

REPORT ON THE FAMILY RESEARCH SEMINAR
FEBRUARY 19-20, 1971

by C. Opong*

Below is a list of the papers presented at the first interdisciplinary research seminar on the family to be held at the Institute of African Studies, Legon. Eighteen contributions in all were read by lecturers and research workers attached currently or in the past to one of Ghana's three universities. The general topic of "the family" among the Akan and Ewe was suggested in 1970 to selected people currently working in these two regions in the fields of sociology, social anthropology, law, linguistics, geography, literature and history. They were invited to write contributions using the results of their own investigations. These two areas were initially selected from the point of view of their being amenable to the kind of controlled comparison of variables increasingly used to advantage in contemporary Ghanaian social research. It was felt that though there might be relatively few people in Ghana who claimed to be "domestic scientists", there were in fact many whose own researches impinged upon Ghanaian family life, while at the same time concentrating upon problems with a specifically legal, economic or other emphasis.

The seminar discussions were attended by graduate students and staff of the Institute of African Studies as well as by members of other departments in Legon and also Cape Coast University. We were most fortunate to have with us Professor Meyer Fortes from the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge. His stimulating introductory paper on the revolutionary developments which took place in family studies in Ghana between 1920 and 1970, set the tone of the occasion. There was throughout a marked emphasis upon economic and legal rights and duties, including rights of inheritance and maintenance. A further problem discussed in several papers was that of defining and describing the composition of the coresident household. In addition, an interesting debate developed concerning the various Ewe terms used to

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refer to kin and domestic groupings. As Professor Ottenberg noted in his closing comment, there was a healthy avoidance on the part of participants of the use of the blanket terms favoured recently by some writers, such as "westernization" and "modernization". There was rather a concern with carefully defined areas of enquiry and the analysis of limited sets of quantifiable social facts.

Happily the feeling proved to be true that many more researchers than those wearing obvious labels of kinship and marriage, family studies or home science were not merely interested in matters affecting the family in general, but were actively engaged in work of direct relevance to the family in Ghana. Thus the seminar was seen to serve as a vehicle for the expression of interest by many more people than are listed among the contributors below. Indeed such was the enthusiasm engendered and expressed during the seminar that it has been planned to hold a similar event next year. Anyone wishing to present a paper then, analysing the results of recent research in the area of family studies in Ghana, is cordially invited to submit the title and an abstract to the administrative secretary. The following was the programme of the 1971 seminar.

First Session

Chairman - Professor J.H. Nketia, Director

Professor M. Fortes, Visiting Professor to the
Institute of Social and Economic Research.

Opening Paper: Family Studies in Ghana 1920-1970.

Dr. G. Ansre, Institute of African Studies, Legon.

Aspects of Akan and Ewe Kinship Terminologies.

Dr. G.K. Nukunya, Department of Sociology, Legon.

Some Bilateral Elements in Anlo Kinship

Dr. E.O. Apronti, Institute of African Studies,
Legon.

Parent - Child Relationships in African
Literature.

Dr. E.O. Ayisi, Institute of African Studies,
Legon.

Kinship and Community in Akwapim.

Second Session

Chairman - Professor N. de Graft Johnson

Dr. G. Woodman, Faculty of Law, Legon.

The Rights of Wives and Children in the Estates
of their deceased Husbands and Fathers.

Dr. A.K.P. Kludze, Faculty of Law, Legon.

Family Property and Inheritance Among the
Northern Ewe.

Dr. Ekow Daniels, Faculty of Law, Legon.

Problems in the Law Relating to the Maintenance
of Wives and Children.

Miss D. Vellenga, Former Research Student,
Institute of African Studies.

Arenas of Judgement: An Analysis of Matrimo-
nial Cases brought before different types
of courts in Akwapim in the 1930s and 1960s.

Third Session

Chairman - Dr. E.O. Ayisi

Mrs. P. Jones-Quartey, Department of Sociology,
Legon.

Some Effects of the Child Maintenance Bill.

Mr. J. Adomako Safo, Kumasi University of
Science and Technology.

Ashanti Migrant Farmers In Ahafo.

Mr. T. Kumakpor, Department of Sociology, Legon.

The Position of Maternal Relatives In the
Inheritance System of the Ewes.

Professor N. de Graft Johnson, Department of
Sociology, Legon.

A Comparison of Inheritance Patterns In two
Fanti and Ewe Communities.

Fourth Session

Chairman - Professor M. Fortes

Mrs. M. Hardiman, Department of Sociology, Legon.

A Preliminary Study of the Role of Women In
Akan Rural Communities.

Mrs. C. Oppong, Institute of African Studies,
Legon.

Inheritance, Kin Ties and Conjugal Resources.

Mr. R. Sanjek, Institute of African Studies,
Legon.

Some Ewe and Kwahu Households in an Accra
Neighbourhood.

Dr. N.O. Addo, Department of Sociology, Legon.

Patterns of Household Composition in Urban
and Rural Areas.

Professor S. Ottenberg, Visiting Professor,
Institute of African Studies.

Continuity and Change in Domestic Science.