

'I Am a Slave Not a Wife': Slave Women in Post-Proclamation Gold Coast (Ghana)

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New insights into the personal agency displayed by slave women in the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) can be gleaned from a careful analysis of colonial court cases brought by them in the period immediately following the colonial government's abolition of slavery and the slave trade.¹ The first measure, the Gold Coast Slave-Dealing Abolition Ordinance of December 1874, outlawed the importation of slaves into the Gold Coast and prohibited both pawning and dealing in slaves; the second, the Gold Coast Emancipation Ordinance, abolished the legal status of slavery and empowered slaves to leave their owners at will.

Before emancipation, slavery could easily blur into marriage or concubinage and slaves could be assimilated within the master's kinship.² Slave women could also be purchased, especially as concubines for the sons of the family or simply be sold as wives by their master or mistress in exchange for the dowry money. British administrators had great difficulty in judging the marital status of local people and in evaluating the differences between a wife and a slave. Their attempt to establish a strict definition of marriage not only created confusion but contributed to the crystallisation of traditional customs in one fixed institution.³ Much of the colonial legislation on family and marriage was aimed at defining and reinforcing the marital bond in opposition to the lineage bond. Whereas local custom emphasised the involvement of two lineages in a social system that stressed the circulation of wealth – the bridewealth presented to the woman's family and polygyny – the European emphasis was on the conjugal bond, monogamy and the dowry.⁴ In a social context in which heterosexual relations differed in terms of both the rituals performed and the exchanges between partners and kin, and where marriage was considered more a process than a state of being, there was much room for the manipulation of the institution. Colonial administrators preferred to speak of dowry instead of bridewealth, thereby stressing the exchange between two persons, not two kinships, and highlighting the economic dimension at the expenses of the ritual one. The difference between a 'bought' wife and a 'free' wife was quite unclear and men bringing or defending cases before the courts generally adopted the British point of view on marriage, claiming their rights over the wives on the basis that they had paid the dowry. The British did not adopt just one single strategy to solve these cases: a male-centred approach that viewed women as pawns to be exchanged between lineages was in general more inclined to accept the idea of the woman as a passive subject within traditional society and to reconfirm her subordinated position.⁵

Debt, the second obstacle to women's emancipation, was often the main focus of the judicial cases involving pawns and slaves. Since dowry was interpreted as a debt repayable by the woman's matrilineal family if she left her husband, ex-slave women who were married within the master's family were vulnerable to the same perverse mechanism as that imposed by debt. The former slaves and their children often remained bound by the logic of the debt, which allowed the institution of pawnship to survive. The

women's battle, in such cases, was precisely to demonstrate that they were not wives.

The proclamation of emancipation was not immediately successful in either stopping the slave trade or emancipating the slaves.⁶ The process of emancipation proposed was called the 'Indian model' after the country in which it had first been promulgated. Although it required the immediate end of the legal status of slavery, in order to be emancipated each slave needed to take his or her individual legal action. The Administration's dual purpose was to demonstrate their commitment to emancipation while at the same time supporting the status quo by allowing only a slow, gradual change in slave-master relationships.⁷ The main priority was the end of the trade in slaves, not the immediate abolition of all the forms of bonded labour in household and agricultural units.⁸ It was, thus, a very delicate period during which slave women, and women married within their master's family, turned out to be particularly vulnerable.⁹

During the years immediately after emancipation slave women were increasingly active in the colonial courts, claiming their right to leave their husbands, whether he belonged to the master's family or was just a slave. They proved themselves capable of confronting the dominant discourses on supposedly fixed gender and power hierarchies. Women tried to free themselves from the stigma of slavery within the context of the family, where men could call them slaves to remind them of their origins and their consequent lack of rights. But they resisted slavery even when it was practised outside the limits of the family, showing that they could bring their masters to court.¹⁰

This article provides a contribution to the recent wave of historical studies that have examined the immediate social transformations implied by abolition on gender relations.¹¹ The departure of female slaves reduced the domestic and agricultural workforce and reshaped the relations between men and women and between the individual and society. Naturally, both traditional and colonial powers soon reacted to this changing situation, in which they were assisted by at least two important factors restricting progress on the women's emancipation. The first was a general confusion around the legal status of wives within the traditional family and the other was the tendency of the logic of debt concealed within the repayment of dowries to force women back into bondage even when they succeeded in changing their legal status from slaves to free women.

After 1874, slave women often succeeded in changing their legal status but female dependence did not decrease significantly. In the first decades of the twentieth century, with the increasing demand for domestic labour due to the combined effects of the end of slavery and infrastructural development, female pawnship, male and female forced labour and child fosterage all seem to have flourished.¹² Due to its ambiguous status, traditionally different from slavery, pawnship was tolerated and girls were often requested as pawns because they were capable of producing crops, carrying goods to market for sale, labouring on road and rail construction projects and engaging in trade.¹³

The judicial cases I analyse here illustrate two factors in play during the first months after abolition: women's agency and the resilience of power in gender relations. Women of slave background played an active role in criticising the dominant power structures, by opposing both local and colonial definitions of gender roles. Abolition was central to the long-term destabilisation of gender relations as evidenced by the crisis in marriage and the gender instability created by new economic development in the first decades of the twentieth century but at the same time the importance of the control of sexuality to state power quickly became evident.¹⁴

The impact of emancipation: mass desertion or continuity?

To assess the many, various reactions to the proclamation of emancipation of all people in a state of dependency is of course a daunting task.¹⁵ This paper focuses on giving a voice to the intentions and actions of slave women who usually have no place within the analysis of macro-historical processes.¹⁶ As Jonathon Glassman reported, resistance or reaction by slaves often took the form of struggles for social inclusion or for access to local community institutions. Through such struggles, slaves sought to gradually redefine the dominant culture by absorbing some elements of its ideology, such as patriarchy and the idea of slave-as-client. They tried to recast this hegemonic language in 'new variants expressive of popular resistance'.¹⁷ Certainly, men accepted more easily than women some elements of the dominant ideology, such as men's rights over women's productive and reproductive capacities, over the institution of polygyny and over the sanctions against female adultery. The refusal by slave women to remain together with the husband in a family unit had a major impact on future social change and gender relations. In the months after the 1874 Ordinances, the attitudes among slaves toward emancipation were various, contradictory and changing. Some went immediately to the colonial court, some simply left the master's house while others refused to leave it, some denounced the master's violence and a small number were not even aware of their changed status. There was no expression of a unified revolutionary class-consciousness and they did not subvert the social structures. At this time, however, the social soil was fertile, ready to support the rapid growth of a response and slave women were more consistent in their reactions against the masters than men, as the colonial records proved. When the masters prevented them from leaving the household they went to the traditional courts and if they did not find satisfaction there they sued the masters in the colonial court.¹⁸

