



# Partners and Competitors

Gendered Entrepreneurship  
in Ghanaian Canoe Fisheries

RAGNHILD OVERÅ

Dissertation for  
the Dr.Polit. Degree

Department of Geography  
University of Bergen  
1998



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Her er understreka dei  
bileta som er i farge!

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Copies can be ordered directly from the author:

Ragnhild Overå  
Chr. Michelsen Institute  
P.B. 6033 Postterminalen  
5892 Bergen

E-mail: [ragnhild@amadeus.cmi.no](mailto:ragnhild@amadeus.cmi.no)

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## Preface

This work is the product of many years of study, travels, and the support of many persons and institutions. I would like to thank the women and men in Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope, who took time to inform me about their fishing and marketing activities, took me along on travels and important events, invited me into their homes, and allowed me to ask all sorts of questions. Most of all, I thank my interpreters, who made communication possible, who shared their own experiences with me, who showed concern and made fieldwork in Ghana a true pleasure. Comfort Sagoe, Aku Kalitsi and Patience Vormawor and their families will always be remembered for their friendship and assistance.

During my stays in Ghana from June to September 1994 and from January to June 1995, my research was made possible through an invitation to be affiliated with the Department of Geography and Resource Development, University of Ghana, by the Head of Department, Professor John S. Nabila. Pro-Vice Chansellor at the University of Ghana, Professor G. K. Nukunya, was most kind in providing me with valuable contacts in Dzelukope. Dr. Irene Odotei at the Institute of African Studies also provided wonderful support, both in Ghana and during her stay in Bergen. I also thank Osman Alhassan, Francis Appiah, Charles Biney and Kari Dako for healthy discussions. Furthermore, the staff at the Fisheries Department's Research Unit in Tema helped me a lot.

The Social Science Faculty at the University of Bergen provided me with a grant in 1993 to write a project proposal, and funded my Dr.Polit. studies for four years. Since 1994, I have been a research fellow at the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) at the University of Bergen. My warmest regards go to my colleagues, the staff and students at the CDS. I have been provided with the best working conditions and with a friendly atmosphere every day. Interesting discussions with the guest researchers who have been coming and going have also been a spicy ingredient in life at the CDS.

In the same period (1994-1998) I have been a Dr.Polit. student at the Department of Geography, University of Bergen. My trips to the Department have not been frequent, but whenever it happens I always feel welcome. Warm thanks to my colleagues there.

Professor Tor Halfdan Aase at the Department of Geography, University of Bergen, has been my supervisor for eight years now. I thank him for his encouragement, enthusiasm and analytic criticism during all these years. His cups of coffee have been a good help!

Nordiska Afrikainstitutet in Uppsala, Sweden, provided me with a grant to do fieldwork in Ghana in 1995. I also spent a month in Uppsala for literature studies in 1996. Thus, the

funds and the library of Nordiska Afrikainstitutet have been vital inputs into this work.

The Christian Michelsen Institute (CMI) in Bergen has also been important for the completion of this project. CMI provided me with facilities when I worked out a project proposal during the spring of 1993. Senior researcher Eyolf Jul-Larsen at the CMI encouraged me during the transition period after the Masters', and has done so ever since. This has motivated me and continues to do so - thanks a lot.

How can I thank Professor Kathleen O'Brien Wicker at the Scripps College in Claremont, California, for showing such an interest that she came to Bergen, has stayed in touch, and has read my stuff? I hope that our paths will cross each other again, and that we can continue our discussions.

With Astrid Blystad, Vibeke Vågenes and Bjørg Lien Hansen I have shared ideas about what our research is all about. Their experience and their visions are always an inspiration to me.

Special thanks also go to Kjell Helge Sjøstrøm, Department of Geography, who has made most of the maps in the dissertation (maps 2 and 7-14), and Erik Grung at Hustrykkeriet, University of Bergen, who improved my photographs and designed the cover.

Lastly, I would like to thank my friends. Their concern, encouragement and companionship cannot be overvalued. My parents and my grandmother have also provided constant support over the years. Arild, my husband, has shared both happy and difficult moments in Ghana and in Bergen during this project, and I thank him for his loving care, his cooking, and for his good humour.

Bergen, March 1998,  
Ragnhild Overå

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## **List of abbreviations**

ADB - Agricultural Development Bank

FRU - Fisheries Department's Research and Utilization Branch

NCWD - National Council for Women and Development

PNDC - Provisional National Defence Council

SAP - Structural Adjustment Programme

SFC - State Fishing Corporation



## Patchwork

The process of knowledge-production we involve ourselves in as researchers, can be described as a craft; a construction process. A handicraft I am well familiar with is patchwork, and it struck me as analogous to the research process. Patchwork is a meaningful metaphor which captures my methodological approach. By seeing parallels between experiences from other times and fields of life and the construction of knowledge I am involved in now, I express a wish to demystify and concretize the research process, as I have experienced it.

In my childhood I used to explore my mother's and her mother's abandoned wardrobes, and I found old dresses, bed-sheets, blouses and skirts. We dressed up in these clothes and played that we were women in the 1950s. We sensed the history of the clothes and the bodies that had been inside them; we could still smell them. We made up stories about foregone times and were inspired to invent fairy-tales about how our lives were going to be when we grew up. Later, when I was too old for these games, I returned to the wardrobes and I went to flea-markets. I searched after cloth for patchwork. I found velvet, satin and cotton; striped, florid and checked cloth in all colours. Some of the clothes were too worn out, others were too nice to be cut into pieces; I selected those which suited my purpose.

Each piece of cloth that I cut had a history. There was the flory tunic from my own childhood, the nylon blouse from my mother's days as a rocking teenager, and the silk dress from an unknown fine lady in the city. Some of the pieces contained memories of special occasions and persons; my first school day with a new coat, my grandfather coming in from a fishing trip in his blue overalls. I cut the cloth in strips, and I sewed them together to form small, square pieces. I never knew exactly how each piece would look before it was finished. But while sitting behind the sewing machine I always had an idea about the composition of colours and material. Gradually new patterns emerged out of the composition of squares as they were sewn together into a large rectangle; a big piece to hang on the wall like a picture.

Looked at from a distance the combinations of colours and patterns appear as an entirely new whole. But if you take a step closer you can see each square, consisting of the cloth-strips. And even closer you can see each little piece; its colour, its pattern, its quality and design. You can even see the stitches of thread connecting them. After hours of searching for material, sewing, thinking and composing, the abandoned wardrobes and forgotten valuables are transformed into a new product with a different purpose; a wall-hanging. But the patchwork quilt will always contain the story about the lives of the people who wore the clothes, and about myself who decided to stitch them together.

I see the effort to write a thesis - the craft of knowledge production which is a process of collecting, selecting, connecting and presenting information - as analogous to patchwork. In the research process I put together pieces of information; interviews, photographs, statistics, observations and conversations, my own sensations, experiences, ideas, and the pieces of relevant work written by others in the past. The pieces of qualitative and quantitative data, as well as my theoretical tools, have many colours and patterns; feminist theory, history, religious beliefs and metaphors, and fisher people's representations of themselves, with all their shades of cultural and individual differences. In order to construct, or compose, a pattern of these pieces, I stitch them together: My words and interpretations are my tools; the needle I sew with. The concept of female entrepreneurship is the red thread I have chosen which penetrates all the pieces and connects them, and makes it possible to make sense out of a fragmented chaos. The shape of the product is yet to be seen.



# 1. Context, methodology and theoretical tools

## Introducing the context of the study

Along the coast of Ghana, women are central and have proved irreplaceable in fish trade. Fish trade is regarded as a female occupation impossible or unworthy or too difficult for men: as they often say, “women know how to handle money”. To be a trader is regarded as a “natural” occupation for women, as much as it is “natural” that fishing is men's work. Ideas about masculinity and femininity are closely tied to how work tasks and other activities are defined as male and female. In the canoe fishery sector, women are vital through their gender defined activities in processing, distribution and trade. Women combine productive and reproductive roles as a strategy; to be both a business-woman and a family provider is a prerequisite for success in both fields. Moreover, large scale female fish traders have played an important role in the introduction of new technology in the fisheries; they extend credit for the purchase of larger canoes, outboard motors and nets. Some women have also invested in equipment themselves. They hire crew and run fishing companies and they have become owners of the means of production. These women are considered as matrons in their communities who employ and sustain large numbers of women, men and children.

The present study aims at an analysis of the cultural, economic and social processes behind the apparently unusually strong economic position of “fish mammies”, as the fish traders are often called, and at a closer examination of the geographical variation in the position of women in Ghanaian fishing communities. I will also discuss in greater detail which barriers and constraints women face in their endeavour of entering into powerful positions in the male field of fishing, and to which channels those who make it have access. In such a project, an understanding of men’s positions in fisheries, in marriage, and in other fields of life, and the relation between women and men beyond fisheries and marketing, is equally important as the study of women’s positions.

Through all the stages of catching, processing and distribution of fish, social persons perform the work tasks. An analysis of a system of fishing, or employment system (Jentoft and Wadel 1984), thus includes not only production, but also the social relations between the persons who perform the work tasks that, for them, are individual human projects, and also essential for the functioning of the system as a whole. I will analyse the historical development of three systems of fisheries (including their marketing regions) with a focus on their “genderedness”, i.e. the manner in which female and male roles are socially constructed and practised within and beyond each system of fisheries. More specifically, this study is thus about *female entrepreneurship*, which I shall define as economic and social strategies by which women succeed in converting capital from the female domain of market trade into the male domain of fishing. I will also discuss to which degree and in which manner women’s entrepreneurial strategies have led to *innovation* in the system of fishing. My focus on female entrepreneurship is not solely caused by my initial interest in women’s economic activities, but also because in this context *male* entrepreneurship, i.e. conversion of capital from fisheries into fish marketing appears to be very rare, or at least less apparent.

As a summary of various entrepreneur approaches (see Schumpeter 1950; Barth 1963; Garlick 1971; Hart 1975; Amusan 1977; Bourdieu 1977; Lewis 1977; Evers and Schrader 1994; Green and Cohen 1995; Mcdade and Malecki 1997), one could say that an entrepreneur is often seen as *someone who takes initiative to start and sustain a business, takes risks and manages to mobilise labour and other resources in order to accumulate both economic and symbolic capital*. According to this definition, all fish traders pursue entrepreneurial strategies in order to make a living out of their trade in the sense that they mobilise and manage resources. However, the scale of their enterprises, and the extent to which they are able to mobilise and accumulate economic and symbolic capital, varies. In attempting to understand these differences between women, and between women and men, in the ability of creating wealth for themselves, for their families and communities, I apply a case-based and agency-centred approach. This means that I will examine individual careers viewed as closely connected with the socio-economic network around them, as part of the community and production system, that are connected to wider regional, national and international structures and processes. In other words, I explore the interplay between the circumstances that shape human destinies and humans’ shaping of their own life paths.

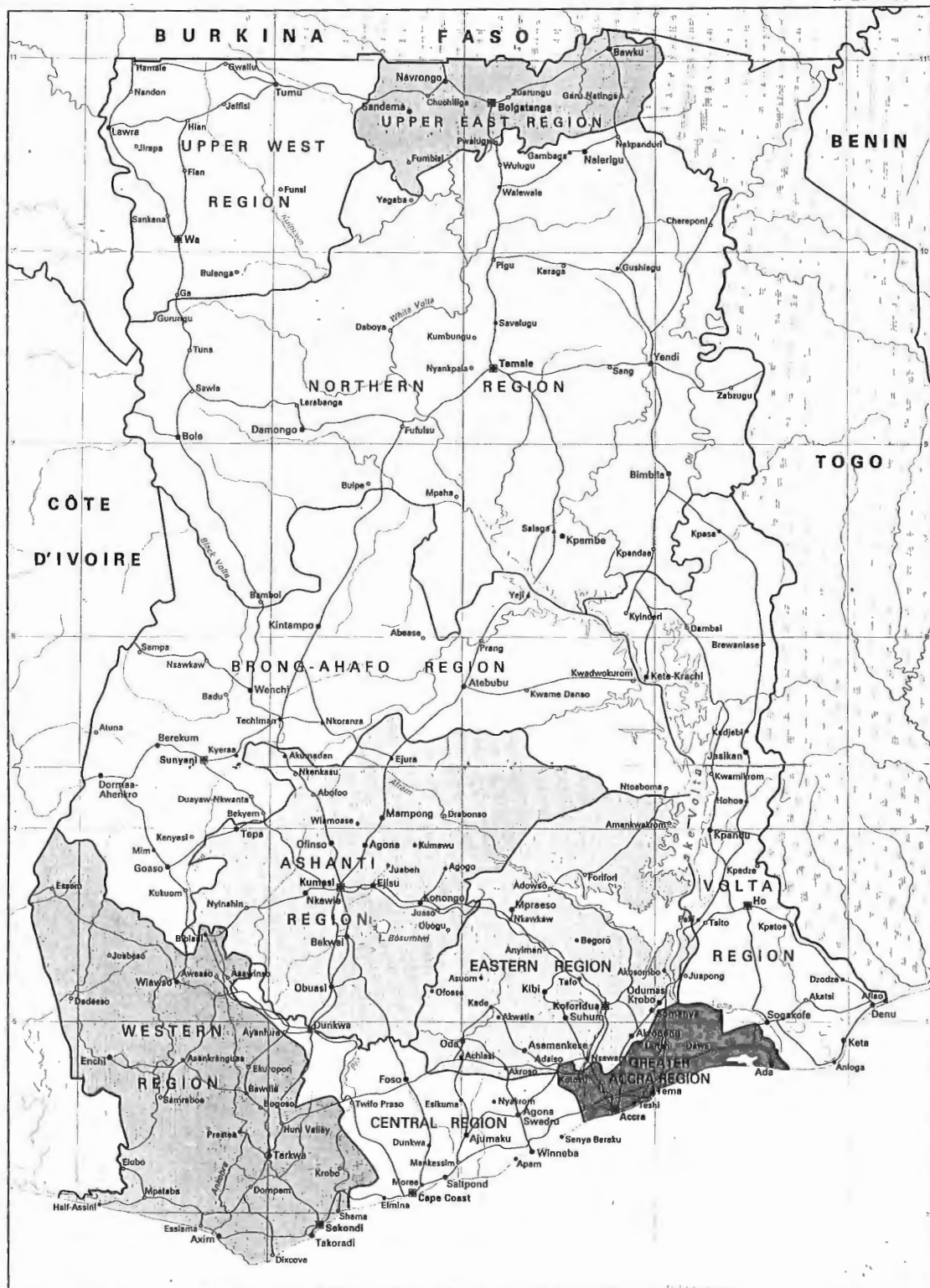
The study will focus on how women manage to establish themselves as fish traders, on how some of them manage to become large-scale traders, and on how some of these women have crossed the gender defined division between fishing and marketing by investing in fishing

equipment and have become managers of fishing companies. Female canoe owners do not enter the “male” domain of the sea physically, but they make activity at sea possible through their investments and enterprises. How does such activity correspond with, or conflict with, contextual gender constructions? I seek to find out what distinguishes these entrepreneurial women's careers from the careers, or lives, of the majority of women who remain small-scale fish traders. I also explore the contextual and spatial aspects of entrepreneurship in order to explain the relatively significant differences in the opportunities and constraints that women in one Ghanaian fishing community face in comparison with women in another Ghanaian fishing community only a few miles apart. This study is therefore about the people in Moree, which is a Fante fishing town near Cape Coast; the people in Kpone, a Ga-Adangbe fishing town near Tema; and about the people in Dzelukope, an Anlo-Ewe town with a fishing community near Keta (see maps 1 and 2). Socio-economic dynamics within and beyond each of these three fishing communities have created specific contexts with specific opportunities and constraints for female entrepreneurship. Through an analysis of the regional differences in the organisation of the fisheries and in the social construction of gender, I hope to unravel some of the causes for the spatial variation of female entrepreneurship in Ghanaian canoe fisheries.

Contextualised places are thus my starting point for a comparative study. Social, cultural, economic and physical environments constitute contexts in which women find possibilities to embark on entrepreneurial projects. Which resources do they possess and mobilise in the various contexts, and which boundaries do they have to cross? Which opportunities and constraints do they meet in the surrounding world? Which gender barriers is it that men do not cross, in spite of the fact that fish trade on a large scale can be a very profitable venture? In other words I explore both the structural and the socio-cultural environment within which men and women make a life and a living.

Contexts are shaped by processes on various geographical levels from the local to the global. The context of fishing communities in Ghana has been shaped through history by development of the market system, technological development in the fisheries, and by the extent of alternatives to fishing and marketing in the coastal zone. People on the coast have been in contact with foreign traders - from across the Sahara, the rain forest and the Atlantic, and rulers coming from the sea - Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, German and British - for centuries. The presence of foreign trawlers for almost forty years along the coast has put local fisher people in direct contact with international capital. National economic policies and fishery policies have varied with shifting military and civilian govern-

Map 1. Ghana with administrative regions, major towns, roads and railways.



**Key**

- International Boundary
- Regional Boundary
- Main Road
- Railway

- Capital City
- Regional Capital
- District Capital
- Important Town
- Other Town



ments in Accra since Independence in 1957, and since the early eighties, restructuring programmes designed in Washington and New York have had a profound influence on the living conditions of rural people. Fisher people relate to these national and global impacts on their livelihood at the same time as gender ideology, kinship systems, organisation of marriage and households, ethnic identity and power relations within families, communities and regions, are part of their lives. These different fields of life and external events are somehow interconnected in each person's strategies and destiny in their life cycle and career. It will be my task in this work to study such interconnectedness.

Gender constructions and the close integration of economic and social relations in fishing and marketing, are key dimensions in an understanding of what Chauveau and Samba (1989:614) call the "engine" or the "endogenous dynamics" in the expansion that has been observed in West African small-scale fisheries. In order to understand how the dynamics of change work in the fisheries, it is likewise important to understand how the people who create this dynamics have dealt with the rapidly changing world around them. Through history the coastal population have had contact with far travelling traders, colonial authorities, overseas companies and aid agencies. Such encounters between the local, regional, national and global spark off processes which often create contexts of increased subordination and marginalization but also potentials for local creativity and economic and social change. Fisher people do not simply live in isolated fishing communities where they passively make the best out of external impact. On the contrary they are actively engaged in the encounter with these changes. By migration, trade and through adaptation of local institutions they explore the changes and find ways to incorporate them into their economic activities and ways of life.

One of the most profound changes in Ghanaian fishing communities was the introduction of the outboard motor in the 1960s. The fishermen incorporated the engine, the "ahead" as it is often called, into the canoe fisheries by making small adaptations to fasten it to the canoes. And the fish traders gave them credit to buy the motors. In their promoting of new technology in the interest of expanding their own fish trade, women traders can be seen as crucial mediators or agents of change in the encounter between local ways of fishing and new opportunities from "abroad". I thus see the fish traders who invested in fisheries as *entrepreneurs in the sense of innovators* (Barth 1963), in their role of intermediaries between the local and the global in a modernisation process. Modernisation in the context of fishing communities in coastal Ghana can both be seen in terms of changing value systems or westernisation (although such a concept implies a too limited approach to where

Ghanaians get impulses from!), or in terms of globalisation as integration of local production systems into the world economy. Peter Berger defines modernisation as “the institutional concomitants of a technologically induced economic growth” (Wuthnow et. al. 1984:55). However, technologically induced changes cannot be seen as separate from the wider, long-term global forces. Moreover, technological change is induced by social persons who are engaged in an interactive process with the impulses from the world and adapt the new technology to already existing production systems and institutions. In this regard, the case of the Ghanaian canoe fishing sector is a very interesting example of modernisation, which was certainly not induced through a one-way transfer of technology, but through an “endogenous dynamics” by which fishermen and fish traders moulded the new technology and their own institutions to suit their own purposes. I will therefore examine the institutional change in communities and the structural change in the fishery sector induced by technological innovation, such as changes in the socio-economic organisation of the fisheries, and changes in gender and class hierarchies. I view both technological and institutional changes in the fishing communities as gendered processes, and try to see them in light of on-going changes in Ghanaian society as a whole.

Seen from this angle it is clear that the local credit institutions - the large-scale women fish traders - found a niche when new technology was incorporated into the fisheries. They saw the potential of increased fish production through investment in outboard motors and new nets, and as an extension of their gender defined marketing and credit role, they were able to finance the innovation. It is also clear that not all women could enter this niche. Access to buy fish, availability of investment capital through credit or savings, and recruitment of labour, were crucial resources for those who became owners in the canoe sector. In my view, the extent to which women with such resources could utilise them and start new enterprises (and thereby create employment opportunities for those who did *not* have the resources or abilities) is closely connected with gender ideology, which is a reflection of the social construction of gender in each context. In order to explore the basis for such values; “models for behaviour” (Geertz 1973) or “assumptions about gender-appropriate behaviour” (McDowell 1997), I have chosen to look at three contexts that vary in terms of kinship systems and postmarital residence patterns, as well as in terms of socio-economic organisation of fisheries and fishing techniques. I suggest that variations in such systems structure spaces within which women to a various degree in each place are able to channelise their resources as mothers, wives and traders into positions that give them economic, social and political power.



It was my studies of the matrilineal Fante, which first drew my attention to female entrepreneurship in Ghanaian fisheries (see Overå 1992). In my interpretation, the Fante women were able to become canoe owners, employers and matrons, without fundamentally challenging the construction of gender in their local context. They did it *as women* by mobilising the resources of the networks they grew up in and acquired during their life cycle. Women who already controlled vital links in the processing and distribution chain of fish, now extended their control to the links of the production chain, into the fishery itself. For these women the new technology became an opportunity *through* their gender defined role in the fish based economy. In the literature (i.e. Odotei 1991), and through encounters with Anlo-Ewe and Ga-Adangbe women in migrant settlements on the Fante coast during fieldwork, I got the impression that female canoe ownership was very rare in their communities. This impression was confirmed when I later did fieldwork in Kpone and Dzelukope. In the patrilineal Ga-Adangbe and Anlo-Ewe communities, the technological changes did not seem to represent an opportunity to the same extent for women as in the Fante context. The Ga-Adangbe women in Kpone who had tried to invest in outboard motors and canoes, had met many obstacles on their way. Some of them owned small canoes without motors, and some of them owned nets, but those who had invested in motorised large canoes had failed, or had migrated. Most of the Anlo-Ewe women in Dzelukope did not even consider the possibility of owning beach seines and canoes; it was not a relevant thought in their local context. However, some of them had done it in Tema, in Accra or abroad. The reasons behind these differences in the opportunities for women to invest in fisheries, is the main theme in the analysis of three contexts, which although all of them are fishing communities where women are active in fish trade, and are located within the same nation state, seem to articulate very different attitudes towards entrepreneurial women in their communities.

To sum up, I try to explain why and how women could take on such an important role in a process of technological change, and to look closer at the characteristics of the careers of those who made it and the contexts in which they did it. In such an attempt it is crucial to get an understanding of how the women themselves, their husbands and families think about what is appropriate, acceptable, possible or “natural” behaviour for women and men in their community. It is likewise important to investigate ideas about gender-inappropriate or “unnatural” behaviour, and how in practice such ideals are negotiated. The local construction of gender is one very basic element which structures men's and women's daily lives and their encounter with the world around them; gender in a way demarcates and outlines the repertoire of possible male and female behaviour, and thereby also what is

possible in a community and for the community as such in a larger regional and national context. However, as we shall see, it is not impossible to invent new roles as part of one's repertoire, nor to step in and out of contexts.

### **Where men fish and women trade**

In fishing communities - as elsewhere - there are very clear ideas about what masculinity and femininity is or ought to be. The connotation of the sea as a masculine domain, and the gender division of labour where men fish and women process the catch, is found in many parts of the world (Acheson 1981; Firth 1984; Gerrard 1987; Robben 1989; Stirrat 1989; Cole 1991; Pálsson 1989, 1991; Neis 1995). Therefore we often think in terms of land/sea and female/male dichotomies (Nadel-Klein and Davis 1988). It is seen as obvious or "natural" that men take responsibility for the risky and physically demanding fishing operations at sea, while women care for children, stay in the house, on the farm, or in the processing plant, doing the necessary work to reproduce society and the labourious task of transforming the fish into a marketable and edible commodity. This division of labour enables men to rest between fishing trips and to go away on longer expeditions. To imagine a fishing community without the labour of women on land, the "ground crew" (Gerrard 1987), is difficult. Even in high-tech fisheries operated from industrial trawlers in international waters, the fishermen depend on wives who stay at home and give birth, wash, cook and wait for the days or months when "father comes home". For the fisherman, who spends so much time among his work mates at sea, it would otherwise be difficult to lead a family life and maintain a social position on land. Thus the image of the fisherman's wife as "mother as 'anchor' for others" (Massey 1994:180), expressed in titles like *To work and to weep* (Nadel-Klein and Davis 1988), *Those who stayed behind* (Norwegian TV documentary), *Not drowning but waving* (a book title), has acquired an almost universal character. Ghanaian "fish mummies" in many ways live up to this image, but as we shall see, their life stories tell us that the stereotypical, dichotomous conceptualisation of women and men in fishing societies will once again have to be redefined.

Worldwide it is not uncommon that fishermen's wives have leading positions in their local communities and homes, and this is often explained by the short and long-term absence of the men when they are out fishing (Acheson 1981). In such a view, women in fishing societies are in decision-making positions only out of necessity. Moreover, even though women often have an important role in small-scale processing and distribution of fish

(Munk-Madsen 1995), the profits are in many societies taken over by men when fish is traded on a large scale (Evers and Schrader 1994). In our society these links in the processing- and distribution chain are integrated into the capitalist world market. Women are factory workers in fish plants, and are as such regarded as very flexible and cheap labour that can adapt to seasonal fluctuations in deliveries of fish (Connelly et. al. 1995; Neis 1995). In many Asian fishing societies male middlemen take over the marketing of fish beyond the local level (Aase 1986; Carsten 1989; Stirrat 1989). Often this is the case also in Africa, but since women are so central in agricultural production and in the informal sector, market trade of fish is in some places done by women (Johnsen 1992; Gerrard 1993), but not so often in large-scale long-distance trade as in small-scale local trade.

In Ghana, women have a monopoly over both small-scale, large-scale, local and long-distance domestic fish trade. Quite an extensive body of literature exists where the role of female fish traders is discussed (i.e. Hill 1970; 1986; Lawson and Kwei 1974; Christensen 1977; Vercrujisse 1983, 1984; Nukunya 1989; Hernæs 1991; Ninsin 1991; Odotei 1991, 1995). The literature on women in market trade in general is also considerable (Nypan 1960; McCall 1962; Lawson 1967; Robertson 1974, 1983, 1984, 1995; Peil 1975; Lewis 1977; Pellow 1977; Bukh 1979; Pellow and Chasan 1986; Rocksloh-Papendick 1988; Ameyaw 1990; Ardayfio-Shandorf and Kwafo-Akoto 1990; Okine 1993; Clark 1994; Brydon and Legge 1995; Dennis and Preprah 1995; Greene 1996). Women are connected with trade to the extent that the “market mammy” has become a symbol of the Ghanaian industrious woman; a national symbol - a colourful motive on postcards - to love for their contribution of distributive services and provision of ingredients for the cooking pot, but also envied and hated for their abilities to accumulate wealth and for their alleged selfishness and manipulative powers (Robertson 1984; Vercrujisse 1984; Clark 1994). The stories about the source of market women's power to attract customers through the magic of scorpions or snakes kept in their private parts or hidden in their market stalls (Bannerman-Richter 1982) and the danger of witchcraft in markets (Masquelier 1993), are many. The feminine space of the marketplace seems to be a dangerous place.

Market women have often been the target of government action to regulate prices (Clark 1994) or destruction of markets, such as the bulldozing of Makola Market in Accra in 1981 (Robertson 1983). This represents a paradox; on the one hand market women are regarded as irreplaceable and admired, on the other hand they are envied and seen as greedy capitalists acting in self-interest. Although it is widely accepted and appreciated that women are economically active, their gender is often used against them in the moral discourse about

the power and wealth of rich people. Ambiguity towards rich people seems to be particularly strong when they are women. The dilemma between idealised gender roles and the way women and men in practise negotiate these ideals, must be resolved in everyday life, in marriages, lineages, markets, on the road and on the beach, in organisations, educational institutions, and in governments. It is in such spaces that gender is constantly defined and redefined, and where women negotiate and find new career paths in the socio-economic system.

If we read history, the often romanticised image of the West African market woman as an institution which has always been there; an integral part of the West African soul or spirit, and an expression for West African femininity and motherliness, becomes less clear and continuous. The economic position of women has varied according to the needs of governments and communities, and has changed with religious influences, with demographic processes, with external trade patterns, and with the availability of other opportunities for income generating activity. The events of slave trade, colonialism, independence and, at present, Structural Adjustment Programmes, have had profound influence on women's opportunities to earn their living and achieve something for themselves and their social networks. The moulding of local gender systems in interplay with the processes of change on various geographical levels has been part of people's lives through history. My fascination with this interdependence between economic and social change, and the historical and cultural contingency of the outcome of these processes, laid the foundation for this work. At the same time the encounter with the energetic struggle of the individual Ghanaian for survival and pursuit of a good life made it clear to me that processes of cultural, economic and political change are not merely “products of history”, but an outcome of the social dynamics created by people who live their daily lives in rural and urban communities, and thereby shape and change the direction of history.

The way this dynamics is sharply and beautifully expressed with great humour in art, songs, personal clothing and hair style, dance, proverbs and bodily gesture, can not be done justice to in writing, but my hope is that the individual will not disappear between the lines. People's creative inventions to make practical adaptations between old and new ways of life, to find technical solutions, social arrangements and answers to the eternal and universal questions and dilemmas of human life, as well as to unpredictable problems and events, and the ability to cope with and redefine oneself in changing and often deteriorating situations, remain a source of inspiration for me which never dries up.

## Social and economic change in Ghanaian fisheries

Small-scale, artisanal, or what I in this context simply call canoe fisheries, is a very important source of employment and food in Ghana. Fish, and especially smoked fish, is regarded both as a delicacy and a life saviour in hard times. The average Ghanaian eats 20-30 kilograms of fish a year (Odotei 1995), and fish is the most important source of animal proteins, fatty acids, minerals and vitamins (Steiner-Asiedu 1994). A considerable inland fishery takes place in Lake Volta, Lake Bosumtwi, the lagoons and rivers, and constitutes 16% of annual domestic fish production (Odotei 1995). The focus here, however, is on coastal fishing communities. The number of fishermen in the marine canoe sector is estimated to be 91,400 persons, in addition to 1.5 million people who are “dependants” of these men (Koranteng et. al. 1993). These are the fish traders, children and elders who make a living out of, and are sustained by, activities in the canoe system of fisheries. All together, people who make a living in coastal canoe fisheries constitute roughly 10% of Ghana's population.

The marine canoe sector consists of more than 8,500 canoes. In addition, an estimated number of 2,000 canoes originating from Ghana (often called “Ghana canoes”) are on seasonal or long term migration in other West African countries from Mauritania in the north to Congo in the south (Haakonsen and Diaw 1991). The largest canoes are 60-70 feet with a crew of 20-30 men. It may thus sound misleading to call them canoes and not boats, but they are in fact made of dugout *wawa* tree trunks from the rain forest and are enlarged with boards along the gunwales to make them larger and deeper.

Canoes land 70% of the total marine fish catches in Ghana, while the rest is caught by semi-industrial vessels, so-called inshore vessels, and a fleet of export oriented industrial trawlers and tuna boats (Haakonsen 1992). According to The Fisheries Department's Research Unit in 1995, there were 164 inshore vessels, 49 trawlers and 25 tuna boats. The trawlers and tuna boats are mostly run as joint ventures where a Ghanaian has the concession and license to fish. A foreigner then provides capital and a vessel with officers, while Ghanaian fishermen are recruited as crew. The level of production in industrial fisheries had its peak in the 1970s, but declined dramatically in the 1980s (see fig. 1). Production has remained low in the 1990s, even though a certain interest by foreign investors has been observed.

In the canoe sector, on the other hand, fish landings have increased steadily. The canoe landings of fish have risen from 20,000 tonnes in 1960 to 300,000 tonnes in 1992. This represents an increase in productivity from 0.6 t/fisherman/year to 1.4 t/fisherman/year

(Degnbol 1992:215). The expansion in fish landings by the canoe sector must largely be assigned to the outboard motor: In 1970 the level of motorisation in the canoe sector was estimated to be 20-25%, but in 1989 over 57% of the total canoe fleet had adopted the outboard motor (Hernæs 1991).

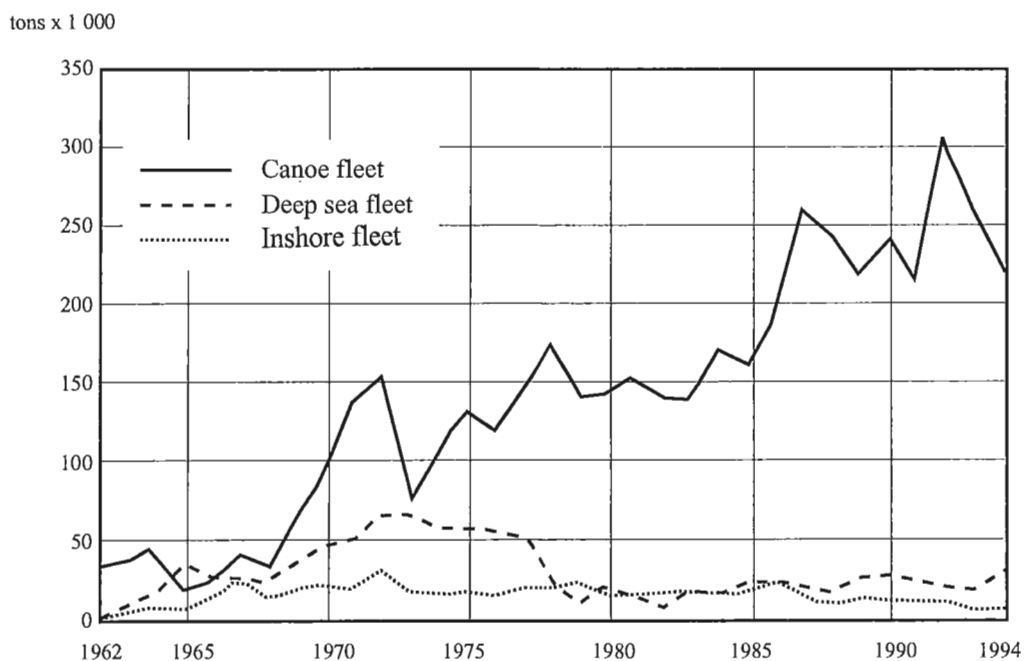


Figure 1. Fish landings of the canoe sector, semi-industrial and industrial sectors 1960-1994. Source: FRU.

In the nineties the canoe fishery sector, as other rural sectors of the Ghanaian economy, seems to experience many problems, and a downward trend in the catches has been observed (see fig. 1). Whether this is caused by over-exploitation of fish resources or by financial constraints of rural people in general, and by the price of petrol in particular, is not well documented, but a combination of causes seems plausible. The level of motorisation and number of canoes has also decreased slightly (Koranteng et. al. 1993). But, as the figure shows, the expansion in the canoe fisheries over the last generation, which was literally propelled by the introduction of the outboard motor, must be regarded as quite remarkable. It is remarkable both in relation to the fish landings of the semi-industrial and industrial fisheries, but also in relation to the agricultural sector in this period. Due to political, economic and to some extent climatic problems in the late seventies and early eighties (see Chisholm 1983), the production of food, such as maize, cassava, yam and plantain (Van den Boom et. al. 1996:802), and cocoa (Berry 1993:71) decreased in Ghana, while fish

production increased steadily<sup>1</sup>. In the nineties the production of food has increased while fish production has gone down.

Social and economic changes in the canoe fisheries occurred, of course, also before the introduction of outboard motors. Canoe fisheries with sails, oars, hook and line, and with nets, have been practised along the littoral of today's Ghana for centuries, and is described by the first Europeans who came to West Africa (Amenumey 1986, Odotei 1991). Technical innovations have taken place continuously, as the adaptation of the *ali* (or *adii*) net by the end of the nineteenth century (Vercrujssse 1984). The larger fish landings with new nets increased women's profit potential in fish trade, and already in those days technical innovation led to accumulation of capital and ownership of the means of production in fewer hands to constitute a local elite (Odotei 1995:7). However, the more recent adaptation of the outboard motor changed the canoe fisheries much more dramatically in terms of scale and organisation of production and, as shown above, in terms of fish landings. Motorisation also resulted in an increase in the size of canoes and nets, the number of crew members, and not the least the need for investment capital and working capital. The modernisation of canoe fisheries furthermore had far reaching consequences in the fishing communities in terms of social organisation and power relations. The canoe fisheries are now more capital intensive and ownership more individualised than in the past. Nevertheless, the investors and owners are still dependent on the cooperation of a wide social network in order to make money on their fishing enterprises. Their economic success and social status depend on "frequent demonstrations of one's ability to command a following" (Berry 1993:147). This is a theme to which I shall return.

In the initial phases of the introduction of outboard motors in the 1950s, the experiments and model projects of the British colonial government, the FAO, The Fisheries Department's Research and Utilization Branch (FRU) and individual entrepreneurs (like the famous Robert Ocran who tried out new types of equipment on inshore vessels and became the first Ghanaian investor of industrial vessels), were important as sources of information and inspiration to try out new technology in the canoe fisheries (Lawson and Kwei 1974, Odotei 1991). However, the success of the outboard motor in the artisanal sector must primarily be assigned to the innovative initiatives of local fisher people themselves who, although they

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<sup>1</sup> According to Manuh (1994:64) the food self-sufficiency in Ghana fell from 83 per cent in the 1961-66 period to 71 per cent in the 1973-80 period, and to 23 per cent in 1982. This resulted in a fourfold increase in food imports in the decade to 1982 (Ibid.). Although the food situation was particularly difficult in the early eighties, and the situation improved in the following decade, this decrease in food self-sufficiency is worth noticing in relation to the stable provision of locally produced fish in the same period.

were sceptic in the beginning, seized the opportunity for increased production and income. A man from Cape Coast remembers very well that the “travelling cinema” came to town in 1959 and showed films about new fishing gear and outboard motors to the fishermen in the harbour there. The information films were often shown as previews to movies like “Moby Dick”, which the old man still can recount in detail so lively that the listeners can almost hear and see the white whale right there in the sea. Likewise he can remember the contents of the fishery films in detail, and how sceptic the fishermen were. They thought that the fish would disappear if it heard the motors and scented the petrol. Some were afraid the Sea God *Bosompo* would not approve of motors. Others feared for their own security at sea, and, moreover, the cost of buying and operating a motor seemed unrealistic. But later, when the Fishery Department brought an outboard motor to Cape Coast, and a canoe went on a testing trip and caught large amounts of fish within short time, the fishermen were impressed. Very rapidly the outboard motor became a necessity for most canoe companies, and they went to the fish traders for credit to buy them.

