UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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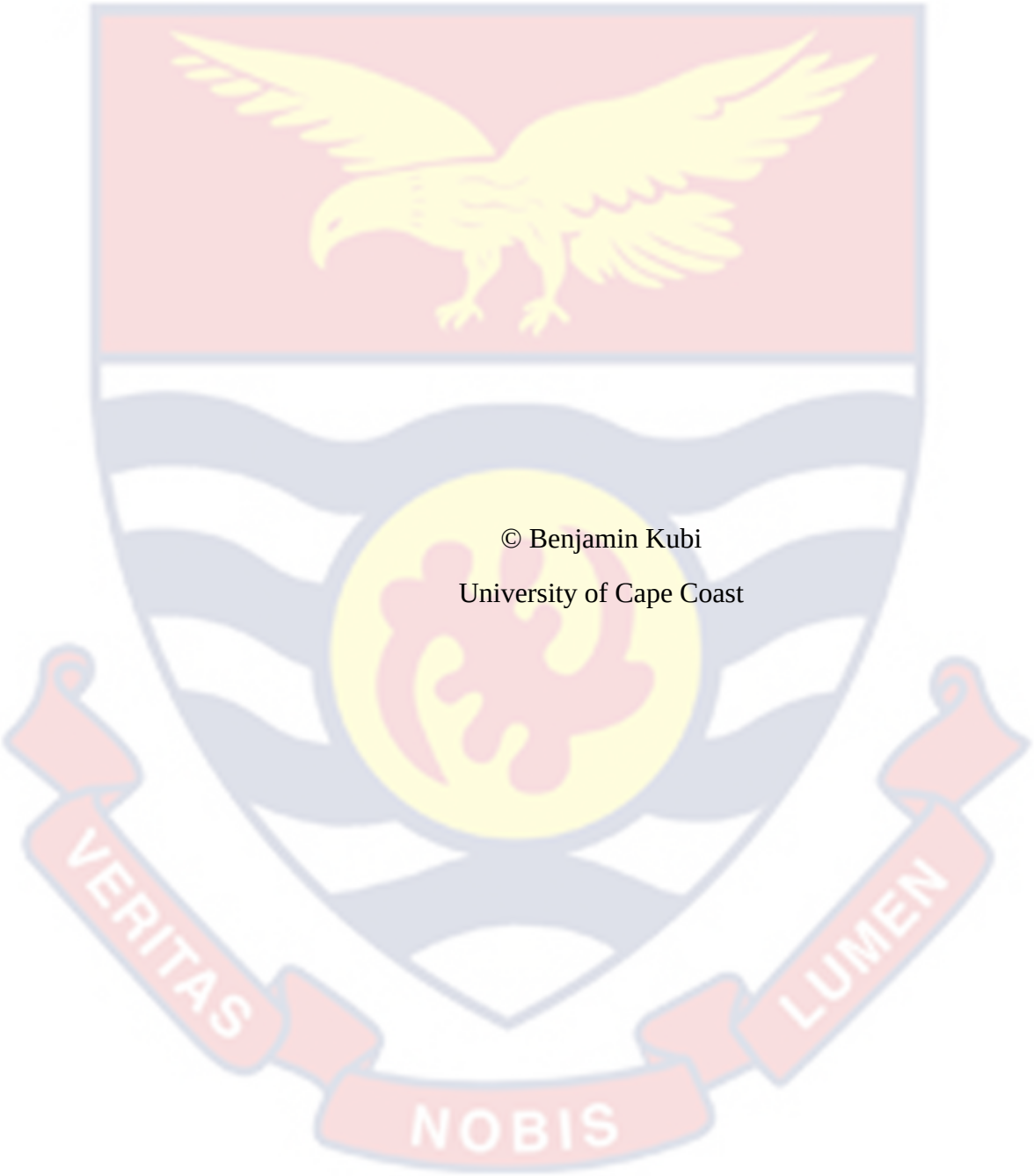
BENJAMIN KUBI

2023



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WOMAN AS THE OTHER: GENDER IDEOLOGY AND PATRIARCHAL HEGEMONY IN GA PROVERBS

BY

BENJAMIN KUBI

Thesis submitted to the Centre for African and International Studies of the College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy degree in African Studies

APRIL, 2023

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature..... Date.....

Name: Benjamin Kubi

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name: Dr. Emmanuel Saboro

Co- Supervisor's Signature..... Date.....

Name: Dr. Rogers Asempasah

ABSTRACT

The study explored the issue of gender, but with focus on Ga proverbs and how they serve in creating a male hegemonic culture in which women are given the status of the *Other* as against men as the *Self*. Specifically, the study examined how men are represented in the proverbs as the *Self*, and women as the *Other*. This was done drawing on feminist literary criticism, with influence from the Marxist concepts of ideology and hegemony. The theoretical premise on which the study was based is that most cultures are fundamentally patriarchal, and they create an imbalance of power that marginalises women, and the social structure is reflected in all aspects of culture, including religion, philosophy, economics, education and literature. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources and analysed, paying attention to content. The analysis revealed that, as the *Self*, men are generally perceived as superior to women and they control affairs both in the domestic and public spheres. On the other hand, as the *Other*, women are confined to the domestic space, and they are required to subject themselves to the authority of men. The representation of men as the *Self*, and women as the *Other*, in the proverbs, creates an avenue for the suppression of women, as proverbs are considered to be expressions of general or absolute truth. It is recommended that attention is paid to the study of Ga proverbs, and the social construction of gender in Ga culture, both of which have not received much attention in terms of research.

KEY WORDS

Ga proverbs

Gender construction

Hegemony

Ideology

Otherness

Patriarchy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The outcome of this study owes a great deal to a lot of people. Firstly, I wish to express my profound gratitude to my principal supervisor, Dr. Emmanuel Saboro, who first expressed interest in supervising this work. I am also grateful to my second supervisor, Dr. Rogers Asempasah, who also expressed interest in the work. Subsequently, their encouragement and motivation kept my interest on the work. They also took their time to read through the work as promptly as possible, and provided me with detailed and insightful comments and suggestions which enriched the work. I would also love to particularly thank Dr. Mrs. Gladys Mansa Feddy Akyea, who had also earlier expressed interest in being my second supervisor, for her encouragement.

Special thanks also go to all the lecturers and administrative staff of the Department of Ghanaian Languages and Linguistics. Particularly, I wish to thank Dr. Mrs. Cecilia Kotey and Ms. Charlotte Ogbedee Laryea of the Ga Unit for their insightful contributions. I also wish to thank the former Head of Department, Dr. Vincent Erskine Aziaku, and the current Head of Department, Dr. Kofi Busia Abrefa, for their support. I am also indebted to the lecturers, administrative staff, and my colleague graduate students at the Centre for African and International Studies. Great thanks also go to all my informants, especially Mr. Abraham Dodoo and Mr. Emmanuel Nii-Adjetey Adjei. To my family and friends, especially, my wife and children, brothers and sisters, and my good friend Cosmas Rai Amenorvi, I say thank you for all the support you gave me. Finally, the greatest of thanks go to you God Almighty for your grace.

DEDICATION

In memory of my parents,

Mr. Christian Tetteh Kubi and Mrs. Esther Korkor Kubi

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INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

This thesis explores the issues of gender, with focus on Ga proverbs, and how they serve in creating a male hegemonic culture in which women are given the status of the *Other* as against men as the *Self*. According to Staszak (2008, p.2),

> Otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group ("Us," the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ("Them," Other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined – presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination….

As Staszak (2008, p. 2) notes, 'difference belongs to the realm of facts, and otherness belongs to the realm of discourse. Thus, biological sex is difference, whereas gender is otherness.' In the context of this present study, men are the dominant group or the *Self* who have constructed for women the category of the *Other*. The concept of *Otherness* finds expression in the works of feminist and post-colonial theorists such as De Beauvoir ([1949] 2011), Said (1978) and Spivak (1994). However, De Beauvoir ([1949] 2011) is perhaps considered as one of the earliest scholars to have discovered that the situation in which the woman finds herself was as a result of her being defined as man's *Other*. She notes that while man does not need to define himself as a man to be recognised as human,

the woman must first define herself as a woman, from which all other assertions will arise. In effect, woman is defined only in relation to man, and her lack of autonomy makes her the *Other* to man, who is the *Absolute*. Though De Beauvoir (1949) did not establish any specific connection between proverbs and *Otherness*, we can glean from her observation about lawmakers, priests, philosophers, writers, and scholars having gone to great lengths to prove that women's subordinate condition was willed in heaven and profitable on earth to establish that any cultural tool in the hands of men, including language, and by extension proverbs, could serve men in the process of *Othering*.

Issues relating to gender and the *Othering* of women have come to occupy an important place in research in recent times and the growing interest in gender has resulted in many studies examining the phenomenon from various perspectives, spanning education (Chisamya, Dejaehere, Kendall & Khana, 2012; Hunt & Song, 2013; Rao & Sweetman, 2014; Oppenhaim-Shachar, 2020), business and economics (Psychogios, 2007; Cabeza-Garcia, Del Brio & Oscanoa-Victorio, 2018), science and technology (Balsamo, 2014; Holman, Stuart-Fox & Houser, 2018; Lerchenmueller, Sorenson & Jena, 2019; Moore & Nash, 2021; Parson, Steele & Wilkins, 2021), language and literature (Goodman, 1996; Bell, McCarthy & McNamara, 2006; Ali & Khan, 2012; DONG, 2014), History (Adjepong, 2015; Smith, 2013; Skiner, 2018) and folklore (Nenola, 1999; Jarv, 2005; Gilman, 2019) among others. Feminism, particularly, is noted for its commitment to exploring issues about gender and the *Othering* of women, and one of the preoccupations of feminism through time has been to examine and

protest against the power relationships between men and women, where men are privileged over women. As feminists and other gender-minded scholars continue to explore the various means by which gender is socially constructed (means by which according to De Beauvoir (1949) women are made), and how patriarchy continues to maintain its hegemonic position, one observation that has been made is that culture and its products: social institutions like law, religion, family, education, etc., and cultural norms, beliefs and values, in the modern age, the media, and as far as this present study is concerned, proverbs all help in the construction of gender (Ali & Khan, 2012).

Proverbs are exceptionally featured in subtly helping patriarchy to construct gender and maintain patriarchal hegemony, creating for women the status of the *Other* as against men who are represented as the *Self* (see Prybylowicz, 1990; Kiyimba, 2005, 2010; Ssetuba, 2005; Salami, 2005; Hussein, 2005, 2009; Ali & Khan, 2012; Ullah & Ali, 2012; Diabah & Amfo, 2015, 2018). This is because proverbs are a '[p]owerful authoritative expressive language tool used to communicate and affirm our cultural beliefs, values and norms of life,' (Kamwendo & Kaya, 2016, p. 92). It is important to note that language, as the vehicle through which culture is transmitted, expresses the patterns and structures of culture and consequently influences human thinking, social practices and power relations (Djite, 2008). Patriarchy, being the custodian of language, employs the tools of language, especially proverbs, to maintain its hegemony.

Proverbs are defined as short sayings in common use that express some obvious truth or familiar experience (Matiki, 1996). This etic definition of the

proverb genre should, however, not make us ignore emic definitions of what we may consider as proverb materials. As Granbom-Herranen (2016) observes, even with the etic definition, there are as many as there are scientific languages; thus, she does not see either the etic or emic concept of the proverb as universal. The etic definitions of the term are only essential for research. Even so, etic categorisations of proverbs should always be accommodated to emic categorisations in order to get close to what exist in reality (see Hakamies, 2016). In effect, it is possible that we may come across some expressions within the context of this present research which may not fit the etic definition of the proverb, but that should not prevent us from accepting such expressions as proverbs, as the term is only being used loosely for the purpose of research. A detailed conceptualisation of the proverb is presented in the section on *The Proverb and Proverb Scholarship* of the Chapter Two of this study.

Proverbs play an important role in virtually all cultures. Apart from being pleasing to hear and providing a purpose to a conversation, proverbs offer wisdom. Indeed, the importance of proverbs is succinctly captured in a metaphor in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958): "… proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten," but because of the importance of proverbs, we often tend not to question some attributes which are conferred on them, and those are the avenues for perpetuating a gendered culture. For instance, apart from definitions of the proverb emphasising its economy of words, origins in human experience and observation of social phenomenon, folkloric and communal belonging, there is also the claim of it being a general or absolute truth (Ssetuba, 2005). Ssetuba

(2005) observes that the claim over truthfulness is disturbing because "[i]t actually reflects the user's or society's aspiration for control and desire to impose a given view of life as unshakeable and accepted. This is where the proverb helps patriarchy to live on from generation to generation by presenting it as a stable immutable part of social order," (pp. 37 – 38).

Indeed, in Ga culture, just like any other patriarchal culture, women are usually given the status of the *Other* as against men who are represented as the *Self*. As observed by De Beauvoir (1949, p. 26), 'The category of *Other* is as original as consciousness itself.' Right from birth, an individual is socialised into the culture and taught how to behave either as a man or a woman, and various socio-cultural institutions and cultural products, including proverbs or *abɛ*, as the Ga people refer to the phenomenon under study, help with this socialisation process as well as with the maintenance of the gender order.

Consequently, there are norms which are prescribed for individuals based on their gender, and one is either rewarded or sanctioned based on how well one conforms or does not conform to the norms. Whether in Europe, America or Africa, 'women have sweated heavily under the woebegone patriarchal burden of male superiority and dominance on the one hand and female subjugation (lack of voice and choice) on the other hand,' (Eboh, 1998). As observed by Chioma Opara, quoted in Eboh (1998, p. 333),

> Woman is fundamentally manacled by the legacy of cultural domination and thralldom. Viewed essentially as a mere object, woman is grossly marginalised by patriarchal culture which

> assigns her the "sacred and vital" role of wife and mother in the domestic sphere. Practically relegated to the confines of the private domain, [she] undergoes a socialisation process that celebrates the self-fulfillment of the male while undermining the autonomy of the female. Women's education while precluding female social and political growth, is primarily directed towards the affirmation of "eternal female virtues such as docility, self-abnegation and chastity."

Perhaps, a good example of a cultural practice among the Ga people that affirms Chioma Opara's observation about the 'socialisation process that celebrates the self-fulfillment of the male while undermining the autonomy of the female' is the puberty rites that are performed for young boys and girls respectively to usher them into adulthood. Engmann (2012) notes that the puberty rites which are performed for young girls among the Ga people are primarily aimed at signifying the girls' maturity and eligibility for marriage, whilst that of young boys signify their maturity and capability of firing a gun or going for war (which means they can join an *asafo* (a military company)). Again, for boys, the puberty rites signify their eligibility for taking on a woman as a wife. It is instructive to note that a young girl's eligibility for marriage does not make it automatic for her to get married; it still depends on a man who will identify her and ask for her hand in marriage. In effect, the puberty rite performance does not give the young girl any autonomy while it gives the young man autonomy.

Because of the motives behind the puberty rites that are performed for both girls and boys, they are taken through particular socialisation processes that prepare them for their respective gender roles that are prescribed for them by the society. 'As the African woman was made to believe that her sole purpose in life was to marry and beget children,' (Eboh, 1998, p.333), the puberty rites that are performed for young girls only socialised them for such roles. They are therefore given training which prepares them for their roles as wives and mothers in the domestic sphere. This includes training in housekeeping, personal and environmental hygiene, cooking, and washing, among others. The purpose of the puberty rite is even given more clarity by a particular ritual which involves the young girl standing in front of a sheep and making a fist to hit the face of the sheep and then spiting on it, which signifies that the young girl is transferring all the misfortunes in marriage unto the sheep so that doors will be opened for her to get a good marriage (Engmann, 2012). Essentially, everything about the puberty rites that are performed for girls among the Ga people has to do with their preparation for their domestic roles in marriage.

On the other hand, the rites that are performed for young boys are ultimately aimed at imbuing them with bravery and courage. This seems to be at the core of the initiation rites for boys in most Ghanaian cultures (see Diabah & Amfo, 2018, p. 185). Among the Ga people, the commonest puberty rite that is performed for boys is the *dɛŋtuwoo* (putting a gun into a person's hand). The rite involves a father teaching his son how to fire a gun. When the young boy gets perfect, he goes with his father to the residences of the chief and his elders to

demonstrate his skills in their presence. As noted earlier, after the puberty rite, the young boy is now eligible to be a member of an *asafo* (a military company), and he can also take a woman to be his wife, as he is capable of protecting her. This is reminiscent of an observation Diabah and Amfo (2018) make about the expression of masculinity among the Akans. They note that an ideal of being a man is to be a protector and it is expected of a man to show bravery even in the face of danger. It is therefore not surprising that the Ga people will have this proverb: 'Kɛ tu fɛ lɛ, ema nuu tsitsi' (If a gun is fired, it must be on the chest of a man), which does not only impose some superiority on men, but also celebrates their masculinity.

As can be observed from the discussion so far, right from childhood, the Ga male child is made to believe that the ultimate being is the male, while the female is presented as the *Other*. Situations like these are what would make De Beauvoir (1946) lament, 'Humanity is male, and man defines woman, not in herself, but in relation to himself.' There are a number of common expressions in everyday speech among the Ga people which lend credence to the notion of male superiority and female inferiority. Such expressions as 'Nuu ji bo lɛɛlɛŋ' (You are a man indeed or you are truly a man), 'Too nuu tsui' (Have a man's patience), and 'Ani, yoo ji bo?' (Are you a woman?) are all definitions of what it means to be a man and not a woman. Men are deemed to be strong, brave, long-suffering and resilient, which are portrayed in the referenced expressions. Conversely, women are considered weak, impatient and fragile.

As observed earlier, Ga culture is fundamentally patriarchal, in which men are represented as the *Self*, while women are given the status of the *Other*, and proverbs play a vital role in legitimising the patriarchal creation of the woman as the *Other* and the man as the *Self*. This is because, among the many forms of verbal expression among the Ga people, proverbs are perhaps the most regarded, and they are also considered as expressions of absolute truth.

While Hammond (1970) laments that most of the verbal art forms of the Ga people are no longer popular with the people, same cannot be said of proverbs. As Mieder (2004, p. xi) observes, 'proverbs are indeed alive and well, and as sapient nuggets they continue to play a significant role in the modern age.' This is observable among the Ga people, where proverbs continue to play an important role in the lives of the people. Proverbs adorn their speeches and conversations. Research on Ga proverbs is what may be lacking. To the Ga people, proverbs are not only an expression of absolute truth, but also a mark of wisdom. As such they are the preserve of the elderly. In fact, it is forbidden for children to use proverbs, especially in the presence of older people. Where it becomes inevitable for a child (which in the Ga cultural context includes anyone who has not gone through puberty rites (see Engmann, 2012, p. 53)) to use a proverb, the person needs to relinquish the responsibility by pleading for pardon. Thus, the person precedes the proverb by saying 'taflatsɛ.'

The high regard for proverbs among the Ga people makes it possible that statements are made and accepted as expressing general or absolute truth without questioning, and this serves for the creation of a male hegemonic culture in which

women have been persuaded to accept the male domination and the subordination of women. It is in light of the above observation that this research seeks to examine how women are represented, as against men, in Ga proverbs.

Statement of the Problem

While there have been studies on how proverbs serve in constructing gender in some African cultures (see Kiyimba, 2005; Hussein, 2009; Asimeng-Boahene, 2013; Diabah & Amfo, 2015; Diabah & Amfo, 2018; Gyan, Abbey & Baffoe, 2020; Dzahene-Quarshie & Omari, 2021), there is a dearth of research on Ga proverbs and their connectedness with gender or woman as the *Other* specifically. Perhaps, this is because '[t]he much debated issue on non-sexist language reform that has since the 1970s been rampant for many languages and in many countries, at first glance, seems irrelevant for Ga,' (Lomotey, 2015, p. 154). This could stem from the fact that Ga appears to have minimal overt gender distinctions (Lomotey, 2015). However, as this thesis demonstrates, Ga proverbs are subtle avenues for perpetuating a gendered culture.

As already noted from Djite's (2008) observation, language expresses the patterns and structures of culture and consequently influences human thinking, social practices and power relations, and a language tool which has been identified to do this very well is proverbs. Proverbs, as a quintessential reflection of the values and culture of a people, help us appreciate how a society is structured. As Stark (2014) notes, 'proverbs can be treated as the message and

medium of cultural knowledge of a [people].' Deng and Liu (1989, p. 48) also observe:

> Proverbs may provide interesting little glimpses or clues to a people's geography, history, social organizations, social views, attitudes. People who live along the sea coasts and whose livelihood is dependent on the sea will have proverbs about sailing, about braving the weather, about fish and fishing… In cultures where old age is revered, there will be proverbs about the wisdom of the elders. And in societies where women's status is low, there will be a number of sayings demeaning them.

In fact, proverbs do not only reflect the values and culture of a people, they also legitimise such values and cultural practices. For instance, Deng and Liu (1989) note that in societies where women are given an inferior status, there will be proverbs which reflect that social view. Such proverbs actually legitimise the inferior status of women and help patriarchy to perpetuate a gender ideology that preserves patriarchal hegemony. However, because of the attribute conferred on proverbs as being expressions of absolute truth, we fail to pay attention to such operations which may be occurring in the proverbs. Particularly, in patriarchal cultures like Ga culture, where proverbs are considered a mark of wisdom which must be accepted without question, there is the possibility for patriarchy utilising proverbs to mask gender ideology.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was therefore to examine how Ga proverbs help in constructing gender and creating for women the status of the *Other* as against men as the *Self*. This was done by analysing the proverbs to reveal how men and women are represented, and the kind of power relation that exists between men and women, as reflected in the proverbs. Though this approach has been applied to proverb data from other cultures, this may be the first time a work of this magnitude has been carried out on Ga proverbs.

Research Objectives

The study has the following as its objectives:

1. to examine how gender is constructed in Ga culture.
2. to examine how men are represented in Ga proverbs.
3. to examine how women are represented in Ga proverbs.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following questions:

4. How is gender constructed in Ga culture?
5. How are men represented in Ga proverbs?
6. How are women represented in Ga proverbs?

Significance of the Study

This study on Ga proverbs is very significant in that it contributes to the advancement of our knowledge on Ga culture and the role of proverbs in Ga culture. It also enhances our knowledge on how Ga proverbs feature in the construction of gender and the possible subjugation of women. An awareness of the process through which proverbs construct gender and possibly subjugate women could contribute to the improvement of the conditions of women in Ga culture and elsewhere. Indeed, as Hussein (2009, p.107) observes, '[d]iscouraging sexist proverbs and other culturally based symbolic verbal battery is a step toward improving the unhappy condition of women in the continent…,' but we can only discourage them if we get to understand the subtle ways by which we get interpellated by such 'sexist proverbs and other culturally based symbolic verbal battery.'

Also, as indicated earlier, there is a dearth of research on Ga proverbs in general, and its connectedness with gender construction specifically. This present work could therefore serve to kindle interest in other researchers who could explore other aspects of proverb scholarship as well as gender study in Ga culture. It could also encourage other researchers to study other cultures that have hitherto not received any attention or have not received much attention in terms of research on proverbs in general, and the phenomenon under study specifically.

Delimitation of the Study

Though Ga culture has many aspects, this study is limited to only the people and their proverbs. Also, while Ga proverbs may address varied subjects and themes, the present study is focused on only proverbs that deal with subjects and themes relating to gender. These include proverbs that specifically make reference to man or men, and or woman or women, and those that by metaphorical extension apply to men or women.

Limitations of the Study

It is very important that when one is dealing with proverbs, one pays attention to the context in which they are used. This is because the proverb in isolation as a text may not reveal much about its meaning, actual use and function. This limitation has characterised many of the works on proverb collection (Yankah, 1989; Mieder, 2004). Indeed, Arewa and Dundes (1964); Arewa (1970); Bauman (1986); and Yankah (1989) all draw attention to the importance of context in studying folklore in general, and proverbs in particular. It must be noted that the same proverb used in different contexts may lend itself to different shades of meaning. There was however some difficulty in finding naturally occurring discourses within the Ga context to document the proverbs for analysis. This is particularly so because the traditional courts where proverbs are often used no longer function like they used to be in the past, and social occasions also did not yield much result as context plays an important role in determining the choice and use of proverbs. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic, which restricted social

activities, created a limited chance of getting social situations in which proverbs are used in natural contexts.

The study therefore relied heavily on published collections of Ga proverbs and interviews for the proverb data. This denied us of that vital ingredient of a naturally occurring discourse which provides context. The results of the study were however not significantly affected as efforts were made during the interviews to find out possible contexts in which the proverbs could be used and the shades of meaning they may connote. Moreover, the focus of this present study is on the text rather than performance. Again, reliance on proverbs from published sources for analysis is consistent with research practice in paremiology.

Organisation of the Study

The study is structured to cover six chapters, preceded by this general introduction. Chapter One provides background information on the Ga people and their ethnography. Chapter Two takes care of the literature review and the theoretical framework on which the study is premised. Chapter Three discusses the methodology. Chapters Four and Five, which constitute the analysis chapters, respectively discuss the representation of men and the representation of women in Ga proverbs. Finally, Chapter Six provides a summary, conclusion and some recommendations.

CHAPTER ONE

STUDYING THE GA PEOPLE: ETHNOGRAPHY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANISATION

Chapter One provides some background information on the Ga people, including their social, political and economic organisation, and religious worldview. This is important because it helps us to understand the contexts of the Ga proverbs under study. As Deng and Liu (1989) observe, the way of life of a people is always reflected in their proverbs.

The Ga People

The Ga people are coastal dwellers, located at the southern part of Ghana. They form part of a larger group known as the Ga-Dangme. Other members of the Ga-Dangme group are the people of Ada, the Krobo, the Shai, the Ningo, the Prampram, and the people of Osudoku (Kropp, [1968] 2017). According to Odotei (1991), the territory of the Ga people stretches from *Laŋma* in the west to Tema in the east, and from the foot of the Akwapim hills in the north to the Atlantic Ocean in the south. Kropp ([1968] 2017), however, notes that the people of Kpone are now considered to be part of the Ga people, even though originally, they were Dangmes. The west boundary is therefore now Kpone instead of Tema.

Ga states, which are sometimes described as towns (Odotei, 1991), stretching from west to east, comprise Ga Mashie (Accra central), Osu (Christiansborg), La (Labadi), Teshie, Nungua, Tema and Kpone. Each of these states or towns has several villages affiliated to it. During occasions like the annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, people from the villages come to their respective towns to celebrate with their town folks.

As an ethnic group, the Ga people are of mixed origin. This is as a result of their contact with migrants, who came to the Accra plains for various reasons. For instance, the Otoblohum of Ga Mashie originally settled in Accra as representatives of the Akwamu government that ruled the Ga people from 1680 to 1730, after the Akwamu defeated the Ga in a war which broke out in 1677 and ended in 1680. Again, a section of the Alatas of Ga Mashie came as slaves and servants of the English company to help in the building and maintenance of James Fort. Also, the people of Tarbon of Ga Mashie are freed slaves from Brazil who came to settle there after the abolition of the slave trade by the Europeans in the nineteenth century. For the Abese-Fante of La, they came from Moure on a fishing expedition to La and decided to stay permanently. The Anehos of Osu and La also came to seek alliance of the Ga in civil war in their town, Aneho, but decided to stay when they realised that the Ga were reluctant to help them, (Odotei, 1991, p. 62). This notwithstanding, the Ga people have a common identity. This is exemplified in their use of a common language – the Ga language, as well as common social institutions such as their naming system,

marriage, inheritance, and annual *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, political organisation, and belief system (Amartey, 1990; Odotei, 1991; Engmann, 2012).

There are several accounts regarding the origin of the Ga people. Some accounts, as indicated by Hammond (1970), point the origin of the Ga people to the Middle East and the Western Sudan. Indeed, some customs of the Ga people provide evidence to support the belief that the people may be descendants of Jews or might have come into contact with Jews. These include the outdooring and naming of a child on the eighth day, the revered place of the *Wulɔmɛi* (High Priests) in state affairs, and the yearly seasonal greeting 'Gbii kpaanyɔ anina wɔ' (The eighth day should meet us), making reference to the Passover (Exodus 12: 22) (Amartey, 1990, p. 12). According to Hammond (1970), the Ga people are believed to have migrated from Israel, and in the course of their migration, they came into contact with the Akans. Together with the Akans, the Ga people came to settle in Ancient Ghana. The Ancient Ghanaians had by then been under constant wars. In AD 1240, the Almoravids, Susus and Madingos generally referred to as the Hausas waged war against the Ancient Ghanaians, and after the decline of Ghana, the Akans and the Ga people moved from the place. They however separated in the course of migration.

On her part, Odotei (1991) observes from oral traditions she collected that most of the Ga people trace their origins to the east of the Accra plains. She notes that a section of the people of Osu trace their origin to Osudoku in the Dangme area, while sections of the Ga Mashie, La and Teshie trace their origins to as far east as the southern part of Nigeria. Similarly, Buah (1998) states that the oral

traditions of the people trace their original home somewhere in the 'east', which some historians believe could have been in present-day Nigeria.

Oral tradition has it that the Ga people came in groups at different times, and the different groups settled in different parts of the Accra plains. In all, four groups came to settle on the Accra plains and established four states: *Wo Kpele* established Tema; *Wo Krowɔ* established Nungua; *Wo Doku* established La; and *Wo Sagba* established Ga Mashie (Amartey, 1990; Odotei, 1991). Odotei (1991), however, observes that before the various groups of Ga people moved into the Accra plains, there were people living there in scattered farmsteads, who were absorbed by the Ga people. These include the Kpeshi of Tema, and other Guan groups. Of all the Ga groups, Ga Mashie emerged as the most powerful state, with its capital at Ayawaso. This was because of its link with trade with the Europeans, who started trading with the Ga people from the middle of the sixteenth century. Some years after the Ga groups came to settle in the Accra plains, the Ga people together with other groups of people established two other states, and these were Osu and Teshie (Amartey, 1990; Odotei, 1991).

Ethnography and Socio-political Organisation of the Ga

Socially, Ga traditional society is organised with its basic unit being the *we*. *We* is an ancestral house for all people who trace their descent to a common male ancestor. Traditionally, it was in the *we* that rituals and customs such as outdooring and naming, marriage ceremonies and funeral rites are performed. In selecting a chief, *wulɔmɔ* (priest) and other traditional office holders, it is the *we*

which is approached for its members to decide on who should hold office, subject to the approval of the elders of the town. What is used to identify a *we* are the names that are given to its members. For example, names like *Kpakpa*, *Kwaate*, *Kwaatɛi* and *Kwaakwei*, among others, indicate that the bearers are from *Kpakpatsɛ We* of Ga Mashie. Every *we* has a head known as the *wekunukpa* (lineage head), who sees to the welfare of the *we*. As the Ga society is a patriarchal one, the *wekunukpa* usually happens to be the oldest male in the lineage. He is responsible for the protection of family property, and sees to the performance of all rituals, (Odotei, 1991; Engmann, 2012).

