husband could ensure harmony in a household.

Women, although forced into millet production by existing conditions, were not much diverted by the siren calls of the cash crop market. Instead, they deliberately concentrated on increasing production of foodstuffs for immediate household consumption by hiring labour at peak work times, experimenting with new crops and seed varieties, and breaking with the traditional sexual division of labour as it related to farming. In addition, they collected wild products and gleaned to obtain certain marketable products, developed marketing plans to ensure optimal returns for their own produce, borrowed money or goods to allow them to enter fulltime marketing, and were extremely careful in their spending,

generally denying themselves even small luxuries such as earrings. To free up time for farming and marketing, they took advantage of the village's volunteer day care facility and spaced births. To make their voices heard at community meetings when they were physically no longer able to attend, they sent trusted delegates, male or female. Interestingly, no one reported using the services of the *magaziiya*, perhaps because the office had just recently been revitalized after a period of dormancy by the appointment of a young woman to the position. While occasionally enjoying a treat at the market out of view of the household, in general women were very careful to use most of their income for essentials.

Some Christian and Muslim women at Tilli had been successful enough at farming and marketing to be able occasionally to purchase various types of assistance, as well as pay clinic and school fees. As already suggested, over time, such women and their children might be expected to prosper relative to women in Tarrakom of the traditional religion, who sold their labour.

### **C. Summary from Anthias and Yuval-Davis' Theory**

In summary then, Kusassi women were differentiated in their interests, needs and responses among themselves, as well as from other Ghanaian and African women by virtue of the intersecting factors of ethnicity, religion, and area of residence. Individual's situations were further shaped by age, marital status and physical status.

### **D. Analysis using Blumberg's General Gender Stratification Theory**

Because Blumberg formulated her "general gender stratification theory" and her "feminist theory of development" with reference to empirical data, it is interesting to see how well the theories match the complex realities of rural Bawku West. The idea of the changeable, gendered economy of the household is of particular interest.

**Hypothesis 1 of the general theory:** "Relative male/female economic power is the most important of the major independent "power variables" affecting overall gender stratification." (Blumberg 1989: 163)

Field research demonstrated that the Kusassi reality was complex. Although men - and especially older men - exercised an important degree of control over resources, the physical conditions under which they lived and worked were not that much more comfortable than women's. Men's advantage lay in their freedom to make certain choices for themselves

and for others, such as women. Although this authority seemed to be loosening, women's position as jural minors was confirmed.

Women, on the other hand, had always had some channels to ensure that certain traditional and religious rights be honoured, and strategies to manoeuvre around traditional restrictions, as the second hypothesis suggests. However, these had not given them the kind of social and economic leverage promised by cooperative activities, which, to some extent, circumvented male power structures. Unfortunately, the sad and unplanned result of gendered production in conjunction with the development of women's marketing cooperatives was a further weakening of the gender bond that had depended in good part on a production system of economic complementarity.

**Hypothesis 2:** "Relative male/female economic power varies - and not always in the same direction - at "nested" levels ranging from micro to macro, that is, from the couple to the household, the community, the class, the ethnic groups and the state." (Blumberg 1989 : 163)

This hypothesis and these hypotheses 1 and 2 are confirmed by the research: as jural minors, women nonetheless retained control of their produce at the level of the conjugal unit and the compound and were able to dispose of it to meet provisionary responsibilities. However, they had little say over resources such as communal plows controlled at the village level, because they were not very active participants in village administration. (Note: The use of the term "couple" in Blumberg's hypothesis is too restrictive, however, because many Kusassi and Fulani women are part of polygamous units.)

**Hypothesis 3:** "The macro levels influence the micro levels more than vice versa..." (Blumberg 1989: 163)

This hypothesis is difficult to evaluate. Given that a subsistence economy - not a cash economy - dominated the north, the macro level of state institutions and the national economy might be said to have impacted on the micro level of the local family unit not through intervention - economic or otherwise - but primarily because of services and opportunities *not* offered. Whatever cash cropping endeavours might have been encouraged, rural producers have not on the whole been drawn in: they realized their very survival was still very much attached to their domestic production.

At the level of the village, social animation has impacted significantly on economic activities of women agriculturalists. However, this macro impact has not at this point unseated village-level male authority systems. In fact, the offices of the chieftancy and elders appeared to have been formalized and strengthened recently with the "enskinment" ("skin"=throne) of a new Naaba. Nonetheless, a separate system guiding women's social and economic activities (that is, cooperatives) appeared to be quietly taking shape alongside the dominant male system.

Therefore the third research hypothesis is confirmed. Capitalism has indeed had an uneven effect on northern women's autonomy.

**Hypothesis 4:** "...the more macro levels of the "pyramid of political economy" in stratified societies are highly male dominated, although the degrees vary..." (Blumberg 1989: 164)

This hypothesis is supported by the research: from the level of northern family on up to the level of the state, the "pyramid of political economy" had been and remained male-dominated. Women were jural minors as hypothesized, although not formally identified as such by the state.

**Hypothesis 5:** "...The extent to which the more macro levels are male-dominated and *repressive* of females affects how much actual leverage a woman can wield for any given amount of economic resources she controls at the micro level..." (Blumberg 1989: 164)

While this hypothesis seems almost self-evident, it was not specifically addressed by the research and is exceedingly difficult to test in real life situations, because of the complexities of peoples' lives. Blumberg notes, for example, that a beautiful, non-earning wife may be more advantaged than an earning woman who feels obliged to hand over her income. Field work showed that both earning and non-earning wives could exert some clout in the home if they were new to the household, had marketing income, or enjoyed the support of their mothers-in-law because they had provided children to the household. Therefore, the amount of leverage a woman could wield varied considerably and was influenced by many factors. Overall, in spite of male dominance at the macro level, women did control their economic resources, inasmuch as management of insufficient funds can be termed "control". In addition, macro level women's institutions were increasingly making their presence felt at local levels through their social animators in the regions.

The third research hypothesis is therefore again confirmed: the effects of the macro, including the capitalist economic order, have been shown to be mediated by social context. Blumberg's hypothesis, however, would be better tested by comparative research among different Peoples.

**Hypothesis 6:** "Women's relative net economic power rises and falls in different trajectories with different consequences. But it generally falls more rapidly than it rises." (Blumberg 1989: 164)

While this hypothesis may well be true, a subsistence economy still dominated in the Kusassi area. Therefore, the data from the current research does not really address this hypothesis. However, it is possible to state that women's economic resources tended to be so meagre that they were easily exhausted by any untoward event, such as family illness.

**Hypothesis 7:** "The greater women's relative economic power, the greater their control over their own lives in a variety of dimensions with broader economic implications..." (Blumberg 1989: 165)

Women occupied the lowest economic strata, and their overall economic power was limited. Nevertheless, they have long exerted substantial control over certain aspects of their lives that have broader economic implications (birth spacing, disposal of income and produce, cropping choices...). They have also been less than passive in marital matters, seeking "love matches" and employing various devices to escape "forced marriage". Therefore, this hypothesis of Blumberg is not supported, while research hypotheses 1 and 2 are.

Of late, government and NGO agricultural programme staff have helped several groups of area women to increase the quantity and variety of their farm production, and thus improve their relative economic position. While this change has put more produce under women's direct control, it has impacted on them negatively in the following ways: 1. the strained system of economic complementarity between the sexes that has existed for generations has in some significant measure given way to two parallel economic streams defined by gender; and 2. women's "real" freedom within the women's stream has proved a chimera, as major economic responsibilities formerly the province of men have been shifted over to women. Thus women produced and controlled more goods and cash, but they were also increasingly responsible for their own subsistence, their children's, and even some grandchildren's. The fact that a few women resided in homes without the presence of male

landlords, usurped absentee landlords' garden plots, and personally sought the services of Ministry of Agriculture staff, did little to mask the desperation of their situation: as they age, infirmity will sooner or later push such women into absolute destitution overnight. Again, therefore, the third research hypothesis is confirmed.

#### **E. Analysis Using Blumberg's "Evolving feminist theory of development"**

**Hypothesis 1:** "The farther down within the class structure and particular economic sectors, the higher the proportion of women who are economically active."(Blumberg 1989: 170)

This hypothesis is weakly supported by the research. Kusassi and Fulani women, being the disadvantaged gender of disadvantaged Peoples in a disadvantaged region, might be seen as occupying the lowest strata of Ghanaian society. (Yet even this position is relative: Tarrakom lies still further down, while villages such as Zongoyiri may fall lower still.) Nonetheless, until recently, Kusassi women's economic activities - while considerable - were somewhat limited, in spite of nearly a century of male outmigration; Fulani women's remained so. Even those so poor as to be forced to sell their labour generally did so only on an occasional basis.

To understand why northern women have entered grains production only in the last decade, while male outmigration has depleted the labour force for nearly a century with only negligible returns in remittances, requires an examination of forces at work other than capitalism alone. Others which come to mind include: the progressive desertification of the Sahel region, causing repeating cycles of hunger over at least the last two decades; population pressure resulting in a significant reduction of flora and fauna formerly important to rural subsistence economies; and recent educational efforts and support programmes designed specifically by government agencies and NGO's to draw women into staples production. Again, research hypothesis 3 is supported.