Obviously the women saw the utility of the outboard motor as a means to increase the production of fish: the raw material for their processing and trading enterprises. The Agricultural Development Corporation (now the Agricultural Development Bank, ADB) distributed subsidised outboard motors through credit schemes, and the Rural Banks also had similar projects. However, the loan schemes that were promoted by the government in order to motorise the canoe fleet were largely unsuccessful for a complex set of reasons (see Kwawukume 1995). One of the problems was that the repayment conditions of the banks were difficult to meet by the fishermen who often were unable to pay their debts at the required time intervals, because this arrangement did not take into consideration the seasonal nature of the fisheries. The fishermen therefore turned to sources of credit within the fishery sector in order to purchase outboard motors. Some used credit from fish traders to buy subsidised motors through ADB, while others used it to purchase motors directly from import firms, such as from Japan Motors in Accra.

The main creditors in this modernisation process, or “outboardisation” process (Hernæs 1991) were large-scale women traders, who often hold considerable amounts of capital (Christensen 1977; Vercrujisse 1983; Odotei 1991). They gave credit to canoe companies for the purchase of equipment, and in return they received a portion of the catch until the loan was repaid. In some cases the loan was never completely repaid, since both parties benefitted from the relationship. Through credit from fish traders, canoe owners were able to buy equipment and petrol so that the company could fish more frequently and further



away, and hopefully catch more fish. Thereby the creditor ensured more fish supply for herself. With the increased production and primary access to purchase of fish, some of these wealthy women were able to combine profitable investments with crucial social contacts. They emerged as a powerful group of large-scale intermediaries, and they converted their gains into social prestige and built houses for themselves and their families. Quite a few women even bought their own canoes and motors, hired crews and became “managing directors” of fishing companies. Through such investments they have been able to employ the innovative strategy of integrating every link in the system of fishing vertically into one single enterprise; from sea, via canoe and village to the market. Especially from the seventies onwards, women involved themselves financially not only as creditors, but also as investors in new technology. A statement by a female canoe owner illustrates their innovative attitude: *“The women found out that there is money in fishing”*. In order to get access to this profit potential that they knew could be achieved by increasing the volume of their fish trade, women invested their market capital in outboard motors, nets, and canoes.



*Photo 1. Canoe owner with one of her two outboard motors.*

The motorisation of canoes led to many changes. With greater mobility, fishermen could undertake fishing expeditions quite far, and return with the fish more quickly. Long migration trips, both seasonal trips and more permanent stays in other countries also became more common (Haakonsen and Diaw 1991). With the increased fish landings, the volume

fish offered in Ghanaian inland markets also increased. Not only the motorisation of canoes, but also the general modernisation of Ghana, such as school education, larger urban concentrations, and an increasing number of roads and cars, made trading on a larger scale possible. Secretaries, bookers, drivers and carriers found employment as a result of the increased fish trade. Moreover, with the commercialisation of fishing and trade, new institutions emerged in the fishing communities. One institution is the *konkohene*, which is mostly found on the Fante coast (Odotei 1995). The *konkohene* is the fish traders' parallel to the chief fisherman, the *apofohene*, who is both a religious and political leader of fishermen, and has also acquired an important position as the spokesman of the fishing community beyond the local level. The women's leader, the *konkohene*, is elected by the fish trades and represents their interest in the negotiation of fish prices. These female leaders are, however, not represented in regional and national fora to the same extent as the chief fishermen.

The social aspects of the fisheries also changed. With capitalisation and technological innovation, ownership of canoes and equipment became more individualised (Ninsin 1991). Canoes had mostly been family property, administered by the elders of the lineage. In some cases, senior women (at least among the Fante) had the position of custodian of the lineage's canoe(s), although the position in most cases was held by a man. But gradually a new class of owners of motorised canoes emerged; men, but also quite a few women<sup>2</sup>. The motorised canoes are thus not family property in the previous sense, but the owners to a large extent still rely on household/lineage labour. As we shall see, this has implications for women's possibilities of becoming managers of canoe companies.

To sum up this brief review on the modernisation of the canoe fisheries, which will be examined more thoroughly in chapter 2, this was not a process where women were the losers as has often been described when new technology has been introduced in developing countries (Boserup 1970; Rogers 1980; Massey 1984; Whitehead 1985; Momsen and Townsend 1987; Momsen and Kinnaird 1993). Neither is this a case where technology was imposed on a society or was given as aid. When the knowledge of the possibility of adopting outboard motors to canoes was spread, people in the fishing communities themselves seized this opportunity in an innovative response (see Lawson and Kwei 1974). And, moreover, this is not a case where women in general have been the "winners" at the expense of men.

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the new individual owners were "absentee owners"; men and women who invested capital from outside of the canoe fisheries. The majority of canoe owners in the communities that I have studied are however professional fishermen and fish traders who reside in fishing communities.

Rather, it represents a case of intensification, commercialisation and capitalisation of fish production and distribution where both male and female entrepreneurs created new opportunities, and where small-scale fish traders and fishermen have become more dependent on patrons and matrons, both within the extended family system, and as paid workers for the owners of canoes, nets and motors. Nevertheless, the new opportunities to earn cash were not monopolised by men, as has often been observed in other cases, for example when cocoa was introduced as a cash crop for individual male farmers in Ghana (Clark 1994). We can thus not take for granted that modernisation or globalisation are processes which automatically work to the disadvantage of women, although that has often been the case. In Nigeria, for example, Sara Berry describes how cocoa became a new trade item for female traders, and how women's accumulation in this new niche altered power relations within communities and families (Berry 1985). Gender inequality with women as the losing part is not inevitable, as some scholars arguing from as different angles as patriarchy theory and socio-biology have tended to pessimistically conclude. The case of the Ghanaian canoe fisheries shows that the dynamics of social and economic relations in processes where power, space and gender play together in a changing web, are very complex. The outcomes cannot be predetermined, but call for detailed and localised studies.

The above picture of the recent changes in the fisheries are based on the findings from my Masters' study (Overå 1992), seen in light of previous and more recent literature. This was about how far I had come when I set out to explore the field further. Let me look back at that process for a while.

### **Going back and further**

In 1991 I lived for five months in Moree, a Fante fishing town in the Central Region, and wrote a Masters' thesis where I expressed my admiration for the complexity, efficiency and adaptability of the socio-economic system of fisheries and fish trade. It was a study of women's role in this system. When I presented the case to my Norwegian colleagues I was often asked questions about how it could be possible that women played such an important economic role in the fisheries. Some of them thought that the case of the town I had studied perhaps was atypical, or perhaps I had presented it only from the side of the privileged women, those who own canoes? Some of the questions echoed my own ambiguities towards what I had presented. Had my Norwegian background created a "wish" for cases to be found where women have power? Were my research findings a reaction against the image

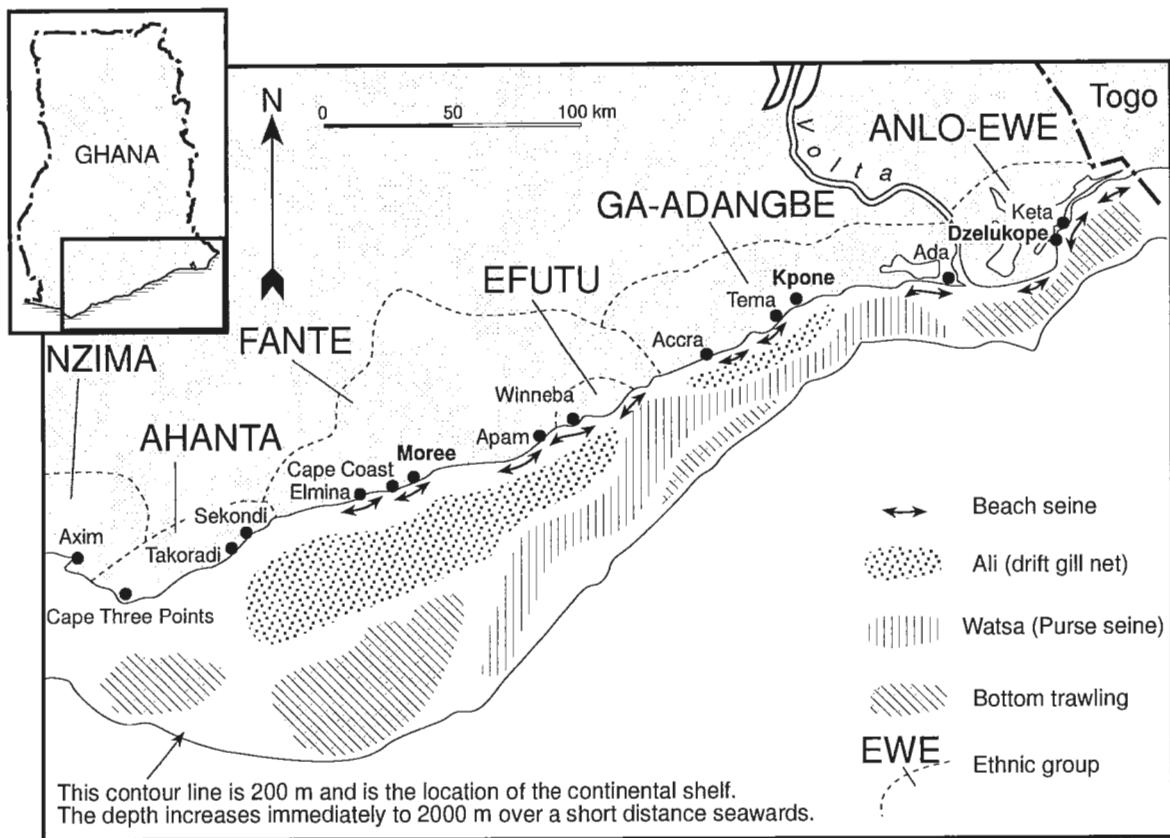
in the media and our educational institutions where “Third World women” almost by definition were seen as suppressed? The questions arose my curiosity to look into other places and to talk with other people in the fisheries; more with men for example. Although I felt I had gathered a lot of knowledge about women's role in the fisheries in Ghana, more questions had to be asked. I had only touched the surface and wanted to dig deeper.

Thus it became necessary to address the questions that are in focus here: Does the Fante case represent a unique situation where women have more power than among neighbouring peoples? Why are the Fante women succeeding to such a degree in becoming canoe owners, while Ga-Adangbe women only to some extent have become owners, and Anlo-Ewe women are close to non-existent as owners? How do women manage to become canoe owners? How does one end up among the “haves” and the “have-nots”? Why is it possible for some women, but impossible, unthinkable - or even undesirable - for other women, whether they come from a different social class or from a different place, to accumulate wealth and prestige in the fisheries? And why do not men pursue wealth and prestige through fish marketing?

With these thoughts in mind, I designed the study as a comparative analysis of female entrepreneurship in a Fante, a Ga-Adangbe and an Anlo-Ewe fishing community. My methodological approach is qualitative and interpretative, and based on ethnographic fieldwork. Through a closer study of women's career paths I hoped to find better explanations for the apparent uniqueness of the extent of female entrepreneurship and canoe ownership among the Fante, as compared with other fishing societies in Ghana. I saw it as important to find out more about the careers of the average trader, and of the features and steps in the careers of those who reached beyond small-scale trade, invested in the means of production and had other men, women and children work for them in their enterprises. I also perceived it as important to see each individual career as part of larger socio-economic networks, and thus to study *career networks*, rather than carefully or randomly selected individuals. And, moreover, I wanted to see these careers and networks as integrated into the larger regional context of fishing and marketing.

In 1994 (during a period in Ghana of three months) and in 1995 (for five months) I did more fieldwork in Moree, with the aim of understanding more about the secrets behind success and failure among the women I had come to know four years earlier. I also did fieldwork in Kpone, which is a Ga-Adangbe town near Tema, and in Dzelukope, an Anlo-Ewe town near Keta in the Volta Region (see map 2). Unlike in 1991, when I used an interview guide,

I now (to my own, and I believe to my informants', great relief) adapted the interview process to each person and situation. Through the interviews, which more appropriately could be called dialogues or conversations, I attempted to gradually develop a better understanding of questions like: Did the Kpone and Dzelukope women face other opportunities and constraints in their life projects than the Moree women did? To what extent did local gender ideology define what women can invest in when they earn money on fish trade? How did people's ideas about femininity and masculinity open up or limit women's and men's chances to cross the boundaries of the land-based female domain between fish trade and the male domain at sea in these three places? Which other factors, such as fishing technology, trade patterns and historical events constitute important facets to make the picture more complete?



Map 2. Field locations, ethnic groups and fishing techniques along the coast of Ghana. Source: Haakonsen and Diaw 1991.

Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope have many characteristics in common because they are Ghanaian fishing communities, and are located on the coast where the natural resources of the sea are most conveniently available. However, these communities also have many contrasting qualities, both in terms of their physical environment and location in relation

to urban centres, their history and type of fisheries. Moreover, variations in kinship ideology and residence patterns after marriage, create differences in the gender systems of each place. The differences that I have outlined below are not absolute, and it is important to realise that these kinship and gender ideologies are constantly negotiated in search of individual solutions in everyday life. However, gender ideologies define some boundaries, guidelines or norms, for appropriate female and male behaviour in these three contexts. In the following I provide a summary of the hypothetical arguments I set out with before entering the field.

The Fante, as other Akan groups, have a matrilineal kinship ideology, and women and men continue to live separately in the houses of cognatic relatives after marriage; a man continues to live in his mother's or mother's brother's house or puts up his own, and the same practice applies to women. A wife cooks for her husband at home and brings the food to him in his family house in the evening. She sleeps there, but goes home to her own family house the next morning. The residence pattern is thus both matri- and duo-local. Children belong to their mother's lineage and inherit from them, rather than from the father. It was my assumption that in such a situation a woman can recruit her own children, and her sister's children, as labour in her enterprises, since it is in their own interest as members of the same matrilineage to work for her. A woman can thus employ her daughters in fish smoking and trade and, if she has a canoe, her sons as crew and - most importantly - as captain. By working for their mother, and for other members of the matrilineage, such as mother's brother, both sons and daughters secure their own future. My hypothesis was thus that a matrilineal ideology could make channels available for women's conversion of market capital into fisheries through access to labour and other resources from matrilineally related men.

The Ga-Adangbe also have a duo-local postmarital residence pattern, but a patrilineal kinship ideology. Women live with their female relatives in women's houses, and men live with their male relatives in men's houses. This gendered spatial separation facilitates cooperation between women in their work and likewise between men. A woman continues to live with her mother and sisters in the women's house when she marries, while her husband continues to live in the men's house with his father and brothers. Children belong to their father's lineage. The patrilineal ideology and the gender divided residence pattern tend to promote a strong affiliation of agnates in men's houses, while the cooperation between women and their daughters, even if they do not belong to the same patrilineage, remains strong because they live together in women's houses. I thus

assumed that in such a situation, it would be easy for women to utilise the labour of daughters in their fish trade enterprises, but that it might be quite difficult for a mother to mobilise her sons to work for her as crew and captain if she buys a canoe. It could perhaps be easier for her to cooperate with her brother (from *her* patrilineage's male house) than with her son (from her *husband's* patrilineage's male house) in a fishing enterprise. The son feels an obligation to help his mother with small gifts and services when he starts earning a living, but his loyalty in his work lies with his father. The fruits of his work for his father is eventually what he is going to inherit. My hypothesis was thus that the extent of female canoe ownership in the Ga-Adangbe context was more limited than in the Fante context because of men's (sons') lack of personal interest of working in women's enterprises.

The Anlo-Ewe have a patrilineal kinship ideology, and a viri/patrilocal residence pattern after marriage. Ideally the woman moves to her husband upon marriage, alternatively to the husband's father's compound in cases where the husband has not built his own. When a man has many wives, he may put up houses for the wives elsewhere, or the wives continue to live in their father or mother's compound. Children belong to their father's patrilineage. Patrilineal ideology among the Anlo-Ewe appears to promote subordination by women in relation to both husbands, fathers and brothers. It is difficult, or rather unthinkable, for a woman to become an owner and manager of the means of production in the fisheries in her home town. An indication of the strength of this ideology in the local context, are the cases of resourceful women who have been able to invest in fishing gear and canoes when they have migrated, as in the cases I heard about from Tema and Sierra Leone. For women to become owners of fishing equipment in their home town seems difficult. My hypothesis was thus that the patrilineal ideology and virilocal residence pattern prevented Anlo-Ewe women from becoming owners in the fisheries within the local context.

The variables that are compared in Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope, are thus gender ideologies as expressed in kinship and postmarital residence systems, and the articulation of these values in the socio-economic organisation of fishing and marketing. By establishing comparable contexts through the analysis of gender relations in lineages, marriages, fisheries and marketing, I will investigate how women's entrepreneurial strategies vary, given their range of opportunities and constraints in each of the three contexts.

In my description of Kpone, Moree and Dzelukope, and in my construction of hypotheses for each place, it may sound as these are three isolated homogenous “wholes”, with unquestioned practices for marriage and kinship, and with a homogenous and culturally defined gender ideology following from these norms. On the contrary, of course, marriage, kinship, residence arrangements and gender relations are debated issues, and are constantly negotiated in relationships and communities. Neither is a fishing community an isolated whole; it is part of and influenced by events in the neighbourhood, in Ghana and on the international scene, and its inhabitants take part in a whole range of social arenas that are integrated into their lives.

This is thus not a locality study as such, with a view of “place as bounded, as in various ways a site of authenticity, as singular, fixed and unproblematic in its identity”, and with a conceptualisation of “space as stasis” as Massey (1994:5) puts it. I rather think of places as contexts in which social practices, relations and processes unfold in time and space. In other words, I do not see places as absolute spaces, but as dynamic social spaces, in which space is an aspect of social relations and processes (see Simonsen 1994). Given a conception of social space as “the vast complexity of interlocking and articulating nets of social relations” (Massey 1994:168), “a ‘place’ is formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location” (Ibid.). Furthermore, according to Massey, the specificity created by the particular set of social relations in a place, the identity of a place, is not bounded; “a proportion of the social interrelations will be wider and go beyond the area being referred to in any particular context as a place” (Ibid:169), and because social relations out of which places are constructed are dynamic and changing, the identities of places are always unfixed (Ibid.). Thus, when I talk about Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope as places or local contexts, I see them in such an open, dynamic, and contextual perspective.

Seeing communities as contextualised places comes close to the Ghanaian concept of *home towns*. When Ghanaians meet for the first time, the most obvious question is not to locate each other’s ethnic group or occupation, but (after having asked about the other’s name) to ask: “What is your home town?” The home town is not necessarily where one grew up, or is presently living, but the town where one’s ancestors come from, and to which one attaches one’s identity. This identity is carried along with one’s body to other places, and is mixed with and becomes part of the particular mixtures of social relations constituting these places. A home town can also be seen as constituting a local culture, seen as a conceptual model that characterise a “moral community”, whose members are each other’s reference group (Jessor et. al. 1996:10). In my opinion, such “local” cultures must not be



seen as bounded either. People's conceptual models and the moral discourse in each place are as unfixed as the specificity of the particular set of social relations that at particular historical moments constitute a place. From this follows that places, containing the embodied identities of differently situated people, can contain several moral communities and discourses at the same time, and that the content of these conceptual models depend on the dynamics of the mixture of social relations in a particular location, which are interconnected with the discourses of other places (such as previous home towns) and with present power relations at various geographical levels.

In comparing Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope, I thus try to investigate how the specificity of each place provide opportunities and constraints for social actors, and how the history of each place and the lives of people who live there today are interconnected with other people and places. In the next section I will explain how I conducted the practical part of this endeavour through fieldwork.

### **Translations in the field**

The children in Cape Coast, the former capital of the British colony The Gold Coast and now the regional capital of Central Region, learn a riddle in English as soon as they can talk: "*Broni*, how are you, I'm fine - thank you!" *Broni* means "person from the other side of the horizon" and refers to any white or foreign looking person. Every *broni* has heard the riddle, rhythmically shouted or maybe whispered, followed by a friendly, curious, excited, or shy smile from a small face. If you have heard the riddle some times, you understand that you can make yourself popular by answering the little child in his or her effort of getting a response from the surrounding world. When the child asks "*Broni*, how are you?", the *broni* shouts back "I'm fine", and together the *broni* and the child say "Thank you!!!!". "What is your name?" and "where are you from?" are also two standard phrases in English that the children learn early. Knowing how to behave in front of strangers is something people along the coast have found useful for centuries!

Walking along the streets of Cape Coast one day a little boy, struggling to prevent his pants from falling down, looked up and greeted us. But he had not quite sorted out the different riddles and phrases he had learnt in English, and had not fully grasped the meaning they contained, so he made a combination and asked us hesitatingly: "What...are you...here?" The boy in fact asked us a very relevant question, and it is a question which I, as a researcher,

often have asked myself in the field, and which probably my informants also have had many different beliefs and opinions about.

The question he asked is both about ethics and about methodology. Firstly, it touches upon the issue of the role of the researcher in the field and his or her reasons for conducting the fieldwork. Many researchers move around in Africa collecting data, go home again, and write up the required pages to acquire a degree. The reasons behind the research may be quite diffuse for the people who give out their time and thoughts. The reasons for one's own presence may even be quite diffuse for the researcher herself, apart from the wish to understand a problem or a society and to get the degree. When I was asked in the field "what - and why - are you here?", my answer of wanting to learn about Ghanaian fisheries, and especially about the smoking and selling of fish, was met with understanding. The fisher people are experts, and they were sure Norwegians have something to learn from Ghanaians when it comes to fish handling. They knew very well that Norway have great fisheries and expressed hopes of getting jobs on Norwegian trawlers or getting hold of good quality fishing nets. They also felt that my goal of getting an education was legitimate, and that they would do their best to help me - a "young girl" (in her late twenties but without children) - in this aim. They expressed hopes about me getting a job in the Fisheries Department in Ghana, so they had nothing against teaching me about the fisheries, perhaps hoping I would act as a spokesperson sometime in the future. Thus I had no problems with my role as a student. When I said I was going to write a book, this was of less interest, but some expressed that it would be nice for their grandchildren to read. Some of the women said it was important that "the government" could read about how hard they struggle.

Since it would make access to certain types of information difficult, I did not often say that I would write about problems within the community, such as social and economic inequality or marriage conflicts. When I said I would not use people's real names in my book, this was considered as quite strange and unnecessary. However, I have chosen to use pseudonyms in the case stories, since some of them contain information which may seem harmless, but which could bring problems for individuals in the local community or in relation to the authorities. The degree of openness about one's life was rather decided by the relationship we built over time and the kind of questions we asked, than by my explanations of the purposes of the study. I also had the experience that those who had life-long experience and large enterprises, or had important religious or other public positions, were more outspoken than those who were either young or poor. Of course some people are, by personality, simply more outspoken than others, but the way a person related to the researcher and her

interpreter often gave us a hint about the person's position in society. Those who were wealthy in terms of economic assets and/or in prestige seemed to feel that they had more relevant information to reveal of interest to strangers. On the other hand, the high status persons also had more important information to *hide*, and thus information about how much they earned, personal accounts about their problems in life, and about important social or business relations, could often be impossible topics to get reliable information about. Low status persons had less to lose by revealing such information, and would often also voluntarily mention things they knew or had heard about influential persons in their community. Such “gossip” was an important source of information, which we did not automatically “believe”. We checked the information by mentioning what we had heard to others (and it was very important never to reveal from whom!), and in this way we were sometimes able, little by little, to get insight into interesting intrigues and networks. Sometimes we found out that what we had heard was only a rumour, but such rumours, especially about powerful people, told us a lot about how entrepreneurs are looked upon in their community.

Secondly, the “what are you here?” question relates to the issue of doing ethnography and using qualitative methodology. My interpreters have been most important for the information I could get access to and for my interpretations of what people have told me about their lives. The interpreters have been gate-openers and made me understand how I could behave appropriately to avoid the most embarrassing situations. I learned a lot from that. The interpreters also disapproved when I wanted to ask questions that were totally out of place. However, I would often insist, or ask them to ask the inappropriate question in an appropriate way, and we would approach a subject from a new angle - from my angle - and we would discuss an issue in a way neither the interpreter nor the people we talked with had thought of before. But mostly it was the other way around; my questions were translated in a way which made them more relevant in the particular context. Therefore I think our interview rounds were quite interesting to all of us; the researcher, the interpreter and the informant.

Since I did fieldwork in three places with three different languages, I was unfortunately unable to learn any of them to any satisfactory extent, and I had a different interpreter in each place. I was conscious about the gender and age factors. All of my interpreters were therefore women, and they were older than me. Through earlier experience knew I that I am perceived as a very young person and thus with little authority. In company with another woman, we were perceived as a team, which was a great advantage. Moving around as a

team made conversations take place more naturally and made us - especially me - look less suspicious. Since both my interpreters and I are women, we easily got access to conversations and to share company with women. Moreover, our gender clearly shaped our interest in knowing about women's lives. And even if men often talked surprisingly openly about personal issues, I am aware that the gender of myself and my interpreters influenced the outcome of this project. For example, while we accompanied fish traders on long market trips where we even slept in the same bed, we never accompanied men on a fishing trip.

Not only age and gender, but other backgrounds, experiences and identities of field workers (both researcher and interpreters), shape their access and approach to various types of information in the field<sup>3</sup>. Thus, although I discussed at length with the interpreters what kind of information I was seeking, I know that each fieldwork would have been quite different with other persons helping me, exactly because I am the person I am and the three interpreters are the persons they are. This was a valuable experience.

In Moree I had the same interpreter as in 1991 when we lived together for five months. Comfort Sagoe was an unemployed teacher, divorced with two children, who was farming on the outskirts of Moree, and we met just by coincidence on the bus. She heard me talking to the driver about my project, and she got interested. When I returned in 1994 Comfort had remarried and lived in Cape Coast, so I was a guest in the big, crowded family house of her husband, while Comfort and I made day trips by bus to Moree. To live with Comfort and her husband's matrilineal family was a fieldwork in itself, which I learned a lot from. Comfort's husband is *abusua panyin* (an elder in the matrilineage who often negotiates in conflicts concerning the lineage members) and speaks English fluently, so he became an important informant. When I returned again in 1995 I lived on my own, but picked up Comfort in my car in the mornings and often spent the evenings with her family.

When Comfort and I “went to work” in Moree, we could draw on the network from the time we had lived there, and not the least she could update me on events in Moree after I had left in 1991, since she had continued to rent our rooms and had tried to make a living selling various things in Moree for about two years. We used to spend the whole day there either looking at what was going on at the beach, or “visiting” people. When we were hungry or exhausted by the heat, we had something to eat, but mostly something to drink in a bar or “drinking spot”, and on such occasions we could hear gossip or important news

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<sup>3</sup> On the significance of gender and other identities in fieldwork, see for example Bell et. al. (1993) and Wolf (1996).

in the town, and we got new ideas about whom to “visit” next. I think the conversations we had during these “beer-hours” have been very important for my perspective on life in Moree and life for Fante women in general. We had time to reflect on the conversations we had with other people, I could write down details and clear up misunderstandings. We also discussed our own and our friends' lives, and tried to understand each other's views and experiences. Comfort had many experiences in common with the women we interviewed. The understanding which grew out of this friendship taught me a lot about why we often *misunderstood* each other, which again enabled me, I think, to estimate or assess the way Comfort translated my questions and how she translated people's answers to me.

In Dzelukope I had an interpreter, Aku Kalitsi, to whom I had been introduced by the district administration. She had lived in Lagos in Nigeria and in Accra, was divorced and a widow, and made a living out of a little shop in her uncle's house in Dzelukope. She had two grown-up children who lived elsewhere. Aku was active in an ADB credit group in the Dzelukope Fishmongers' Association, and spoke good English. She was a good interpreter, but was quite busy in her own life. Her views about what the Government and other external agencies should do for the women, and what fisher women did “wrong” were often apparent. Often I disagreed, but I think I learned something by knowing Aku's way of thinking. And again, she shared many of her personal experiences with me, and taught me much about what life is like for women in Dzelukope. With her I taped many of the interviews, which we later listened to at my place and transcribed. This process took many hours, since we discussed so many of the issues which were raised during the interviews. These discussions were very useful, and I later adopted the same method with Comfort on some of the interviews we did in Moree.

The interpreter who helped me in Kpone, Patience Vormawor, had quite a different background than Comfort and Aku, whose lives, although they were literate, were not so distant from the fisher women's. I was introduced to Patience at the University of Ghana. She had worked as assistant and interpreter on many projects. She has a Bachelor degree in Sociology, writes children's books and works at a Centre for National Culture. She has two children and her husband works abroad. Patience had worked in many fishing villages before, so it was a real luxury for me to work with her. She was very well liked wherever we went. We taped all the interviews, and Patience transcribed them for me on her own, and then we discussed them. This meant that we could do many more interviews than we otherwise would have had time to do. My problem, however, with this “easy” way of translating what people said, was that I was much less part of the interpretation process. I

had to struggle less, in a way, and did not make all those mistakes which had to be corrected and discussed on the spot.

To work with different interpreters made me more aware of the problems with interpretation of language as well as the interpretation of events and behaviour. I had been frustrated so many times over the inaccuracies of the interpreter, sometimes just lack of English words or an inadequate understanding of how important it was to explain to me what people meant by those small comments or simply by what they did *not* say, and so forth. But by having to relate to three different interpreters, I think I became more aware of my *own* position in the interpretation process. The validity of the data are not only dependent on the accuracy of the translation of words, but also on the relation between me and the interpreter, the situation, and on the methods we used. Misunderstandings and biases do not only arise as a result of my own western background, but also by the “filtering” of information through an interpreter with her specific background, which she does in such a way that statements and situations can be made understandable to the foreign researcher.

Without doubt the times when I feel I have grasped the contents of a conversation or a situation in the field best, are those when both I and the interpreter had known the persons involved for some time, and when they also knew us. It was also an advantage when we could leave the field situation and sit down elsewhere later and discuss what happened. Therefore *time*, inevitably, is a very important factor when it comes to understanding people and what they say and do. With time there is also the possibility of listening to what people say they do, later hear what others say they do, and often also to observe what they do in an actual situation. It also makes it possible to assess the interpreter's translations better, and to confront my own interpretations of the translations with observed events or contradictory statements. To visit the same locality and some of the same people over the years is also of great value. This makes it possible to see people's lives more in perspective: Relations between people change, events may alter his or her plans, and it is possible to reflect together on the events which happened years ago with “belated wisdom”.

These reflections on qualitative methodology are, as I see it, the only way to give an account of the reliability and validity of my data. I have tried to explain the context in which I gathered information, and some of the factors which have influenced the way in which I construct or produce my research findings. And it is not difficult to see the connection to the metaphor of patchwork again; I stitch together fragments of interviews and events, which have been collected the way it was possible for me and my interpreters to do, given

the amount of time, knowledge, resources and the relationships we were able to establish between ourselves and with the people we related to in the field. But the interpretation process does not stop there. It is still my task to make an accessible text out of the interpretations we made in the field.

This important issue leads me from the account of relations and methods in fieldwork, to the issues of epistemology and the construction of knowledge, which, I would say, both shape the preconditions for and the outcome of a research project.

I will in the following sections argue for an interpretative human geography, drawing on the phenomenology of Alfred Schutz. I provide a discussion of what we are actually doing when we engage ourselves in a process of interpretation of Others. I point at the problems of relativism and incommensurability, but find that through self-reflexivity and a comparative approach, these problems are not unsurmountable, at least not to the extent that we should give up the project of understanding life-worlds beyond our own.

Furthermore, I emphasize the “processual” aspect of writing a text where theory meets empirical experience, which again goes back to inform theoretical assumptions. That is, in my view, what interpretation and writing is about; a dialectical process where theory is created in the encounter with empirical data. I thus see research as a construction process, and as I have illustrated, my way of conducting research could be described as a craft; patchwork. In line with Karin Knorr-Cetina (1981) I therefore argue that scientific knowledge or “facts” are as socially constructed as any other type of knowledge. For this reason it is vital to be aware of in which way our interpretation of the world is a constitutive part of the construction of knowledge and representation of Others.

### **Interpretation of Other life worlds**

In her feminist critique of geography’s “imperialist” and “masculinist” way of thinking, Gillian Rose (1993) writes that:

“Geographers desire knowledge of the whole world (...), they also desire a whole knowledge of the world. Geographical knowledge aims to be exhaustive. It assumes that, in principle, the world can be fully known and understood” (Ibid:7).

The assumption that exhaustive, positive knowledge is possible - or even desirable - has

been questioned, challenged and rejected for a long time, also in geography. But such an attitude, although we no longer “believe” in it, or at least an overestimation of what we have been able to understand, may still lurk in our subconsciousness. One of the attempts of seeking knowledge in a way that does not claim to be exhaustive has come from phenomenology. Interpretivist and constructivist thinking originated in this philosophical tradition. The two approaches share the critique of logical empiricist methodology applied on the social and humanistic sciences, and have their roots in the earliest arguments over a rational foundation of knowledge. Historically, constructivism builds on interpretivist thinking (Schwandt 1994). Both these approaches to human inquiry aim at understanding the complex world of lived experience *from the point of view of those who live it*.

Interpretivist thinking was conceived as a reaction against the effort to develop a natural science of the social. It was influenced by the sociological tradition following Max Weber (*Verstehende Soziologie*), the German intellectual tradition of hermeneutics, and Alfred Schutz' sociological variant of phenomenology. Schutz (1899-1959) distinguished between three meanings of the term *Verstehen*: 1) as the experiential form of common-sense knowledge of human affairs, 2) as an epistemological problem, and 3) as a method peculiar to the social sciences (Schutz 1971:57).

In the first meaning, *Verstehen* is seen as the complex process by which we come to recognise our own actions and those of our fellow actors as meaningful. This process can also be explored as an epistemological problem: How is such understanding or *Verstehen* possible? Here the notion of *Lebenswelt* (or *universal horizon*) is central. Schutz sees the *life-world* as ontologically prior to science, or as he puts it: “The common-sense knowledge of everyday life is the unquestioned but always questionable background within which inquiry starts and within which alone it can be carried out” (Ibid:57). Peter Berger defines a life-world as “a total sphere of experience circumscribed by a natural environment, man-made objects, events and other individuals” (Wuthnow, Hunter, Bergesen and Kurzweil 1984:31, see also Werlen 1993 chapter 3). Individuals live in multiple realities (i.e. dreams, fantasies), but we share the reality of everyday life (the paramount reality) through the world of meanings that we share with others; through intersubjectivity.

The problem occurs when one tries to understand the life-world of people who do not share the same paramount reality as oneself:

“Here am I and my culture; it is accessible to me and to my cultural companions as a kind of experience of Others. Other cultural humanity and other culture can become accessible



only by a complicated process of understanding, namely, on the basic level of the common Nature, which, in its specific spatio-temporal structure, constitutes the horizon of being for the accessibility to all the manifold cultural phenomena. As Nature is thus concretely and uniformly constituted, so human existence itself is referred to an existent life-world as a realm of practical activity, which, from the first is endowed with human significations” (Schutz 1971:127).

Schutz thus seems to assume an objective reality; Nature, which is “filled” with human significations. It is the task of science to reveal the way practical activity is made meaningful in the existent life-world by the social actors themselves. Social science should therefore explore the individual's experience of the complex world from the perspective of those who live it. Hence Schutz makes a distinction between the everyday concept of the life-world and the “rational reconstruction thereof” (Collin 1985:151), and states that: “All social sciences are objective meaning-contexts of subjective meaning-contexts” (Schutz 1973:212). Then the epistemological problem of *Verstehen* becomes one of constructing a representation which is in correspondence with social reality, or people's subjective meaning context; a second meaning of *Verstehen*. Here Schutz' postulate of adequacy is central:

“Each term in a scientific model of human action must be constructed in such a way that a human act performed within the life-world by an individual actor in the way indicated by the typical construct would be understandable for the actor himself as well as for his fellow-men in terms of common-sense interpretation of everyday life. Compliance with this postulate warrants the consistency of the constructs of the social scientist with the constructs of common-sense experience of the social reality” (Schutz 1971:44).

In order to make a meaningful interpretation of individuals' actions, and make them understandable for other individuals on a different level of abstraction, one must therefore try to find out what the meaning behind the actions are. This does not mean that one necessarily has to “go native”, as Collin has pointed out: “The contention that in order to grasp the native language one has to share native beliefs, is too strong: an appreciation of the contents of those beliefs is all that can be asked of the interpreter, not that he actually embrace them” (1985:154). The problem of adequacy can also be linked to the use of the linguistic terms “emic” and “etic”. An emic analysis is based on the informant's subjective categories, while an etic analysis refers to models derived from the analyst's theoretical categories. Broch-Due, Rudie and Bleie (1993) claim that the distinction between these two types of analyses never can be clear-cut because, as they put it, the intellectual tradition of the analyst's lived culture lurks behind the development of theory: “Therefore, it is our emic

models that are turned into the etics with which we attack other cultures” (Ibid:4). In my view, adequacy then becomes a question of *degree*; we cannot *be* the people of whose life-world we try to make an adequate representation.

The problem of adequacy and the construction of scientific terms based on the categories of those who are being studied, leads us to the third meaning of *Verstehen*; *Verstehen* as method. Here Schutz distinguishes between first-order and second-order interpretation. The first-order meaning of the term is the process by which we make sense of and interpret our everyday world (Schwandt 1994:121). A second-order sense of interpretation or *Verstehen* is the process by which the social scientist tries to make sense of people's own interpretations:

“The thought objects constructed by the social scientist, in order to grasp this social reality, have to be founded upon the thought objects constructed by the common-sense thinking of men, living their daily life in the social world. Thus, the constructs of the social sciences are, so to say, constructs of the second degree, namely constructs of the constructs made by the actors on the social scene” (Schutz 1971:59).

