

**A BUSINESS PARTNER IN HEAVEN
RELIGION, KINSHIP AND MIGRATION IN THE LIVES OF THREE
GENERATIONS OF WOMEN IN URBAN SOUTHERN GHANA**

'Oh, Father, I will enter your gate with thanksgiving in my heart. I will enter your court with praises. And I'll say that is the day, the Lord has given us. Amen.' A soft singing is filling the still cool atmosphere of the moist dawn in a suburb of the Garden City of Kumasi in Ghana. Sudden exclamations 'Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!' leap as hot thirsty flames into the reddish pink coloured sky.

I feel very sleepy and am sitting in a circle with the family I had spent the night with, in a still shaded room. We are holding hands and singing and praying in turn. Each of the persons present says a prayer fervently, asking for God's blessing and protection for the day and thanking Him for what He has done in the recent past. The activities of the day are told in the prayer, so as for everybody to hear what the person has been and will be up to. Furthermore, God's holiness and greatness is praised. After each prayer we all together sing a song, before the next person starts her/his prayer. One hour passes before the session comes to an end. It closes down with a ritual that makes me think of a game in nursery school. All present stand in a circle, holding hands while singing a song of praise. One by one, the participators enter the circle and shake hands wishing the others God's love and blessings. Agnes, mother of six children tells me afterwards: 'Yes, I really brought this thing up, the morning devotion. Because I know, every morning when you wake up and you pray to God he will protect you wherever you go' (Francke 1997: 302). Betty, one of her daughters tells me something similar:

It is known in the bible that the Lord whom we are serving needs to be worshipped. Because He was the one who created us, we should give Him everything He needs. I will sing that this is the day He has made for me. You know, it is just that. I know that God is doing something for me. I actually enjoy the service we have here. Sometimes when I wake up, I don't feel happy. Then there is music I will listen to. Like He is the Lord almighty, who turns my sorrow into dancing (Francke 1997: 148).

This is an example of the praxis of Christian religion by a first generation migrant family in the context of city life. Since the sixties, the country of

Ghana has been involved in a process of rapid urbanisation. The main centres of attraction being the capital of Accra, the towns of Kumasi, Sekondi-Takoradi and Cape-Coast. Drawn by expectations of quick money earning, of being able to buy European goods, attracted by better amusement, and by the odor of the cities labelled as 'civilisation', many villagers set off with big ideals to establish life in a new style. In the continuous process of creating a new life-style, morality and religion play a pivotal role.

A religious tradition can lay an influential pattern in any cultural map. By expressing the central principles underlying thought, religion can for the subject constitute a more or less ordered world. After the impact of the colonial maps on the land and peoples of Africa, the peoples of this continent have been involved in a constant process of remapping their borders not only geographically but also culturally, economically and emotionally. In this article I reflect on women's appropriations of different forms of Christianity as a personal route through, or a suitable life-style in the urban landscape of the garden city of Kumasi. As such, the women concerned can be seen as travellers not only in the geographical urban landscape, but as travellers between the several religious traditions present as well. In this article my focus will be on the use of Christian tradition as a reinforcement of women's social economic position in migrant networks.

CHRISTIANITY'S SURVIVALKIT (MALE/FEMALE)

One of the distinctive features of modernity according to Anthony Giddens (1991) is an increasing interconnection between the two 'extremes' of extensionality and intentionality: globalising influences on the one hand and personal dispositions on the other. Christianity, in this context is taken as a globalising force that at the same time functions as a local, personal banner for a new life-style.

The importance to highlight women's own appropriation of such banners is twofold. Firstly, Christianity still is powerfully flooding the fertile green shores of Southern Ghana in a rainbow of colours. Pentecostalist tongues from the USA reached the thirsty throats in the sixties and seventies. In the eighties as a response to the syncretic Pentecostalist practices, fundamentalist Charismatic leaders turned water into wine and wine into the blood of Christ. In the present scenery God is black and so are his guides. These developments have been described extensively by anthropologist like Meyer (1992, 1995a & 1995b) and by Van Dijk (1995). The second argument starts off with the relatively little attention that has been paid to the specific role

of women in developments in the Christian traditions in Ghana. This is quite surprising, considering the fact that many Pentecostal churches are filled with women mostly. Considering the fact that women are the main driving forces of the household and of the informal economy, it might be worthwhile to look at the relation between religion and economy in a migrant context, where social networks are shaken to a certain extent.