There are usually a number of *wei* (plural) at a particular geographical location. According to Odeotei (1991) this often resulted from an increase in the number of people in the original *we*, which compelled a member to build an annex called *plama* close to the original *we*. The *plama* eventually developed into another *we*, and in time, a cluster of *wei* developed in the area and become what is called *akutso*, and a number of *akutsei* (plural) form a state. Each Ga state is therefore divided into *akutsei*, composed of *wei*. The number of *akutsei* for each state differs. For example, Ga Mashie has seven; Osu has four; La has seven; Teshie has five; Nungua has two; Tema has four; and Kpone has two. Odotei (1991) notes that immigrants were usually incorporated into the oganisation of the *wei* and *akutsei* – the reason for the mixed origin of the Ga people. They either formed separate *akutsei*, as in the cases of Otublohum and Alata of Ga Mashie, and Aneho of Osu, or became a section of an already existing *akusto*, as in the case of the Abese-Fante section of the Abese *akutso* of La. Individual immigrants

who could not build their own *we* and stayed with their hosts also had their children becoming members of the *we* of their hosts.

Engmann (2012) notes that, originally, the Ga people did not have the political office of the *maŋtsɛ* (king/chief). As noted earlier, all the Ga states or towns were divided into lineage groups. Each lineage group was under the leadership of a *wulɔmɔ* (priests), who was in charge of the lineage god (*jemawɔŋ*). The whole town also had a principal god and the *wulɔmɔ* of this god was the *wulɔmɔ nukpa* (chief priest), and he was the head of both religious and secular administration, (Odotei, 1991; Engmann, 2012). Odotei (1991) observes that events of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries affected the nature of political authority among the Ga people, and this brought about the political office of the *maŋtsɛ*. As the responsibilities of the *wulɔmɔ* increased, particularly when Europeans started coming to the Gold Coast, and there was the need to sign trade pacts and treaties, it became necessary to separate the religious functions of administration of the *wulɔmɔ* from the secular functions. The person who took charge of the secular functions of administration became known as the *maŋtsɛ*, and he was recognised in that capacity by the British colonial government, when it took over the administration of the Gold Coast in 1874.

As Odotei (1991) points out, with the separation of religious authority from the secular and the institution of the office of the *maŋtsɛ*, the Ga people began to adopt certain characteristics of Akan chieftaincy. These included the stool, which is the symbol of the *maŋtsɛ*'s office, the use of state drums and horns, and the creation of other offices for office holders who assist the *maŋtsɛ* in the

administration of the state. These are the offices of the *maŋkralo*, the *akwaashɔŋ* and *akwaashɔŋtsɛ* (supreme military commander or field-marshal), the *jaase* and *jaasetsɛ*, the *asafo* and *asafoiatsɛ* (military captain), *shipi*, *otsaamɛ* (linguist), *wolɛiatsɛ*, and *agbaafoiatsɛ*, (Engmann, 2012).

With respect to the economic organisation of the Ga people, Adjei (2006) observes that because the Ga people went through various phases before finally settling at their present location, they had to adapt to the various environments they found themselves in, and this reflected in the occupations they undertook. As Engmann (2012) notes, the earliest occupations the Ga people engaged in were farming and hunting. They later learnt marine fishing from their Fante neighbours. The Ga people also engaged in craft making, and they became famous for their accomplishments in carpentry, blacksmithing, and goldsmithing. The women also engaged in beadmaking and soapmaking. Young men and boys also occupied themselves with the making of *akpaki* (large calabash for selling kenkey) and the weaving of baskets for carrying farm produce, to make some money. Apart from all these economic activities, the Ga people also engaged in salt mining and trading in gold and slaves (Adjei, 2006). Presently, the Ga people can be seen in every sector of the Ghanaian economy: education, banking, law, medicine among others.

Concerning their religious beliefs, the Ga people believe in a Supreme Being, who they refer to as *Nyɔŋmɔ* (God) or *Ataa Naa Nyɔŋmɔ* (Father Mother God). Within Ga cosmology, the Supreme Being is at the apex of the hierarchy, followed by the gods, human beings, animals and plants, in that order. The

concept of *Nyɔŋmɔ* is that of a being who is a personified creative force, immortal, rational and mobile. The Supreme Being is considered the creator of the universe and all that is within it. The Supreme Being is also considered in both male and female terms; hence, the titles *Ataa* (Father) and *Naa* (Mother), (Adjei, 2006). Adjei (2006, p. 42) observes that *Ataa* connotes 'a father who protects and defends his children in times of trouble,' while *Naa* signifies 'a sympathetic, accommodating and caring mother who sees not only to the needs of her children but other people as well.' Though the Ga people conceive of *Nyɔŋmɔ* as both male and female, most often, *Nyɔŋmɔ* is addressed in only one of the two terms as either *Ataa Nyɔŋmɔ* or *Naa Nyɔŋmɔ*, emphasising either his male qualities or female qualities, depending on the context in which *Nyɔŋmɔ* is called, (Adjei, 2006).

Ga Verbal Art

The Ga people have lots of verbal art forms which serve as means of entertainment, instruction, as well as ways of preserving culture. Among the Ga people, verbal arts are rendered either as songs or other modes such as chants and forms that are meant to be recited. Some of these literary expressions include *adesa* (folktale), *ajenu* (riddle), *abifaowɔlemɔ lala* (lullaby), *ŋkpai* (libation text), *yarawoo lala* (dirge), *ta lala* (war song), *nitsumɔ lala* (work song), *shwɛmɔ lala* (play song), *alabaaloo* (puzzle), *toli* (joke) and *abɛ* (proverb). *Adesa* and *toli* are examples of Ga verbal arts that are rendered as narratives not meant to be sung; *abɛ*, *ajenu* and *ŋkpai* are among forms that are recited; while *abifaowɔlemɔ lala*,

yarawoo lala, *nitsumɔ lala* and *ta lala* come under forms that are rendered as songs. This kind of classification is however not very convenient since there are constant overlaps with the forms in terms of rendition. Forms that are sung however constitute a large proportion of the repertoire of Ga verbal art. This postulate is based on the fact that even narratives that are not meant to be sung may involve songs, and forms that are recited could also be sung. For instance, there are a number of *adesai* which contain songs as part of the *adesa*. Again, Ga verbal art could be classified as either religious or secular. The religious ones are those that are associated with worship. Libation texts and *kple* (cult) songs, which are performed by traditional priests during religious celebrations (Kilson, 1971, p. 9), fall under this category. The Ga verbal art which is the focus of the present study is *abɛ* (proverb).

The Concept of Ga *Abɛ*

The concept of *abɛ* will be examined in this chapter, while the general concept of the proverb is examined in chapter two. In defining Ga *abɛ*, this is what Ago (1992, p. 13) had to say: '*Abɛ ji wiemɔ kuku ni jieɔ nilee kɛ jwɛŋmɔ ni mli kwɔ kpo. Eshishinumɔ bɛ faŋŋ loo ekaaa gbɛ he, ja agbala mli dani eshishinumɔ feɔ faŋŋ*' (A proverb is a short saying that reveals knowledge and deep thought. Its meaning is not overt or easy to arrive at, unless it is explained before its meaning is arrived at). For Dakubu (2012, p. 1475),

> Ga *abɛ* extends to a text or a corpus of any length or form, that is composed in allusive language and is understood to stand for a

> discourse beyond its immediate literal meaning, indeed can encompass its users' world view. A particular instance of it may be expressed in any genre, or in several and even symbolic material objects.

Indeed, Ago (1992) had earlier observed that symbols, designs in cloths, dance, and ways of dressing could be proverbial among the Ga people. What this means is that among the Ga people, proverbs could be both verbal and non-verbal. It will therefore be erroneous to consider proverbs as only short or pithy sayings as most etic definitions indicate.

Just as Yankah (1989, p. 71) observed about the proverb and Akan society, 'Part of the rhetorical power of the proverb derives from its authoritativeness, or rather its ascription to authoritative sources.' Like the Akan, the Ga people ascribe proverb authorship to *onukpai* (the elders). Thus, when people use proverbs, they usually precede them with '*Onukpai ni bu abɛ akɛ*…' (It is the elders who use the proverb…) or '*Onukpai kɛɛ*…' (The elders say…). Even though authorship may also be ascribed to characters in the proverbs, for example, '*Aduŋ kɛɛ* …' (The monkey says…) or '*Abobonua kɛɛ* …' (The woodpecker says…), generally, authorship is ascribed to the elders.

Forms, Structure and Types of Ga Proverbs

In terms of form, Ga proverbs could either be declarative or interrogative. Examples of declarative proverbs include 'Kɛ mɛi enyɔ lɛ too lɛ, elaajeɔ' (If two people rear a goat, it gets missing); 'Abui ni he edɔ lɛ shaa kpaa' (A needle that is

hot burns tread); and 'Onukpa booo maji anɔ toi' (A leader does not pay attention to rumours in town). For the interrogative proverbs, examples include 'Kɛ obi fooo hewɔ lɛ ohaaa lɛ fufɔ?' (If your child does not cry, so you won't give it breast milk?); 'Ani lilɛi bɔ tsina wɔŋ hewɔ ni enyɛɛɛ ewie lɛ?' (Is it because the tongue cursed the cow to a god that it is unable to speak?); and 'Kɛ faa egbe obi hewɔ lɛ onuuu emli nu dɔŋŋ?' (If a river ever killed your child so will you not drink water from it again?).

Again, Ga proverbs could either be simple sentences, complex sentences, compound sentences or compound-complex sentences. However, simple sentence and complex sentence proverbs seem to be the most common types. Examples of simple sentence proverbs include 'Akɛ shaajo emaaa aboŋo' (Baobab sticks are not used in buiding a barn) and 'Gbɔblilɔ gbɛi pɛtɛ emilɛloo he' (A hunter's name is attached to his meat); complex sentence proverbs, 'Kɛ maŋ baabutu lɛ, otsaame muɔ toi' (If a town will collapse, the linguist becomes deaf) and 'Kɛ tu fɛ lɛ, nuu tsitsi ebaa' (When a gun is fired, it is a man's chest it comes to); compound sentence proverbs, 'Ejurɔ juɔ abɛku he ni abɛku hu juɔ ejurɔ he' (The right hand bathes the left hand and the left hand also bathes the right hand) and 'Mɔ kome fɔɔ shi jeee mɔ kome lɛɔ' (One person brings forth a child but it is not only one person that brings it up); and compound-complex sentence proverbs, 'Kɛ je tsɛre lɛ, jeee he ko ŋulamii etee shi moŋ mɔ ni efee amɛ lɛ eye amɛnɔ' (When it is daybreak, it is not that the stars have gone anywhere, but it is the one who created them that has overshadowed them) and 'Apasafo tsu lɛ, kpa akpaa shi ashaa' (For a lair's house, it is the roof that is taken off but it is not burnt).

Structurally, Ga *abɛ* is composed of two parts. The first part could be referred to as the opening, and the second part, the message. The opening takes various forms. Some proverbs begin with negation, which is followed by the message. Examples include 'Jeee faa fɛɛ faa ajuɔ he awoɔ mli' (It is not every river that one bathes in); 'Ayiii mɔ ni atua lɛ yaafo' (You do not beat a person and then prevent him or her from crying); and 'Amɔɔɔ mɔ nine akɛshiii tsitsi' (One does not beat one's chest with another person's hand). In the examples above, it can be observed that the proverbs have openings which contain verbs in their negative form before the actual message follows.

There are also proverbs which do not begin with negation, and there are various types of such proverbs. There are those that begin with an attribution, and the message is rendered either as a direct speech or indirect speech. Examples include "Aduŋ kɛɛ, 'Mihiɛŋmɛii ji miwɔŋ'" (The monkey says, 'My eyes are my oracle'); "Abobonua kɛɛ, 'Gbi ni minyɛ baagbo lɛ, tɛ mli makpɛ ni mafu lɛ yɛ'" (The woodpecker says, 'The day my mother will die, it is a rock I will peck and bury her in'); and "Abletsi kɛɛ, 'Mɔ ko enyiɛɛɛ kɛyaaa gbele he'" (The goat says, 'No one walks towards death'). The above proverbs have their messages rendered as direct speeches, but the same proverbs could also be rendered as indirect speeches: 'Aduŋ kɛɛ ehiɛŋmɛii ji ewɔŋ' (The monkey says his eyes are his oracle); 'Abobonua kɛɛ gbi ni enyɛ baagbo lɛ, tɛ mli ebaakpɛ ni efu lɛ yɛ' (The woodpecker says the day his mother will die, it is a rock he will peck and bury her in); and 'Abletsi kɛɛ mɔ ko enyiɛɛɛ kɛyaaa gbele he' (The goat says no one walks towards death'). Not all the proverbs in this category could have their messages

rendered as both direct and indirect speeches. There are some which are rendered only as indirect speeches. Examples include 'Titiɔmɔɔtɔi kɛɛ ebaada dani eje hiɛŋmɛi lɛ, naagbee lɛ ejeee eko kwraa' (When the eathworm says it will grow before it gets eyes, at the end it did not get eyes at all) and 'Gwaŋtɛŋ kɛɛ eefite gbɛ nɔ lɛ, elei he efiteɔ' (When the sheep said it was making the street dirty, it was its tail it was making dirty).

There are also Ga proverbs which have their openings beginning with an if-clause, which is followed by the message. Examples include 'Kɛji awo bo maŋtsɛ ni oyeee lɛ, otsaamɛ po onaŋ oye' (If you are enthroned as a chief/king and you decline, you will not get to become even a linguist) and 'Kɛ oju maŋtsɛ he lɛ, okɛ eko juɔ ohe' (If you bath for a king/chief, you use some of the water to bath yourself). Finally, there are some proverbs which are just statements and their openings do not begin with negation, nor attributions followed by a direct or indirect speech nor an if-clause. Such proverbs begin with an expression, and it is the expression that determines the message. Examples include 'Ahiɔ maŋtsɛ yɛ esɛɛ' (A king/chief is held from behind) and 'Gbɔblilɔ gbɛi pɛtɛ emilɛloo he' (A hunter's name is attached to his meat).

There are different ways of classifying proverbs. Looking at proverbs from various cultures, Finnegan (2012) identified various forms based on the figure of speech employed in the proverb. This way, she identified some proverbs as metaphors, similes, hyperboles and allusions. In respect of Ga proverbs, the common form of classification is based on the things which are used in the proverbs. Ago (1992) and Engmann (2021) both adopted this form of proverb

classification. Thus, they have proverbs about trees/plants, animals, rivers, and humans among others. In addition, Ago (1992) classified Ga proverbs based on themes, and by this means, he identified two broad themes under which Ga proverbs can be classified: proverbs about good behavior and proverbs about bad behavior. Under good behavior, there are sub-themes such as humility, hardwork, patience, kindness and frugality; and under bad behavior, there are sub-themes such as arrogance, cowardice, wickedness and boastfulness. The present study did not consider any of the aforementioned methods of classification because they do not serve the purpose of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The previous chapter provided some background information on the Ga people. Chapter Two is devoted to a discussion of related literature and the theoretical framework on which the study is premised. With regard to the literature, a lot of work has been done on proverbs, and gender. Some of these works are paremiographical, which means they involve the collection of proverbs, and others are paremiological, which means they involve the study of proverbs, (Mieder, 2004). There are also works on the conceptualisation and theorization of gender, while other works look at the issue of gender within specific domains, including proverbs. This review looks at some relevant literature which helped to situate the present study.

The Proverb and Proverb Scholarship

> The challenge of defining the proverb is one that has defied the will, patience, and intellect of scholars for millenia – from Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and other classical scholars, to more recent pioneers in the field, such as Archer Taylor, Bartlett Jere Whiting,

Lutz Röhrich, and Wolfgang Mieder, (Mac Coinnigh, 2015, p. 112).

Wolfgang Mieder, who is perhaps the world's leading scholar on proverbs presently, acknowledges the difficulty in defining the proverb. Mieder (2004; 2008) traces various attempts of earlier scholars to define the proverb, and the difficulty of such an enterprise is obvious.

Perplexed by the unsuccessful attempts at getting a definitive definition of the proverb, Taylor (1931, p.3), cited in Mieder (2004, p. 3; 2008, p. 10) had this to say:

> The definition of a proverb is too difficult to repay the undertaking; and should we fortunately combine in a single definition all the essential elements and give each the proper emphasis, we should not even then have a touchstone. An incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not. Hence no definition will enable us to identify positively a sentence as proverbial….

In reaction to the above observation, Taylor's friend, Whiting (1932, p. 302; 1994, p. 80), also cited in Mieder (2004, p. 2; 2008, p. 10) hazarded a definition by summarising his findings from various definitions of the proverb which he reviewed, thus:

> A proverb is an expression which, owing its birth to the people, testifies to its origin in form and phrase. It expresses what is apparently a fundamental truth – that is, a truism – in homely

> language, often adorned, however, with alliteration and rhyme. It is usually short, but need not be; it is usually true, but need not be. Some proverbs have both literal and figurative meaning, either of which makes perfect sense; but more often they have but one of the two. A proverb must be venerable; it must bear the sign of antiquity, and since such signs may be counterfeited by a clever literary man, it should be attested in different places at different times. This last requirement we must often waive in dealing with every early literature, where the material at our disposal is incomplete.

As Mieder (2004; 2008) observes, Whiting's attempt at defining the proverb only produced a useful summation of the definitions by other scholars, but that definition lacks precision.

In his own attempt at defining the proverb, Mieder drew on Taylor's supposition that people in general know what a proverb is to sample definitions from 55 citizens of Vermont and came up with this description: 'A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals and traditional view in a metaphorical, fixed and memorisable form and which is handed down from generation to generation,' (Mieder, 2004, p. 3; 2008, p. 11). Similarly, *The concise Oxford dictionary of proverbs* (2008) defines the proverb as 'a traditional saying which offers advice or presents a moral in a short and pithy manner.' As noted earlier, Matiki (1996), on his part, defined proverbs as

short sayings in common use that express some obvious truth or familiar experience.

Emically, Ago (1992) and Dakubu (2012) also examined the concept of Ga *abɛ*, which was discussed in the Chapter One of this study, and as Dakubu (2012) observed, Ga *abɛ* could extend to a text of any length or form, and it could also be expressed in any genre or even symbolic material objects.

It is obvious from the foregoing that we cannot have a definitive definition of the proverb. Indeed, Mieder (2004, pp. 4 – 5; 2007, p. 18) observed that there may be expressions which may look like proverbs but may not actually be proverbs. A typical example that Mieder (2004) provides is 'Where there are stars, there are scandals.' According to him, this invented sentence is based on the common proverb pattern 'Where there are Xs, there are Ys', and it appears to contain some perceived generalisation about the behaviour of movie stars, yet it is not a proverb. In order for it to become a proverb, it has to be taken over by others and used over a period of time. Even with the emic definition by Ago (1992), there is a problem because the same definition can refer to *fɔŋwiemɔi* (idioms), and Dakubu (2012) also observes that an expression like '*Suro nipa*' is short and pithy, but is not a proverb. Notwithstanding the challenge in providing a precise definition of proverbs, we cannot dispute their usefulness in virtually all cultures, even in modern times, (Mieder, 2004).

Following from the difficulty in getting a definitive definition for the proverb, and the fact that there are cultural differences with the concept, researchers have been inclined to adopting or coming up with definitions that suit

their purpose. Though Ago's (1992) emic definition of the proverb is also inadequate, since this study is situated within Ga culture, his emic definition, together with Dakubu's (2012), and the researcher's intuitive knowledge, served as the guiding principles for the identification of the Ga proverbs which served as data for the study. As Taylor (1931, p.3), cited in Mieder (2008, p. 10), maintained, 'An incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not.'

Wolfgang Mieder has works which catalogue the development of proverb scholarship through time, and bibliographies on proverb scholarship. In one of such works, Mieder (2004) touched on the historical development of both paremiography and paremiology, and notes that the collection of proverbs dates back to the third millennium B.C., where proverbs were 'inscribed on Sumerian cuneiform tablets as commonsensical codes of conduct and everyday observations of human nature' (p. xii). He remarks that from classical times to the present, there have been very impressive collections of proverbs, ranging from compilations of texts only to richly annotated scholarly compendia. As Mieder (2004) observes, there are multi-volume collections of proverbs in most languages for readers interested in the origin, history and distribution of proverbs, and the extant bibliographies of proverb collections have registered over 20, 000 volumes with about 200 new publications each year. He notes that many of these publications are small collections of several hundred texts for the general book market, but there are also invaluable scholarly collections which are produced with thousands of references. As Mieder (2004) avers, most of these

paremiographical works have provided data for paremiological studies, and it is as a result of the great wealth of proverb collection that scholars have come to consider paremiography as one side of the coin of proverb studies.

On her part, Finnegan (2012) observed that because proverbs seem to occur almost everywhere in Africa, and they have been relatively easy to record, they have been very popular with collectors. She testifies to the many extensive collections of proverbs from the Bantu area (especially the Southern Bantu), the Congo and West Africa. She claims that while there are few or no proverbs among some African peoples, for instance the Bushmen of southern Africa and the Nilotic peoples, in other areas, proverbs seem universal, and in some African languages, they occur in profusion. She recounts some of the early published proverb collections in Africa, but is quick to add that many editors are themselves not sure whether their collections are complete. This means that there is still much work to do as far as proverb collection is concerned. Though this present study does not have proverb collection as its focus, it draws attention to the importance of proverb collection as that is the foundation for proverb scholarship.

One important Ghanaian scholar who paid particular attention to proverbs from a Ghanaian culture is Yankah (1989). Though the work was essentially paremiological, Yankah (1989) catalogued some early paremiographical works under the section titled 'Context and Proverb Study in Africa,' with the focus of highlighting the importance of context in proverb studies. According to Yankah (1989), one of the earliest collectors of African proverbs is Richard Burton. It must however be observed that what Burton did was to compile proverb

collections by other collectors, who he duly acknowledged. In the book, entitled *Wit and wisdom from West Africa; or A book of proverbial philosophy, idioms, enigmas, and laconisms,* Burton (1865) compiled 2, 268 proverbs, with their English translations, from various ethnic groups in West Africa. Interestingly, Burton included a collection of Ga proverbs, which, according to him, he adopted from Zimmermann's ([1858] 1972) *A grammatical sketch and vocabulary of the Akra or Ga language*.

On account of proverb collection from a single African culture, Yankah (1989) identified J. G. Christaller, who was said to have collected 3,600 proverbs among the Asante. Other collectors named by Yankah (1989) include Merrick, who published 431 Hausa proverbs; R. S. Rattray, who published a translation of 830 of Christaller's Asante proverbs into English; D. W. Arnott, who provided 49 Fulani proverbs; and Jedu Bannerman, who compiled 519 Fante proverbs, translated into English. From Yankah's (1989) work, it could be reasoned that not much work has been done on Ga proverbs, even with respect to collection. That is why there is the need for studies like this present one which gives some scholarly attention to Ga proverbs.

As suggested by Finnegan (2012), proverb collections can never be exhaustive, and Appiah, Appiah, & Agyeman-Duah's (2007) collection of 7015 Akan proverbs in their useful book, *Bu me bɛ: Proverbs of the Akans*, testifies to this. It is instructive to note that until this publication, the largest collection of Akan proverbs was the 3600 that Christaller published, (Yankah, 1989; Appiah et al, 2007). An important feature of the work of Appiah et al (2007) is that, apart

from the English translations of the proverbs, they give brief explanations to the proverbs. However, like most other such collections, they did not provide any information regarding context of usage – a characteristic phenomenon with most collections that Yankah (1989) laments. They however mentioned context in passing in their introduction, which indicates that they recognise the importance of context in dealing with proverbs. The work of Appiah et al (2007) confirms that, indeed, whatever proverb collections there are in existence may be incomplete. This means there is much that can be done on for instance Ga proverbs. This calls for interest in works like the present study, and works on proverb collection in Ga so that the Ga culture also receives the attention that other cultures, such as Akan, are receiving regarding the subject.

On the paremiological front, Mieder (2004) observes that it also has a long history. He traces the history to at least as far as Aristotle, who he remarks about as having had much to say about various aspects of proverbs. He makes a point that while paremiographers occupied themselves with the collection and classification of proverbs, paremiologists concentrated on the definition, form, structure, style, content, function, meaning, and value of proverbs. 'They also differentiate among the proverbial subgenres that include proverbs as such, as well as proverbial expressions ("to bite the *dust*"), proverbial comparisons ("as *busy* as a bee"), proverbial interrogatives ("Does a *chicken* have lips?"), twin formulas ("*give* and take"), and wellerisms ("'Each to his *own*,' as the farmer said when he kissed his cow")."

Apart from providing a definition of the proverb, Mieder (2004) also analyses how proverbs have been classified in different ways in various proverb collections, and provides practical discussions of proverbs from various cultures to illustrate ways of investigating proverbs. In addition, he describes the present state of proverb study and its future direction, but also touched on past accomplishments. Most interestingly, he discusses various approaches of studying proverbs, including culture, folklore, worldview, pedagogy and language teaching, literature and mass media. Finally, he discussed various contexts in which proverbs function such as literary works, letters, speeches and political writings, and paid attention to particular individuals and their use of proverbs. Mieder's (2004) work is a very useful one which immerses the reader properly into the fields of paremiography and paremiology and provides insight into ways of studying proverbs such as the present study seeks to do.

In line with his style of providing surveys of works on paremiography and paremiology, in a paper entitled 'The proof of the proverb is in the probing": Alan Dundes as pioneering paremiologist,' Mieder (2007) pays glowing tribute to Alan Dundes (1934 – 2005), the renowned folklorist, and surveys works which were produced in honour of him as well as works produced by himself. A striking thing that Mieder (2007) noticed about Dundes was his interest in the definition of genres by means of structural, textual, and contextual analysis, and this reflected in his works on proverbs. He particularly had a study which looked at the structure of proverbs. Dundes's works on the structure of proverbs are very useful in that they help one to determine whether an utterance is a proverb or not. Other

interesting dimensions from which Dundes looked at proverbs, which Mieder (2007) touched on, are proverbs as expression of worldview and stereotypes in proverbs. These are dimensions that help us to understand how society is structured. In general, this survey work by Mieder (2007) helps us to appreciate the contributions of a great scholar such as Alan Dundes to the field of paremiology, and identify paths that we could chart if we so decide to embark on any paremiological study.

In another book, *Proverbs speak louder than words: Folk wisdom in art, culture, folklore, history, literature and mass media*, similar to Mieder (2004), Mieder (2008) 'draw[s] attention to the fact that proverbs as metaphorical signs continue to play an important role in oral and written communication.' He underscores the ubiquitous nature of proverbs, and the fact that they are best studied and understood from a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective. In line with the above observation, Mieder (2008) examined proverbs within the contexts of culture and folklore, the mass media, worldview and history. Mieder's (2008) work proves that there are endless possibilities to which proverbs could be examined to study and understand other phenomena, and this is confirmed by the increasing number of paremiological works in many different disciplinary contexts. Though Mieder's (2008) work did not consider proverbs within the context of gender, it is an area that is receiving scholarly attention from various cultural perspectives (see Storm, 1992; Kiyimba, 2005; Lee, 2015; Diabah & Amfo, 2015, 2018; Litovkina, 2019; Lomotey, 2019). The purpose of the present study is therefore to contribute to the discourse on how proverbs may be

contributing to the social construction of gender and the maintenance of patriarchal hegemony, but with focus on Ga culture.

Again, Mieder (2010) examined American proverbs as an international, national and global phenomenon. The focus of the paper was to show that while there are some English proverbs which are indigenous to America, there are also many English proverbs in use in English speaking countries, including America which entered into the English language through loan translations. Such proverbial 'mixed bag', according to Mieder (2010), represents an international phenomenon. Regarding American proverbs as a national phenomenon, Mieder (2010) observes that there is no collection of proverbs that is in the truest sense American. As he notes, the various collections of proverbs which have been labelled 'American' are problematic 'in that they are an international hodgepodge of proverbs from many sources and only in part comprised of national American texts.' As a global phenomenon, the sample of proverbs in common use in the United States, which are conveniently labelled American proverbs, Mieder (2010) argues, have spread throughout the rest of the English-speaking world, and possibly other non-English speaking places, due to the 'constantly increasing global influence of American as well as earlier British proverbs.' Mieder's (2010) work is very significant in that it draws our attention to the possibility of labelling some proverbs as originally belonging to a people which may be far from the truth. As Mieder (2010) would say, designations such as American, or in this case Ga, proverbs are mere constructs. Our designation of a collection of proverbs as

Ga proverbs is acceptable 'insofar as the general population makes use of them frequently as concisely expressed traditional bits of wisdom,' (p. 41).

Finnegan's (2012) *Oral literature in Africa* is perhaps one of the most influential works on the subject of African oral literature, and one of the early works that really appreciate the literary qualities of African oral literature (Okpewho, 1992). In the work, Finnegan outlines the general characteristics of African oral literature, and presents a survey of research that had been done in the past on the subject and the various attitudes with which various scholars had approached the subject. She also surveys various types of African oral art forms, which she discusses as poetry, prose and special forms. Under prose, she discusses the proverb and underscores their importance and their literary significance in virtually all African cultures. Finnegan (2012, p. 380) notes that '[i]n many African cultures a feeling for language, for imagery, and for the expression of abstract ideas through compressed and allusive phraseology comes out particularly clearly in proverbs.' She also observes that because of the literary significance of proverbs in Africa, they are closely connected to other forms of verbal art, and this is sometimes apparent in the local terminology, as proverbs are not always distinguished by a special term from other categories of verbal art. Finnegan's (2012) work is an insightful one that gives a comprehensive overview about the literary quality of African proverbs. Though she was not concerned about the role of proverbs in the construction of gender, the work provides a good background on African proverbs on which to build for the examination of African proverbs with a particular focus, as the present study seeks to undertake.

On his part, Mac Coinnigh (2015) provides a chapter which gives an overview of the unique architecture of proverbs across a range of languages. Just like Alan Dundes, Mac Coinnigh also examines the 'structural features that appear frequently in proverbs, and which constitute, in very broad terms, the concept of proverbial style.' Accordingly, he dealt 'with the role of different sentence types, both in terms of their linguistic structure and associated functions.' He also outlined 'the most common proverbial formulae, including some of the traditional and modern patterns.' Finally, he described 'the various optional syntactic devices (or markers) …particularly parallelism, inverted word order and parataxis.' Mac Coinnigh (2015) notes that proverbs of all languages resemble one another in terms of structure; however, with respect to semantics, there are some variations. He also observes that proverbs feature all possible sentence types – simple, complex, compound, compound-complex and nominal. For some languages, however, there is preference for one over the other. In terms of functions, Mac Coinnigh (2015) mentions that there are variations too, but there seems to be preference for simple indicative statements. Mac Coinnigh's (2015) work is also very useful in that it helps us to identify utterances which satisfy the description of proverbs and those that do not.