The awareness that we all construct our life projects and that the information we get from our informants are their own constructions, is what Anthony Giddens (1976) calls *double hermeneutics*. To prepare an interpretation is in itself to construct a reading of peoples' interpretations of their life-worlds: Interpretation is thus to offer a construction of the constructions of the actors one studies.

It appears to me that one can approach the problem of interpretation from two extreme viewpoints. The first viewpoint is that interpretation of Others is impossible because of the incommensurability of different life-worlds; the more different our paramount reality is from the paramount reality of the everyday lives that we try to understand, the less meaning are we able to grasp. The other viewpoint is that once we have learned the language and have shared everyday life long enough with the Others, we will be able to interpret their world according to the postulate of adequacy so that our interpretation and representation corresponds to social reality of the Other's subjective meaning-context. The first viewpoint would lead us to the sad conclusion that to study other people than ourselves and those whose everyday life we share, is not a worthwhile endeavour, since it is impossible. The last viewpoint would lead to a naive overestimation of our own interpretative capabilities, and an underestimation of the fact that “We all start out the search for improved belief with a vast store of beliefs already at hand” (Campbell 1996:155).

I therefore think we should be aware of our limitations in the understanding of other people from distant places with world views and everyday lives different from our own. However, by continuously improving our interpretative tools through extensive fieldwork and a case-based and actor-oriented approach, our interpretations can be improved. This is not an easy project, and there is no easy way of interpretation. On the contrary, as I noticed during my fieldwork, understanding comes through lengthy discussions and time-consuming participation and observation, through which discoveries of *mis*understandings can lead to improved understanding of concepts and situations, and if not a complete, at least a partial grasping of people's own constructions. I thus see the awareness of how the "worldview embeddedness of all observations" (Ibid.) constructs our own reality with which we interpret Others' reality, as a first step towards what Schweder (1996) calls a "validity-seeking hermeneutics" (Ibid:156). An interpretative geography is thus based on the common-sense recognition that:

"Like all scientific endeavour, the aim of such a geography is to understand and explain the nature of (social) reality. But it recognizes that investigation of the social world does not construct the real world anew. (...) we are already in the reconstruction business of learning to see the world of individuals or groups as they see it" (Eyles 1988:1-2).

I will in the following discuss the implications of the "situatedness" of researchers in time and space for their role in the "reconstruction business", in other words how we as social persons construct scientific knowledge and representations of Others.

### **Social construction of knowledge**

The major concern of constructivists is not, as for interpretivists, the understanding of different people's interpretation of the *same* world, but with the *making of different world versions*. An early constructivist contribution came with Berger and Luckman's *The Social Construction of Reality* in 1972. Constructivists emphasize the instrumental and practical function of construction of theory and scientific knowledge: What we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective. Knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by mind, and are the products of complicated discursive processes (Schwandt 1994). Thus, when we interpret and make a representation; a construct of others' constructs, the world version that we have constructed is an integral part of what has been interpreted. But the representation is also part of a system of interpretation that we as researchers are part of, or what we maybe can call a *context of making and judging of world versions*.

Construction of world versions, of what counts as “facts”, is also the concern of Karin Knorr-Cetina (1981; 1984) in her theory of the constructivist and contextual nature of knowledge. Knorr-Cetina rejects that there should be any particular scientific logic, and she contends that “it may be time to acknowledge scientific methods as just another version of social life” (1981:137). In contrast to Schutz, she rejects the division between everyday reasoning and scientific rationality.

Knorr-Cetina explains that “to the objectivist, the world is composed of facts and the goal of knowledge is to provide a literal account of what the world is like” (1981:1). That such a literal account of the world should be possible is a belief which, according to Knorr-Cetina, exists in the world of science (the problem of facticity). In present “technological societies”, she says, a hegemony over what counts as knowledge appears to be held by the sciences (Ibid:152). Knorr-Cetina thus provides a critique and highlights the power relations in the world of science and the way “facts” are established, or should we say the way paramount world versions are created.

Knorr-Cetina did ethnographic fieldwork in a scientific laboratory. She studied the process of knowledge production empirically, and analysed how researchers in this particular context fabricated research results. For her, it is necessary to study the research process empirically, because she wants to show that social processes and power relations in the world of science are not irrelevant to the content, form and status of the knowledge it produces:

“The thesis under consideration is that the products of science are contextually specific constructions which bear the mark of the situational contingency and interest structure of the process by which they are generated, and which cannot be adequately understood without an analysis of their construction. This means that what happens in the process of construction is *not* irrelevant to the products we obtain” (Ibid:5).

Thus, she sees the scientific product as internally structured through the process of production, and not necessarily in accordance with “reality” outside the laboratory. Knorr-Cetina therefore claims that in the study of the production of knowledge one has to *bring space and time back in*, as she puts it. The researcher always carries with her her cultural and social capital, and she is situated in a context. Observations, as the language of science, are always impregnated with theory. Behind each observation lie a series of decisions and negotiations; *selections*. Processes of fabrication of knowledge involve chains of decisions and negotiations through which their outcomes are derived (Ibid:5). In other words, selections have to be made, and selections can only be made on the basis of previous

selections; they are based on translations into further selections. Hence earlier selections are the criteria we choose from in our further selections. To study scientific investigation is thus to study the process by which the respective selections are made (Ibid:7).

By viewing scientific products as highly internally constructed in terms of the selectivity they incorporate, Knorr-Cetina calls into question the classical division between the “context of discovery” and the “context of validation”. This means that the validators of the scientific community are part of the process of production of knowledge, and therefore decisive for the procedure and outcome of the researcher's activities:

“If we look at the process of knowledge production in sufficient detail, it turns out that scientists constantly relate their decisions and selections to the expected response of specific members of this community of ‘validators’, or to the dictates of the journal in which they wish to publish. (...) In short, the discoveries of the laboratory are made as part and parcel of their substance, *with a view towards* potential criticism or acceptance” (Ibid:7).

In this sense the validators are most present in the opinion-formation about which facts are to count as “truth”. Certain research results are *solidified* through continued incorporation into ongoing research. Solidification and production of research results happen through the selections made in the process of scientific investigation in the research context where the researcher has to relate to “validators, producers, clients and competitors” (Knorr-Cetina 1984:230). Consequently Knorr-Cetina sees researchers as opportunists; as practical reasoners:

“It is the scientist's knowledge about what is a problem and what counts as a solution, educated guesses about where to look and what to ignore, and highly selective, expectation-based tinkering with the material that guides them towards an ‘innovative’ result” (Knorr-Cetina 1981:12).

Here the opportunism of the researcher is seen as comparable to that of a “tinkerer” (Ibid:34). A tinkerer uses materials and tools available to mend or construct things. In the same way researchers use what they have at hand, and do not follow any particular “scientific” logic apart from practical reason. Others, such as Lévi-Strauss, have in a similar way viewed the multiple methodologies of qualitative research as *bricolage*, and the researcher as a *bricoleur* (Denzin 1996:129). The meaning of this French term is “someone who works with his (or her) hands and uses devious means compared to those of the craftsman ...the *bricoleur* is practical and gets the job done” (Weinstein and Weinstein in

Denzin 1996:147). This view of the research process comes quite close to my experience of doing qualitative research (and quantitative research as well if we agree with Knorr-Cetina). I am not sure about the extent to which researchers always are opportunists, and whether the world of social science in all aspects can be compared with a natural science laboratory. But I think that we all can acknowledge that we make the best out of what we have at hand during collection of data and in the process of analysing them, and, of course that we write for an audience of both sympathetic readers and “validators”.

Knorr-Cetina’s emphasis on the “fact” that “facts” are socially constructed, and on the researcher’s “situatedness” in time and space, are perhaps two of the most basic and important epistemological and methodological tools to bring along in the research process. One of the points made by Knorr-Cetina is that if construction of “facts” builds on selections, we can criticise “facts” by challenging the underlying selections, and provide alternatives by making other selections:

“Selections can be called into question precisely because they *are* selections: that is, precisely because they involve the possibility of alternative selections. If scientific objects are selectively carved from reality, they can be deconstructed by challenging the selections they incorporate. If scientific facts are fabricated in the sense that they are derived from decisions, they can be defabricated by imposing alternative decisions” (Ibid:6).

A constructivist approach can therefore be applied in order to, on the one hand, study concrete processes of construction of knowledge, on the other hand it opens up for a critique of the social sciences by challenging earlier selections. To me, deconstruction here does not mean a quasi-postmodern “anything goes”, but rather a way of “peeling the onion”, of revealing the fabric of the layers of knowledge we are informed by today.

The strength of the constructivist approach thus lies in its awareness of the contextual nature of the knowledge construction process: “The selections of previous work constitute a *resource* which enables scientific inquiry to proceed: they supply the tools, methods and interpretations upon which a scientist may draw in the process of her own research” (Ibid:6). By being aware of the selections we build our research on, the practice of social science can become more self-reflexive, and we may have a chance to make our representations of other people in both our own and other cultures more in accordance with the postulate of adequacy and in line with how people understand the world. In our research we should therefore recognise that

“The product of the bricoleur’s labour is a bricolage, a complex, dense, reflexive, collagelike creation that represents the researcher’s images, understandings, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis” (Denzin 1996:130),

My choice of an actor-oriented and gendered entrepreneur approach is thus clearly based upon earlier selections in geography, in other social sciences, in development studies and in gender studies<sup>4</sup>. My task in this study is therefore to provide an alternative interpretation, which nevertheless and to a large extent is based on previous selections. Through my construction of a representation of my interpretations of Others’ interpretation of their own life-world (my patchwork or bricolage), I attempt to describe and explain social and economic processes in Ghanaian fishing communities as close to their own experiences as my tool-kit containing theories, concepts, assumptions, other researchers’ interpretations, and a portion of self-reflexivity, allows.

In the following sections I will examine some of the previous selections that have been made by previous generations of social scientists in their studies of entrepreneurship, and I will attempt to clarify how, on the basis of these selections, I have constructed an entrepreneur approach which aims at adequacy for the study of everyday life in Ghanaian canoe fisheries.

### **Theoretical approaches to the study of entrepreneurship**

I see the female traders' and financiers' role in the fisheries in an entrepreneur perspective. There exists a whole body of literature on entrepreneurship and many definitions of the phenomenon, such as "self-employed accumulators of material surpluses" (Hart 1975:6). Entrepreneurs have been analysed as a distinct personality type (as in the Weberian perspective), as a manager, as a promotor of economic development, and by the entrepreneurial function of combining the factors of production in working enterprises. The entrepreneur, in whatever way he is defined, generally seems to be a man or, at best, sexually neutral (see Robertson 1984:148).

The male bias in entrepreneur theory reflects both the importance the world of science ascribes to economic factors in "development" and "growth", as well as the assumption that women are not a driving force in socio-economic change, given their often invisible

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<sup>4</sup> For a review of how “Western” selections shaped the various approaches and representations of “Third World women”, see Overå (1995c).

role in the economy. In my view, it is important to have a much wider approach to human agency in socio-economic change. One must search into many other fields than the economy and the work place; families, sub-cultures, art, religion, media, processes of spatial and social mobility, and so on. In order to understand why history takes certain directions one also needs to understand in what kind of environment the so-called entrepreneurs are active. In essence, then, the study of entrepreneurship is about the dynamics between structure and human agency in given contexts. Given that half of the world's "human agents" are women it is self-evidently important to include them in analyses of socio-economic change, of modernisation and globalisation. Firstly, women often act as "catalysts" of change themselves (see Ekechi 1996). Secondly, gender is a crucial explanatory factor when we try to understand change through a closer examination of the careers of the women and men who - in one way or the other, on a small or a large scale - find new solutions to earning a living and represent new approaches to ways of living one's life in a changing world.

My theoretical approach to entrepreneurship is inspired by Fredrik Barth (1963), who was one of the first to see entrepreneurial activity as part of wider social processes. Likewise Sara Berry's (1993) emphasis on the flexibility and negotiability of African institutions is important for my understanding of the gendered socio-economic processes in Ghanaian canoe fisheries. I view the female entrepreneurs with such a process and institution oriented approach, informed by the knowledge we now have after decades of feminist and gender research (i.e. Edholm, Harris and Young 1977; IBG 1984; Errington and Gewertz 1987; Moore 1988, 1994; Moran 1990; Stølen and Vaa 1993; Broch-Due et. al. 1993; Lund 1993; Parpart 1993; McDowell 1993, 1997, Rose 1993; Connelly et. al. 1995; Massey 1984, 1994; Clark 1994; Greene 1996).

In 1946 the economist Joseph Schumpeter saw the function of entrepreneurs as "to reform or revolutionise the pattern of production by exploiting an invention or, more generally, an untried technological possibility for producing a new commodity or producing an old one in a new way, by opening up a new source of supply of material or a new outlet for products by reorganizing an industry and so on" (Schumpeter 1950:132). The undertaking of such economic functions require will power and personality because of resistance from the social environment as "they lie outside the routine tasks which everybody understands" (Ibid.). Thus, the important function of the entrepreneur does not "consist in either inventing anything or otherwise creating the conditions which the enterprise exploits. It consists in getting things done" (Ibid.). It is mainly in this function



of *innovator* the entrepreneur has been incorporated in, for example, economic anthropology (i.e. Firth 1967: Polanyi 1968). Formerly, geographers have been more concerned with the spatial diffusion of innovation than with human agency in this process, such as in time geography (Carlstein 1982). Torsten Hägerstrand's model of spatial diffusion was path-breaking in these studies, and although the focus was on the spatial process, geographers did acknowledge the existence of people behind it. To illustrate how human agency often was viewed, I quote one textbook in human geography: "From research on agricultural innovations we know that there is generally a small group of people who are 'early innovators' and another small group of 'laggards'; the majority of population adopts an innovation after the early innovators and before the laggards" (Haggett 1983:314). In many geographical innovation studies, however, "social factors" were often seen as a hindrance or as resistance to diffusion of new inventions.

Rather than looking at the functions of the entrepreneur as such, the social anthropologist Fredrik Barth viewed entrepreneurship as an *aspect of a role*. The focus in Barth's model of entrepreneurship is on that aspect of behaviour that relates to *actions* and *activities*; "it characterizes a certain quality or orientation in this activity which may be present to greater or lesser extent in the different institutionalized roles found in the community. To the extent that persons take the initiative, and in pursuit of profit in some discernible form manipulate other persons and resources, they are acting as entrepreneurs" (Barth 1963:6). Barth sees the entrepreneurial career as a process, as a chain of *transactions* between the entrepreneur and his environment. In other words, the acceptability by the community of the activities of the entrepreneur always has to be negotiated (as Schumpeter also pointed out). The characteristics of entrepreneurial activity are, according to Barth, the following; 1) maximization of "profit"; 2) an experimental attitude, or innovation; 3) a willingness to take risks (Ibid:7).

The "*profit*" obtained through entrepreneurial activity is not only of a material nature, but "may take the form of power, rank, or experience and skills" (Ibid:8). Such immaterial profit can often be *converted* into material capital, and can thus in a sense serve as a "store of value in a strictly economic sense" (Ibid.). Thus both material and immaterial profit or capital can be accumulated. Bourdieu calls this *symbolic capital*, which can be seen as a "transformed and thereby *disguised* form of physical 'economic' capital" (Bourdieu 1977:183). The "*cost*", which can also be the outcome of an enterprise, according to Barth, is not solely of an economic nature; an entrepreneur *risks* a loss of power, rank, prestige and goodwill.

The environment is of great importance in Barth's analytic model as he sees the entrepreneur as taking a series of *constrained choices* in his activities. He attempts to "analyse the articulation between the activities of the entrepreneur and the social organisation within which he is active, and which he is instrumental in creating and changing" (Barth 1963:7). Barth borrowed the concept of *niche* from ecology. The clue of entrepreneurship is to find a niche which can be exploited profitably (in the above noted form of profitability). A niche is the "position which he occupies in relation to resources, competitors and clients" (Ibid:9). In order to be able to exploit a niche, the entrepreneur mobilises his *assets*; "the sum total of capital, skills and social claims which he may employ in the enterprise" (Ibid.).

Another key concept is *spheres of exchange*, which is defined as discrete spheres of the economy, with unity within and barriers or boundaries between, in which goods and services circulate freely (Ibid:10, see also Barth 1967). The idea is that certain types of value can circulate freely within each sphere, but not between them. The *conversion of value* from one sphere to another can only happen through a few restricted *channels*. There are legitimate and illegitimate channels of conversion, in other words; conversion of value by illegitimate means will be met by sanctions from the surroundings. The classical example of illegitimate conversion of value is the politician who buys votes. Another example is exchange of sex for money. There are, however, other legitimate, more indirect and acceptable channels, such as investment in education and investment in party apparatus by the would-be politician, or perhaps economic support of humanitarian organisations to obtain symbolic capital. And we have the institution of marriage - in our society even co-habitation or a steady relationship - where sexual favours and material needs can be combined in a legitimate and morally acceptable way.

According to Barth (1963) "to cross boundaries and exchange value through channels of conversion from one sphere to another is typical of entrepreneurial activity" (Ibid:11). It is those who are able to convert value through socially acceptable channels in order to exploit a new niche, or an already established niche in a new way, who can accumulate and reinvest in the enterprise with the aim of some material and/or symbolic wealth. With reference to female entrepreneurs in Ghanaian fisheries, one can ask how the boundaries are constructed in the three communities in relation to gender, age, social status, and so on. These barriers seem unsurmountable for the majority, but can be crossed by those who are able to mobilise their assets and channelise them in ways which are socially acceptable in their particular context. It will be most important for this study,

then, to find out how symbolic capital is accumulated by both men and women, and what is viewed as symbolic capital for men and women in the three places.

Notably, a system of spheres of exchange must be seen as part of whole value systems and as culturally constructed. As Barth points out; "...the demarcation of spheres must be made with respect to the total pattern of circulation of value in an economic system, and not merely with reference to the criterion of direct exchangeability" (Barth 1967:149).

All social relations are gendered. To become male or female is the first and most basic aspect of a person's identity. Therefore value systems and spheres of exchange are gendered in their construction, and thus gender is a crucial element in the analysis of entrepreneurial activity (as it is in the other aspects of a person's roles and status in society). In studies of entrepreneurship gender has often been a "missing link". Let me explain how I find Barth's model useful for my study of gendered entrepreneurship in Ghanaian fishing communities.

### **Gender, entrepreneurship and moral exchange**

In a gendered entrepreneur perspective women's gender-defined marketing role in Ghana can be viewed as their *asset*, and their roles as fish traders, financiers, investors and owners in the canoe sector as *niches*, which entrepreneurial women intermediaries could enter in a process of technological and economic change in a certain period of Ghanaian history. Through access to certain *channels of conversion*, such as marriage by wealthy fish traders with canoe owners, women have been able to exchange value from one sphere to the other; from the female dominated domain of market trade to the male dominated domain of canoe ownership. Women's entrepreneurial activity in the motorisation process also brought about social change; an increasing number of women became owners of the means of production and came to inhabit elite positions (symbolic capital) in their communities. Interestingly, though, although all women along the coast possess their gender defined comparative advantage - the asset of their market trade role - the niches of investor and owner were not open for women with economic resources everywhere. Fante women seem to have found legitimate channels to convert value from the social and economic sphere of fish exchange, commonly perceived as a female domain, into the male dominated sphere of fishing to a far greater degree than Ga-

Adangbe and Anlo-Ewe women.

One can ask whether it is particularly entrepreneurial or innovative that women become canoe owners when there are hundreds of male canoe owners already. An innovative attitude, a crucial and defining characteristic of entrepreneurs (according to Barth), is often associated with the creation of new combinations of means of production, new products or working processes. Clearly innovation happened in the canoe fisheries when the traditional types of dug-out canoes were enlarged with wooden boards and equipped with a "supporting platform" for imported outboard motors. Women copied these technical inventions of the fishermen when they invested in canoes. Thus it was not in technical invention, but in the diffusion of the new technology, women were entrepreneurs. Their main entrepreneurial function did not lie in new inventions, but in investing in them and organising production in order to, as Schumpeter pointed out, "get things done". As we shall see later, the ways women negotiated their positions and managed to find organisational principles that could work for them in their enterprises demanded a high degree of creativity and guts. Likewise, the profit potential they achieved by vertically integrating the production and marketing of fish through binding credit relations was also a new way of running a fishing enterprise which often put them in an advantageous position as compared with male owners.

Interestingly, Green and Cohen (1995) claim that research on women owners and managers reveal that in relation to female entrepreneurs, innovation has a very different meaning than in the conventional models of entrepreneurship. Such women are entrepreneurs simply because they are women entrepreneurs, by virtue of making atypical career choices. In setting up and running businesses of their own, they are breaking out of the domains traditionally allocated to women (Ibid:299). The financial or physical risk is not necessarily the greatest challenge for a woman, compared with other types of risks - personal and psychological - which they often see as much more difficult. If this is true it becomes obvious that some of the *risks* and *constraints* women face, are of a different nature than those faced by men. These gender differences vary within and between societies. In a gender divided production system like the canoe fisheries in Ghana a better understanding of the dynamics of the "genderedness" of social and economic relations in a modernisation process, is thus essential.

I find it interesting to ask: To what extent have Fante women actually made atypical career choices? Did they have to break out of traditional domains allocated to them? In

my view, Fante women could take the opportunity of starting new enterprises at the time when outboard motors became profitable investment objects precisely because such activity represented a continuation of their marketing role and of their central economic and social position in the matrilineage. As long as their entrepreneurial activities were centred around the reproduction and improvement of living conditions for the lineage, in accordance with the matrilineal ideology of procreation and descent through women (see Poewe 1981), their accumulative activities were not in conflict with their roles as mothers, sisters, daughters and wives. Instead of breaking out of female domains, these women were regarded as living up to the Fante gender ideal of hardworking and procreative women, even by male members of their matrilineage, who could benefit from the redistribution of female entrepreneurs' wealth.

Although the ideals of fertility and industriousness by women certainly are highly valued in Anlo-Ewe and Ga-Adangbe fishing communities as well, women's economic efforts are not necessarily seen as enhancing continuity within a patrilineal ideology of procreation and descent. Since ideas of procreation of human life and descent goes through the males, a woman who pools her economic effort into the welfare of her children does not enhance the continuity of her own patrilineage, but the continuity of her husband's lineage to which her children belong. It is thus very likely that male members of her own lineage will pool resources and support the enterprises of their sons and brothers' sons, instead of the enterprise of their sister or sister's children, since these belong to their fathers' patrilineage and not their mothers'. Thus, when a woman pools her accumulated wealth into the welfare of her children and thereby the security of her old age, these "investments" enhance her own patrilineage only within her own life-time, and not beyond. Hence, such investments in her children (i.e. husband's lineage) gives her security in old age only if her children can support her, and very little security upon the death of her husband or inability of her children to help her. Ideas about procreation of life and the enhancement of lineages' continuity, in other words kinship ideology, may thus influence the extent to which lineage members constitute a supportive environment for women's possibilities of taking risks and making long-term investments for the future and the continuity of their lineages.

In relation to these observations Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch's *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (1989) is of interest. They draw on Barth's and others' spheres of exchange approach, and introduce the concept *transactional systems*. Through a cross-cultural collection of case studies, they claim that a pattern of two related but separate

transactional systems is revealed;

"on the one hand transactions concerned with the reproduction of the long-term social or cosmic order; on the other, a 'sphere' of short-term transactions concerned with the arena of individual consumption" (Parry and Bloch 1989:24).

As long as the latter is not in conflict with long-term reproduction of collectivity, the transaction (or conversion of value) is acceptable. In one of the cases, Carsten (in Parry and Bloch 1989) analyses a Malay fishing community where the short-term transactional order is represented by the fishermen's exchange of their catch with outside Chinese merchants. These transactions involve a foreign and "unclean" set of values. The money the men get for the fish is connected with immoral values which are threatening to the unity of the community. Once the money have been earned, however, they are handed over to the women, who "de-contaminate" the money by symbolically "cooking" it and thereby convert it into something which nourishes the household. There can therefore, in the Malay case, be said to exist two transactional systems connected with the symbolism of money and the symbolism of gender; a sphere of short-term transactions in fishing and commerce, and another sphere which is oriented towards the longer-term goals of reproducing the household and thereby the wider community.

The short-term transactions in market exchange of fish are not regarded as a male activity in the case of Ghana; it belongs to the female market sphere. Market trade is seen as a means to secure the continuity of the community. Fish from the male sphere must go through the "cooking pot" of the women; through the female dominated marketplace; through the female sphere of converting fish into an edible and marketable good. There is nothing unclean about money or market exchange in this context. In this way both "male" fishing and "female" fish trade can be seen as interdependent and legitimate within a sphere of short-term transactions as long as the transactions enhance the fulfilment of the long-term goal of securing the continuity of the natural and human resources of the community.

To avoid confusion about how I use the concepts of spheres of exchange and transactional systems, I will provide some clarification. Fishing and trade can be viewed as separate spheres of exchange in Barth's meaning of the concept (with unity within and boundaries between, within which goods and services circulate freely). On another level, however, activities in both spheres belong to a short-term transactional system of making a living

out of a natural resource; fish. In this perspective, a male-female relationship such as marriage, can be seen as an institution where short-term transactions take place between the male and female spheres of fishing and marketing; fish is transformed into food and money, children are brought forth, and so on. This institution is, however, connected with the long-term transactional system of continuity of lineages, the community and the sustenance of the system of fishing in itself.

Male fishing can not be sustained without the female trade and vice versa. As long as these separate, but interdependent male and female spheres work together in short-term transactions, and individual accumulation does not directly threaten the longer-term goals of reproduction and continuity of society, commercial fishing and marketing are not seen as immoral activities. Male participation in the female market sphere, or female participation in the male fishing sphere, may however, not only break with the separateness of spheres of exchange, but also threaten the long-term moral purpose of short-term transactions.

The concepts of short-term (sensual) and long-term (moral) transactions can be relevant for my concerns above about women's enterprises seen in relation to the long-term goal of their lineages' continuity. In a moral exchange perspective, one could say that the short-term activities involved in market relations and exchange of fish, and in labour and credit relations - for which the women entrepreneurs are often regarded as aggressive, abusive and exploitative - are legitimate if they are seen as a means to secure the longer-term goal of securing the continuity of the family, the lineage and the wider fishing community. Through such legitimization women entrepreneurs can find ways to handle risks, constraints and opposition from the social environment in gender-specific ways. Since such entrepreneurial activities according to matrilineal ideology would enhance the long-term continuity of the woman's own lineage, I believe that matrilineal kinship ideology could be an explanatory factor in the understanding of the degree to which Fante women are active entrepreneurs in not only marketing but also in fisheries. If, according to patrilineal ideology, entrepreneurial activity enhances a woman's own and her children's welfare during her life-time but not the continuity of her patrilineage in a long-term perspective, Ga-Adangbe and Anlo-Ewe hypothetically face other gender barriers than Fante women do.

Short-term and long-term transactional systems can also be seen on another level: When people bring in values from transactional systems beyond the moral discourse of the local

context, conflicts often arise. Such other transactional systems can be represented by the modern fishery sector, investors from outside the fishing community, or entrepreneurs who accumulate in "modern" or "urban" ways that are not convertible into symbolic capital in the local context. Entrepreneurial behaviour according to a morality of individual consumption through short-term transactions in such external systems, violate the values of moral exchange in the local fishing economy by unacceptable consumption, negligence of kinship obligations, or fishing during periods of the year when such activity is ritually banned. I shall return to vivid examples of such conflicts over the morality of exchange in case studies in subsequent chapters. Suffice here to say that whether economic activity and accumulation is regarded as moral or immoral, depends to a large extent upon the entrepreneur's gender and the context in which he or she performs entrepreneurial activity.

The problem of moral exchange is also discussed in *The Moral Economy of Trade*, edited by Hans Dieter-Evers and Heiko Schrader (1994). The dilemma of moral exchange that traders constantly face in their activities is discussed in this volume, and case studies (from Asian economies) provide examples on how traders find solutions to overcome these dilemmas. With reference to Polanyi's (1968) view on economies as embedded in all spheres of society, the traders' dilemma according to Evers and Schrader (1994),

"arises out of their moral obligation to share proceeds with kinsfolk and neighbours, on the one hand, and the necessity to make profits and accumulate trading capital, on the other" (Ibid:5).

Traders therefore, in order to find solutions to this dilemma and in order to continue with their means of livelihood, form homogenous groups through ethnicity or religion, or they migrate, accumulate honour and prestige, engage solely in petty trade, or find solutions through the depersonalization (disembedding) of economic relations (Evers 1994:10). In the case of fish trade in Ghana, the traders constitute a gender-homogenous group which is internally structured. Given the characteristics of the West African marketplace economy, the fish traders' economic activities are not at all disembedded from other spheres of society. Thus as we are going to see, for those who accumulate wealth beyond the petty trade level, accumulation of honour and prestige (symbolic capital) is an important strategy to overcome the dilemma of moral exchange in a long-term perspective, for, as Schiel (1994) points out,

"as long as the economy is not sufficiently disembedded one still needs to invest in symbolic



capital, and to attain a political position is still the surest way to gain wealth" (Ibid:25).

One of the main purposes of this study is thus to examine the gendered way in which entrepreneurs in the context of Ghanaian fishing communities accumulate wealth (in the spheres of fishing and marketing through short-term transactions) and convert this wealth into symbolic capital in a morally acceptable manner (which is not in conflict with long-term continuity of their communities).

With reference to entrepreneur and exchange theory, it can be questioned to which extent it is possible to "demarcate" separate spheres of the economy (given its embeddedness) and wider value and transaction systems, and to which extent the barriers between them are permeable or not, and whether it is possible to locate channels of conversion in the socio-economic world of fisheries in Ghana. The spheres and barriers are perhaps not perceived uniformly by people from different strata within a community either. These are after all *etic* categories - theoretically constructed - and the model may not always fit a complex reality. However, in my view this approach, which can be called a contextualised entrepreneur approach, seems to allow for the complexity of the world, and is a good tool to describe it. Again, the patchwork metaphor is useful; the contextualised entrepreneur approach provides us with tools to make a conceivable order out of a fragmented chaos.

### **Studies of entrepreneurs in West Africa**

The contextualised entrepreneur approach also makes sense in relation to other studies on markets and traders in Ghana and elsewhere in the West African region. Some of these studies approach traders as entrepreneurs, while other studies of how people "make it" more indirectly focus on how they draw on resources in different fields of life. With reference to market traders in Kumasi, for example, Gracia Clark asks: "How valuable is trading to traders in their other struggles, and how important are their other resources for their trading?" (Clark 1994:4). In my view that is exactly the question one has to pose in order to analyse Ghanaian market women's careers. Clark does not explicitly use the terms asset, niche and spheres. The more common and general term *resource* is widely used, and is usually defined as access to land (or fish or other productive resources), labour and capital. The question of access to resources in different spheres of life; work, marriage, lineage, community and other networks; how these spheres are intertwined,

and how resources flow and are cut off between them, is crucial for an understanding of the opportunities and constraints women and men face through their life paths.

Some of the studies of entrepreneurship in Ghana explicitly draw on Barth's and related entrepreneur approaches. The relationship between the entrepreneur and his environment is a central theme in Keith Hart's *Swindler or Public Benefactor. The Entrepreneur in his Community* (1975). Hart's main issue is whether the entrepreneur - in this case Frafra businessmen from northern Ghana who migrate and establish themselves in Accra and Kumasi - enriches himself in a way which can be idealised as public benefaction, leading to social progress, or whether he enriches himself at the expense of the community and those whose resources he exploits. Hart's definition of entrepreneurship as an "economic role which may be only an aspect of the behaviour of individuals whose primary position in society is not necessarily defined by the term " (Ibid:6) is in line with Barth's. It refers to a "category of instrumental behaviour - the individual accumulation and investment of surpluses, realised in the form of capital assets which are productive of further wealth and managed by the owner himself" (Ibid.). Hart's thesis is that the degree to which an entrepreneur can succeed without too much opposition from the environment depends on 1) the methods of accumulation and its consequences for distribution of social welfare in the community, and 2) the strategies the entrepreneur adopts in the negotiation between private and public interests in the local discourse (Ibid:19). Hart further argues that pursuit of political power and social prestige is more acceptable than self-enrichment and capital accumulation for its own sake (Ibid:31). This argument can also be seen in light of Parry and Bloch's long-term and short-term transactional orders. Hart's study showed that accumulation was acceptable by the community as long as the entrepreneur's wealth was redistributed to its members. According to Hart, these claims from the collectivity prevents an enduring class of accumulators from developing.

Similar arguments were made by Peter Garlick (1971) in his study of the role of traders (mainly male Ghanaian and expatriate shop-keepers) in economic development in Ghana in the fifties and sixties. He expressed considerable pessimism due to the lack of an enduring class of "new men" at the Ghanaian "stage" of political and economic development (Ibid:146). Garlick wrote: "The total Ghanaian environment is in a state of constant change. It can be argued that at some stage conditions will have evolved to a point where Ghanaian entrepreneurs, after the security requirements of the family have been met, will re-invest primarily in their businesses, will be able to find capable managers and reliable employees, and will create enterprises which will not die with

them" (Ibid:148). However, Garlick could not see that Ghana had reached a situation where true entrepreneurship in the Schumpeterian sense could develop. The main problem for "the new men" were the claims from the extended family. He found that although the extended family was useful in the establishing phase of an enterprise, there was "no major ploughing back of capital into a single enterprise" (Ibid: 149). Instead a businessman tended to diversify his enterprises, support too many nephews' education and so on, and the business tended to crumble when relatives divided the property amongst themselves after his death. Garlick's concerns are reflected in the media and in the general public discourse in Ghana even today. The extended family is often blamed for the lack of "development" in general, and perceived as an obstacle in the careers of the "returnees", who feel that it is difficult to return empty-handed from Europe or America. It is said that the little they have accumulated will go into the pockets of the family instead of into the establishment of a new business.

In her study from Cape Coast; *Female Entrepreneurial Styles among Coastal Fante Women*, Mary Agnes Lewis (1977) concludes quite differently on the relationship between the entrepreneur and her closest environment. In Lewis' view "the extended family far from being a constraint on the development of entrepreneurship, is one of the most valuable resources on which a woman can draw in her efforts to start and sustain a business" (Ibid:129). Lewis sees an entrepreneur as someone "who assumes all the risks and makes all the decisions concerning the operation of an enterprise in order to achieve some economic or social goal" (Ibid:132). Lewis puts an emphasis on the managerial aspects of female entrepreneurship, rather than on innovation. She argues that the entrepreneurial activities of the women in Cape Coast best can be described as imitative or traditional (Ibid:3). Women have been involved in the same economic activities, particularly market trade, for a long time, and Lewis thus sees these activities as imitative rather than innovative "at the present time" (Ibid:4). Lewis therefore seems to follow the thought that what she calls the female entrepreneurial style is an integral part of being a Fante woman. Thus, traditional female entrepreneurship does not represent a break with gender ideology, but is firmly defined within the female domain. In explaining the high number of female traders and women's relative high degree of success in other enterprises such as baking, dressmaking and ownership of fishing equipment, Lewis points to the fact that Fante women can dispose of their own income, which made the development of private enterprise possible for them. They got training and starting capital from members of the matrilineage or their husbands, and they mobilised labour through the same network. Lewis found that these women occupied positions of high prestige in

the occupational hierarchies for women, for example as market "Queen mothers" and employers, and they were respected for their generosity and wisdom as members of the family. But despite their mobility in economic and social status, access to positions in the traditional prestige system remained limited.

Lewis' findings are in line with what I found in Moree. For large scale traders and female canoe owners, conjugal and matrilineal relations were important for access to the crucial resources of fish, credit and labour, and this holds true not only for women, but also for men. The entrepreneur's social network was her most important channel for access to economic resources, and the sustenance of this network was to a large extent the aim of the enterprise. The accumulation of material capital was a way to accumulate symbolic capital; through investment in people. As pointed out, and in line with Parry and Bloch, the fishing community can be said to have two transactional systems; short-term transactions of fishing and market exchange and investments in physical objects, such as houses, and; a long-term transactional system of reproduction of lineages through the birth of an abundant number of children by which the viability of the fishing community and of the fisheries as such was enhanced. The short-term transactions are, however, a precondition for long-term continuity, and could be said to be a means to an end. On the other hand, short-term transactions are possible because longer term values have been maintained. In Moree it was thus considered as positive when both women and men had individual success in their enterprises. Their success made it possible for other people to make a living as well. But if a trader violated the ethics of fair trade and redistribution to the extent that it damaged the careers of her colleagues and relatives, it was considered immoral, since it could have serious consequences for both individuals and for the community as a whole. In such cases one could say, following Barth, that the entrepreneur converted value from one sphere to another through unacceptable channels, or in an unacceptable manner.

It is clear, then, that the social aspects of entrepreneurship, and not mere accumulation of wealth, are of great importance. The relationship between the individual and the collective is of particular importance. This was recognised by Schumpeter, who saw the social surroundings of the entrepreneurs as, in a sense, immature, and also by those, such as Garlick, who viewed the extended family as "parasitic" (Lewis 1977:206). In the bottom of these views on "social factors" in the innovation process lies, in my view, a picture of the entrepreneur as a business-man who accumulates wealth for its own sake and for his individual consumption, and which he shares only with his wife, children and

his old mother. In the African context much more direct emphasis is put on the moral exchange between the "big men", or patrons and matrons, and his or her community *personally* and not only as representatives of a class (see Cohen 1969, Barnes 1986, Médard 1996). Diversification of activities and investment in social networks are thus strategies to reduce risk and mobilise resources in a context where the economic success of an enterprise and the prestige of the entrepreneur depends on the negotiated power balance between patron/matron and clients.