In the years following the Ordinances, the Gold Coast administration had to deal with both the opposition from discontented traditional chiefs and kings and the increasing difficulties in recruiting waged workers. Consequently, colonial officials tended to stress continuity rather than to encourage mass desertion by slaves and developed a public discourse on the relative leniency of domestic slavery that might decelerate the emancipation process. Despite this general policy, there were British administrators who enthusiastically supported the emancipation process and who described the

euphoric reactions of the emancipated slaves (mainly women) in positive terms. Among them was D. Goldsbury (Special Commissioner), who witnessed the enthusiasm of the people of Akim in October 1875. He wrote to the Governor:

I am impressed with the incalculable boon the emancipation has been to the oppressed and the more I rejoice at having been connected even in an humble way, with such a great and lasting good, a work that is the proudest memorial of our rule in Africa. I have been told that young maidens and old women who have been emancipated from thralldom sing a song, the burthen of which is as follows: 'We thank Queen Victoria. We wish we could take her on our shoulders and carry her to heaven, so that she might never have to die.'¹⁹

D. P. Chalmers, chief magistrate and later Queen's Counsel, also testified to the success of the emancipation process from his privileged vantage point, claiming that the majority of the cases that came before him in the months immediately after the proclamation were of family groups migrating to their 'tribal or family home' from the place where they had lived under a master.²⁰ One year later he reported that the number of cases was declining because manumissions were being achieved without the need for an application for

assistance.²¹ Analysis of the court cases and colonial documents indeed suggests that immediately after abolition there were internal conflicts, numerous mass migrations and severe effects on many households but that after 1876 there was, indeed, a dramatic decrease in the number of cases brought before the colonial courts.

Where the slaves were aware of the colonial policy of emancipation, they proved to be quite ready to take advantage of it. In the months just after proclamation, almost all the cases discussed in the colonial court concerned slavery. The swift reaction of slaves sometimes left the masters stunned, as in the case of Quamina Essoon who sued Quamina Quansah for having taken away his wife and children immediately: 'he did so on 26 December last' . . . (two days after the proclamation) . . . 'Defendant said that he had gone down to one part of the town of Sarafa and heard that there was an order issued by the British Government which authorised him to do what he did'.²² In those months, several women in a state of dependency left their masters or husbands, asserting their right to be free. The men's reactions varied from astonishment to violence and in general they were unprepared for this radical change.

More women than men were slaves in the African internal trade.²³ In pre-colonial Akan society, the power of older men was based on the exploitation of wives, younger kinsmen, slaves and other dependent workers. Ewe and Ga-Adangme societies followed the same pattern. The importance of female production and reproduction supported and encouraged polygyny, and the accumulation of women was one strand in the economics of power and differentiation in these societies.²⁴ In the nineteenth century, the local demand for domestic slaves in the coastal towns of the Ewe speaking area increased in response to the European demand for agricultural products. Slaves were so numerous that polygyny became a social norm. As Sandra Greene reported, a common saying went 'only a lazy man had only one wife'.²⁵ Polygyny was strictly linked to labour, including slave labour, and to the accumulation of capital, and it increased with economic expansion. Women slaves were doubly exploited, and in a matrilineal society the advantages for men were even greater, since they could directly exercise control over the children of a slave-wife whereas those of his 'regular wife' were subject to the control and protection of her family lineage.²⁶ A slave woman did not have kin either to arrange a marriage for her or to protect her from ill treatment and this was particularly crucial in a matrilineal society such as the Akan.

'He called me slave': the shackles of slavery

Notwithstanding his or her social position both inside and outside the master's family, a slave was almost always known to be a slave and the stigma never completely disappeared; it remained more or less visible and ready to surface in crucial situations such as inheritance and in times of economic crisis. Inheritance emerged as the main issue in the case of Abinabah Mansah in 1876 in the Cape Coast colonial court. She claimed the right to the inheritance of a house that had belonged to her aunt Abinabah Caesey. Although nobody in the family seemed to remember that the aunt was a slave, the defendant Joseph Samuel Watt, who opposed the claim, explained to the judge that actually she was. 'Caesey although the cousin of my mother, yet as she had been purchased by my mother she stood in the position of slave.' When she grew up, Caesey was given in marriage to a white man (the one who built the house), and for that reason 'my mother did not wish to make it appear that Caesey was her slave and therefore bestowed great attention upon William Scott (the child of Caesey) because he was a

white-man's child'.²⁷

The data available are insufficient for a quantitative analysis of the number of women who asked and obtained emancipation or to make any general assumptions. However, the record books of court cases discussed in the High Court of Cape Coast between 1875 and 1877 display a substantial number of slave women who claimed their freedom. During these hearings the women demonstrated that they knew the difference between being a wife and being a slave, and, more importantly, they tried their best to emancipate themselves and to escape the master or other authorities that they did not recognise.

This was, for instance, the case of Accosuah Kankamah, who was sued by her former master Quabina Boardin. He was the nephew of Assran, her mother's master and Kankamah's father. The case was heard on 18 November 1875 in the Cape Coast Judicial Assessor's Court. Boardin sued Kankamah for repayment of the money she had borrowed to pay a debt that her son had incurred.²⁸ Before emancipation, Kankamah had belonged, with all her sons and daughters, to Boardin's house. She was clearly aware of being a slave and of the stigma associated with slavery. She explained to the court what she meant by belonging to his house:

when I say belong to the plaintiff's house I mean that I was his slave. My grandmother was taken captive during a fight that took place between the Assins. The Assins form two distinct parties, one called Appimanim and the other Tannissoo. My grandmother belonged to Appimanim, she was married to a man who was of the Tannissoo principality. When she was caught she had a child at her back. The child grew up and was given in marriage to the plaintiff's predecessor, called Assran, by the man who caught my grandmother. And she was my mother. My grandmothers' master received dower for her.²⁹

Her mother had four children, including Kankamah, and after Assran's death they all passed to the successor, Quabina Boardin. According to Kankamah, he treated them as his slaves and when the emancipation was proclaimed she left with her children, three of whom were put in pawn by Boardin. Following a common procedure to ensure the fidelity of the slaves, however, she had been compelled to swear an oath not to leave him and his successor.

From the testimony of Kankamah's son, some details emerge of the public life of slaves. In general, slaves did not have to pay a share of the funeral expenses when a member of the family died, they, in fact, collected their portion of the money but the other relatives, of free status, refused their contribution. When the Ashanti war broke out, one of the brothers accompanied the master to battle. As a slave, he was expected to present his master with the head of any enemies he might kill, and he did in fact do so.