Many urban women feel attracted to certain forms of Christian religion. Which elements of Christianity can be identified as pull factors? Initially, the gender ideology in the missionaries and colonialist economic agenda prescribed a modest role for women. As in Europe at the time, in a Beauvoirian sense women were made into the 'second' sex, primarily filling kitchen spaces armed with the heavy tools of a housewife. Through women's cooking pots, the spicy substance of a new economy filled man's bellies mainly. Women's wombs grew substantially as well often from the embodiment of new life, which made them work even harder to survive, with fewer economic tools as compared to their male counterparts. As a resulting the gap widened between men and women in socio-economic affairs.

GENDER IDEOLOGIES IN THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY

The missionaries who came to convert the peoples of Southern Ghana presented the Christian gospel as a tale of civilisation. In fact, conversion could be the first step on a bright stairway to heaven as well as to success in a colonial economic order. This aspect of Christianity attracted many men, who smoothly embraced the accompanying ideals towards kinrelationships as well. In the early twentieth century Western European Christian imagery, 'the nuclear family' was meant to be the cornerstone of society. Accordingly, a marital relationship was defined to early twentieth century Western gender norms, positioning the husband as head of the household and the wife as his assistant in the house.

A description of the situation before the arrival of the missionaries, requires that the term 'family' should be replaced by 'kin', indicating a different form of organisation. The principle structuring relationships on the levels of kinship and politics was a matrilineal one. Matrilineal kinship organisations stretch the responsibilities of persons to the whole maternal line of kin. The complementarity of female and male in the matrilineal system did offer women some freedom and esteem in socio-economic respect. In this context, both males and females had responsibilities in the house and at the same time both were required to work outside as well. Men and women alike

could be in the position of household head. Whether or not they acquired this title was a matter of their position in the lineage, their age and character.

As I explained, in the new gender ideology only males were being offered an easily available role as head of a household. This position was bestowed with more power in the unit of the conjugal family. The household was defined more narrowly as a unit of two adults with children, leaving aside the extensive matrilineal relationships. Male dominance was based and consolidated upon an economic ground embedded in religious principles. In their strive for 'civilisation' of Africans, missionaries initially offered education to males only. Education opened up roads to jobs of a different economic order, symbolical for a 'modern' life-style. This life-style was intrinsically linked to the towns and cities, where gradually more civil servants were needed to maintain the machinery of colonial administration.

Perhaps the Christian gender ideology improved the situation for men, initially it worsened terms for women. If it was up to the missionaries, female creatures should be 'tamed' and should 'serve in an honourable role' only in the house. It really is intriguing to read the mixture of fear, fascination and repudiation in the accounts of first missionaries concerning 'indigenous' women (see archives Baseler Mission). It often has been said by researchers that as a result of the new ideals on relationships between kin, women's one-sided dependency upon their husbands increased. In the West-European family image, extensive kinrelationships were not comprehended. This has led researchers to conclude that matriliney is on the wane (Bartle 1983). The category of full-time housewife, however, remained a rather rare phenomenon, while the financial input of both marriage partners continued to be a necessity to keep up the household economy (Oppong 1987: 27-30, 74-76). In a later phase, missionaries thought it wise to offer education to females as well. Nowadays, many women are eagerly partaking in the educational mill at all levels and are entering suitable jobs. Still, the fact remains that the group of women working in the formal economy is far less substantial than the group of men. Unfortunately, this is typical not only for the Ghanaian situation.

Christian missionaries' moral of promotion of monogamy against polygamy, was reinforced by an economic model shaping the image of the 'modern' person. Furthermore, a polygamous life-style became increasingly problematic, because for the majority of people the terms of economy worsened after the seventies. Therefore many researchers maintain, the trend noted in the cities nowadays, moving away from polygamous relationships to monogamous marriage (Dinan 1983: 345-363), appears to be more an economical adaption to conditions in the cities than an ideological one. Reasoning from every day-life situations, many middle class urbanite women

have become more dependent on their husbands both economically and emotionally, while broader networks of kin often are remote. The same applies for men of course, but both the general ideology and the tools to settle in society seem to be more favourable to males.