Sara Berry has provided a lot of insight into the importance and flexibility of networks and institutions in rural economies through her studies, primarily from Nigeria and Ghana (i.e. Berry 1989; 1993; 1995). Rather than seeing networks as closed corporate units, she sees them as *arenas of individual mobility* (Berry 1993:158). Individuals occupy multiple membership in several networks, and "multiple memberships, like multiple enterprises, can be difficult to manage" (Ibid:165). Networks, therefore, are not entities of collective action, as some texts on communities and localities (when they are viewed as stasis, cf. Massey 1994) have tended to depict: "The fact that a group of people share, even cultivate, a strong sense of collective identity does not mean that they necessarily engage in collective action" (Berry 1993:166). Jane Guyer expresses similar sober views:

"The social relations of communities are not a natural resource, a simple direct outcome of birth and contiguity as naturalistic 'subsistence' assumptions about 'communities' tend to imply. They constitute an achievement of Byzantine complexity, built up from myriads of attentive acts, imaginative rethinkings, interventions by the powerful, and selective avoidances by the powerless" (Guyer 1995:24).

Thus, although the long-term goals of reproduction of more or less durable institutional structures of the community is a central value which steer people's behaviour to some extent, individuals all the same must find solutions to everyday life problems and constantly negotiate these ideals. The most "profitable", respectable and secure way of going about this life project is to invest in social networks.

In daily life people negotiate relations to the people they live and work with, the community they live in and places they move between. In the preceding I have mentioned arenas, fields, spheres and networks. These are expressions for the space within which people make their moves in order to carve out a life path. Sara Berry calls this social space "...social networks through which people pursue access to resources and

opportunities" (Berry 1993:166); "...the boundaries of networks are fluid and negotiable, and there is room for individual mobility within them" (Ibid:164). And between them, I would add.

In the study of entrepreneurship the relationship between the individual and the collective is a recurring theme. This also relates to a central topic in contemporary human geography; the dynamics between structure and human agency (see Cloke, Philo and Sadler 1991). People's actions shape social structures and the environment but their actions are also influenced by the physical and social surroundings. But this is not simply a dichotomous relationship, as we are all parts of a myriad of collectivities and environments, and are influenced by and influence these in many different ways. In order to get an understanding of this complexity I argued above for detailed and localised studies. An approach to such analyses, which accounts for the unique of the local complexity at the same time as localities are seen as part of regional systems on micro and macro levels, is field analysis.

### **Social fields and types of capital**

Field analysis can be seen as a tool to operationalise linkages between structure and human agency. It relates to people's multiple membership in networks, activities on various levels, and to the conversion of value between spheres of exchange. On the one hand field analysis is simple and concrete because it explicitly locates relations and activities in time and space; on the other hand, it highlights the complexity of people's membership in multiple social fields simultaneously and on different scales or levels. This becomes a geography which focuses on the stretching out of social relations in space where localities in a sense can be present in one another (see Massey 1994:7).

Social fields are here seen as regional systems; empirical systems of social interconnections that vary in *scale* and in *structural complexity* (Grønhaug 1978). Grønhaug defines the scale, or size, of a field as the number of people involved and extension in social space (Ibid:79). Structural complexity is related to the number of roles and ways of combining roles into social persons; the composition of the social status of the people involved in a field. These individuals are interlinked by organisation and communication (Ibid.) Social fields "vary from well-defined corporate groups, to mere aggregates of interrelated actors who themselves may be unaware of the social

interlinking among themselves" (Ibid:81). The point, as I see it, is not to design social fields with etic categories in order to be able to discover features of a society of which its inhabitants are unaware themselves, but to construct concepts which can be used as tools to describe social categories and processes in terms which are comparable. Thereby studies of complex contexts can reveal insights beyond the local, detailed and unique.

The idea is that fields can be discovered as *aggregates of events* extended in social space and time. Grønhaug says that social fields as regional systems must be discovered before they can be defined (Ibid:105). The analytic procedure in field analysis is thus to follow events and processes and generalise from case stories (Ibid:106). The main entry into such investigation is the observation of social events. These can be micro- or macro-events; from a childbirth, a fishing trip or a party, to a war, a drought or change of government. Through observation of events one can map the main categories of social persons and relevant economic and social units involved, such as households, religious groups or fishing companies. Gradually one can define regional systems which extend on various geographical levels, such as kinship systems, religious systems, economic systems and gender systems.

People's economic activities and social relations on family-, production system- and community level, often depend on processes and events far away: "On the one hand, events in large-scale fields affect local level processes: regional personnel circulation, macro-ecological and economic flow-patterns, and so forth. On the other hand, there are units smaller than locality, such as the domestic field, and ultimately the levels of person and sub-person: role-repertoires and specific roles" (Ibid:86). An example of such connections could be directly observed when the Ghanaian government doubled petrol prices as a result of the Gulf War in 1991. The fatal consequence was that the fishermen could not afford to go fishing unless a good catch was guaranteed, and their wives had to support them through the low fishing season. Thus an event on the international level can be an element in field analysis, as events can stretch over various time spans and scales, and vary considerably in structural complexity. Field analysis, then, consists in a stepwise contextualisation of phenomena on ever higher scales of inclusion (Aase 1991).

This complexity requires a multi-field analysis, where fields can be categorised in a hierarchy according to scale and complexity (Grønhaug 1978:86). Thus, while one can observe a West African regional system of market trade where women generally are

numerous and central, it is penetrated by other systems of kinship, gender ideology and production systems which create regional variations within the same market trade field. The market of Kumasi can be looked upon as an expression of the West African field of market trade. At the same time its location in Ghana, and specifically in the old Asante capital, makes it different from other major markets, such as in Kano in Nigeria or in Dakar in Senegal. Within the Kumasi market the traders are members of fields which are defined by ethnicity and local origin, and according to which production system their market branch is part. Fish trade at the market in Kumasi is organised according to where the fish traders come from, and one can go to specific places in the market and buy fish from specific places along the coast; just ask where the women from a particular village sit. These women, in turn, identify with an area in which their language is spoken, and their location within the trading hierarchy and the scale of their trading activities are decided by their status (or combination of roles) in the lineage system, the marriage field, the fisheries and often a religious field in their home town. Together their membership in all these fields create a web, a set of roles which defines their social person.

A hypothesis in relation to entrepreneurship could thus be that a person's position in a field, such as fish marketing, which stretches from the local level to a regional level, for example, gives the person who is positioned within this field access to resources beyond the local level, which, potentially, can enhance his or her enterprise and accumulation of symbolic capital on the local level. Following that hypothesis, a long-distance trader has a greater profit potential than local traders.

As we see, persons are actors and have roles in several fields simultaneously: "When a person participates in the...economy, he acquires social roles that determine or steer further allocation of roles to him as he takes part in other fields. His economic role and the opportunities implied by it determine the level of resources in his domestic unit" (Ibid:115). Or as expressed by Aase: "People are able to convert events in one social field into intended events in other social fields" (1991:160).

In the following it will be my task to discover social fields in three different systems of fishing. To see the strategies of women and men as interconnected in the fields of fishing and marketing, and in the fields of marriage and kinship, and to analyse concrete events in the light of such regional systems could be fruitful in the context of fishing communities. By analysing empirical events, such as a canoe landing of fish, or a seasonal migration, a funeral, smoking of one canoe's catch, or the event of the three



months fishing season, I attempt to represent how the persons involved have differing but interrelated and interacting roles on various scales both geographically and socially. These social fields are each part of wider fields, such as the regional market trade system and marine fisheries. But they are also related to fields on other scales, as for example to international capitalism represented by foreign trawlers.

External forces and local responses have created distinctive mixtures or webs of fields. Each individual relate to events in these, whether they are near or far away. Thus, if we for example define a Fante field of fishing, it extends far beyond the Fante towns in the Central Region. In Kumasi there is a quarter called Fante New Town, named after the numerous Fante fish traders travelling to Kumasi. In Abidjan in the Ivory Coast, there are living quarters for migrant fisher people from all along the Ghanaian coast. They have their own representative in relation to the Ivorian government, and there are Fante living quarters with an elected chief for each town. The cluster of migrants from Moree in Abidjan, for example, is generally known as Osibisa. The Fante migrants bring along other local institutions, such as kinship ideologies, religious practices, fishery organisation and so forth, to the new locations (where they are maintained, modified or refined according to the circumstances). People move, work and trade between these places in a "Fante fishing field" that stretches all over coastal West Africa. These fisheries are connected with markets in the interior. In this field Fante fisherfolk and traders can relate to a network of people who share common experiences and institutions - if not always the same interests - which can be used in one's career within the same field.

Clearly field analysis has a lot in common with Barth's view of how entrepreneurs are able to convert value between spheres. Thinking in terms of social field analysis is also close to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. For Bourdieu (1977) a field is a social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources and access to them. A field is a structural system of social relations; a network of relations between positions. According to Bourdieu, the boundaries between fields are shifting, or flexible in Berry's terms. In each field a person - to a various extent - has a stock of capital. Here I find Bourdieu's distinction between types of capital useful (Ibid:183). These are *economic capital*, such as material wealth and property; *cultural capital*, such as knowledge and skills; *social capital*, such as social relations through kinship, marriage, friendship or work, and *symbolic capital*, such as trust, prestige or honour. The composition of a person's types of resources, or forms of capital, in each field is decisive for the person's range of strategies.

His or her capital stock represents opportunities and constraints on entrepreneurship and accumulation, both economically and socially. Thus, when I analyse the cases of women's careers, I think in terms of the positions they occupy in each field of which they are members, and the composition of resources, or types of capital, they have in each capacity. The types of fields they are involved in, their position within it and the composition of their capital stock, is decisive for their ability to convert value through conversion channels in entrepreneurial activity. Out of such an analysis a complex network of interrelated destinies and careers emerges; what I call career networks.

In a contextual entrepreneur perspective, with the concepts of social fields and conversion of capital as theoretical tools, a number of methodological questions arise: Which forms of material capital are available to men and women in Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope? Which forms of symbolic capital are there? What are the spheres of circulation with conversion barriers between them? Which conversion channels are legitimate for female and male entrepreneurs? Are there, for example, channels that are open for women that are closed for men and vice versa? And how do female and male entrepreneurs in the various contexts find solutions to the dilemma of accumulation versus distribution? It also becomes important to reveal whether and how people enter new niches, or how they utilise "old" niches in new, but always gendered, ways. By looking at entrepreneurial careers as processes I will analyse the transformation of one type of capital into another, and the channels and barriers men and women meet in their entrepreneurial strategies.

Events, cases and life stories must be viewed in light of the codes of the local and regional context in order to give meaning to an analysis. The next chapter presents the historical development and regional variation of the system of fishing and marketing, in which social and economic relations are seen in a gendered perspective.

## 2. Fishing for the market

### Introduction

This chapter will outline the chronological and chorological context of the study. In other words, I select those aspects of time and space that I consider relevant for the understanding of female entrepreneurship in the fisheries today. Hence, the chapter does not provide a comprehensive historical analysis; it contextualises a contemporary phenomenon. Two factors that are of great importance in an understanding of the central position women have come to occupy in the fishing economy of Ghana will be examined; the gendering of market trade in West Africa through history, and the changes in socio-economic organisation of production which has followed technological innovation in the canoe fisheries. I will look at some of the events which have shaped contemporary Ghana, and how these have affected men and women differently; I will explore the history of market trade with a gendered approach. I will also explore how the technological development of canoe fisheries and its interconnectedness with fish marketing has become gendered through these changes, and how this dual relationship between the fields of "male" fishing and "female" trading is reinforced through the symbolic construction of gender.

The coastline which has had names like Coast of Guinea, Upper Slave Coast and Gold Coast, and now Ghana, has been exposed to and interacted with various world systems from east, north and west through time. Trade is an essential part of this history, and it is a gendered history. As Gracia Clark says with reference to the market in Kumasi:

"Contemporary female dominance in market trade (...) is not rooted in a conservative tradition of female trading reproduced unthinkingly and unescapably. The current disapproval of (...) men to engage in marketplace trade is historically contingent" (Clark 1994:325).

In pre-colonial times women dominated the fish trade in local market places, but long-distant fish trade was primarily in the hands of men. Gradually not only local, but also long-distant fish trade became female-identified. On the one hand, the female dominance in the markets can be seen as a result of men's disapproval of market trade when other opportunities arrived, but on the other hand, women had a clear interest in keeping their monopoly over, for example, fish trade. A closer examination of history and of gender values, of the *naturalization* of female trading roles, is needed to understand this change. An examination of the development of a female market hierarchy is also relevant for an understanding of how women are able to reach high *female positions* and thereby achieve prestige and power in other spheres than the market as well.

Different social groups, different individuals, have quite distinct relationships to processes of change according to where they are located in the web of relations of power. People are positioned individuals in networks, or in what Doreen Massey calls a *power geometry* (1994:149). In consequence, people are differently affected geographically and according to social differences, such as class, gender, age, race or ethnicity by processes of change, be they colonialism, modernisation, marginalisation or globalisation. Such processes take place at the same point in time in different parts of the world, but with different consequences for different people in these places.

In looking at geographical variation in fishing societies, it becomes clear that the occupation of market trader does not qualify for a conversion of accumulated capital into ownership and control in the fisheries automatically and everywhere. There is spatial and cultural variation in the extent to which women meet economic and social barriers in their entrepreneurial efforts in the fisheries. And there are power relations within each community, often connected to power in fields on other geographical levels which influence women's (in relation to men's) access to resources and networks. But local variation and internal power relations are moulded in the encounters with other people through history. Historical events have therefore had different consequences in the various fishing communities, and for various social groups who live there.

Distribution of fish from the coast to local and distant markets is an integral part of production in the system of fisheries, and an economic and practical interdependence usually exists between the processes of production and distribution (Tvedten and Hersoug 1992:15). This division of labour and interdependence is gendered. In my view it is women's position as market traders which has enabled those who make successful careers in the distribution

system to extend their power into the production system; to convert value from one sphere to another; in other words to convert material capital from the market field in the form of extension of credit and investment into material capital in the field of fishing in the form of fishing equipment. The interaction between these two separate, but complementary spheres, will therefore be another focus in this chapter.

### **A gendered history of market trade in West Africa**

Women's role in the marketing of agricultural surplus dates far back in time and is deeply rooted in the traditional production systems and cultural values in West Africa (Lawson 1971), and women's significance for social and economic development has long been recognised. Melville J. Herskovits, for example, in his preface to *Markets in Africa* (Bohannon and Dalton 1962) stated that:

"The energy these women [on the Guinea Coast] expend in carrying out these [marketing] functions and the organised activity their work entails express the importance of their effort, both for themselves and for the economy as a whole" (Ibid:xi).

Based on the first written accounts from the Guinea Coast, which became available in the fifteenth century, we can assume that women were active in market trade long before the Europeans arrived. From a description by the Dutch trader De Marees from 1602 we get an impression of how women were involved in not only subsistence trade; in their marketing of local produce women went quite far distances, worked hard, and earned a profit, and they were also engaged in exchange with the European traders. From De Marees' description we also recognise today's sexual division of labour where men fish and women trade:

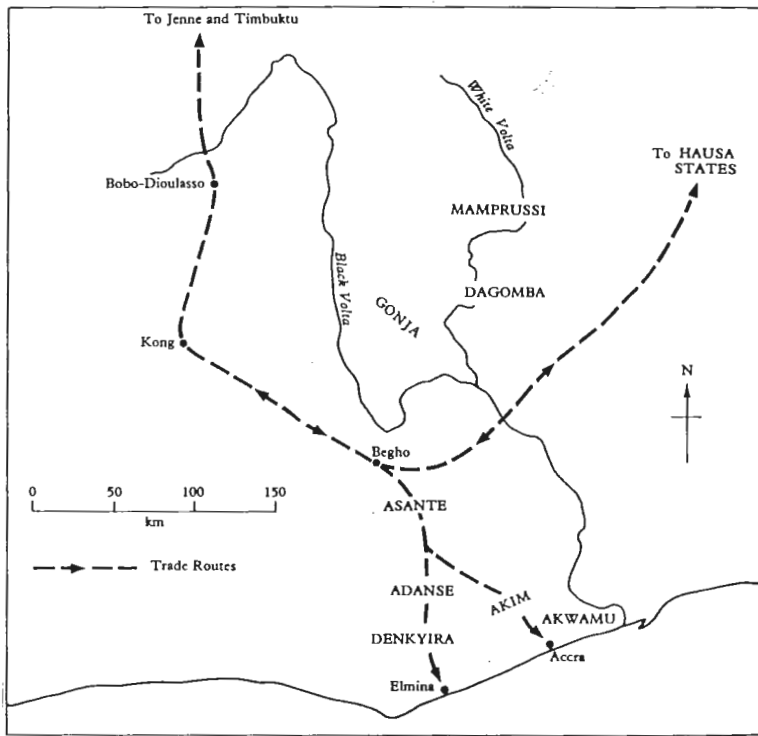
"The inhabitants of the sea-side come also to the market with their wares, which they buy from the Netherlanders in the ships, as linnen cloth, knives, ground corals, look-glasses, pinnes, arme rings, and fish, which their husbands have gotten in the sea, whereof the women buy much, and carrie them to other towns within the land, to get some profit of them, so that the fish which is taken in the sea, is carried at least an hundred or two hundred miles up into the land, for a great present, although many a times it stinkes like carrion, and hath a thousand maggots creeping in it. Those women are verie nimble about their businesse, and so earnest therein, that they goe at least five or sixe miles every day to the places where they have to doe, and are laden like asses; for at their backes they carrie their children, and on their heads they have a heavie burthen of fruit, or millia, and so go laden to the market, and there she buyeth fish, to carrie home with her, so that oftentimes, they come as heavily laden from the market as they went thither" (in Nypan 1960:2).

The rural areas were integrated in networks of small and large periodic markets, rotating in a cycle with for example seven or four day intervals (see Smith 1971). Women walked on foot between them, carrying their wares on their heads. Some could use slaves as carriers (Robertson 1984). A woman from the coast would for example carry smoked fish to one market which had its market day on Thursday, sell as much as possible there, and continue the next day to a market which had its market day on Friday where she would hopefully sell the rest. She would then buy the agricultural products which were the speciality of that particular market, or according to season, and carry them back home, either for family consumption or to sell at another market. Today this is still the practice for traders in fish and agricultural produce, but with roads and cars the distances which are covered, quantities of goods and use of time have changed considerably.

Before the first Europeans, the Portuguese, arrived in the fifteenth century the kingdoms and states of Sub-Saharan West Africa had almost exclusively had external commercial and cultural contact with the Mediterranean world-economy through the caravan routes across the Sahara (Moseley 1992:527). Through this trade people in the interior had been exposed to contacts beyond the local community and region for thousands of years. Salt, cloth, beads and cowries, copper and brass vessels, horses, swords, paper and Arabic books were brought from North Africa to the Sahelian zone south of the Sahara in exchange for gold, slaves, civet, ambergris, pepper, wax, ebony and ivory, leather goods and textiles (Ibid:528). The growth of states in the zone between the forest and the desert reflected the dialectics between external commerce and local factors, and promoted increasing political scale and centralisation (Ibid:529). The Asante capital Kumasi, for example, lies about halfway between the coastal fort towns and the northern savannah towns, and the Asante thus for centuries controlled and had a monopoly over the north-south trade between the interior and the coast in this area (Clark 1994:62). The Asante became the most powerful state in the area of present southern Ghana, and constantly expanded and defended its borders and trading privileges in wars and agreements with other Akan states, such as the Fante, Denkyira and Akwamu.

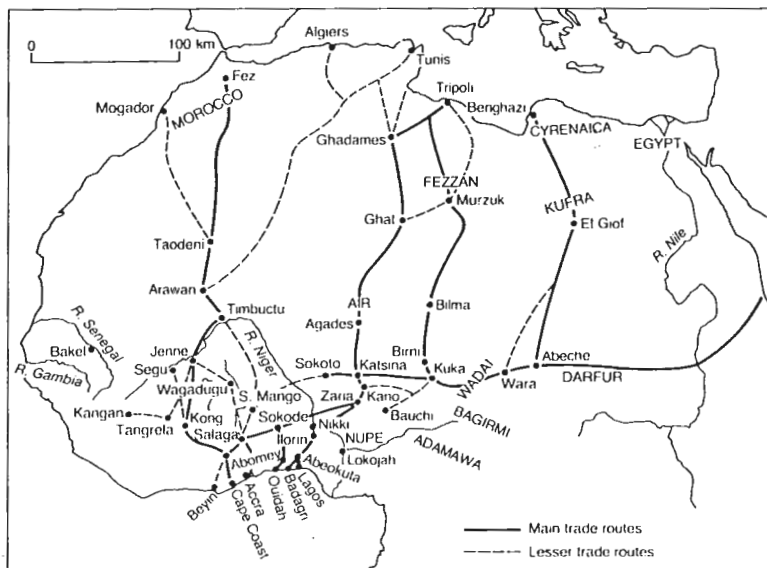
Sub-Saharan West Africa can, according to Moseley (1992:523), be seen as a point of confluence for two expansive movements; the Mediterranean world-economy, which has been a somewhat remote but persistent influence over several millennia, and the European world-economy, which in contrast began to be felt only 500 years ago. To compare the impact of these two world-systems Moseley estimates that the trans-Saharan slave trade in the thousand year period between 900 and 1900 AD involved the export

Map 3. Trade routes of the Akan around 1600 AD.



Source: Davidson et. al. 1977:94.

Map 4. The trans-Saharan trade routes around 1800 AD.



Source: Webster et. al. 1980:47.

of 5,040,000 slaves from West Africa, while the Atlantic slave trade in the 450 year period between 1450 and 1900 AD mounted to 6,300,000 slaves from the same region (Ibid:534). Therefore, although one should not underestimate the effects of the northern trade, the western trade in comparison had more dramatic consequences due to its intensity and later sixty years of formal colonisation and imposition of European institutions and rules.

Women were not to any considerable extent involved in the northern pre-colonial long-distance trade. The border controls and regulations of the Asante chiefs with the purpose of keeping the most profitable trade of slaves, gold and ivory in the hands of Asante traders and to keep ethnic outsiders at a controllable distance, kept much of the most profitable trade in the hands of men (Clark 1994:62). Although accounts of large-scale female traders exist, they were rather exceptions than the rule:

"Gender boundaries existed in Akan long-distance trade and were only slightly more permeable than ethnic boundaries. No formal prohibition existed against women in any kind of trade, comparable to the formal regulations about ethnic roles, and women were recorded at all levels of trade, from head carriers to magnates" (Ibid:88).

It is plausible, then, that a few privileged women, for example members of the Asante royal family, who occupied positions both in the state apparatus and in the military (see Arhin 1983), could pursue economic interests in such positions, or through marriage to royal men or rich merchants. But due to the male dominance of the savannah long-distance trade women were more southwards oriented (Ibid:85). Therefore women to some extent took part in the considerable regional caravan trade supplying coastal and inland cities with craft products and foodstuffs (which, however, was less profitable than the trade in slaves, gold and ivory), but they much more visibly dominated the local retail markets, selling fresh vegetables from farms near the towns, cooked food, and inexpensive imports from the European ships (Ibid:62). Economic opportunities for women also developed along the trade routes, for example in selling cooked meals to the passers-by (see Daaku 1971:176). Women's main role, then, was not in the profitable long-distance trade, but in the marketing of food and items produced by themselves and their families at periodic markets with walking distance between them.

"Almost invariably trading at [the level of local community market places] was the women's affair, for the Akan made a subtle distinction between what was to be sold by the different sexes, which was epitomised by the popular saying (...) that [marketplace trade] is the business



of a woman who sells garden eggs and not gunpowder. (...) in accordance with this neat dichotomy (...) European writers always reported groups of merry-making women travelling from place to place to sell vegetables" (Daaku 1971:177).

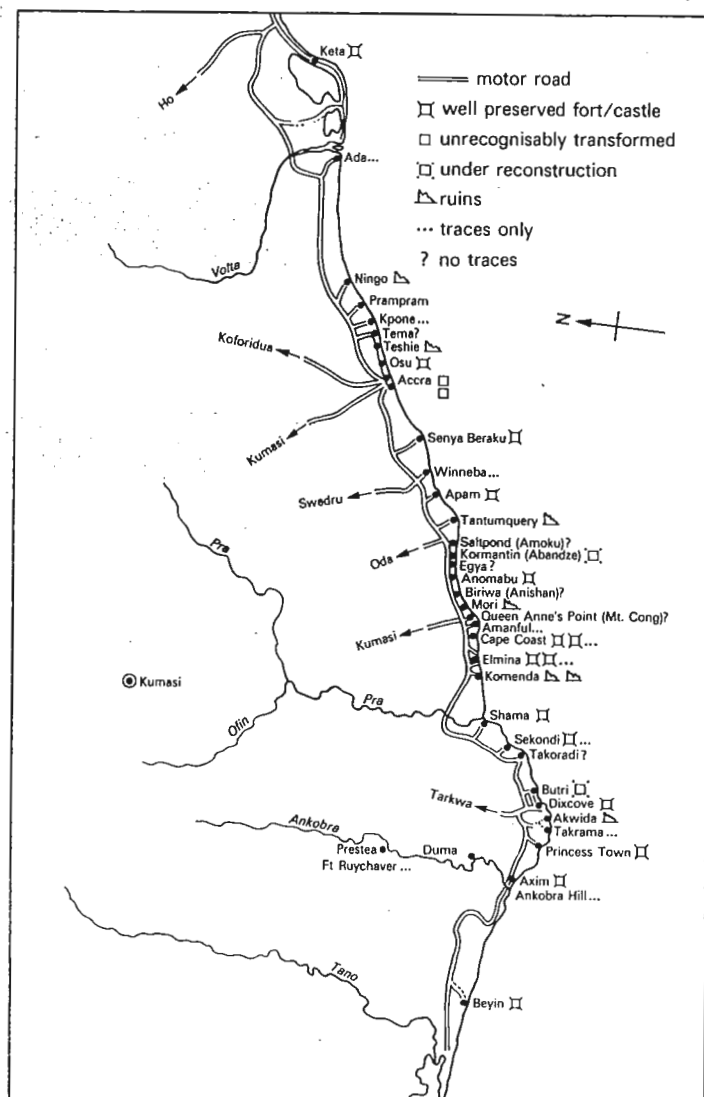
The coastal market networks and the extensive east-west carrying trade and canoe trade (see Clark 1994:85 and Gutkind 1985) were linked to the savannah trade by the north-south Akan trade routes. The coastal villages played an important role because large quantities of both valuable salt and fish found their way through the caravan trade into the states in the interior (Daaku 1971:169). But the long walking distances to these inland economic and political centres, as well as frequent wars between the powers, made direct exposure to the international savannah trade quite rare for the average coastal farmers, fishermen and market women. Thus it must have been quite a dramatic and exciting experience for people along the coast when the Europeans, the *broni*, came in their ships "from the other side of the horizon" and established their trading posts right next to their



*Photo 2. Ruins of Fort Nassau, built of Dutch bricks in the seventeenth century in Moree. These are now a site for fish smoking, as the fish smoking ovens indicate.*

villages; an experience which created new opportunities for exchange of goods and labour for both men and women, new communities, and for the establishment of new relations of power.

The western influence was of course first felt on the coast; initially in the Cape Coast and Elmina areas where the Fante early interacted and traded with the Europeans, and later further east and west as more forts and castles were built along the coast (see map 5). Around the castles and European trading houses former fishing and salt-panning villages grew into busy trading centres. Petty trade, selling of cooked food and provision of accommodation gave women more diversified economic opportunities. Many men started to work for wages. This was a new concept in the local economy, and although the payment was very modest some of those who were employed were able to set up a small trade for themselves (Daaku 1971:169). New groups got chances of upward social mobi-



Map 5. The coast of Ghana with forts and castles in their present condition.  
Source: Van Danzig 1980:89.

lity, and migrants came to work in the new trading posts. In the Fante language, the descendants of those who came to work on the European forts and castles are still called *alata*, as the workers in the castles were called, and have their own *asafo* companies (military defence divisions).

Since the Coast of Guinea had no natural harbours the most indispensable workers in the coastal trade were perhaps the canoe men. They were recruited from the fishing communities, and brought people and goods through the dangerous surf back and forth between the ships and the shore (see Gutkind 1985). Many people also worked in the forts and castles as masons, bricklayers and interpreters, and provided a whole range of other services for the Europeans, as well as for African traders who established themselves in the trading stations. Prostitution and concubinage was common, and women who gave birth to children of white men achieved a certain social prestige. The Europeans seldom moved beyond the trading station into the "wild" interior, and they were quite dependent upon an alliance with the chiefs and cooperation with the coastal population; to participate in the triangular trade between Africa, the West Indies and Europe was a hazardous and risky venture. Svalesen (1996), for example, vividly describes the encounter in 1767 by the largely Norwegian crew on the Danish slave-ship *Fredensborg* with the Coast of Guinea. One after the other they got venereal diseases, guinea worm or malaria and were carried to the "negro-village" near Chistiansborg Castle in Accra, where they got herbal treatment in the hut of the woman Asioko. Most of those who got sick died, however, and were buried in the Danish graveyard, as so many others who pursued a career as traders, administrators, priests, soldiers or sailors in the tropics.

The inland chiefs and the coastal population were also heavily involved as middlemen in the profitable slave trade. A whole new class of "merchant princes" settled and established trading and other businesses, like salt manufacturing and canoe hiring, around the trading forts and soon came to overshadow the traditional rulers (Daaku 1971:169). In Elmina, Cape Coast, Accra and elsewhere their family names are still connected with prominence and influence. From Keta, for example, Greene (1996:127) narrates the outstanding case of Atitsogbi, who was a household slave owned by a Portuguese trader, and who became a slave trader himself in the nineteenth century. His relationship with his owner evolved into that of trusted business partner; he inherited both his owner's property and wives and took his name De Lima. Moreover, due to his economic success in slave trade and later in palm oil export, and *despite* his status as an ethnic outsider, he became a man of influence and managed to become a prominent member of one of the

established Anlo-Ewe clans (Ibid:130).

Women who got children with Europeans, and who in many cases also got married to them, often acquired capital from their husbands to start a trade. Thus in the new urban areas there were quite many rich women traders. The Europeans, who usually had their own trade on the side of their formal occupation, probably found out that to leave the trade in the hands of an African wife was good business! Old people today can still remember that they had a grandmother who was a slave trader or that they have a European great-great-grandfather. Most women who traded with the Europeans, however, were, as De Marees described, primarily involved in small-scale exchange. And most of them still lived in rural areas where production and marketing were integrated activities. With colonialism, capitalism, development of infrastructure, urbanisation and men's increasing participation in "development", marketplace trade increasingly became a domain for specialised women traders. This opened up new avenues for entrepreneurial women, but limited the range of opportunities for future generations of common women, as trading more and more was considered as the most - and almost only - suitable occupation for women.

### **Colonialism and new occupations for women and men**

In the nineteenth century the British gradually took over the Dutch, Portuguese and Danish forts and castles, and in 1874 (after several wars with the Asante) they established a British colony; the Gold Coast. Colonial intervention in the marketplace was limited, but policies directly affecting the whole structure of the economy indirectly led to dramatic changes in market employment and accumulation patterns (see Clark 1994:114). With the establishment of British import and export firms, with the agricultural focus on export crops, and the development of new infrastructure the spatial and organisational structure of the marketplace system and the participation of men and women within it, changed. Towards the latter part of the nineteenth century women in particular got new opportunities in import trade. This period, which coincided with the abolition of slave trade, with colonialism and with the spread of Christianity, also affected the economic opportunities for men, but in a different way than for women. Generally, the range of opportunities widened for men, while women became more and more engaged in marketplace trade. They took over male domains in the marketplace trade beyond the local level when men left them in favour of other opportunities, and hence women came

to partly monopolise new branches of trade which emerged with the structural changes.

Slave trade was abolished by most European powers between 1807 and 1820, and by the Mediterranean powers some thirty years later (Webster et. al. 1980:52). By the mid-1860s, the trade had come to an end (Greene 1996:128). This was a hard blow for the West African kingdoms and states, whose power to a great extent rested on the revenues from this trade. Instead of exporting slaves, these were now used as labour on plantations; export of palm oil and rubber, and mining, became the main sources of income for the colony. This also happened elsewhere in the region. Webster et. al. (1980:81), for example, describe the successful transition of Dahomey "from a slave to a palm oil-centred economy". In the Gold Coast cocoa-production by individual farmers for export was promoted, and came to replace rubber and palm oil as the primary cash crop. By 1910 the Gold Coast had become the world's largest producer of cocoa (Berry 1993:71). Coastal men with access to capital operated as independent buyers of rubber, palm oil and cocoa. A large number of men were also dependent agents for British export firms which advanced capital to them. Later state marketing boards were established and the export trade was reorganised. Thus the political and economic changes almost completely altered the commodities and patterns of export trade in which the men, who had previously exported slaves and gold, were involved.

The production of cash crops mainly became a male domain; the male-female ratio in 1960 was three to one (Engmann 1986:183). Although some women were cocoa-farmers, their farms were generally smaller than men's and often women only had usufruct rights to the land (Hill 1963:117). Likewise palm oil production was almost entirely a male occupation, while women continued to produce food for their own consumption and for the local market, which was looked upon as less prestigious by men:

"...the male population did not, in general, consider food-farming a sufficient or worthy occupation, most of the weeding and harvesting being done by women, though the idea of export agriculture, on an expanding scale not limited to the home market, appealed to their creative spirit" (Ibid:168).

In addition to new occupations in export production and trade, many men got education in the missionary schools in order to be employed in white-collar jobs in the colonial administration. In the early colonial period this was particularly the case for Fante men in Cape Coast, the capital of the colony and centre for educational institutions. When the

British moved the capital to Accra in 1877, many Fante men moved to the new capital where their qualifications were needed. After the British conquest of the Asante in 1900, white-collar and blue-collar workers were also needed in Kumasi, and with their advantages of education and links to coastal capital several Fante men established themselves as storekeepers or government clerks there (Clark 1994:115). The chiefly privileges of the Asante and their regulations on the north-south trade were removed, and now not only the British firms' access to the interior markets had been assured; new markets also opened up for coastal Fante and Northerners who swelled the regional markets within Asante territory (Ibid:63). Notably, Clark writes that Fante men (working for British firms), filtered into Asante in large numbers to sell smoked fish and imports and to buy up rubber and cocoa (Ibid:316). Large-scale, long-distance fish trade had in other words not yet become an entirely female occupation by the turn of this century.

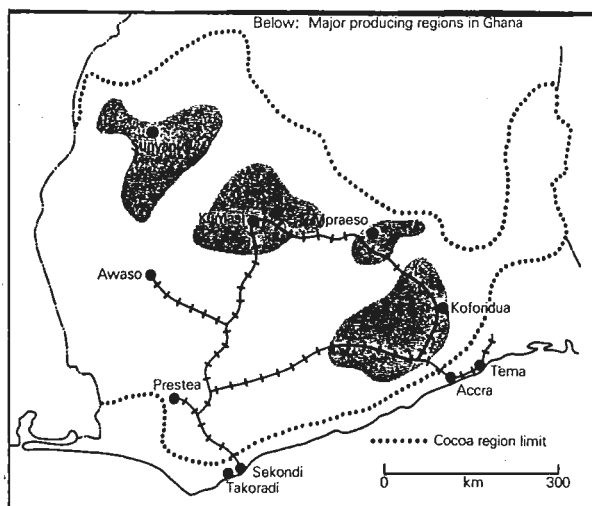
This coastal-inland trading pattern was similar to the previous caravan trade. However, in addition to traders, many Fante women with western skills in baking, sewing and contacts with coastal import firms, arrived in Kumasi with the educated Fante men, who got jobs in the emerging colonial infrastructure. Other uneducated women could use these new networks of relatives and friends in the interior in long-distance trade. The observation of coastal Fante women's position as "first-comers" in long-distance fish trade in interior markets is, in my view, significant in understanding the strong position they came to occupy in relation to fish traders from other parts of the coast, and in understanding Fante women's position within the canoe fisheries in the communities where they came from. Fante women had travelled to Kumasi to sell smoked fish long before British conquest but, according to Clark (1994:237), their numbers increased dramatically and many of the fish traders settled permanently in Kumasi after the conquest. A township in Kumasi where particularly many coastal Fante settled is still called Fante New Town, and when wholesale yards were established for various commodity groups, the Fante fish sellers were the first to get one (Ibid.).

Several British trading companies were established on the Guinea coast long before the formalisation of British rule, and these had come to dominate the local distribution of import goods already from the mid-1800s. In these firms' need for a cheap and efficient distribution network women, especially illiterate women, found a new niche. Through the *passbook system*, women got supplies of import goods like canned food, cloth, sink buckets and bowls, soap, and so forth, on credit. The items they received were listed in each woman's passbook by the trading company, and the women paid what they had

received after they had sold the goods and came for new supplies. This opened up the possibility for experienced traders to expand their trade, and for even the poorest women to get an opportunity to earn some small cash. The passbook system, however, privileged those who could operate on a large scale, and those who had special contacts with the clerks who handed out the goods. Longstanding passbook holders enjoyed preferential access to goods which gave them a virtual monopoly over the most scarce or popular items (Clark 1994:236). The passbook system also reduced competition between firms, as the passbook holders could only receive goods from one firm, and thus entered into a dependent client relationship with the firm.

Another important reason for increasing female participation in marketplace trade was the construction of paved roads after 1901 (Vercrujssse 1984:132) and the building of railways between Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi in the mid-1920s (see map). Furthermore the first artificial harbour was constructed in Takoradi in 1926 (Gutkind 1985:29), which meant that imports could be transported directly from the ships in the harbour on the railway to the markets in the mining and cocoa towns along the railway and to the major market in Kumasi, and exports could be transported in the opposite direction.

Map 6. Railways and major cocoa producing areas in Ghana.



Source: Pritchard 1979:82.