Following up from Mieder (2010), Villers and Mieder (2017) investigated the origins and dissemination of the proverb 'Time is money', and noted that neither did the proverb originate in America nor is it attributable to Benjamin Franklin as we are made to believe. According to Villers and Mieder (2017), Google Books trace the proverb to a British origin. They note that it already

appeared in an article published in a London-based newspaper from 18th May, 1719. They however hesitantly admit that Franklin's works could be the main source of the propagation of the proverb in the United States. Like Mieder (2010), Villers and Mieder (2017) also draw our attention to the problem of attributing proverbs to origins which are not authentic. As such even though the present work attributes the proverbs to a particular group of people, it does so not necessarily to say the proverbs originated from the people, but in recognition of their common usage among the people.

Ga Proverb Scholarship

Regarding specific collections of Ga proverbs, perhaps the first significant collection is the one which was done by Zimmermann ([1858] 1972) and published as part of his book entitled *A grammatical sketch and vocabulary of the Akra or Ga language*. The book, which was actually a grammar book on Ga, had a section which was titled *Different Specimen of the Language from the Mouth of the Natives*. The section had items on Ga histories, Ga speeches, Ga fables, and Ga songs, but most importantly, it contained 220 Ga proverbs with their English translations. Like most other proverb collections, no information was provided in respect of contexts, and neither were any explanations to the proverbs provided. As indicated earlier, it was this collection that Burton (1865) fell on for his Ga entry of the proverbs from West Africa. Zimmermann's ([1858] 1972) proverb collection is very significant as the first Ga proverb collection, and it became the

starting point for this present study in looking at Ga proverbs that serve in the construction of gender.

Ankra (1966), Ago (1992) and Amartey (1995), who are all native speakers of Ga, also have few collections of Ga proverbs in their respective books *Agwaseŋ wemɔi kɛ abɛi komɛi*, *Agoo*, and *Beginners' Ga*. Ankra (1966) gives examples of contexts of usage and detailed explanation of the meanings of the proverbs in his collection, and where necessary, provides the stories from which the proverbs were derived. However, as the title indicates, Ankra (1966) treats sayings (agwaseŋ wemɔi) and proverbs (abɛi) together. Though not explicitly stated, this suggests that sayings and proverbs may constitute a single genre, as applies in some cultures where a single term refers to riddle, saying, story or proverb (Finnegan, 2012). That sayings and proverbs may constitute a single genre in Ga is given credence in the fact that Ago (1992) and Amartey (1995) also treat idioms and proverbs together. On his part, Ago (1992) separates the proverbs from the idioms, but Amartey (1995) mixes them up. For his proverbs, Ago (1992) does not provide any information about the context of usage, but he gives some explanation of their meanings. Amartey (1995) also does not provide any information about context, neither does he give explanations to the meanings of the proverbs, but he provides something like the English equivalents of the Ga proverbs. All these works do not have any significant number of proverbs comparable to Appiah et al's (2007) collection of Akan proverbs. Perhaps, this is because these are booklets, and also, the authors did not have the proverb as their sole focus as Appiah et al (2007) did. The works are however significant in

drawing our attention to the need for extensive collection of Ga proverbs and like Zimmermann's ([1858] 1972) work, they provide a starting point for looking at the construction of gender in Ga proverbs.

Regarding the largest collection of Ga proverbs presently, Engmann's (2021) *Kpawo-kpawo toi kpawo: Abɛi (Folklore of the Ga People)* can be mentioned. Unlike the earlier Ga proverb collections, the sole focus of Engmann's (2021) book is the proverbs, and it has 733 recorded proverbs. Just as Ankra (1966), Engmann (2021) also provides examples of contexts in which the proverbs can be used, gives the meanings of the proverbs, and where applicable, provides the stories from which the proverbs were derived. Engmann (2021) however does not provide English translations of the proverbs. Engmann's (2021) collection is the major source from which the proverbs for this present study were sampled. Though the number of proverbs in the collection is still very small in comparison to Appiah et al's (2007) collection, it is still significant.

Perhaps the first significant paremiological work on Ga proverbs is Kudadjie's (1996) work on Ga and Dangme proverbs for preaching and teaching, which formed part of the African Proverbs Project. The work was subsequently reduced into a journal article (Kudadjie, 1999) and published in *Wajibu*. Kudadjie (1996; 1999) observed that Ga and Dangme proverbs could serve to teach important lessons and preach the Gospel. For illustration, he demonstrates how particular Ga and Dangme proverbs are affirmed by biblical texts, and how this could help in strengthening biblical teachings. Although proverbs play a positive role in what Kudadjie (1996; 1999) explored, he also identified instances where

proverbs uphold negative teachings which must be corrected through the Gospel. An instance in which proverbs uphold a negative teaching, which resonates in this present research, is the subordination of women to men. As Kudadjie (1999, p. 17) notes, 'It seems natural that wherever people live together and relate to one another, some should take a leadership role and others a subordinate position, as is usually the case between men and women… Sometimes, however, this beautiful God-given, natural arrangement is misunderstood, and women are treated as if they were inferior to men.' Though Kudadjie (1996) did not explore the issue in-depth, his identification of the phenomenon is significant, and draws our attention to it. An extension of the argument in this present research, however, is that the phenomenon is borne out of an ideology which is aimed at preserving patriarchal hegemony.

Dakubu's (2012) work, 'Metaphors of social and epistemological boundedness in Ga proverb', is another significant paremiological work on Ga proverbs. Though her focus was on metaphors of social and epistemological boundedness, with reference to Ga, she felt the need to reconsider the definition of the proverb because, according to her, her discussion on the metaphors depended on the definition of the proverb. Thus, she began her discussion with the definition of the proverb. Like other scholars (e.g. Granbom-Herranen, 2016; Hakamies, 2016), Dakubu (2012) also acknowledges that etic definitions do not readily accommodate what may be considered proverbial in every culture, and maintains that even the term 'proverb' may not mean the same thing in all European languages, let alone, an African language like Ga. She demonstrates

that the Ga word *abɛ*, which is commonly glossed as 'proverb', does not mean the same thing in the sense of the term, and as indicated earlier, she proposed that Ga *abɛ* constitutes a discourse and notes that what we have as collectable short proverbs are only summaries of the discourse. In the second part of the discussion, Dakubu (2012) looked at the metaphorical figures in relation to the hypothesis that proverbs are wider discourses, especially in the domain of tales, and maintained that the titles of the tales constitute the proverb in the sense of a short pithy indirect expression.

Gender and Gender Construction

The distinction between sex and gender is a complex one that continues to be a subject of debate because the terms mean different things to different theorists, and they have also not been easy to characterise (Pryzgoda & Chrisler, 2000). The two terms are often considered synonymous and are used interchangeably on daily basis without much thought. For instance, we are often required to fill out our appropriate sex or gender on questionnaires and all sorts of official forms, and whether the request is for sex or gender, the options we are expected to check remain the same – male or female (Pryzgoda & Chrisler, 2000). Are the two terms synonymous? Definitely no, and this is becoming clear as 'many psychologists, stimulated by an appeal from Rhoda Unger (1979), adopted more precise definitions of the two terms,' (Lips, 2017, p.5). Sex is defined based on biological features (chromosomes, sex organs, hormones and other physical features). That is, sex refers to a person's biological maleness or femaleness. On

the other hand, gender is a social or cultural construct. It is the cultural expectations for masculinity and femininity (Lips, 2017). Lips (2017) notes that such a distinction between sex and gender is very useful in that it keeps us focused on the fact that many male-female differences in behaviour or experience are not based on biological differences between the sexes.

In effect, from Lips' (2017) definition, gender is what is expected of a person as either a man or a woman in a given society. This concept of gender is based on gender binary, that is, the recognition of only two genders – male and female, man and woman or masculine and feminine. It must however be observed that the concept of gender has assumed a complex nature, which is non-binary, with scholars like Butler ([1999] 2002) going to the extent to say that gender is performative. The recognition of non-binary gender has culminated in creations such as the LGBTQ+ community in which some genders do not readily fall into the two categories – male and female, man and woman or masculine and feminine. For the purpose of this present study, however, the concept of gender is based on gender binary, as traditionally, that is what is reflected in Ga culture, and no other gender is of any effect as far as this study is concerned.

One concept that features prominently under the concept of gender is patriarchy. According to Beechey (1979), the concept of patriarchy is not something new, as it has been used within the women's movement to analyse the principles underlying women's oppression. Within feminist writing, the term has different conceptions, but generally, 'patriarchy' is seen as an organisation,

institution or society in which power, social control, material wealth, and high social status accrue predominantly to males rather than females, (Hill, 2009).

Ademiluka (2018) observes that the term has its origin from the Greek word 'patriarkhēs', which literally means 'father of a race' or 'chief of a race.' The term therefore basically means rule of the father or 'patriarch.' While in its etymological origins, 'patriarchy' has no connotations of oppression and domination, these have become key components of its feminist usage. As Sultana (2012) notes, originally, the term was used to describe a specific type of 'male-dominated family, that is, the large household of the patriarch, which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male, but now, it is used more generally 'to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways,' (Bhasin, 2006, p.3).

On her part, Walby (1989) defines patriarchy as a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (A similar view is expressed in Walby (1991)). As a system, patriarchy has its various parts, and at its core, "it is a set of symbols and ideas that make up a culture embodied by everything from the content of everyday conversations to literature and film. Patriarchal culture includes ideas about the nature of things, including men, women and humanity, with manhood and masculinity most closely associated with being human and womanhood and femininity relegated to the marginal position of 'other,'" (Johnson, 2000, p.29).

In relation to the present study, patriarchy is seen as the system on which Ga culture is organised, and the system places the man in a position where he is considered the ultimate being, and the woman is subordinate to him. A view that has been held by some scholars, and which is sustained in this present study, is that patriarchy utilises cultural products such as proverbs to propagate a gender ideology and legitimise its domination and oppression of women, and that such ideological functions of proverbs are only possible because of the attribute conferred on proverbs, just as claimed about ideology itself (Nescolarde-Selva, Uso-Domenech & Hugh, 2017, p. 2), as being absolute truth.

Two other concepts which are rooted in gender are masculinity and femininity. As already noted, gender is the cultural expectations for masculinity and femininity, (Lips, 2017). Basically, masculinity and femininity refer to traits that define an individual as being either male or female. This is the traditional view, in which masculinity and femininity were considered 'to constitute a single bipolar dimension,' (Auster & Ohm, 2000, p. 499), with masculinity at one end and femininity on the other end. This meant that an individual can only be either masculine of feminine. This notion however changed in the 1970's, when a variety of researches suggested 'that masculinity and femininity were two separate dimensions on which an individual could be high or low,' (Auster & Ohm, 2000, p. 499). With the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) instrument, developed by Sandra Bem, individuals could be categorised into four groups based on a list of personality traits: androgynous (high masculine/high feminine), masculine (high masculine/low feminine), feminine (low masculine/high

feminine), and undifferentiated (low masculine/low feminine), (Auster & Ohm, 2000). Although this present study acknowledges the notion of masculinity and femininity as being two separate dimensions on which an individual could be high or low, it still relies on the traditional notion of a single bipolar dimension since that is what pertains in Ga culture, and it fits the purpose of the study.

As observed earlier, gender is socially constructed, and this is reflected in various social experiences. Using life course and intersectional perspectives, Vespa (2009) interrogates how changes in life experiences such as marriage, parenthood, and work inform changes in a person's gender ideology. It was revealed, for instance, that marriage has more egalitarian effect on Blacks and less egalitarian effect on Whites. Vespa (2009) claims 'Black husbands' tend to appreciate being the providers of the home, and their partners being the keepers of the home, when it comes to the division of family duties. This family role among Black folks, Vespa (2009) thinks, is relatively different from that of 'White homes'. Vespa (2009) also makes a claim that parenthood has less egalitarian effect on married people than unmarried people. He explains that this is as a result of most fathers assuming the responsibility of 'providers of the home'. On work, he argues that working women have stronger egalitarian gender ideology than non-working women, while work has little or no egalitarian effect on men irrespective of race. He concludes that there is dynamism in gender ideology through various life experiences and that these dynamisms vary across gender-race categories. Unlike previous works which look at a single life experience and its influence on gender ideology construction, this paper goes beyond that. This

widens the scope of understanding the sociological antecedents of gender construction. This paper would have been more enlightening if the race-based undertones were a bit lowered.

On their part, Ali and Khan (2012) drew on feminism and constructionism as theoretical perspectives to examine how stereotypical female identities are constructed through the use of language, in their case, SMS discourse. A sample of 400 messages was collected from different people of both gender in Pakistani setting and analysed, paying attention to content, and with a feminist lens. Their analysis revealed a derogatory portrayal of Pakistani women. Among others, they were portrayed as satanic, dubious, enigmatic, perpetrators of all evil and vices, liars, immoral, cunning and materialistic. Their work paints a gloomy picture of how virtually every media is being appropriated by patriarchy to give women the status of the *Other*. Illuminating as their work may be, there are two main challenges with it. First, they claimed they used a purposive sampling technique, and later contradicted themselves by saying messages were randomly selected. This is problematic for their methodology. Second, some of the messages which served as their data were in a Pakistani language, and it would have been expedient that they provided an English translated version as the paper was written for an English language speaking audience. In all, the paper extends our understanding on the social construction of gender and the fact that various socio-cultural institutions play a role in the construction of gender.

Similar to Ali and Khan (2012), Ullah and Ali (2012) examined how gender is socially constructed through discourse, in their case, textbook discourse.

They used data which was collected from 28 educationists (11 females and 17 males), who were purposively sampled, to highlight how gendered discourses in Pakistan inform textbooks as objective and true knowledge. Their findings revealed that while on the surface it may seem something is being done to establish gender equality and equity in education, in reality, educationists themselves play an active role in producing gender/sexual identities and hierarchies in ways that reinforce hegemonic masculinity and fixed notion of femininity. Just like Ali and Khan (2012), Ullah and Ali (2012) also extend our understanding on the social construction of gender and the fact the various socio-cultural institutions play a role in this construction of gender. Thus, it is important that we examine the various socio-cultural institutions and cultural products to determine the roles they play in the social construction of gender.

Ga Gender Research

There is a dearth of research situated on Ga culture, which examine the issue of gender (Lomotey, 2015). Among the few are Odamtten (2012), Mensah and Fitzgibbon (2013), Lomotey (2015), and Atobrah and Awedoba (2017). Odamtten's (2012) 'They bleed but they don't die: Towards a theoretical canon on Ga-Adangbe gender studies' was aimed at offering 'conceptual tools with which to examine the lives of historical and contemporary women in Ga traditional society … living beyond the glass ceiling,' (p. 110). Drawing on the distinction between the role of women in the modern nation-state and traditional societies, Odamtten (2012) asserts that unlike what pertains in modern

governance, structures and practices of Ga traditional societies have enabled Ga women to live beyond the glass ceiling. He demonstrated this with the lives of some female traditional religious leaders and the significant role they play in their society. Though it may appear from Odamtten's (2012) work that, in the traditional sphere, gender is of no significant effect in Ga culture, this may be an oversimplification, as '[t]traditional gender beliefs are constantly reproduced, for example, in sayings, proverbs and idioms, which justify gender hierarchies as natural,' (Lomotey, 2015, p. 168).

On her own part, Lomotey (2015) probes the extent to which the Ga language and society are really indifferent to linguistic gender distinctions and asymmetries. She notes that though Ga does not have grammatical gender, there are other means by which gender differentiation is expressed. For instance, referential gender, which is largely not specified, gets specified through the use of lexical gender and compounding. An example of lexically specified gender is kingship terms. An observation Lomotey (2015) makes about kingship terms in Ga is that although they are symmetrical, certain terms are male biased. She attributes this to the influence of patriarchy in Ga social organisation, so that, for example, a word like *tsɛ* (father), which can also form a (male generic) component in compounds denotes 'owner, proprietor, controller, head'.

Lomotey (2015) makes an important point which gives impetus for the present study. She notes that '[i]n traditional Ghana, proverbs, songs, riddles, and stories are the means by which traditional sociocultural values are passed on from generation to generation. Consequently, they are valuable for the analysis of

linguistic representation of women and men,' (p. 167). For the purpose of her study, Lomotey (2015) briefly touched on gender in Ga proverbs, and illustrated how this plays out with six examples of proverbs. Though Lomotey (2015) did not provide a detailed discussion on the phenomenon, it is very useful in opening the window for other researchers to do a detailed examination of the phenomenon. As she herself indicates, the 'article is meant to serve as an introduction to research on gender issues in the Ga language …,' (p. 168). The present study is therefore a response to her call for 'further studies to confirm the results obtained in [her] exploratory investigation,' (p. 168).

Mensah and Fitzgibbon (2013), and Atobrah and Awedoba (2017) also attended to gender in their works, but with their focus slightly different from Odamtten (2012) and Lomotey (2015). Mensah and Fitzgibbon (2013), for instance, focused on how duolocality shapes men's and women's differential burden in domestic water supply among the Ga, while Atobrah and Awedoba (2017) explored the gendered conceptualisation of sexual and reproductive behaviour among the Ga. Interestingly, both Mensah and Fitzgibbon (2013), and Atobrah and Awedoba (2017) underscore that Ga women are economically empowered because of their trade activities. However, while this economic empowerment, together with other strategies, comes to the aid of Ga women in negotiating gender relations with respect to water supply (Mensah & Fitzgi-bbon, 2013), it does not translate into sexual and reproductive autonomy for the women, (Atobrah and Awedoba, 2017). This is because 'Ga norms endorse passivity, obscurity and naivety of female [sexual and reproductive behaviour],' (Atobrah

and Awedoba, 2017, p. 876). Though Mensah and Fitzgibbon's (2013), and Atobrah and Awedoba's (2017) works do not directly relate to the present study, they help us to understand the nature of gender relation among the Ga from other dimensions.

Gender and Proverbs

There are quite a number of paremiological works which have examined various cultures in which proverbs have served as vehicle to construct gender and maintain patriarchal hegemony. Storm (1992), for instance, examined traditional Japanese proverbs about women, as well as newer sayings that appeared after World War II, and notes that by examining proverbs about women, one can see, to some extent, how women are perceived in a culture. This observation resonates with what was earlier made by Deng and Liu (1989). The proverbs on women that Storm (1992) examined revealed many with negative connotations, where 'negative' connotation means they deal with women's undesirable characteristics or oppressed situations. There were just few positive proverbs on women in the Japanese culture. Contrary to the many proverbs about women, Storm (1992) identified only few proverbs about men. Storm (1992) also presented the results of a questionnaire survey on proverbs about women, which sought to clarify Japanese attitudes on women, as reflected by the reactions of modern Japanese to a selection of eighteen proverbs. The data revealed that attitudes toward women has not changed much, and this could be due to the general conservatism of Japanese society. One can, however, not deny the fact that gradual change is

occurring, and this is reflected in the data from Storm's (1992) survey. Though Storm's (1992) work is situated within Japanese culture, it may be reflective of what pertains in Ga culture. It is based on this that the present study seeks to examine Ga proverbs to reveal how women are perceived in the culture.

On his part, Stark (2014) examined Finish proverbs about men to look at the representation of men with respect to masculine honour and ideals of a decent man, but his focus was on Finish rural peasant culture. While there are other themes reflected in the Finish proverbs about men such as 'women's talk about men', 'gender roles in relationships' and 'useless men', Stark (2014) mentions that the "category of 'a man of honour' is the largest in number and basically reflects a man's higher status in nineteenth and early twentieth century society." He identified four sub-themes that emerged from the 'man of honour' theme. These are 'men in relation to speech and talk', 'men in groups', 'skilful men' and 'humane men.' With respect to the first theme, the proverbs portray real men as people who do not talk much and honour their words. Stark (2014) notes that a man loses his dignity if he talks too much and is unable to keep to his words. Thus, from the study, it is seen as a mark of honourability for a man not to talk too much. Regarding the second theme, the proverbs extolled the nature of men to work together. A real man is therefore the one who can function among his peers. For the third theme, the proverbs portrayed the ideal man as one who possesses certain masculine skills and is responsible. An example of such masculine skills which Stark mentioned are looking after horses, and 'drinking alcohol and not behaving too stupidly while drunk.' With the last theme, the proverbs portrayed

men in their frailties and inefficiencies. Thus, while men are supposed to be of 'superior status', they are human so succumb to human weaknesses. Though the focus of the work was on men, and not women, Stark made reference to women in passing, which gives a glimpse to their place in Finish culture, and like in most patriarchal cultures, they are seen largely in the domestic sphere.

Like Storm (1992), Lee (2015, p. 561) also observes that '[t]he rich linguistic data found in proverbs enables us to study the cultural beliefs and social values of a society, including its attitude towards the two genders.' As such, he examined Chinese proverbs to reveal how men and women are represented, and whether the gender identities constructed of men and women in the proverbs reflect their roles in contemporary Hong Kong society. He also touched on how teachers could use proverbs to promote gender equality when teaching Chinese to young learners, as proverbs are important tools with which to instil values and transform the social order. Again, Lee (2015) observed that though women were not under-represented in Chinese proverbs, there were overt gender biases against women, who are stereotypically depicted as dependent on and submissive to men, and were valued only for their physical charm, chastity, domestic roles and ability to bear sons to continue the family line. Women are also depicted negatively as foolish, nosy and loud. Men, on the other hand, were valued for their talents, friendship building and such personal attributes as bravery, modesty and kindness, and where their fondness for women was concerned, they were neutrally or positively portrayed as unrestrained or romantic, reflecting the sexual objectification of women. While women occupied the domestic sphere, wealth

and the public sphere were the domains of men. 'Male supremacy was also evident in the common use of masculine generic constructions and male-firstness in Chinese proverbs.' To avert the situation, Lee (2015) recommended that educationalists and parents pay attention to the hidden gendered messages and help children to develop a heightened awareness of the undesirability of the gender-biased features in some proverbs so as to promote a gender-fair society.

In her book, *Women through anti-proverbs*, Litovkina (2019) explores how women are stereotypically portrayed in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. Anti-proverbs here refer to proverbs which are created through some kind of alteration of traditional proverbs. Litovkina also tries to analyse the surface meanings of the anti-proverbs with the aim of establishing the image of the woman, her qualities, her attributes, and behaviour. This book was preceded by a paper (Litovkina, 2014) which explored 'the nature of women in three roles they might play at certain stage of their lives that is the roles of mother-in-law, spinster and widow as revealed through Anglo-American anti-proverbs.' *Women through anti-proverbs* (Litovkina, 2019) is, therefore, an extension of the work on the roles of mother-in-law, spinster and widow in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, (Litovkina, 2014).

Litovkina (2019) notes that it is a common phenomenon in most cultures that proverbs about women devalue, discriminate, and undermine women. Examining American proverbs about women in general, and women in various roles as girls, daughters, brides, spinsters, wives, widows, mothers, mothers-in-law, and generic old women, Litovkina (2019) highlights images created about

women, which include their dominance, bossiness, powerfulness, vainness, quarrelsomeness, difficulty to please or satisfy and inferiority. She also examines proverbs about female sexuality, where women are generally depicted as easy to seduce and unfaithful.

Regarding anti-proverbs, Litovkina (2019) observes that though there is hardly a topic that anti-proverbs do not address, women are one of the most frequent themes in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. Generally, women are portrayed in Anglo-American anti-proverbs as being obsessed with their looks, being materialistic, talkative, stubborn, dominant, strong willed, intellectually weak, quarrelsome, wicked, curious, unfaithful, and greedy. Litovkina (2019) also examines women in their specific roles as young women, girls, daughters, brides, spinsters, wives, widows, mothers, mothers-in-law, and generic old women, and in all the roles she examines, women are generally represented negatively in the anti-proverbs. As has been observed elsewhere, patriarchy is relying on another cultural product to construct gender and maintain patriarchal hegemony, creating for women the status of the *Other* as against men who are represented as the *Self* (see Prybylowicz, 1990; Kiyimba, 2005; Ssetuba, 2005; Salami, 2005; Hussein, 2005; Ali & Khan, 2012; Ullah & Ali, 2012). Indeed, from Litovkina's (2019) observation, contrary to the known positive image about women in their role as mothers, they are portrayed in anti-proverbs as constantly complaining, nagging and lecturing, critical and dominant.

Again, Litovkina (2019) explores the portrayal of women's sexuality in Anglo-American anti-proverbs, and the discussions show that women are the

most targeted subject of humour in sexual Anglo-American anti-proverbs. It could also be observed that, for most part, women are portrayed as sex objects in the anti-proverbs, and this demonstrates how women are never spared from devaluation no matter the context in which they are portrayed in Anglo-American anti-proverbs.

Finally, Litovkina (2019) examines some professions and occupations which are considered feminine, such as housewives, actresses and whores, maids, babysitters, teachers, secretaries, hairdressers and beauticians, and how they are depicted in Anglo-American anti-proverbs. Just as could be observed about the earlier portrayals of women in the Anglo-American anti-proverbs, the depictions of the professions and occupations which are considered feminine are largely negative in the anti-proverbs. As Litovkina (2019) observes in the conclusion, one possible reason why women are constantly assigned inferior and abnormal qualities in anti-proverbs could be that men want 'to provide themselves with a sense of their own worth and, therefore, to feel better about themselves, enhance their own self-esteem, and sense of superiority,' (p. 195).

Litovkina's (2019) work is very significant in that it adds to the discussion on how culture and its products subtly help patriarchy to construct gender and perpetuate the subordination of women. Litovkina's (2019) ability to look at the representation of women in the anti-proverbs from various perspectives helps us to get a comprehensive picture of how Anglo-American anti-proverbs, just like traditional proverbs, feature in the devaluation and subordination of women.

'[G]iven the adverse effects of hierarchical gender relations on a society's development,' Lomotey (2019, p. 162), investigated 'the current relevance or otherwise of gender related Spanish proverbs, which promote male dominance and female subordination.' She did this with insight from feminist linguistic theory and the Modern and Old-Fashioned Sexism theories by Swim et al (1995) with which she analysed the gender ideologies inherent in the proverbs, and Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of metaphor, with which she examined how the gender ideologies enact and reinforce violence. Finally, she administered questionnaires to examine participants' familiarity with the proverbs. Lomotey (2019) observed that like proverbs from many other cultures, Spanish proverbs promote androcentric views; however, overtly sexist proverbs are uncommon in modern times. On the other hand, proverbs that reflect covert and benevolent sexism are still evident as some old-fashioned overtly sexist proverbs have been refashioned by society into proverbs that appear covertly benevolent to women, concealing the 'traditional' and bluntly sexist ones. According to Lomotey (2019), the popularity of proverbs that reflect covert and benevolent sexism and unpopularity of overtly sexist proverbs 'demonstrates societal awareness and sensitivity towards the negative effects of gender bias and it confirms a systematic success in feminist attempts to eliminate sexism,' (p. 175). This notwithstanding, proverbs continue to serve in the devaluation of women in many other cultures, as can be seen from the literature.

From the African continent, Oha (1998) looked at the semantics of female subjugation and derogation in Igbo proverbs, and observed that, through proverbs,

patriarchy generates meanings that disparage women in order to invigorate and sustain itself. He notes that though there are both positive and negative images of womanhood in Igbo proverbs, the profuse negative images that occur in the proverbs undermine the positive images. According to Oha (1998), in sexist Igbo proverbs, women are stereotypically portrayed as childish, irresponsible, foolish, weak, unreliable, wicked, dangerous, inferior, and as sexual objects. These stereotypes or negative images of women in Igbo proverbs seem consistent with what pertains in many other cultures. 'The fact that these stereotypes have been encoded in a form of communication usually respected and highly valued in Igbo culture suggests the degree rhetoric in the society has been masculinized,' (p. 87). Indeed, Oha (1998) maintained that, in Igbo culture, proverb use is a male art, and men have made the proverb a sex-specific speech form so as to 'consolidate their superior cultural and ontological position,' (p. 94). Moreover, women are hardly allowed in contexts where proverbs are used so that they can participate in the learning and use of proverbs. In his conclusion, Oha (1998) avers that the inferiorisation of women in the Igbo proverbs has implication for both proverb use and male-female relationship, as they undermine the integrity of women. There is therefore the need for us to heed to Lee's (2015) call that we pay attention to the hidden gendered messages in proverbs that devalue women, in a bid to develop a heightened awareness of their undesirability so as to promote a gender-fair society.

On his part, Kiyimba (2005) examined the portrayal of boys and girls in the oral literature of the Baganda of Uganda. Specifically, he assessed the near-

indelible impressions that oral literature, particularly proverbs, creates, and how they impact on gender relations. He argues that the gender inequality among the Baganda has its foundations in early childhood, and according to him, children begin in the early stages of life to develop life-long attitudes towards themselves and each other, which attach socially ascribed meanings to gender. He underscores that proverbs play an important role in the construction of gender. For instance, proverbs consistently depict the boy and his mother in privileged positions, while the girl and her mother are portrayed as worthless – an indication that it is socially rewarding to give birth to a boy than to a girl. From the proverbs he studied, it could be suggested that a woman's worth is measured only by her beauty, as through her beauty, she could get married to a rich man. Ideas of this sort may be prevalent in many other cultures, but we can only recognise them when we subject the proverbs to scrutiny and that is exactly what this present study seeks to do with the Ga proverbs.

In another work, Kiyimba (2010) examined how masculinity is portrayed in Baganda folktales and proverbs, and argues that 'patriarchal ideology of dominance remains unchallenged because it is rooted in the culture's founding myth which permeates everyday life,' (pp. 5 – 6). He notes that cultural mechanisms, especially oral forms and everyday communicative strategies are tools that are used to perpetuate male hegemony and make absolute the undisputed leadership of the male in the Baganda society. This observation underscores the importance for us to examine oral forms to uncover the subtle ways they help to legitimise male hegemony.

Similarly, Ssetuba (2005) examined the proverbs of the Baganda of Uganda to reveal how proverbs implicitly serve predominantly patriarchal societies to preserve and sustain patriarchy through language use. Though most of the proverbs he examined did not give positive views about women, portraying them as weak and people who must be submissive, as against men who are portrayed as strong and people who must show dominance, there are a few of the proverbs which carry positive messages for gender relations. These are however rare. That notwithstanding, he underscores the need to encourage the use of such proverbs to show that somewhere in the mentality of the ancestors lay the awareness of gender balance. This work, like others that have looked at the operations of gender in proverbs, provides a good background on which to situate any study of proverbs in relation to gender.

On her part, Salami (2005) examined the use of proverbs in two drama texts by two Nigerian playwrights – *Imaguero* by Evbinma Ogie and *Dance on his grave* by Barclays Ayakoroma – to demonstrate the ways in which African writers construct and reinforce gender stereotypes in their works. Like many other African scholars sensitive to the ways proverbs help to construct gender, Salami (2005) stressed the importance of proverbs within African cultures; however, she noted that patriarchy played a major role in the formulation of many of the proverbs, such that proverbs 'are commonly used in Africa to construct feminine identities, perpetuating the subordination of women to men,' (p. 27). Salami's work provides a different dimension to the ways by which proverbs contribute to gender construction, to wit, their use in written literature. This demonstrates the

extent to which proverbs could find their way into other domains and subtly help to socially construct gender and propagate patriarchal ideology.