Returning to the matrilineal living arrangements, an increased rivalry between the conjugal family and matrilineal kin has been noted (see for example Amoah 1986). According to the writings of anthropologists, this rivalry is aimed at the graces of male kinmembers residing in the urban centres. Firstly, both adult members of the conjugal family face increasing pressures from their matrikin, because viewed from the remote villages those urbanites are the gateways to more luxury and prestige. Rural youngsters often are sent to the cities to go and live with their relatives in hope of better prospects. Therefore, when I talk about conjugal family in an urban setting, the reader should keep in mind that a two room apartment often is crowded with many more people than just two spouses and their children (Vellenga 1983).

Secondly, the dictate of an ideology with the impingement that a man's main concern is to provide for his close conjugal family, pressures the limits of loyalty. As mentioned before, the terms of economy worsened during the last decades. At the same time a man's financial resources could be claimed by a broadened range of kin. In addition to the matrikin, the conjugal family could make stronger claims to a man's support. Anthropologists, usually have described these kinrelationships from the point of view of male migrants and have labelled them as 'highly problematic'. 'Matriliney is on the wane', is often stated. In the context of matrilinearity surprisingly much less attention has been paid, however, to relations of and between females. For this reason, in my research in Kumasi in 1996, I decided to focus on women especially. Interestingly enough, I found that within lineages women often continued to be of major importance for survival more than male members of the same lineage. In my sample, women supported each other financially in their daily business activities. Additional proof for the continued importance of female kin can be found in the many stories circulating in the streets on the topic of witchcraft that involve female relatives. Very often aunts and grandmothers are accused of witchy ways, indicating the vital importance of and dependence on these persons. In matters of economic survival female kin are most central to each other. In the following I will delve deeper into their religious affiliation as a source from which they derived moral and emotional support both for being responsible for a wider network and for positioning themselves as female persons at a crossroad of cultures.

RELIGION: A BINDING FORCE

Returning to the fragment about the morning devotion of Agnes and her conjugal relatives, it should be clear their religious engagement in the first place points to their relationship with an experienced divine world, that seeps into their everyday activities and emotions. To request and enforce protection against illness and misfortune by divine intervention was the most important function of the morning devotion, according to Agnes' testimony. Illness and misfortune are the result of the arbitrariness of life, but also are explained through affliction by witchcraft and similar spiritual forces. These constitute an unpredictable factor in life for many Kumasi urbanites. God, however, is experienced as known and predictable in his behaviour. Betty, the sixth born daughter, explained: 'God needs to be praised and worshipped. He always wants us to tell Him that He is great and mighty.' (Francke 1997: 148)

God's ways can, therefore, almost be scrutinized in order that one may try to influence Him. We should give Him what He wants, in order to achieve what we want from Him: well being in its broadest sense. This reciprocity seems almost perfect.

Using the image of this early morning devotion I will now elaborate on the attraction which several Christian praxises hold for the women in this family. Therefore, let me draw your attention to their socio-economic situation. The conjugal unit consisted of ten members. The mother was a trader. She sold second-hand clothes in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Very often she was away from home. Sometimes, she would not be in town for weeks. In these periods everyone in the house took care of her/himself, except for the smallest children, who were cared for by the oldest daughters present in the house. The father was a school teacher. Their first born daughter was selling bread at the roadside. The second born was married to a pastor and was busy as a housewife mainly. The third born daughter had married a Dutch man and was living in a luxurious house in Accra, with two housegirls and two watchboys. Another sister worked at a telephone centre. The next one was a master seamstress in the centre of town, having several pupils in training. Betty, who was the oldest girl living in the house then, just had finished highschool and was about to enter university. She was often out: at school, with friends, or with her seamstress sister. Economically she was supported by her older sister who lived in the capital Accra. Then there was Mary. She was in secondary boarding school. After Mary, Naomi was born. Naomi then was a twelve year old girl. Samuel, an eleven year old schoolboy was the last born.