**Hypothesis 2:** "The farther down the class structure and particular economic sectors, the higher the proportion of their family's subsistence women's economic activities provide." (Blumberg 1989: 170)

This hypothesis is hard to test, given the non-monetary nature of men's and women's contributions. However, Tilli and Tarrakom women clearly were providing an increasingly important portion of their own and their children's foodstuffs through their agricultural

production. They also envisioned themselves as increasingly responsible for their children's education and health expenses, though whether they were able to fulfil these responsibilities any better than men were in the past remains a question.

Contrarily, Fulani women had not moved into the cropping of staples, and therefore were not able to contribute significantly in cash or kind to their children's subsistence. In fact, during hungry season, husbands supplemented the portions women provided. In addition, since the group moved into the Tilli area (or perhaps even for longer), women have not been occupied with income-generating dying and weaving, as had once been the practice of older women.

Hence, it appears that although Kusassi and Fulani women were low down in the class structure, ethnicity, tradition and historical factors determined the extent to which they contributed to the subsistence of their children, not their position in the class structure nor in particular economic sectors. Again, therefore, the third research hypothesis concerning the uneven effects of capitalism on women's autonomy is supported.

**Hypothesis 3:** "Women tend to contribute a higher proportion of their income to family subsistence, holding back less for personal consumption." (Blumberg 1989: 171)

This hypothesis is strongly supported by the research findings. While men spent a portion of their money on such things as pito (a local alcohol), radios and furniture for their rooms, women spent almost everything they had on foodstuffs. They reported no leisure activities involving any expenditure, and seldom expressed even the desire for anything more than a bit of clothing and a few more cooking utensils. Women, therefore, avoided the type of "conspicuous consumption" and injudicious buying so often attributed to capitalism, thus providing support once again for research hypothesis 3.

**Hypothesis 4:** "It is the mother's, rather than the father's, income or food production, that is more closely related to children's nutrition." (Blumberg 1989: 172)

There is some slight evidence to support Blumberg's contention that rising male income does not impact positively on children's nutrition, while rising female income does, given women's provisionary responsibilities. For example, while one woman whose husband had a civil service job was struggling financially, another woman who marketed extensively was able to keep her children well-nourished, well-dressed, and in school.

Analysis of the significance of each spouse's food production to children's nutrition is complicated by the fact that northern Ghana's staple, millet, is a better source of protein in the diet than other staples such as wheat and rice which are eaten in other countries. Thus, Kusassi and Fulani fathers' grain contributions to their children's nutrition was caloric (quantitative) and qualitative. In addition, Fulani herds, cared for by male youth, contributed protein to the diet of Fulani families in the form of soured milk (which, however, was a product whose sale was controlled by women). Kusassi and Fulani women's major contributions to diet have traditionally been mainly qualitative: that is, they provided mainly vegetable, seed and nut soup ingredients, thereby augmenting the caloric and protein value of the meal, as well as providing essential vitamins and minerals almost exclusively. (Children and adults snack fruits directly from the wild in season.) On the basis of this information, men's food production could be seen as more important than women's.

However, the key to analyzing the importance of each sex's food contributions may not actually lie in the nature of the food supplied, but in the willingness of the particular parent to struggle to ensure that children receive sufficient amounts of food, even in times of shortage when sacrifice on the part of that parent may be required. Though evidence is indirect, I would suggest that mothers were more willing to make such sacrifices, even though their resources tended to be limited. It was they, in their role as primary caregivers, who saw to the sustenance and nurturing of infants and children - a role which they recognized as preceding birth (demonstrated by their diet). It was they, therefore, who might develop a particular view of reality - and hence particular lines of action - commensurate with their tasks<sup>1</sup>. Dawn-to-dusk labour and an almost total absence of leisure time and activities suggest women's commitment to increased production came at considerable cost to themselves. Sadly, the visible physical deterioration of many women demonstrated that they were themselves losing ground nutritionally, whereas the relative health of village children spoke of the success of their mothers' efforts on their behalf.

Bearing in mind that men have been principally responsible for providing millet, the staple eaten in the evenings, while women were observed to make such provision as existed for breakfast and lunch - meals which frequently consisted of "brunches" of irregular quantity and quality, the importance of women's contributions to children's nutrition becomes clearer: women marketing extensively rather than on an emergency basis seemed to have significant stores of their own beans and groundnuts to feed their children during the day, or cash to allow food to be purchased at the roadside "market"; other women

had to fall back on the previous evenings left-overs, or whatever was available seasonally to feed their children.

Blumberg's fourth hypothesis and the second research hypothesis are therefore confirmed by the research. However, evaluating the importance of each gender's food contributions to children's nutrition is shown to be much more complex than might be supposed.

**Hypothesis 5:** "Women will tend to allocate their labour (1) towards activities that put income and/or food under their direct control; and (2) to the extent culturally feasible, away from activities that don't - even if the later are more profitable." (Blumberg 1989 : 174)

This hypothesis and the second research hypothesis are well supported by the research. Kusassi women in both Tilli and Tarrakom concentrated their efforts on producing food for themselves and their children for consumption, rather than on cash cropping, which would have put them at the mercy of an unreliable market. Some who had been able to acquire goods or capital did gamble and entered "fulltime" marketing; however, they certainly implemented strategies (such as diversifying their stock) to protect themselves from market vagaries - strategies that would have been ineffective had they been marketing single cash crops. In any case, with only one exception, women involved in extensive marketing still continued to farm.

The Fulani women, however, were interested in the cash crop, cotton, because they felt they could create an economically-viable enterprise by dyeing and weaving their own cotton. Older women had had experience in cloth production, and did not have to be concerned with food production to the same extent that Kusassi women did.

**Hypothesis #6:** "Especially among poor women with provider responsibilities, they may be more responsive than their male counterparts to either (1) easing the constraints on their production or (2) emergence of new incentives for production." (Blumberg 1989 : 177)

This hypothesis is also borne out by the research findings. Women in Tilli, Tarrakom and the Fulani subvillage enthusiastically responded to educational and organizational efforts by outsider agriculturalists in spite of already long days of toil. They expressed interest in every type of information that could impact on their production

efficiency and self-sufficiency, and marketing possibilities: the availability of technical services, agricultural inputs, agricultural education, cooperative loans, improved seed varieties, processing techniques... Women recognized, however, that their production successes had cost dearly: the educational and health responsibilities once belonging to men were now theirs. Thus again, the second research hypothesis is confirmed.

**Hypothesis 7:** "Women will give primacy to income-generating activities, and accommodate their reproductive activities to fit, under the following conditions: (1) The returns from the activity are controlled by the woman, (2) she has a need for income for expenditure obligations for her children, herself, and/or her extended kin, (3) she is physically able to accommodate the extra work by extra effort and/or shunting some of the labour burden to others... (4) it involves a (further) commercialization of what she is already doing, and (5) her extra income will not be matched by a withdrawal 1:1 of resources or assistance from her husband." (Blumberg 1989: 178)

Kusassi women made calculated reproductive choices, based on their personal situations and medicinal options available to them seemingly without extensive consultation with their husbands. This subject was not explored in any depth however. Yet increased income should not be assumed to lead to lower overall birth rates for Kusassi women; in fact, market women may have more surviving children than their age mates, because they can afford prenatal care for themselves, well-baby clinic fees for their infants, nutritional foods for their children, etc.. This idea was expressed by the District Public Health Nurse at Bawku in the mid-1970's, who felt that urban women, and especially those involved in marketing had larger families. A comparative study of rural and urban families, incorporating descriptions of mothers' economic activities, would certainly be most useful.

As for the movement of Kusassi and Fulani women into income-generating activities, up to now women in general (and men) had tenaciously resisted such a shift, given start-up costs, the poor prices offered for their produce in area markets, the improbability of profitable commercial links between the rural north and southern urban centers, the decades-old currency instability of the nation, and the lack of local backup to ensure their survival if speculative efforts failed. In addition, women doubtless remembered the aspersions directed at market women by officials in the '70's - how they were blamed for the nation's economic condition, labelled as opportunistic "bloodsuckers" of the poor, harassed by the police enforcing price controls.

Thus, in a situation where women made reproductive decisions, controlled their income, had a need for cash, did accommodate extra physical activities (at great cost to themselves), commercialized some aspects of their production, and fatalistically discounted their husbands' contributions to family maintenance, their well-founded fears concerning the high potential for disaster in income-generating activities overrode their desire to engage in it. Therefore, Blumberg's seventh hypothesis, as it stands, is not supported by the research, while the third research hypothesis is: the effects of capitalism were mediated by local realities.

#### **F. Summary from Blumberg's Theories**

Blumberg's idea that household economies are changeable and gendered is well illustrated. However, while the economic power variable was shown to be of central importance, it was also shown to exert its influence within a particular social context. Thus from the macro level, institutions other than the NCWD did not appear to impact on a great many rural women's lives. At the micro level, rural men's economic power over women did not deprive them of resistance strategies. Women's expanding economic resources, on the other hand, did not translate into appreciable advantage even at the local level under subsistence conditions. It did, unfortunately, further undermine the weakened system of economic interdependence that was the central arena of cooperation between the sexes.

Women's position in the class structure did not in the past determine what proportion were "economically active"; economically important cereal crops were until recently grown only by men. However, as gendered cropping patterns began to disappear rapidly, women, young and old, struggled increasingly to meet their own and their children's nutritional needs. Kusassi women in general attempted to do so through the production of food crops they themselves controlled. Fulani women familiar with weaving, however, were attracted to the cash crop, cotton.

All women demonstrated an enterprising spirit and a willingness to break with old gendered patterns of agricultural production. They had already developed strategies, such as controlling fertility, that they could employ in their management of new enterprises.