With new means of transportation women traders could travel to the interior and sell imported goods obtained through their passbooks. They could also transport locally produced food to more distant markets, and this was significant for the profitability of long-distance fish trade. Limited quantities of smoked fish had been transported by

caravans, a trade mostly in the hands of men. But with the new infrastructure women, who had walked on foot between local periodic markets, could sell their goods on regional markets in larger quantities and further away from the fishing village. A woman from Moree who was born approximately in 1915 and has been a prominent fish trader since she was a teenager, remembers how women from Moree were involved in long-distance fish trade when she was young. According to her, quite a few Moree women smoked fish for Fante fishermen who were fishing in Sassandra in today's Côte d'Ivoire (600 km from Moree). They hired a "wooden truck" with which they transported the smoked fish to the river Pra (approximately 120 km from the coast). They crossed the river by canoe, and then walked on foot to the markets in Adanse (20 km) and Bekwai (another 45 km). If they could not sell all the fish there, they continued and walked yet another 30 km to Kumasi. Later, it became very common to go directly to Kumasi by truck from Moree, and to take the train from Takoradi when they were on seasonal fishing migration on the coast west of Takoradi.

With the shrinking of distances a new network, partly based on the old, of district and regional markets emerged where women played a key-role in organizing long-distance trade. The market trade expanded and became more centralised, and as a consequence new market-places were constructed, such as the new Kumasi Central Market in 1926 (Clark 1994:111). The market potential for imported goods was great, since cocoa-farmers, migrant workers and traders, and the educated élite, now requested and could afford new products for a "modern" life style. The regional markets were periodic in the beginning, but as some of them expanded, their cycle of rotation became shorter and shorter. This is a continual process. In the seventies the market in Techiman (north of Kumasi), for example, was bimonthly (Quinn 1978). In the eighties the market was growing and became weekly. When I visited the market in Techiman in 1991, its main market day was no longer only on Friday, but both Thursday and Friday.

As a result of the growth of regional markets, the greater mobility of women traders, their entering into distribution of imported goods, and their taking over trades which earlier had been in the hands of male caravan traders, some trends developed which have continued until present. One feature of Ghanaian markets today is the predominance of women, and another is the enormous inequality between these women traders in terms of scale of business, and in power and prestige within the market system. I will examine these closer before looking at how the fisheries developed.



## **The feminisation of the "informal sector"**

It was the striking predominance of women in the markets which first arose my interest when I visited Ghana as a twenty-one year old first-year student of geography in 1987. The fact that women were visibly economically active to such an extent, but yet did not seem to extend power to an accordingly striking extent into other areas, was a paradox for me. I did, as many western observers do, confuse economic independence with autonomy. The work load, and the constraints in other spheres of life, are not easily discovered in the colourful and cheerful atmosphere of a Ghanaian market.

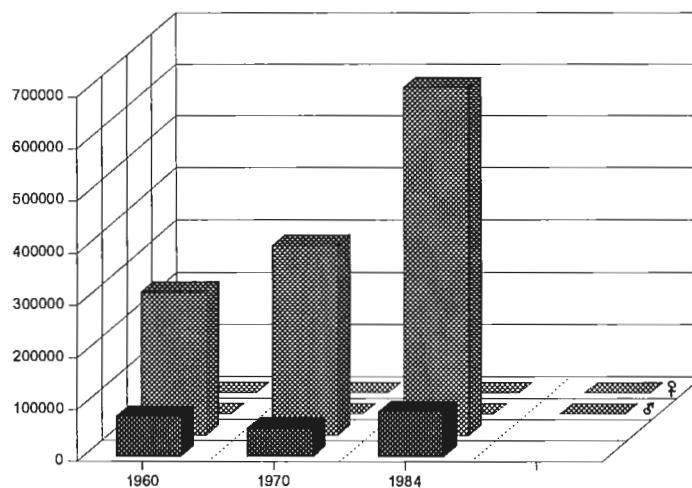
In her historical monograph from Accra, Claire Robertson (1984) contends that women lost autonomy when they moved from production into distribution. In the rural areas before and well into the twentieth century, what Robertson calls a corporate kin mode of production prevailed; men and women cooperated and gender division of labour was clearly defined (Ibid:17). Within this system women were both producers and distributors. Women were subordinate to men, but with considerable autonomy. According to Robertson, women's movement out of production into distribution weakened the corporate kin mode of production and consequently women's positions as producers (Ibid.). In her view, distribution became a lucrative niche for a large number of women, but in the long run it undermined their access to resources in the production sphere. With the increasing impact of capitalism, with the negative effects of the World Wars on the Gold Coast economy, and the economic decline after the first years of optimism after Ghana's independence in 1957, women lost autonomy and scale of business, since they had little access to resources outside the market sphere. In the kin mode of production men's and women's tasks had been separate, but complementary. Labour recruitment for both men and women primarily happened through closely related, but sexually segregated structures (Ibid:13). Age was the primary power indicator in the separate male and female hierarchies. According to Robertson, with women's confinement in small scale trade and marginalisation in the production sphere, the male hierarchy came to dominate the female hierarchy. This was perhaps a stronger tendency in Accra and other urban areas than in the rural areas, where the kin mode of production has continued to prevail up until the present. This will become apparent in the discussion of the developments in the canoe fisheries.

In the 1930s the commercialisation of market trade led to accumulation of capital and concentration of large scale trade in fewer hands. According to Clark; "the increasing

female predominance in marketplaces corresponded to an accelerating marginalization of market traders and of women, in a mutually reinforcing pattern" (1994:325). In the 1950s and 1960s the terms of passbook sales deteriorated, including lower credit ceilings and conditional sales (Ibid:237). Only those with solid connections could get secure supplies. In other words, a highly differentiated market system evolved: While the number of women traders increased, the majority of them could only operate on a very small scale, and the path to wealth beyond the subsistence level through market trade became limited to a few.

In 1984 the female proportion of employment in the commercial sector (i.e. wholesale and retail trade, hotels and restaurants) was 85.9% (Ghana Population Census 1984). Of these 97.9% were in retail trade (i.e. marketplace trade, petty trade, and hawking). Only 11 % of persons employed in wholesale trade were women (mainly cocoa and timber buying and shipping, petroleum distribution, and other imports). From the types of trade that are categorised as wholesale trade, we see that these are not the types of trade that are dominated by women. Moreover, the types of trade categorised as retail trade seem to include marketplace trade on all levels, the large-scale marketplace trade included. Thus, although the category of retail trade mostly is constituted by small-scale traders, the wealthy market traders are also found here. The number of people in retail trade has more than doubled since 1960, and these are mainly women (see figure).

Figure 2. Number of men and women in retail trade in 1960, 1970 and 1984 in Ghana (dark: men, light: women). Sources: Ewusi (1987) and Ghana Population Census 1984 (Statistical Service 1987).



Whilst the number of men remained quite stable, the number of women increased from 274,742 to 666,477 persons between 1960 and 1984. The predominance of women in retail trade can in a way be explained by their "comparative advantage" as women. The "comparative advantage", which hardly is any privilege, lies in their acceptance of low incomes, long working hours and flexibility and variety in the items they sell (see Nypan 1960). Women have less access to land and capital for investment in cash crop production, and the literacy rates are lower among women (23%) than for men (42%) (Ghana Demographic and Health Survey 1988). Women thus have few other options than market trade. Besides, when women engage in trade, they can be economically active without reducing the effort in their duties as wives and mothers: Cooking and child care can be combined with trading, at least in periods of life. Thus Engmann (1986) can observe that for each man in sales occupations there are as many as seven women, and he neatly sums up the situation by saying that

"This in itself may reflect the relatively few job openings for women in other areas of the economy who might wish to be self-employed; and partly lack of educational opportunities for girls (...). But part of the reason may be found in their flexibility, their modest requirement in skill and capital, and above all, the fact that they are relatively footloose" (Ibid:182).

Unfortunately, no population census has been conducted in Ghana since 1984, but as Manuh (1994:66) indicates, the number of people who make a living out of retail trade has continued to increase in the nineties. The increase in people who try to sell along the streets is virtually visible, especially in Accra. As a result of the Government's Structural Adjustment Policies, import goods are no longer scarce, as they were in the early eighties, and the large number of unemployed youth, who move to the cities, have few other options than petty trade. Unemployed young men have increasingly been forced into street vending for lack of education and work opportunities. What has often been called the "informal sector", is thus largely dominated by women and young men. The majority of them earn extremely small profits.

This is a picture from Africa we know quite well by now; the enormous number of people who live on an existence minimum in the swelling "informal sector" in sprawling urban areas, where they are further and further marginalised. However, the "informal sector" is extremely varied, and whilst the vast majority is poor, also the richest people are to be found there. Even academics have an "informal" source of income to supplement a meagre "formal" income; the national economy of Ghana depends upon people's self-employment and production in the so-called "informal sector". It is thus

necessary to distinguish between types and scale of activities in the "informal sector" in order to have a more nuanced view of the activities and people involved. The retail trade category in the 1984 Ghana Population Census (Statistical Service 1987), for example, is not differentiated according to scale. Thus both small-scale bulk-breakers, who buy a bag of rice and sell it in small quantities, and the large-scale trader, who hires a truck to pick up tomatoes from farmers whom she has given fertilizer on credit, are lumped into the same category.

Furthermore, marketplace trade, which is highly organised and under the present conditions an efficient distribution system, represents something else than the hand-to-mouth hawking of imported things along the streets of Accra. The marketplaces are well established systems with their own unwritten laws, rules and authority structures, where there are rich traders with large profits and considerable power beyond the market sphere. A marketplace is in many ways a very formal social and economic system, where it is impossible to make a career as a trader without knowing, following and negotiating its rules.

When more than 80% of market traders are women, we can literally talk of the markets as a female sphere, or as Robertson does, a *female hierarchy* (184:133). This is valid both in terms of wealth and prestige; there are class differences among women in the market hierarchy. As I will discuss, the feminisation of the marketplace system in Ghana in many ways fitted neatly into the West African dual-sex gender discourse. After a discussion of the dual-sex gender model, I will outline the characteristics of the female market hierarchy; its different categories of traders and positions.

### **The gender duality discourse**

In Cape Coast I observed a meeting which was organised in a neighbourhood by the representative its inhabitants had elected for the District Council. The main issue was the sanitation of the area, the cleaning of stinking gutters, disposal of dirty water and so on. I noticed that no women attended the meeting, and I asked my hosts why women did not attend a meeting which concerned issues so important for their daily lives. Their prompt answer was: "*What do you expect? The District Council representative should have brought his wife!*" In their view a policy concerning women in the community would have to be handled by a woman leader if it were to be put into practice; men deal with

men's issues and community issues on behalf of women, and women deal with women's issues only.

This is in line with the recognition that social, economic and political structures in many West African societies are gender sensitive and dual-sex in nature (Okonjo 1976, Moran 1990, Iyan 1997). In a dual-sex type of status system both men and women are able to achieve social esteem via exclusively male and female channels, where age, entrepreneurial activity and control over resources grant prestige (Moran 1990:167). Dual-sex gender constructions are not solely a West African phenomenon. Errington and Gewertz (1987), for example, describe a dual-sex type of status system among the Chambri in Papua New Guinea, a society where "men and women pursue separate objectives and their society is a negotiated balance between the separate interests and strategies of each" (Ibid:152).

One reflection in Ghana of a similar gender duality is the Akan political structure with the positions of the male chief (*ohene*) and the female queen mother (*ohemma*). In a Nigerian parallel, Awe (1977) notes that in traditional Yoruba political systems there were distinct and separate female and male rulers: "the Oba in charge of male society and the Lobun in charge of female society" (Ibid:154). Of the female rulers Awe says that

"they did not see themselves as competitors for influence and authority with the Oba and his chiefs. They regarded themselves primarily as part of an establishment that was essentially symmetrical in conception, where if the man was on the right hand woman must be on the left" (Ibid:155).

The dual-sex conceptualisation of social structure and social practice permeates daily life in many West African contexts also today. In Accra, for example, Fayorsey (1992/1993) observes that when naming ceremonies are arranged, a baby girl is named by a woman and a baby boy by a man. The assembly of relatives who are present are seated in the compound where the naming ritual is performed with the maternal relations on one side and the paternal relation on the other side. According to Fayorsey: "This is a characteristic of the gender division which permeates all aspects of the Ga social structure" (Ibid:25). As we shall come back to in the analysis of residence arrangements in Kpone, women live in women's houses and men in men's houses, which reflects a continuation of the dual-sex logic.

Also in Dzelukope, I observed a dual conceptualisation of gender. In widowhood rituals, for example, the exchange of male and female beauty is central. An *ahoga* (a "senior widow" who is in charge of the *ahowowo* (widowhood ritual) for both women and men) explained that the widow must go into seclusion in a private room after a husband's death, "so that she can give male beauty (*deka dzedze*) back to the late husband, and he can give her female beauty (*tugbe dzedze*) back". The exchange of female and male beauty or "attractiveness" is repeated when the widow is cleansed on the sea shore at a later stage in the ritual: The ghost of the late husband is called upon and told that his wife has come to seek female beauty from him, and that she will return the male beauty to him. In this way the spouses are finally released from each other. When the ritual is concluded after a mourning period of six months, the widow buys a cock and a hen, which she cooks and serves on a plate for the late husband, as when he was alive. Then she shares the food containing the cooked male and female ingredients with her friends and relatives, who participate in the ritual. Male and female, in other words, constitutes human existence itself, in both life and death.

In this way of thinking the genders are conceived of as fundamentally different, but equally necessary and valuable. The difference between the genders is seen as something natural and sent by God, as expressed by a *bosomfo* (traditional priest) in Moree: "All God's creations are male and female, even houseflies confirm to this plan" (in Opoku and Wicker, forthcoming). The female is brought to the centre of human existence; male can not exist without female and vice versa. Continuity can not be secured without both female and male elements. Kalu (1996) refers to the tendency of things in African myths and legends to exist in pairs as the *duality discourse*, and says that:

"This way of knowing, which is dependent on a discursive formation that insists on the harmonizing principle inherent in existence, asserts that the female exists not as a complement to the male but as a complementary opposite of the male" (Ibid:283).

The duality discourse could be compared with the yin-yang principle in Chinese philosophy, or even with European pre-Enlightenment gender conceptualisation (see Overå 1995c). Laqueur (1990) has studied how images of the sexed body in Europe changed from a female-as-male model into a male-female model in the eighteenth century. In pre-Enlightenment medical journals male and female reproductive organs were represented as similar, but opposite (the uterus as a penis inside-out). Laqueur contends that to be a woman or a man at that time was not to *be* one or the other of the

incommensurable biological sexes. It was rather to hold a social rank, a place in society, to assume a cultural role, in other words what we today call socially constructed gender. With religious, political and philosophical changes in the eighteenth century (as the philosopher Descartes' division of body from soul, or emotion from intellect, etc.) medical research, where bodies were opened up and male and female reproductive organs were studied in detail, was used to construct an image of women as inferior (justified by their different biology) to men. Laqueur's point, then, is that since sex is situational (temporally and spatially contextual) further scientific knowledge about biological similarities or differences between the sexes, makes claims about why women and men are the way they are, no more or less true, "because at stake are not biological questions about the effects of organs or hormones but cultural, political questions regarding the nature of women" (Ibid:22).

My reason for pointing at these changes in European gender constructions, is to make it quite clear that gender duality is not the same as gender dichotomies. In a duality discourse, the genders are opposite and different, but not, as in a discourse based on dichotomies (such as nature-culture, private-public etc.), opposed to each other and unequally valued.

Mary Moran, in her study of dual-sex status systems among the Glebo in Liberia, contends that an almost universal characteristic of such systems is their asymmetrical nature; men and men's activities are accorded the greatest social value (1990:9). I think this is a view that must be taken with great caution, since "social value" only can be evaluated in each cultural context. The fact that there are incommensurable male and female ways of acquiring symbolic capital in one context, does not necessarily mean that one of the ways is imbued with more "social value" than the other, or that the gender divisions would be the same in another context.

But if we look at what happened when the indigenous West African status systems merged with the European power structure, it seems clear that western traders and colonial powers valued the male side of the dual-sex system above the female side. In the Yoruba case, for example, Awe contends that

"With their Western preconceptions of female inferiority, colonial administrators tended to relegate women to the background in their governments. Consequently many female titles disappeared while some of their functions became obsolete through lack of opportunity" (Awe

Whether the indigenous dual-sex systems were relatively symmetrical, insisting on harmonizing the male and female principle inherent in existence, to follow Kalu, or less symmetrical, the strength of the male side of the power structure relative to that of the female side, and the male prestige hierarchies, were certainly enforced by foreign encounters. The story about the District Council representative in Cape Coast from 1995 is an indication of how the political system still today continues to be male dominated.

The historical retrospective of the development of the market trade system earlier in this chapter showed that a gendered system evolved in Ghana where market trade is associated with female activity. The gendering of market trade can be seen as an outcome of the encounter between local production systems and political, economic and cultural changes on a regional and international level. In this local-global encounter local gender systems have merged with, for example, European standards of suitable education and occupations for women. The British did not consider education as a priority area for women.

By the feminisation of marketplace trade, a compromise was made where women's activities could fit into *both* the "traditional" value system (represented by the duality discourse) and "modern" gender values (to some extent influenced by western/British/Victorian gender ideas): By their domination of marketplace trade women have reserved a domain of economic activity for themselves, in order to fulfil the expectation of feeding their children and secure the continuity of the community, and at the same time they provide cheap labour and an efficient distribution system without challenging male power in new arenas in the modern state. In this way women's market trade role was naturalised and categorised as feminine, not in opposition to, but as complementary to men's new opportunities in cash crop production, education and administrative jobs.

The modernisation project of the colony and new nation was thus largely a male project. The market sector was "forgotten" and was seen as less important - and sometimes even as an obstacle to "development" - and as such more suitable for women. Women are often seen as more "traditional" than men who pursue resources and careers in the "formal" sector. The market system today provides one of the few opportunities for women to rise within a hierarchy that is not dominated by men. The marketplace is the most important arena for women, where age, experience and entrepreneurial activity can



bring them to the top. But those who do not make it to the top have little possibility of having any influence outside the female sphere, since it would require either education or capital. Markets are therefore highly stratified systems, but do not necessarily give access to power in other fields. That, among other things, depends upon what is considered as appropriate behaviour for women in particular social contexts.

In Moran's view Glebo women in Liberia who pursue life careers outside female domains - marketing and farming - are very vulnerable and are the losing part in the modernisation project; "a single-sex political system modelled on the West, where men and women find themselves pitted against each other in a unitary system of ranking" (Moran 1990:167). Christine Oppong (1981) describes a similar process in her book on Akan women who migrated from rural communities to Accra in pursuit of education, élite husbands and an urban life style. They often lost the economic independence and support from the matrilineage they had in their home towns, and ended up as dependent wives, often as second and third wives, or as mistresses, of educated high status husbands.

There is, as more recent studies have shown (Fayorsey 1992/93, 1995; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Momsen and Kinnaird 1993; Okine 1993; Dei 1994; Manuh 1994; House-Mindamba and Ekechi 1995), a great variation in how women cope with their experiences with urbanisation, and also in the extent to which they are losers in face of structural changes both in urban and rural communities. But one point can be drawn from Moran's and Oppong's studies of women's experience with the modernisation project that is of relevance for this study: Fishing communities in Ghana are to a large extent still dual-sex systems. Through the feminisation of marketplace trade women strengthened their position as fish traders, and the modernisation of the canoe fisheries and which resulted in an increased fish production, further brought them new opportunities in the female market sphere. Thus they could start new enterprises, accumulate and reinvest capital while firmly remaining within the duality discourse.

By applying strategies which fitted into the view of trading as women's domain that had historically evolved, fish traders could achieve prestige and accumulate wealth in the female status system. Women in that sense did not, then, compete for the same resources as men; they achieved prestige as mothers and traders and did not challenge male prestige. That some women managed to enter the male domain of canoe ownership was, in my view, possible because women remained within the duality discourse and defined

such activities and positions which normally had male connotations as a continuation of female fish marketing activities. The interesting question is thus to ask why women in Moree succeeded in this strategy comparatively better than women in Kpone, and women in Dzelukope in particular. My hypothesis is that the social construction of gender in each place to a various degree has put barriers on women's possibilities to convert material and symbolic capital from the female sphere of trading into the male sphere of fishing. What is at stake in this regard is, to re-quote Laqueur (1990:22), "cultural, political questions regarding the nature of women".

An understanding of women's positions within the market hierarchy, of the kind of "ladder" this system represents, is crucial for an understanding of their possibility of converting market capital into the male sphere of fishing. I will in the following give a brief outline of how markets are organised, of important institutions and of different categories of traders.

### **The female market hierarchy**

By the turn of this century the institution of *ohemma*, or "Queen mother" as the British called the female parallel to the chief, emerged in Ghanaian markets (Clark 1994:251). With an increasing pressure on the market traders, both from colonial authorities and later from national governments, a need arose in the market system for a better internal organisation. The growing number of market women realized that they needed an institution to strengthen their position and to secure "fair play" within their ranks; they needed an institution for internal and external negotiation. The fact that the majority of traders in food and imports were women was not irrelevant for their organisation; they organised themselves according to the dual-sex model. The traders saw themselves not only as an occupational group, but just as much *as women*. The institutionalisation of female domination of particular market branches further reinforced the feminisation process. This can, in my view, not only be regarded as a process where women were marginalised, but also as a process where women traders monopolised economic opportunities for their own sex. The market *ohemma* institution was a culturally legitimate pattern of leadership in this female project, based on the dual-sex way of thinking, which was seen as an acceptable strategy by both men and by the state.

An *ohemma* is a female "chief" or "queen", who in Akan authority structure is the female

parallel to the male chief, the *ohene*. *Ahemma* is the plural of *ohemma*, and *ahemmafo* when acting as a group. The *ohemma* of an Akan community represents a repository of wisdom and morality. She is elected among the prominent women in the matrilineage of the chief, and can thus not be his wife, but his sister or mother's sister or another cognatic female relative. Her main role in the political system is to select a new chief from within the matrilineage to replace the old chief when he dies. Apart from that important role, she primarily deals with women's issues, and functions as an advisor and negotiator in conflicts between women. She can also act as a women's representative towards the *ohene*, and is expected to promote the wellbeing of women in general. The *ohemma* is a mother figure and leader, both economically and socially.

According to Clark, the *ahemmafo*, the market leaders, stepped into a vacuum created when the colonial authorities put aside the set of chiefly offices that governed Asante markets before direct colonial rule around 1900 (1994:251). The present organisation with an *ohemma* for each commodity group (such as tomato sellers, onion sellers, ect.) in each market was gradually formalised between the 1930s and 1950s. At the market in Kumasi the Fante women, who were strangers trading in smoked fish, early developed a tight internal organisation. They were the first commodity group to have a wholesale yard reserved for themselves (Ibid.).

In each market the *ohemma* who is the leader of the most important commodity branch of that particular market, has seniority over the other *ahemma*. Thus at the market in Kumasi the leader of all *ahemma* is the *ohemma* of yam sellers. The leader of the fish traders is called *enamhimba* ("fish woman")<sup>1</sup>.

An *ohemma* is elected by the traders of her commodity group. Often the old *ohemma* points out a younger woman who looks promising as a representative to succeed her. But a woman can not be elected unless she has proved to be an experienced, honest and fair trader. She must be eloquent, as her main function is to negotiate in disputes between traders. Some have even adopted the practice of chiefs and elders of speaking through an *okyeame* (linguist/spokesman for the chief). The *ohemma* also has a council of elder

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<sup>1</sup> In Moree, fish is the most important commodity, and the leader of the fish sellers, the *konkohene*, has seniority over the others. Interestingly "the queen of fish traders" is called *konkohene*, which means the (male) chief (*ohene*) of those who buy (in bulk) to sell (in retail) (*konko*). Some places she is called *konkohemma*, but generally in Fante the term is the "male" *konkohene*. This institution did not emerge until the commercialisation of fishing and trade made it necessary, and clearly demonstrates the adaptability of local systems to structural changes. I shall return to this in chapter 3.1.

women, who help and advise her. She also needs to have a secretary, since most of the traders are illiterate. The secretaries register the flow of goods into the market, prices, the payments by travelling traders' renting of market stalls, and so on. Sometimes a letter may have to be written to the market authorities or town council. The secretaries are often men, such as in the case of the council of the leader of fish sellers in Techiman. She has two male secretaries, but as one of them said: "*These women don't trust upon men, so all the others [in the council], especially the treasurers, are women. They don't trust upon men in money issues*" (Overå 1992:104). Other men who work in the market trade are the truck drivers, and the carriers, the *kaya-kaya*, who are mostly young men from northern Ghana. One could say that these men provide the "infrastructure" that facilitates market women's performance of their occupation.

Men's market branches, such as meat or electrical equipment, and commodity groups with a mixture of male and female sellers, such as second-hand clothes, follow different organisational patterns, and the majority remain without formal organisation or acknowledged single leaders. But some, such as the shoe sellers at the market in Kumasi, have developed a dual-sex organisation with both an *ohene* and an *ohemma* for male and female members (Clark 1994:253).

Although an *ohemma* may be rich, and by all means among the prominent and respected traders, she is not necessarily among the richest. A great responsibility follows the position of a market leader, and she must demonstrate by her behaviour that she is trustworthy and honest. Moreover, generosity greatly enhances her position. She enjoys great prestige, and the funerals of prominent *ohemma* can be a spectacular sight. The *ohemma* is also expected to act as a representative of "her" traders in funerals, and is treated with respect from the rest of the community on such occasions. Public visibility is important for an *ohemma*. However, she has no formal recognition in the council of chiefs; her power and prestige domain remains within the female market sphere.

When a case of dispute is brought before the *ohemma*, the parties involved, in front of witnesses, are each given the opportunity to give their version of the conflict. The witnesses may also have a word. Cheating and failure to repay debt are the most common problems. In most cases the *ohemma* manages to give the parties a lesson in trading ethics and moral behaviour, and to make them come to an agreement. If necessary, she fines the woman who is "judged" guilty. The main sanction in cases where traders do not accept the negotiation of the *ohemma*, and continues to break the rules, is the collective

destruction of her reputation by the other traders in her commodity group. The worst characteristic of a trader is one of quarrelsomeness and of being a troublemaker; someone it is not worth doing business with. A reputation of being trustworthy, on the other hand, can be a decisive asset - a stock of symbolic capital - in a trader's career. A trader thus has to be extremely careful if she tries to find new ways of doing things, tries to get advantages over the other traders, or in other ways violates the norms of the market.

There is a great difference between the traders according to scale of business and type of activity. The profit potential depends, of course, on demand in the market (which is very fluctuating and unpredictable), but also to a large extent on scale of trade and distance of transportation. The large-scale long-distance traders do, however, risk greater losses than the small scale trader because they aim for big profits. On the other hand, a minor loss for a petty trader, who lives on the border of the poverty line, can have very serious consequences.

A few traders have education but have lost their jobs after one of the public sector structural adjustment reforms in the eighties. Some have left the public sector voluntarily in favour of trade in order to earn more money. The majority of female market traders, however, are illiterate and start as apprentices, trading for their mother or another female relative. When a woman "starts her own" (which means that she starts earning money for herself and not for her mistress), usually when she gets married or has her first child, she starts on a very small scale. Gradually she may become a large-scale trader. Thus age and experience is an important differentiation factor in the hierarchy of traders. With time and with practice, a trader can build a reputation of trustworthiness and efficiency, and a network of valuable contacts; from carriers and drivers to the lodging women they stay with and rent market stalls from, and other trading partners and creditors. One can hardly overemphasize the importance of such cultural, social and symbolic capital in the career of a marketplace trader.

There are many different types of traders, categorised according to scale, type of activity and commodity. The travellers, as Clark (1994) calls them, are professional *wholesale buyers*. They rent trucks, go to the villages where the goods are produced, and transport the harvest to a regional market. They are often involved in the production itself by giving credit for farming input or machinery. Some traders from the interior travel to the coast for the purchase of smoked fish, which they transport to inland markets, northern Ghana or Burkina Faso. Further, there are *wholesalers* who buy from such travellers in

wholesale markets and transport the goods to markets further away. The market in Techiman, for example, is a typical wholesale market. Wholesalers come from the north with corn, yam, onion, etc., in large quantities, sell it, and then buy smoked fish, plantain, fruit, etc., from the south, which they bring home to markets in the north. Another type of wholesalers are those who are *large-scale producers and traders* of agricultural produce. Some of them buy from many small producers in their home town, and distribute the local produce to distant markets. This is typical for the large-scale fish traders; production, processing and distribution are integrated processes. Some of these do not travel themselves, but operate through a network of *representatives*; very often their daughters. Then there are the *wholesale-retailers* who buy from the wholesalers in a large or small quantities. Some of them just resell the goods to retailers for a meagre profit, others are bulk-breakers and retail the goods themselves. At the smallest scale are those who buy a small quantity from a wholesaler, or a wholesale-retailer, which they pile up in small heaps on a tray, and sell in the market, in the street or in their neighbourhood; the so-called *petty traders*. At a similar level are the *small scale producers who go to a market* not too far away and sell their own produce. They can not afford to travel to distant markets, and do not have quantities to sell which makes a long journey worth the effort. Instead, they may sell to a wholesaler, who in turn makes a greater profit on a market further away.

In a marketplace the traders are not only located and organised according to commodity and scale of business. The commodity groups are also categorised according to ethnicity. Often particular commodities are sold by people from a particular area: Shallot onions are sold by Ewe women, plantain and yam mostly by Asante women. Smoked herring is more likely to be sold by a Fante or Ga-Adangbe woman than an Anlo-Ewe woman, who sells smoked or dried sardines, the *amani* which are called "Keta school-boys". This reflects the type of fish which is caught in their home region. Within a yard of a market which is reserved for one particular commodity, the yard is further organised according to ethnic group and town of origin. As a total stranger in the huge market of Kumasi, it therefore took me only ten minutes to find the place in the market reserved for Moree fish sellers. When Anlo-Ewe and Ga-Adangbe fish sellers who come from migrant fishing communities on the central and western coast of Ghana come to the market in Kumasi, they join the women from their ancestral hometown. In the markets of Accra, the Ga fish sellers dominate, while in Kumasi it is the Fante fish sellers who dominate. As we have seen, there may be historical reasons for Fante fish traders' strong position in Kumasi. There is thus a differentiation within the marketplace, not only according to

scale of business between women of a particular commodity group, but also according to ethnicity and more specifically according to town of origin.

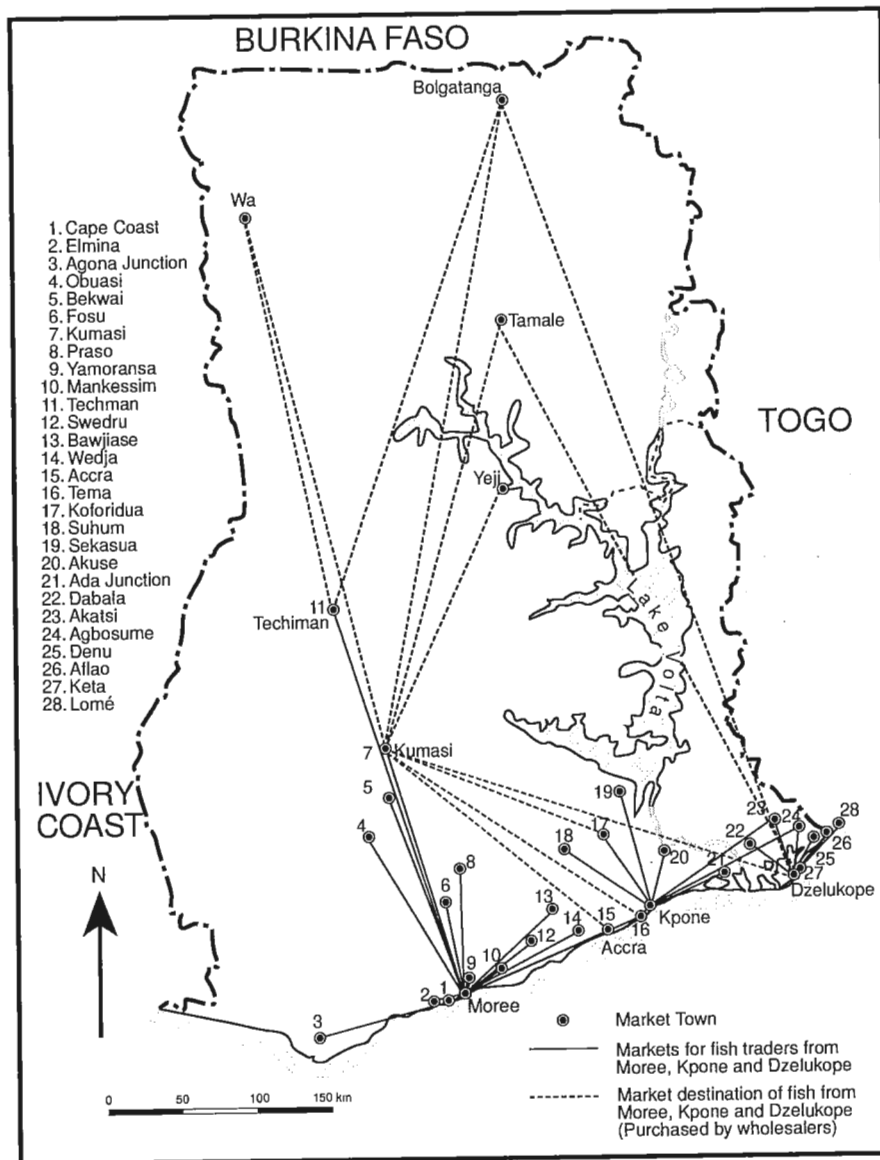
To sum up, a trader's gender, age, experience, reputation, ethnicity, type of commodity and scale of trade are factors that are crucial in the building of a business-network and a successful accumulation of both material and symbolic capital. Entrepreneurial strategies within the market field thus consists of enhancing one's stock of these ascribed and achieved types of capital and activating these resources both within and beyond the female market sphere.

### **From beach to market: The production and distribution chain of fish**

The context of marketplace trade is the arena within which women in fishing communities practice their profession and make careers. I will now briefly outline some of the main characteristics of the system of fish trade and its geographical distribution.

Fish marketing is a social field which to a various degree stretches out in space for fish traders from various places. As the map below shows, fish from the three fishing communities that we are soon going to examine further - Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope - have distinctive marketing regions. In terms of kilometres, Moree has the most extensive marketing region of fish which is traded by women from the town where the fish was produced. Women from Moree go as far as to Kumasi and Techiman with the fish they have smoked. Traders from Kpone bring their fish as far as to Koforidua and Sekasua, while women in Dzelukope mainly trade in fish in the southern Volta-Region (mainly within the Anlo-Ewe area). I must stress, however, that this figure is based on interviews with women that I met, and that I do not have a total overview of the marketing activities of *all* women in these towns. With this methodological reservation taken into consideration, a regional pattern of fish marketing nevertheless emerges, where Moree fish traders has a wider marketing region, Kpone fish traders have a comparatively more limited marketing region, and Dzelukope has the smallest marketing region. At a later stage in the analysis I will come back to some of the causes for these regional differences.

Map 7. Marketing regions of fish from Moree, Kpone and Dzeluko. Source: Field notes.



When we look at where fish from the three coastal communities end up, we see that travelling wholesalers from northern Ghana, Kumasi, Accra and other urban centres, buy up fish from all the three regions. However, while fish from Moree is brought by Moree traders a long way northwards (Kumasi and Techiman) before it is exchanged and brought further north by wholesalers (who are not from Moree), the wholesalers go all the way to Accra to buy fish brought to the market by Kpone traders, and to Keta and other in the local region to buy fish sold by women from Dzeluko. Although there may be large-scale fish traders from both Kpone and Dzeluko who sell fish in Kumasi or other long-distance markets, whom I did not encounter, the regional pattern of fish marketing indicates that traders from Moree have a more extensive marketing region than



women from Kpone and Dzelukope.

If we assume, as Schrader (1994) does, that the profitability of trade increases with the distance and scale of trade, it is plausible that the profitability of those of the traders in Moree who travel the longest distances and trade on the largest scale, have the highest profit potential. Since a certain volume is required to make the transportation of fish over long distances worth the effort, the traders who travel the longest distances also, as we are going to see, trade on the largest scale. Hence, it is possible that the extension of the marketing region of fish from Moree (which implies that a large number of women trade on a large scale and have relatively large profit potentials) is at least one factor, and in my opinion a crucial factor, in the explanation of the greater extent of female canoe ownership in Moree as compared with Kpone and Dzelukope. It is thus no coincidence that I emphasize the development of the market trade system to such a degree as I have done so far in this chapter, when I in the subsequent chapters will attempt to examine female entrepreneurship seen as the conversion of capital in the market sphere into ownership in the fisheries.

It is normally *within* the female market sphere women have a chance to start an enterprise. Entrepreneurship within the market sphere is often mainly a matter of scale; women mobilise resources from many arenas in order to increase the scale of their trade in items normally sold by women. To become rich through entrepreneurial activities normally defined as female within the dual-sex framework, does not challenge fundamental gender ideals. What I argue, in relation to female entrepreneurship in the fisheries, is that those who have become canoe owners have been able to convert their accumulated resources as entrepreneurs in the female market sphere to achieve wealth and prestige in the male fishing sphere. It is as successful fish traders they can accumulate enough capital to invest in fisheries. It is also as fish traders that women can build up personal reputations which enable them to fill new roles as employers of men and owners in a male domain. The women who have been able to do this, reached the summit of the female market hierarchy, in terms of wealth at least, before they could invest in canoes: To have success as a market woman seems to be a prerequisite for the possibility of converting accumulated economic capital and personal authority (symbolic capital) into the male sphere of fishing.

Interestingly, these women do not exchange success in the female sphere for a low status position in the male hierarchy. They convert value from the summit of the female fish

trade hierarchy to the summit of the male fishing hierarchy as canoe owners. This perhaps illustrates a change in the fishing community; from a system where gender and age were the main rank indicators to a system where wealth and class have come to precede these. Let us now take a look at the development of fisheries in Ghana, and how these changes have come about.

### **Technological innovation in the canoe fisheries in a historical perspective**

It is difficult to document how early marine fisheries began on the coast of Ghana. Fishing in lagoons, rivers and lakes and with cast nets from beaches for family consumption has a long tradition (Nukunya 1975; 1989), and we know that the Europeans recruited canoe men from fishing communities (Gutkind 1985). Until the late nineteenth century marine fisheries was an artisanal activity conducted in small, dug-out canoes with paddles, and sails made from bark cloth, with casting nets made of pineapple leaves twisted into cords, and lines with hooks made by a blacksmith (Christensen 1977:73). The fisheries on the coast was probably not, however, insignificant, since smoked fish was one of the commodities mentioned in the interior caravan trade.