In his paper, 'The social and ethno-cultural construction of masculinity and femininity in African proverbs,' Hussein (2005) examined how, through African proverbs, masculinity and femininity are socially and culturally constructed. He notes that through gender ideology, which features largely in cultural products such as rituals, legends, name-giving ceremonies, oral narratives, proverbs, aphorisms and usages, men's prerogatives to the allegiance and subservience of women, and legitimacy to exercise power over women to sustain the latter's subordination and marginality is cultivated. Though Hussein's paper purports to look at African proverbs, it is evident from his discussion that proverbs from just a few African cultures were catered for, and conspicuously missing from Hussein's data are Ga proverbs. Where proverbs from Ghana were mentioned, they were not attributed to any specific group of people, which creates the impression that Ghana has a homogeneous culture. The need to study Ga proverbs to examine their role in perpetuating gender ideology is borne out of the fact that they have not received much attention in that regard, as can be attested to from Hussein's data. Hussein (2005) however makes an important observation with regard to methodology, in studying proverbs in the manner that he did. This is the need to understand the culture from which the proverbs emanate, and to take note of the context in which a proverb is used, as a single proverb could have divergent meanings based on the varied circumstances under which it is used.

This observation is consistent with what Arewa and Dudes (1964) and Bauman (1986) say regarding context in folklore studies.

In a related paper, Hussein (2009) examined 'how proverbs have been used to relegate women to a secondary position in patriarchal systems in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan.' Particularly, he examined how 'proverbs have been used to subjugate women through institutionalizing, rationalizing, formalizing, or naturalizing their secondary positions and sometimes nullifying their total humanity.' Hussein noted that while proverbs occupy an important place in many African cultures, as espoused by proverbs about proverbs in these cultures, they are also a fertile ground for legitimising gender inequalities. He observed that women participate in this legitimisation of their secondary position as they also use the proverbs. He concludes that '[d]iscouraging sexist proverbs and other culturally based symbolic verbal battery is a step toward improving the unhappy condition of women in the continent….' To achieve this, proverbs from various African cultures need to be examined to identify the hidden gender ideology within them.

Balogun (2010) also examined Yoruba proverbs and observed that there are elements of oppression in some of the proverbs that relate to women. He argued that these proverbs violate the rights and dignity of women, and that they are indicators of discrimination against women in Yoruba culture. He notes that the most fundamental but neglected aspect in gender discourse lies in the proverbial resources of the community. Balogun (2010) provided textual evidence of proverbial oppression of the feminine gender in Yoruba culture, and also

underscored their pernicious effects on the struggle for gender balance. Findings of the study showed that though not all African women are oppressed and not all proverbs demean women, for the most part, many Yoruba proverbs clearly pointed to the oppression of women in Yoruba society. While male users of these proverbs considered them witty rather than offensive and oppressive, their female referents felt humiliated by them. This is similar to Oha's (1998) observation about sexist Igbo proverbs. The study concluded that it is not only women that should be blamed for problems of all sorts such as divorce, sexual immorality, extravagance and dishonesty. There should be proverbs that reprimand or warn both sexes. Balogun (2010) recommended that the oppressive picture of the nature of women created in many Yoruba proverbs must be critically re-examined.

Similar to Kiyimba (2005), Hussein (2005; 2009) and Balogun (2010), Ncube and Moyo (2011) examined how women are given the status of the Other among the Ndebele of Zimbabwe. Ncube and Moyo (2011) did this through the examination of Ndebele proverbs and idioms, which, according to them, 'reflect society's thinking and also influences [sic] one's thinking about the status of women,' (p. 127). They mentioned that the proverbs and idioms they studied portrayed women as 'voiceless, ignorant, docile, functional objects, undiscriminating, naive, immature, disempowered, irrational and at times self-destructively dangerous.' These images of women are meant to represent them as the *Other* as opposed to the *Self*, that is masculinity. The ultimate result of representing women as the *Other* is the creation of patriarchal hegemony. Like

their work, the present study also seeks to examine how, through proverbs, women are given the status of the *Other* in Ga culture.

Unlike Kiyimba (2005), Hussein (2005; 2009), Balogun (2010) and Ncube & Moyo (2011), Olasupo, Olugbemi and Jumoke (2012) looked at gender equalities and equities in African cultures as expressed in proverbs. They observed that proverbs in Yoruba culture recognise the natural dichotomy that exists between male and female. However, while it recognises their co-existence, it also underlines the fact that the relationship between women and men should be founded on equality. They note that it is part of human nature to want to dominate one another, and when this happens, both the oppressed and oppressor invent a proverb to back his or her position. So, while the oppressor would invent one to justify his or her position, the oppressed would also think deeply and invent one that would show that the oppressor is oppressing him or her. Thus, among the Yoruba, there is a mechanism for challenging gender stereotypes. This shows that there is the possibility of changing the narrative about men dominating women in patriarchal societies; however, to do this, both the oppressed and the oppressor must be aware of the prevailing situation, which happens to be legitimised also through proverbs. There is therefore the need to expose how proverbs feature in legitimising patriarchal hegemony, like this study seeks to do, in order to create that awareness in people so as to change the narrative.

Asimeng-Boahene (2013) also notes the importance of proverbs in African cultures; however, like the other scholars, he reckons that aside their importance, proverbs serve, 'through rationalisation, institutionalisation, formalisation, and

even sometimes nullification' of the humanity of women, 'to situate or socially construct African women in both matriarchal and patriarchal systems in Africa.' Applying social construction and African feminism as theoretical frameworks, he examined how proverbs 'place the role, status, and identity of women in Africa.' From his analysis, he identified that women are represented in African proverbs largely in negative light. Women are generally represented as objects or commodities, and this is tied to their dependence on men, particularly in marriage. They are represented as subordinate to men and only useful in the domestic sphere. Also, women are portrayed as having no autonomy, and are forbidden to even express their sexual satisfaction or otherwise. This may be the reason why clitoridectomy is performed on females in some African cultures. Again, women are presented as unintelligent, difficult to manage and opportunistic. In a few cases however, women are represented in positive light as hardworking. Like Hussein (2005), while Asimeng-Boahene (2013) purports to have examined African proverbs, his examples came from only Akan proverbs. Thus, the work is not representative enough on Africa. There are other African cultures, such as Ga culture, which may add to or give a different perspective to what Asimeng-Boahene (2013) discovered in his study.

Belfatmi (2013) also looked at the social construction of gender in proverbs. Specifically, he examined how women were portrayed in the Moroccan proverbs to see whether such proverbs support women's secondary position in society. Like other scholars, Belfatmi (2013) notes that the authority that proverbs wield has the function of legitimising certain role patterns as well as preventing

those patterns from possibly being questioned. As he observes, through the attributions that are attached to women while talking about proverbs in Morocco, women's secondary position is faithfully mirrored in the culture. Belfatmi (2013) identified various ways that women are represented in Moroccan proverbs. These include in their roles as wives in the domestic sphere, that their beauty or charm is their asset, that they are intellectually weak, that they are victims of domestic violence, which is sometimes portrayed as deserving, and also that they are evil creatures. In his conclusion, Belfatmi (2013) observed that since proverbs are based on common sense and practical experience of humanity, they call into question the extent of their truth and validity. He therefore suggests that proverbs with negative gender connotations should be altered.

On their part, Dickson and Mbosowo (2014) examined the semantic import of African proverbs about women and their impact on the roles and status of women. They observed that because these proverbs express social and cultural precepts deeply rooted in the minds of the people, they yield valuable insights into the women question and the inequality in male/female relationships in the African society. While they also purport to be looking at African proverbs, there was no mention of a proverb from any Ghanaian culture. It would have been expedient if they focused on specific African cultures as Hussein (2009) did, instead of saying they were looking at African proverbs. That notwithstanding, their work adds to the general picture of how proverbs feature in gendering, and this provides a good background for examining the role of proverbs in gender construction in Ga culture.

Rasul (2015) did a sociolinguistic and critical discourse analysis of English and Urdu proverbs to examine how power relationships of different genders are determined through linguistic choices in different languages or societies. Like other scholars, she notes that because proverbs are considered as transmitters and reflectors of accumulated wisdom, they are generally accepted blindly, and they reflect the traditional values of a society. As she observes, in the context of gender and language relationships, proverbs acquire great significance because they mirror the traditional power relationships between genders. Rasul (2015) sourced data from one English and one Urdu dictionary of proverbs to examine how a woman was perceived, symbolised and portrayed through Urdu and English proverbs. She also examined whether the stereotypical image of the woman in English proverbs was the same in Urdu proverbs. From her findings, it was observed that both the English and Urdu proverbs depicted women as weak, inferior and subsidiary. However, Urdu proverbs depicted this weakness more in the marital perspective. A woman was typically expected to be docile, submissive and subservient to her husband and her in-laws. There is hardly any evidence of courage and assertiveness of women which was found in the proverbs. Generally, in both English and Urdu proverbs, women were presented as negatively beautiful, fragile, unintelligent and talkative. They were also considered as troublesome and untrustworthy and were projected as degraded and immoral objects of satisfaction. Like some of the other scholars whose works were reviewed, Rasul (2015) is of the view that proverbs, as a linguistic and socio-cultural phenomenon, have served to support and advocate patriarchy in many

societies. 'Proverbs, as folk wisdom, present the woman the way SHE is expected to be, not the way SHE actually is.'

Employing a poly-epistemic conceptual framework within the concept of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), Kamwendo and Kaya (2016) analysed 'the role of African proverbs in gender construction and articulation in Southern and East Africa,' (p. 92). Specifically, they used Afrocentrism and postcolonial African feminism 'to discuss the role of African proverbs in gender construction and articulation,' (p. 93), and employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) 'to analyse the proverbs in the context of IKS to articulate and understand the power relations between men and women in African ways of knowing and value systems,' (pp. 93 – 94). Like many other scholars who examined the role of proverbs in gender construction, Kamwendo and Kaya (2016) acknowledged the value of proverbs in African culture. However, they also recognise how influential proverbs are in promoting male superiority and female subordination. While a work like this is useful in making us know the negative aspect of proverbs, it is not all there is about African proverbs and their role in perpetuating a gendered culture. There is the need to look at proverbs from cultures which have hitherto not been well explored in that respect to see the insights they could provide us regarding the construction of gender.

On their part, Bacha and Kuto (2019) investigated how men and women are portrayed in Arsi Oromo proverbs, and note that the claim by some studies that both women and men are portrayed either negatively or positively in proverbs is a simplistic conjecture because 'it is impossible to wrap up whether women are

subordinate or not and men are dominant in Oromo culture by selecting proverbs in which women and men are directly or indirectly mentioned,' (p. 74). This is because the philosophical outlook of the Oromo does not support the claim that proverbs serve as a weapon for the subordination of women, and also proverbs cannot give an insightful picture about gender when it is detached from the worldview of society. Thus, proverbs need to be placed in their wider cultural context and philosophical outlook of the people in order to understand their multifaceted nature and functions. According to Bacha and Kuto (2019), proverbs are directed to one individual who is believed to exhibit a behaviour in a given context, and both men and women can demonstrate weakness and strength. They therefore call for the reconsideration of the biased assumption that there are gender biased Oromo proverbs. Contrary to Bacha and Kuto (2019), the present study subscribes to the view that other scholars hold, that proverbs could serve as ideological tools for the maintenance of patriarchal hegemony. Indeed, there may be systems within culture which give the semblance of gender equality, as observed by Lomotey (2015) about the Ga, but that does not take away from the forceful imprint that proverbs make on the mind, as they are considered absolute truth.

In Ghana, Diabah and Amfo (2015) examined the representation of women as espoused in some Akan proverbs. They analysed the data from a Feminist Critical Discourse Analytical perspective, and the analysis revealed three categories of representation of women in the proverbs: **Positive representations**, where women were represented as givers of life, carers/nurturers,

homemakers/caretakers, representation of virtue, possessing strength and power, and submissive; **neutral representations**, where women were represented as dependent, better off in marriage, particular about physical appearance; and **negative representations**, where women were represented as gullible/vulnerable, opportunistic/selfish, 'sweet-talkers', sex objects, supporters/subservient, people who need to conform to traditional assigned roles, and as usurpers. Diabah and Amfo note that the proverbs reinforce traditional stereotypes and legitimise the traditional authority of men over women and the subordination of women. The belief that this could also be the case with Ga proverbs is the reason why Ga proverbs need to be studied to examine how the phenomenon plays out within Ga culture.

In a sequel to Diabah and Amfo (2015), which looked at the representation of women in Akan proverbs, Diabah and Amfo (2018) again examined the representation of men in Akan proverbs, as a way of exploring the concepts of masculinities in Akan societies. Through focused group discussions, they also explored the implication of the traditional views on masculinities, as expressed in the proverbs, for contemporary Ghanaian men. Their analysis revealed eight emerging themes under which the representation of men in the Akan proverbs can be categorised: men and bravery, men as protectors, men as providers, men as action- or result-oriented, men as lecherous, consequences of polygamy, the superiority of men, and marginalised and subordinate masculinities. Diabah and Amfo note that masculinities are multiple and diverse: some are dominant, highlighted and celebrated, while others are looked down upon by society. For

instance, it can be gleaned from Diabah and Amfo's discussions that men are supposed to be brave, protect their families and provide for them, be action-oriented, exhibit sexual prowess, and demonstrate superiority over women. Any masculinity that runs counter to these societal ideals is rejected by the society, and it is those forms of masculinities that Diabah and Amfo categorised as marginalised and subordinate masculinities. Regarding the implication of how men are represented in the proverbs for contemporary Ghanaian men, Diabah and Amfo observed from their focus group discussions that men are put under undue pressure to meet the expectations of society due to such representations. This work is very useful in that it draws our attention to the fact that just as proverbs could serve patriarchy to create for women the status of the *Other*, they could also be utilised to create for men the status of the *Self*, thereby magnifying the subordinate position of women in a society.

Employing Critical Discourse Analysis, Gyan, Abbey and Baffoe (2020) also examined the representation of women in some Akan proverbs, with the focus on analysing the ways by which these proverbs are utilised by patriarchy to systematically perpetuate and legitimise gender inequities and inequality against women. They observed that proverbs 'highlight several ideas and beliefs that at all times continue to reflect and define women and their roles' (p. 3). Just like Diabah and Amfo (2015), Gyan, Abbey and Baffoe's (2020) analysis of the Akan proverbs revealed some emerging themes which largely portray women in a negative light, and in their domestic roles. These include women as dependent on men, women as unintelligent, women as subordinate to men in terms of

leadership, women as objects, and marriage as an ultimate goal for women. Even where women are portrayed in a positive light, Gyan, Abbey and Baffoe (2020) are quick to observe that such portrayals only go on to affirm their domestic roles. Like Diabah and Amfo (2015, 2018), Gyan, Abbey and Baffoe (2020) give an insight into how proverbs could be used to construct gender in a Ghanaian culture, which is the Akan culture. It is however instructive to note that there are several other cultures in Ghana, and one of such is the Ga culture. The present work therefore seeks to find out how the phenomenon pertains to the Ga culture as well.

On their part, Dzahene-Quarshie and Omari (2021) did a comparative study on gendered proverbs in the Akan society of Ghana and the Swahili society of Tanzania to find out the points of convergence and divergence regarding their worldviews on conceptualisation of gender roles and functions. Like most other scholars, Dzahene-Quarshie and Omari (2021) reckon that gender is a social construct which humans create through their interactions with one another and their environments, and proverbs play a role in the social construction of gender. Based on the various aspects of gender roles and perceptions the proverbs address, they identified the following themes from their proverb data, which was sourced from written and oral sources: Marriage; gender roles and positions in the family: reproductive roles, and productive and management roles; intelligence; beauty and physical appearance; behaviour and manners in society: representation of virtue, and promiscuity; respect and power; and sexuality. The analysis of data within the theoretical concepts of gender ideology and intertextuality revealed that, largely, gendered proverbs in Akan and Swahili are convergent and express

similar gender ideologies. Generally, gendered proverbs in both societies typically make reference to women, and even in cases where men were mentioned, such proverbs often only exposed the subjugation of women in relation to male superiority. Only few proverbs describe women in a positive light. 'Men are mainly depicted as tough, powerful, outgoing, and controllers of resources. Women though often depicted as dependent and devious, are also conceptualised as powerful and worthy of respect especially, in their roles as mothers and caretakers of the home,' (p. 140). 'All these are underpinned by the African patriarchy (sic) ideology and cultural system which uphold men as leaders who rule in society by occupying the important positions within the family, political, economic and social jurisdictions,' (p. 140). On their points of divergence, while in gendered Akan proverbs women were perceived as sex objects, and there is use of explicit expressions of sex organs and sexual acts, Swahili gendered proverbs rarely address sexuality, and when they do, they do so discreetly by implication. Also, while some Akan proverbs depict the woman as capable of working and creating wealth, no such proverbs were identified in the Swahili data.

Contrary to the earlier view expressed, that because of the attribute of truthfulness conferred on proverbs, they are not challenged, Yitah (2006, 2009, 2012) observes a situation among Kasena women from Northern Ghana where they 'take advantage of a socially sanctioned medium, the "joking" relationship that exists between an individual and her spouse's siblings, to subvert and contradict Kasem proverbs in an effort to transcend the misogynist images and connotations of these proverbs as well as to critique patriarchal norms,' (Yitah,

2006, p. 234). This is similar to what Olasupo, Olugbemi and Jumoke (2012) observed about proverbs in Yoruba culture. Yitah (2006) observes that like proverbs in other African cultures, Kasem proverbs exert a strong moral force and are typically employed didactically and as social correctives, and the authoritative force in proverbs is felt strongest when it has to do with women. However, unlike other cultures where women are not given voice to protest against the gender biases in their proverbs, Kasena women 'create a corpus of "counter- proverb" by which they establish their own signifying terms. According to Yitah (2009), this activity is termed *ka jang de memanga* (to fight with proverbs), and it is an activity that Kasena who see proverbs as the wisdom of their ancestors, would typically avoid, but the contemporary African sees it as a tool to invoke, evoke, enact, reject, consciously reshape, or completely transform the perceptions of gender and female personhood. In effect, the proverbs reveal 'women's tacit awareness that the notion of gender is bound up with and partly defined by inequality, and that in order to provide greater rights for women and to mitigate the hierarchical aspects of role stratification there is the need to soften rigid distinctions between women and men,' (Yitah, 2012. p. 19).

While there have been works which examine the operations of patriarchy and gender in proverbs in some cultures, including Ghanaian cultures such as Akan (see Diabah & Amfo, 2015; Diabah & Amfo, 2018; Gyan, Abbey & Baffoe, 2020) and Kasen (see Yitah, 2006; Yitah, 2012), there seems to be a dearth of research on Ga proverbs, particularly relating to gender. As Hussein (2005) notes, 'a gender study based on proverbs of a single society does not provide a fuller

understanding of the ethnocultural construction of masculinity and femininity in Africa' (p.63). There is therefore the need for a study like this present one to expand our understanding of the operations of patriarchy and gender ideology in African cultures.

Theoretical Framework

Feminism, Ideology and Hegemony

This study is underpinned by feminist literary criticism, with influence from the Marxist concepts of ideology and hegemony. Dobie (2002, p. 97) observed that '[a]lthough the feminist movement stretches back into the nineteenth century, the modern attempt to look at literature through a feminist lens began to develop in the early 1960s.' Before then, however, were two centuries of struggles for the recognition of women regarding their cultural roles and achievements, and social and political rights. These were marked by books such as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A vindication of rights of women* (1792), John Stuart Mill's *The subjection of women* (1869), and Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the nineteenth century* (1845), (Abrams & Harpham, 2012).

According to Abrams & Harpham (2012, p. 121), '[a]n important precursor to feminist criticism was Virginia Woolf.' In addition to her fiction, her influential work, *A room of one's own* (1929), and other essays questioned the suppression of women's productive and creative potentials in what she called a patriarchal society, dominated by men. As observed by Abrams & Harpham (2012, p. 121),

> A much more radical critical mode, sometimes called "second-wave feminism," was launched in France by Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), a wide-ranging critique of the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object, or "Other," to men as dominating "Subject" who is assumed to represent humanity in general….

Abram and Harpham (2012) note that current feminist criticism in all parts of the world is not unitary. As such we cannot talk about a feminist theory but rather feminist theories. Feminism's engagements with psychoanalysis, Marxism and post-structuralism have produced many strands of feminism. As diverse as the various strands may be, they 'share certain assumptions and concepts that underlie the diverse ways that individual critics explore the factor of sexual difference and privilege in the production, the form and content, the reception, and the critical analysis and evaluation of works of literature,' (Abrams & Harpham, 2012, p. 122). No particular strand of feminism is favoured in this present study, apart from the principal assumption that unites all feminists. The principal assumption that unites all feminists is the assumption that most cultures are fundamentally patriarchal, and they create an imbalance of power that marginalises women, and the social structure is reflected in all aspects of culture, including religion, philosophy, economics, education and literature (Dobie, 2002).

Ledwith (2009) reckons that Antonio Gramsci made a very important contribution to feminist thought through his concept of hegemony, and this could be extended to the concept of ideology as the two concepts are closely related. It

is instructive to note that for a dominant group to maintain its hegemony, the dominated group must accept the dominant ideology as the norm. 'Ideology', as a Marxist concept, is applied to various areas of study, including gender and feminist studies. Karl Marx was however not the one who coined the term; neither was he the first person to use the term. As Drucker (1972) avers, the term was coined by Antoine Louis Claude Destutt de Tracy, and it was earlier used by Napoleon Bonaparte, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson, and its use was also known to Jeremy Bentham, but for its intellectual agency, the term begins with Marx.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx (2004) sees ideology as '[t]he production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness', which is 'directly interwoven with the material activities and the material intercourse of men.' He notes that all that men engage in is governed by ideology, and men are producers of their own ideologies, 'as they are conditioned by a particular development of their productive forces and the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms.' 'If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.' Marx observes that, in every society, the ruling or dominant class controls the means of material production, and their ideas become the dominant ideology. They therefore rule as 'thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age'. It is evident from Marx's

conception of ideology that his focus was on how society was organised such that the ruling class presents its ideas as the only rational ones.

Like most concepts in the social sciences and the humanities, the concept of ideology has different notions and has divided scholars on many fronts, (van Dijk, 1998; Knight, 2006; Martin, 2015; Nescolarde-Selva, Uso-Domenech & Hugh, 2017). For van Dijk (1998, p.8), ideology may be defined as 'the basis of social representations shared by members of a group.' Thus, it 'allow[s] people, as group members, to organize the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, for them, and to act accordingly.' As van Dijk notes, ideology may also influence what is accepted as true or false, especially when such a belief is found to be relevant for the group. In broader terms, Knight (2006, p. 619) defines ideology 'as the way a system – a single individual or even a whole society – rationalizes itself.' Nescolarde-Selva, Uso-Domenech & Hugh (2017, p. 2) have these observations about ideology:

1. An ideology is a system of ideas that an individual or a social group hold over time to which they are committed;
2. Ideology is an organizing world view that obscures aspect of experience and when it operates as a closed belief system is impervious to evidence contradicting its position;
3. All ideology diminishes the importance of individuals.

From the foregoing, it is clear that much of our understandings about society and power relations are constructed based on ideologies. In most cases, ideologies are self-serving to dominant groups who utilise them as tools to

legitimise their domination of others. For instance, in the context of this present research, ideology is seen as a tool which is utilised by patriarchy to legitimate the domination of women in Ga culture.

'Hegemony', just like 'ideology', is also a Marxist concept which is applied to various areas of study, including gender and feminist studies. Herrmann (2018) asserts that '[h]istorically, the term *hegemon* signified "leadership" or "sovereign rule,"' (p. 1). The term was however later extended 'to include military, economic, and political dominance of one nation-state over another.' Antonio Gramsci is noted as the progenitor of the concept, but not without influence from other sources, (Bates, 1975; Boothman, 2008). In his *Hegemony*, Gramsci (2004) noted that the relationship that exists between the intellectuals and the world of production is not direct, but '"mediated by the whole fabric of society and by the complex of superstructures, of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the "functionaries".' He identified two levels of superstructure: "civil society" and "political society", which correspond on the one hand to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society, and on the other hand, "direct domination" exercised through the State and "juridical" government. As he notes, the functions are well organised and connected, and the intellectuals act as deputies for the dominant group, exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government. These comprise obtaining the consent of the masses of population, and the use of coercive power on those who do not give consent.

Bates (1975) observes that the basic premise on which the concept of hegemony is based is 'that man is not ruled by force alone, but also by ideas,' (p. 351). 'According to Gramsci, hegemony is created when the *Weltanschauung*, or worldview, of the ruling class is consented to as the cultural norm for society,' (Herrmann, 2018, p. 1). In other words, '[h]egemony occurs when the [dominant group] accomplishes its goal of presenting its understandings of society for the whole society, reifying the status quo.' As Gramsci notes, hegemony emerges as 'common sense' that is 'inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed' and reproduces moral and political passivity, (Herrmann, 2018). According to Herrmann (2018, p. 2), the cultural industry – newspapers, television, books, music, and so on, and as far as this present study is concerned, proverbs – is particularly identified for its 'ideologically hegemonic functions', through which 'individuals in society not only identify with dominant discourses, but also appropriate an active involvement in their own subjugation.' This is to say that, for instance, in Ga culture, where women accept the proverbs that represent them as the *Other* as absolute truth, and also partake in their usage, they give consent to their own subordination.

According to Ledwith (2009), Gramsci's 'insightful analysis of *hegemony*, and subtle nature of *consent*, offered feminists a conceptual lead on *the personal as political*.' With Gramsci turning 'the key to the personal as political,' and reinterpreting the traditional Marxist concept of hegemony, feminists became conscious to the public/private divide and the way that domination permeates the most intimate aspects of women's life through their interactions in civil society.

Ledwith (2009) notes that the family, community, schools and formal religions remain key sites for male domination in society. Gramsci's contribution to feminist thought has provided a tool of analysis for understanding the sites of gendered oppression in society. As Ledwith (2009, p. 687) observes, 'By exploring the nature of consent, [feminists] come to see that hegemony is always in process, in continuous struggle, and they begin to see that feminist consciousness is the beginning of questioning the nature of that consent in relation to patriarchy.'

Situating the study within the theoretical premise of feminism, with influence from the Marxist concepts of ideology and hegemony is very useful. Apart from helping us see how women are oppressed in society, we also get to understand how elements of culture, such as proverbs help to maintain patriarchal hegemony and legitimise the status of the woman as the *Other* and the man as the *Self*.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed some relevant literature, which helped to provide a context and adopt a theoretical framework for the study. The works reviewed fell within domains of paremiography, paremiology, and gender. Generally, the literature review showed that though proverbs are very important in virtually all cultures, they could also serve in the construction of gender and the marginalisation of women. The review, however, showed a dearth of research on

gender relations in Ga proverbs, and this necessitates studies like the present one to draw attention to the phenomenon in Ga culture as well.

The theoretical framework on which the study is premised was also discussed. Primarily, the study is underpinned by feminist literary criticism, with influence from the Marxist concepts of ideology and hegemony. The principal assumption of feminism is that most cultures are fundamentally patriarchal, in which an imbalance of power is created that marginalises women, and the social structure is reflected in all aspects of culture, including religion, philosophy, economics, education and literature. The Marxist concepts of ideology and hegemony, as they apply to feminism, give feminism a political outlook. This allows for feminism to probe ways by which women are interpellated to give consent to their own marginalisation and oppression, and patriarchy legitimising its domination and oppression of women.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter looks at the methodology that was employed for the study. The type of method a researcher employs in a study is dependent on a number of factors, but primarily, methods are driven by the research problem or questions and the type of data the researcher needs to collect. It must be observed that in studies such as this present one, which involve developing an understanding of a phenomenon, the qualitative approach to research is preferred. Consequently, this study is purely qualitative in nature, and involves qualitative data, specifically textual data, from both secondary and primary sources. The secondary source of data, which constituted the main source of the data, was published collections of Ga proverbs, and this was supplemented with primary data which was sourced through interviews and observations.

The discussions that follow first address some important observations about the need to include context in folkloristic studies of this nature. This is drawn from scholars such as Arewa and Dundes (1964), Dundes (1966), Arewa (1970), Bauman (1986) and Yankah (1989). This consideration had been useful to the researcher in an earlier study on *adaawe* song-texts of Ga maidens (Kubi, 2012), where the inclusion of contextual information brought in clarification to a

number of issues. The discussions will then continue with the research design and the procedures that were followed for the data collection, transcription, translation and analysis.

Folklore and Context

In an article entitled *The field study of folklore in context*, Bauman (1986) underscored the importance of context in folkloristic studies, and provided some guidelines for undertaking such an enterprise. Even before Bauman (1986) made this observation, Arewa and Dundes (1964) already stressed the importance of studying folklore in context, following from Dell Hymes' advocacy for 'ethnography of speaking', and they applied it to some Yoruba proverbs. Again, the point was reemphasised by Dundes (1966) and Arewa (1970) in their respective works *Metafolklore and oral literary criticism* and *Proverb usage in a 'natural' context and oral literary criticism*, indicating the level of importance they attach to it.

According to Bauman (1986), the text we often view as the raw material for folklore study represents merely the tip of the iceberg. Other researchers have also observed that indeed there are deeply situated human behaviour under the iceberg which folklorists must expose before they are able to understand and explain to their readers how the beliefs, tales, songs, sayings and other traditions manifest themselves in the culture and what they mean to the people (Okpewho, 1992; Narayan, 1995; Finnegan, 2012). As Dundes (1966, pp. 505 – 506) puts it,

> Folklore texts without contexts are essentially analogous to the large numbers of exotic musical instruments which adorn the walls of anthropological or folk museums and grace the homes of individuals. The instrument is authentic as is the folklore text, but the range of the instrument, the tuning of the instrument, the function of the instrument and the intricacies of performing with the instruments are rarely known.

Accordingly, we need to examine folklore contextually, in terms of the individual, social and cultural factors that give it shape, meaning, and existence.

Bauman (1986) further stressed the need for researchers to examine the aspects of a people's way of life that are expressively represented, projected, or transformed in their folklore. As he maintains, the belief systems and value that underlie the relation of interdependence, cause and effect, motivation and choice, modes of action, symbolic and metaphoric relations, and other semantic dimensions, as they give shape to folkloric expression, all need to be examined. Bauman (1986) observes that when researchers ask the people to explain the point and meaning of their folklore, they are likely to uncover unanticipated dimensions of significance in apparently familiar traditions. It is this method of finding out the meaning of the folklore of a people from the people themselves that Dundes (1966) terms "oral literary criticism."