## G. General Summary

The research shows that at both the micro and macro levels of society, neither Kusassi nor Fulani women were the helpless victims of male aggression nor the powerful trading matriarchs of modern myth. Overall, they were, however, rural minors as hypothesized, and as assumed in the texts of Anthias and Yuval-Davis and Blumberg (who assume patriarchy is universal). My second hypothesis - that women were expected to demonstrate considerable autonomy in certain areas - was also confirmed, given women's agricultural and marketing responsibilities and privileges, and their say in educational and health decisions affecting themselves and their children. As suggested by Anthias and Yuval-Davis, the intermeshing of gender and ethnicity had a significant impact on women's responsibilities, privileges and rights within the peasant class. Blumberg's assertions about the degree of economic activity being related to social strata were not supported.

However, the fact that women might now farm a complete range of crops, market a variety of products on at least a part time basis, and control their own incomes, did not protect them or their children from a system in which shared male responsibility for dependents forced no one but the women themselves to accept final responsibility. At the level of the home and local community, women have been forced to respond to their position as rural minor with flexible and creative strategies (as stated in the second hypothesis, part 2), along lines fixed by ethnicity, position in the life cycle, marital status, religion, level of educational, place of residence, and personality. Those most disadvantaged were women who were pregnant, breast feeding, handicapped, elderly, widowed, divorced, belonging to an ethnic minority and/or living in a subvillage. No advantaged groups were recognized, although the children of traders and Naabas, or their children, may be slightly so. Thus Blumberg's assertions about the centrality of economic power to gender relations appear to be somewhat overstated. Ethnicity seems the dominant factor shaping the gendered economy of the household.

Hypothesis 3 - that the effects of encroaching capitalism on northern women's autonomy have not been uniform - is confirmed. First of all, capitalism has not been the sole motive force behind the outmigration that has impacted on subsistence production. The "push" factors for outmigration deserve more attention: regularly recurring hunger and subsequent mounting despair and desperation, the dearth of essential services, and youth powerlessness. After nearly a century of outmigration, Northerners were painfully aware that while their southern-dwelling relatives were generally too impoverished to send even

token remittances to dependents in the north, they at least had access to certain services which were scarce in the north. Secondly, producers have not neglected subsistence production in favour of cash cropping in response to structural adjustment. Thirdly, women's increased work load has not resulted from increased hunger precipitated from outmigration or widespread cash cropping, but from their now having the knowledge and encouragement to break with tradition and enter cereal production. All in all, the impact of capitalism remained limited. However, its greatest effect on the north may lie in the near future: the privatization of land and the exclusion of rural minors such as women from ownership are real possibilities.

**Endnote**

1. For a comprehensive presentation on the relationship between women's work of mothering and their consequent task-related world views, see Sara Ruddick's **Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace** (1989).

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

### A. General Remarks

While age-old attitudes and ways of doing things reported by Rattray in 1932 may still have dominated the lives of Tili people in the mid 1970's, by 1992, significant change had taken place. The last of those alive in precolonial days had died. Christianity had gained ground, then begun to lose it to Islam. The acceptability of polygamy had fallen, then risen again, paralleling religious conversions. The sexual division of labour had undergone significant change. Population pressure from all sides had led to the opening up of most virgin lands to a citizenry now ethnically mixed. Rights, responsibilities, roles - all were in flux. As women watched old doors of opportunity closing even while new were opening, they did not echo young men's expressions of optimism about the economy.

### B. Significance of the Research

The research will be of interest to researchers, theorists and development planners for four reasons: (1) because field experiences brought out the weaknesses and strengths of different data collection strategies; (2) because rich, generalizable data about the north east Ghana was amassed; (3) because research findings contribute to feminist and development theory; (4) and because research findings have immediate, practical applications.

#### 1. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Different Data Collection Strategies:

In spite of my familiarity with the research area, and the guidance of an experienced faculty advisor and thesis committee, significant methodological adjustments were required in the field. Activities of women were much more diverse than described in the literature or imagined by myself from previous, rather superficial observation. First of all, time budget studies (with me doing the recording) were dropped because they appeared inefficient, intrusive and insensitive (if not actually unethical). Rather than providing rich detail, time budget studies conducted over such a short research period would have masked the diversity of women's tasks. Secondly, watching from the sidelines as women laboured all day was not for me an acceptable (in)activity. I concluded therefore that time budget studies are perhaps unsuitable for studying illiterate populations<sup>1</sup> if the researcher for whatever reason is obliged to stand as a passive observer to others' labour.

Because of the consensus of opinion demonstrated in group interviews, I was able to be more selective than originally planned when choosing individual informants. Therefore, for example, in addition to choosing women by age group, marital status, social status, and place of residence, I was able to select women "of special circumstance": for example, one was chosen whose husband had gone south without her the previous year, two who were known for their initiative and business acumen, two who were handicapped, and two who were ill. Thus a more complete picture of women's realities emerged - the type of picture essential for realistic development programme planning. Future researchers might bear in mind, therefore, that group interviews might be the best starting place of research in communities where residents have similar life experiences, and are likely to reach consensus about the subject matter of the research fairly rapidly.

However, while the end result of following the Ethics Committee's suggestion of doing group interviews before individual interviews was very positive, the immediate effects in the field were quite disconcerting. When I had agreed to change the interview order, I had not foreseen that group consensus on issues might mean that there would be little point, statistically or otherwise, in afterwards proceeding with individual interviews dealing with almost exactly the same subject matter. Although a quick rethinking of the methodology in the field enabled me to turn the situation to advantage, at that point, I was unable to consult with my thesis advisor, thesis committee or the Ethics Committee about the changes. I have concluded two things from this experience: (1) that researchers need to be aware of the danger of adjusting research tools too quickly in response to institutional pressures - as much as possible, lead time needs to be built into the research schedule so that adjustments can be made without undue haste; and (2) that one of the central considerations of ethics committees must be the protection of the researcher (and hence the researched community) from untoward effects - intended or not - on the research process pursuant of methodological adjustments required by that same committee.

The chances of similar situations occurring would be less if all members of such committees consistently took a non-adversarial approach to their work and thus encouraged effective communication with researchers. Questioning which appears to be confrontational and accusatory is in any case demeaning, and hence unethical, and therefore should not be tolerated. Student researchers in particular are already in a vulnerable and dependent position before such institutional bodies.

The third research instrument, participant observation, allowed me unexpected access to population statistics, oral histories and a wealth of detail about village life that enriched my understanding of the milieu. Not all the information gleaned, however, appeared in the field notes. Instead, much emerged during reflection as the thesis was being written. Researchers should bear in mind, therefore, that a wealth of information is absorbed passively and rather erratically during field work. Depending on the nature of that information and how it was obtained, researchers may or may not be able to use it to support their research conclusions.

In spite of some difficulties, therefore, the value of qualitative field research employing triangulation, methodological flexibility, and creativity shone through. A certain toughness on the part of the researcher, and critical nurturing on the part of the thesis advisor were also helpful.

## **2. Richness of the data**

Of particular importance is that the rich data elicited by this research revealed the conditions of the life and work of Kusassi women, whose history has been largely ignored in published literature. It also provides the briefest glimpse of the lives of Fulani (or Peul) women. Group interviews provided a large amount of baseline information, but individual interviews and participant observation contributed the "cream". For example, although time constraints did not allow for men's views to be solicited systematically, nevertheless, they emerged to some extent because I stayed right in Tilli village and spent time visiting when not interviewing.

A number of assertions made in the empirical literature about Ghanaian and African women are challenged by my research findings about these northern Ghanaian women. First of all, the idea of "the primacy of [African] women in food crop cultivation" (Nelson 1981 : 7; Bryson 1981 : 30) is shown to be a rather inaccurate description of a complicated social reality with an important ethnic component. Secondly, the idea that women are either suppressed or autonomous agents is also shown to be an oversimplification: while women were shown to be rural minors, they were also shown to be active social agents. However, even women's resistance strategies were different than those mentioned in much of the empirical literature. Because fecundity had come to be seen as offering little or no economic advantage, some women tried to control pregnancies more strictly. Because they had little control over child labour, rights to care and services were often ignored, and respect and

authority were not necessarily forthcoming with age, Kusassi women young and old increasingly relied on their own farming efforts to produce enough to sustain themselves and their dependents. For them, cash cropping and marketing were of secondary importance. Because almost no indigenous women's groups or women functionaries existed to support women's efforts, Tilli area women looked to social animators from NCWD and NGO's to guide the formation of women's cooperatives. Finally, while the "collaborative interdependence" between the sexes was shown to have been upset by changing cropping patterns encouraged by women's production and marketing cooperatives (and not by capitalism per se), this upset, nonetheless, had given women a much firmer hold on what went into their cooking pots than they ever had had before, even without the introduction of new technologies.

In other ways, the lives of Tilli women very much reflected those described in the literature. Although, for example, the hierarchical, gendered domains referred to by Sudarkasa (1987 : 28) were being transformed through women's struggles to ensure their own and their children's subsistence under the guidance of social animators, women still received limited education and agricultural assistance as indicated by Tadesse (1984 : 12), were still inherited as parts of deceased husbands' property (Hay and Stichter 1984 : 7 and Cutrufelli 1983 : 65), were in danger of being excluded from arable lands (Traoré 1984 : 25; Thiongane 1984 : 25 and Harkness 1983 : 114) and were still unable to produce enough to meet their growing provisionary responsibilities.