In *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea*, William Bosman in 1721 reported that there were thousands of Fante fishermen, and that they traded by sea (in canoes) with Accra to the east and Axim to the west (Christensen 1977:72). The Fante were also the dominant group crewing the large surf boats which replaced the canoes that brought ashore goods from the ships before the harbours in Takoradi and Tema were constructed. The population in other areas of the coast mainly fished with cast nets from the beach or with small canoes and traps in the lagoons as a supplement to their main livelihood, which was farming. It is thus not surprising that both Lawson and Kwei (1974), Christensen (1977), Vercrujssse (1984) and Robertson (1984) write that deep sea canoe fishing was introduced by Fante migrant fishermen to the Ga-Adangbe between the late 1700s and the mid 1800s, and to the Anlo-Ewe somewhat later (Jorion 1988). This is also well established among people in the communities where fishing "started when Fante canoes first landed on the beach" (Lawson and Kwei 1974:51), as remembered today by the chief fisherman in Kpone when he recounts some of the main developments in the fisheries of his town:

*"In the past the main economic activity of the people in Kpone was farming, and fishing was not a commercial activity. Any time people needed fish they caught it by throwing cast nets into the sea, then drag it out to get food to supplement their diet. Commercial fishing was introduced to*

*this community by the Fante. A group of migrant fishermen came to sojourn among the people in Kpone. They fished, using bigger canoes and larger nets which they lay in the sea and dragged ashore. They taught the people how to use the nets and they also started doing the same thing. But because the Kpone people loved farming, they fished only during the major fishing season after which they pushed back their nets into the rooms, locked them up and went back to farm. In between the farming, the people only caught a small quantity of fish for food. With the growth in population and lack of land, farming ceased to be a popular activity since the yield was not encouraging. Fishing thus provided an alternative economic activity which has lived with the people up to date.*

*The first fishing technique adapted by the forefathers of Kpone was the small cast net canoes with masts and sails, erected to control the canoes from being blown away by the wind. The people also evolved the hook and line system to catch bigger fishes such as tsile, oda, and shark. This has become one of the most popular fishing methods in Kpone. Only short distances were covered to catch fish which abounded everywhere. The canoes were manually operated with paddles made from trees in the area. Smaller canoes were also used with long bamboo sticks which pushed canoes off the sand into the water. Fishing was done during the main season when the sea becomes calm. After this, there is a large break in fishing because the sea becomes very rough and scares away fishermen. When I was about 8 years old [approximately 1930] all kinds of fishing nets that are still in use today were being utilised by my grandfather, father and uncles. With time, the Fante introduced the purse seine as well. This method was adapted, but through the people's ingenuity, many other methods were evolved at the same time.*

*The introduction of the outboard motor into the fishing industry in Kpone occurred in the 1960s during the reign of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Most fishermen heard of this when they went to Accra and Tema to fish. People who could afford it in the cities talked about the outboard motor to other fishermen. They talked about how easy fishing had become with the use of outboard motors. Everywhere you went, fishermen were advertising the machine such that everyone felt like possessing one" (Chief fisherman of Kpone, March 1995).*

The chief fisherman here points out three major technological innovations; the adoption of larger canoes and nets, the introduction of nylon purse seines, and the introduction of outboard motors.

### **From pineapple and twine to *adii* nets and *Mfantse* canoes**

Technological innovation with the invention of a variety of fishing methods had happened gradually over the centuries in the canoe fisheries, but well over one hundred years ago equipment imported from Europe began to bring about more dramatic changes. It started with the introduction of manufactured cotton twine for nets, canvas for sails, as well as cork and lead (Christensen 1977:73). Towards the latter part of the nineteenth century a large surface drift net called *adii* (Fante), *ali* (Ga) or *agli* (Ewe) was introduced, which made

possible much larger catches of herring during the main season, which normally falls between July and September (Ibid.). These nets were gradually enlarged, and in order to handle them the size of canoes and crews also increased. The large canoes made of dug-out trunks of *wawa* tree enlarged with boards along the gunnels, were called *Mfantse* canoes, since it was the Fante who started making them. The length of the canoes that had been used before the introduction of the *adii* had been 20-23 feet, with a crew of two to four persons. Gradually the *Mfantse* canoes that fished with large *adii* nets were enlarged to the size of 30-40 feet with a crew of 10-14 men (Christensen 1973:73, 80).

According to Robertson (1984:86) the *adii* was introduced in Accra and other Ga towns by a Fante fisherman in 1870. In the following decades its use spread westwards and by the 1920s it had become a widely established fishing method all along the coast (Christensen 1977:73, Vercrujssse 1984:114). It was particularly the Fante fishermen who specialised in *adii* fishing and moved along the coast with the herring fisheries. The Ga-Adangbe also fished with *adii* or *ali*, but continued to use a variety of methods where hook and line fisheries became their speciality.

Around the same time as the *adii* net was introduced the first beach seine, called *yevudor* in Ewe (meaning European or white man's net), was purchased by a woman in Woe; an Anlo town between Keta and Anloga (Nukunya 1989:156). Her name was Afedima and she was the daughter of a prominent local man. Greene (1996:165) dates this event between 1850 and 1874. Afedima was a wealthy trader, as was also her husband John Tay, and they hired local people to fish for them (Ibid.). The beach seine was better suited for fishing in the rough surf in this area east of the mouth of the river Volta than the *agli* canoe fisheries, and the adoption of the new type of drag net allowed the Anlo-Ewe to catch greater quantities of fish in the ocean. This was very welcome, since the rich fish resources of the Keta Lagoon were overfished (Ibid.). After the adoption of the *yevudor* the Anlo-Ewe made modifications and constantly enlarged the beach seine, and as it got bigger and bigger, an increasing number of men was required to drag it ashore. Few Anlo-Ewe fishermen had the financial and labour resources to operate the *yevudor*, and most of them found that the only way they could continue to participate in the fishing industry was to work for the wealthier *yevudor* owners (Ibid:167).

The introduction of new types of nets brought about social and economic changes. According to Vercrujssse (1984) the introduction of the new *adii* net was not unproblematic; many people were amazed by the size of the new net, and feared that it would destroy the

fisheries. Not only did they fear the depletion of fish resources, but also increasing inequality between fishermen and new productivity demands on them from the owners of the new equipment (Ibid:114). The new net and bigger *Mfantse* (Fante) canoes also implied new conceptions of territoriality in resource management. While the range of the small canoes had been limited and fishing was done within the boundaries of each fishing community's territory in small quantities and in shallow water, the larger canoes with larger crews and sails could go much further, and disputes about fishing rights arose (Ibid:117).

In many ways the excessive costs of the *adii* net, the big catches and increasing size of crews and canoes brought with it a new way of thinking in the fisheries. Especially religious leaders and local authority persons feared the social consequences of new values in their communities. In Vercrujssse's (1984) Marxist terms, the "penetration of capitalism" into the canoe fisheries, which he classified as a "petty mode of production", had begun. Yet the fisher people increasingly invested in the new technology which resulted in fish landings that were welcomed by fish traders and consumers.

Before the turn of this century fishing with *tenga* nets had been the most common fishing method (and it is still common in some areas); each crew member owned his own net and went to sea with one, two or three mates who hired a canoe and shared the expenses. Often one of them owned the canoe, and the other fishermen paid him for the usage of the canoe with a share of their catch. The capital outlays were limited and were not unsurmountable for the average fisherman (Ibid:30). Thus each fisherman's share of the catch from a fishing trip was determined by the number of nets he brought with him on the canoe.

Canoes were often regarded as family (lineage) property (Ninsin 1991), and marriage was closely tied to the right of the wife to buy, process and market her husband's catch. The fisherman handed over the share from his net to his wife (or wives) or, if he was not married, to his mother, aunt or sister; his so-called fishwife (Vercrujssse 1984:31). She processed and marketed her husband's catch, and then gave him the agreed price of the fish after she had sold it on the local or regional market. This gender division of labour and implications for marriage relations was described in Labadi (near Accra) by M. J. Field:

"It is a woman's duty to trade any fish or food her husband produces over and above the amount required to feed the husband, wife, and children. For instance, when a husband has a catch of fish, he will say to his wife - or to each of his wives - "This is five shillings worth of fish. Take it and give me...five shillings in three day's time"...A man cannot demand of his wife that she works on his farm...But it is her bounden duty, as a wife, to do all the marketing and exchanging of farm goods for her husband" (Field 1940:62-63 in Nypan 1960).

With the income a fisherman could earn from his own labour through his wife's trade, he should contribute to the up-keep of the children and give *chop money* (money for cooking) to his wife (wives). The wife also contributed from her income to children and food, and in addition she was expected to save money from her trade to help the family through the lean fishing season. During the lean season the husband would not catch much fish, and would have little to contribute to the children, food and other expenses. The wife thus functioned as a kind of "seasonal bank account" for the husband and family during such times.

With *adii* fishing the sharing system of the canoes' catch was changed. The owners of the net and canoe now faced expenses to a degree they never had done before. Therefore the catch was divided so that each fisherman, including the owner if he went fishing with the crew and sometimes even if he did not, got one share of the catch each. But the canoe owner in addition got one share for the canoe and one for the net (at least). Thus the owner began to earn substantially more than the crew members, and although he also faced more investment and maintenance expenses, social differentiation between them increased. This also meant that the wives of crew members had less fish to buy than the wives of canoe owners. The stock of capital in the form of crucial social and economic relations in each woman's various social fields, such as marriage, thus became even more decisive for her access to resources in the system of fishing.

When *adii* fishing brought increasing catches many women feared that they would lose control over the supply of fish and that fish prices would increase and make the marketability of their commodity less favourable for them. During the few months of the main season the large quantities of herring that now were landed, were difficult to handle for the fish processors and traders. The average fishwife did not have sufficient processing and distribution capacity. Thus a specialisation and stratification occurred among fish traders, where those who had capital could buy large quantities of fish, and could build more ovens, hire smokers, and earn much bigger profits than those who relied on their share of fish from a fisherman husband and perhaps only had two fish smoking ovens. Apart from the women and men who could raise capital from outside the fishing industry, as for example from a brother employed in the colonial administration in Accra or Kumasi, it is most likely that those who were able to invest in processing and distribution facilities, and in labour, were the wives of owners of *adii* nets and canoes. Through the rights that a married woman had to buy fish on credit, those who were married to owners could do this on a larger scale than others. These women took advantage of the limited smoking capacity of the average fishwives, who could not operate on a large scale despite the increased volume of their

husband's catches. They simply did not have enough ovens, or space and resources to build new ovens, and often had to sell fish to those with more processing capacity. The large scale processors and traders could thus build up enterprises with resources (fish, labour and capital) generated through the local production system and wider distribution chain. With the development of the large scale and long distance fish marketing system, which was an implication of colonial policies and economic and structural changes at the world market, women who had an advantageous location in the web of social and economic relations, in the local power geometry (cf. Massey 1994), and who had an enterprising spirit, got access to resources in wider fields and could accumulate capital, increase the scale of their businesses and climbed on the prestige ladder in the female market hierarchy.

As fish production increased with the spread of new fishing equipment, marine canoe fishing more and more became a commercial and market oriented activity. The demand for fish was growing in pace with the growth of urban centres, such as Accra and Kumasi. Migrant labourers on cocoa farms and in the mining industry needed protein rich food they could afford, such as fish. Vercrijse (1984:133) actually indicates that the expansion in cocoa production and increased productivity in canoe fishing were closely interconnected. It was in the cocoa manufacturers' interest to keep the cost of labour down and thus to keep food prices down as well. Cheap smoked fish from the coast was therefore very welcome, and while the improved infrastructure enabled the cocoa-agents to go further and further inland, it had the same effect for the fish traders.

In the first five decades of this century, long distance fish trade became a female occupation, and a new arena for accumulation of wealth and prestige for women from fishing communities. Although fish trade proved to be a profitable venture, it was not an area where men entered. This can probably be seen in relation to the development of the organised female market organisations. It became difficult for men to enter a trade which was increasingly seen as a female occupation and a female hierarchy. I shall return to the deeper causes of female connotations associated with fish trade.

According to Christensen (1973:76) women were not as much involved in financing and ownership of canoes and equipment as they became in the sixties and seventies. But already with the *adii* nets the costs of running a canoe company increased tremendously. With the increased cost of nets and canoes, and with the specialised, large scale traders' demand for supply of fish, credit relationships developed between canoe owners and traders. The fish traders who were no longer only selling the produce of their husbands had become

professional big dealers who hired people in their processing industry. The accumulated capital of these women was the main source of credit for the canoe and net owners for their purchase of the new equipment. These women were able to provide the *adii* fishermen with ready cash, and they got a very strong hold over their debtors who had few or no other sources of credit to turn to. It is quite obvious, then, that large scale women traders promoted new technology in their own interest; to increase the supply and to keep the price of fish low (see Vercrujisse 1984:122-23; Platteau 1989).

### **Institutional change**

With technological changes, institutional arrangements followed. The institution of chief fisherman, *apofohene*, had existed for a long time in Fante fishing communities. With increasing fish production, interaction with migrant fishermen, a changing structure of ownership in the fisheries, and a commercialisation of the relationship between fish producers and fish traders, the institution of chief fisherman spread to other communities as a response to the need of organising the relations between new interest groups in the system of fishing better. Mediation of conflicts between fishermen, between crew members and owners, and between fishermen and fish traders, were typical tasks for the *apofohene*. The chief fisherman in Kpone narrates why and how the institution, which in Ga is called *woleiatse*, evolved in his town:

*"In those days fishing was not a serious activity and there were only a few fishermen. In spite of this, fishermen had to operate in an organised manner. There was no chief fisherman in those days. The community, however, appointed an experienced fisherman from the three adebo wekushia [houses of founding lineages] as head of all the fishermen. They were appointed one at a time. Thus a person held office once in his life-time for one year. At the end of the year, another one was appointed from the next house. During his term in office, the leader of the fishermen was responsible for the welfare of the other fishermen. He kept an eye on everyone's operation. When there was conflict he would attempt to resolve it amicably between the conflicting parties. If he couldn't, he would report every occurrence at sea to the elders and regulate the behaviour of all fishermen. In the past, fishermen were not very many and migrant fishing was virtually non-existent because fish was caught wherever fishermen cast their nets or threw their hooks and lines. As such, there was no scramble for fish. Absence of pressure on the sea for fish meant less interaction with fishermen, with very little conflict. There was, therefore, little need for a chief fisherman. As time went on, however, the number of fishermen increased. Migrant fishing was on the increase as people had to travel further away from home for fish. The first chief fisherman that was installed in Kpone was called Nii Ashong from whose lineage I descend. People travelled from all over the suburbs of Kpone to learn fishing in Nii*



*Ashong's house, and people who came to fish here had to pay a fee to the chief fisherman".*

In the Anlo-Ewe area the chief fisherman institution did not appear until on a much later stage, and then not from within the fishing industry. It was introduced by the Fisheries Department (which was established by the colonial government in the early 1940s) as a link to facilitate its policy implementation in the fishing communities. As mentioned a female parallel institution to the male *apofohene*, the *konkohene*; the "queen of fish traders", also appeared with the commercialisation of fish trade. The present *konkohene* of Elmina (an important fish landing harbour in the Central Region), for example, was installed in the early 1980s. She is the third *konkohene* to be installed in Elmina. That means that the first woman who was elected as the leader of fish traders, was installed about two generations earlier, approximately in 1920. Considering the importance in terms of quantities of fish landed (sold fresh) in Elmina, it is probable that this was one of the first communities to have a *konkohene*. Today most Fante fishing communities have this institution. The power of the *konkohene* in each community varies, both in her influence vis a vis the *apofohene*, and in her following amongst the fish traders. The *konkohene* in Moree, for example, felt that the *konkohene* in Komenda exercised more influence in her community, than what she herself was able to do in Moree.

The need to organise the fish traders better, in order to strengthen the position in the system of fishing and the position of women in their communities in general, is also felt elsewhere. In Kpone, the women were inspired by the Fante *konkohene* institution. The Kpone women had tried to adapt a similar system, organised in the same manner as the *woleiatse*, where one woman from each of the founding lineages should negotiate with the fishermen on behalf of the other women. The attempt collapsed, however, because the other women felt that the leaders did not achieve much for them, but rather represented their own and their lineage's interests.

The establishment of new institutions and the maintenance of their function and authority therefore depends on factors that are both external and internal to the community, and these factors change over time.

## From paddles and cotton to nylon and motors

In the 1950s the Fisheries Department experimented with the building of inshore motor vessels and with the adaptation of motors on local canoes. The focus of the government was to modernise the fisheries and the distribution system. From 1960 many efforts were done to achieve this aim; a modern fishing harbour was built in Tema, a wholesale market was built in Takoradi and in 1961 a State Fishing Corporation (SFC) was established (Lawson and Kwei 1974). A fleet of subsidised private inshore vessels had been built in boat yards which were established for that purpose. Some of those who had experience from this sector later went into industrial fisheries. In 1961 the Director and owner of Mankoadze Fisheries, Robert Ocran, who was a remarkable private entrepreneur in the industrial fishery sector in Ghana and born in the fishing village Mankoadze, purchased the first freezer trawler from the Soviet Union (Ibid.). From his experience in the inshore vessel fisheries he was fully aware that control over distribution was a key link in the successful operation of a fishing company. Thus he had already established the first cold store in the brand new fishing harbour in Tema the year before. I will not go into the development of an industrial fishery sector in detail here. But as I shall come back to later, it is interesting to note how the development of small and large scale "modern" or industrial fisheries, and the observation of and interaction with this sector by people in fishing communities, led to major innovations in the canoe fisheries which got significant social and economic consequences.

A good example of innovation as a result of the interaction between local and imported technology was the invention of a purse seine called *watsa*, *ahwea*, *poli*, or sieve net (see Hernæs 1991:139, Vercuijsse 1984:131, Mansvelt Beck and Sterkenburg 1976:12). The *watsa* (as I mostly heard it called) is a large, multipurpose purse seine with many different net types and mesh sizes sewn together. It is set in a circle and its upper part floats on the surface while it is closed in the bottom by a rope through rings that are fastened to the lower part of the purse seine. According to Lawson and Kwei (1974:167-68) the *watsa* was modelled on the nylon and ring nets that the above mentioned Director of Mankoadze Fisheries brought back to Ghana after he on his own initiative had been on the first World Gear Congress of the FAO held in Hamburg in 1957. Inspired by the catches Robert Ocran's inshore vessels got with the ring net, fishermen made their own type of purse seine and adapted it to the motorised canoes. This adaptation, in turn, led to modifications on the canoes to make them bigger, and to take larger crews, so that they could handle the *watsa*. These days the largest canoes are up to 60 feet long. The more average size is about 40 feet, and such canoes ideally have both *adii* nets and a *watsa*, and shift fishing techniques

according to season.

The motorisation of canoes rapidly took off in the sixties. Within a very brief period from the experiments of the Fisheries Department in 1959-60, about 20% of the canoes were equipped with an outboard motor (Vercrujisse 1984:131). In the beginning, mostly 16-18 h.p. motors were used, but with the increasing size of motors and nets the 40 h.p. motor became the standard equipment. In fact it has been standardised to the extent that hardly any other size of motor is now available at the Ghanaian market (in 1995). Facing very high petrol expenses, some fishermen want to switch to a smaller motor and a more modest canoe size, but 18 h.p. motors were hard to find. This shows that the adaptation of canoe fishermen to structural changes continues<sup>2</sup>. Their need for less petrol consuming motors will probably result in the import of more varied types of technology (I was asked to bring with me an 18 h.p. motor the next time I returned to Ghana). However, back in the 1960s the benefits of the outboard motor after some initial scepticism from some of the fishermen were unquestionable, despite the high capital outlays for the owners. The chief fisherman in Kpone again recounts how it was spread to the fishing communities:

*"Apart from hearing about the outboard machines from people, the Nkrumah government was propagating the idea to fishermen. Educational programmes were mounted about it. Film shows were organised to educate people in various fishing communities. Classes were also organised and special training was given to people. Before any would purchase a machine, he had to attend this special training where he was taught things about the machine, how to manipulate and how to effect some repairs in it if it develops a problem. The course lasted between 4 and 5 weeks for each group of people. There were, however, people who were fast in learning at the school. Such people spent less than the stipulated period meant for the course. Illiteracy was no barrier to the course because of the element of demonstrations in the training course.*

*What made it easy for people to have access to the machines was the credit facility attached. The income of fisher folk is generally very low, thus it was not possible for them to buy the outboard motor. The government had again facilitated payment for the machine by introducing credit facility. Initially one had to deposit some money before being given the machine. The rest of the money was paid later by instalment. The machine cost only 13 shillings at the time".*

The success of the outboard motor thus seems to be related to a combination of factors; the

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<sup>2</sup> For a study of technological retrogression in fisheries, see Endresen's (1994) analysis of Malaysian and Sri Lankan cases.

importation of new net types, the development of an industrial fishery sector, the "propagating" by the government and their importation of outboard motors, and distribution of these through credit programmes. However, even though the motorisation of canoes was supported by the Government<sup>3</sup>, the main "catalysts" (Ekechi 1996) in the diffusion of the new technology were the large scale fish traders, who in the outboard motor saw an investment object for further accumulation in fish trade, and the fishermen themselves, who wanted jobs and larger catches.

Initially the credit programmes of the government were scheduled for a repayment period for a motor of one year. But few could pay back so soon. The repayment period was extended to two years. But repayment still proved to be problematic, since most motors did not last for more than two or three years. Lack of knowledge when the motors had technical problems and lack of spare parts was also inhibiting an efficient utilisation of the motors and ability to repay loans. The knowledge of maintenance and repair of outboard motors improved with experience, and soon a network of workshops were found in all fishing villages. Hernæs (1991) compares them to the myriad of "fitting shops" for cars along the roads. But the problem of raising capital for motorised fishing and of repayment of debt at the required intervals was not so easily overcome. The fishermen thus had to use their own institutions; the fish traders who could give them credit outside the season on more flexible terms.

The sharing system of a canoe's catch had to change with the introduction of outboard motors. The costs of motor and petrol now required that shares of the catch were allocated to cover these expenses. Thus a share of the catch is deducted to cover the sum that was used for petrol on a trip and to buy new petrol for the next trip. The remainder of the catch is shared in two equal parts. One of them is divided among the crew members and the other half goes to the net, motor and canoe, that is the owner. There are many variations in sharing systems, but this *fifty-fifty* system is the most common method used in *adii* and *watsa* fishing today. There are two obvious consequences of such a system; each fisherman's share gets smaller relative to that of the owner of equipment as compared to non-mechanised fisheries, and the wife (wives) of canoe-, motor- and net-owners get a larger quantity to buy.

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<sup>3</sup> In fact the investments by the Government in the modernisation of the canoe fleet was very modest compared to their effort of establishing an entirely new and modern industrial fishing fleet. As Platteau and Abraham (1987) point out, "the total investment in the modern sector (including infrastructure) had amounted to 16.25 million by 1966 compared to an estimated investment of 2.28 million (around 12% of the total investment expenditure for fishing) in the artisanal sector" (Ibid:576).

The *watsa* canoes have a crew of up to 25 members. One should perhaps think that technological innovation would lead to less labour intensive fishing and higher income for the fishermen. However, the major impact was that the canoe sector changed from a large fleet of small canoes to a small fleet of large canoes. Until 1953 there were about 8,000 canoes in Ghana and 50-60,000 fishermen. In 1983 there were about the same number of canoes, but 100,000 fishermen (Vercruijssse 1984:69). Larger canoes with larger crews caught about 100,000 tons more fish per year twenty years after the introduction of outboard motors. The *watsa* could catch large quantities, and the size of the *adii* had also increased (300-400 yards in 1973 according to Christensen 1973:80). However, the costs of running a canoe company also increased, as had the number of fishermen on each canoe who shared the catch, so the average income - at least in terms of real income - for each fisherman seems not to have increased very much.

Thus the outboard motor did not first and foremost lead to better living standards for fishermen, but to a rise in number of people who earn their livelihood from this occupation, and of course in the number of women and children who are employed in processing and distribution. It should also not be forgotten that the increase in fish landings has provided Ghanaians with protein rich food in contrast to the fish which is landed by the industrial sector, which mainly is frozen and goes for export.

The other effect of the capital requirements in motorised canoe fishing was that the canoe owners and large scale traders earned more. With increased fish landings a number of "fish wives" got an employment opportunity, but not to trade on a large scale, since the shares of their husbands did not necessarily increase much. But the large scale fish traders and the canoe owners' wives profited on the dependency relationships between the owners of equipment and creditors, and secured an increasing amount of fish to supply their processing and distribution businesses. As mentioned, some of these women saw the advantage of integrating production, processing and distribution vertically, and they thus invested in canoes and hired crews themselves. Although women in some cases were heads of matrilineages (in the case of the Fante), and thus also in earlier times could be regarded as custodians of canoes as family property, and some rich women outside the fishing industry invested in equipment (such as Afedima in Woe and some rich urban traders in Accra), female private ownership of canoes in fishing communities seems to be a consequence of the motorisation and the increased capital requirements in canoe fisheries, and the ability of large-scale fish traders to meet these requirements.

In my view the case of female entrepreneurship in the canoe fisheries can be interpreted in the light of parallel sets of male and female gender values, as expressed in dual-sex hierarchies and the duality discourse. This gender duality was moulded through historical and structural changes and resulted in a feminisation of the market trade system. In the interface between local gender ideas that brought about specific gender divisions of labour, and structural changes within the fishing community, such as technological innovation, and processes beyond the fishing community, such as international developments in the cocoa-market, or political changes in Ghana upon independence from the British, a space - or a "platform" - was provided for entrepreneurs in the market hierarchy, from which entering into powerful positions not only in trade, but also in the fisheries, was possible.

### **Gendered symbols: The fish and the pot**

The gender division of labour where it is men's role to fish and women's role to sell the fish and make money is deeply rooted in the cultural construction of gender in the fishing communities. Gender differences; ideas about femaleness and maleness, are created, reproduced, negotiated and redefined in particular historical and cultural contexts. Gender can also be seen as relational, in the sense that the meanings of masculinity and femininity are continually being redefined through social interaction and with reference to each other. As Lerman et al. (1997) point out, creating and maintaining gender categories often requires an extraordinary amount of work. A lot is at stake, whether it is access to knowledge, jobs, technology or other resources. But while gender ideas are versatile and changing in the interaction with external and internal processes, the social construction of gender in different contexts do not always change in the same direction even though they face similar structural or technological processes. People's heads are not blank papers ready to be filled with new ideas; the paper is already "thick" with cultural symbols and metaphors, which influence the shape of new and changed ideas. The social construction of gender will therefore have to be negotiated and constantly redefined in relation to existing "truths".

When the gendered division of labour in the fisheries has been maintained, despite the economic and structural changes in Ghana, and in many ways has become even more clear-cut than in the days when some men actually were engaged in long distance fish trade, it indicates that fish processing and trade has distinctly female connotations and that the activity of fishing has male connotations attached to it. This can be observed in very many

cultures (see Acheson 1981; Nadel-Klein and Davis 1988; Pálsson 1989; Robben 1989). The gendering of fishing is not satisfactorily explained by the fact that fishing is a physically strenuous work which leaves fishermen with little time to process and sell their fish. There are examples of women who are involved in actual activity of fishing from their own boats in contexts where this is considered as a male profession, as in Peru (Eyde 1996) and in Norway (Munk-Madsen 1997). Involvement of women in the collection of mussels, snails and shells, and in reef and lagoon fishing, seems to be common in almost all coastal societies as, for example, in Oceania (see Chapman 1987), Melanesia (see Firth 1984; Hviding 1992), as well as in Ghana (i.e. Nukunya 1969). There are also studies of societies where fish trade is mainly an activity that is performed by men (i.e. Carsten 1989). Moreover, as Schrader (1994:39) points out, small-scale trade in many societies is performed by women, but is taken over by men when it becomes a large-scale venture. And lastly, the example of the modernisation of fisheries in Kerala (Platteau 1989a) showed that fish trade which had been regarded as a low cast occupation was redefined with the introduction of modern and profitable shrimp fisheries; it became prestigious for even high caste persons to deal in shrimps (Ibid:581). Thus, in many parts of the world, when fish trade has become profitable men have crossed both gender, class, ethnic, and caste barriers to enter this profitable domain, why did this not happen in Ghanaian fishing communities?

Not all men in Ghanaian fishing communities are fishermen. There are of course men who are tailors, drivers or masons, and so on. No men, however, are fish traders. Some men are agents for cold stores selling frozen fish or, as Lawson and Kwei (1974) reported from the 1950s, importers of Norwegian stockfish. But men in Ghanaian fishing communities generally do not enter into any role in exchange of fish after it has been landed on the beach. When the canoe is emptied, and the fish has been put into carrying pans and is sold, the fish has entered a female domain.

In my view the clear-cut male and female roles in the system of fishing can be seen in light of the dual-sex model and the duality discourse mentioned above. In relation to fishing communities in the West African context a gender representation which encompasses the duality and complementarity of male and female in an illuminating way, is Margaret Thompson Drewal's analysis of Yoruba ritual where she sees female and male as respectively "the container and the contained" (1992:180). The notion of woman as container, which is seen as a symbol of female power, is based on cultural interpretations of biological factors, on women's role as life-givers and nurturers. Men are contained in women during sexual intercourse, and women contain their children during pregnancy.

A concrete expression of the relevance of this perspective can be seen painted on the wall in a religious shrine in Moree (Opoku and Wicker, forthcoming). This shrine has Maame Water as one of its divinities. Maame Water is a water divinity who is represented as a mermaid, an image which is found many places in Africa and also in black communities on the other side of the Atlantic (see Wicker, in press). Maame Water is beautiful; white in complexion and with long, black shining hair, the upper part of her body is bare, and the lower part of her body is a fish tail. She represents wealth and success. On paintings of Maame Water, she is often surrounded by her children who live with her in water; fishes and snakes. Fishermen turn to her for help to get good catches, and traders turn to her for success. Maame Water brings happiness in life if one treats her well, respects her and keeps the days of sexual abstinence she demands. According to the *bosomfo* (priest) of the Tsgia No.1 shrine in Moree, Maame Water is always represented as a mermaid, but can be both male and female, because, as he says, "*all God's creations are male and female*" (Opoku and Wicker 1996). The painting on the wall of the shrine portrays one female Maame Water and one male Maame Water (both in the shape of a mermaid). But they are each holding gendered symbols that permit their identification as female or male:

*"Bosomfo (...)* designates the Maame Water figures holding fish as the male Maame Water who deals with fishermen and their work. The Maame Water holding the pot is the female. The pot, the receptacle for storing the woman's money, symbolizes wealth. These symbols clearly relate to the gendered social constructions within the Fante community, where men's role is to fish and women's role is to sell the fish and make money" (Opoku and Wicker, forthcoming:25).

Following Drewal's gender analysis of male and female as container and contained, the symbols of the fish and the pot make sense in a fishing community like Moree. Men are through their work supposed to fill their women's pots with fish. A man goes to sea where he fills the *hembra* (the word for canoe in Fante which has female connotations) with fish. His wife puts what he produces in her container, and this procreates life and continuity. In selling his fish she also converts what he produces into money. From the money she generates, the husband is expected to give her *chop money*; money for food. In this lies the whole idea of marriage; the exchange of his chop money for food (from her cooking pot) and sex (where she contains him) and children (which she contains in her womb). In the case of a matrilineal society the children she contains in her womb represent the wealth and continuity of her own lineage, in the case of a patrilineal society they belong to the patrilineage of her husband<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> A story from the Beng people in the forest of Ivory Coast expresses a similar conception of male as contained in the female: "They say in the old days, Penis, Testicles, and Vagina were friends; they spoke with one





*Photo 3. Male and female Maame Water in Moree. Photography by Patricia Ranieri and Allan W. Wicker; photo illustration by Matthew Gerber, 1997.*

The exchange relationship of fish and food (in the pot) between men and women is vital for both the viability of the system of fishing and for the continuity of the community. In the duality discourse such a view makes sense; male can not exist without female and female can not exist without male. The conversion of the product of men's work, fish, into money, thus

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mouth. One day, they were going to the village, and they carried on their heads some banana-corn pudding that they had cooked. They took to the road and started going rather far. Now, Vagina had a rather big mouth. She said, "Hunter is killing me". So she divided up her pudding and ate it. Soon she ate the rest. They kept going, kept going, and again she said hunger was killing her. She begged Testicles to give her some of his pudding, but he refused. Then she begged Penis, "I'm sorry, please give me a little bit of your pudding to eat". Penis divided up the pudding and gave her some. They kept going, and in a little while the sky started getting dark, it started getting windy. Penis and Testicles said, "Oh, we are afraid of the wind". Vagina said "Penis, don't worry about it, I will hide you". It started raining, and she caught hold of Penis and hid her in her big hole. Then Testicles said he wanted to enter, too, but Vagina said, "No you're selfish, you're not coming in". And even now, when a man sleeps with a woman, Testicles stays hanging outside" (in "Parallel Worlds" by Alma Gottlieb and Philip Graham, 1994).

belongs to the same sphere as food, sex, procreation of life and birth of children. Processing and distribution of fish thus has deeply rooted female connotations, and the marketplace itself can be viewed as a "cooking pot"; a female domain with its own prestige hierarchy. A tentative hypothesis could be that, since women in a matrilineal society fundamentally secure the continuity of the lineage from whose own "womb" or "pot" they are procreated, and thus in themselves represent a direct line of continuity, constitute the wealth of the lineage which is in the interest of male elders. Women's economic independence is therefore promoted.

Although a man's lineage can only be continued through the children of his sisters, he still realizes that he can not exist without a female partner (if not necessarily a wife) who can convert his fish into food and wealth, and a woman through whom he can demonstrate his virility as a man; without children and without a woman he is not a male. According to this logic, the gendered division of labour is reasonable; male fish traders would be "inverted women" and thus break with the cultural gender construction.

Seen in the duality perspective women in a patrilineal fishing community are equally valuable as containers and procreators, and as converters of fish in the "cooking pot" of the market (see Masquelier 1993, Feldman-Savelsberg 1996). But although there is no contradiction in her becoming rich and giving life to many children, it is not in the same interest of the elders of her lineage, since her children and eventually her wealth (to the extent that it benefits her sons and daughters) represent the continuity of the father of her children's lineage, and not her own. Her economic independence is therefore not to the same extent promoted by the elders of her lineage, although there are strong bonds and a relationship of mutual help between mother and daughter (Nukunya 1969, Greene 1996). For the males of her own lineage and of her husband's lineage it is perhaps more in their interest to control her sexuality and labour so that she turns out to be the kind of female who proves their maleness. I will later come back to a comparative analysis of how matrilineal (in Moree) and patrilineal (in Kpone and Dzelukope) ideologies play a part in the careers of women entrepreneurs.

In relation to Parry and Bloch's (1989) transactional systems, one could say that the short-term activities of fisheries and marketing (exchange of fish and food) are interconnected with a long-term transactional system of procreation of life and reproduction of the community (in this case the viability of the integrated system of fishing and marketing as a whole). Thus, in my view, and in accordance with the duality discourse, the analysis of gender relations as intertwined with economic activities in fisheries and marketing, does not benefit much from

a perspective where male fishing and female trading are seen as opposed to each other. This does not imply that the relationship is not often antagonistic, asymmetrical and exploitative. On the contrary, this articulation of the production sphere with the distribution sphere is a dynamic relationship which involves both cooperation and conflict. As in the relationship between men and women, between husbands and wives, the interdependence between fisheries and consumption (and thereby distribution) are inseparable from each other. In a long-term perspective, short-term transactions in male and female spheres only make sense in relation to each other: Consumption is impossible without fishing, and fishing is not worth the effort if there are nobody to eat the fish.

### **Social and economic relations interwoven**

The duality discourse can shed some light on the analysis of the developments of the fisheries. Seen in light of a gender discourse it becomes clear that the process of accumulation and stratification which has happened in fishing communities induced by technological innovation, is more complex than a class perspective can grasp.

The Marxist scholar Emile Vercrujisse (1984), for example, constantly states that the technological development, or penetration of capitalism in his terminology, in the canoe fisheries is caused by the interests of the big fish traders. He asserts that there is a fundamental antagonistic relationship between the fish traders and the petty producers, the fishermen. At the same time, because the motorised form of fisheries is not "purely capitalist" (yet), the fishermen feel solidarity and are grateful towards the owner (when a good catch is caught). According to Vercrujisse, the fishermen do not "realize" that they are exploited by the canoe owners, and their class consciousness is not developed in this "peculiar mode of production", which no longer is a typical petty mode of production, but not yet a capitalist mode of production. The canoe owners, on the other hand, are exploited by the big traders, to whom they stand in a credit dependency relationship. Not for a moment does Vercrujisse take seriously, in spite of his often impressive ethnographic thoroughness, that the big fish traders, upon whom the canoe owners are so dependent for credit, are integrated members of the fishing communities; that they are the mothers, sisters, daughters and wives of both canoe owners and fishermen, and that this necessarily must mean something in the relations between them.

In the next chapter I will examine the significance of kinship, marriage relations, friendships

and other social relationships in three systems of fishing; from canoe to beach; in homes and villages; on the road and in markets. Looking thoroughly at how the "exploiters" and the "exploited" in economic systems are connected through social relationships will, I assert, redefine how we view entrepreneurship as well as technological innovation in this West African context.

### 3. Webs of people and resources

#### Introducing three places

In getting to know the people and places this study is about, we start in Moree in the Central Region, which was the basis for the study and remains its main point of reference. Then we move eastwards to Kpone, and, lastly, we go to Dzelukope in the southeastern corner of Ghana. When we have come to know these places better, we can move back and forth between them and explore some similarities and differences in the experiences of men and women who make a fish-based living in the three communities.

The aim of the chapter is to describe three systems of fisheries, and the social positions and relations between the people who perform the work tasks in each system (see Jentoft and Wadel 1984). In order to do this, the whole "social space" in which production, changes and reproduction of the system takes place, must be understood. I attempt, in other words to apply an approach to the study of social processes in wider contexts that perceives of *societies as consisting of interrelated social fields at scales that vary both geographically and in structural complexity*. Social fields are, according to Bourdieu (in Jenkins 1992:84), networks, or structured systems, of social positions occupied by individuals or institutions. And the fields are structured internally in terms of the power differential in the relations between the social positions "by virtue of the access they afford to the goods or resources (capital) which are at stake in the field" (Ibid.).