Agreeing with the other scholars about the need to include context in studying folklore, Yankah (1989), like Arewa and Dundes (1964), exemplified the approach in his study on Akan proverbs. He however acknowledges that there are

challenges with the method, specifically in relation to proverbs. Yankah (1989, p. 63) identified the factors responsible for the problem with collecting proverbs in 'context situations' to include the following: 'The proverb forms an integral part of discourse, and cannot be easily predicted,' and also, '[u]nlike other genres like the tale and epic, the natural context for the use of proverbs cannot be easily "induced."' This observation was confirmed during the process of collecting the proverbs for this present study.

In the case of proverb study, context is particularly important because context determines the choice as well as the meaning of a proverb, and though it is challenging to study proverbs in contexts situations, Arewa and Dundes (1964) make the following useful observation which served as a guide to the researcher in conducting this present research:

> With particular regard to proverbs, the techniques or "rules" for applying them cannot be studied unless the actual instances of individuals applying proverbs to life situations are recorded. In the absence of ideal circumstances, which would consist of recording a representative variety of such instances, informants can at least be asked to construct what they consider to be the typical and appropriate contexts or situations for individual proverbs, and to recall such instances as they can. If a person does know how to apply the proverb, the chances are good that he can report and envision situations in which the proverbs have been or could be appropriately used, (p. 72).

It must however be observed that though context was considered in this research, the concern of the study was not with how the proverbs are applied in life situations and what they mean per se, but rather how they influence human thinking, social practices and power relations. The proverb texts were therefore viewed through a theoretical lens, and considered as being ideologically formulated to reflect social practices and power relations, and maintain patriarchal hegemony.

Research Design

Every research study has a design, whether implicit or explicit, and researchers are inclined to seeking to use strong designs to strengthen the validity of their studies and to ensure that the data to be collected properly address the research topic being studied. Qualitative research also has designs, but its designs are not any fixed types or categories. In other words, every qualitative study is likely to have its own unique design, and researchers are permitted to customise their designs as they deem it fit, (Yin, 2011). To this end, no specific type of qualitative research design was adopted for this study, as the research did not readily fit into any particular research design. A customised research design that includes elements of phenomenology and ethnography was therefore adopted to meet the needs of the researcher.

Data Collection

Qualitative data collection goes beyond the type of data and the procedures that are involved in collecting the data. Among other things, a researcher needs to gain permission or access to the site, conduct a good qualitative sampling strategy, develop means for recording information, both digitally and manually, and anticipate ethical issues that may arise as important steps in the qualitative data collection process.

On the issue of gaining access to the site and the informants, there was virtually no difficulty for the researcher as he is a member of the Ga-Dangme community, and had lived among the Ga people for a long time. Again, the researcher has been teaching Ga in a university for some time now, and this has given him the opportunity to meet stakeholders who matter when it comes to issues about Ga. Moreover, his master's research, which was on *adaawe* song-texts of Ga maidens (Kubi, 2012), has already helped him build some rapport with some individuals who served as leads in identifying informants for the present study. The long-standing relationship the researcher has had with the Ga community has resulted in building trust; however, the researcher still needed to build trust before engaging the informants. The informants were assured of their confidentiality, and their consents were sought before they were engaged in the interviews. In order to maintain confidentiality, informants were not identified by their real names. For consent, informants who could read and write were provided with written consent forms to read and sign. For others who could not read and write, a verbal consent was sought. For the vulnerable, however, for example the

aged, in addition to seeking informed consent from them, there was also the need for a witness.

As has earlier been observed, context is very important in folkloristic studies, particularly if it has to do with proverbs. Thus, it would have been good to collect the proverbs for this present study in naturally occurring discourses. Indeed, the researcher had that as an initial option, even though he was aware of collections of Ga proverbs that have been published, with the most recent being that of Engmann (2021), with 733 proverbs. He was however soon hit with the reality of the problems associated with collecting proverbs in naturally occurring discourses. As noted earlier, Yankah (1998) outlined some of the factors that engender the problem, even though he managed to circumvent the problem and documented his proverbs in 'natural context situations'. For the present researcher, however, the problem was far greater, as the work required not just any proverb, but specific types of proverbs. It is instructive to note that specific situations call for specific types of proverbs, and where the situation does not call for the particular type of proverb, such a proverb will not be used. There may even be instances where not a single proverb will be used in a whole discourse.

The initial setback for collecting the proverbs in naturally occurring discourse for this study was COVID-19. The researcher had planned to have a pilot data collection session between August, 2020 and December, 2020. This period is full of social activities, particularly for the Ga people. August, for instance, is the period for their annual Ga *Hɔmɔwɔ* festival, and the researcher hoped to chance on situations in which proverbs would be used in naturally

occurring discourse. Similarly, December is a festive period where there are social gatherings and family meetings, and it was hoped that some of these social activities would yield situations for the use of proverbs in natural contexts. This however did not materialise because of the restrictions that were placed on social activities during the period as a result of the COVID-19.

In January, 2021, following the ease of restriction on social activities, the researcher went to the research setting to assess the possibility of having the proverbs collected in natural contexts. Because the researcher had ever lived in La and knows the terrain very well, he chose that place for the pilot data collection, and the focus was on traditional marriage ceremonies and funerals, but he was also open to any possible situation that would produce proverbs in naturally occurring discourse. As has been observed earlier, however, for the purpose of this present research, the researcher was interested in particular types of proverbs, to wit, proverbs that specifically make reference to man or men, and or woman or women, and those that by metaphorical extension apply to men or women. Unsurprisingly, the exercise did not yield the desired results. Though some proverbs were used on some of the occasions, they were not the types of proverbs that were of interest to the researcher. There were only two discourse situations that generated proverbs which addressed the researcher's concern: in the first instance, the researcher witnessed two women quarrelling, and one of the women used the proverb 'Kaa fɔɔ loofɔlɔ' (A crab does not give birth to a bird); and in the second instance, at a traditional marriage ceremony, people were given the opportunity to advise the couple, and one elderly woman used the proverb 'Yoo

sheee latɛ' (A woman does not fear the hearth). This was however expected because as has already been noted, if the discourse situation does not call for a particular type of proverb, it will not be used.

Consequently, the only option that was left for the researcher was to pick the proverbs from the published sources, and supplement it with interviews in the fashion that was suggested by Arewa and Dundes (1964, p. 72) to identify the contexts. As Creswell (2013) observes, '[t]he research process for qualitative research is emergent,' which means the initial plan for the research may change in the course of the research, and this may involve the forms of data collection. Indeed, having the proverbs picked from published sources is not inconsistent with research practice in paremiology, particularly those related to gender. Most scholars who worked on gender in proverbs selected their proverb data from published sources and sometimes supplemented it with primary data sourced through interviews (e.g. Storm, 1992; Hussein, 2009; Lee, 2015; Diabah & Amfo, 2015; Diabah & Amfo, 2018; Gyan, Abbey & Baffoe, 2020).

Proverbs from Published Sources

As already noted, proverbs from published sources constituted the main data for this study. Fortunately, the researcher was made aware of some of these published sources of Ga proverbs prior to embarking on the study. At the time of conceiving the research, the researcher consulted an academic, whose area of specialisation is Ga linguistics. This person happened to be one of the people who supervised the researcher's master's thesis, and eventually, he became one of the

informants for this present study. It was during the consultation that the researcher was informed about the collection of proverbs in Zimmermann's ([1858] 1972) *A grammatical sketch and vocabulary of the Akra or Ga language*, and Engmann's (2021) collection of proverbs which was at the time yet to be published. With Engmann (2021), though he is not alive, he had already prepared the manuscript, but he could not publish it at the time because there was a change of the Ga orthography and he was not happy about the development. Through an arrangement between Engmann's eldest son, Prof. Nii Lomote Engmann, and Rev. Prof. Phillip Tetteh Laryea of the Akrofi-Christaller Institute of Theology, Mission and Culture, Rev. Prof. Phillip Tetteh Laryea worked on the manuscript and got it published. Zimmermann's ([1858] 1972) *A grammatical sketch and vocabulary of the Akra or Ga language*, and Engmann's (2021) collection of proverbs together with other published sources such as Ankra (1966), Ago (1992), Amartey (1995), Kudadjie (1996) and Lomotey (2015) provided the published proverb data for the study.

The proverbs in the published sources were read through several times to identify proverbs that were related to gender. As noted earlier, these included proverbs that specifically make reference to man or men, and or woman or women, and those that by metaphorical extension apply to men or women. For instance, a proverb like 'Nuu mli bɛ bibioo' (There is no mean man) makes direct reference to man. Similarly, 'Yoo awuŋayelɔ lɛ, ekukwɛi bibioo' (The jealous woman's cooking pot is small) makes direct reference to woman. However, 'Too nyɛ akwɛɔ aheɔ toobi' (It is the mother of the goat/sheep that is observed before

buying the young goat) does not specifically make reference to man or men, and or woman or women, but metaphorically it is making reference to a mother and her daughter. That is, it is a mother that is observed in making a decision to marry her daughter.

In all, a total of 115 gender-related proverbs were selected from the published sources. The majority of these proverbs came from Engmann's (2021) collection. That is, 66 of the proverbs came from Engmann's (2021) proverb collection, while the other 49 came from the other published sources. Because some of the proverbs recurred in some of the sources, the data was reorganised to eliminate repetitions. Proverbs that are variations were however kept separate. For instance, 'Akpɛɛɛ pioto atooo gbɛi' (A pant is not sewn in anticipation of scrotal elephantiasis) is a variant of 'Aloo bo atooo gbɛi' (A cloth is not woven in anticipation of scrotal elephantiasis). Though such variations did not bring about difference in meaning, they were kept separate because the metaphors could bring some insight into the analysis.

Interviews

As has been observed earlier, there were challenges with getting the proverbs recorded in natural context situations. For this reason, the researcher adopted the strategy proposed by Arewa and Dundes (1964) to identify the contexts in which individual proverbs could be used. That is, informants were asked to construct contexts for particular proverbs. The interviews were very useful because they provided significant contextual information which helped to

clarify issues which could not have been clarified without that medium. For instance, the proverb 'Too nyɛ akwɛɔ aheɔ toobi' (It is the mother of the goat/sheep that is observed before buying the young goat) is making reference to a mother and her daughter, but without any contextual information, it may be impossible to know that. Indeed, Schilling (2013) notes that the interview has an advantage over other methods of data collection in that it combines both elicitation and observation. That is, the researcher can elicit specific linguistic responses from the participants, for instance the proverbs, as well as observe how they use the proverbs.

In all, thirty participants were purposively sampled for the interviews. Purposive sampling involves choosing the participants in a deliberate manner, and the goal or purpose for selecting the specific units is to have those that will yield the most relevant and plentiful data for the topic of study (see Saboro, 2017). Because among the Ga people, proverbs are the preserve of the elderly, all the informants were adults who were above age forty. They comprised fifteen men and fifteen women who were well versed in the Ga language and culture. The thirty respondents included five female and five male academics, five female and five male traditional leaders, and five female and five male ordinary members of the community who were recommended by the local community based on their knowledge on Ga culture and proverbs.

The decision to involve thirty participants is consistent with practice in qualitative research. Because qualitative research is aimed at providing detailed report about each individual or site, large number of cases can become unwieldy

and result in superficial perspectives. Indeed, Yin (2011, p. 89) notes that '[t]here is no formula for defining the desired number of instances for each broader or narrower unit of data collection in a qualitative study'; however, at the narrow level, the number of interviewees can fall in the range of 25 – 50. Thirty participants were therefore adequate to provide the rich information needed for the study. Again, the decision to involve equal number of men and women was to ensure gender equity.

The interviews sought to do two things. First, they were aimed at collecting proverb data to supplement what was collected from the published sources. Secondly, they sought to gather information regarding meaning and contexts in which the proverbs, particularly those that were collected from the published sources, could be used. The interviews were conducted in a flexible manner so that they were very informal. All the interviews took place at the participants' homes on more than one occasion, and each interview session lasted approximately an hour. Because of the informal nature of the interviews, the informants could freely express themselves, and it also gave the researcher the opportunity to further pursue topics of interest by asking follow-up questions or changing questions based on responses that an informant provides.

In respect of the first aim for conducting the interviews, the informants were asked to provide Ga proverbs that they knew which made reference to man or men, and or woman or women, and those that by metaphorical extension applied to men or women. They were also to provide the meanings of the proverbs and the contexts in which they could be used. Interestingly, most of the

proverbs that they provided were also found in the published sources, with a few exceptions. Even with the exceptions, most were variants of proverbs found in the published sources.

For proverbs that were found in the published sources but did not readily come to the mind of the informants when they were to provide the proverbs that they knew, the researcher provided them with the proverbs and found out from them whether they knew those proverbs. When an informant said he/she knew a proverb, the person was then asked to provide the meaning, and context in which the proverb could be used. Interestingly, they knew all the proverbs. Perhaps they were unable to remember them the first time because proverbs are better recalled in discourse situations where they are needed, and as there were no such situations to prompt the recalls, the informants did not readily remember those proverbs.

Recruitment and Training of Field Assistants

For this study, the researcher recruited four field assistants. He ensured that all four field assistants were proficient in the Ga language and had a minimum qualification of first degree and some research experience. The researcher discussed the purpose of the research with field assistants and took them through the data collection procedure. He also discussed ethical issues with the field assistants and the need for them to adhere to ethical standards, as suggested in the literature, (APA, 2017). The researcher made them understand the need for honesty and truthfulness on their part, and the need to respect the rights and dignity of the respondents. He also briefed them on the need to assure

respondents of their confidentiality and the fact that whatever information they provided would only be for the purpose of research. Again, he informed them about the need to brief the respondents about the general purpose of the research and the nature of the interview or observation, and inform them about the fact that their participation in the study was voluntary, and as such, they were at liberty to decline answering some questions, and could even decide to withdraw from the study at any time. They were also briefed about the need to obtain informed consent from the respondents, which could be written or oral, before engaging them in an interview and recording them when required. In order for the field assistants and other members of the community to be protected from Covid-19, the researcher insisted that the field assistants adhered to all Covid-19 protocols such as the wearing of nose masks and washing of hands under running water and rubbing of hands with hand sanitizers.

Observation and Challenges

Even though the piloting of the data collection procedure which involved recording the proverbs in natural discourse situations proved using such a procedure for the actual data collection may not yield the desired results, the researcher did not abandon the prospect completely. When he went to the field, he explored opportunities to record proverbs in natural contexts. He kept an open mind and observed everyday life occurrences for a possible recording of proverbs in natural discourse situations. The four research assistants were also tasked to observe traditional marriage ceremonies, funerals and any possible discourse

situations in which proverbs are likely to be used and record such proverbs and the contexts in which they were used.

Just as happened in the pilot data collection, some proverbs were recorded through the observations, but most of these proverbs did not address the researcher's concern. Virtually, all the proverbs that were of interest to the researcher had also already appeared in the published sources. With this, the researcher was convinced that he had reached data saturation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues in research, especially qualitative research, are very important and as such must be addressed properly. Accordingly, care was taken to ensure that the research was conducted paying attention to ethical standards, as suggested in the ethical guidelines of the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2017) and the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017).

Before going to the field, ethical clearance was sought from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast. This was to ensure that no ethical code was breached in the process of conducting the research. Also, the consents of participants were sought before they were interviewed and recorded. Respondents were also assured of their confidentiality and the fact that whatever information they provided was only for the purpose of research. They were also briefed on the general purpose of the research and the nature of the interview, and were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary.

As such, they were at liberty to decline answering some questions, and could even decide to withdraw from the study at any time.

Regarding the observations at the traditional marriage ceremonies and the funerals, permission was sought from the elders in order to observe the ceremonies. They were also informed about the purpose of the study and what was being observed. The ceremonies were however not recorded with any recording device, rather notes were taken on proverbs that were used and the contexts in which they were used. This was to ensure that only what was permitted to be recorded was recorded.

Transcription and Translation

Transcription is an integral part of qualitative research, and it involves converting recorded speech into written text that can be analysed (Nikander, 2008; McMullin, 2021). Since there were interviews which were audio recorded to obtain information on proverbs, there was the need to transcribe the audio materials for analysis. There are levels of transcription, based on the aims of a study and the analytic purpose (Nikander, 2008; Bailey, 2008). Some studies require detailed transcription, incorporating non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expression and gestures into the transcript (Bailey, 2008). Since the present study does not need such details for the analysis, the focus of the transcription was the proverbs and contexts in which they can be used.

In the case of the proverbs in Zimmermann's ([1858] 1972) *A grammatical sketch and vocabulary of the Akra or Ga language* and Kudadjie's

(1996) *Ga and Dangme proverbs for preaching and teaching*, because the transcriptions were done using old Ga orthographies, there was the need for re-transcription, using the new Ga orthography. This is because the old orthographies are no longer in use. The proverbs from the other published sources were however already transcribed using the new Ga orthography.

'One largely overlooked question in qualitative methods literature concerns the fact that an increasing proportion of empirical and analytic work is done on languages other than English,' (Nikander, 2008, p. 226). Yin (2011) notes that in such situations having the original language and its English translation side by side in the text is preferred. 'Readers familiar with the foreign language can then gauge the adequacy of the translations for themselves,' (Yin, 2011, p. 82). It must however be observed that translating proverbs from one language to another is a very difficult task (Baker, 2011; Maria, 2012). This is because 'they are filled with cultural realities seldom encountered elsewhere,' (Maria, 2012, p. 281). Though Baker (2011) suggests some strategies that can be adopted in translating proverbs, the researcher realised that they would not be helpful for the purpose of this present research as they would not allow him to capture the cultural realities in the proverbs. The translation was therefore done in a way such that as much as possible, it captures the metaphorical essence and cultural realities of the proverbs. The reverse translation technique was also adopted, where after translating from the source language (Ga) to the target language (English), the researcher identified individuals who were competent in both languages to do a reverse translation of the texts. This was to ensure that the

translated texts were as close as possible to the original texts. However, in order to ensure ethics of privacy and confidentiality, no information about informants was on the texts which were reverse translated.

Procedure for Data Analysis

For the present study, the qualitative content analysis was employed. This involved a subjective interpretation of the content of the proverb texts with their contexts by a systematic identification of the themes. The themes and the main ideas of the proverb texts provided the primary content, and the context information provided the latent content, (see Vimal & Subramani, 2017).

The data analysis started right from the time of compiling the gendered proverbs from the published sources. While compiling the proverbs, the researcher was reflecting on them and making sense of the data. As indicated earlier, after the compilation, the data was then organised to remove repetitions. The proverbs that were collected through the interviews and observations were also transcribed and put together with what was compiled from the published sources. The data was reorganised to remove any repetitions that may be occurring from the data sourced through interviews and observation. After this reorganisation, the data was then organised into the themes. An interpretation was then made of the organised themes and conclusions drawn about their meanings personally and theoretically.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodological issues pertaining to the study. It began by providing some useful information on the importance of context in folkloristic studies. The discussions continued with the research design, procedures for data collection, transcription, translation and analysis. There were also discussions on how research assistants were recruited and trained, and the ethical issues that were considered regarding this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SELF: REPRESENTATION OF MEN IN GA PROVERBS

The thesis of this chapter is the representation of men as the *Self* in Ga proverbs. This is tied to the research question 'How are men represented in Ga proverbs?' However, it also implicitly answers the research question 'How is gender constructed in Ga culture?' As noted earlier, the concept of the *Self* is opposed to the concept of the *Other*, and by the *Self*, we are referring to a dominant in-group, which constructs a dominated out-group, the *Other*, (Staszak, 2008). The patterns that are emerging from the data reveal that men are perceived to be superior to women; they are perceived to be brave; they are perceived to be providers; they are perceived to be leaders; they are perceived to be owners of property; they are perceived to be role models; and they are perceived to be smart and wise. Some of the proverbs also portray some masculine habits that men engage in. The discussions that follow explore these themes.

Proverbs Expressing the Perceived Superiority of Men

Typical of patriarchal societies, Ga culture is socially constructed such that men occupy a superior position (Lomotey, 2015). They wield so much authority, and control affairs both in the domestic and public spheres. They are

the decision-makers and women are subject to their authority. 'The superiority of men', as an emerging theme under which men are represented in Ga proverbs as the *Self*, is given prominence in proverbs such as the following:

#1 *Nuu bɛ bibioo* or its variant *Nuu mli bɛ bibioo.*

'There is no small man/male.'

#2 *Wuɔyoo le jetsɛremɔ moŋ, kɛlɛ wuɔnuu naabu ekwɛɔ.*

'The female fowl (hen) knows daybreak, yet it looks at the mouth of the male fowl (cock).'

#65 *Kɛ yoo lɛ too lɛ, nuu gbeɔ.*

'When a woman rears a goat/sheep, it is a man who slaughters it.'

#66 *Kɛ yoo fo nii lɛ, nuu tsu mli ekpasaa.*

'If a woman harvests crops, they are kept in a man's room.'

#67 *Kɛji yoo he tu lɛ, nuu tsu lɛ mli ekɛtoɔ.*

'If a woman buys a gun, she keeps it in the man's room.'

#68 *Kɛ yoo tɔ lɛ, nuu saa.*

'If a woman goes wrong, a man corrects her.'

The proverb 'Nuu bɛ bibioo' or its variant 'Nuu mli bɛ bibioo' (There is no small man/male), for instance, is often used in reference to the superior physical strength of men or the authority they wield. Being the ultimate being or the *Self*, the male wields great authority, and no matter how young the male may be, he must be given recognition above any female. As such, in both domestic and public circles, men take the lead while women are supposed to be subject to men. The referenced proverb is often used to remind the man of his authority and

superior position, while reminding the woman of her subordinate position. In conformity to the dictates of the proverb in question, it is not uncommon to witness among the Ga people situations where among siblings, the only male, whether he is the oldest or the youngest, wields the greatest authority. When it comes to decision-making, the women will invariably leave that responsibility to the man, often with the expression, 'Bo ji nuu lɛ' (You are the man). In effect, the women have been interpellated to accept the superiority of men in the society and have internalized their subordinate position.

Similarly, 'Wuɔyoo le jetsɛremɔ moŋ, kɛlɛ wuɔnuu naabu ekwɛɔ' (The female fowl (hen) knows daybreak, yet it watches the mouth of the male fowl (cock)) portrays men as superior to women. Just like 'Nuu bɛ bibioo' (There is no small man/male), 'Wuɔyoo le jetsɛremɔ moŋ, kɛlɛ wuɔnuu naabu ekwɛɔ' (The female fowl (hen) knows daybreak, yet it watches the mouth of the male fowl (cock)) also helps in creating a male hegemonic culture by representing the man as the ultimate being or the *Self*. Though no specific reference was made to man or woman in the proverb, metaphorically, the 'female fowl' refers to woman and the 'male fowl' refers to man, but the animalization in the proverb does a bit more, in that it seeks to naturalise male hegemony as something that is recognised even in the animal kingdom. Herein lies its power as a cultural form of ideological construction. Just like was observed in the first proverb, the man is portrayed here as the person with authority and the woman is subject to his authority. Thus, in any situation which requires decision-making, the woman must invariably wait for what the man has to say, though the woman is not ignorant.

This is what is meant by the female fowl knowing daybreak yet looking at the mouth of the male fowl. While proverbs like the one under review ascribe to men their individual existence, they deprive women of their autonomy, and portray them as incapable of existing independently, but must always be subject to the authority of men.

Again, the proverbs 'Kɛ yoo lɛ too lɛ, nuu gbeɔ' (When a woman rears a goat/sheep, it is a man who slaughters it); 'Kɛ yoo fo nii lɛ, nuu tsu mli ekpasaa' (If a woman harvests crops, they are kept in a man's room); and 'Kɛji yoo he tu lɛ, nuu tsu lɛ mli ekɛtoɔ' (If a woman buys a gun, she keeps it in the man's room) all portray the man as superior and deprive the woman of her autonomy. In all circumstances, the woman needs a man to depend on in order to achieve total fulfilment in life. The man is therefore seen as superior, without whose support, the woman is incomplete. This feeds into the observation De Beauvoir ([1949] 2011) made, which was referenced earlier in the work, that woman is defined only in relation to man, and her lack of autonomy makes her the *Other* to man, who is the *Absolute*.

At its height, the man's superiority gives him the authority to correct the woman when she goes wrong, as expressed in the proverb 'Kɛ yoo tɔ lɛ, nuu saa' (If a woman goes wrong, a man corrects her). Engmann (2021) notes that the referenced proverb portrays how a woman is supposed to be humble and submit her will to that of her husband, and according to him, this is the norm in many cultures. It is therefore not surprising that some men feel entitled to controlling their wives and telling them what to do and what not to do. Some even go to the

extent of beating their wives as a way of correcting them for 'wrongdoing'. Interestingly, some women also internalize their subordination and lack of agency, and even observe that wife beating, as a way of correcting a woman, is indicative of a man's love for his wife. The question to ask then is who corrects the man when he goes wrong? As the ultimate being or the *Self*, the man is deemed not to require correction from anyone. Thus, while the man is capable of correcting the woman when she goes wrong, the woman has no audacity to correct the man when he goes wrong, because 'Wuɔyoo le jetsɛremɔ moŋ, kɛlɛ wuɔnuu naabu ekwɛɔ' (The female fowl (hen) knows daybreak, yet it watches the mouth of the male fowl (cock)).

Proverbs Expressing the Perceived Bravery of Men

Another theme under which men are represented in Ga proverbs as the *Self*, which is related to 'the superiority of men', is 'the bravery of men.' A masculine trait that is expected of every man among the Ga people is the show of bravery, and this is demonstrated by the puberty rites that are performed for young boys. As indicated somewhere in the introduction of this work, the commonest puberty rite that is performed for boys is *dɛŋtuwoo* (putting a gun into a person's hand). The rite is not aimed at only imbuing young boys with bravery, but also to charge them with a duty of protecting their women. That is why any man who does not show bravery is metaphorically referred to as a 'woman' among the Ga people. It is instructive to note that it is only when a young boy undergoes the *dɛŋtuwoo* rite that he will be eligible to join an *asafo* (a military

company) and go to war. It is therefore not surprising that the Ga people have a proverb that says, 'Ta yaa afeɔ nuu yɛ' (It is going to war that makes one a man). From the referenced proverb, *nuu* (man) is a metaphor for bravery, and it must be observed that among the Ga people, it is only men who go to war, as it is only men that can join an *asafo*. Interestingly too, most of the Ga proverbs which portray men as brave are associated with gun and war, as can be seen from the examples below:

#16 *Ole tawuu kulɛ, awoŋ onyɛ okrawa.*

'If you had known how to fight in war, your mother would not have been enslaved.'

#17 *Kɛ tu fɛ lɛ, ema nuu tsitsi.*

'When a gun is fired, it is on a man's chest.'

#18 *Kɛ tu fɛ lɛ, nuu tsitsi ebaa.*

'When a gun is fired, it is a man's chest it comes to.'

#19 *Nuu heɔ tuŋtɛ yɛ etsitsi.*

'A man receives bullet in his chest.'

#22 *Mɔ ko mɔɔ nuu damɔɔɔ ta naa.*

'No one forces a man to fight in a war.'

#27 *Osa gbaja wuuu ta.*

"'Osa gbaja' does not fight in war." ('Osa gbaja' is a sack that is strapped on the waist to carry gun powder and bullets)

#30 *Amɔɔɔ mɔ nine akɛshiii tsitsi.*

'One does not beat one's chest with another person's hand.'

The proverb 'Ole tawuu kulɛ, awoŋ onyɛ okrawa' (If you had known how to fight in war, your mother would not have been enslaved) does not only demand of a man to be brave, but also highlights the consequence of the lack thereof. The point has already been made regarding how the Ga people expect their men to protect their women, for which reason a man is taught how to fire a gun during puberty rite performance. Though the referenced proverb is usually used in situations where a person's ineptitude leads him to lose something valuable, and does not necessarily have to do with war, it draws on a cultural practice of the Ga people which is related to war, and feeds into the ideology that men must be brave and protect women. According to Engmann (2021), *okrawa* is a female slave, likely a prisoner of war, who is marked to be sacrificed 'to accompany' the slave master when he dies. Because a brave man who is skilled at fighting in war is someone who is feared and respected, his mother also receives recognition and respect. Thus, it is difficult for her to be made an *okrawa*, as that has its consequences. The ideological twist here, however, is that while bravery is attributed to men, women are portrayed as helpless, needing protection from the brave men.

Another proverb that projects the bravery of men is 'Kɛ tu fɛ lɛ, ema nuu tsitsi' (When a gun is fired, it is on a man's chest). Why is it not possible for a gun to be on the chest of a woman? Is it because her chest is not fit for the purpose? Is it because she is not the ultimate being? Is it because she is not human enough as De Beauvoir (1946) laments? Or is it because only the brave fire guns, to wit men? Indeed, in Ga culture, and it is likely to be so in most African

cultures, when a woman puts to birth and people get informed, the question they often ask is 'Did she give birth to a human being?', where a human being here refers to a male child. It is therefore not surprising that the Ga people will attribute anything that attracts honour, like the firing of a gun, to a man. The import of the proverb under review is that men are action-oriented, and they have the capability to deal with any situation, no matter the difficulty. It also means that nothing significant can be achieved which will not be attributed to a man. This deprives women of their essence because no matter how much effort they put into doing something, it will not be considered significant.

For the Ga people, a man's bravery must not be demonstrated only by actions such as the firing of a gun, but also by showing fearlessness even in the face of danger. This is expressed in proverbs such as 'Kɛ tu fɛ lɛ, nuu tsitsi ebaa' (When a gun is fired, it is a man's chest it comes to) and 'Nuu heɔ tuŋtɛ yɛ etsitsi' (A man receives bullet in his chest). As the ultimate being or the *Self*, when a young man undergoes the *dɛŋtuwoo* rite, what the Ga people expect of him is that he avails himself to fight in wars and protect the women in his life. However, if he does the contrary because he is afraid for his life, then what becomes the essence of the rite? For the Ga people, it is a man's lot to face difficult situations head-on, including receiving bullets in his chest in battle: only a weak and cowardly man runs away from battle; a strong and brave man fights until his death. The essence of the referenced proverbs is that unpleasant situations do occur in life, but as a man, one is not supposed to run away from such situations, but rather embrace them and deal with them. The metaphor of embracing unpleasant situations in the

two proverbs creates an image, where a man is seen as a person who does not give up on anything, no matter the consequences. This kind of image fuels the ego of men, so that, in projecting themselves as the *Self*, they sometimes expose themselves to pronounced danger (see Mariwa et al, 2022).