Apparent displays of passivity such as the silent carrying out of domestic chores were offset by economic initiatives. Thus the lives of women in Tilli did and did not match the general portrait of Ghanaian and African women in the empirical literature. Therefore, the research demonstrates the importance of **context** in feminist and development analysis.

### **3. Contributions to Feminist and Development Theory**

All three research hypotheses were confirmed: that is, women were jural minors, but, nonetheless, that they had numerous responsibilities which they attempted to honour by employing manifold strategies determined primarily by ethnicity, and to a lesser extent, by outside influence. Thus, support was given to the idea of universal patriarchy, but also to the view that women are active social agents, and therefore that their suppression is never total but mediated; and to the view that social change results from the complex interplay of micro and macro factors, and therefore, specificity and ethnic context must be central to feminist analysis and theory.

Hence, authors who refer to "women" or "African women" as if they constitute one homogenous group tend to be guilty of unwarranted generalizations. The same can be said for those who recognize the importance of context, but fail to research it, or detail it in their writings. Perhaps ignorance of context or lack of academic discipline is what leads a significant number of authors to continue to overstate the importance of the control of economic resources in gender relations, and to be roundly criticized, as a result, for their narrow, "Western" perspective.

#### **4. Practical Applications**

The research looked beyond capitalist economic relations at the effects of federally-supported educational and policy initiatives. On the negative side, the recent national elections will have diminished women's representation significantly in the government. On the positive side, the relationship between the institution of chieftancy and federal government agencies was evolving, and beginning to impact significantly on all social relations - including gender relations. Schools and daycare, for example, were being given increasing attention by government and local officials at their meetings, with the information from those meetings being fed back to women via the *magaziiya*. The value of consultative exchanges was demonstrated by the research, particularly in the discussion about birth spacing that took place in Tarrakom. Dolphyne's (1991) assertion that changes in law alone (such as the criminalization of female circumcision) cannot be expected to bring about changes in attitude and compliance with the law was thus demonstrated.

While subjects such as female circumcision and women's inheritance rights were being specifically dealt with by agencies of the Ghanaian government, other alarming situations were identified in the Tilli area specific to the historical, social and political context. They included the possibility that the privatization of land might soon become an area issue, and if usual patterns of privatization were followed, that women might be excluded from access; that the uncontrolled stripping away of natural grasses and other products from wilderness areas would soon make itself massively felt in local economies; that the marketing of local and wild products continued to benefit go-betweens and exporters rather than rural people; that a destructive nuclearization of rural (extended) families was underway which impacted seriously on the vulnerable; that in the current situation, the economic viability of whole extended families can be threatened by acute illnesses in single members; that the marginalization of certain rural communities and segments of rural communities continued largely unnoticed and unchecked; and that social and economic

conditions were depriving a new generation of youth - especially girls - of education, resulting in the reproduction of poverty.

Only a paced, contextual, basic needs approach with a strong education component and grassroots involvement is practical in the face of male privilege, poverty, illiteracy and economic instability. Rural, formerly homogeneous communities have been shown to be increasingly complex social entities, requiring careful study and complex approaches. The narrow economic focus that has tended to be central to much development theory and programming has supposed that the most effective way of attacking women's subordination is to attack the "symptom" - women's lack of control of economic resources, when the root cause is relational. Hence, treatment of the "symptom" has left the "disease" intact, resulting in the inadvertent exacerbation of existing gender, educational and religious divisions, at a time when the physical deterioration of many women indicates they can least afford such disunity. Of particular note is the fact that any failure by NGO's to initiate contact with women from all religious communities and in all locales means that the "*poorest of the poorest*" - especially ethnic minority women and women of the traditional religion in the subvillages - will not be reached. Such women often appear outwardly passive, but when approached, they demonstrate clearly that they resent having been overlooked.

### C. Final Comments

In emphasizing the dangers inherent in generalizing from empirical data and theory too much, I do not mean to suggest no generalization is possible. In fact, because exogamy remained the rule in the Tilli area, results from this research are somewhat generalizable to other rural Kusassi communities of Bawku East and West. And because the Kusassis are related linguistically and culturally to other Peoples of the Mole language group, the presumption may be made that some of the results are generalizable to these other Peoples as well. However, before development plans are developed on the basis of such generalizations, verification would be recommended, particularly if the concerned community lay in Burkina Faso, a nation with a different history and government.

By fleshing out the complex context within which development programmes in northeast Ghana exist, this thesis points to many topics for future researchers. Some of these are listed in Appendix H. It is my hope, however, that the record provided by this thesis will be sufficient to encourage future researchers to appreciate more fully the complexities of social life and gender relations in northern Ghana, and indeed, in Africa and the world. It is

my hope also that project planners and service personnel will integrate such information into their work, taking special note of some of the alarming trends identified. In this way, perhaps I will have been able to give back in small measure something to the Tilli people, who have opened my eyes on new ways of seeing and responding to the world. In particular, I hope I have given something of substance to all those women with whom I worked, but whose voices few have ever heard. May the world hear your voices and learn.

Win teh tee bio! (God give us tomorrow!)

**Endnote**

1. If the women had not been illiterate, they could have kept diaries of their own activities. Privacy would therefore not have been an issue.

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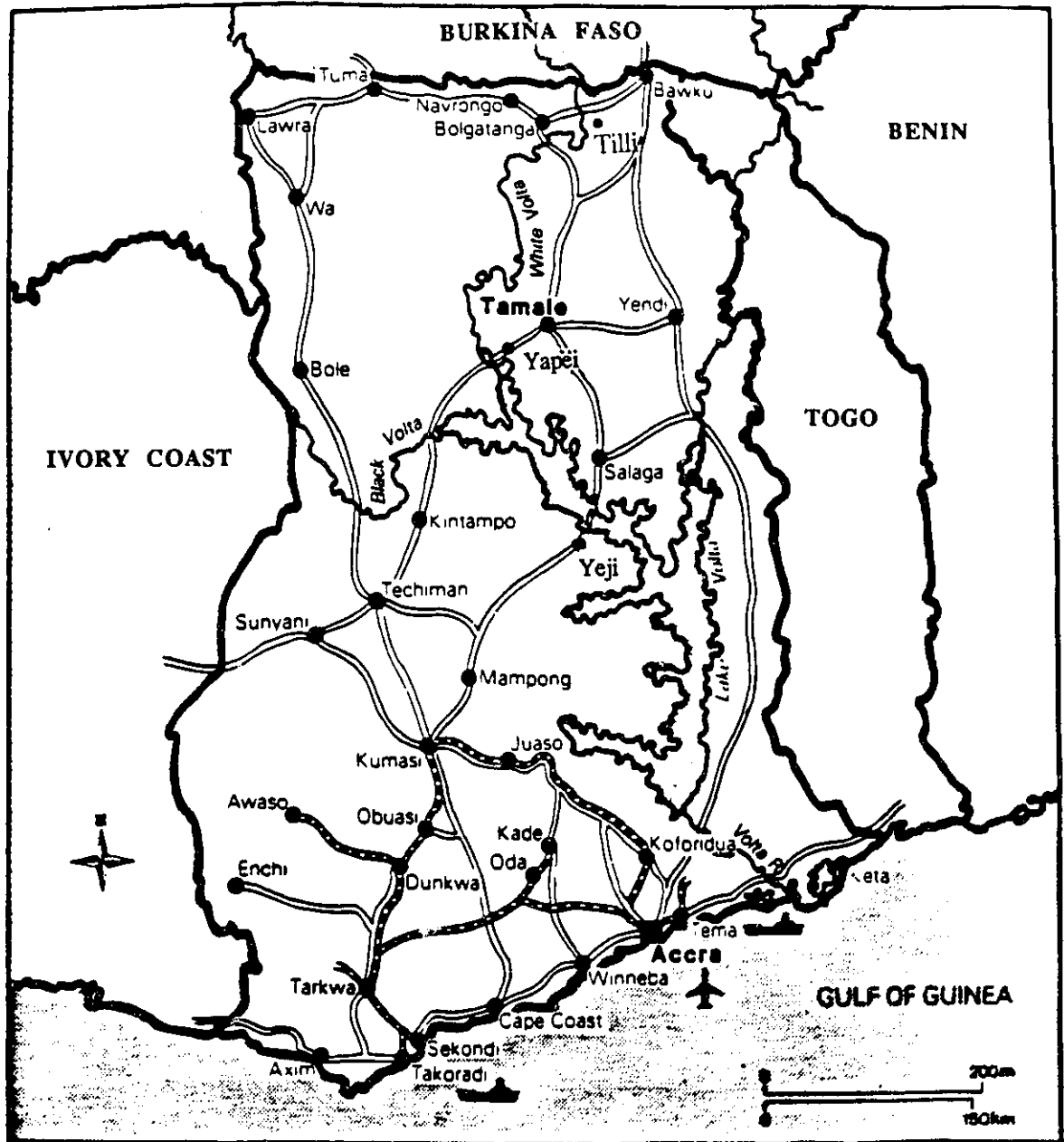
1982 "Riot and Rebellion among African Women: Three Examples of Women's Political Clout", in Perspectives on Power: Women in Africa, Asia and Latin America, edited by Jean F. O'BARR. North Carolina: Duke University, 50-72.