In order to identify which resources are at stake, and how fields are internally structured through the differential access to these resources, I return to the methodological questions I introduced in Chapter 1. How are social fields internally structured in terms of social positions? How are the persons positioned in relation to each other? Which forms of

social, economic, cultural and symbolic capital are accessible in the various social fields for women and men? Which conversion barriers, in line with Barth (1963), exist between which spheres of exchange? Which conversion channels are open for men and women respectively? And, given that the conversion channels and barriers are gendered, have these opened or closed new niches in the fisheries in a gender differentiated manner? These and many other questions will be explored in the Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope contexts.

I have defined four social fields that are central for an understanding of how people live and make a living in each of these fishing communities. These are the fields of fishing, marketing, kinship and marriage. I will present the four fields in Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope; the extension of each field in time and space (scale), and the composition of the social statuses of the personnel involved in the fields (structural complexity) (cf. Grønhaug 1978).

Other fields are of course also of importance in the analysis of people's destinies and strategies. Particularly I am thinking about the fields of religion and of local political authority. I will not describe these fields in detail, but in the analysis of individual careers and career networks, religious and political influence will be dealt with when it is relevant. Symbolic capital acquired in these fields have been highly significant in the careers of some entrepreneurs.

Cases will be used all along, sometimes to illustrate a point derived from observation or from secondary sources, and other times as basis for analysis. I will analyse entrepreneurial careers as processes where the premises for each person's access to resources (various types of capital) lie in the network of interrelated fields that surround him or her (at various geographical scales). Degree of access depends upon his or her social status within each field.

I will also focus on the exchange of various types of capital, on how channels of conversion of value from one sphere to another have been entered at various stages in the life-cycle. Opportunities and constraints have appeared through intended and unintended events in ways that became decisive turning points or moments of change in the entrepreneurs' careers. One important point about analysing careers through case studies, is that the cases are always network cases. It is impossible to understand entrepreneurial (or "ordinary") careers without studying the social dynamics in the network of people and

resources surrounding the person; the fields in which she participates in various social capacities.

A hypothesis in relation to exchange of value and types of capital is that the extent to which such exchange can succeed, depends upon the way the activity is done and in which context; in other words how entrepreneurial strategies are practised. According to Parry and Bloch (1989) short-term or sensual exchange is in some contexts and situations incompatible with long-term or moral exchange. The extent to which material and symbolic exchange is perceived as morally acceptable often depends on the social position of the person who is involved in such activity. Are there gender or class differences in the (spatial and social) extension of spheres of moral exchange in the fishing communities? As previous studies have shown (Barth 1963; Hart 1975; Garlick 1971; Lewis 1977), entrepreneurial activity happens in interaction with the social environment. In every society there are boundaries that, for example, limit the manner in which wealth can be accumulated, displayed, or distributed. In Evers and Schrader's (1994) terminology, the entrepreneur must find solutions to overcome the "traders' dilemma".

A person who seeks to convert one type of capital into another has to manoeuvre and find strategies that do not violate the norms for moral exchange. When a person is able to enter a kind of "spiral" where the acquisition of different forms of capital contributes to a cumulative increase in his or her total capital stock, the person is involved in entrepreneurial activity (in Barth's sense of the concept). Entrepreneurial activity thus consists of finding channels through the barriers created by the norms of moral exchange in each context, so that material and symbolic capital can enter a "spiral" of accumulation.

Here I touch upon a problem that relates to the theoretical construction of analytical categories. Originally this chapter was planned to be divided into two parts; the first part with an emphasis on social networks and the other part on socioeconomic organisation of the fisheries. However, in making a representation of how people in fishing communities understand their surroundings, themselves and the people they interact with, a main point turned out to be the *interconnectedness* of social and economic relations, of production and reproduction, of domestic and economic roles, and of private and public spheres. A division between social factors, such as trust, care, kinship, sex and religion on the one hand, and economic factors, such as productive activities, accumulation of wealth, ownership of property, recruitment and organization of labour on the other,

became, during fieldwork, "illogical" when I attempted to represent the systems of fisheries. Thus, a division of the text itself according to such dichotomous categories became both difficult and undesirable to accomplish.

The application of dichotomous etic (theoretically constructed) categories, such as nature/culture and private/public, which do not necessarily capture the logic of the society one tries to comprehend is, as discussed in Chapter 1, a well-known problem in the social sciences. This is a methodological problem also in field analysis. In choosing analytical concepts that are metaphors from economics, such as capital, and from ecology, such as resources, one can easily fall into the trap of "ethnocentric naivety of economism" (Bourdieu 1977:177). For example, Bourdieu warns against an accountancy of exchange of material and symbolic capital that equates it with economic calculation. We must rather

"...extend economic calculation to *all* goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation - which may be 'fair words' or smiles, handshakes or shrugs, compliments or attention, challenges or insults, honour or honours, powers or pleasures, gossip or scientific information, distinction or distinctions, etc." (Ibid:178).

Bourdieu's way out of "distorted representation" by an economistic accountancy of exchange of such material and immaterial goods, is to "apprehend the undifferentiatedness of economic and symbolic capital (...) in the form of their perfect interconvertability" (Ibid.). Obviously the concepts of material and symbolic capital, constructed in Western science, do not exist in Moree, Kpone or Dzelukope. My task is thus to "fill" the analytical concepts with people's own categories. The etic concepts are thus merely tools that can make the emic concepts accessible to us and others outside the local community and to make them comparable. In the choice of analytical categories such as social fields, types of capital and modes of exchange, I hope to have found tools that are suitable for the construction of a representation that allows for the complexity of empirical reality.

The three fishing communities will as far as possible be treated as integrated wholes (although not necessarily unambiguous and in harmony) according to location. Herein lies a danger of representing the "local wholes" as not only integrated internally, but also as externally disintegrated and isolated localities, or as places that are "culturally distinct" in themselves. This is not my intention. The three fishing communities are located within the



same national borders. They have been shaped through some of the same historical events, and face some of the same contemporary economic and political dilemmas. Nevertheless each place "contains" a distinct "mix" of ways of thinking and organizing social relations and activities. People who live there do, in other words, experience place-specific schemes of thought and social practices. But these are not created or practised in local isolation. Through the historical retrospect on the Ghanaian coastal context in the previous chapter I have tried to establish an approach to place which Doreen Massey calls "open and porous":

"...the particular mix of social relations which are (...) part of what defines the uniqueness of any place is by no means all included within that place itself. Importantly, it includes relations which stretch beyond - the global as part of the local, the outside as part of the inside. Such a view of place challenges any possibility of claims to internal histories or to timeless identities. The identities of place are always unfixed, contested and multiple. And the particularity of any place, in these terms, constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counterposition to the other part which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections *to* that 'beyond' - the global as part of what constitutes the local, the outside as part of the inside" (Massey 1994:5).

By stressing this multiplicity, and people's interconnectedness in both time and space, I try to avoid a particularism that can create boundaries between exotica instead of an increased understanding through a comparison of differences. Further it is, as we see, important to distinguish between social fields and place. Social relations stretch out on all scales, and social fields are interconnected through people's combination of roles across space. Social fields, in other words, stretch *beyond* place. People's life careers are therefore deeply embedded in their social and spatial movements in webs of social relations. Through these webs they get access or non-access to resources in various fields.

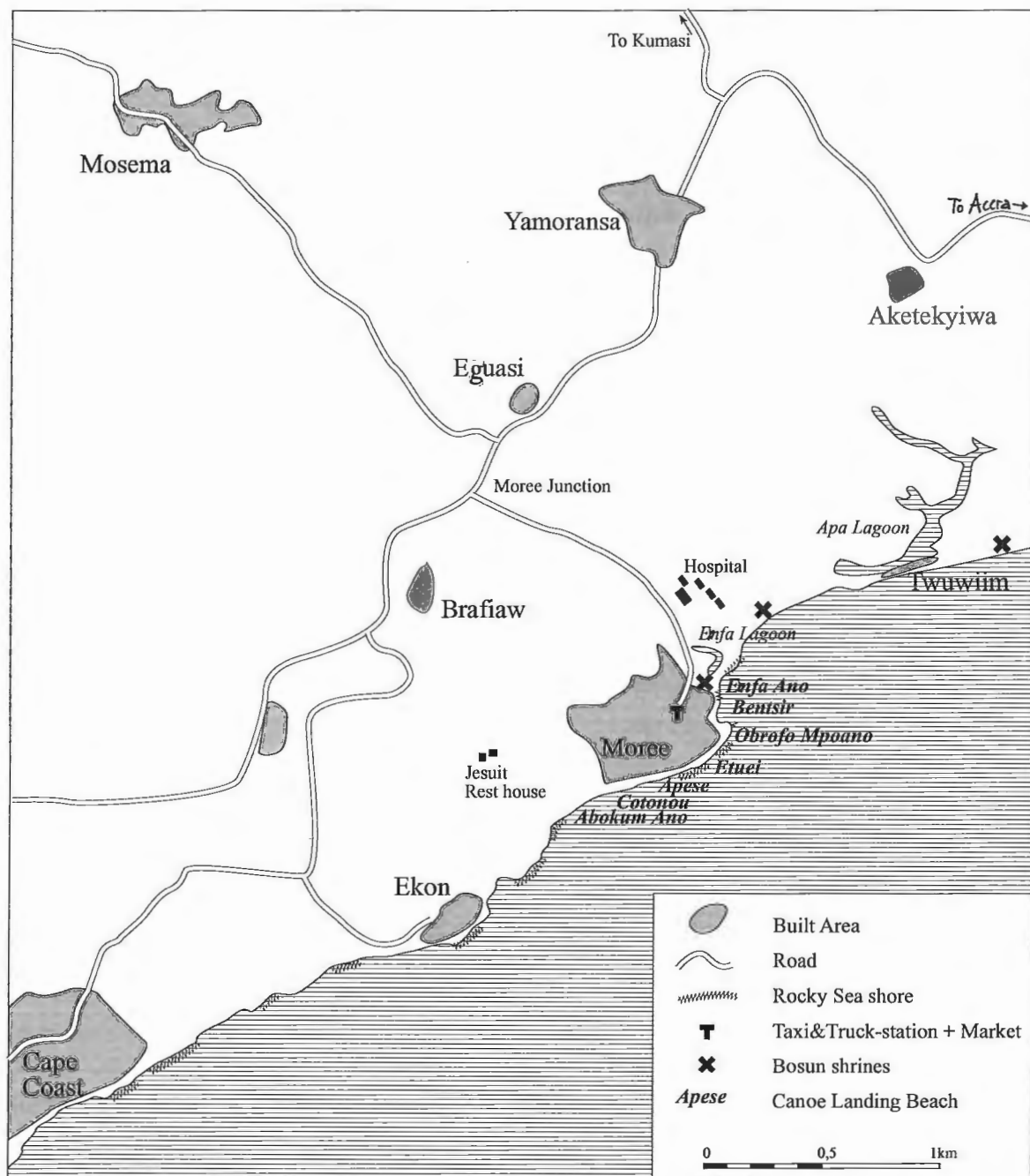
In making an interpretation of how gender is conceptualised and socially constructed in each place, I try to understand the basis of how opportunities and constraints on women's and men's activities in each localised system of fishing (which stretches far beyond the local community) are gendered, and how such differences are created, recreated and negotiated. An examination of the local context, of how gender is constructed within the parts or fields of which each "mix" of interrelated fields is constituted by, is, in my view, a precondition for an explanation of the spatial difference in female ownership in the fishing industry in three communities that all relate to the same national and global context. This is in essence the kind of understanding a contextualised entrepreneur approach is meant to accomplish.

In line with contemporary gender theory (i.e. Maynes et. al. 1996:13), I see women and men in different places and times as differently positioned actors, whose particular position shape their experience of the world. People's choices are influenced by their position in power geometries, in Massey's words, or, in Bourdieu's terminology, by their social position in internally structured and interrelated fields. They are positioned in relation to gender, class, ethnicity, and other identities and geographical locations. The composition of the webs of people and resources surrounding a person, and his or her movements within and between these, then, are crucial for the person's accumulation of material and symbolic capital. The same can be said of his or her chance to convert one form of capital to another; it happens through careful (if not always conscious) manoeuvring of social relations stretched out in space. Let us now get to the ground and see what the "mix" of relations in each place consists of.

### 3.1. Moree

Moree is located 8 kilometres east of Cape Coast, and has approximately 15,000 inhabitants. Apart from a few Hausa traders and the Ewe and Ada fisher people in the migrant settlement Twuwim east of town, the inhabitants of Moree predominantly identify themselves as Fante.

Map 8. Moree.



Most people in Moree make their living as fishermen, in fish processing and trade, or in providing services for the fisher people, such as selling petrol, food and beer, driving taxis or trucks, or in sewing and hairdressing. The resident population fluctuates with fishing seasons, though, as a large proportion of the fishermen and women migrate westwards to the villages near Sekondi, Dixcove, Axim and Half-Assini during the off-season from October to April. The migrants usually return from the Western Region around Easter and start preparing for the herring season, which normally lasts from July to September. The herring (*sardinella aurita*) fisheries usually starts in the Western Region, and fisher people thus to some extent move with the herring eastwards from June onwards (Koranteng 1990:16). Fishermen and fish traders from Moree also travel to work abroad, as for example in Nigeria, Benin, Ivory Coast, Liberia (before the war there), Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia (see Haakonsen and Diaw 1991). To seek one's fortune through seasonal or more permanent migration to new fishing grounds has been a career for many, if not the majority, of people in Moree for generations. While away from the myriad of social obligations at home, migration provides a chance to save the income from fishing or trading. The aim is usually to invest the money in Moree upon return.

The oldest part of the town is centred around the nearly four hundred years old ruins of the Dutch Fort Nassau, the old market place *Gua dadawmu*, and one of the seven fish landing beaches; *Obrofo Mpoano*, which means "Hunter's Beach". According to an old legend this is where the hunter Adzekase, who had a hunting camp by the holy Emfa lagoon at this beach, came to meet the first people who settled in Moree<sup>1</sup>:

"One night Adzekase had been hunting without success, and wandered along the beach. Suddenly he saw thousands of people coming out of the sea. Quickly Adzekase hid in the bush and watched them. The people carried white gods with them and they were led by a giant; Asebu Amanfi. The hunter stood there the whole day, from dawn to sunset, and still people continued to come out of the sea. He had to do something. With all his strength Adzekase shouted: "Isn't there going to be an end to this great stream of people?" As soon as he had revealed himself, there was a sudden break in the column of moving people. Those who had reached the shore continued to walk inland, but those who were still in the sea were immediately turned into rocks. These rocks, human in shape, can still be seen in Moree.

The giant Asebu Amanfi, the leader of the people from the sea, had a brother. His name was Farnyi Kwegya, which means "a man who goes fishing". When Farnyi Kwegya met

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<sup>1</sup> The sources of the legend are the *ohene* of Moree; Nana Adzekase, Mr. Nana Amparbin, Mr. C. L. Biney and "The People From the Sea" (1988) by J. O. de Graft Hanson.

Adzekase, they founded Moree. Nana Adzekase became the first chief and Farnyi Kwegya became the first chief fisherman. But Asebu Amanfi was so big, and his appetite for corn was so great that he could not settle in Moree. So he and his followers went searching for better land. Asebu Amanfi depended on his sister, Amenfiwa, to feed him with fried corn. Thus he had built a hut for her, which he put on his shoulders. In the hut on her giant brother's shoulders, Amenfiwa fried and fried corn in her pan and filled Asebu Amanfi's mouth continuously as he walked. In that way they found farming land, and the town Asebu was founded. Moree still has special relations with Asebu, and is under its paramountcy. When the giant had settled with his people in Asebu, he traded with the white men at Cape Coast Castle. He could be seen on his trading trips walking with one of the cannons of the Castle as his walking stick, and with the hut containing the goods he traded and with his sister pouring whole potfuls of hot, roasted maize into his mouth.

Meanwhile, Farnyi Kwegya, the chief fisherman, taught the people in Moree fishing, and they became great fishermen. When Farnyi Kwegya went fishing, he fished with a net so huge that it covered the whole ocean. Especially on Tuesdays, he loved to go fishing. Therefore no one dared to go to sea on Tuesdays, for fear that he and his boat might be caught in Farnyi Kwegya's enormous net. That is why it is still prohibited to go fishing on Tuesdays in Moree. It is also said that a non-fishing day is kept to honour the sea-god, Bosompo".



*Photo 4. Asebu Amanfi and Amenfiwa. Painted on a door in the house of a wealthy woman fish trader and canoe owner in Moree.*

Living in a town founded by a hunter and a fisherman the Moree people have a long and established identity as fisher people. Through their skill, organization and cooperation with God in nature they are well adapted to make a living on the coast. The legend also tells us that they see themselves as dependant upon the farming of their inland brothers and sisters and upon exchange with them. Moreover, a basic and important social unit is that of brother and sister; the matrilineage.

### **Ownership, organisation and institutions in Moree fisheries**

Between the rocky shores of Moree there are seven fish landing beaches (see map 8). During the main fishing season between July and September there is hectic activity and there is not much space between the canoes lined up there. The canoes have names like *Sika wo pomu* ("there is money in the sea"), *Adze biranyame no oye* ("everything is done by God"), *Kese wokan* ("more is in front of you"), *Obofo nyim abrefo* ("a hunter is never tired"), *Afebi ye esen* ("each year has its own problem"), *Aban ye dur* ("the government is great"), *Anema nto nsmu* ("birds do not dive into the water in vain"), *Ohye wo bo* ("pregnant woman"), *Awor wo mu* ("there is marriage in it"), *Gyaakontaabo* ("stop envy-



*Photo 5. Hectic activity on Obrofo Mpoano.*

ing me"), *Wiadze* ("the world"), *Papa ye wie bon* ("good puts an end to bad"), *Dabi obeye yie* ("the future will be good"), *Ade edze edze* ("you always eat and eat") and English or "modern" names like *Calabash*, *No problem*, *Good God*, *Judgement Day*, *Shark*, *7up*, *City Boys*, *Soldier*, *Not Yet* or *Bible*.

Fishing is associated with good luck, hunting and one's dependence upon the powers and goodwill of God. The names of canoes also connote with production of food and with fertility. "There is marriage in it", for example, expresses an association between the earning of money through fishing and a subsequent ability to fulfil the desire of getting married. Money brings the pleasure of food and sex, and the prestige involved in having one or more wives, as well as the manly dignity that fatherhood brings.

The canoe is the means by which one gets out at sea and the container in which one brings the catch back to one's wife. Both men and canoes must be cleansed so that the pollution connected with women and land is not brought into the male domain of the sea. It is a taboo to go fishing if one has had sex and not bathed before going out to sea. A sacrifice of abstaining from sex for one week before going out could also increase the chance of getting a big catch. The canoe is still regarded by many fishermen as sacred, and it is regularly blessed and cleansed. One *komfo* (priestess) said:

*"Our fishermen have often been coming to me to get epudu ["sea medicine"]. We slaughter a fowl, sheep or dog, pour the blood in a little pot and hang it inside the canoe. Sometimes the canoe owner puts the pot in his room, and whenever they are ready to go out fishing he pours libation into the pot and spreads it on the net to ensure good fishing. This is very good for the canoe owner, because when there is epudu in the canoe the fishermen can not steal from him or go to another town and land the fish there. The gods can see what they do because the gods are in the canoe or in the owner's room. If a fisherman does something wrong, the canoe owner knows, because the thief falls sick and has to consult a priest. The priest will know which god has punished him, and has to send him to the priest who gave the god's powers to the canoe owner".*

The use of *epudu* is thus not only aimed at good catches, but also at keeping up the morals of the fishermen and at symbolic maintenance of established power relations.

Some of the canoes are identified, not by a name but a number; 4.19, 6&9, 404, 50-50, No.4, 204, etc. Some of these are *seiko* canoes. *Seiko* means "very good" in Japanese. Industrial trawlers are often called *seiko* or *Koreans*, although not all of them are

Japanese or Korean. The owners of *seiko* canoes in Moree have special agreements, or contracts, with the foreign trawlers based in Tema through Ghanaian contact persons. Therefore *seiko* canoes are registered by number so that they easily can be identified by the crew on the trawlers. *Seiko* canoes go out to the trawlers and buy *seiko* fish; the by-catch called *dumping-fish*, *trash-fish* or *let-go-fish*. This is fish that is too small to be frozen for export. Such exchange is not illegal in itself, but when fish traders in the communities along the coast are willing to pay for low quality fish, the crew on the trawlers are often tempted to trawl with too small mesh sizes (which of course is illegal but rarely controlled). The foreign owners in Tema and their officers on the trawlers usually overlook the selling of by-catch by the Ghanaian crew. The trawler company sees this as a way to get rid of fish that otherwise would have been thrown away. It is also a way to keep the workers happy, as they can earn a little extra.

The *seiko* canoes supply the trawlers with provisions of fresh food, and that is how the contact between the canoes and trawlers started in the early seventies. This is one of the reasons for why primarily women got *seiko* contracts; they were considered suited to purchase food in the markets for provision of the trawler crew. But later the exchange not only involved food-for-fish, but also money-for-fish, and evidently women saw this as just another source of frozen fish supply, like when they take the bus to Tema and buy it from the "cold store". A major difference, however, is that to buy fish from a trawler one needs a canoe. One can imagine the profit potential that lies in the smoking and selling of by-catch during the lean season when weeks and months can pass without any considerable canoe catches. In Moree only female canoe owners have *seiko* contracts, and in chapter 5 I will show how important the access to this new fish resource - directly connected to international capital in industrial fisheries - has been in the careers of some of the wealthiest women in Moree.

According to the *apofohene* (the chief fisherman of Moree) in 1991 there were 400 small canoes (20-30 ft) with a crew of 8-10 men, and 100 big canoes (40-60 ft) with a crew of up to 25 men. There were about 400 canoe owners, some of whom had more than one canoe, and approximately 100 of the owners were women. The number of female canoe owners (25%) is of course approximate, but is probably not exaggerated. In a sample of 80 canoes in another Fante fishing town, Christensen (1977:86) found that 35% were owned by women. In a survey of 255 canoes in Moree (conducted by a research assistant in April 1995) I found that 43 canoes (16.9%) were owned by women. However, when interviewing female canoe owners later, I discovered that some of their canoes had been

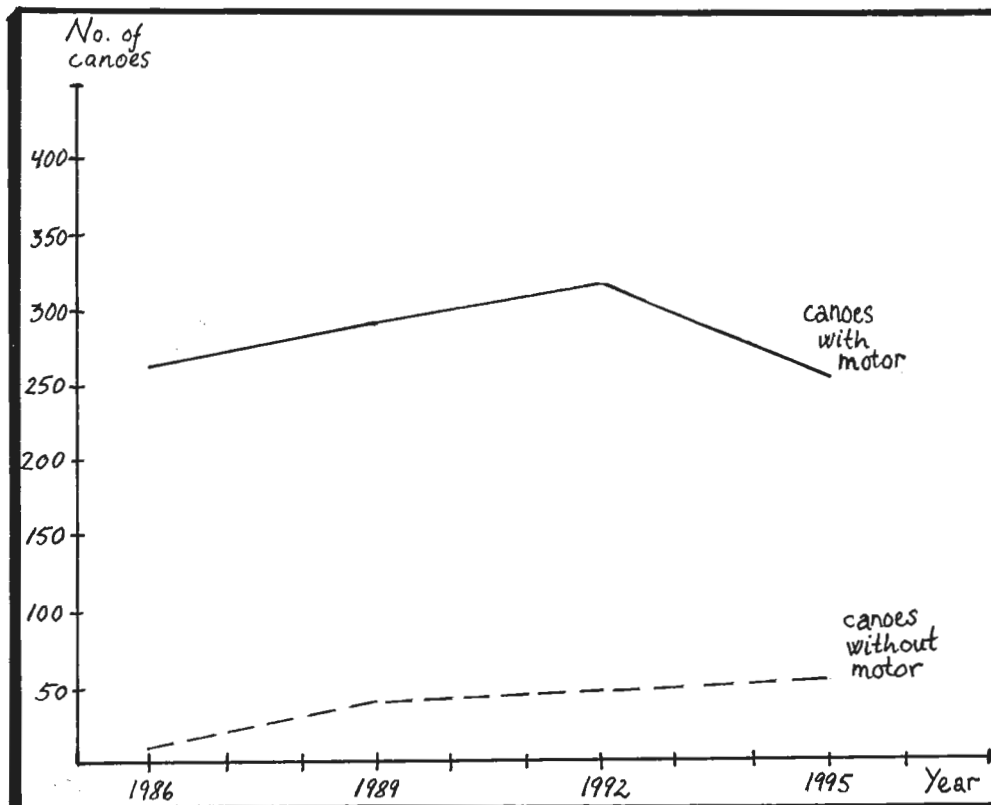


registered in the name of a son or their captain. Thus I regard the suggestion by the *apofohene* of 25% female owners in Moree as quite sensible.

All the big and most of the small canoes are equipped with outboard motors (almost exclusively Yamaha 40 hp). In 1989, 88% of the canoes in Moree were motorised (Koranteng 1990). They fish with drift gill nets (*adii*) and some also have purse seines (*watsa*), which they mainly use to catch herring (*sardinella aurita*) during the main season. Those who have *watsa* (17.4% in the April 1995 survey) usually also have *adii* and other net types to catch a variety of species for the rest of the year.

The figure below is based on the Canoe Frame Surveys of 1986 (March-April), 1989 (March) and 1992 (March-May) by the Fisheries Department's Research and Utilization Unit in Tema (Koranteng et. al. 1987; 1990; 1993). The figures for 1995 is based on the survey that was conducted in April.

Figure 3. Number of motorised and unmotorised canoes in Moree 1986-1995.



Sources: FRU 1986, 1989, 1992, and field data, 1995.

These figures are all collected around Easter, a time of the year when those who migrate seasonally return home. The number of returned canoes may therefore be quite

coincidental and dependent on the time of the survey. Thus the high number of canoes recorded in 1992 could be due to a late survey that year (when many canoes had returned from migration). The decrease from 1992 to 1995 is probably a result of diverging survey procedures. But after a long period of steady growth it is, however, possible that the number of canoes in Moree declined in the mid nineties when the effects of the IMF structural adjustment policy began to affect living conditions in rural areas in Ghana. One woman I got to know in 1991, for example, had two canoes and was planning to buy a third. In 1995, due to the increasingly high food prices and withdrawal of subsidies on "premix" (petrol mixed with oil used in outboard motors), and a large family and crew to support, she had not been able to buy the third canoe and one of her two canoes was out of operation. She thus now has only one canoe and does no longer see it as realistic to own three canoes anymore. This was not an exceptional case, and I suspect that female canoe owners were harder hit by the higher cost of living than were male canoe owners because of women's responsibilities towards their children. The above mentioned woman's husband is also a canoe owner, but the wife feels that he does not contribute enough to the children, as she says: *"If it is hospital bills, it is me [who has to pay]. If it is school fees, it is me. Every problem, and it is me."* This was her explanation for her inability to maintain her second canoe.

Nowadays the canoe owners do not always go to sea with the crew. Most canoe owners do not (and never women). The *bosun*, the captain, is therefore the leader of the crew. He is the owner's closest partner, makes decisions about when and where to go fishing and is responsible - with the owner - to count the fish, negotiate the price and sell it on the beach. The crew of the canoe also consists of a steersman and a "motor-man". In addition to the ordinary crew members, there are also a couple of apprentices; young boys who are paid half of a fisherman's share.

Crew members on women's canoes are often recruited from the matrilineage; typically working on their mother's or mother's sister's canoe. It is, however, common for young boys to be apprentices on their father's canoe, and they often remain as crew members on their father's canoe, and recruit their own sons when they grow old enough. According to Christensen (1977:76) the Fante prefer agnates (i.e. related through patrilineal descent) in their canoe crews. In Moree this is sometimes the case for male canoe owners, but female canoe owners largely depend upon the labour of male members of their matrilineage in their fishing enterprises.

In one case where both the mother and father had canoes, a teenager boy went through training as a crew member on his father's canoe. But when he was eighteen years old, and a fully trained fisherman, his girlfriend became pregnant for the second time. The boy's father had actually paid for an abortion the first time she got pregnant because the couple was so young, and he felt the son was not ready to support a family yet. But when the girl became pregnant for the second time, the son married her. Upon his change of status the boy joined the crew of his mother's canoe instead of his father's. The father with humour said that: "*He got afraid of the waves here [at this landing beach] and went over there to the bay [where the mother's canoe lands]*". His mother needed him as *bosun* on her second canoe, and since the son "*is now grown and has learned everything*" the father did not object to sending him back to his mother. The son should now support himself and contribute to the up-bringing of a child, and not be his father's apprentice anymore. The son felt that it was more in his interest to work for the mother than for the father in his new situation.

Fishermen can also be recruited in a crew because they are good friends of the other crew members, or fishermen approach canoe owners they have heard need "helpers". A crew therefore often consists of a core of the owner's kinsmen besides a number of men who work with the canoe for one or more seasons, and then shift to another canoe the next season. But some fishermen stand in lifelong patron-client relationships to their canoe owner, although they are not related to him or her. As we understand, it is valuable for canoe owners to recruit and keep fishermen who are hard workers and most of all workers that are loyal and trustable, when they give their canoes names like *Boafo ye na* ("it is hard to get good helpers") and *Nyimpa hia mboa* ("man needs help"). A reputation of trustworthiness, loyalty and of being a skilled and hardworking fisherman, is therefore the most important asset in the careers of men who do not get access to advantageous positions in the fisheries through kinship relations, such as becoming a *bosun* because one's mother has a canoe. The fishermen are also often indebted to their patron or matron. As Platteau and Abraham (1987) point out, such credit relationships are often used by canoe owners as a labour-tying device so that he or she will not be without strong men during the season when labour is in great demand.

The leader of the town's fishermen, whom they elect, is the *apofohene*. *Apofo* means "people from the sea"; the *apofohene* is their chief. The *apofohene* is always elected from *Tuafo Asafo Company No.1*, which, according to elders in Moree, was founded by Farnyi Kwegya (the first chief fisherman). Asafo companies were formerly Fante military

divisions, and membership is traced patrilineally and not matrilineally. Both men and women can become leaders; *asafohene*. But the top leader, the *supi*, is usually a man. Asafo companies still have religious significance as each company has its own shrine, gods and religious leaders, and a festival is organised and celebrated every year. Asafo companies can also mobilise their members to put special "development" tasks into practice. There are three Asafo companies in Moree: *Tuafo Company No.1* was, as mentioned, founded by Farnyi Kwegya. *Alata Company No.2* was founded by people from the slaves quarters (*Alata* in Fante), who came to Moree after they had built the fort in Anomabu. *Nkum Company No.3* was founded by people who came to Moree from many different places<sup>2</sup>.

The *apofohene* has a council of 18 men; six from each of the three Asafo companies. One of their duties is to hear cases concerning fisheries and to negotiate in conflicts between fishermen, and when women complain about fishermen. When canoes from other towns come and land their catch in Moree, *mpoano nsa* ("beach charge") is paid to the *asafohene* institution. One pan of fish is collected by the *apofohene*'s people for each landing of more than twenty pans of fish (irrespective of whether the canoe lands 20, 30 or 100 pans). This is of course a "tax" Moree fishermen must pay when they land fish on "foreign" beaches as well. Once a year the *apofohene* makes accounts for the *mpoano nsa*, and one third is given to the *ohene* of Moree, one third is given to the *nkosohene* (leader of a "Town development committee", *nkoso* means "progress" or "development"), and the last third is kept by the *asafohene*. This is not personal remuneration. The money is used for communal purposes, such as religious rituals, festivals, travel expenses, etc.

Today one of the most important roles of the *apofohene* is to be a link between governmental institutions and the fisher people. When the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) distributes subsidised outboard motors through credit schemes, a certain number is allocated to each town through its chief fisherman. The *apofohene* also advises the bank about the credit applicants' creditworthiness. The credit performance of each customer decides whether he or she will be considered the next time. Of the 10 outboard motors that were allocated to Moree in 1992, three of the customers were women.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on Asafo companies, see for example Field 1940; Datta 1972; Quaye 1972; Simensen 1975.

However, only one of them repaid the loan, and in 1994 no women got outboard motors through ADB<sup>3</sup>.

Not only the individual and collective performance of the customers is of importance in the allocation of motors to a town. The chief fisherman's position locally and his performance in relation to the bank is also of significance. The chief fisherman is seen by the bank as a representative responsible for each town. By motivating the customers to repay their bank loans, and sometimes even arranging with credit locally for them so they can repay the loan within the stipulated two years, the chief fisherman can ensure that his town gets many motors in the next allocation round. The *apofohene* of Moree, for example, is well respected locally and is, moreover, chairman for the Central Region chief fishermen in the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen's Council of which all chief fishermen are members. While the number of outboard motors allocated to Cape Coast was reduced from nineteen in 1992 to six in 1994, and from nineteen to four in Elmina, Moree received ten motors from ADB in both 1992 and 1994. This was of course a result of the bad repayment performance of the bank's customers in Cape Coast and Elmina. In a situation where the total number of subsidised outboard motors distributed by ADB declined, the *apofohene* of Moree seemed to be particularly good at speaking for his "clients". His esteem as chairman and his negotiation abilities, played a role in getting motors for his community.

ADB is however not the only source of supply of outboard motors. Outboard motors can also be purchased from import firms in Accra, as for example from Japan Motors. As in the case of ADB motors, the *apofohene* is also of good help for fishermen in the ordering of motors in Accra, as he said one day on his way to Accra: "*I am going to negotiate with the whites*". Motors bought from import firms are of course not subsidised.

Another important institution in both the fields of fishing and marketing is the leader of the fish traders; the *konkohene* ("fish queen mother"). The *konkohene* is the female parallel to the *apofohene*, and her position belongs to the market field. However, I include the *konkohene* institution in this section on the field of fishing because of its relevance in relation to the fisheries (as in negotiation of fish prices), and in order to see the two parallel leaders of men and women in relation to each other. The *konkohene* has an assistant woman, who is the leader of a council of seven women. The present

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<sup>3</sup> Source: Interview with representative of the Agricultural Development Bank in Cape Coast, 7. July 1994.

*konkohene* is the second one who has been installed in Moree and is about 80 years old. Her mother's sister was the first *konkohene*. This institution, then, is not connected with "the beginning of time", as that of the *apofohene*, but goes only two generations back in time. In some towns she is called *konkohemma* (*ohemma* means "female chief or leader"), but in Moree and most other Fante towns she has the male *ohene* ("chief") suffix. It is not clear why the female leader of the female traders, the *konko* ("those who buy to sell"), has a male title, but it is possible that this institution was cooperating closer with the *apofohene* when it originated. In talking about the past, one of the *konkohene* council members in Moree said that "*in the old days the konkohene was pricing fish with the apofohene*".

A *konkohene* is elected by the fish traders for her life time. She must be a mature woman with extensive knowledge of fish trade, and her main role is to be a negotiator and mediator when there are problems and conflicts concerning fish trade between the women, for example over the quantity or quality of fish, and in conflicts between traders and fishermen. In case of the latter, she contacts the *apofohene* for further negotiations.

The *konkohene* works for the common good of the fish traders, and these are expected to contribute financially. Until recently the *konkohene*'s people therefore collected one fish from each pan the women buy on the beach. The money from this fish was used for communal purposes, such as rituals and festivals, and to help traders if they are injured in car accidents, or to contribute to their hospital bills or funerals. But, as the *konkohene*'s council member complains, the fishermen did not like it when the *konkohene*'s people came to the beach and "priced" the fish too low, and the women did not like it either, because they declined to pay the fish fee. The collection of the fish fee has therefore become more irregular, and is mainly done during the bumper season.

The present *konkohene* is an old woman. In 1995 she complained both about difficulties in collecting the fish fee and a small fee she used to collect at the truck station for each basket of fish that was transported from Moree to the inland markets. The money was used for improvement of the marketplace in Moree. The bookers at the truck station now charge a governmental tax for the fish going to the markets and the drivers also collect a transport fee for each basket of fish. In the present situation the *konkohene* finds that her power and legitimacy is eroding. She also feels that the *apofohene* does not show her the respect he ought to. The idea is that in conflicts involving both men and women in the fisheries the *apofohene* and *konkohene* represent each of the groups. The *apofohene*

is supposed to treat the *konkohene* as the representative of the fish traders and to send her all necessary information, both from the fisherman and from the bank and authorities, for example if he hears about governmental fishery projects, which could concern the fish traders as well. The present *konkohene* feels that this is not done to a satisfactory extent. She even complains that women on the beach do not respect her and do not let her decide the fish price anymore: "*They say to me that 'you are not the one who bought nets, outboard motors, canoes and petrol', so they want to take any price they like*".

The complaints of the old *konkohene* are quite interesting. In my interpretation they indicate a decline in the authority of the fish traders' representative due to the increasing participation of the most powerful fish traders in the male defined and capital intensive domain of canoe ownership. For them, the *apofohene* is now a more important representative than the *konkohene* because of his useful links to resources on the regional and national level. As a result of the powerful traders' change of interest from the market sphere to the fisheries, the summit of the female fish trading hierarchy - and consequently the "bottom" as well - has been weakened. The position of the small scale traders has become impaired since the most powerful strata of large scale traders are no longer representing them in relation to the fishermen and canoe owners *as women* to the same extent. Wealthy women are now rather representing *themselves* in their combined positions of canoe owners and large scale traders. They have to an even larger extent than before become matrons that the small scale traders and fishermen depend upon, and they are on the summit of both a class hierarchy as well as a gender hierarchy.

Fishing, then, is a male field in the sense that the persons involved in activity at sea are men. They have the knowledge of how to build a canoe and manoeuvre it, of how to catch the fish, of which technology to use, and of how to mend the nets and maintain the outboard motor. Their "territory" is not only the canoe at sea, it extends to the beach and into town; the shadow sheds where men sit and play card games, *oware* and backgammon, discuss and mend nets, and into the bars where it is mostly men who enjoy their beer or *akpeteshie* ("local gin"). And although fishing takes place at sea, it is organised by people and through institutions on land. Female and male domains clearly emerge: The fisheries can only work in agreement with those who convert the catch into a commodity.