From the forgoing, it seems apt to observe that the Ga people consider a man's chest as a symbol of bravery. Thus, when one hears a proverb like 'Amɔɔɔ mɔ nine akɛshiii tsitsi' (One does not beat one's chest with another person's hand), the image that is spontaneously evoked is that of a man's chest. It is therefore not surprising that, in hinting at the construction of gender in Ga proverbs in her work, Lomotey (2015) adapted the translation of the referenced proverb in Ankra's (1966) work: 'No one beats upon his chest to show manliness using another man's fist.' Though the Ga proverb under review does not make any specific reference to man, the beating of the chest is culturally framed as a masculine activity because it is a demonstration of bravery and fearlessness, which can only be ascribed to a man. The question one may ask is this: is it the case that women do not have chests? The outright answer is no, they certainly do. However, when a woman beats her chest, the Ga people attribute that to her compassion and empathy. Thus, while according to Ga gender ideology, men are expected to be brave and fearless, women are expected to be compassionate and empathetic. This is also reflected in the Ga conception of the androgynous God, *Ataa Naa Nyɔŋmɔ* (Father Mother God) (Adjei, 2006; Odamtten, 2012). As noted earlier, *Ataa* connotes 'a father who protects and defends his children in times of trouble,' while *Naa* signifies 'a sympathetic, accommodating and caring mother

who sees not only to the needs of her children but other people as well,' (Adjei, 2006, p. 42). However, while this concept of the androgynous God does not portray a separation of gener roles, as God embodies both masculine and feminine qualities, this is not reflected in the real life of the Ga people. As can be observed, Ga culture enforces strict separartion of gender roles.

That a man is supposed to be brave and avail himself to fight in wars to honour his duty of protecting the women in his life is further portrayed in proverbs such as 'Mɔ ko mɔɔ nuu damɔɔɔ ta naa' (No one forces a man to fight in a war) and 'Osa gbaja wuuu ta' ('Osa gbaja' does not fight in war). According to Engmann (2021), 'Osa gbaja' is a sack that is strap on the waist to carry gun powder and bullets. Though it has a significant function, in that it is used in carrying gun powder and bullets, that is the only thing it can be used for. Thus, if 'Osa gbaja' does not fight in war, who then fights in war? Certainly, for the Ga people, it is a brave man. That is why they say, 'Mɔ ko mɔɔ nuu damɔɔɔ ta naa' (No one forces a man to fight in a war). In this proverb too, it can be seen that man is a metaphor for bravery. As the *Self* or the ultimate being, the brave man responds to the call of duty without any promptings.

All the proverbs under review in this section attribute bravery to manliness or masculinity. This means that for a person to be recognised as a man, that person must show bravery in all circumstances of his existence. Since Ga culture operates on gender binary, the lack of bravery is automatically considered a feminine attribute. That is why among the Ga people, when a man exhibits any trait which is considered cowardice, he would be asked, 'Ani, yoo ji bo?' (Are

you a woman?). According to feminist thought, the attribution of bravery to masculinity and cowardice to femininity feeds into the ideology that men are superior to women, and this helps patriarchy to maintain its hegemony.

Proverbs Expressing the Perceived Idea of Men as Providers

Diabah and Amfo (2018) observe that in all Ghanaian cultures, and indeed many other cultures, a major ideal of masculinity is the concept of the male breadwinner. As noted earlier, in Ga culture, young men are socialised to come to terms with this responsibility through the puberty rites that are performed for them before they get into marriage. According to Engmann (2012), traditionally, when a young man gets of age and starts working, and shows maturity, the first thing his father does for him is to buy him a gun, which is used for the *dɛŋtowoo* rite. Next, his father gets him a wife. The assumption is that with his work and the gun, he should be able to provide for his wife and children and protect them. The notion of the man as a provider is also expressed in a number of Ga proverbs as can be seen in the following examples:

#5 *Kɛji tsɛ duna ta loo lɛ, eyɛ ebi dunaa.*

'If a father's buttocks grow lean, the flesh can be found on his child's buttocks.'

#6 *Lɛɛhe fe fɔmɔhe.*

'Catering/providing for a child is more difficult than bringing forth a child.'

#7 *Gbɔblilɔ gbɛi pɛtɛ emilɛloo he.*

'A hunter's name is attached to his meat.'

#8 *Kɛji yoo na ehe pɛ etsɔ nuu.*

'If a woman gets money (rich), she becomes a man.'

The proverb, 'Kɛji tsɛ duna ta loo lɛ, eyɛ ebi dunaa' (If a father's buttocks grow lean, the flesh can be found on his child's buttocks) connotes the denial of self-comfort by men in order to meet the needs of the women who depend on them. As a man or the *Self*, one is expected to work hard to provide for his children. It is often the case that men find themselves in demeaning works and circumstances, but they have no option than to bury their pride and face such situations head on just to create some comfort for their wives and children. A man who is unable to provide for the needs of his wife and children is not respected among the Ga people because traditionally that is his duty.

It is instructive to note that one of the attributes of beauty among the Ga people, and indeed many African cultures, particularly in respect of women, is an endowed behind. The referenced proverb is therefore a metaphor that portrays the stress a man has to go through just to ensure that his daughter, and by extension his wife, looks beautiful. Indeed, Diabah and Amfo (2015; 2018, p. 118) note that

> [B]ecause women in the past were mostly absorbed in domestic activities, they became dependent on men who were seen as the providers for the family, for their material needs. It is therefore not surprising that men took (and still take) credit for their

> wives' beauty and achievements. This is regardless of the fact that most women now take care of part or all of their own needs, and sometimes those of their husbands and other family members.

Diabah and Amfo (2018, p. 188) recount experiences of participants in their focus group discussions about how their individual wives '"rescued" them from embarrassment' by either putting money in their wallets to pay bills; giving them money in the bedroom to be given to the children; giving them their bank cards so they could provide house-keeping money and pay children's school fees; and giving them money so they could get Christmas gifts for their wives' parents. All these are done in order to help the men maintain their respect and meet society's expectation of them as real men.

Even in the case where a woman takes care of the needs of her husband, the man must still be seen making some efforts on his own to provide for the family, lest the woman becomes 'the man' in the family. Generally, Ga men dread losing their hegemonic position to women so they would not want any situation which makes them subordinate to women, as expressed in the Ga proverb, 'Kɛji yoo na ehe pɛ etsɔ nuu' (If a woman gets money (rich), she becomes a man). It is for this reason that men work hard, even to the extent of breaking their backs, to provide for their families. The cumulative effect of men's quest to maintain hegemony propels some men to frustrate the efforts of their wives to build wealth for themselves. Some women are also interpellated to

believe that since it is the duty of their men to provide for them, they do not need to be ambitious and they become totally dependent on the men.

Again, the proverb 'Lɛɛhe fe fɔmɔhe' (Catering/providing for a child is more difficult than bringing forth a child) projects the man as superior by virtue of his responsibility of providing for the family. It is a fact that it does not take only a man or only a woman to bring forth a child; it takes both. Neither does it take only a man nor a woman to cater for a child; it takes both. However, as has been observed all along, providing for the child is considered the responsibility of the man, and that is what it takes to bring up a child. Catering for a child involves the provision of shelter, food, clothing and protection, and as has already been noted, in Ga culture, young men are socialised through their puberty rite performance to accept this responsibility as an obligation. The referenced proverb is therefore highlighting how important it is for a man not to shirk his responsibility of providing for his family, as that is what makes him a real man. It must however be observed that catering for a child alone is not considered a good achievement among the Ga people. It must be accompanied by good training. In the absence of good training, the Ga people will say, 'Gbekɛ nɛɛ, alɛ lɛ shi atsɔseee lɛ' (This child was catered for but was not trained). Thus, though the referenced proverb stresses the importance of providing for the needs of the child, good training is also implied.

The proverb 'Gbɔblilɔ gbɛi pɛtɛ emilɛloo he' (A hunter's name is attached to his meat) is another proverb that portrays men as providers. As noted earlier, when a young man gets of age and starts working, and shows maturity, the

first thing his father does for him is to buy him a gun, which he is supposed to use to work and provide for his wife and children, as well as protect them. As noted earlier, one of the earliest traditional occupations of the Ga people was hunting. Through hunting, men were able to get game, which provided meat for the family, and money for other things. Engmann (2021) notes that, in the villages, when a hunter gets a game, he usually shares some of the meat with his family members and friends, and when the meat is brought to a person, what is usually said is my father or 'this person' says I should bring you this meat. Thus, the hunter's name is attached to the meat. Though the proverb under review is used in contexts to show that when someone related to you engages in something terrible and you sit aloof that it does not concern you, on the day of reckoning your name will be mentioned, it draws on the cultural practice of the Ga people, where a man is seen as a provider.

Proverbs Expressing the Perceived Idea of Men as Leaders

Another theme under which men are represented in Ga proverbs as the *Self*, which projects men as superior, is 'men as leaders.' According to Kudadjie (1996), in every society, it seems natural that some members should take up a leadership role, while others occupy a subordinate position. This is usually the case between men and women, where men invariably take up the leadership role, while women become their subordinates (Kudadjie, 1996). Lomotey (2015, p. 157) notes that '[t]raditionally, men are considered to be the embodiment of power, control and authority in the Ga society.' This is reflected "in the usage

patterns of the word *tsɛ* 'father', which can also form a (male generic) component in compounds that denotes 'owner, proprietor, controller, head.'" For example, virtually all Ga traditional political titles are compound words which have the component *tsɛ*. These include *maŋtsɛ, akwaashɔŋtsɛ, jaasetsɛ, asafoiatsɛ, wolɛiatsɛ and agbafoiatsɛ* (Engmann, 2012). Interestingly, virtually all these leadership positions are occupied by men. The idea of men as leaders is also reinforced in a number of Ga proverbs, and this is epitomized in the proverbs below:

#9 *Onukpa booo maji anɔ toi.*

'A leader does not pay attention to rumours in town.'

#10 *Kɛ maŋ baabutu lɛ, otsaamɛ muɔ toi.*

'If a town will collapse, the linguist becomes deaf.'

#11 *Ashiii gɔŋti sɛɛ aŋmɔɔɔ kpɔ.*

'You cannot tie a knot without the thumb.'

#12 *Gɔŋti mɔɔ mli dani ewaa.*

'The thumb holds it before it becomes strong.'

#13 *Ahiɔ maŋtsɛ yɛ esɛɛ.*

'A king/chief is held from behind.'

#14 *Kɛ oju maŋtsɛ he lɛ, okɛ eko juɔ ohe.*

'If you bathe for a king/chief, you use some to bathe yourself.'

#15 *Kɛji awo bo maŋtsɛ ni oyeee lɛ, otsaamɛ po onaŋ oye.*

'If you are enthroned as a king/chief and you decline, you will not get to become even a linguist.'

The proverb 'Onukpa booo maji anɔ toi' (A leader does not listen to rumours in town) is a good example of proverbs that portray men as leaders. Ordinarily, the word 'onukpa' denotes an adult person so it could be assumed that the proverb is making reference to all adults. However, upon interaction with some of the informants, it became clear that the word 'onukpa' in the proverb is making reference to a leader other than just any adult person. Indeed, in Dakubu's (2009, p. 170) Ga-English dictionary, her English entries for 'onukpa' are 'an adult person', 'a tittle for a man, Minister', and 'an elder, boss or leader in a group'. Thus, apart from its denotative meaning, 'onukpa' has other connotative meanings. In giving an explanation to the referenced proverb, Engmann (2021) gave examples of 'onukpa' to include a chief, a reverend minister and a headteacher, and notes that such leaders are not expected to pay attention to rumours they may hear in town. That is to say they must live above pettiness. Generally, as noted, among the Ga people, leadership positions are held by men. It has been indicated that virtually all Ga traditional leadership positions are occupied by men, and Lomotey (2015) notes that though the word 'onukpa' is gender-indefinite, it seems to have a slight male social bias. In essence, 'onukpa' in the proverb under review refers to a male leader other than a female leader. With the image that is evoked when proverbs such as the one under review are used, men may feel entitled to their leadership position and see women as subordinate to men. It is therefore not surprising that when you go to a chief's palace or traditional court, virtually all the people who sit in council are men.

Again, the proverb 'Kɛ maŋ baabutu lɛ, otsaamɛ muɔ toi' (If a town will collapse, the linguist becomes deaf) makes reference to the leadership role of men. The *Otsaamɛ* (linguist) is the spokesperson for the king/chief. According to Engmann (2021), it is the duty of the *Otsaamɛ* to relay the heart's desires of the king's/chief's subjects to the king/chief and vice versa. When the subjects are grumbling about some bad occurrences in the town, it is the duty of the *Otsaamɛ* to inform the king/chief and his elders about the situation. However, if he feigns ignorance, this can lead to a breakdown of society. Since among the Ga people, it is men who occupy leadership positions, the referenced proverb highlights their important role in keeping society intact. Ideologically, such a projection of men makes them assume the position of the *Self*, without which society cannot function properly.

The proverbs 'Ashiii gɔŋti sɛɛ aŋmɔɔɔ kpɔ' (You cannot tie a knot without the thumb) and 'Gɔŋti mɔɔ mli dani ewaa' (The thumb holds it before it becomes strong) are also proverbs which make reference to male leadership. The word *gɔŋti* (thumb) in the two proverbs is a metaphor which refers to an important person who is indispensable in a particular situation. Though, generally, the two proverbs could be used in contexts in which the absence of any important person could engender a negative outcome, they are more applicable to situations where the absence of the *tsɛ* (father) or *wekunukpa* (lineage/family head) has negative consequences for an event. As already noted, Ga culture is fundamentally patriarchal, and men are considered to be the embodiment of power, control and authority. As it was mentioned elsewhere in this study, socially, Ga traditional

society is organised with the *we* as its basic unit, and every *we* has a *wekunukpa* (always a man) who steers affairs of the *we*. The *wekunukpa* is indispensable in anything that concerns the family. Particularly, when it comes to marriage, funeral, the selection of a king/chief and the performance of rituals, nothing can be done without his involvement (Engmann, 2012; 2021). Similarly, though the Ga people do not give much recognition to the nuclear family, the *tsɛ* (father) wields the greatest authority in the nuclear family. Like the *wekunukpa*, his views concerning any situation in the family are very important. For instance, no marriage can be contracted on behalf of his son or daughter without his approval and involvement (Engmann, 2012; 2021). The two proverbs under review are therefore drawing our attention to the leadership role of men in Ga culture, and the fact that they are indispensable in any decision-making situation. Like the other proverbs which have been examined so far, the two referenced proverbs represent men as the *Self*, and this is ensued by the creation of patriarchal hegemony.

Just like the preceding proverbs, the proverbs 'Ahiɔ maŋtsɛ yɛ esɛɛ' (A king/chief is held from behind); Kɛ oju maŋtsɛ he lɛ, okɛ eko juɔ ohe (If you bath for a king/chief, you use some to bath yourself); and 'Kɛji awo bo maŋtsɛ ni oyeee lɛ, otsaamɛ po onaŋ oye' (If you are enthroned as a king/chief and you decline, you will not get to become even a linguist) make statements which implicitly portray men as leaders. Though the proverbs do not make explicit statements about the leadership role of men, the image that is evoked when the key actors in the referenced proverbs are alluded to is that of men. The point has

already been made about how, among the Ga people, the traditional leadership positions of *maŋtsɛ* and *otsaamɛ* are invariably occupied by men. Thus, when proverbs with these lexical items are used, they reinforce the leadership role of men in the society. Interestingly, though the Ga people have the position of the *maŋnyɛ* (queen), and history records an instance where a *maŋnyɛ* by name Naa Dɔde Akaibi ruled the Ga state during their settlement at Ayawaso (Amartey, 1990), none of the proverbs that were collected for this study made reference to *maŋnyɛ*. Engmann (2012) also did not add the *maŋnyɛ* to his list of traditional leadership positions among the Ga people. By this, as the argument has been, a male hegemonic culture is created, which mutes the role that women play in Ga traditional leadership, but as Odamtten (2012) demonstrates with the lives of some female traditional religious leaders, women play a significant role in Ga society.

Proverbs Expressing the Perceived Idea of Men as Owners of Property

Apart from the themes that have been examined so far, there is also the theme of 'Men as Owners of Property', under which men are represented in Ga proverbs as the *Self*. Already, we can glean from the proverbs 'Kɛ yoo lɛ too lɛ, nuu gbeɔ' (When a woman rears a goat/sheep, it is a man who slaughters it); 'Kɛ yoo fo nii lɛ, nuu tsu mli ekpasaa' (If a woman harvests crops, they are kept in a man's room); and 'Kɛji yoo he tu lɛ, nuu tsu lɛ mli ekɛtoɔ' (If a woman buys a gun, she keeps it in the man's room), which were discussed under 'The Superiority of Men', that women do not have absolute control over property

among the Ga people. Indeed, it was observed that the *wekunukpai* (plural), who usually happen to be men, are the people responsible for the protection of family property. This brings family property under the direct control of men. Similarly, Engmann (2012) mentions that among the Ga people, the traditional arrangement for inheritance is that the brothers of a deceased person inherit his property before it gets to his children. The explanation to this is that the deceased person's children are part of his property, and it is expected that his brothers maintain his property, including the children. It is instructive to note that even the widow becomes an inherited property, *gboshiŋa* (inherited wife), of the deceased person's younger brother. It does not necessarily mean that the inheritor must live with the widow as his wife, it could just be symbolic. However, all these instances demonstrate how control over property resides largely in the hands of men in Ga culture. In fact, though women can own property, there are some property, such as fishing boats, which are deemed necessary to be under the control of a man for proper management. In such a situation, a woman's younger brother or a son takes control. The notion of men being owners of property or having great control over property is also reflected in Ga proverbs such as the examples below:

#32 *Nyɔŋ jwɛŋmɔ yɛ enuŋtsɔ yitsoŋ.*

'A slave's thoughts are in his master's head.'

#33 *Kɛ okɛ otsɛ nyɔŋ miifo tɛŋdaa lɛ, etsɛɔ bo 'tsiɛnuu'.*

"If you are tapping palm wine with your father's slave, he calls you 'tsiɛnuu' (male friend)"

#34 *Afi efeee ŋmɔtsɛ.*

'The partridge does not get more than the farmer/ farm owner.'

The proverb 'Nyɔŋ jwɛŋmɔ yɛ enuŋtsɔ yitsoŋ' (A slave's thoughts are in his master's head) does not only give evidence about the existence of slavery among the Ga people from time immemorial, but also portray men as ultimate owners of slaves. Indeed, before the introduction of external slave trade in the Gold Coast in the 17th Century, domestic slavery had been in existence, and it continued to exist side by side the external trade, sustaining each other, (Perbi, 1992). According to Perbi (1992), even after the abolition of the external trade in 1807, the domestic trade continued until its legal abolition in the colony. As observed earlier, one of the main traditional occupations of the Ga people was farming. Domestic slaves therefore mostly provided labour on the farms to augment the labour that was provided by wives, children, pawns and debtors, (Odotei, 1995; Adjei, 2006). As farming was a male dominated field of occupation, where women only assisted men with their farming activities, it became natural that men usually owned slaves. As a matter of fact, the word *nuŋtsɔ* which has been used in the proverb under review denotes 'boss', 'master' or 'lord' (see Dakubu, 2009, p. 155), and it is always utilised in reference to a man. In fact, women also refer to their husbands as *nuŋtsɔ*, and this gives men control over their wives just as it gives them control over their slaves. In effect, with the unequal relationship that is established between men and women, men assume the position of the *Absolute* or *Self*, and women become the *Other* of men. Though the referenced proverb is a metaphor which does not necessarily apply to

slaves, and is usually used in reference to a person whose actions are influenced by someone of superior authority as a result of fear for the latter, it draws on the cultural practice of the Ga people, where men are the ultimate owners of property or have great control over property.

That men were the ultimate owners of slaves among the Ga people is even given more credence in the proverb "Kɛ okɛ otsɛ nyɔŋ miifo tɛŋdaa lɛ, etsɛɔ bo 'tsiɛnuu'" (If you are tapping palm wine with your father's slave, he calls you 'tsiɛnuu'). Here, there is an explicit statement about who owns the slave - *tsɛ* (father). By virtue of the slave being a property of the addressee's father, he also has some control over the slave. Consequently, he commands respect from the slave. However, if he gets himself into a situation, which causes him to lose respect in the sight of the slave, such as getting drunk in the course of tapping the palm wine, he could address him like a co-equal - *tsiɛnuu* (Engmann, 2021). It is instructive to note that, as a child, the addressee is also a property of his father, just as the slave, who could be integrated into the family (see Odotei, 1995), thus making them equal in status. This is not the case with the addressee's father, who is the owner of the slave. As the *Self*, he is superior and will continue to receive respect from the slave no matter the circumstance. Just like the previous proverb, the proverb under review is also a metaphor which does not necessarily apply to slaves. The referenced proverb is often used to caution someone whose relation with someone or a group of people could result in losing the respect he receives from them. However, it also draws on the cultural practice of the Ga people,

where men are the ultimate owners of property or have great control over property.

With the proverb 'Afi efeee ŋmɔtsɛ' (The partridge does not get more than the farmer/ farm owner), the idea of men being the ultimate owners of property is carried by the lexical word *ŋmɔtsɛ* (farmer/ farm owner). The point has already been made that, among the Ga people, farming was a male dominated field of occupation. Thus, when a proverb such as the one under review is used, the image that is spontaneously evoked is that of a man. Also, as has already been observed, the word *tsɛ* (father), which is used in the compound *ŋmɔtsɛ* to denote 'owner', is male generic (see Lomotey, 2015). In effect, though the referenced proverb does not explicitly mention that the farmer is a man, ideologically, when the word *ŋmɔtsɛ* (farmer/ farm owner) is mentioned, it is assumed that the owner of the farm is a man. Just like the other proverbs, the referenced proverb is a metaphor, and may not necessarily have to do with a farmer. In fact, it is often used to encourage someone who may feel like giving up on something he/she is engaged in because the desired results are not being achieved. It, however, feeds into the ideology that a farmer or owner of a farm, among the Ga people, is ultimately a man, and this creates for men the position of the *Self*.

Proverbs Expressing the Perceived Idea of Fathers as Role Models

The Ga people believe that traits that people exhibit are, to a large extent, picked from their parents. If parents exhibit good character, their children are more likely to imbibe the trait and grow to portray it in life. Similarly, if parents

exhibit bad character, their children learn from them, and are likely to become replicas of their parents. Most often, fathers become role models for their sons, while mothers become role models for their daughters. There are some Ga proverbs which portray the influence that fathers have on their children. It must be observed that some of these proverbs are gender neutral so they could apply to both fathers and mothers. With respect to proverbs that are specific to fathers, the data recorded only one. Interestingly, the proverb does not represent the father as either a good or bad role model; it is neutral. This is not the case with mothers, who are mostly represented as bad role models for their children. This may create the impression that fathers, other than mothers, are better models for their children, and this could result in legitimising male hegemonic culture, where mothers are often blamed for the bad behaviours that their children exhibit. Examples of Ga proverbs that represent fathers as role models to their children include the following:

#45 *Ayi bi Ayi.*

'Ayi, son Ayi/ Like father like son.'

#47 *Duŋ fɔɔɔ yɔɔ.*

'A dung does not beget an antelope.'

#99 *Kaa fɔɔ loofɔlɔ.*

'A crab does not beget a bird.'

'Ayi bi Ayi' (Ayi, son Ayi/ Like father like son) is a Ga proverb that is specific about the influence a father may have on the life of his son. Traditionally, the Ga naming system operates with two generations of family names which are

alternated: there is a set of names for fathers and another set for children. Fathers give their children names from the set of names for children, and when the children, specifically, male children, also give birth, they give the children names from the set of names for fathers. For instance, a father called *Otu* will name his first son *Ayi*, and *Ayi* will also name his first son *Otu*. It is therefore only on condition that *Ayi* will name his first son *Ayi*. Perhaps, it could be in honour of his grandfather whose name would have been *Ayi*. That notwithstanding, the referenced proverb exemplifies the influence that a father has on his son. The choice of *Ayi* as name for the son is to emphasise the resemblance in character between the father and the son. Though the proverb could apply to both negative and positive contexts, it is mostly used in positive contexts, and this makes it seem men are prone to having positive influence other than negative influence on their children. This is why often men absolve themselves of blame when their children turn out to be bad people, and women get at the receiving end of the blame. While men are mostly seen as enforcers of discipline, women are seen as lax and permissive parents, whose handling of their children tend to spoil them.

Unlike 'Ayi bi Ayi' (Ayi, son Ayi), the proverbs 'Duŋ fɔɔɔ yɔɔ' (A dung does not beget an antelope) and 'Kaa fɔɔ loofɔlɔ' (A crab does not beget a bird) are gender neutral. They are also used in only negative contexts (Engmann, 2021). However, they do not make scathing remarks about any of the genders. As will be seen later, proverbs that are specific about mothers make scathing remarks about women. Generally, in terms of the portrayal of men or fathers as role models, Ga proverbs do not depict men in a grotesque manner, even in instances where the

proverbs are used in negative contexts. Perhaps, this is because as the *Self* men are an embodiment of the norm, and their identity is valued, as against women who are defined by their faults, devalued and discriminated against, (Staszak, 2008).

Proverbs Expressing the Perception that Men Are Smart and Wise

Another theme that emerged from the proverb data is the perception that men are smart and wise. As the *Self*, men consider themselves to be smart and wise, and women, as the *Other*, are 'unwise' or 'foolish'. This has emerged in studies on proverbs from other cultures as well, (see Storm, 1992; Kerschen, 2012; Litovkina, 2019), even though Litovkina (2019) also identified that there are proverbs which demonstrate that despite their perceived foolishness, women are very skillful in making total fools of men, particularly in extracting money from them. For the Ga proverbs however, while men were portrayed as smart and wise, no proverb from the data directly attributed foolishness to women. Examples of Ga proverbs that attribute smartness and wisdom to men are as follows:

#42 *Oblanyo hiɛ tamɔɔɔ edeka mli.*

'A young man's face is not like the inside of his wardrobe/ portmanteau.'

#44 *Ataaa buulu dɔrɔ nɔ shi enyɔ.*

'A fool's testicles are not sat on twice.'

The proverb 'Oblanyo hiɛ tamɔɔɔ edeka mli' (A young man's face is not like the inside of his wardrobe/ Portmanteau) projects how smart men can be to

the extent that they can also be very deceptive. The proverb intimates that young men can look presentable by their looks on the outside, but that must not be equated to how much money they have or their riches. Indeed, most young men can pretend to be what they are not, just to have their way with women. Interestingly, some women also easily fall prey to the deception of these young men, and this could be the reason why men perceive women to be 'unwise' or 'foolish'. Though the proverb under review sounds negative, and serves as a warning to young women to be cautious of young men, it also fuels the ego of men, who see themselves as the *Self*, and goads them to see their smartness, whether negative or positive, as a masculine trait which they must exhibit.

In one of the proceedings of the parliament of Ghana, a member of parliament raised concerns about some roads in his constituency, and village names such as 'Etwe nim Nyansa' (Vagina is Wise), 'Kote ye Aboa' (Penis is a Fool) and 'Shua ye Morbor' (Testicles is to be Pitied) were mentioned, which drew laughter from all the members in the House. As indicated earlier, Litovkina (2019) noted that women are very skillful in making total fools of men, and the tool they employ is their female sexual organ, as reflected in the names of the villages herein referenced. This notwithstanding, as the *Self*, men still consider themselves as wise and attribute 'stupidity' to women. A Ga proverb that attributes wisdom to men is 'Ataaa buulu dɔrɔ nɔ shi enyɔ' (A fool's testicles are not sat on twice). This proverb draws on the delicate nature of the testicles as a source of wisdom for men. Anatomically, the male sexual organ is external, while the female organ is internal; thus, the male organ is easily prone to harm. Because

any harm caused to it is very painful, care is taken to protect it from harm. In effect, even if a fool allows someone to cause harm to his testicles for a first time, because of how painful it is, he gets wise and does not allow the harm to be caused a second time.

Proverbs Expressing Some Perceived Masculine Habits

In portraying themselves as the *Self*, and creating for themselves a male hegemonic culture, Ga men tend to engage in some perceived masculine habits, which are not encouraged for women. These include the drinking of alcohol and smoking of tobacco. This is however not peculiar to Ga culture (see Mullen et al, 2007; Peralta, 2007; Hinote & Webber, 2012; Mensah, 2021). With specific reference to proverbs, Stark (2014) examined the representation of men in Finnish proverbs and identified that '[i]n order to become a fully authorized man in the eyes of other members of society, men … engaged in certain cultural customs, such as drinking alcohol and not behaving too stupidly while drunk,' (p. 82). A similar situation pertains with Ga proverbs, where some proverbs portray masculinity in terms of a man's ability to drink alcohol or smoke tobacco, and probably 'not behaving stupidly while drunk'. Examples of such proverbs are below:

#38 *Nuu enuuu daa tsene kome*.

'A man does not take one calabash of drink (palm wine).'

#39 *Kɛ ohiɛ otsene lɛ, daa ebɔɔɔ bo.*

'If you have your own calabash, you will never lack drink (palm wine).'

#40 *Apaafonyo leee tawa ni egbo*.

'A labourer does not take into consideration that tobacco has lost its potency.'

The proverbs 'Nuu enuuu daa tsene kome' (A man does not take one calabash of drink (palm wine)) and 'Kɛ ohiɛ otsene lɛ, daa ebɔɔɔ bo' (If you have your own calabash, you will never lack drink (palm wine)) are examples of Ga proverbs that are specific in ascribing masculinity to a man's ability to drink alcohol. 'Nuu enuuu daa tsene kome', for instance, does not only portray that a man must be able to drink alcohol, but also celebrates a man's ability to take a lot of it and still be in control of his mental faculties. As Engmann (2021) notes, a man drinks alcohol in order to get drunk, and not because of its sweetness; as such, one calabash of drink is not enough to get a man drunk. Though this proverb does not necessarily have to do with drinking, and is usually used to remind a man about the need for him to be hardened emotionally, even in the face of adversity, it draws on the Ga cultural custom of drinking. Thus, just like it is expected that a man should be able to take more than one calabash of drink, he should also be able to withstand multiple adversities, and adversity should not prevent him from doing good. Since the Ga people do not encourage women to drink alcohol, this proverb does not apply to women. It is assumed that women do not need to

develop hardiness because they do not encounter situations which will require them to be hardened emotionally.

For the proverb 'Kɛ ohiɛ otsene lɛ, daa ebɔɔɔ bo' (If you have your own calabash, you will never lack drink (palm wine)), it does not only remind people, in general, about the need to always be in a state of preparedness, but also, like the previous proverb, draws on the Ga cultural custom of drinking to define what it means to be a man among the Ga people. Though 'man' is not mentioned anywhere in the proverb under review, since the Ga people do not encourage women to drink alcohol, the proverb can only be making reference to a man. Thus, just like any serious person is always in a state of preparedness to meet opportunity, the real man is the one who goes to the drinking bar with his calabash ready in hand. That way, he does not wait for the calabash that is being used to serve the drink to go round until it gets to his turn, and in the event that the drink is not enough to get to everyone, he would have been served because he has his own calabash.