**APPENDIX A**

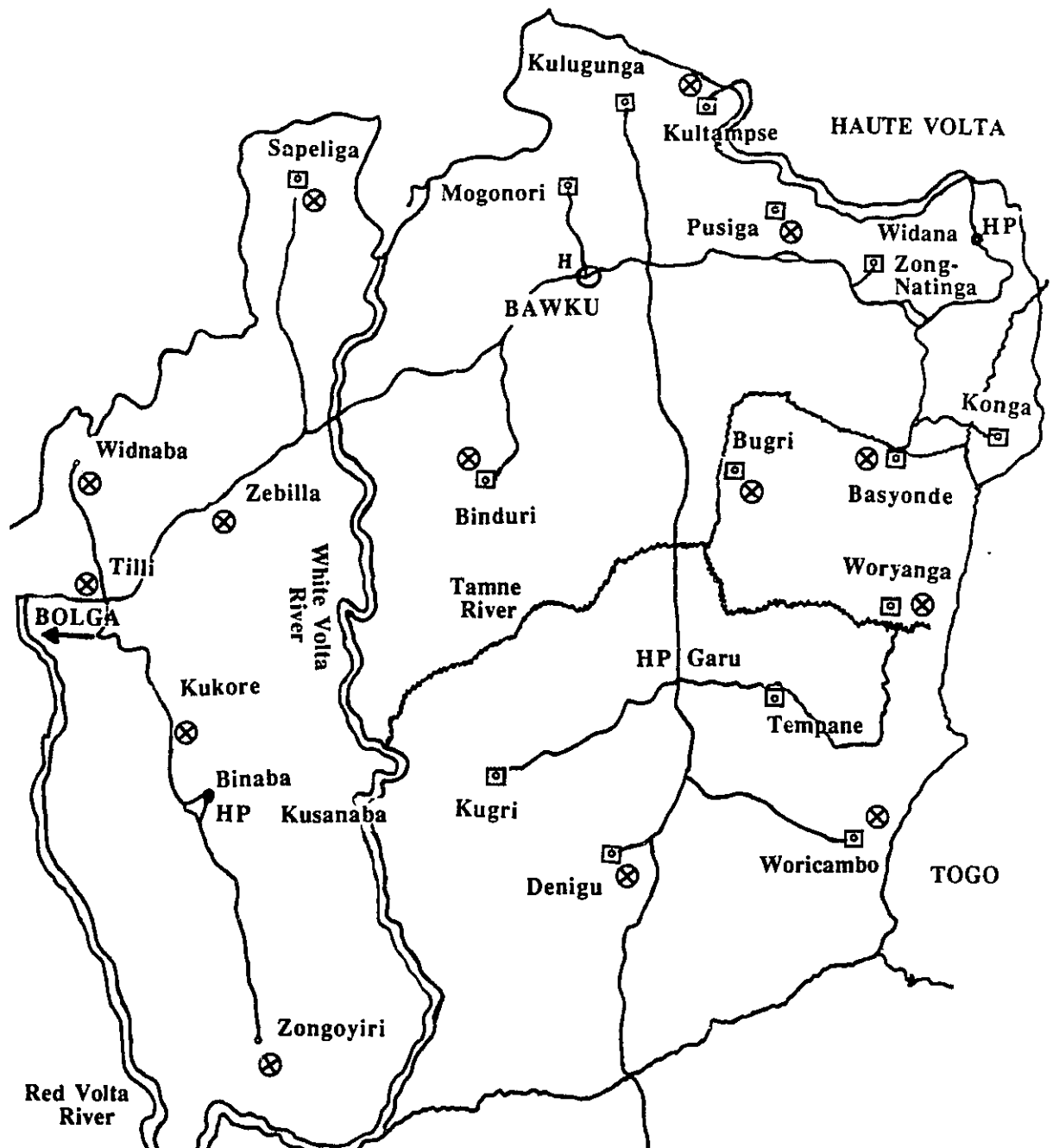
**MAPS OF GHANA,  
THE UPPER EAST REGION AND THE TILLI AREA**

APPENDIX A

Map 1: GHANA\*



\*Adapted from the CIDA Country Report: Ghana - Tamale 1990 (no page)

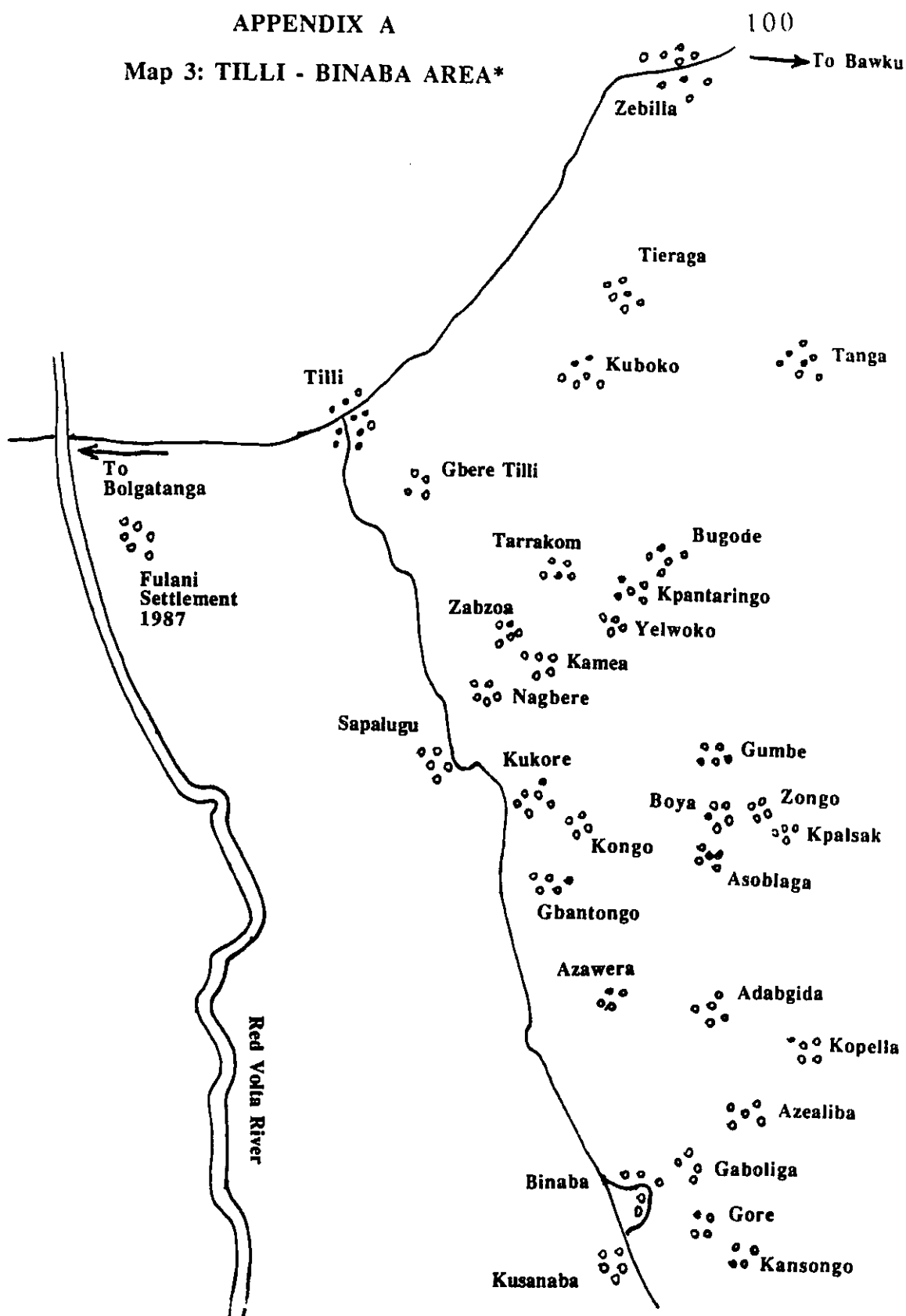


**HEALTH FACILITIES AS OF MARCH 1978**  
**H Hospital**  
**HP Health Post**  
**⊗ Mobile Clinic**  
**⊠ Dressing Station ( not necessarily staffed)**

\*Adapted from the Bawke District Regional Medical Officer's Annual Report to the Regional Medical Officer of Health at Bolgatanga, March 1978.