Betty told me, their day-time activities were so divergent that the only time when they were all together in the house was at night. The morning

devotion encompassed the only scarce hours they were together as a family. None of them met regularly on other occasions. So, the morning devotion was not only performed as a way of guaranteeing protection for the day, but also in order to strengthen the bonds between the members of the nuclear family, in which the relationships were on the one hand defined by a situation of scarcity in which everyone should depend but on her/himself. On the other hand, this network of relationships was marked by hierarchy and care. Joint trading activities could and actually did alleviate their poverty. However, this kind of cooperation was not practised extensively. This was being made impossible by the divergent future ideals and present situation of each and everyone. For example, the pastor's wife was excluded from any business activities and even from any intimate friendship with her relatives. Her husband the pastor held the strong conviction that 'it does not suit a pastor's wife to involve in such relationships'. The mother belonged to the first generation who changed her old village life for that of an urbanite. Her children did not even know all their relatives and the younger ones had never even been to their matrilineal hometown. They all led their separate lives within the context of conjugal living arrangements and without the broader context of a quickly activatable kinship network.

The strengthening bond was played out beautifully in the final act of the morning devotion. All relatives stood in a circle, holding hands. One by one, they entered the circle and shook hands in order to give God's blessing and love to the other members of the household. This Christian ritual constituted a bonding factor, in a context in which new definitions of kinrelationships are arising as a result of migration, religion and education.

RELIGION: BANNER AND BUSINESS

In Agnes' family, religion was employed not only as a means of protection and bonding. Moreover, prayer was meant to request for protection against misfortune as well. By entertaining a satisfactory relationship with God through frequent prayer, safety was ensured to realise ones personal goals. It is a doctrine that God is good. He will always and especially in the end protect those who love Him. If a woman doesn't make it in the here and now, then she awaits a joyous future as heavenly creature in the ever-green pastures of the divine. Even if the whole world is falling apart, God will always remain faithful to those devoted to Him. In different churches, God is encountered through different languages all serving as a stairway to heaven. Desire for success and prosperity in matters of health, school,

marriage relationships and business all the same, draw a woman closer to God.

The following is based on a research I did in the fall of 1996 in the city of Kumasi in Southern Ghana. I worked mostly in the centre of the town where I met most women I worked with. They were all related in one way or the other, sometimes as relatives, sometimes as friends and other times as colleagues in the same street. Their involvement in Christian religion was an obvious fact. It was an aspect of their lives they stressed strongly towards me as a stranger from the - in their eyes - modern western world. Their language was seeped with the apprehension of looking through western eyes as to confirm their identities as modern, and sincere Christian women. It should be clear to me, they had turned their backs on traditional, heathen and (in their words) 'backward' practices, such as ancestor worshipping, etc. Although they denied to know anything about their ancient religious traditions, they were highly fascinated by new forms of non-Christian religion. This juju (every spiritual affair that is related to Christianity or Islam) was especially appealing in the form of stories; gossip in the street and in newspapers. Though Christian religion served as a means of protection, the women saw themselves and the world around them influenced negatively by a free morality prevailing in Christian ethics. This free morality refers especially to long-term punishments in the hereafter for malicious actions performed in the here and now. In the ancient traditions the Gods punished immediately at the spot. Another striking feature of the Christian landscape of present day Ghana is its flowering plurality. All women I encountered, were 'shopping' in the rich religious scene. Take for example Betty, the sixth born girl in the family I started with, who changed affiliation several times in her young life, dependent on the socio-economic context she found herself in. She started going to a Presbyterian church together with her mother. Later, as her school adhered to Roman Catholic principles, she became a Catholic. After she completed school, she stayed in the house for a while and went to the Charismatic church founded by her brother-in-law. All women were 'born in' mainline churches and were 'born again' into other religious movements in Southern Ghana, all of which are much more recent. Finally, Christian religion can be approached as a factor that is constitutive for the women's sense of - in their words - being modern persons who focus on the future instead of on the past.

Comparing the three different age groups, it seems as though the basis of women's personhood appeared to become increasingly determined by women's occupational activities instead of women's biological functions mainly. A gaze through the agegroups from top down, gives us the sight of

women whose hold on their own life and development tends to become stronger as a result of changing attitudes towards women's education.

Women's chances to develop themselves as economically independent and strong persons are increasing. In this context it must be remarked that Akan women have always been described as relatively independent as compared to other West-African women. In all age groups the women's life histories centre around the keywords: freedom and a life of one's own. The question is what this strive means for each of the agegroups. The youngest women seem to have the best chances to encounter and employ the different strands of thought present.