Masculinity is not portrayed only in a man's ability to drink alcohol, but also in his smoking of tobacco. The proverb 'Apaafonyo leee tawa ni egbo' (A labourer does not take into consideration that tobacco has lost its potency) is a Ga proverb that attributes tobacco smoking to masculinity. Like the earlier two proverbs, this proverb does not necessarily have to do with the smoking of tobacco. It is a metaphor that draws on the Ga cultural custom of smoking tobacco to say that a person who is in need of something should be satisfied with whatever he or she gets, even if it does not meet his or her expectations. In explaining the

referenced proverb, Engmann (2021) notes that tobacco that has lost its potency is something which is not cherished by a master. He usually gives that to his labourers, who are noted for smoking a lot. Since they do not have money to buy the potent tobacco, they do not even know how it tastes, and they are satisfied with whatever they get. Perhaps, their desire is just to feel like fully authorized men, who can also smoke tobacco just like their master.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how men are represented as the *Self* in Ga proverbs, creating for men a male hegemonic culture. The analysis revealed that men are perceived to be superior to women, and women are required to subject themselves to the authority of men. Being superior, men are also perceived to be brave, and they are charged with the duty of protecting the women in their lives. Thus, any male who does not show bravery is not considered man enough, and is usually referred to as a 'woman'. Again, men are perceived to be providers, and this puts on them the duty to provide for their wives and children, and even extend it to other family members. Furthermore, men are perceived to be leaders, and this is probably the reason why virtually all traditional leadership positions are occupied by men. Men are also perceived to be owners of property, and their wives and children are even considered property, which are inherited. Also, they are perceived to be better role models for their children, and are often absolved of blame when their children go wayward. Finally, some of the proverbs portrayed some perceived masculine habits that men engage in. These include the drinking

of alcohol and smoking of tobacco. There is however the recognition that despite their portrayal as the *Self*, men owe their existence to women, as demonstrated by this proverb: 'Wuɔnuu ootsɔɔ ohe tsɔ, wuɔ wɔlɔ hetoto mli kɛkɛ ojɛ' (Cock, you are too standoffish, you came out from just an egg shell).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE OTHER: REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN GA PROVERBS

The previous chapter examined the representation of men in Ga proverbs, and it was observed that men are generally represented in the proverbs as the *Self*. Chiefly, they are perceived to be brave and superior to women, and they control affairs both in the domestic and public spheres. This present chapter looks at the representation of women in Ga proverbs, where they are generally represented as the *Other* of men. This is tied to the research question 'How are women represented in Ga proverbs?' However, again, it implicitly answers the research question 'How is gender constructed in Ga culture?' It must be noted that there are more proverbs about women than there are about men in Ga culture and most of these proverbs also appear to portray women negatively. This seems to be the case with most cultures in which gendered proverbs have been examined (see Storm, 1992; Oha, 1998; Balogu, 2010; Lee, 2015; Litovkina, 2019). Just as it was done for the Ga proverbs about men in Chapter Four, the discussions in this chapter on the representation of women in Ga proverbs is done according to the emerging patterns. The emerged patterns include the domestic role of women, women as subordinate to men, co-wife rivalry, women as evil/wicked people,

women and sexuality, women as commodity, women as mothers-in-law and women as role models.

The Domestic Role of Women

According to Gyan et al (2020, p. 3), '[p]roverbs are very vital in illuminating the condition of women in traditional Ghanaian society,' and '[t]hey highlight several ideas and beliefs that at all times continue to reflect and define women and their roles.' Generally, women are thought of to be better fit for the domestic sphere other than the public sphere (see Litovkina, 2019), a reason why the Ga people take young girls through puberty rite rituals which prepare them solely for the domestic sphere. Examples of Ga proverbs which limit women's participation to the domestic sphere include the following:

#52 *Ŋa tamɔ asaabu.*

'A wife is like a giant.'

#53 *Ŋa tamɔ kuntu.*

'A wife is like a blanket.'

#56 *Yoo sheee bɔlɔ gbeyei.*

'A woman does not fear the broom.'

#57 *Yoo sheee latɛ.*

'A woman does not fear the hearth.'

#58 *Yoofɔyoo kɛ eka shi lɛ, ekajeɔ.*

'When a breastfeeding mother sleeps, she lies on her back.'

#59 *Kɛ obi fooo hewɔ lɛ ohaaa lɛ fufɔ?*

'If your child does not cry, won't you give it breast milk?'

#60 *Yoofɔyoo ji mɔ ni le akɛ hɔmɔ miiye ebi.*

'A mother is the one who knows that her child is hungry.'

#63 *Akɛ nyɛ kɛ tsɛ eyaaa gbala.*

'You don't enter marriage with your mother and father.'

#64 *Akɛ hefɛo eyaaa gbala.*

'Beauty does not marry.'

'The destiny that society traditionally offers women is marriage. Even today, most women are, were, or plan to be married, or they suffer from not being so,' (De Beauvoir, 1946, p. 502). Indeed, among the Ga people, it is the desire of every family to have their daughters married off when they reach a marriageable age. Because usually the family of a young man who desires to marry a lady investigates the lady to ascertain whether she is of good character, and the family she comes from is a good one, most families try to bring up their female children well and maintain a good name for themselves. They also offer their children good counsel to maintain their marriages, as a failure of their marriages is considered a failure on the part of the entire family, and this could affect other people's desire to marry from that family.

The proverbs 'Akɛ nyɛ kɛ tsɛ eyaaa gbala' (You don't enter marriage with your father and mother) and 'Akɛ hefɛo eyaaa gbala' (Beauty does not marry) are examples of Ga proverbs that draw attention to how women are expected to behave in marriages in order to sustain their marriages. The first referenced

proverb cautions women that, while their parents play an important role in the contraction of their marriages, they are not responsible for the maintenance of the marriages. Everything depends on the women themselves. The Ga people therefore do not countenance situations where a married woman constantly reports issues in her marriage to her parents, or involve them in taking decisions regarding things happening in her marriage. Similarly, 'Akɛ hefɛo eyaaa gbala' (Beauty does not marry) expresses the importance of character in sustaining one's marriage. Thus, no matter how physically attractive a woman is, it is only her character that will make her succeed in marriage. The two proverbs under review create the impression that women need marriages more than men do. Thus, it is only women who must be concerned about the sustenance of marriages, as a failed marriage is assumed to be to the disadvantage of a woman more than it is to a man.

While married, a woman is expected to show a duty of care to her husband and children. Litovkina (2019, p. 20) notes that '[f]or centuries, nothing has been considered more important for a woman than serving her husband and children.' Contrary to the earlier observation that among the Ga people, women are considered weak and deserving protection from men, when it comes to the domestic sphere, the reverse applies. The woman is supposed to be a support on which the man leans in times of his weakness. This is reflected in the proverbs 'Ŋa tamɔ asaabu' (A wife is like a giant) and 'Ŋa tamɔ kuntu' (A wife is like a blanket). While 'Ŋa tamɔ asaabu' (A wife is like a giant) connotes only the positive role of a wife as the support on which her husband leans, 'Ŋa tamɔ kuntu'

(A wife is like a blanket) projects a wife as a necessary evil. Just as a blanket provides warmth to the body when the weather is cold, but also has the propensity to cause the body to itch, a wife is a source of happiness to her husband, but she could also be a source of his misery.

Again, among the Ga people, when a man and a woman get married, the expectation of society is that the woman bears the man children. When this happens, the woman would have brought honour to the man (Engmann, 2012). The woman does not only have a role to reproduce, but also, she is expected to play a motherly role. The proverbs 'Yoofɔyoo kɛ eka shi lɛ, ekajeɔ' (When a breastfeeding mother sleeps, she lies on her back), 'Kɛ obi fooo hewɔ lɛ ohaaa lɛ fufɔ?' (If your child does not cry, won't you give it breast milk?) and 'Yoofɔyoo ji mɔ ni le akɛ hɔmɔ miiye ebi' (A mother is the one who knows that her child is hungry) all charge women to be responsible mothers. A responsible mother is the one who is responsive to the needs of her children, and this is what is expressed in the proverbs under review. 'Yoofɔyoo kɛ eka shi lɛ, ekajeɔ' specifically speaks to how a breastfeeding mother must always be in readiness to give her child breast milk when the baby requires it. Similarly, 'Yoofɔyoo ji mɔ ni le akɛ hɔmɔ miiye ebi' portrays how a responsible mother is always in tune with the needs of her child so that she does not need to be prompted before she attends to the child. Though largely positive, proverbs such as these and the previous ones under this section help to legitimise the domestic status of the woman as a wife and a mother, making her the *Other* of man, who controls positions of social and economic influence.

The proverbs 'Yoo sheee bɔlɔ gbeyei' (A woman does not fear the broom) and 'Yoo sheee latɛ' (A woman does not fear the hearth) also portray women in their domestic roles. As a wife and a mother, the woman is expected to keep the home and cook for her husband and her children, and as noted earlier, the puberty rites that are performed for young girls socialise them to accept this as a norm. A woman who fails to conform to this norm is usually sanctioned by society. 'Yoo sheee bɔlɔ gbeyei' enjoins a woman to make it a part of her routine to keep her home and surroundings clean. Similarly, 'Yoo sheee latɛ' instructs a woman to see cooking as an inevitable duty. Like the previous proverbs, the two proverbs under review help to legitimise the domestic status of the woman, making her the *Other* of man.

Women as Subordinate to Men

In Chapter Four, some proverbs which project men as superior and relegate women to a subordinate position were examined. These included 'Wuɔyoo le jetsɛremɔ moŋ, kɛlɛ wuɔnuu naabu ekwɛɔ' (The female fowl (hen) knows daybreak, yet it looks at the mouth of the male fowl (cock)), 'Kɛ yoo lɛ too lɛ, nuu gbeɔ' (When a woman rears a goat/sheep, it is a man who slaughters it), 'Kɛ yoo fo nii lɛ, nuu tsu mli ekpasaa' (If a woman harvests crops, they are kept in a man's room), 'Kɛji yoo he tu lɛ, nuu tsu lɛ mli ekɛtoɔ' (If a woman buys a gun, she keeps it in the man's room), and 'Kɛ yoo tɔ lɛ, nuu saa' (If a woman goes wrong, a man corrects her). These proverbs were extensively discussed. It is therefore not necessary to belabour the points here. Generally, however, it was

revealed that men occupy a superior position which gives them authority to control affairs both in the domestic and public spheres. They are the decision-makers, and women are subject to their authority. It is assumed that a woman cannot make a good decision independently. She, therefore, needs to rely on a man to help her make good decisions.

Apart from the above referenced proverbs, other Ga proverbs that represent women as subordinate to men are 'Yoo kpakpa ni boɔ ewu ŋaawoo toi' (It is a good woman who pays attention to advice from her husband) and 'Yoo nɔ ji yoo' (A woman's portion is to say I have heard you). As women are considered unable to make good decisions for themselves, a good wife is expected to pay heed to the advice she receives from her husband. It is assumed that women take decisions based on their emotions, other than reasoning. Thus, they are likely to take decisions which could create problems for them in the future. That is why for the Ga people, a good wife must defer to her husband for advice on any decision she wants to make. At its height, the woman is expected only to listen to what a man says and respond, 'I have heard you.' She has no right to express her views concerning any issue, and this deprives the woman of her voice. As noted earlier in this work, it is this unequal power relation between men and women, where men are privileged over women, that feminists have been protesting against through time. It is also in this sense that woman as the *Other* is such an unenviable position which must not be recognised in Ga society.

Co-wife Rivalry

Like most African cultures, Ga culture permits polygamy, so men are allowed to have more than one wife. This creates situations where the women and their children have to relate to each other. These relationships are, however, not always smooth. The women rival each other, and it is extended to their children. The proverbs that follow exemplify the effect of co-wife rivalry in polygamous homes:

#71 *Tsɛbi kɛɛ je ena, shi nyɛbi kɛɛ je enako.*

'The father's child says it is night but the mother's child says it is not night.'

#72 *Kɛji obienyɛ he yɛ fɛo lɛ, ojieɔ eyi.*

'If your rival is beautiful, you praise her.'

#73 *Mɔnyɛ eyaaa jara ni amaje mɔnyɛ bienyɛ.*

'One's mother does not go to the market for one to let one's mother's rival buy things from the market for one.'

#74 *Kɛ onyɛbi miishɛ oyi lɛ, otaooo ashwishwɛ.*

'If your mother's son is giving you a haircut, you don't look for a mirror.'

The proverbs 'Kɛji obienyɛ he yɛ fɛo lɛ, ojieɔ eyi' (If your rival is beautiful, you praise her) and 'Mɔnyɛ eyaaa jara ni amaje mɔnyɛ bienyɛ' (One's mother does not go to the market for one to let one's mother's rival buy things from the market for one) portray the kind of relationship that exists between co-wives. They usually do not see eye to eye, and even in situations where one

accomplishes something important, the other does not praise the former for her accomplishment. The first referenced proverb calls on a woman to admit it if her rival does something good, something that is assumed a woman will hardly do. Once a person is her rival, it is assumed she will hardly see anything good about the person. Similarly, the second proverb portrays that no matter how good one's mother's rival may be, she should not be trusted to always have one's interest at heart, a reason why one will not let one's mother's rival buy things from the market for one when one's mother is also going to the same market. Proverbs such as these portray women as quarrelsome people who are full of rivalry, giving them a negative image.

The rivalry that exists among co-wives is often extended to their children, who also compete with each other for superiority. The proverbs 'Tsɛbi kɛɛ je ena, shi nyɛbi kɛɛ je enako' (The father's child says it is night but the mother's child says it is not night) and 'Kɛ onyɛbi miishɛ oyi lɛ, otaooo ashwishwɛ' (If your mother's son is giving you a haircut, you don't look for a mirror) portray the kind of relationship that exists among stepsiblings. It is usually the case that, just as their mothers do not agree on issues, stepsiblings of the same father also do not agree on issues. This is as a result of seeds of disconcert that are sown into them by their respective mothers. Most often, children of the same mother agree on issues that their stepsiblings have a dissenting view about. The proverb 'Tsɛbi kɛɛ je ena, shi nyɛbi kɛɛ je enako' presents a situation where children of the same mother agree on an issue, while their stepsibling has a contrary view. Again, the proverb 'Kɛ onyɛbi miishɛ oyi lɛ, otaooo ashwishwɛ' expresses the extent to

which children of the same mother trust each other. Because they trust each other so much, they do not harbour any fear that one can harm the other. Same may not be said of stepsiblings of the same father. In all, the blame is put on the mothers, who are assumed to be the source of disunity among the stepsiblings, thus, constructing the woman as the *Other*.

Women as Evil/Wicked or Dangerous People

Some traits that are attributed to women, which find expression in proverbs from various cultures across the world include evil, wicked and dangerous (see Oha, 1998; Hussein, 2005 and Litokina, 2019). Similarly, there are Ga proverbs which portray women as evil, wicked and dangerous. Examples of such proverbs are as follows:

#75 *Kɛji abonsam tee yara nɔ lɛ, ayɛ we etoɔ.*

'If the devil goes for a funeral, he lodges in the witch's house.'

#76 *Kɛ yoo kafo bo lɛ, nyɔmɔ ni.*

'If a woman praises you, it is a debt.'

#77 *She yoo gbeyei ni owala sɛɛ atsɛ.*

'Fear woman and live long.'

#80 *Kɛ ayɛ bi gbo lɛ, edɔɔ lɛ.*

'If a witch's child dies, she feels pain.'

#81 *Kɛ ayɛ bɛ osateŋ lɛ, obi gbooo.*

'If there were no witch in your community, your child will not die.'

Though witchcraft is ascribed to both men and women, women, particularly old women, seem to suffer witchcraft accusations more than men (see Awedoba, 2005; Ncube & Moyo, 2011; Crampton, 2013). The word for 'witch' in Ga is *ayɛ*, and it relates more to women than to men. There seem to be no specific word for 'wizard' in Ga. Usually, the word *ayɛ* has to be qualified with *nuu* (male) to denote 'wizard' (nuu ayɛ). *Ayɛ* has a negative connotation, but it could have a positive connotation, where it refers to someone who is skillful in doing something. In the context of the Ga proverbs under study, however, the reference to *ayɛ*, but not *nuu ayɛ*, creates a negative image about women as evil people. The proverbs 'Kɛji abonsam tee yara nɔ lɛ, ayɛ we etoɔ' (If the devil goes for a funeral, he lodges in the witch's house), 'Kɛ ayɛ bi gbo lɛ, edɔɔ lɛ' (If a witch's child dies, she feels pain) and 'Kɛ ayɛ bɛ osateŋ lɛ, obi gbooo' (If there were no witch in your community, your child will not die) indirectly attribute evil doing to women. 'Kɛ ayɛ bi gbo lɛ, edɔɔ lɛ' however portrays that, while women may be evil, they do not wish evil for themselves. Thus, 'If a witch's child dies, she feels pain.' It must be observed that though 'woman' was not mentioned in the referenced proverbs, because of the association of witchcraft to women, the image that is evoked when such proverbs are used is that of a woman, making her the stereotypical *Other*.

The proverbs 'Kɛ yoo kafo bo lɛ, nyɔmɔ ni' (If a woman praises you, it is a debt) and 'She yoo gbeyei ni owala sɛɛ atsɛ' (Fear woman and live long) also portray women as dangerous and evil. 'Kɛ yoo kafo bo lɛ, nyɔmɔ ni' can be looked at from two perspectives. First, it could imply that if a woman praises you,

she may only be flattering you in order to receive a favour from you. As Litovkina (2019) noted, women are very skillful in doing this, particularly in extracting money from men. Secondly, it could imply if a woman praises you and you fall for it, you may end up paying a fine. This is in respect of a married woman. In Ga culture, when a woman commits adultery and it is proven to be true, her husband receives *ayifare* (a fine for adultery) from the man involved. It is very disgraceful for a man to find himself in a position where he would have to pay *ayifare*. The referenced proverb therefore portrays the woman as a dangerous person who could cause the disgrace of a man. Similarly, 'She yoo gbeyei ni owala sɛɛ atsɛ' portrays women as evil people who could cut a man's life short. Women are often tagged as untrustworthy, and this is expressed in statements like 'Women are their own enemies.' They are perceived as fickle-minded and unpredictable. As observed earlier, it is assumed that women are led by their emotions other than reason, and this could make them change their minds at any time. For one to trust a woman therefore amounts to exposing oneself to danger. Portrayed as an irrational being, the woman is seen as someone who could easily be influenced by one's enemies to do one harm. Also, through her perceived irrationality, she could divulge damaging information that can destroy a person. Like the other proverbs, these two proverbs also portray the woman in a negative light, making her the stereotypical *Other*.

Women and Sexuality

De Beauvoir (1949, p. 444) has observed that men's anatomical destiny is profoundly different from that of women. While Patriarchy condemns women to chastity, men are permitted to openly express and relieve their sexual desires. For women, their sexual desires are supposed to be confined within marriage, and any sexual act outside marriage is considered 'a fault, a fall, a defeat, a weakness.' Contrary to the disdain that is suffered by a woman for not defending her virtue and honour, 'even the blame inflicted on her vanquisher brings him admiration.' Issues about female sexuality have also been subjects in proverbs from some cultures across the world (see Ncube & Moya, 2011; Litovkina, 2019; Dzahene-Quarshie & Omari, 2021), and a similar situation pertains in Ga culture as well. Examples of Ga proverbs that touch on female sexuality include the following:

#82 *Maŋ naa yoohɔlɔ.*

'Society discovers a pregnant woman.'

#83 *Ajwamaŋ leee mitɔ.*

'A promiscuous woman is never satisfied.'

#84 *Kɛ owiɛ yoo ajwamaŋ lɛ, onaaa mlifu.*

'If you marry a promiscuous woman, you do not get angry.'

#85 *Yoo ajwamaŋlɔ leee gbala kpakpa.*

'A promiscuous woman does not know good marriage.'

#86 *Yoo ni le mɔ ni wo lɛ hɔ.*

'It is a woman who knows the person who impregnated her.'

As discussed earlier in this work, in Ga culture, the woman is supposed to occupy a domestic position, and she has a role to reproduce and take care of children, which creates for her the position of the *Other*. In addition, the process involved for reproduction to occur is also appropriated to portray the woman as the *Other*. This is exemplified in the proverb *Maŋ naa yoohɔlɔ* (Society discovers a pregnant woman). Though this proverb is usually used in contexts where a person's character exposes him or her, and does not necessarily have to do with a woman and her pregnancy, the metaphor creates an image which has the potential to suppress the expression of female sexuality. The import of the proverb is that though sexual acts occur behind closed doors, and no one can see it on the faces of a man and woman involved, pregnancy exposes the woman and people get to know what she has been doing behind closed doors. It must be observed that, for the man, nothing shows on his body which exposes him for what he has been doing behind closed doors. Proverbs such as this therefore give the impression that while sex is desirable for the man and can be concealed from the public eye, for the woman, it is undesirable because it cannot be concealed from the public eye forever.

Just like the previous proverb, the proverbs 'Ajwamaŋ leee mitɔ' (A promiscuous woman is never satisfied), 'Kɛ owiɛ yoo ajwamaŋ lɛ, onaaa mlifu' (If you marry a promiscuous woman, you do not get angry) and 'Yoo ajwamaŋlɔ leee gbala kpakpa' (A promiscuous woman does not know good marriage) also suppress the expression of female sexuality. As noted earlier, for women, their sexual desires are supposed to be confined within marriage. Any sexual act

outside marriage is considered inappropriate. Men are however at liberty to satisfy their sexual desires even outside marriage, and by this, the man becomes the *Self*, and the woman, the *Other*. It is instructive to note that, in Ga culture, a man may not be described as promiscuous because he is entitled to as many wives as he wants. A woman, on the other hand, is supposed to settle to only one man. A woman who defies the restriction imposed on her by society and has multiple sexual relations attracts a backlash, and such will be referred to as *ajwamaŋlɔ* (a promiscuous person). Such women are not supposed to attract any man for marriage because they cannot settle to only one man. If, however, on his own volition, a man decides to marry any such woman, then the proverb 'Kɛ owiɛ yoo ajwamaŋ lɛ, onaaa mlifu' applies to him. The point is that he was aware that the woman was promiscuous before he married her, and since 'A promiscuous woman is never satisfied,' he should know that such a woman will not settle to him alone – It does not matter whether he treats her well or not.

The proverb 'Yoo ni le mɔ ni wo lɛ hɔ' (It is a woman who knows the person who impregnated her) goes beyond the suppression of the expression of female sexuality to casting doubt at the faithfulness of women. Hussein (2005) notes that African oral traditions portray women in general as unfaithful. Perhaps this is because of the view held by most men about women, that they are materialistic and are also led by their emotions so they cannot be loyal to a man. The referenced proverb expresses the idea that women are generally unfaithful, and it is possible that the man a woman claims is responsible for her pregnancy may actually not be responsible for the pregnancy. However, the woman knows

the man who is actually responsible for the pregnancy. Like the previous proverbs, the proverb under review creates a negative image about women, making them the stereotypical *Other*.

Women as Commodity

Another theme under which women are represented in Ga proverbs as the *Other* is 'women as commodity.' From primitive time to date the woman has been treated like a 'thing', (De Beauvoir, 1946). Hussein (2005, p. 65) observes that '[i]n Africa, women have been used as a conduit via which men formed and solidified their relation with other men. Families enhance their wealth and alliance through giving away their female children.' By this, the woman is treated like a commodity which is exchanged for money or other favours. Examples of Ga proverbs which portray women as commodity include the following:

#87 *Ahaaa mɔ yoo ni asaa ake lɛ saa afata he.*

'No one gives a woman to a man and gives him a mat/bed in addition.'

#88 *Abɛ mama ni abiɔ yoo shi?*

'Can one not have cloth and ask of a woman's hand in marriage?'

#89 *Yoo gbooo jara.*

'A woman's market value does not diminish.'

The proverb 'Ahaaa mɔ yoo ni asaa ake lɛ saa afata he' (No one gives a woman to a man and gives him a mat/bed in addition) portrays the woman as a commodity or a 'thing' which is given to a man, probably in exchange for

something. This proverb deprives the woman of her humanity and places her in a subordinate position while it puts the man in a hegemonic position. Though the referenced proverb is usually used in contexts to mean that 'heavens help those who help themselves,' and has nothing to do with women specifically, the metaphor employed in the proverb evokes an image which commodifies women, making the woman, the *Other*, and the man the *Subject* or the *Self*. The fact that the woman is 'given out' means she does not determine what goes on in the process. She is only an object that is delivered to another man. Indeed, among the Ga people, when a man wants to ask of a woman's hand in marriage, he negotiates with the woman's father and not the woman. The man may have met the woman as an individual prior to the marriage, but once marriage is activated, she ceases to own her individual being. She becomes an object which is given out, just as expressed in the proverb.

Similar to the proverb 'Ahaaa mɔ yoo ni asaa ake lɛ saa afata he', the proverb 'Abɛ mama ni abiɔ yoo shi?' (Can one not have cloth and ask of a woman's hand in marriage?) also portrays the woman as a commodity. However, while the previous proverb does not emphasise the fact that for a man to get a woman to become his wife, he needs to present some items, the proverb under review emphasises that fact. This is where the woman is portrayed like a commodity which is exchanged for something. It is instructive to note that among the Ga people, the items that a man needs to present when asking of a woman's hand in marriage include six half pieces of cloth for the woman, one half piece of cloth for the woman's mother, and one full piece of cloth for the woman's father.

These items are sometimes converted into money, and this is aside other monies that the man has to give to the woman and her family. Thus, a man needs an appreciable amount of money before he can ask of a woman's hand in marriage. The fact that a man needs money before he can ask of a woman's hand in marriage makes it look as if the woman were a commodity that is being bought by the man. The commodification of the woman, as expressed in the referenced proverb, makes her the *Other* of man, who is the *Self*.

The commodification of the woman is even given more prominence in the proverb 'Yoo gbooo jara' (A woman's market value does not diminish). Here the woman is portrayed as a commodity which has a market value. However, unlike other commodities which lose their market value over time, due to the depreciation of their use-value, the use-value of the woman does not depreciate. There is always a man somewhere who gets attracted to her, either for marriage or just to satisfy his sexual desires. The woman's usefulness is therefore restricted to only the domestic sphere and the sex she provides for the man. Just like the other proverbs under this section, the commodification of the woman in the proverb under review also makes her the *Other* of man, who is the *Self*.

Women as Mothers-in-law

There are a number of Ga proverbs about the mother-in-law which were identified in this study. Though these proverbs do not make any specific reference to the particular mother-in-law in question, whether it is the mother-in-law of the daughter-in-law or the mother-in-law of the son-in-law, it could be deduced from

most of the proverbs that the mothers-in-law in question are those of the sons-in-law other than those of the daughters-in-law. Thus, the rivalry situation that is often created between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law, which is portrayed in proverbs from some other cultures (see Litovkina, 2019) is muted. Again, unlike it pertains in some other cultures where the images created about the mother-in-law are largely negative (see Litovkina, 2019), the images created about the mother-in-law in Ga proverbs appear to be positive. Subtly, however, the presence of the mother-in-law puts some burden on the son-in-law, as he must go to every extent to please the mother-in-law. It is in circumstances like this that the woman is presented as the *Other*. The idea of the woman being the *Other*, as expressed in Ga proverbs about the mother-in-law, is even heightened by the fact that there are virtually no Ga proverbs about the father-in-law. Examples of Ga proverbs about the mother-in-law are presented below:

#90 *Shaayoo bɛ shwɛ.*

'No mother-in-law is a rag.'

#91 *Gbi ni ohe ehiii lɛ, gbi lɛ okɛ oshaayoo kpeɔ.*

'It is the day you do not have money on you that you meet your mother-in-law (in town).'

#92 *Kɛ ohiɛ miigbo oshaayoo lɛ, ofɔɔɔ.*

'If you are shy of your mother-in-law, you won't give birth.'

#93 *Kɛ ohiɛ miigbo oshaayoo lɛ, otaa loo.*

'If you are shy of your mother-in-law, you grow lean.'

#94 *Kaaje oshaayoo sɛɛ oŋmɔ lɛ, no lɛ ohiɛ kwɛmɔ jraaa.*

'Do not laugh at your mother-in-law behind her back, lest getting insulted becomes easy.'

Generally, the Ga people expect sons-in-law and daughters-in-law to treat their respective mothers-in-law with respect and reverence, and this is reflected in a number of proverbs about mothers-in-law. An example of a proverb that epitomises the above assertion is 'Shaayoo bɛ shwɛ' (No mother-in-law is a rag). Though the image of the mother-in-law in this proverb could apply to both the mother-in-law of the wife or that of the husband, for most part, it relates to the mother-in-law of the husband. The import of the image created in the proverb is that for a man to identify a woman and develop interest in her to the extent of marrying her means he considered the position of the mother-in-law. It must be noted that it is the mother-in-law who gave birth to the woman who becomes the man's wife; thus, she deserves respect from the man. No matter how the man sees her, she bears the title of mother-in-law, and that is in reference to the man and by virtue of his marriage to her daughter. Subtly, however, another image is created at the background, and this is where the woman is presented as the *Other*. Mothers-in-law are generally perceived as the source of most problems in the marriages between their children and their sons-in-law or daughters-in-law. This is because of their interferences in the marriages, which invariably lead to a strain in the relationship between themselves and their sons-in-law or daughters-in-law. In the context of the proverb under review, a son-in-law may not be pleased with an attitude of his mother-in-law towards him. That notwithstanding, the proverb

admonishes the man against showing any form of disdain towards his mother-in-law as that will amount to despising himself. It also means the man must accept whatever attitude the mother-in-law puts up as her nature and endure it. The stereotypical notion about the mother-in-law as a fomenter of trouble gives women the status of the *Other*.

Just like the previous proverb, the proverb 'Kaaje oshaayoo sɛɛ oŋmɔ lɛ, no lɛ ohiɛ kwɛmɔ jraaa' (Do not laugh at your mother-in-law behind her back, lest getting insulted becomes easy) also projects the need for a son-in-law to treat his mother-in-law with respect and reverence. This is notwithstanding whether the mother-in-law in question is displaying an attitude which may be infuriating her son-in-law. At every cause, sons-in-law are prohibited from openly showing their disdain towards their mothers-in-law, as that could attract trouble from the mothers-in-law. As noted earlier, mothers-in-law are generally perceived as fomenters of trouble in their children's marriages, and they look for every opportunity to interfere in their children's marriages or pick up quarrels with their daughters-in-law or sons-in-law. In the context of the proverb under review, therefore, a son-in-law is cautioned against displaying his disdain towards his mother-in-law, as that gives her a justification to pick up a quarrel with him and insult him. This perception about the mother-in-law as a person who is always looking for an opportunity to trouble her son-in-law is what makes her the *Other*.