APPENDIX A

Map 3: TILLI - BINABA AREA\*



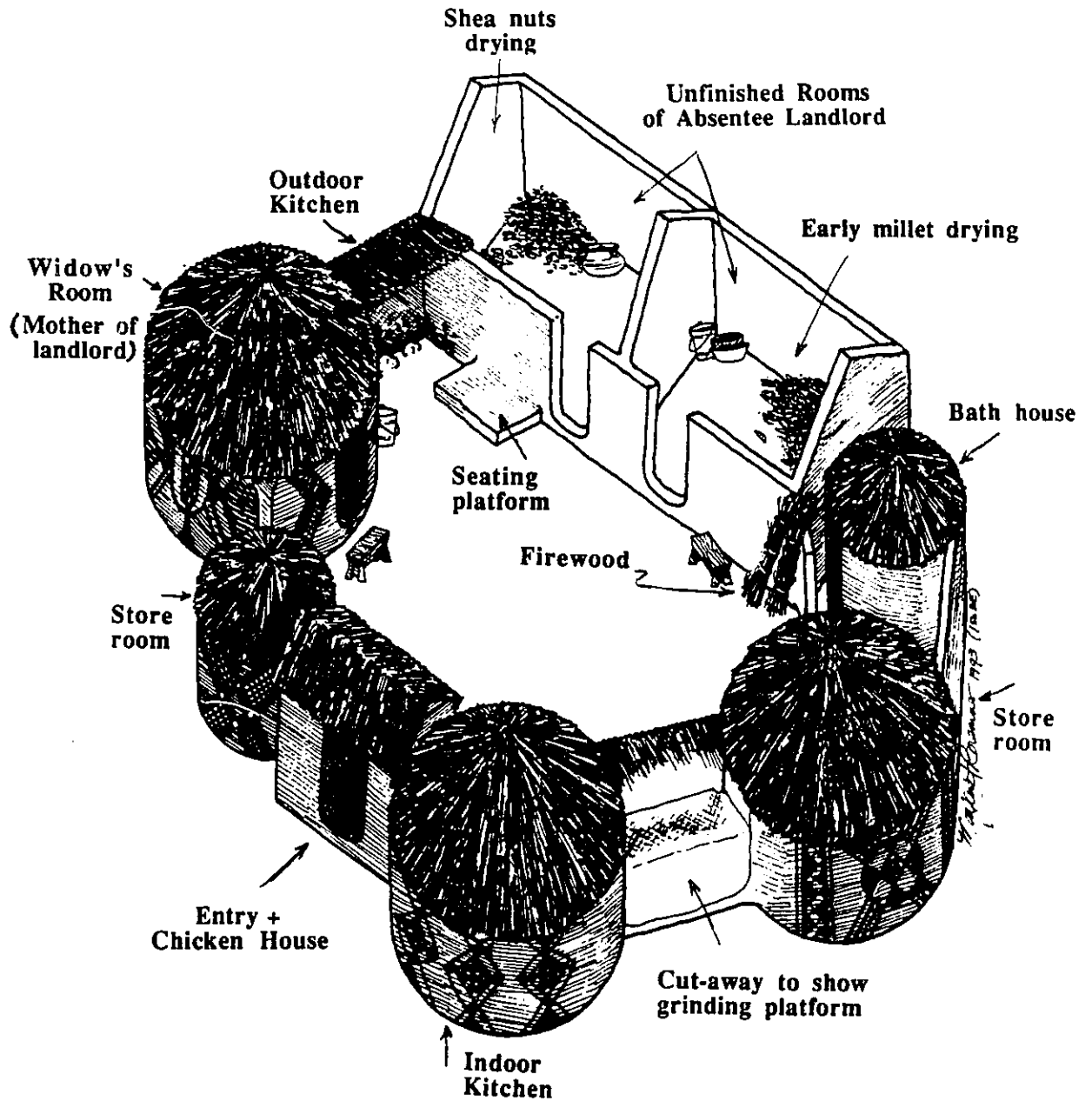
\*Adapted from a hand-drawn map in my personal files - original source unknown.

(Note: Pronunciation and spelling of place names are not standardized)

**APPENDIX B**

**ARTIST'S DRAWING OF A SMALL COMPOUND**

Artist's Drawing of Small Tilli Compound\*



\*Original by Margaret Bremner of Osgoode, Ontario, 1993

**APPENDIX C**

**ORIGINAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULES, INFORMATION SHEETS,  
CONSENT FORMS, PLAN FOR TIME BUDGET STUDIES AND  
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION**

## APPENDIX C

### 1. ORIGINAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR INDIVIDUAL WOMEN

#### 1. Personal Information

Name, village, landlord's name (= address), approximate age, education, religion, number of rivals, number of living children, occupation, formal and honorary titles; age, education and occupation of husband; usual dwelling place of husband (in village, in Bolga or Bawku, in town or city further south...).

---

*To answer the following questions, I would like you to imagine that in this village, there lives a woman about your age named Hawa. I am going to ask you how this imaginary person might live.*

#### 2. Work conditions

**Access to land:** If Hawa wanted a plot of land to farm, who would she have to ask? Would she be assigned as much land as she requested? ...Why or why not? Would she have access to any other land (for example, at her father's house)? If there was a dispute over land, to whom could she complain? Do you think she could be successful with her complaint? Why or why not?

**Access to technology:** Who would clear Hawa's fields? ...with what tools? Who would prepare the soil for planting (Who turns it)? ...with what tools? If someone else cultivated the land, would there be any cost to Hawa? Who would do the other jobs, such as sowing, weeding, and harvesting? What tools would be used by whom? Who could Hawa ask for assistance? How often? Would she have to pay for services? What foodstuffs would she be responsible for processing (shea fruits, dawadawa, beans...)? Would she have special tools for these tasks? Would they be her own tools, the landlord's, or a coop's?

**Access to agricultural education and other types of education:** Would Hawa be able to attend classes given by agricultural extension agents in this village? Why or why not? Would some other women be able to go? If yes, what might they be taught? Would their lessons be the same as men's?

**Women's perceived need for cash; access to credit:** Might Hawa belong to any type of farm organization? Why or why not? If yes, how would membership in this organization help her?

**Cropping and animal husbandry taboos and their reinforcement:** What crops might Hawa grow? What poultry and animals could she raise? Why?

**Innovations by women agriculturalists:** Could Hawa farm and market crops that were traditionally grown by men? Could she use a bullock plow? (Has any woman in this area used a bullock plow? If so, what did her housepeople and neighbours think of her action?)

Control of their labour and the fruits of their labour: How much time would Hawa have to spend working her own plot or garden? What would happen if she were pregnant or ill - would someone else work the field for her? After she give birth and returned to her father's house, could her husband call her back to work his farm at times [this question would be left out with older women]? Could she market her own crops and keep the money afterwards?

### 3. Control of income

Sources of income: What foodstuffs and crafts might Hawa sell in the market? Could she sell them herself? How far away could she travel to market (to Tamale, Kumasi or Ouagadougou)? How often? Could she keep some or all of the income from her sales? Would her husband sometimes give her payment for work or an allowance on special occasions?

Financial obligations: How would she spend the income; what would her major expenses be?

Assessment of ability to meet financial obligations: After buying necessities and paying debts, would she have anything left for herself? If she required money suddenly (to buy seed or for a funeral, for example), where could she get it? Would she be able to pay it back without great difficulty?

Assessment of their degree of flexibility in spending: Would Hawa's income be spent immediately on necessities? Would there ever be anything left over for sweets, new clothes or cooking vessels? Would Hawa ever be able to purchase any kind of grain mill or other tool from the agricultural extension agent or market?

### 4. Material conditions of life

Background information: What property would Hawa have been expected to bring to the marriage? In case of divorce, would it still belong to her?

Women's assessment of minimum material requirements: What foodstuffs, clothing, furniture and tools would Hawa expect her husband to provide? Would she be expected to provide certain articles too, such as baskets, pottery, and calabashes? If yes, would these articles be purchased or made by Hawa herself? What tools would Hawa probably not have that she might feel she needed? Could she borrow or rent these from someone else?

Availability of fuel and water: Where would Hawa get fuel and water in wet season? - in dry season? How long would this take her? How often in a day would she collect these? Who would help her? Would supplies usually be adequate?

Access to educational and health facilities: Are any adult education courses or literacy courses given in the village? If yes, do you think someone Hawa's age would have time to attend any classes? Why or why not? What health facilities exist in the area, and how far away are they? How would Hawa reach them in case of emergency? If she had wanted to go to hospital for delivery, who would decide whether she could go or not? Who would pay the fees? Would such a person always have been willing to do so?

Perceived needs in health care and education which are unmet: What health services might Hawa think are lacking in the village? If there is no adult literacy programme in this village,

would women like to see one started? Would they be able to attend? Why or why not? What type of things would they like to learn first?

## 5. Family relations

Gender relations during courting : Can you tell me how Hawa's husband would have courted her? Might Hawa have shown interest in him? If so, how? Who would have given gifts to whom? Why? Might she have had several suitors? Might her suitor have been courting someone else as well? Would Hawa have been expected to be a virgin at the time of marriage?

Permissible marriages: Who can marry whom? For example, would Hawa have had to marry someone from another village? Could she have married someone from her mother's village? Why or why not? Could she have chosen (or accepted) someone from outside the (Kusassi/Nankane) tribe? Who has the right to make all these decisions? If Hawa had been divorced once, would she be freer to choose her second husband? If she was a widow, who might she have married; who would have chosen her second spouse? Would she have been forced to remarry?

Changing economic nature of marriage: Can you explain to me about dowry? What would Hawa's suitor have done if he could not afford to pay? What if Hawa's suitor had been from another tribe - would he still have had to pay dowry? Could he have substituted cash? Would the amount of dowry payment have been more if Hawa had been educated?

Control of sexuality and reproduction: Would Hawa's husband have expected her to become pregnant soon after marriage? If she had not become pregnant for some time, what would she and her husband have done? If she had been pregnant before she wanted to be (for example, when she was still nursing) what could she have done? What might others think of her decision? Could Hawa lock her husband out if she was unhappy with him? Could she go back to her father's house for a long visit? If so, would she tell her husband why she was leaving? Why or why not?

The economic nature of divorce: Could Hawa herself ask for divorce or only her husband? If she wanted a divorce, what would her family do? What would happen to her children? What would happen to Hawa's belongings? What would happen to the cows (dowry)? If Hawa's husband had not completed dowry payments by the time Hawa's first or second child was born, what might her family have done?