On the private level, a slave did not have any rights over his/her children. Boardin took some young relatives of slave origins away from the rest of the family, to work as servants. He also married one of Kankamah's daughters, Adjuah Ortinwah, and lived with her for 16 years, without providing for her. Moreover, she was forced to swear an oath to the king to authorise Boardin to divorce her when he needed to give her in marriage to one of his slaves. Ortinwah told of how she was constantly reminded that she was a slave and of how, whenever she or one of her relatives complained, Boardin would remind them about their status.

Boardin's argument was that they were not slaves but relatives while Kankamah's strategy was to show that she, her daughter Ortinwah and her sons were indeed slaves and not entitled to pay back debts. Kankamah's evidence was quite strong and the Judicial Assessor, William Melton, decided not to grant the debt because at the relevant time the

woman was in a state of slavery. The children still in pawn, however, remained out of the discussion.

In another case, Adjua Dahbah, a girl in her fifteenth year, was sued by her alleged husband. Her evidence is somewhat similar to that of Accosuah Kankamah and it demonstrates her awareness of her situation.³⁰ The plaintiff declared that Dahbah was his wife but she strongly disagreed. In her evidence Dahbah described to the judge the inadequacy of the rituals performed during her alleged marriage, explaining that they were completely different from those of a traditional marriage between free people. When a freeman wanted to marry a slave woman, he usually paid the dowry to the master, provided a 'small drink' to the head of the slave's family and performed a simple ceremony. The ceremony was performed because it gave the marriage customary backing, it symbolised the integration of the slave into the family and it enabled the free husband to procure fines from anyone who seduced the slave.³¹ During the emancipation period it was quite common for husbands to claim falsely that these simple ceremonies were legitimate traditional marriages between free people. As Dahbah claimed during the discussion:

Plaintiff said that I was his wife and he sent 'head rum' for me. I was sent to plaintiff as a wife at the same time I was to be looked upon as a pawn. I was sent with my brother for 4 ounces (of gold). I lived with plaintiff for a time afterward I went with plaintiff to Salt Pond. Plaintiff took an action against my mother for a debt. Plaintiff said that he wanted his money. Plaintiff never gave me a cloth to wear. I then said I would go to my mother. I heard that everyone was free to go where they pleased. (...) I went away on my own accord.

Answering the questions the court put to her, she explained both why she was not a wife and how a traditional marriage should have been celebrated:

I told plaintiff I would not marry him. I said him: You say that I am your wife but if you sent just the head rum you did not send clothes. Only rum, and nothing else is this the way to get a wife? He made no reply to this. He treats me as a slave woman. He never gives me clothes or anything. The clothes I now wear belong to my mother, plaintiff never married me according to the custom of the country (...) He not went through the usual ceremonies such as putting money in a brass pan for the wife greasing her body or parading her round the town, paying dower, making a feast for her, making presents after 8 days of yam and meat. None of these things were done for me because I was a slave.

Melton judged that Dahbah was the plaintiff's concubine and allowed her to go wherever she preferred. She was still young and she was under the protection of her relatives, to whom she was returned.

Whether a child was born to a slave woman and a free man or to a couple who were both slaves, the child belonged to the master's lineage. After abolition, slave women could remain trapped by the fear of losing their children and this was one of the reasons why they often turned to the colonial court.³² Abinabah Boduah was a slave (married to a slave) who decided, immediately after proclamation, to join her relatives. Some months later she sued her former master (but not her husband) for detaining her children. The father of the children – Boduah's husband – had not left the master's house. The master claimed his rights over the children and refused to return them to the mother. After attempting to resolve the issue by means of the customary procedures, Boduah faced her former master at the colonial court in Cape Coast, and she obtained the children.³³ According to Melton, the former master, who was one of the captains of the Denkerah king, should have been informed about the Ordinance and should have delivered the children to the mother.

It is evident from the court cases that assimilation within the master's family did not improve women's condition: on the contrary, it could lead to quite dramatic internal conflicts, as in the case of Accosuah Essie, a slave belonging to a Mansue household. Immediately after the proclamation, she was able to contact her brother who went to the village to take her away. The defendant, Quacoe Quah, was both the son of Essie's former husband and her master. He had forced her to swear oaths that if she or any of her other children left, they would die. Quah asserted that Essie was his mother, but she claimed to be a slave: she had worked for Quah's father and had lived in his household for a long time before Quah's birth. She was not happy, so when she discovered that 'all slaves are free', she decided to leave and she left.³⁴

Slave women could be under the threat of supernatural sanctions, as they had often been compelled to swear oaths – sworn on the king, on some local gods or simply on the head of the family – never to leave their master's house. To be released from the oath required a ritual process that could be complex and expensive, which tells us that slave owners were not sure that assimilation or even coercion could assure their slave's loyalty.³⁵ After abolition, however, many court cases indicate that the 'oath' did not prevent women from suing their master and complaining of the injustice they had suffered. One example is the case of five sisters and their children who had been prevented by their master from leaving the house. They were forced to swear oaths and one of them, Adjua Onyea, who tried to escape, was severely flogged. She described her ill-treatment:

I was flogged so severely that I got sick and blood passed through me. One of the relations wanted to apply medicine to me, but defendant's nephew prevented him and said that if I were to die no notice would be taken of me. I was sick for a month.

She brought her case to Cape Coast and they all obtained their freedom.³⁶ There are several cases where women denounced their former masters and husband on the grounds that they were called slaves or they were under threat of being sold. In so doing, they aimed to prove that they were slaves and could exercise their right to leave their husbands. That was why Adjua Essamanbah, from Salt Pont, sued her husband and claimed damages for the repeated abuses that she had suffered. According to Essamanbah he threatened her, saying that if it were not for the 'white man's law' he would have sold her. She escaped and the husband summoned her to the local court to reclaim the money he had paid for her. She responded by taking him to the colonial court, where she obtained her freedom and a small sum in compensation for her ill-treatment.³⁷ Essamanbah's strategy, whether she was a slave or a concubine, was to use the Ordinance to leave her husband.

Analogously Ambah Oquiluo ran away from her master's household who was threatening to sell her and her six children. She left some months before the proclamation. During the case she declared:

He said I was his uncle's slave and quarrelled with me, he threatened to sell me. I and my children went to Eukoquasi. We had been there for eight months. (. . .) At last I heard that all is clear, the world is open, that if anyone had relations living any where he could go where he liked.

She decided to go to court because her sister was still in Agafo with her family and they were still 'looked as slaves'.³⁸

Similarly, Ambah Ecooah Baduah was the daughter of a woman kidnapped a long

time before the proclamation. She was married within the household but, as she claimed: 'Whenever we [she and her husband] had a quarrel he called me his slave. I said I did not understand it. He said in explanation that his mother purchased my mother. I could not understand this. He treated me like a slave'.³⁹ She left the village with her children and joined her uncle. Melton's decision was that Baduah and her children could go wherever she preferred.