The continuous flux of ideas and trends from Europe, Asia and the USA creates new wants and sets new standards. In this article, these new wants and standards are highlighted primarily within kinship networks and marriage relationships. To differentiate oneself as a member of the elite, particular western ideals and practices are embraced eagerly. They are used in the process of weaving new patterns of moral and economical relationships. In the following I will talk about the personal stories of eight women living in a multi-cultural environment in present day Southern Ghana.

1. Personal and spiritual power

The relations between economy and Christian religion are vibrant in the lives of women in each peergroup. For the youngest women the most striking about their religious behaviour is the strong individual flavour. Individualism refers to the independent choice and searching of different members of a family for a strand of thought that fits them best in a particular period. Moreover, 'individualism' refers to the praxis of religion. To worship God, the environment of a private room suffices. God can be worshipped everywhere. Among the youngest women, mainline churches were most popular. Most unpopular and harshly criticised were the Pentecostal/Charismatic churches. Meddling with the life of the individual through prophecies, strict prescriptions on looks, high demands of money, and discriminating practices towards women, were experienced as obstacles to enjoy their services. Betty's dislike of prophecies might relate to what she tells about pastors and Mami Watra (a sea goddess whose popularity in stories and in rituals stretches along the whole West coast of Africa). Betty explained that some pastors go to Mami Watra who reveals to them personal information on their churchmembers. Significant in this respect is Betty's statement: '(...) this pastor was an occult! Who can assure me that the next one is not an occult either?'. The main reason for her discontent, however, concerns the message that comes through in prophecies. Pastors told her horrible things would happen if she would not do this and this. She had

learned to mistrust prophecies as forms of foretelling the future. The prophets' Holy inspiration sometimes led to quite capricious and even contradicting messages from above. Moreover, prophecies made her also feel unfree, when someone was telling her what to do and what not to. These young women felt far too promising and successful themselves for a close economical partnership at spiritual level. Such a partnership only needed to provide them with safety against evil that lurked everywhere. They felt very well able to make their own future. They heard a corresponding message in Pentecostalist and Charismatic churches. Even so, Betty and her peer group members had chosen to go to mainline churches until then. This decision certainly was influenced by the fact that Charismatic churches preach that God can do everything for you, 'he can turn your life away from sorrow'. Subsequently this is translated to 'you can make your own life, dependent on your relationship with God'. And this is just what they didn't want: meddling with their life. They felt pretty self assured to build up their own lives with their own powers. Their grip on their socio-economic situation seemed strong enough.

Very striking in this context is that my findings diverge considerably from what has been written before on the topic of Charismatic churches and economy. The 'young' generation in my sample do not (yet) go to Charismatic churches, while others have described the main target group of these churches as 'the young and higher educated people' (see for example Paul Gifford 1996). One way to explain this divergence is the poor definition of 'young'. Often this category is not specified by researchers who themselves are often in their thirties. It could be easily possible that they take themselves as points of reference and of course they see themselves as 'young'. This makes it acceptable to assume that these researchers mean people in their thirties, when they speak about 'the young' educated people, as I use the term 'young' to indicate my peer group, those in their twenties. It would be very interesting to see whether in a few years time these women's opinion about Charismatic churches has changed or not. If they should not go to these churches when they reach their thirties, we might have traced an interesting divergent pattern. For the moment, however, these young women have already experienced the Charismatic environment. In mainline churches they seem to find more room for their own contributions towards their own lives. They choose their own education, their own job, their own boyfriends and husbands, their own friends etc. They do it themselves. God is not immediately 'making' their future, but provides them with a safe space in which they can develop themselves. God is praised and worshipped especially because he provides protection and watches over their lives, but he does not intervene immediately.

2. *Business routes through heaven*

Mansa and Evelyn, making up my middle generation group, told me they attended Pentecostal and Charismatic churches mainly. Very popular with them were the internationally oriented churches. Here I stumble upon the same difficulty I described above with the youngest women. It has been said that these churches especially attract young and educated people. In my sample, however, the thirtiers are not really the young people (disregarding the fact that my whole sample can be regarded as young). In the definition of generations, I took myself as a point of reference and thus young for me is 20 and thirty is old(er). I assume my middle generation comes close to their young people.