## 6. Political and Legal Conditions

Perceptions concerning women's role in society: If women are important members of the village, how is this demonstrated?

Customs and customary law: What customs demonstrate what you have told me about women's role in society? Would Hawa have to ask permission from one of her housepeople before travelling? Could she bring a case before the elders? Could she and other women bear witness? Who would decide the case? Could Hawa seek redress for a crime committed against her? How could she take part in community decision making? Are there any women's organizations in this village? - in nearby villages? If so, what can you tell me about them? How could Hawa influence her husband's or her landlord's decisions?

## 7. Social activities and leisure

What things might Hawa do for pleasure, like conversing, or travelling to visit family or friends? Would she have a chance to do these things often? Would she have to ask permission? (If yes, from whom?) Do men and women enjoy themselves in different ways (for example, do only men go to Bolga dances)? If yes, why?

## **APPENDIX C**

### **2. ORIGINAL INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GROUPS OF WOMEN**

The interview questions used for individual women will also be addressed to groups. Fewer questions may be asked, however, so that women's time is not unduly occupied.

## APPENDIX C

### 3. INFORMATION SHEET: WOMEN to be OBSERVED and QUESTIONED

I (Sumasim/Louise Yazdani) wish to conduct research in your village. I would like to observe your work for (two/three) days and talk to you about women's work, spending habits, health and education, family relationships, customary law, and leisure activities.

I want to do this to obtain a diploma from the University of Ottawa, in Canada, where I am a student studying different Peoples, and their beliefs and practices. My work is supervised by Professor Ann Denis. I will give the report of my work to CUSO, CIDA and other organizations.

The University of Ottawa wants to ensure that any research conducted by a student respects the local authorities, and respects the right of these authorities, and all individuals to refuse permission for all or parts of the research. I am therefore requesting permission from you as I already requested permission from the chief and elders, because the University requires that I ask the permission of each individual man or woman I would like to question, so that they have the opportunity to say "yes" or "no" themselves to assisting with this project, without fear of any negative effect on themselves or the village.

In addition, if you have any complaint or feel that I did not respect what I have explained, you have a right to complain to the University at the address given at the end of this sheet. If you agree to the research, I need to record your agreement, either on tape, or by your signature or mark on a consent form, so that the University will know that I have explained everything, and left you with an explanation on this piece of paper.

I will use a tape recorder and my camera, and also take notes during my stay with you, provided you agree to this. When I make my written report after my return to Canada, I would like to write the names of people who helped with my research at the beginning of my report as a way of thanking them. But you may refuse to have your name or title recorded in this way if you so desire. In the report itself, I will not mention your individual name unless you ask me to do so. I will write about the situation of women in general; if I must write about a particular case, I will make up a name to protect the identity of the person.

So you will not feel forced to tell me things which are personal, I will ask questions about the life of an imaginary woman in the village. Because such a person does not exist, you will not have to talk about your own life, but about how such an imaginary person might live. All comments will be useful to me. If there are things which you do not want recorded, I will respect such wishes.

I am a wife and mother myself; I am interested in my work and hope that my study will be useful to organizations such as CUSO and CIDA. If you have any questions, you may ask me at any time. And as I explained earlier, you can always address complaints or questions to the University of Ottawa, by writing: University Ethics Committee, University of Ottawa, 115 Seraphim Marion, Ottawa, Canada, K1N 6N5.

## APPENDIX C

### 4. INFORMATION SHEET: WOMEN to be QUESTIONED ONLY

I (Sumasim/Louise Yazdani) wish to conduct research in your village. I would like to talk to you about women's work, spending habits, health and education, family relationships, customary law, and leisure activities.

I want to do this to obtain a diploma from the University of Ottawa, in Canada, where I am a student studying different Peoples, and their beliefs and practices. My work is supervised by Professor Ann Denis. I will give the report of my work to CUSO, CIDA and other organizations.

The University of Ottawa wants to ensure that any research conducted by a student respects the local authorities, and respects the right of these authorities, and all individuals to refuse permission for all or parts of the research. I am therefore requesting permission from you, because the University requires that I ask the permission of each individual man or woman I would like to question, so that they have the opportunity to say "yes" or "no" themselves to assisting with this project, without fear of any negative effect on themselves or the village.

In addition, if you have any complaint or feel that I did not respect what I have explained, you have a right to complain to the University at the address given at the end of this sheet. If you agree to the research, I need to record your agreement, either on tape, or by your signature or mark on a consent form, so that the University will know that I have explained everything, and left you with an explanation on this piece of paper.

I will use a tape recorder and my camera, and also take notes during my talk with you, provided you agree to this. When I make my written report after my return to Canada, I would like to write the names of people who helped with my research at the beginning of my report as a way of thanking them. But you may refuse to have your name or title recorded in this way if you so desire. In the report itself, I will not mention your individual name unless you ask me to do so. I will write about the situation of women in general; if I must write about a particular case, I will make up a name to protect the identity of the person.

So you will not feel forced to tell me things which are personal, I will ask questions about the life of an imaginary woman in the village. Because such a person does not exist, you will not have to talk about your own life, but about how such an imaginary person might live. All comments will be useful to me. If there are things which you do not want recorded, I will respect such wishes.

I am a wife and mother myself; I am interested in my work and hope that my study will be useful to organizations such as CUSO and CIDA. If you have any questions, you may ask me at any time. And as I explained earlier, you can always address complaints or questions to the University of Ottawa, by writing: University Ethics Committee, University of Ottawa, 115 Seraphim Marion, Ottawa, Canada, K1N 6N5

## APPENDIX C

### 5. INFORMATION SHEET FOR RURAL DECISION MAKERS

I (Sumasim/Louise Yazdani) wish to conduct research in your village. First, I wish to talk to a group of women volunteers about women's work, spending habits, health and education, family relationships, customary law, and leisure activities. Then, I want to observe a volunteer mother with a child at the breast for three days, and a senior volunteer woman for two days. At the same time, I will ask them and other volunteer women the same questions as I asked the whole group.

I want to do this to obtain a diploma from the University of Ottawa, in Canada, where I am a student studying different Peoples, and their beliefs and practices. My work is supervised by Professor Ann Denis. I will give the report of my work to CUSO, CIDA and other organizations.

The University of Ottawa wants to ensure that any research conducted by a student respects the local authorities, and respects the right of these authorities, and all individuals to refuse permission for all or parts of the research. I am therefore requesting permission from you - the chief and elders - of this village. You can refuse permission if you so desire without fear of any negative effect on yourselves or your village. Even if you give your consent however, the University still requires that I also ask the permission of each individual man or woman I might like to question, so that they have the opportunity to say "yes" or "no" themselves to assisting with this project, without fear of any negative effect on themselves or the village. In addition, if anyone has any complaint or feels that I did not respect what I have explained they have a right to complain to the University at the address given at the end of this sheet. If you agree to the research, I need to record your agreement, either on tape, or by your signature or mark on a consent form, so that the University will know that I have explained everything, and left you with an explanation on this piece of paper.

I will use a tape recorder and my camera, and also take notes during my stay among you, provided you agree to this. When I make my written report after my return to Canada, I would like to write the names of people who helped with my research at the beginning of my report as a way of thanking them. But those who do not want their name or title recorded may say so, and I will not mention them. In the report itself, I will not mention any individual names unless the person asks me to do so. I will write about the situation of women in general; if I must write about a particular case, I will make up a name to protect the identity of the person.

So that women do not feel forced to tell me things which are personal, I will ask questions about the life of an imaginary woman in the village. Because such a person does not exist, women will not be talking about their own lives, but about how such an imaginary person might live. All comments will be useful to me. If there are things which people do not want recorded, I will respect such wishes.

I am a wife and mother myself; I am interested in my work and hope that my study will be useful to organizations such as CUSO and CIDA. If you have any questions, you may ask me at any time. And as I explained earlier, you can always address complaints or questions to the

University of Ottawa, by writing: University Ethics Committee, University of Ottawa, 115  
Seraphim Marion, Ottawa, Canada, K1N 6N5

**APPENDIX C****6a. SHORT CONSENT FORM for VILLAGE LEADERS**

Sumasim/Louise Yazdani has read to me the description of the work she wants to do in this village, and given me the information sheet to keep. I, as chief, give my consent along with the village landlords and elders, for this research to be conducted in this village.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Witness(or mark) \_\_\_\_\_

**6b. SHORT CONSENT FORM for WOMEN PARTICIPANTS**

Sumasim/Louise Yazdani has read to me the description of the work she wants to do in this village, and given me the information sheet to keep. I give my consent for her to observe my work and ask me questions. I understand that I can refuse to answer at any time, can ask her to leave, and/or ask her not to record certain things I might say or do. I can also refuse to be photographed.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Witness(or mark) \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX C**

### **7. PLAN FOR TIME BUDGET STUDIES AND OBSERVATIONS**

Record will be kept of the time expended by women for all tasks, including grooming and leisure activities, until about sunset each day. By following women for three days, market activities can also be observed (area markets take place every three days). In addition as the research will take place during rainy season, farming activities may also be observed. Special note will be made if the subject is pregnant, lactating or physically handicapped.

Record will be kept as well of the following: when women display deferential behaviour, in what ways and to whom; when women require high energy expenditure for their work (for example, when walking to market carrying grain for grinding); and the material conditions of women's lives.

Some photos will be taken of housing and tools when there is no objection.