Abbinabah Essiah left her former husband because 'He did not keep me properly as his wife but treated me as his concubine and ill treated me. He beat me often times (no dowry was pay for me) and I left him a time ago'. Later, Essiah was caught during the war and taken to Ashanti and given to a captain of the king of Ashanti and subsequently freed by her brother. She went to the court because her husband was searching for her, calling her a slave and threatening to sell her. Melton informed her about the proclamation and declared:

she was at liberty to go where she pleased; that there were no slaves or pawns, and to tell Quacoe Quagill (the former husband) or anyone else that should interfere with her liberty that, upon proof, the court would interfere and punish the offender.⁴⁰

Eccoah Fowah sued the Yow Abboah who had some years before taken her as his 'sweetheart'. She worked for him on the palm tree plantation, but he ill-treated her and beat her, and her Abboah mother always said that she was a slave and that she did not dare to redeem her because the money she would receive actually belonged to the husband. On the day of the proclamation she was pressing her case in court.⁴¹ In 1876, a woman called Apokor, from Teshie, sued her husband for divorce on the grounds of ill-treatment and of his insinuating she was a slave: 'Defendant has flogged me, four times the last time, only five days ago, but he also says that he has bought me and that is my principal reason for wishing to be divorced'.⁴²

Women could also choose to stay with their masters because they were intimidated by the high risk of losing their children or by the difficulty they would face in seeking wage labour or starting up a business, or simply because they did not wish to join their relatives. Oppawah for instance was a lady in her fifties. Two months after the proclamation one of her nephews sued her master in order to have her back. She had been kidnapped 40 years before and had been a slave in the master's family since then. Oppawah refused to follow the nephew, notwithstanding that she considered herself a slave. She lived in the family with her daughter and three nephews and she stated that she was content to remain in the house where she had grown up.⁴³ A girl captured during the war between Cape Coast and Elmina had a similar history. She was able to escape from her captors, who intended to sell her, and she asked for the protection of a Cape Coast lady. Six years later, her uncle from Cape Coast sued the lady to have the girl back, but she refused to go back to her family.⁴⁴

What emerges from the cases briefly described above is that native courts were not always able to resolve such conflicts and that women often preferred to take their disputes to the colonial Supreme Court.

'The shackles of debt': wives or slaves?

The courts needed urgently to resolve two questions: how to judge whether a social institution could or could not be defined as slavery and how to circumscribe the role of women within the family. Reading the court cases, it appears that although the colonial

judges, and the British administration more generally, were happy to challenge the traditional power structure's attitude to the concept of freedom, they were not willing to cancel the debts that regulated such traditional structures. In other words, they found it easy enough to allow a woman her freedom but not to cancel the financial debt that bound her to her husband's family, whether she was a slave or simply a wife wishing to leave her husband.

Debt was the crucial issue during this transitional period and the main cause of continuing dependence both before and after proclamation. The amounts paid, in cowries or gold or silver coins, increased the vulnerability of people of low status and built up a bondage system very difficult to dismantle. The usual interest rates of fifty to 100 per cent meant that people were trapped in bond to the creditors for several years; the debt, moreover, could be inherited. The proclamation forced a showdown and women were often shackled anew by the demand for repayment of the dowry that the husband-master was presumed to have paid or by the cost they would face in redeeming their children.

The British colonial government clearly had no intention of undertaking the reform of the condition of women, and were reluctant to weaken men's control over women.⁴⁵ Indeed, the magistrates could be quite unfriendly toward women who sought their own liberation.⁴⁶ The following case shows both the extent to which repayment of the dowry could put the woman back into bond to the master's family and the general confusion between on the one hand the price of a slave and on the other hand the dowry paid by the husband to the wife's family.

In October 1875, in Cape Coast, Acquassie Quaw Essell supported by his relatives, sued Quabina Akronko.⁴⁷ This long and complex case demonstrates the extent to which the colonial court could prevent women from leaving their husbands. The ultimate decision as to what was deemed to be customary law was in the hands of the colonial judge. The Judicial Assessor, again William Melton, seemed to have a clear idea of what a traditional marriage was, including the fact that it operated most often at the expense of women.

Following a pattern that became widespread after proclamation, a man from outside went to the village, Jumpah, and asked to speak with the chief, asserting that his relatives were there and claiming the right to take them away.⁴⁸ Defendant and plaintiffs all belonged to the chief's household. Apparently the chief permitted the men to leave with their wives and children but the defendant, Akronko, a powerful man, had 'bit gong' and swore the 'big oath' to hold the women and children and prevent any of them from leaving the village. Akronko belonged to the same family as the women. This might sound paradoxical, but it is important to understand that Akronko's ancestors had at some point in the past been taken captive and sold to the plaintiffs' predecessors, but now Akronko had become the owner of the plaintiffs.

The second point was that the plaintiffs claimed the right to their wives and children, but not all the wives wanted to follow them. When the husbands decided to leave the chief's house on discovering they were free, the women, who were the slave wives of slaves, refused to follow their husbands, declaring: 'If you are free I am also free'. From this process there emerged a complex social framework in which the levels of dependency were difficult to disentangle. Everybody was a slave of somebody else, but the women appeared to be subjected to a higher degree of personal dependence, at the centre of the economic interests and strategies of men.

The discussion focused on the nature of the money paid and on the status of the women. Did the men pay a dowry or the purchase price of a slave? All the witnesses for

the plaintiffs asserted that the women were married according to custom and they corroborated their point by describing the wedding ceremonies. Akronko claimed the right to be paid a 'fresh dowry' if the husbands wanted their wives back. According to the new British laws, he insisted that they were no longer wives but just slaves. He gave the audience his own interpretation of the proclamation. The Governor, he said 'has sent a paper to Kagbill, the paper states that when a man has a wife and she is taken away from [you] him, you cannot have back the dowry nor anything else you have given her and when another man takes her you cannot claim compensation from him'.⁴⁹ Of course, he was speaking about slave women.

Akronko was a relative of the women and the former master of the husbands. His discourses on the rights of women to assert their freedom concealed his two main interests: that he could gain more money from the women and that he wished to prevent the whole group from leaving his house. Melton stated that Akronko was not detaining the women against their will, because they actually preferred to remain with him in the village. He judged, however, that the husbands had the right to recover any dowry they had paid and the expenses they had incurred by their marriage, and that the defendant, Akronko, had to hand over the children to the husbands.