Furthermore, Mansa and Evelyn are not highly educated. Nevertheless, their foremost interest was in developing a career as business women. It is true these two women found themselves in rather privileged positions. Mansa was married to a Dutch man. Evelyn had been married, divorced and had two children who were cared for by her mother in law. She had acquired the full social reputation of 'woman' already (marriage and motherhood) and could now live her own life freely. These women can be seen as belonging to an elite because compared to other women they enjoyed a lot of freedom to build their own lives. However, in building their own life their lack of education did not provide them with the same favourable starting position as the youngest women found themselves in. Some extra help and stimulation was very welcome. The message in churches of the Pentecost and churches of Charismatic brand, is centered exactly around these themes: life is makable because god will do everything for you, if you pray to him and invest in him (give enough money). That is, the one that invests, he will receive his investments doubled.

When I visited Mansa's church in Accra, I was struck by the manner in which the famous pastor, Donkor Williams, argued against traditional practices. Although his arguments sounded very radical they were not radical in character. Traditional practices were condemned and their 'absurdity' was demonstrated. His critique was received by the public with confirmative nodding and manyfold laughter on their own 'foolish behaviour'. The audience really seemed biologised by William's appearance and sucked in his words. As an alternative to the 'foolish' continuation of tradition, he proposed a 'new' principle to shape a life style, that would be more sensible in a rationalist kind of way and would bring more profit. (Striking here is the reference to being smart and cunning.) However, the new principle proposed is inherent to tradition as well.

The argument was about the custom of burial. People who had passed away often still are being buried in their hometown, because the family gods

are believed to reside in the villages. 'The passed away have been living in Accra throughout their whole life, so why should they want to be buried at that 'strange' place?'. Williams reasoned that 'for God it doesn't matter at all where you are buried. Therefore, Christians should not be buried in their hometowns anymore. And why do you want to be buried at a place you won't be remembered?', he continued, while referring to the wide shattering of kin networks over greater distances. 'Nobody will remember you there, because you are remembered by what you have done! And what have you done in your hometown?'

Now, the speech turned to an interesting point, because reference was made to the importance attached to the continuation of lineages and lineage members in oral history. I had been talking about this subject with my host Samuel, in Kumasi too. Samuel had explained to me that the main reason for him to have children is that he wants to be remembered by future generations. Being remembered was of vital importance to him. In this church I heard it again: 'Your name should be remembered! So what have you done?'. In this particular instance, Williams did not refer directly to having children. The importance of being remembered was linked to building a house, a business, helping other people etc. 'Urbanites should be active here in their new environments and make their personal and collective history here. It doesn't make sense to live here in the city and to be buried (and thinking you are remembered) in the village.'

The lecture, or rather performance, of Donkor Williams consists of several important elements. First, he agitated against the continued importance of the hometown and family gods for dead urban dwellers and for their relatives. The pastor demanded a radical breach with the 'traditional' roots of people. He wanted to emphasize that the new home of people is in the city. The need for him to stress these points indicates again that most people live with one foot in a village-rooted world and have positioned their second leg in 'urban landscapes'. Williams reasoned for politics of radical relocation: a process in which the boundaries between the known and the 'new' are constantly shifting. In this case, one element of tradition was ridiculed and another element was given major importance under the flag of 'a modern life style'. The continuation of the village tradition, of being remembered both by kin and by other people, as an individual and as a member of a lineage, was shifted away from the villages and was relocated in the 'modern' environment of the town. Secondly, the reference to the deeds of people fits in perfectly with the ethics of this church. By God's divine intervention, one's activities will result in success and by one's success one is remembered by people. Thirdly, the statements of Williams can be interpreted as a request to the churchmembers, to invest with heart,

soul and money in a future in the city, as to the advantage of his church and of the urban environment in general. Even more it refers to the hampering attitude of many attendants. New maps have to be drawn and new communities have to be build. This takes all you've got, and the more you've got, the more you should invest, the more you will receive. Woe, to those who have not! But for that, one is always in charge herself.