**APPENDIX D**

**RATES OF OUTMIGRATION BY GENDER  
5 COMPOUND SAMPLES FROM TILLI AND TARRAKOM**

## APPENDIX D

**RATES OF OUTMIGRATION BY GENDER  
5 COMPOUND SAMPLES FROM TILLI AND TARRAKOM**

TILLI

House #	# of single men in the south	# of married men in the south with wives	# of married men in the south without wives	# of men left in the compound	Total # of women left in compound	# of widows in com-pound
1	1	1	1	4	12	4
2	0	1	1	3	6	0
3	4	5	1	6	11	6
4	5	0	0	10	13	5
5	0	1	1	7	7	1
Total	10	8	4	30	49	16

TARRAKOM

House #	# of single men in the south	# of married men in the south with wives	# of married men in the south without wives	# of men left in the compound	Total # of women left in compound	# of widows in com-pound
1	2	3	0	6	4	1
2	1	2	0	2	2	1
3	0	1	0	2	2	1
4	0	2	0	1	1	0
5	6	1	0	2	5	2
Total	9	9	0	13	14	5

**APPENDIX E**

**SELECTED SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF  
INTERVIEWEES**

## APPENDIX E

## SELECTED SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERVIEWEES\*

## Key to Abbreviations used in the Table:

Position in life cycle: M = menopausal, YM = young mother

Level of education: Lit = adult literacy classes, NFE = no formal education, P = primary school, MS = middle school, TT = Teacher Training; "H" preceding Lit, NFE, P, MS or TT indicates husband's level of education

Religion: TR = traditional religion, C = Christian, ML = Muslim, B = Baha'i

Marital status	# of rivals	# of children	Occupation	Position in life	Level of education	Religion wife / husband	Special Circumstances	Present Residences
widow	5	5	farmer / trader	M	Lit/ HNFE	C/C	2 daughters live with her /marked weight loss	Tilli
widow	2	4	(farmer) / food-for-work	M	HNFE/ HNFE	C/C	Blind	Tilli
widow	5	5	farmer	M	HNFE/ HNFE	C/C	ill / not farming / marked weight loss	Tilli
widow	?	yes	farmer	M	NFE/HNFE	C/C	very elderly / blind / grandchild with her	Tilli
widow	4	4	farmer	YM	NFE/HNFE	TR/TR	not farming because her infants are still breast-feeding	Tarrakom

## APPENDIX E

(Continued)

Marital status	# of rivals	# of children	Occupation	Position in life	Level of education	Religion wife / husband	Special Circumstances	Present Residences
married	0	4	farmer	YM	MS/HMS	C/C	not farming because her youngest is still breast-feeding / husband in the south / marked weight loss	Tilli
married	?	4	housewife / farmer	YM	NFE/HNFE	TR/TR	husband about 30 years senior	Tarrakom
married	1	2	farmer / trader	YM	Lit / HP5 or 6	C/B	-	Tilli
married	0	2	farmer / trader	YM	P or MS / HTT	C/C	-	Tilli
married	1	2	farmer	M	NFE / HMS	ML/ML	-	Tilli
married	1	6	farmer	M	NFE / HMS	ML/ML	-	Tilli
married	0	2	farmer / trader	YM	P6 / HMS	C / C	husband self-employed in Bolga	Widnaba
married	0	4	housewife / farmer	YM	NFE / HMS	C / C	ill / not farming / marked weight loss	Tilli
married	0	4	farmer / trader	YM	MS / HP	will become ML/ML	travels to trade	Tilli
married	0	1+?	farmer	M	NFE / HNFE	C / C	husband blind / son at secondary school	Tilli
married (2nd)	0	6	farmer	M	NFE / HNFE	C/C	marked weight loss	Tilli
married	0	4	housewife / trader	YM	NFE / HNFE	C/C	pregnant / husband about 20 years senior	Tilli
married (2nd)	0	3	farmer / trader	YM	P / HNFE	C/TR	pregnant / separated	Kukore

\* Birthplaces of the women interviewed have been dropped from this table so that anonymity may be preserved. However, in all cases, they came from villages shown on Map 3, Appendix A - that is, in general, from communities less than 15 km. from Tilli.

**APPENDIX F**

**COST OF LIVING IN TILLI AREA - SOME EXAMPLES**

## APPENDIX F

## COST OF LIVING IN TILLI AREA - SOME EXAMPLES

(Exchange rate in July 1992: \$1Can. = \$0.75 US = 319.5 Cedis)

(Exchange rate in July 1992: \$1Can. = \$0.75 US = 235 CFA)

Salary of Day Labourer	200 Cedis per day
Basic clinic fee:	200 Cedis
Fees for one year at Navrongo Secondary School	38000 Cedis
Cost of antidiarrheal	200 Cedis
Canadian-sized loaf of bread	200 - 300 Cedis
1/2 Cup(1 ladle) yoghurt	30 Cedis
box of sugar cubes	300 Cedis
3 cobs of roasted maize	50 Cedis
10 oz. bottle of Fanta	200 Cedis
3 teabags	25 Cedis
5 small tomatoes	50 Cedis
1 cup Milo at a roadside stand	50 Cedis
chocolate bar	200 Cedis
3 oranges	50 Cedis
2 Cups groundnuts in the shell	25 Cedis
Airmail stamp	80 Cedis
Lorry fare Bolga/Bawku, or any stop in between	500 Cedis
Lorry fare to Binaba Health Post	200 Cedis
Bus fare from Bolgatanga to Accra:	4400 Cedis
Lorry from Ouaga to Bolga	3000 CFA

**APPENDIX G**  
**FIELD ACTIVITIES**

## APPENDIX G

## FIELD ACTIVITIES

July 2, 1992	To Bolgatanga/Tilli
July 3	To Ministry of Immigration, Bolgatanga, market, Tilli Naaba
July 4	meeting with Naaba and elders, message sent to NCWD staffer
July 5	Interviews Tilli women's farm coop, observed woman processing of shea fruits, verified processing information with translator
July 6	Followed and interviewed older widow
July 7	Two interviews, visit to a woman's farm
July 8	one interview (incomplete)
July 9	Completed interview, interviewed three other women
July 10	Rest day (funeral in the village); watched spinning
July 11	Group interview at Tarrakom
July 12	Cecilia Anaba of NCWD arrived
July 13	Five interviews
July 14	Two interviews, visit to District Administrator
July 15	Visit to Binaba Health Post and BACH
July 16	Visit to the District Secretary and the Ministry of Agriculture at Zebilla
July 17	Two interviews, translated Kusassi songs; group interview at the Fulani settlement
July 18	One Interview; visit to Tilli Naaba
July 19	Visit to Tarrakom with NCWD officer; statistics on outmigration obtained; one interview
July 20	Discussion with the NCWD officer; visit to Tilli schools
July 21	To Bolga - visit to NCWD office and the Ministry of Agriculture

**APPENDIX H**  
**QUESTIONS REMAINING**

## APPENDIX H

### QUESTIONS REMAINING

What then were the motive forces behind recent changes in families and in the village? Why were women and youth just now rising up against the constraints of the old social order? Where was the gender split heading, now that women were producing every type of crop and the illusion of complementarity was no longer maintainable? Why were large households breaking up? Were such radical changes simply the effect of the passing of a cohort of elders in one section of Kusassi territory, or was some more fundamental change going on? At the regional and national levels, was the communication between the traditional administration and national agencies leading to the evolution of a system of government at once respecting diversity and history, and yet promoting justice for the formerly disenfranchised such as women and ethnic minorities?

By fleshing out the complex context within which development programmes in northeast Ghana exist, this thesis points to many topics for future researchers. Some of these are listed below:

#### 1. Sociodemographic Studies

- a. A study of means for facilitating communication and reciprocity between the sexes in development programmes;
- b. A study of "high risk women" (widows, divorcees, the deserted, women pregnant or breast-feeding, minority women, women in the subvillages...) in the Upper East;
- c. A study to identify those who will be at risk as a result of certain types of social change, such as privatization of land;
- d. A study of the changing relationship between youth and parents, by gender;
- e. An examination of the conditions of life and the rate of social change in villages distant from all-season roads;
- f. An in-depth study of the economic strategies employed by rural women, including borrowing strategies;
- g. An examination of the changing ethnic composition on rural communities, and its significance;
- h. A study of the role played by religious affiliation in community unity and disunity; in inclusion and exclusion;
- i. A study of model projects for women.

#### 2. Educational Research

- a. A comparative longitudinal study of primary girls' and boys' school attendance, and the factors affecting it;

- b. An exploration of means of promoting school attendance, especially of girls;
- c. A study of the social costs of illiteracy;
- d. A study comparing the impact of maternal literacy on the life chances of children whose fathers are illiterate/literate;
- e. A longitudinal study of community social stratification developing along educational lines;
- f. A study of the training and working conditions of Upper East service workers and social animators, as it impacts on their work.

### 3. Health Research

- a. Comparative studies of the caloric intake of villagers, by sex and age, during hungry season and rainy season;
- b. Studies of the health strategies of rural men and women having limited access to health care facilities;
- c. Comparative longitudinal studies of the health status of infants whose mothers use ground water/pump water;
- d. A KAP (knowledge/attitudes/practice) survey on water usage/sanitation practices, in conjunction with pump/health education programmes employing home visits, and demonstrations.

### 4. Institutional Research

- a. A study of the impact of federal legislation on rural women's lives and life chances;
- b. A study of the institutional relationship between the institution of chieftancy and federal agencies.