The case did not finish there, as three of the husbands sued their wives for having ended the marriages. Each of the three women involved was an assertive actor struggling for better conditions for herself and her children. Essuah Adjueraboe, one of the wives, had never had any rights over her own life and, before her marriage, had belonged to an uncle on her father's side (they were all slaves in the father's house).⁵⁰ When the uncle found himself in financial difficulty he offered her hand in marriage to a man by the name of Aquassir, who accepted, though she was still under age. Sometime afterwards Aquassir incurred debts and was forced to leave the village. The uncle decided to pawn the young girl and to give the money to Aquassir as partial compensation for the expenses he had already laid out for her. Subsequently, when Aquassir went back to the village, he discovered that the uncle had died, Adjueraboe had reached the age of puberty and her brother was going to give her to another man, Quamin Amsah. Aquassir stated that he had claimed compensation from Adjueraboe's brother and then paid him the dowry. But on examining Adjueraboe's testimony we discover that she had already married Amsah before Aquassir arrived and took her away. We also understand that the dowry was not paid to her brother but to her father's family (under the matrilineal system the dowry should be paid to the maternal side). Aquassir claimed the right to remove Adjueraboe from her former husband because she was the daughter of a slave woman belonging to his uncle. Adjueraboe, in her testimony, added only that when Aquassir took her away she cried a lot.

Aquassir, with the help of his witnesses, some of whom were his fellow male plaintiffs against Akronko, succeeded in convincing the court of the legitimacy of his marriage, and Adjueraboe was ordered to pay back the dowry and the marriage expenses.

The life of the second woman, Yawah Odoochinawah, had been very similar.⁵¹ While she was still a young girl, her family chose to pawn her and forced her to marry the man she now wished to leave. She worked for him: 'I served him. He sent me about from place to place. Sometimes to Akim. I was never his wife. He never slept with me . . . I was unhappy, therefore I would not return to him'.⁵² After the proclamation she felt she was free and decided to enter into a relationship with another man – 'who liked me' – with whom she went to live. Again the court did not recognise her as a slave and ordered her to pay the dowry and expenses. However, she was neither forced to go back to her

husband nor accused of adultery.

The third case involved Adjuah Filamponmah.⁵³ Speaking of her husband, she stated:

... he has not treated me kindly. He has done much to grieve me. He pawned one of my children! ... and with the money he married a young woman. I work in the gold mines and bring in gold and give it to him but he gives me none of it (. . .) and whenever I go in search of gold and am unsuccessful, he scolded me (. . .) He gives me no food. He has taken away from my charge two plantations of palm trees and the other of plantains and yam. He does not consult me as his wife on family matters, particularly when he and his brother consulted about leaving the village. I looked upon him as my master and as he is free I considered I was free too.⁵⁴

In this case there was no dowry to recover, and the magistrate, because of her ill-treatment, gave her custody of her children, although we must bear in mind that the children had been pawned.

Generally, the magistrates tended to guarantee the right of women to choose their own destiny, but at the same time they tended to uphold the rights of the men (husbands and masters) over the children and their right to recover dowries and expenses.⁵⁵ In the cases under discussion, the magistrate did not recognise the slave status of the women and made no real distinction between marriage and slavery. The women decided to leave their husbands and to remain with Akronko. We do not know whether or not this choice improved their circumstances. Akronko, notwithstanding his belonging to the same slave line as the women, was a man of power who owned the people who had bought his own ancestors. For the women it was difficult to escape from all of the different forms that dependency could assume and, although Melton agreed to grant them their freedom, they remained bonded by the dowry debts that they or their relatives would have to pay.

These cases indicate that slave women often chose not to remain together as family units with the freedmen but instead sought to live with their relatives or with their former masters. A case similar to the Akronko one was heard a month later. Again, former slave, Quamina Essoom, sued the former master for detaining his wife and her three sisters. All the women refused to follow him and chose to remain in the master's household. The wife's motivation was that the husband had no money and so could maintain neither her nor her sisters.⁵⁶ This position was quite common among slave women married to slaves. In another case in the Accra court, Akuoah Movabin explained her reasons for not following her husband. First, she stated, she (along with three other women in the same situation) wished to remain in the town where she was born and had always lived. Second, she added that she was completely aware of her freedom to go away with the husband and that nobody was forcing her to stay.⁵⁷

Conclusion

Seventy years after abolition, following a request by the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society for a survey on the pawning of persons in West Africa, the Gold Coast administration carried out a brief investigation. In his letter to the Chief Commissioner, the District Commissioner in Cape Coast claimed that pawning was still prevalent among the poorer classes. In Cape Coast, he stated, fifty per cent of the children who crowded the streets selling food and other goods were pawned. He also consulted the prominent chief Nana Kwesi Johnson, who confirmed this, adding that only females were pawned. He concluded by asserting that pawning, although not the same as slavery and serfdom, was 'very nearly so'.⁵⁸

After 1874, a *complaisant*, hegemonic discourse on the meaning of dependency spread, in particular on female dependency within the traditional institution of marriage. According to the British mentality, dependency was intrinsic to the condition of women in Africa. They had always been considered nothing more than pawns to be exchanged between men. Because of these views of women in African societies, after the first post-emancipation period, the administrators continued to consider formerly enslaved women who were married to their former master as wives and not as former slaves with a right to emancipation. Former slave women assimilated within families were not deemed to be in a condition of serious personal bondage: in other words, implicitly, a compulsory sexual relationship could somehow ameliorate women's condition.

This position emerged clearly in 1929, during a general discussion of the meaning of domestic slavery occasioned by the 'League of Nations Report on Slavery'. Each colonial official expressed his opinion on the matter, including Major Walker Leigh, Chief Commissioner of the Northern Territories, who claimed: '... the so called slaves are perfectly happy, generally related by marriage to their master, and have no warring as to making a living. I should call them Domestic parasites rather than Domestic slaves, as, if they wished to leave they could always do'.⁵⁹

An analogous opinion was expressed by J. Coleman de Graft Johnson, who had in 1927 been charged with writing a memorandum on the 'Vestige of slavery in the Gold Coast'.⁶⁰ He was the Assistant Secretary for Native Affairs in Cape Coast and belonged to an important, rich family that had been directly involved in the issues he was writing about.⁶¹ His long 'Memorandum' clearly shows his benevolent point of view on slavery. In the country and especially in the Colony, he claimed, the slaves and the descendants of slaves who still lived within the master's family had not for a long time lived as slaves. They had a portion of the family or community lands. Yes, they helped their 'master' to farm and 'those who stay in the house perform such house-hold duties as hired servants in European countries do', but in return they were 'fed and clothed, and are given all the privileges of children while staying with their masters. Otherwise they are only required occasionally to perform such duties as selling, going on errands etc'.⁶² In writing about the last generation of slaves (those who had been enslaved in the years just prior to and after the emancipation), he remarked on the low moral attitude of women: 'females preferred to follow soldiers or policemen or some other aliens at large instead of living with their masters'.⁶³ He was reiterating some of the stereotypes about the so-called 'licentious practices' of slaves and low class people. At the same time, he was also reacting to the destabilisation of gender and power relations brought about by former slaves. As Claire Robertson's research in Accra shows, certain external personal attributes were common in the history of former slave women, one of which was the lack of pretension to respectability in other people's eyes, because slavery might bring 'the freedom of society's indifference'.⁶⁴

The cases discussed in the colonial courts exemplified the gender conflicts taking place against the backdrop of the end of slavery. Slave women were familiar with the habits of life that distinguished their daily existence from that of free women and with the differences between a concubine and a wife. At the same time they could also assess whether it was more advantageous for them to remain within the master's family or to go with whoever else claimed them, husband or stranger. They were realising that their existence could also take place outside the boundaries of the household. Of course former slave women did not express class or gender consciousness, because their reactions were individual and non-structured.