Another important function of these, as all, churches is again the protection they seem to offer against witchcraft. 'If you do not go to church, oh ... they just pick you up as a football. In a few minutes you are off the world.' (Evelyn, cited in Francke 1997: 236). In this manner religion becomes a vehicle for meaning making of and protection from further sinking in poverty and misfortune. Though the youngest in my sample were full of self-reliance and felt agitated by the prophecies in the Charismatic and Pentecostal church, the middle generation felt less self assured and less equipped to build a bright future. The middle group then was quite happy with this foretelling. 'If you listen to it, it will improve your *life-style!*'

Meyer (1992, 1995a&b) has argued that Pentecostal churches in Ghana supply people with an image of the Devil, that can be used not only to demonise traditional gods and spirits, but also to diabolise negative aspects of the capitalist world economy. Referring to God's dark counterpart, is one way to face and explain problems and troubles (307). Though Mansa was not going to a Pentecostal church (Evelyn does), she believed that misery is the work of Satan or otherwise misery might be a test from God. So, both poverty and wealth can be either godly or satanic.

3. *A protective & supporting partner*

The oldest women depended on Pentecostal churches most of all. Activities in church, such as prayer groups and bible study groups were very important to them as well. As first generation migrants, they often coped with feelings of loneliness and despair for the future. They had become increasingly dependent upon their husbands in economical and therefore in emotional respects as well. Being part of a greater community was experienced as a kind of compensation for these feelings. Furthermore, the fact that in church one can study the bible herself, reinforced the feeling of being a good Christian and thus of having a better protection against affliction by evil forces. The women felt stimulated by the knowledge that 'I can pray myself and that we don't need a mediator'. Participation involved education and knowledge, things they were not made familiar with in their youth. For Agnes the attraction of the Pentecostal church was found mainly in being a singer. This special role and the joy it brings, next to the regular attendance of choir rehearsals, made her stay there. Mary explained the phenomenon

that churches are filled with a majority of women, by stating that women simply are facing most problems. In church they find a space to express themselves and to find relief.

The women in my research, stressed developments within churches in recent years, that have created the possibility to be an active member instead of just an passive attendant. As a parallel process, the individual grows steadily in her faith as well. All women maintained that people in general had become better Christians.

IN HEAVEN AS ON EARTH: TRANSITIONAL OBJECTS AND SPACES

Summarizing my findings, the youngest best educated women were seeking freedom in church, an atmosphere in which they could choose their routes themselves and where God was present as a protecting power. The middle group non-educated women, who were working hard to be successful business women, felt comfortable with an ideology actively supportive for a new way of life. They had to locate themselves between the flowing boundaries of 'Akan culture' and 'other' cultural influences. In this process God played the role of an intervening power, or as a spiritual business partner, that could benefit them in reality. The third generation seemed to enjoy the church activities most. They assessed the dancing, the singing, and the offices as singer in the choir as feeling appreciated. What appealed to them mostly was an image of God who comforted them. This comfort brought them relieve and inspired them to continue their struggle for economical survival and improvement.

So, it seems that all women choose a religious practice most appealing to them in a particular phase of life and socio-economic situation. Religion is a supportive factor viewed from this angle. The women appropriated religion in such a way that it strengthened their 'spirit' in the processes of cultural, economical and remapping they were involved in.

The actual experiences of the women interviewed and their concern with socio-economic and emotional developmental themes, invites me strongly to explain their involvement in religion as an example of 'internal object relations'. This concept originates from psychoanalysis. The development of personality through the internalisation of relationships is being emphasized (Greenberg and Mitchell 1983, Hamilton 1989). Objects are people in relationships. The developmentally earliest objects are parents. I would suggest that imagined performance can be understood as a manipulation in fantasy of internal objects in order to resolve developmental stalemates. The

image of a deity in all this can be interpreted as a transitional object (D.H. Winnicot 1971).

The women who told their lifestories to me, expressed religion as a personal genre, bringing together imagination and memory. It offers a transitional space between past and present to design future wellbeing in its broadest sense. The image of God functions as an object constituted through fantasy in between two realities: past and poverty versus future and wellbeing. The image and relationship with God at least changes a woman's perception of world around. As such, Christianity contains some practical tools to design and build. To design new routes and to build shelters on the way. Life can be seen as a landscape, with dark shades and bright colours. After all life for the Kumasi women concerned is a story about travelling. Being on the way and looking ahead. Being a traveller from village to city, from poverty to wealth, from being a student to being a self-determining woman. A woman does not leave one site for the other but is constituted through different cultural locations. A colourful mosaic or map is being drawn on the way from being a woman to becoming a business-man. To become, to belong, heaven as transitional space is drawn with God as a business partner. Religion as investment, serving as taxmoney on the road leading to a healthy economy of a woman's heart's desires.

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