

## Going to the Market - part 3

Dear Friends,

May I take this opportunity to wish all of my readers, a HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR! As I write this I also acknowledge the change of governments in our two respective countries, Ghana and the United States of America. It is my prayer that the Lord Himself will govern both nations, through them.

In part 3 of this series I'm going to talk again about market-queens, and introduce for the first time the activities of 'middle women/men' and their relationship with market queens. These 'middle women/men' either work by themselves or are the employees of the market queens. Now, what do they do, and how do their activities affect the prices of items and commodities in the market?

If you missed part 1 and 2 of my series, you can find it on the FLC website, under Ghana Archive. Those two articles cover the comparison of village and town market operation and introduce the market queens and their jobs.

The 'middle women/men' go into the hinterland (very remote, underdeveloped places, in the plantation or forest areas) to buy from the farmers and those other people who don't have the logistics (transporting, warehousing, etc.) to bring the goods into the town markets.

Once they bring the commodities into town, they will fix their prices in relation to the total cost involved in bringing the goods to their destination. In most cases, the cost of transporting the goods is the main factor in fixing the price, so it goes without saying that prices are not very stable. Indeed, the situation is such that some local radio stations call out the prices of some of the food items on a weekly basis, to let consumers know what is pertaining at any one time.

If the haulage of the goods to the market is solely by the 'middle woman/man', then the market queen would merely moderate the price but has no authority to fix it. If on the other hand, the 'middle woman/man' is the employee of the market queen, then the market queen would determine the price of the commodity. The primary producer of the item doesn't get much, but rather the middle man who 'helps the farmer' to clear his/her farm so the goods don't get spoiled. In most cases, the farmer is more than happy, indeed, very much relieved to have his/her produce taken away for sale, instead of it getting wasted.

The heckling takes place when upon the arrival of the goods from the farm the 'middle woman/man' decides that it would be best to leave the goods in the hands of the market queen or any trader. There and then you will find shouting and loud talking aimed at getting the attention of the 'middle woman/man'. The noise one hears is the calling out of bids till the 'middle woman/man' gets the price she/he wants, and then the goods are handed over to the one who succeeds in the pricing battle. When a vehicle laden with goods enters the market, the women traders run to meet it, not waiting for it to stop, jostling one another in the attempt. When the goods are handed over, the 'middle women/men' will just leave with the vehicle and go back to the hinterland to bring more.

If the primary producer decides to bring the goods herself/himself, and does not intend to sell them herself/himself, the goods will be handed over to other traders in the market, who buy from the farmer, and the farmer will return to her/his village. The price at which the goods were exchanged, without doubt, is not the same as when it is offered for sale. The moment the goods are handed over to the local trader, the end-user, the consumer, has no part in determining the price, nor the one who bought the goods.

The small town market, or the village market are places that garbage can gather easily. There is no organized removal of garbage from the market, unless the traders themselves decide to do so. When the food stuffs are brought to the market and off loaded, pieces of them begin to litter all over the place. Pieces of plantain, cassava, banana, animal waste and other fecal matter the animals wandering around or brought in for sale, leave on the ground, make the village market a place of stench. Simply put, unfortunately, our village markets for the most part are not clean. Measures are being put into place in several places to make conscious efforts in cleaning up after each day's business and the market queens are the people tasked to insure compliance.

Blessings,

Pastor Ben