The deplorable conditions of women slaves, trapped in some form of economic dependency and of women living at the economic margins of the society, even in the early decades of the twentieth century, were certainly not the result of women's traditionally alleged inability to act politically, or simply of the coercive traditional gender relations then in operation. They were, rather, the result of an economic system based on the exploitation of the labour of slaves, especially female slaves, and on women's labour more broadly. Gradually, after the enthusiasm of the early months following emancipation, the number of cases in colonial courts involving slavery issues and women diminished. Colonial administrators did not wish to reduce the control of men over women and were in general prepared to refrain from using their powers of intervention, out of respect for customary law, and they were willing to believe that wives really were 'bought' by husbands in the Gold Coast. The exercise by the slave women of their agency clashed with the logic of debt, and colonial administrations in general helped to prevent their full emancipation.

Notes

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1. From 1850 to 1873 the Gold Coast was just a narrow strip of coastal territory. In 1874, following the end of the Ashanti war (1873–1874) and the annexation of the last Dutch forts, the British acquired control over the inland states up to the boundary of Ashanti state, which was occupied by the British in 1896 and finally annexed after the Yaa Asantewa war in 1900–1901, twenty-five years after the two Ordinances.
2. Domestic slavery as an anthropological notion was 'a twentieth-century invention', but from an analytical point of view it is a category capable of interpreting forms of dependency over a much longer period in the history of the coast of West Africa. See Pierluigi Valsecchi, 'Careers of slaves and bonded individuals on the Western Gold Coast (17th–18th century)', *Working Paper 22* (2007), Department of Communication, Università degli studi di Teramo. The categorisation of domestic slavery implied that the slave could be integrated with the master's kinship and suggested a more benevolent idea of slavery, often being used in contradistinction to the cruelty and inhumanity of American plantation slavery. The 'integration model', however, cannot be applied to every historical period. Its weaknesses were that it treated groups of relatives as immutable social units without conflicts and internal differences and that it was not sensitive to gender relations. For instance, Dumett identified at least five categories within the principal economic relationship between slaves and masters in the Gold Coast: Raymond Dumett, *Imperialism, Economic Development and Social Change in West Africa* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2013), pp. 172–4.
3. Dorothy Dee Vellenga, 'Who is a wife? Legal expressions of heterosexual conflicts in Ghana', in Christine Oppong (ed.), *Female and Male in West Africa* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 144–55.
4. Jack Goody, 'Polygyny, economy and the role of women', in Jack Goody (ed.), *The character of kinship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 175–90.
5. Brodie Cruickshank was one of the Europeans who helped to construct the category of domestic slavery and to describe traditional marriage as a form of slavery: Brodie Cruickshank, *Eighteen years on the Gold Coast of Africa*, vol. 2 (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1853). Recognising that the general definition of slavery did not describe the social reality of the natives of the Gold Coast, he blurred the boundaries of that definition by incorporating within it the notion of patriarchal control. He stated, 'to a certain extent, the condition of slavery is the heritage to which every individual without exception is born', and he described marriage, analogously, as a form of slavery, because wives were regarded as the property of the family elder (Cruickshank, *Eighteen years on the Gold Coast*, p. 313). He claimed that in traditional society, women were 'bought' by the husband and were in general regarded as pawns. Another way in which women in the Gold Coast represented wealth was that the husband could add to the amount of the original debt other expenses he incurred in caring for the wife or her children. This was the 'very enslaving nature of the marriage contract' (Cruickshank, *Eighteen years on the Gold Coast*, p. 313). His definitions were particularly important and influenced the perception of traditional society on the part of a future generation of