As noted earlier, there seems to be some burden on sons-in-laws to please their mothers-in-law, and this is exemplified in the proverb 'Gbi ni ohe ehiii lɛ, gbi lɛ okɛ oshaayoo kpeɔ' (It is the day you do not have money on you that you

meet your mother-in-law (in town)). A son-in-law is not only required to show respect and reverence to his mother-in-law, he must also lavish her with money and gifts. This is what demonstrates that the son-in-law is not ungrateful, and he is pleased with having her mother-in-law's daughter as a wife. Unfortunately, however, mothers-in-law are also perceived as people who are very difficult to please, and this puts some burden on sons-in-law to go to every extent to please their mothers-in-law. The situation becomes even embarrassing for a son-in-law when he does not have money and is unable meet the expectations of his mother-in-law. That the presence of a mother-in-law can create discomfort for a son-in-law is what makes her the *Other*.

Though sons-in-law are expected to treat their mothers-in-law with respect and reverence, that should not prevent sons-in-law from expressing themselves in the presence of their mothers-in-law. The proverbs 'Kɛ ohiɛ miigbo oshaayoo lɛ, ofɔɔɔ' (If you are shy of your mother-in-law, you won't give birth) and 'Kɛ ohiɛ miigbo oshaayoo lɛ, otaa loo' (If you are shy of your mother-in-law, you grow lean) express the fact that despite the respect a son-in-law may have for his mother-in-law, he should not be scared of being himself and expressing himself as he wishes. The point is that because of the nature of relationship that exists between mothers-in-law and their sons-in-law, sons-in-law feel shy in their presence and this prevents sons-in-law from expressing themselves even when they are not happy with a situation. It even goes to the extent that sometimes, a mother-in-law may seek a favour from a son-in-law, which he may not be willing to grant; however, because of the respect and reverence he has for his mother-in-

law, he reluctantly grants the favour. This sometimes goes a long way to affect the son-in-law and even the marriage. Just like the previous proverb, the two referenced proverbs also stereotypically portray the mother-in-law as the *Other*, whose presence creates discomfort for her son-in-law.

Women as Role Models

In Chapter Four, it was observed that the Ga people believed that traits that people exhibit are, to a large extent, picked from their parents, and fathers become role models for their sons, while mothers become role models for their daughters. Some Ga proverbs which portray the influence that fathers have on their children were examined, and it was observed that only proverbs that are gender neutral and could apply to both fathers and mothers are used in negative contexts. These included 'Duŋ fɔɔɔ yɔɔ' (A dung does not beget an antelope) and 'Kaa fɔɔ loofɔlɔ' (A crab does not beget a bird). There was only one proverb which was specific to fathers, 'Ayi bi Ayi' (Ayi, son Ayi/ Like father like son), and it did not represent the father as either a good or bad role model; it was neutral. Contrarily, apart from the gender-neutral proverbs, there are a number of proverbs that are specific to mothers, and these proverbs represent mothers as bad role models for their children. The proverbs also make scathing remarks about women, thus, portraying women as the *Other*. Examples of Ga proverbs that represent mothers as role models to their children include the following:

#97 *Akpaŋa he fu lɛ, ekɛjɛ enyɛ wɔlɔ mli.*

'The vulture brought its foul smell from its mother's egg.'

#98 *Too nyɛ akwɛɔ aheɔ toobi.*

'It is the mother of the goat/sheep that is observed before buying the young goat.'

#100 *Akpaŋa he fu tsɛŋeɔ ewɔji.*

'The vulture's foul smell is transmitted to its eggs.'

The proverbs 'Akpaŋa he fu lɛ, ekɛjɛ enyɛ wɔlɔ mli' (The vulture brought its foul smell from its mother's egg) and 'Akpaŋa he fu tsɛŋeɔ ewɔji' (The vulture's foul smell is transmitted to its eggs) portray mothers as bad role models whose bad character traits are imbibed by their children, particularly their daughters, who eventually also exhibit such traits. 'Akpaŋa he fu lɛ, ekɛjɛ enyɛ wɔlɔ mli' is usually used in contexts where a child, particularly a daughter, portrays a similar trait as her mother, while 'Akpaŋa he fu tsɛŋeɔ ewɔji' is used in contexts to warn a mother of the possibility of her daughter imitating her bad character. The metaphor of the mother as a bad role model is expressed in the comparison of her character to the foul smell of a vulture. Just as a foul smell is repulsive, bad character is also repulsive. Thus, a mother with bad character cannot be a good role model for her daughter. The stereotypical representation of the woman as a bad role model for her daughter makes her the *Other* to man, who is the *Self* and is represented as neutral.

The proverb 'Too nyɛ akwɛɔ aheɔ toobi' (It is the mother of the goat/sheep that is observed before buying the young goat) does not only express the fact that it is mothers who become role models for their daughters, but also warns about the consequences of the kind of example a mother sets for her

daughter. As observed elsewhere in this work, when a young man expresses the desire to marry a woman, his family investigates the woman's family to ascertain whether members of the family are of good character. If it is found out that members of the family are not of good character, that becomes a discouragement for the man to marry into that family. As the Ga people believe that daughters pick their character traits from their mothers, particular attention is paid to the kind of behaviour that a mother exhibits in her marriage to determine the kind of behaviour her daughter will also exhibit in her own marriage. Because 'The vulture's foul smell is transmitted to its eggs,' if a mother has a bad behaviour, her daughter is likely to exhibit a similar behaviour. The referenced proverb therefore instructs men to consider the behaviour of mothers in determining whether they will have their daughters as wives or not. Like the previous proverbs under this section, the proverb under review also portrays the woman as the *Other*, as it is her character and not the man's character which determines whether their daughter will get a man to marry her or not.

Aside representing the mother as a role model, whose character could have consequences for her daughter, in terms of getting a man to marry, the proverb under review also commodifies the woman. The commodification of the woman is expressed in the fact that the 'toobi' (making reference to daughter) must be bought. That the 'toobi' must be bought means that the woman is treated like a commodity or a thing which is exchanged for money. Like the proverbs which were discussed under the theme of women as commodity, the commodification of

the woman, as expressed in the referenced proverb, also makes her the *Other* of man, who is the *Self*.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the representation of women in Ga proverbs, in which they are given the status of the *Other*. It was observed that there are more proverbs about women than there are about men, and most of these proverbs portray women negatively. Women are generally represented as subordinate to men, and are expected to subject themselves to the authority and control of men, who are the *Self*. Some of the proverbs portray women in their domestic roles as wives and mothers, and there are expectations that a woman must meet in order to be considered a good wife or a responsible mother. Women are also perceived as the source of most conflicts in polygamous homes. Again, women are perceived as evil or dangerous people who could create problems for particularly men. Women are also expected to be chaste, and are not allowed to openly express their sexual desires, while men are allowed to express their sexual desires. Furthermore, women are perceived as commodity which can be exchanged for money or other favours. There are also Ga proverbs about the mother-in-law; however, unlike it pertains in some cultures where the images created about the mother-in-law are largely negative, the images created about the mother-in-law in Ga proverbs appear to be positive. On the other hand, the mother-in-law is perceived as someone who is difficult to please, putting a burden on the son-in-law. Finally, women are perceived as bad role models for their children,

particularly their daughters, and are often blamed for the wayward behaviour of their daughters.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has been on Ga proverbs and how they serve in creating a male hegemonic culture in which men are given the status of the *Self*, while women are relegated to the subordinate position of the *Other*. Specifically, the study examined how men and women are represented in the proverbs as either the *Self* or the *Other*, and the kind of power relation that exists between men and women, as reflected in the proverbs. This was done on the theoretical premise that most cultures are fundamentally patriarchal, and they create an imbalance of power that marginalises women, and the social structure is reflected in all aspects of culture, including religion, philosophy, economics, education and literature (Dobbie, 2002). At this point, it will be useful to summarize the thesis chapter by chapter to briefly go over the ground that has been covered, in order to prepare for the conclusion.

The thesis began with a general introduction, which established the background upon which the study is based. The introduction also included the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, and the delimitation and limitations of the study.

Chapter One provided background information on the Ga people, which covered their geography, social, political and economic organisation, religious worldview, and verbal art.

In Chapter Two, an effort was made to survey and review related literature, which helped to provide a context in which the study was carried out. The literature reviewed included works on the concept of proverb, from both etic and emic perspectives. The development of proverb scholarship was also traced, and works on paremiography, which involves the collection of proverbs, and paremiology, which involves the study of proverbs, were reviewed. Works on the concept of gender and gender construction were also reviewed. Finally, the theory on which the study is premised was discussed.

Chapter Three discussed the methodological issues pertaining to the study. First, there was a discussion on the importance of context in folkloristic studies of this nature. This was drawn from scholars such as Arewa and Dundes (1964), Dundes (1966), Arewa (1970), Bauman (1986) and Yankah (1989) who all stressed the importance of context in folkloristic studies, particularly studies on proverbs. This was followed by discussions of the research design and procedures for data collection. There were also discussions on how research assistants were recruited and trained for this research, the ethical considerations that were involved in this research, and processes for transcription and translation. Finally, the procedure for data analysis was discussed.

The Chapters Four and Five respectively examined how men and women are represented in Ga proverbs as either the *Self* or the *Other*, answering research

questions 2 and 3, and implicitly answering research question 1. As the *Self*, men are generally portayed in a positive light, while as the *Other*, women are generally portrayed negatively, engendering a social construction of gender. This is consistent with the process of *Othering*, where there is a stigmatisation of a difference between the dominant group and dominated group.

Generally, as the *Self,* men are perceived to be superior to women, and they wield authority over women both in the domestic and public spheres. This is notwithstanding whether a man is younger or older than other women in a group. Once he is a man, he must be given recognition above any female. As feminist theorists suggest, the portrayal of men as suprerior, with total authority and control over women, deprive women of their autonomy and exposes them for suppression.

Again, as the *Self,* men are perceived to be brave, and they are expected to demonstrate bravery even in the face of danger. It is for this reason that boys are taken through the *dɛŋtuwoo* rite, so that from a very young age, they are socialised to see themselves as the *Self* or the ultimate being, who owe a duty of care and protection to the women in their lives. The attribution of bravery to masculinity functions ideologically to project men as superior to women, and creates the avenue for the subordination of women, and ultimately, the maintenance of patriarchal hegemony. On another hand, it fuels the ego of men, so that in projecting themselves as the *Self,* they sometimes expose themselves to danger.

As the *Self,* men also have a duty to provide for their wives and children, and indeed other women who depend on them. This sometimes demands that men

deny themselves self-comfort in order to meet the needs of their wives and children. They however take solace in the fact that they are credited for the beauty and achievements of their wives and children. On the negative side, in their quest to be seen as providers, and in order to maintain their hegemony, some men are sometimes propelled to frustrate the efforts of their wives to create their own wealth, which is a form of suppression. Again, some women also accept their lot as dependants and make no effort to liberate themselves from male domination.

Further, as the *Self*, men are perceived to be leaders, and this also projects them as superior to women. In Ga culture, virtually all traditional leadership positions are occupied by men, and interestingly, virtually all traditional political titles have the male generic component *tsɛ*, denoting owner, proprietor, controller or head, as part of a compound word. Men also happen to be heads of lineages and even the nuclear family. These men wield so much authority, and women are supposed to be subjects to them.

Again, in representing men as the *Self*, Ga gendered proverbs portray men as owners of property. Property here includes wives and children, who are eventually inherited by the brothers of a deceased man. The Ga social and political structure makes it that state and family property come under the direct control of men. While men have absolute control over property, women do not have total control over property. There are some properties that by necessity must be under the control of a man even if a woman owns them.

Also, men are perceived to be good role models for their children, a reason why they are usually absolved of blame when their children go wayward. Men are

also perceived to be smart and wise, and their smartness is particularly in relation to how they are able to deceive women to have their way with them. Finally, as the *Self*, there are some masculine habits that men are expected to exhibit, and these include the drinking of alcohol and smoking of tobacco. A man is not only expected to drink alcohol or smoke tobacco, but he is also expected not to behave foolishly even after taking so much of alcohol.

On the other hand, it was revealed that, as the *Other*, women are recognised only for their domestic roles as wives and mothers, and there are expectations that a woman has to meet in order to be considered as playing the role well. Again, as women are perceived to be subordinate to men, they are expected to subject themselves to the authority of men. It is assumed that women cannot take good decisions; thus, they have to defer any decision-making to men. In effect, even within the domestic sphere where women are confined to, they do not have absolute control, and this gives men the authority to control affairs both in the domestic and public spheres.

Additionally, as the *Other*, women are perceived to be evil, wicked and dangerous, and they are usually blamed for any disharmony in polygamous homes. They are also not permitted to express their sexual desires, and are celebrated for their chastity, while men revel in their sexual exploits. Again, as the *Other*, women are treated like a commodity or a thing, and are deprived of their autonomy and humanity. Finally, unlike men who are considered good role models for their children, as the *Other*, women are perceived as bad role models

for their children, a reason why they are often blamed for the waywardness of their children.

In conclusion, it is evident from the discussions that, as it is in most patriarchal cultures, gender is socially constructed in Ga culture, and there is an imbalance of power that marginalises women. Right from childhood, boys and girls are socialised to internalise the conventional stereotypes and traditional gender roles that are prescribed for them by society. The social construction of gender is also aided by cultural products such as proverbs in which men are represented as the *Self*, and women as the *Other*, thereby legitimising the stereotypes. It is therefore recommended that attention is paid to how language, in the context of this present study proverbs, becomes an instrument for the subordination of women.

It is also recommended that further research is conducted on other aspects of Ga proverbs such as how they reflect Ga worldview or how they are used for social control in Ga culture. Further research could also be conducted on how other forms of Ga oral literature and written literature serve in creating a male hegemonic culture by giving women the status of the *Other* as against men as the Self.

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APPENDIX A

GA GENDERED PROVERBS

1. *Nuu bɛ bibioo.*

   Nuu mli bɛ bibioo.

   There is no small man/male. There is no mean man.

2. *Wuɔyoo le jetsɛremɔ moŋ, kɛlɛ wuɔnuu naabu ekwɛɔ.*

   The female fowl (hen) knows daybreak, yet it looks at the mouth of the male fowl (cock).

3. *Kɛ okɛ otsɛ nyɔŋ miifo tɛŋdaa lɛ, etsɛɔ bo 'tsiɛnuu'.*

   If you are tapping palm wine with your father's slave, you call him 'tsiɛnuu' (male friend).

4. *Okla kɛ etsɛ ekpe.*

   Your soul has met his father.

5. *Kɛji tsɛ duna ta loo lɛ, eyɛ ebi dunaa.*

   If a father's buttocks grow lean, the flesh can be found on his child's buttocks.

6. *Lɛɛhe fe fɔmɔhe.*

   Bringing up/providing for a child is more difficult than bringing forth a child.

7. *Gbɔblilɔ gbɛi pɛtɛ emilɛloo he.*

   A hunter's name is attached to his meat.

8. *Kɛji yoo na ehe pɛ etsɔ nuu.*

   If a woman gets money (rich), she becomes a man.

9. *Onukpa booo maji anɔ toi.*

   A leader does not pay attention to rumours in town.

10. *Kɛ maŋ baabutu lɛ, otsaame muɔ toi.*

    If a town will collapse, the linguist becomes deaf.

11. *Ashiii gɔŋti sɛɛ aŋmɔɔɔ kpɔ.*

    You cannot tie a knot without the thumb.

    Mɔ ko eŋmɔɔɔ kpɔ ni eshi gɔŋnti.

    No one ties a knot without the thumb.

12. *Gɔŋti mɔɔ mli dani ewaa.*

    The thumb holds it before it becomes strong.

13. *Ahiɔ maŋtsɛ yɛ esɛɛ.*

    A king/chief is held from behind.

14. *Kɛ oju maŋtsɛ he lɛ, okɛ eko juɔ ohe.*

    If you bathe for a king/chief, you use some to bathe yourself.

15. *Kɛji awo bo maŋtsɛ ni oyeee lɛ, otsaamɛ po onaŋ oye.*

    If you are enthroned as a chief/king and you decline, you will not get to become even a linguist.

16. *Ole tawuu kulɛ, awoŋ onyɛ okrawa.*

    If you had known how to fight in war, your mother would not have been enslaved.

17. *Kɛ tu fɛ lɛ, ema nuu tsitsi.*

    When a gun is fired, it is on a man's chest.

18. *Kɛ tu fɛ lɛ, nuu tsitsi ebaa.*

    When a gun is fired, it is a man's chest it comes to.

19. *Nuu heɔ tuŋtɛ yɛ etsitsi.*

    A man receives bullet in his chest.

20. *Mɔ ni amɛɔ dani awu ta lɛ, ejeee gbekɛ.*

    The person who is being waited for before the start of the war is not achild.

21. *Mɔ ni fata ohe kɛwuɔ ta lɛ, oteee lɛ tsofa.*

    You do not hide gun powder from the one who helps you in the war.

22. *Mɔ ko mɔɔ nuu damɔɔɔ ta naa.*

    No one forces a man to fight in a war.

23. *Ta yaa afeɔ nuu yɛ.*

    It is in going to war that makes one a man.

24. *Shwaa he jeee wuu he.*

    The place of boasting is not same as the place of war.

25. *Ajuuu ta awuuu.*

    You do not steal a war to fight.

26. *Mɔ ko gbaaa ta yɛ tsɛŋi ahiɛ.*

    No one creates a war in front of shields.

27. *Osa gbaja wuuu ta.*

    'Osa gbaja' does not fight in a war. ('Osa gbaja' is a sack that is strapped on the waist to carry gun powder and bullets)

28. *Wɔmiiwu ta moŋ shi wɔŋɔɔɔ wɔhe nom.*

    Even though we are fighting in a war, we do not enslave ourselves.

29. *Mɔ ko emɛɛɛ ta gbi dani ekpɛ fai.*

    No one waits for the day of a war before he sews a hat.

30. *Amɔɔɔ mɔ nine akɛshiii tsitsi.*

    One does not beat one's chest with another person's hand.

31. *Tu fɛɛɛ kɛkɛ.*

    A gun is not fired in vain.

32. *Nyɔŋ jwɛŋmɔ yɛ enuŋtsɔ yitsoŋ.*

    A slave's thoughts are in his master's head.

33. *Kɛ okɛ otsɛ nyɔŋ miifo tɛŋdaa lɛ, etsɛɔ bo 'tsiɛnuu'.*

    If you are tapping palm wine with your father's slave, he calls you 'tsiɛnuu' (male friend).

34. *Afi efeee ŋmɔtsɛ.*

    The partridge does not get more than the farmer/ farm owner.

35. *Wuɔnuu ootsɔɔ ohe tsɔ, wuɔ wɔlɔ hetoto mli kɛkɛ ojɛ.*

    Cock, you are too standoffish, you came out from just an egg shell.

36. *Osɛi hiɛ gbɛ lɛ, gbɔmɔ ba.*

37. Osɛi's tribal mark was made by a human being. (Making reference to Osei Tutu)

38. *Nuu enuuu daa tsene kome.*

    A man does not take one calabash of drink (palm wine).

39. *Kɛ ohiɛ otsene lɛ, daa ebɔɔɔ bo.*

    If you have your own calabash, you will never lack drink (palm wine).

40. *Apaafonyo leee tawa ni egbo.*

    A labourer does not take into consideration that tobacco has lost its potency.

41. *Kɛ odaa eŋɔɔɔ lɛ oshiii mli nu.*

    If your drink is not sweet, you do not add water to it. (Reference to palm wine).

42. *Oblanyo hiɛ tamɔɔɔ edeka mli.*

    A young man's face is not like the inside of his wardrobe/ portmanteau.

43. *Akpɛɛɛ pioto atooo gbɛi.*

    A pant is not sewn in anticipation of scrotal elephantiasis.

    Aloo bo atooo gbɛi.

    A cloth is not woven in anticipation of scrotal elephantiasis.

44. *Ataaa buulu dɔrɔ nɔ shi enyɔ.*

    The fool's testicles are not sat on twice.

45. *Ayi bi Ayi.*

    Ayi, son Ayi/ Like father like son

46. *Mɔ kome fɔɔ shi jeee mɔ kome lɛɔ.*

    One person brings forth a child but it is not only one person that brings it up.

47. *Duŋ fɔɔɔ yɔɔ.*

    A dung does not beget an antelope.

48. *Kɛ oyitso tamɔɔɔ Tɛtɛ yitso lɛ, otooo Tɛtɛ sama.*

    If your head is not like Tɛtɛ's head, you do not have Tɛtɛ's style of haircut.

49. *Bi ni kɛɛ ehaaa enyɛ awɔ lɛ, lɛ hu ewɔɔɔ.*

    The child who says he/she will not allow his/her mother to sleep also does not sleep.

50. *Wuɔ bi ni nyiɛɔ enyɛ nane he lɛ, lɛ emiɔ aga shwuɔ.*

    Wuɔbi ni nyiɛɔ enyɛ masɛi lɛ, lɛ emiɔ aga shwuɔ.

    The chick that walks by its mother is the one that gets the thigh of the grasshopper.

    Wuɔ bi ni shwɛɔ enyɛ nane he lɛ, lɛ emiɔ aga shwuɔ.

    The chick that plays around its mother is the one that gets the thigh of the grasshopper.

51. *Kɛ obi wa eshwie oshuɔ nɔ lɛ, ofooo shi otsumɔɔ.*

    When your child defecates on your laps, you do not cut it, but rather, you clean it.

52. *Ŋa tamɔ asaabu (giant: positive).*

    A wife is like a giant.

53. *Ŋa tamɔ kuntu.*

    A wife is like a blanket.

54. *Wuɔ nane egbeee ebi.*

    The foot of the hen does not kill its chick.

55. *Onukpa eyɛɛɛ nu kɛ jwɛi.*

    An elderly person does not fetch water with grass/leaves.

56. *Yoo sheee bɔlɔ gbeyei.*

    A woman does not fear the broom.

57. *Yoo sheee latɛ.*

    A woman does not fear the hearth.

58. *Yoofɔyoo kɛ eka shi lɛ, ekajeɔ.*

    When a breastfeeding mother sleeps, she lies on her back.

59. *Kɛ obi fooo hewɔ lɛ ohaaa lɛ fufɔ?*

    If your child does not cry, won't you give it breast milk?

60. *Yoofɔyoo ji mɔ ni le akɛ hɔmɔ miiye ebi.*

    A mother is the one who knows that her child is hungry.

61. *Kɛji oyeko mɔ ko nyɛ wonu da lɛ, okɛɛ onyɛ kome kɛkɛ wonu ŋɔɔ.*

    If you have never tasted someone's mother's soup before, you will claim it is only your mother's soup that tastes good.

62. *Kɛ yoo yɛ shia lɛ, ehi.*

    It there is a woman in the house, it is good.

63. *Akɛ nyɛ kɛ tsɛ eyaaa gbala.*

    You don't enter marriage with your mother and father.

64. *Akɛ hefɛo eyaaa gbala.*

    Beauty does not marry.

65. *Kɛ yoo lɛ too lɛ, nuu gbeɔ.*

    When a woman rears a goat/sheep, it is a man who slaughters it.

66. *Kɛ yoo fo nii lɛ, nuu tsu mli ekpasaa.*

    If a woman harvests crops, they are kept in a man's room.

67. *Kɛji yoo he tu lɛ, nuu tsu lɛ mli ekɛtoɔ.*

    If a woman buys a gun, she keeps it in the man's room.

68. *Kɛ yoo tɔ lɛ, nuu saa.*

    If a woman goes wrong, a man corrects her.

69. *Yoo kpakpa ni boɔ ewu ŋaawoo toi.*

    It is a good woman who pays attention to advice from her husband.

70. *Yoo nɔ ji yoo.*

    A woman's portion is to say I have heard you.

71. *Tsɛbi kɛɛ je ena, shi nyɛbi kɛɛ je enako.*

    The father's child says it is night but the mother's child says it is not night.

72. *Kɛji obienyɛ he yɛ fɛo lɛ, ojieɔ eyi.*

    If your rival is beautiful, you praise her.

73. *Mɔnyɛ eyaaa jara ni amaje mɔnyɛ bienyɛ.*

    One's mother does not go to the market for one to let one's mother's rival buy things from the market for one.

74. *Kɛ onyɛbi miishɛ oyi lɛ, otaooo ashwishwɛ.*

    If your mother's son is giving you a haircut, you don't look for a mirror.

75. *Kɛji abonsam tee yara nɔ lɛ, ayɛ we etoɔ.*

    Kɛ sasabonsam tee ya nɔ lɛ, ayɛ we etoɔ.

    If the devil goes for a funeral, he lodges in the witch's house.

76. *Kɛ yoo kafo bo lɛ, nyɔmɔ ni.*

    If a woman praises you, it is debt.

77. *She yoo gbeyei ni owala sɛɛ atsɛ.*

    Fear woman and live long.

78. *Yoo awuŋayelɔ lɛ, ekukwɛi bibioo.*

    The jealous woman's cooking pot is small.

79. *Kɛji okɛ Kɔmenyɛ yeee lɛ, oheee eyolo.*

    Kɛ okɛ Kweinyɛ yeee lɛ, oheee eyoro.

    If you are not on good terms with Kɔmenyɛ, you do not buy her *yolo* (type of food).

80. *Kɛ ayɛ bi gbo lɛ, edɔɔ lɛ.*

    If a witch's child dies, she feels pain.

81. *Kɛ ayɛ bɛ osateŋ lɛ, obi gbooo.*

    If there were no witch in your community, your child will not die.

82. *Maŋ naa yoohɔlɔ.*

    Society discovers a pregnant woman.

83. *Ajwamaŋ leee mitɔ.*

    A promiscuous woman is never satisfied.

84. *Kɛ owiɛ yoo ajwamaŋ lɛ, onaaa mlifu.*

    Kɛ oŋɔ yoo ajwamaŋ lɛ, onaaa mlifu.

    If you marry a promiscuous woman, you do not get angry.

85. *Yoo ajwamaŋlɔ leee gbala kpakpa.*

    A promiscuous woman does not know good marriage.

86. *Yoo ni le mɔ ni wo lɛ hɔ.*

    It is a woman who knows the person who impregnated her.

87. *Ahaaa mɔ yoo ni asaa ake lɛ saa afata he.*

    No one gives a woman to a man and give him a mat/bed in addition.

88. *Abɛ mama ni abiɔ yoo shi.*

    Can one not have cloth and ask of a woman's hand in marriage.

89. *Yoo gbooo jara.*

    A woman's market value does not diminish.

90. *Shaayoo bɛ shwɛ.*

    No mother-in-law is a rag.

91. *Gbi ni ohe ehiii lɛ, gbi lɛ okɛ oshaayoo kpeɔ.*

    Be ni onyiɛɛɛ jogbaŋŋ ni okɛ oshaayoo kpeɔ.

    It is the day you do not have money on you that you meet your mother-in-law (in town).

92. *Kɛ ohiɛ miigbo oshaayoo lɛ, ofɔɔɔ.*

    If you are shy of your mother-in-law, you won't give birth.

93. *Kɛ ohiɛ miigbo oshaayoo lɛ, otaa loo.*

    If you are shy of your mother-in-law, you grow lean.

94. *Kaaje oshaayoo sɛɛ oŋmɔ lɛ, no lɛ ohiɛ kwɛmɔ jraaa.*

    Do not laugh at your mother-in-law behind her back, lest getting insulted becomes easy.

95. *Gbee kɛɛ eetao foi eje, mbasro ni eshaayoo too elaaje.*

    The dog says he wants to race, fortunately his mother-in-law's goat got missing.

96. *Gbɔbilɔ gbe loo lɛ mikpe wu? Ni kɛ eshaayoo egbo ni miyaaa eyara nɔ ni efeɔ sane?*

    When the hunter killed his game, did I chew the bone? And when his mother-in-law is dead and I don't attend the funeral, it becomes an issue?

97. *Akpaŋa he fu lɛ, ekɛjɛ enyɛ wɔlɔ mli.*

    The vulture brought its foul smell from its mother's egg.

98. *Too nyɛ akwɛɔ aheɔ toobi.*

    It is the mother of the goat/sheep that is observed before buying the young goat.

99. *Kaa fɔɔ loofɔlɔ.*

    A crab does not beget a bird.

100. *Akpaŋa he fu tsɛŋeɔ ewɔji.*

    The vulture's foul smell is transmitted to its eggs.

101. *Awooo hiɛ mama nɔ yɛ maŋ.*

    You do not lift the front cloth in public.

102. *Dede miifee kooloo shi ekɛɛ Kɔkɔ ni.*

    Dede is misbehaving but she says it is Korkor.

103. *Abletsi kɛɛ enyɛ ahe shi lɛ lɛ aheee lɛ.*

The goat says it was its mother that was bought but not him/her.

104. *Mɔ ko ehɔɔɔ ewuɔyoo ko yaka.*

No one sells his hen in vain.

105. *Wuɔ gbɛ shi aahu lɛ, egbɛ enyɛ wui anɔ.*

The fowl scattered the earth for a long time and at the end scattered his mother's bones.

106. *Mɔ ko kɛ ni tsuru wooo ayɛ he gbeyei.*

No one scares a witch with a red cloth.

107. *Yoomo ni bɛ nyanyɔŋ lɛ, etaŋme yɛ ekotokuŋ.*

An old woman who does not have teeth keeps her tiger nut in her pocket.

108. *Kɛ ohiɛ mɔ 'awula, awula' lɛ, ewulaa oyiteŋ.*

If you handle a person 'ladylike, ladylike', he/she jumps on your head (becomes rude to you).

109. *Yoo kpakpa jara wa fe tɛŋloo.*

A good woman is expensive than the gums.

110. *Akɛ gbee ni mlikwɔ biii yoo shi.*

A woman is not wooed with deep/strong voice.

111. *Yoo ni fɔɔ nuu.*

It is a woman who gives birth to a man.

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23RD MAY, 2022

Mr. Benjamin Kubi
Centre for African and International Studies
University of Cape Coast

Dear Mr. Kubi,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE – ID (UCCIRB/CHLS/2022/01)

The University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) has granted Provisional Approval for the implementation of your research **Woman as the Other: Gender Ideology and Patriarchal Hegemon in Ga Proverbs.** This approval is valid from 23rd May, 2022 to 22nd May, 2023. You may apply for a renewal subject to submission of all the required documents that will be prescribed by the UCCIRB.

Please note that any modification to the project must be submitted to the UCCIRB for review and approval before its implementation. You are required to submit periodic review of the protocol to the Board and a final full review to the UCCIRB on completion of the research. The UCCIRB may observe or cause to be observed procedures and records of the research during and after implementation.

You are also required to report all serious adverse events related to this study to the UCCIRB within seven days verbally and fourteen days in writing.

Always quote the protocol identification number in all future correspondence with us in relation to this protocol.

Yours faithfully,

Samuel Asiedu Owusu, PhD
UCCIRB Administrator

ADMINISTRATOR
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