- colonial civil servants. For instance, the long Confidential Report issued by the Colonial Office at the time of official abolition was almost completely based on Cruickshank's interpretations of slavery (PRO, CO 879/6, *Confidential papers*. Printed for the use of the Colonial Office, Gold Coast N.47, March 1874).
6. Raymond Dumett, *Imperialism, Economic Development and Social Change in West Africa* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2013), pp. 174–82; Trevor Getz, *Slavery and Reform in West Africa: Toward Emancipation in Nineteenth-Century Senegal and Gold Coast* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).
 7. See: Getz, *Slavery and Reform*, pp. 101–02; Kwabena Akurang-Parry, 'The administration of the abolition laws, African responses, and post-proclamation slavery in the Gold Coast, 1874–1940', *Slavery & Abolition* 19 (1998), p. 150.
 8. Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
 9. See Claire Robertson's seminal work on female slavery in the Gold Coast: Claire C. Robertson, 'Post-Proclamation Slavery in Accra: A Female Affair', in Martin Klein and Claire C. Robertson (eds), *Women and Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp. 220–45; Marcia Wright, 'Bwanikwa: consciousness and protest among slave women in Central Africa, 1886–1911' in Martin Klein and Claire C. Robertson (eds), *Women and Slavery in Africa*, pp. 247–67; Marcia Wright, *Strategies of Slaves and Women: Life-Stories from East/Central Africa* (London: James Currey, 1993); Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, Joseph Miller (eds), *Women and Slavery: Africa, the Indian Ocean world, and the Medieval North Atlantic* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), pp. 281–308.
 10. This paper is based on a qualitative analysis of the Gold Coast Supreme Court Records (SCT), mainly those dealing with Cape Coast and Accra (High Court Records, Cape Coast 1874–1876; District Court Accra, 1876–1878). In particular between the end of 1874 and September 1875 in Cape Coast High Court (SCT 5/4/15 and SCT 5/4/16) were discussed forty-six cases involving slavery; from September 1875 to February 1876 the cases were around thirty (SCT 5/4/17); from February to October 1876 (SCT 5/4/18) the cases were twenty-two while between October 1876 and February 1877 the cases were just twelve. The majority of the 110 cases concerned emancipation and involved women. According to Robertson's researches, (*Women and Slavery*, pp. 222–4) from 1874 to 1880 in Accra fifty-two cases involving slavery emancipation were discussed; from 1881 to 1918, seventy-nine cases, among which only six concerned emancipation, the other had to do with slave dealing.
 11. See among others: Richard Roberts, *Litigants and Households: African Disputes and Colonial Courts in the French Soudan, 1895–1912* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005); Emily Burrill, "'Wives of Circumstance': Gender and Slave Emancipation in Late Nineteenth-Century Senegal", *Slavery & Abolition*, 29 (2008), pp. 49–64; Marie Rodet, "'I Ask for Divorce Because My Husband Does not Let Me Go Back to My Country of Origin with My Brother': Gender, Family, and the End of Slavery in the Region of Kayes, French Soudan (1890–1920)" in Gwyn Campbell and Elizabeth Elbourne (eds), *Sex, Power and Slavery: The Dynamics of Carnal Relations under Enslavement* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2014) pp. 182–202.
 12. According to Gareth Austin, pawnage declined in ambiguous and very gendered ways that profoundly impacted upon conjugal relationships: 'Human Pawnage in Asante, 1800–1950: Markets and Coercion, Gender and Cocoa', in Toyin Falola and Paul Lovejoy (eds), *Pawnship in Africa* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994). Robertson identified seventy-nine court cases discussed in Accra involving slave dealing (mainly female) between 1881 and 1919 (Robertson, *Women and Slavery*, pp. 222–4). In his study, Gerald McSheffrey argued that by 1874 the size of the coastal 'servile population' (including both slaves and 'pawns') was much larger than had previously been believed. He stated that 'a new form of slavery and a new class of slaves did emerge in the nineteenth-century Gold Coast out of the traditional mould in response to economic change': Gerald McSheffrey, 'Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade, and the Impact of Abolition in the Gold Coast, 1874–1901', *Journal of African History* 24 (1983), pp. 349–68.
 13. Kwabena Akurang-Parry, 'Colonial Forced Labor Policies for Road-Building in Southern Ghana and International Anti-Forced Labour Pressures, 1900–1940', *African Economic History* 28 (2000), pp. 1–25; Kwabena Akurang-Parry, "'The Loads Are Heavier than Usual': Forced Labor by Women and Children in the Central Province, Gold Coast (Colonial Ghana), 1900–1940', *African Economic History*, 30 (2002), pp. 31–51; Dumett, *Imperialism*, p. 184; Sandra Greene, 'Modern "Trokosi" and the 1807 abolition in Ghana: Connecting Past and Present', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series 66, 4, *Abolishing the Slave Trades: Ironies and Reverberations* (2009), pp. 959–74.
 14. See for instance the works of Jean Allman, 'Making Mothers: Missionaries, Medical Officers and Women's Work in Colonial Asante, 1924–1945', *History Workshop*, 38 (1994), pp. 23–47; Jean Allman, 'Rounding up Spinsters: Gender Chaos and Unmarried Women in Colonial Asante', *The Journal of African History*, 37 (1996), pp. 195–214. Jean Allman, 'Of "Spinsters", "Concubines" and "Wicked Women": Reflections on Gender and Social Change in Colonial Asante', *Gender & History* 3 (1991), pp. 176–89. See also: Penelope A. Roberts, 'The State and the Regulation of Marriage: Sefwi Wiawso (Ghana), 1900–40' in Haleh Afshar (ed.), *Women, State, and Ideology: Studies from Africa and Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 54; Beverly Grier, 'Pawns, Porters and Petty Traders: Women in the Transition to Cash Crop Agriculture in Colonial Ghana', *Signs* 17 (1992), p. 314; Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

15. One hundred years after the proclamation, in the 1970s the issue of the end of slavery entered the historical debate and scholars started to ask what had been the real impact of abolition and emancipation in Africa. For instance, Gerard McSheffrey stated that mass slave liberation did occur (Gerald M. McSheffrey, 'Slavery, Indentured Servitude, Legitimate Trade and the Impact of Abolition in the Gold Coast, 1874–1901', *Journal of African History* 24 (1983), pp. 349–68). His conclusion was widely criticised by others who believed that a non-coercive policy had promoted a gradual change rather than a massive social shift. Among the critics were Raymond Dumett and Marion Johnson (Raymond Dumett and Marion Johnson, 'Britain and the Suppression of Slavery in the Gold Coast Colony, Ashanti and the Northern Territories', in Suzanne Miers and Richard Roberts (eds), *The End of Slavery in Africa*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), pp. 71–116; Dumett, *Imperialism*, pp. 174–82 and Robertson, *Women and Slavery*, pp. 220–45. More recent historical studies went beyond the historiographical opposition between continuity and rupture, showing that there was a range of different series of events, often involving negotiations between masters and slaves, see for example, John Parker, *Making the Town. Ga State and Society in Early Colonial Accra*, Heinemann, Portsmouth, 2000, pp. 93–7; Trevor Getz supported Parker's point of view, claiming that the 1874 emancipation was not revolutionary but resulted in a 'long term transformation and in a wide variety of negotiated outcomes for slaves and their masters' (Getz, *Slavery and Reform*, p. 104). Gareth Austin stressed slaves' own contribution to their emancipation in Gareth Austin, *Labour, Land and Capital in Ghana: From Slavery to Free Labour in Asante, 1807–1956* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), p. 205, and Sandra Greene recently focused on the abolitionists within West Africa: Sandra E. Greene, 'Minority Voices: Abolitionism in West Africa', *Slavery & Abolition* (2015), pp. 1–20.
16. For contributions by scholars who have used colonial court cases to discuss the emancipation of slave women, see Trevor Getz, 'Interpreting Gold Coast Supreme Court Records, SCT 5/5/19', in Alice Bellagamba, Sandra Greene and Martin Klein (eds), *African Voices on Slavery and on Slave Trade* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 360–77; Roberts, *Litigants and Households*; Marie Rodet, 'Islam, pluralisme juridique et relations de genre dans les "tribunaux indigènes" du Soudan français, 1900–1925', *Outre-Mers. Revue d'histoire*, 99 (2011), pp. 173–83.
17. Jonathon Glassman, 'The Bondsman's New Clothes: The Contradictory Consciousness of Slave Resistance on the Swahili Coast', *The Journal of African History*, 32 (1991), pp. 277–312.
18. During the nineteenth century native courts gradually lost their right to try serious criminal offences, such as murders, robbery and other crimes. By the 1850s the native courts in the coastal towns discussed predominantly civil matters. They dealt mostly with disputes concerning the possession of land, marriage, fetishism, witchcraft and debt cases. As such civil matters often involved slavery offences, after the 1874 Ordinances the colonial court could exercise jurisdiction on these cases, too.
19. PRO, CO 96/116, *Goldsbury to Governor Strahan*, Kibbie Akim, 29 October 1875.
20. PRO, CO 96/116, *Chalmers to Governor Strahan*, Cape Coast, 24 December 1875. In the first months of 1875, many family groups applied to the colonial court. Usually conflict arose, as a consequence of their desire to leave, with the head of the household where they had been in a state of slavery or dependence for generations. The main points of conflict were women or past debts. For instance: PRAAD, SCT5/4/15, 24 December 1875, pp. 239–40; PRAAD, SCT5/4/16, 4 August 1875, pp. 247–56; 13 July 1875, pp. 256–68; 15 August 1875, pp. 298–304; 10 September 1875, pp. 373–6; 6 October 1875, pp. 444–54, PRAAD, SCT5/4/17, 19 October 1875, pp. 46–55; 25 October 1875, pp. 55–8; 5 November 1875, pp. 120–4; 22 November 1874, pp. 174–8.
21. PRO, CO 96/116, *Chalmers to Governor Strahan*, Cape Coast, 24 December 1875.
22. PRAAD, SCT5/4/15 High Court Records, Cape Coast, Sekondi Criminal and civil records, *Quamina Essoon vs. Quamina Quansah*, 3 March 1875, pp. 429–30.
23. Klein and Robertson, *Women*, pp. 3–21
24. Tom McCaskie 'State and Society, Marriage and Adultery: Some Considerations Towards a Social History of Pre-Colonial Asante', *The Journal of African History* 22 (1981), pp. 477–94
25. Greene, 'Modern "Trokosi"', p. 972.
26. On the debates on the theme of the relative importance of women's productive labour and women's reproductive role, see for instance Martin Klein revisiting his own debates with the work of Claude Meillassoux: Martin Klein, 'Sexuality and slavery in the Western Sudan', in Gwyn Campbell and Elizabeth Elbourne (eds), *Sex, Power and Slavery*.
27. PRAAD, STC, 5/4/19, *Abinabah Mensah vs Samuel Watt*, 25 January 1877, p. 305–33.
28. PRAAD, SCT5/4/17, High Court Records, Cape Coast, Sekondi Criminal and civil records, 18 November 1875, *Quabina Boardin vs. Accosuah Kankamah*, p. 130.
29. PRAAD, SCT5/4/17, p. 131.
30. PRAAD, SCT5/4/17, 19 October 1875, pp. 46–55.
31. Akosua Adoma Perbi, *A history of indigenous slavery in Ghana. From the 15th to the 19th century* (Accra: Sub-Sahara Publishers, 2007), pp. 107–08.
32. Klein and Robertson, *Women*, pp. 3–21.

33. PRAAD, SCT5/4/17, 11 December 1875, pp. 246–8.
34. PRAAD, SCT5/4/17, 18 January 1876, pp. 349–50.
35. Klein and Robertson, *Women*, pp. 3–21.
36. PRAAD, SCT5/4/17, 22 November 1875, pp. 174–8.
37. PRAAD, SCT5/4/17, 30 October 1876, pp. 84–6.
38. PRAAD, SCT 5/4/15, *Bosom Inkatsiah v Quacoe Bampon of Ayarfo*, 23 December 1874, pp. 230–32.
39. PRAAD, SCT5/4/15, *Quamina Essoon v Quamina Quansah*, 3 March 1875, pp. 429–30.
40. PRAAD, SCT5/4/16, 18 August 1875, pp. 320–1.
41. PRAAD, SCT5/4/15, 24 December 1874, p. 241.
42. PRAAD, SCT 17/4/4, District Court Accra, 7 December 1876, p. 65.
43. PRAAD, SCT5/4/16 High Court Records, Cape Coast, Sekondi Criminal and civil records, *Quacoe Assor-dee vs. Cobina Acquafull of Lagoo*, 14 February 1875, pp. 295–6.
44. PRAAD, SCT5/4/16, *Adjuah Chibbah v Agoale of Moree*, 21 October 1873, pp. 337–9.
45. Klein and Robertson, *Women*, pp. 3–21; Robertson, ‘Post-Proclamation’, p. 223; Frederick Cooper, *Plan-tation slavery on the East Coast of Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).
46. Robertson, ‘Post-Proclamation’, p. 228; Getz, *Slavery*, p. 124; Trevor Getz, ‘Interpreting Gold Coast Supreme Court Records, SCT 5/5/19’, in Alice Bellagamba, Sandra Greene, Martin Klein (eds), *African voices*, pp. 360–77.
47. PRAAD, SCT5/4/16, *Acquassie Quaw Essell (with Codjio Owan, Quacoe Accra, Quabina Aimepemah) versus Quabina Akonko*, 6 October 1875, p. 444–54.
48. Jumphah or Joompuah could be the present day Yumapo, a small town close to Koforidua in East Akim.
49. PRAAD, SCT5/4/16, p. 447.
50. PRAAD, SCT5/4/16, *Acquassie Quaw Essell v Essuah Adjueraboe*, 14 October 1875, pp. 454–8.
51. PRAAD, SCT5/4/16, *Quabina Ampimah v Yawah Odoochinawah*, 15 October 1875, pp. 458–62.
52. PRAAD, SCT5/4/16, p. 460.
53. PRAAD, SCT5/4/16, *Codjio Owan or Woon v Adjuah Filamponomah*, 14 October 1875, pp. 463–6.
54. PRAAD, SCT5/4/16, p. 464.
55. The problem of the dowries arose whenever a family group decided to leave a household. As in one of the cases discussed by Melton, one Quassie Accomainee decided to leave his master’s household and to bring with him his two wives and their children, his three brothers with wives and children, some nephews and other (women) relatives. The reaction of the master’s relatives was quite violent and the ex-slaves decided to sue the master in the colonial court. Among these relatives were some women whom the ex-slaves had given in marriage within the master’s family. According to Melton’s judgement, they could all leave the household and the master could not claim any debts incurred by them when they were in slavery. However, the women given in marriage by the ex-slaves could not leave the village unless the dowries were paid back (PRAAD, SCT5/4/17, 21 January, 1876, pp. 388–97).
56. PRAAD, SCT5/4/17, *Quamina Essoon v Yaw Mensah*, 24 November 1875, pp. 182–8.
57. PRAAD, SCT 17/4/4, District Court Accra, 9 December 1876, p. 63–4.
58. NACC, ADM 23/1/3735, *Pawning of persons as security for debt*, Confidential letter, District Commissioner to Chief Commissioner, Cape Coast 14 September 1948.
59. PRO, CO323/1027/7, *Slavery*, p. 238.
60. PRAAD, ADM 11/1/975, Domestic slavery, ‘Vestige of slavery in the Gold Coast’, October, 1927.
61. Writing to J. C. de Graft Johnson, the Secretary of Native Affairs claimed: ‘I have heard you praise the days when your family had domestic slaves and you have told me how well treated and how really part of the family they were’ (PRAAD, NAG, ADM 11/1/975).
62. PRAAD, ADM 11/1/975.
63. PRAAD, ADM 11/1/975. Notwithstanding the abolition of slavery, the slave market of Salaga – a city in the north of the country – remained an important centre for slave traders. Young girls and children were still sold in the south at least until the end of the century.
64. Klein and Robertson, *Women*, pp. 3–21.