The division of labour where men fish and women trade reflect Fante gender ideas: Women are vital for the continuity of the lineage and the community because they give

birth to children. Women "know how to handle money" and they are "greedy" because they have to feed their children and families. And to provide women with something to cook and to sell at the market, men fish. Women are not thought of as physically weak and therefore unable to fish. On the contrary they often demonstrate their physical strength and most of all their spiritual power. But because women are so focused on cooking and providing for their children, and on the making of money, women have become "greedy" to the extent that they are "unwise" at sea. As the following story suggests, women are assumed to think so much about their duties on land if they go fishing that they are unable to follow the laws of the sea and to apply the knowledge of how to avoid the risk involved in fishing<sup>4</sup>:

"Long, long ago, men did not go to sea in Moree, only women did. One day the women were very lucky. The area in the sea where they went fishing, swarmed with all kinds of fish and they made a good catch. But even when the canoes were full, they would not return to land. The women wanted more fish. One said, "Let me fish some more to give to my aunt". Another said, "I must have enough to last me up to next month". They all gave several reasons for wanting more fish, so they filled the canoe with more and more fish until it reached up to the brim and the canoe was sinking. But still the women were not satisfied. The canoe sank to the bottom, but the women knew how to swim, so they swam towards the land. They swam and swam, but they were far out and their limbs grew tired. One by one they started to drown. Then some of them prayed to the great god of the sea, Nana Bosompo. He had pity on them and changed them into porpoises. So because of their greediness the women became porpoises. After that it was decided that women should not be allowed to go to sea. The men took over, and since the disaster took place on a Tuesday, the day has ever since been a sacred day for fishermen in memory of their lost wives, mothers and sisters".

The boundaries between male and female domains are, however, not unambiguous: The emergence of female canoe owners has made the domains of male/fishing and female/trading hierarchies less clear-cut. And the influence from other fields - the state and foreign companies - has put an end to the time when the sea (controlled by God through men) was the only resource pool. Men and women who find channels to resources in other fields can now pool them into the fisheries and convert them into new forms of capital through the market.

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<sup>4</sup> After J.O. de Graft Hanson (1988) "The People From the Sea".



We now enter the beach where the field of fishing meets the field of marketing, and men meet women. To visualise that activities and social relations in exchange of fish stretch far beyond the local, I describe what happens on the beach and in town before we move with the fish out of Moree.

### **On the seashore: The transformation from catch to commodity**

The process where the fish is handed over by men from sea and canoe into the hands and head-pans of women on the seashore is an event where a lot is at stake. From now on the fish is virtually in the hands of women all the way to the cooking pot. I see the beach as a liminal sphere where symbolic negotiation of the boundaries between spheres and domains takes place; between sea and land; fishing and marketing; male and female (see Nadel-Klein et. al. 1988). The beach is also the place where a girl is bathed and transformed into a woman when she starts menstruating, and where a widow or widower is cleansed and parted from the spirit of the dead spouse. But the beach does not separate land from sea, it connects them.



*Photo 6. The landing of a catch. Note female canoe owner commanding her crew.*

When a canoe arrives on the beach the fish is counted and measured in number of pans, and it has to be done fairly and correctly. It is controlled by the *bosun*, the canoe owner and the fish traders. The effort and luck of the fishermen is measured as well. The fish price has to be agreed upon when the first canoe lands in the morning, and this price becomes a basis for the bargaining of others for the rest of the day. Conjugal dramas where wives quarrel over the fairness of the size of shares they are given by their husband are played out, and a quick, loud and rough fight among sisters can easily happen. A young fisherman gives his *chop fish* of the day out of his bucket - his *birefi* - to a woman he would like to marry, and she may cook for him in the evening. Sometimes marriage is not the intension; she only "sleeps for fish". The big traders demonstrate their power and hand out fish and collect debts from the small scale traders. And children, the old ones and the disabled are given a little fish here and there, or are able (and allowed) to steal one or two fishes.

The landing of a canoe's fish catch is an event where people combine the social statuses they have in both the field of fishing, marketing, the matrilineage and in marriage. A woman can, for example be both canoe owner and mother of the captain of her canoe. At the same time she may be the wife of another canoe owner with rights to buy fish from his canoe. In addition she is a large scale trader who sells fish on credit to other women who are small scale traders. By combining these and a number of other roles she has access to resources in various fields. She can activate her stock of capital through the many roles which constitutes her as a social person in many fields at the same time. These resources can, for example, be cultural capital in the form of skills in fish smoking and accounting techniques, social capital in the form of family and permanent business relations, material capital in the form of ownership of canoes, a house, and of smoking ovens, and symbolic capital in the form of sufficient personal authority to negotiate prices, collect debts, and to sanction cheating.

If an entrepreneur "plays her cards right", that is without breaking the rules of moral exchange, she can convert value from the field of marketing to the field of fishing, and later re-convert material capital into symbolic capital into other fields, such as the matrilineage. A fish trader's marriage to a canoe owner establishes a conversion channel that gives her access to fish and credit. This *fusion* of social and material capital in turn enhances her stock of symbolic capital in many social fields; her authority and prestige as employer and manger of a canoe company, as a "somebody" in the market hierarchy, as a provider for both children and matrilineal relatives, and as a good saleswoman of her

husband's fish. As we shall see later, such a career path does not necessarily make the maintenance of a good marriage relationship easy. This may not even be desirable. An entrepreneur may consider the loss of an image as a good wife, and the loss of the resources the marriage gives access to, as a cost she is willing and (unlike poor women with few advantageous relations to fall back upon) able to bear when she has achieved a position in fisheries. Her prestige as canoe owner, and position as matron in both the fields of marketing and in the matrilineage outweighs the importance of the marriage.

Before we look into career networks which illustrate how individuals handle or *live* this structural complexity in the various fields, we must know what happens to the fish after it has been landed on the beach, and the many work tasks and social relationships involved in the transformation of the fish into a marketable commodity.



*Photo 7. Removing fish from the net.*

Well over a generation ago each fisherman handed over his share of the catch to his wife or female relative. She smoked and sold the fish, gave the fisherman the amount of money they had agreed upon, and kept any surplus from the market price, the *bontodo* (profit of trade). The sale of a canoe's catch now usually goes through a wholesaler or *enam enyi* (woman selling fish). Together with the *bosun* (the captain of the canoe) she is in charge of the counting of fish and assures that the sale of the fish is done correctly; that the crew member's wives or other women get no more or less than they are entitled to buy. She usually has a "staff" of carriers (in addition to her daughters, other relatives, foster children and apprentices) who carry the fish to the smoking site near her house.

The *enam enyi* is usually one of the canoe owner's wives or, as already indicated, she may be a canoe owner herself. Some women (who are not necessarily canoe owners) are *enam enyi* for many canoes at the same time and can earn a nice income on the *bontodo* (profit) from the sales of many shares. In addition to being a wholesaler the *enam enyi* has an important function as creditor. She can give short term consumption loans to the fishermen and she advances fresh fish to the fish buyers, so that they can smoke it, sell it and pay back later when they have the money. From her, the canoe owner can get a long term investment loan in order to buy outboard motors, nets or petrol. When a canoe has wasted petrol on a less successful fishing trip where the income simply does not cover the expenses for petrol, the *enam enyi* can give them petrol on credit for the next trip. By their reputation these women often get petrol on credit from the petrol station. The advantage for both the fishermen and the *enam enyi* is that the debt is repaid in the form of fish. This makes the repayment more flexible for the fishermen, and it ensures the woman's supply of fish. Without credit from a fish trader it is often difficult to meet the formal banks' repayment schedules that are not well tuned to the seasonality of the fisheries, and within a time frame few canoe owners are able to follow.

A canoe's catch is counted in number of head-pans (one pan of herring is approximately 28 kg). A pan's value is estimated according to the day's beach price. The catch can be shared in various ways, depending on ownership and the internal organisation of the crew. Kwesi, for example, has a canoe with a crew of 20 men. Kwesi has two wives of which his first wife is also the *enam enyi*. If the canoe had a good catch of 100 pans of herring, the procedure of division is often as follows: The cost of petrol - the petrol share - which for this trip was equivalent to the value of 20 pans, is first deducted. That means that both owner and crew contribute to the major expense of petrol. The *enam enyi*

is responsible for selling the fish of the petrol share, and to purchase petrol for the next fishing trip out of the income. The *bontodo* of the petrol share is, however, hers.



*Photo 8. Carrying petrol to the beach.*



*Photo 9. A canoe owner and the fish his crew caught. The fish is measured into pans to be sold.*

After the cost of petrol is deducted, the remains of the catch on Kwesi's canoe (80 pans) is shared in two; *fifty-fifty*. 50% (40 pans) goes to the crew. Since Kwesi's canoe has a crew of 20 men they get the income of 2 pans each. 16 fishermen have one wife each, while the remaining 4 have two wives. Each of the 16 single wives are thus entitled to 2 pans, but the 8 co-wives (four of the fishermen have two wives) will only receive one pan each.

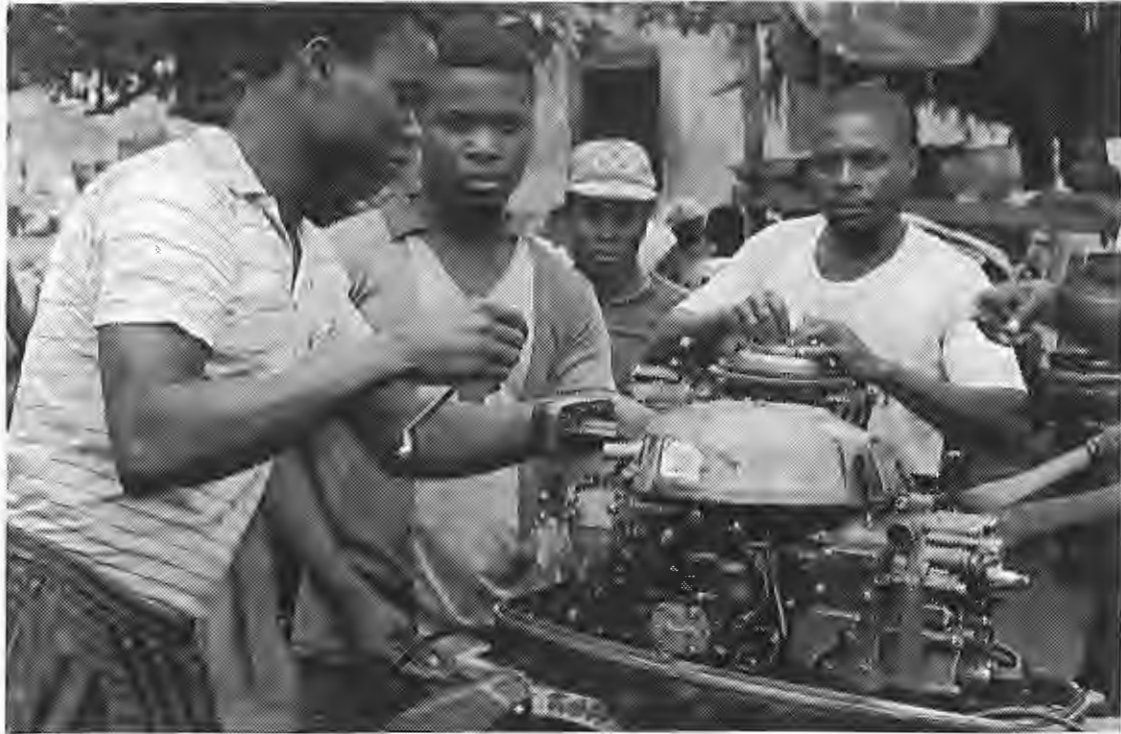
The other 50% (40 pans) is for Kwesi (the owner's share is twenty times as large as the shares of the average crew member) and is divided in three shares; one for the canoe, one for the motor and one for the net. These are the shares that the wives of the owner are entitled to buy, and the 40 pans will be divided between them. The table below summarises the division of the total catch among the women.

Figure 4. Division of catch between wives of owner and wives of crew. The shares are measured in number of pans. Source: Field notes.

Status of wives	Petrol share	Owner's share	Crew's share	Pans per woman	Total
<i>Enam enyi</i> (1. wife)	20	20		40	40
Owner's 2. wife		20		20	20
Single wives of crew (16)			32	2	32
Co-wives of crew (8)			8	1	8
Total	20	40	40		100

In this example we see the economic advantage of being married to a canoe owner and even better: to be *enam enyi*. The advantage lies in the purchase of fish before a *bontodo* is added, and in the right to buy fish on credit. Many large-scale traders thus maintain credit relations with several canoe owners, and consciously let some of the debt remain unpaid in order to secure their fish supply (see also Platteau and Abraham 1987). In this case the canoe owner had two wives, but even if Kwesi had 3 wives, they could have bought 13 pans each, compared to the 1-2 pans of the wife of a crew member. An even more advantageous situation is of course when the woman owns the canoe herself. Then she earns *both* the sales price of the 40 pans of the net, motor and canoe shares *and* (if

she also "stands" for the sale of the petrol share) the *bontodo* of the 100 pans of the whole catch!



*Photo 10. Maintenance of an outboard motor.*

Marriage between a canoe owner and a large scale trader gives the wife access to resources in the field of fishing (fish on credit and primary access to supply) and the husband gets access to resources in the field of marketing (transformation of catch to commodity and of credit to cover investments and the running costs of the company). We shall return to the importance of marrying a canoe owner in the cases of female canoe owners' careers. Material capital from the field of fishing that a canoe owner's wife accumulates through exchange in the field of marketing can, as we shall see, be converted into both material and symbolic capital in the field of the matrilineage. Prestige and authority through the control over lineage members can further be reconverted into more accumulation in the fields of marketing and fishing, for example with the labour of the lineage members who respect her and depend upon her. Let us, however, before we return to this topic, take a closer look at how women go about it in their occupations of fish smokers and traders.

Women not only buy fish from the canoes in Moree. Those who can afford it hire taxis and purchase fish from the nearby fish market in Elmina. They also go to other towns further away, such as Axim, if there are rumours of good fisheries in that area. One

solution, especially during the lean season, is to buy frozen fish (which is imported or provided by the factory trawlers) from the cold storage plants in Tema. Purchase of frozen fish is not an opportunity for the poorest traders, as it requires a certain amount of capital. Another source of fish supply is to purchase by-catch directly from the factory trawlers; the *seikos*. This is also a source of fish supply that is only open only for a few; in 1995 I was told that only six canoe owners (all women) in Moree had *seiko* contracts. One of them had (as quite a few women in Elmina already have) built an insulated wooden box filled with ice. In an ice box, the *seiko* fish can be kept frozen longer. This is an innovative strategy for a fish trader who plans to smoke all the fish herself. The investment in an ice box enables her to use her oven and labour capacity little by little, instead of having to sell out the fish quickly before it deteriorates in the hot sun. She can also keep prices high, since she does not have to sell all of it immediately.



Photo 11. Ice box.

Large scale fish traders need a spacious site for their smoking ovens. They build the ovens outside their houses, preferably with a shed to protect them from rain. The traditional circular mud ovens are relatively cheap and easy to build, and women make these themselves out of red soil mixed with water. Governmental organizations (31st December Women's Movement and the National Council for Women and Development)



have held workshops to introduce the improved smoking technology of the so-called Chorkor smoker (named after a fishing community near Accra where one of the first projects were implemented).

The Chorkor smoker has been a success in the area around Accra, but very few women in Moree have built such ovens. They complain about the cost involved in buying wire mesh and wooden boards for the rectangular smoking tables of the Chorkor smoker. Another factor is that the Chorkor smoker is best suited for the smoking of small fish species, such as anchovy, which is rarely caught by the Moree canoes. Small fish types are generally caught with beach seines in this area. Thus the Chorkor smoker is common among the Ewe and Ada women in the nearby migrant settlement Twuwim at the beach of Asekyerebedzi east of Moree, where they fish with beach seines only. I think, therefore, that one of the main reasons why women in Moree have not adopted the Chorkor smoker to any large extent, is that the circular multi-purpose ovens, which they can build of cheap local materials, suits their purposes better. An indication of this is that even the richest fish traders, who definitely *can* afford to buy wire mesh and wooden boards, have only built one or two Chorkor smokers (if any) as a supplement to their "traditional" ovens. Instead, some of them have improved their circular mud ovens by plastering them with cement (which is quite expensive), in order to make them more solid and water resistant. Ama, for example, who owns six canoes (more than any other canoe owner, male or female, in Moree), has in all 18 ovens: Near her house Ama has six cemented circular mud ovens. Under a smoking shed she has two double cemented Chorkor smokers in addition to eight more of the circular cemented mud ovens. Ama also has cemented the ground around the ovens in order to make the cleaning and gutting of the fish more hygienic and practical. Cement floors on smoking grounds are very rare and a visible sign of Ama's wealth and skill.

In some cases two or more fish traders, who operate on a smaller scale and are not canoe owners, pool resources and build a smoking shed and ovens that they can use together. It is important to have large smoking capacity during the main season when fish, mainly herring, is in abundance. But when fish traders live in large family houses with many inhabitants, there is often not enough space for ovens, especially in the congested old part of Moree. It is therefore a good solution for women from many houses to use one large smoking site. Women who go together are very often, but not necessarily, from the same matrilineage. In some cases they are rather friends and colleagues who have cooperated for many years.

Family labour, unlike hired labour, is not paid in cash. It is regarded as an obligation for matrilineal relatives to "give a helping hand". They are, however, rewarded with security, shelter and food. For those who buy and process fish in large quantities, hired labour is a necessity even if they have many children. Most of them therefore rely on regular "helpers"; women who do the hard work of carrying, washing, gutting and sometimes smoking and packing of the fish. Some only use carriers to take the fish to the house or smoking site, where their daughters take over the smoking. Yet others, who operate on a small scale, perform all the work tasks themselves; from the beach to the market. During the main season women come to work in fish processing from nearby farming villages.



*Photo 12. Members of a matrilineage cooperate in the building of a smoking-shed over circular mud ovens at ruins of Fort Nassau.*

Ekua, a canoe owner and large scale fish trader in Moree pays her regular helpers in this way: Each carrier gets paid for each pan she carries and according to how far in the fish processing she participates. For the carrying of a pan Ekua's carriers get 400 cedis. If they also wash and arrange the fish on the oven, they get 600 cedis per pan, and if they smoke it in addition, they get 1,000 cedis per pan (which in 1995 was approximately \$1). Each of Ekua's smoking ovens had a capacity of 4 pans of fish. Hence, for looking after

the fire and turning the layers of fish for 4-8 hours, they could earn 4,000 cedis (\$4) on one oven. But then the carriers had been at the beach since dawn, and worked late into the night, perhaps smoking fish through the night until the next morning. In comparison, Ekua paid 4,000 cedis per pan (the beach price) and would have earned a *bontodo* of 1,000 cedis per pan if she had sold it fresh. However, by adding an expense of 1,000 cedis to the fresh fish for carrying, washing and smoking, Ekua increases the profit potential of the fish (which her canoe landed) by sending it to the market in Kumasi.



Photo13. Fish carriers.

Some of the fish is salted and/or dried, but the great bulk is smoked. Depending on the length of the smoking process and the storing practice, the fish can be kept for more than six months. It has to be kept dry and must be re-smoked about once a week. It is difficult for many traders to store their fish for so long; most of them sell it as quickly as they can at the market because they need ready cash to pay for the fish they got on credit from the *enam enyi*. Since the small-scale traders hardly ever are able to repay their debt completely, the *enam enyi* always has a number of buyers ready who need fish to smoke and sell in order to pay her back as much as they can.

Finally, when the fish has been smoked, it is counted and packed in wooden boxes or baskets. It has to be done carefully in order not to damage the fish. In this process the owner of the fish often takes part; she has to control the quality of her product and that



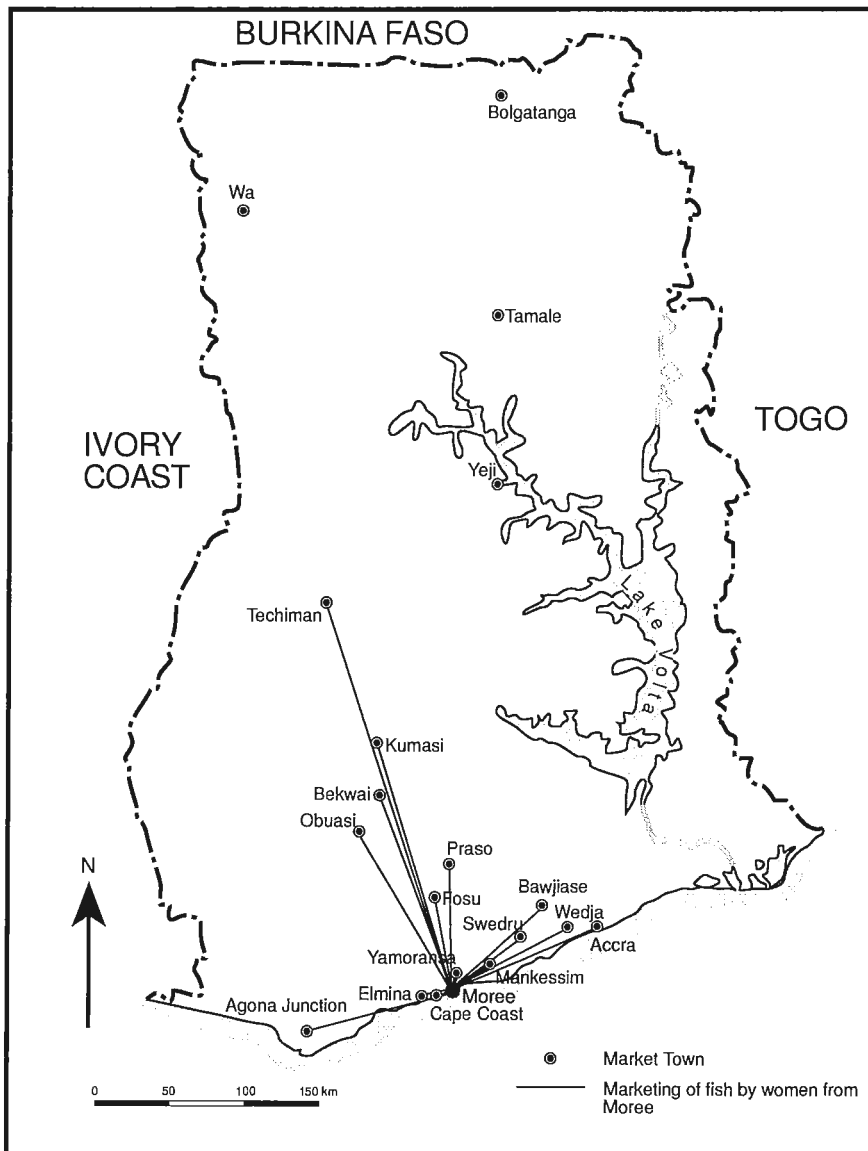
*Photo 14. Packing smoked herring.*

her "helpers" count correctly. Paper is put between the layers. I was a bit surprised to notice that one of the canoe owners and fish traders subscribed to Daily Graphic, one of the newspapers that come out in Accra and is distributed nationally. She could not read herself, and barely any of her children or tenants either. When I asked her why she subscribed to the newspaper, she said she needed the paper for the packing of fish! However, even if the people in her house occasionally were able to have somebody read for them and there was a practical aspect to the news-*paper*, an important reason for the subscription of Daily Graphic clearly was the prestige it gave to have a boy coming to the house bringing the newspaper every day. It was a way to obtain symbolic capital from the community through display of her material wealth.

## The marketing chain: On the road through social networks

It is in processing and long distance trade the profit potential in fish production lies. The smoked fish from Moree is marketed in Mankessim the year around, and some small scale traders can never afford to go further. Some go to Swedru, Accra and Techiman. But Kumasi is the most important market during the main season or when there is a bumper catch.

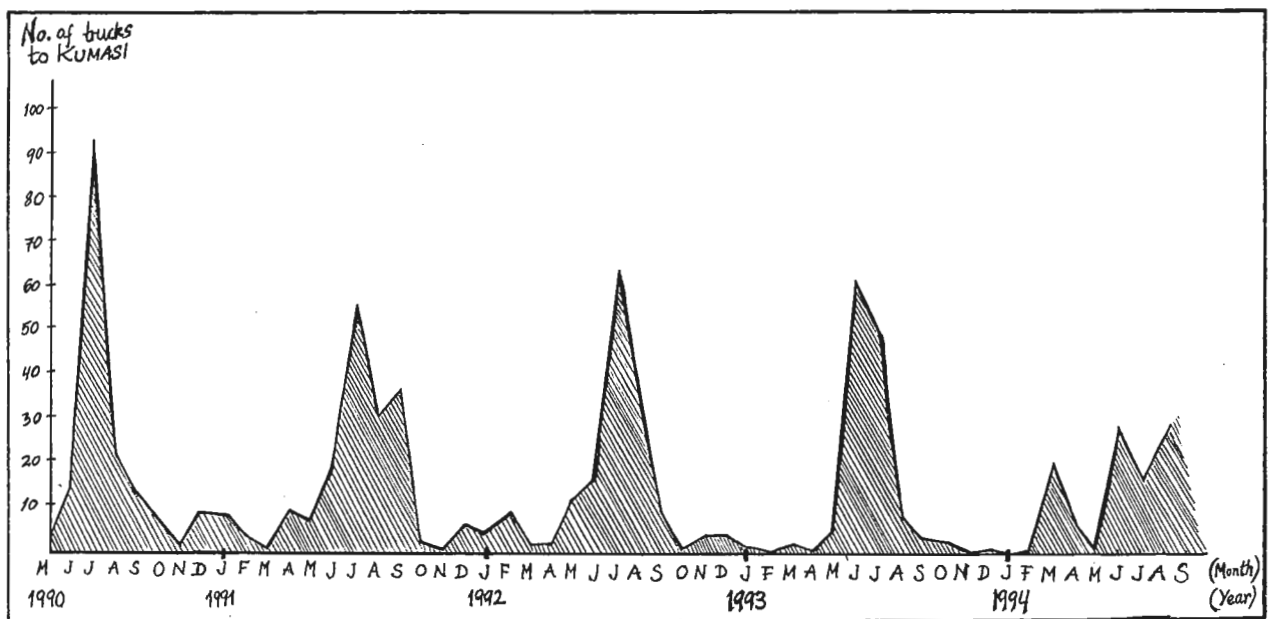
Map 9. The marketing region of fish from Moree.



The traders who have large smoking and storing capacity can also go to Kumasi during the lean season when fish fetches the highest prices. The fish is transported in big trucks to the inland markets. The traders themselves often go by public transport via Accra. In

1992, however, the road which branches off east of Moree by Yamoransa and goes directly to Kumasi was improved, and some of the traders therefore now hire a *tro-tro* (minibus) or a *Benz* (bus) and go together directly from Moree to Kumasi. As the figure below shows, fish trade is as seasonal as the fisheries. The peaks of fish trade follow the herring (*sardinella aurita*) season, which is at its peak between July and September, and then there is a small season around December-January. However, since many of the Moree canoe companies migrate to the Western Region during the off-season from October to May, fishing activity in Moree is very low. During this period the majority of traders do not travel further than to Mankessim (not included in the figure). Only a small number of large-scale traders, who may have supplied local fish landings with external supply, make the effort of hiring trucks and travel to Kumasi during the off-season (when fish prices are very high).

Figure 5. Seasonality of trucks leaving Moree for Kumasi. The peaks of fish trade follow the peaks of fishing.



Source: Bookers' office in Moree.

Personal contacts are of vital importance since the whole system of trade is based on credit and trust, and often life-long trading relationships develop. An extensive social network is therefore a prerequisite for a woman's success as a trader, and the extended family is most important in acquiring cooperation partners.

During the main fishing season, many of the large-scale traders stay at home in Moree administering their enterprises. They have a "ground crew" (Gerrard 1987) of women who help them in the carrying, washing, smoking and packing of fish. In busy periods the large scale fish smokers send a daughter or younger sister; a representative or partner, to Kumasi to take care of the fish trade. The trading partners travel back and forth between Moree and the market in Kumasi, or they stay in the receiving end for 2-3 months during the whole season from July to September.

Most of the traders get accomodation at a lodging woman's house in the marketing town. Many Fante traders also have relatives in Kumasi they can stay with. One of the most famous lodging women for Fante traders in Kumasi is Maame Ama Danquah. She is an instutution with her house and other facilities for the Fante traders. Maame Ama Danquah inherited her position and property from her mother, who established herself in Kumasi when the commercialization of fish trade "took off" in the first decades of this century. The lodging women (also called middlewomen) can provide the traders with credit and other facilities in the market, such as the renting out of market stalls. Often they also have a middleman in their service. These are men from northern Ghana ("northerners" as they are called) who organise carriers, arrange the wholesale trade, negotiate between the women, deliver and collect money. Some of the middlemen have established themselves (at a later stage in their careers) as store owners in Kumasi, and have maintained their personal business-links with some of their previous customers. Knowing that they deal with professionals, the middlemen give these particular fish traders credit. Apart from the driver and his two mates who accompany him on each trip, the middlemen and the *kaya-kaya* (carriers) are the only men involved in the woman dominated marketing chain.

In order to reduce the risk of financial loss in long-distance fish trade, the traders have developed a system for the sending of money over long distances when they do not physically carry the money themselves, but operate though a partner. Each fish trader has a "symbol"; a piece of cloth which is tied to the fish boxes or fish baskets she sends by truck to Kumasi. The truck driver as well as the trader's partners in the marketing town must know her "symbol cloth".

When the truck arrives in the marketing town, the trader's partner is either waiting or is sent for (by the truck driver's or his mates). She collects the fish and sells it at the market. According to a member of the *konkohene*'s council, the sending system has

changed. In earlier times a fish trader sent a number of nuts wrapped in a piece of cloth to her partner in Kumasi, indicating how much she expected back after all expenses had been subtracted when the trader and partner met again after the season. The transport fee was paid by the partner when the truck arrived in Kumasi. However, since this could lead to problems, for example because the driver and the partner could agree to a lower transport fee than the fee they reported to the trader, the system was changed. The transport fee is now paid in advance by the trader herself upon the departure of the truck from Moree. The uncertainty factor of the transport fee in the relationship between the trader, her partner and the driver has thus been eliminated. And instead of the trader and her partner meeting after the season or accounting every month or so, the money - the cash - is now sent back to the trader in Moree from the partner in Kumasi as soon as she has sold the fish.



*Photo 15. The owner of the fish (right, with beads) and her helpers tie her "symbol" (peice of cloth) to the thoroughly and carefully packed box with smoked herring. Its destination is Kumasi.*

This is a fascinating system of "money transfer", invented by illiterate women outside any banking system. It is based on relationships of trust between the persons who perform the tasks that bring the processed fish from the production site to the consumer. Such relationships develop over time and with experience. Often the relationship is based on kinship, where sisters or daughters are expected to be loyal and to have common interests with the owner of the fish. It is also important to know the truck driver well,



since he is often trusted with large amounts of money. But when the partner is an unrelated colleague, and even if she is the trader's own sister, there can be weak links in the "chain of trust" upon which the marketing of fish is based. The relationship of trust between the driver and the partner may, for example, develop into a sexual relationship. It can also happen that the trader's partner out of inexperience employs unreliable middlemen who cheat her in the market. By regularly demanding the income from the trade back to Moree in cash (which the trader anyway needs in order to buy more fish or petrol), there is less room for the partner in Kumasi to cheat her employer and more pressure on her to be professional; to be "serious".

To send cash over long distances on the road of course involves great risk. The driver is a key person in the transfer of money, but the cash may also be sent through traders or other people who travel from Kumasi, whom the traders in Moree have great trust in. To minimise any temptations to take a note or two out of the large bundles of cedis, the money is carefully packed: It is wrapped in paper, lashed tightly with a string, and marked with the same "symbol cloth" which the fish was marked with when it came to Kumasi. There are many individual ways of wrapping, and the partner and trader thus have a good chance to detect the opening and closing of a bundle by unknown persons.

Through the changes in the sending system (from the sending of nuts to the sending of ready cash) the risk of loss or theft of the money has increased. On the other hand, the trust aspect (which involves uncertainty) has been reduced, and the trader (who owns the fish) has more control with her partner's trading performance. The change in the sending system could also be an expression for the large-scale traders' constant need to have cash ready to provide "her" canoe companies with credit for petrol.

A reputation of trustworthiness is one of the most important qualities, or forms of symbolic capital, a trader acquires in her life-long career. Among her relatives the qualities of a trader is well known, since she has received training in all aspects of processing and trade from older women in her matrilineage, and bonds of loyalty and common interest are established during childhood. But to get access to the resources beyond the network of kinship and marriage relations - the network through which she has ascribed rights to crucial resources - a woman must establish her own identity as a professional trader who has learnt all necessary skills, including accounting, how to deal with cheating and the collection of debts, and about how to get information about the price level, gluts and demand on various markets (see Quinn 1978). Through

apprenticeship under an experienced trader, for example through some seasons as a partner in Kumasi, a young woman can establish her own trade; she can "start her own". But although she acquires good knowledge about trading, she must build up her reputation over time in interaction with the other actors in the field of marketing: A young trader must, in other words, first acquire cultural and social capital in the form of skills, knowledge, and social relationships that are relevant for her business. Over time she must also, in order to advance in her career, acquire symbolic capital through her performance of the trading profession.



*Photo 16. Bundle of money returned from Kumasi with the "symbol" of the fish seller.*

As we have seen, the recruitment of labour, the handing over of knowledge and skills from one generation to the other, and access to fish supply and other resources, is closely connected with kinship and marriage relations in the fields of fishing and marketing in Moree. In the following I will first enter the field of kinship, and then marriage, in order to understand the implications of this interconnectedness for men and women's opportunities and constraints in their fishing- and trading-careers.

## **Matrilineal ideology: Coming from the same womb**

The Fante, as other Akan speaking peoples (i.e. Asante, Ahanta, Nzema, Brong, Kwawu, Akuapim, Akyem), practice a matrilineal kinship system<sup>5</sup>. In Akan belief a human being is formed from the blood (*mogya*) of the mother and the spirit (*ntoro*) of the father (Manoukian 1950; Sarpong 1977). Through the principle of continuity of human existence and belonging through the blood ties to mothers during pregnancy and birth, descent is traced through women. Blood is moisture and spirit is air; air mixes with moisture and creates life (see Knudsen 1994:49). To become a complete human being, the child needs the elements from both mother and father. Thus, although the child mostly lives with the mother and belongs to her lineage, the role of the father is not insignificant, since the child's personality is formed by the *ntoro* of the father.

During the first seven months of a pregnancy, a regular provision of the father's semen is required "to help build up and strengthen the unborn baby, and also to 'open up the womb' for an easy delivery" (Ibid:53). Children need their fathers to grow up. This is especially the case of boys, who often spend a period of adolescence in the house of the father while they are trained in the fishing profession. Fathers further have a financial responsibility towards his children and, as Abu (1983) points out, the strength of the relationship between a father and his children to a large extent rests on how much he can contribute to their upbringing. Fathers are also central in arranging for the marriage of a son or daughter, and membership in Asfao companies is, as mentioned transferred through the paternal line. On the whole it is meaningless for men, as it is for women, to think of a life without having children. As Bleek's informants in his Kwawu study indicated, a man without children is regarded as a "useless man", he "is like a farmer without cutlass"; a childless man "is like drawing Africa without Madagascar and he is not regarded by anybody" (Bleek 1976:174). Mother-child relationships, especially that between mother and daughter, and sibling bonds do, however, through the blood relation and through residential arrangements, develop to become stronger than most father-child relationships, and jural rights in a person remain with the matrilineage.

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<sup>5</sup> There exists an extensive literature on the Asante in particular (Sarpong 1977; Abu 1983; Clark 1994), on Akan society, culture and history in general (Manoukian 1950; Okali 1983) and on other Akan groups, such as Kwawu (Bleek 1976; 1987), Brong (Woodford-Berger 1981), Effutu (Hagan 1983), and Nzema (Grottanelli 1988). Not many Fante studies are available, except Christensen (1961; 1977), Gladwin (1970; 1980), Lewis (1977), Vercrujse (1972; 1983; 1984), Kronenfeld (1991) and these also refer extensively to the Akan literature. Since the various Akan peoples have a lot in common both linguistically and culturally, I often refer to the general Akan literature as a background for my own field data from Moree.

One could, taking the importance of paternity into consideration, discuss whether the Fante kinship system has bilateral elements or double descent, as Christensen (1961) has done. However, as Schimizu (1991:395) points out, folk-definitions of kinship are always context-bound. In agreement with this and with the limits and purpose of this study in mind, I will not enter a discussion on how to categorise kinship systems here. Schimizu (Ibid:397) argues for a model for the analysis of kinship consisting of three phases or levels; kinship-by-procreation, socially constructed kinship, and ideological kinship. I would say that both on the level of procreation and ideology, people in Moree think in terms of matrilineality, but that there are many variations and elements of bilaterality on the level of social construction and social practice. Nevertheless, the matrilineal kinship ideology has important social, economic and practical consequences in the lives of people in Moree<sup>6</sup>.

By birth each person becomes a member of his or her mother's matrilineage, the *abusua*, on two levels: One becomes a member of one of the seven Fante clans<sup>7</sup>, and a member of the corporate group of a localised matrilineage belonging to a particular chiefdom. It is primarily in the latter meaning the term *abusua* will be used here. This "minimal lineage" as Clark (1994:98) calls it, is also often called *yafunu*; "those of the same stomach" or "womb" (Ibid.). The localised *abusua* relates to a common ancestress, to whom members trace matrilineal descent with a depth of about four generations (Bleek 1987). After the death of the oldest generation of grandmothers and granduncles of the minimal lineage, however, the group usually splits (Clark 1994:98), and new residential groups with a common ancestress are formed.

Descent in the matrilineal kinship system, then, goes through the female line; from an ancestress through her daughter, her daughter's daughter, etc. The matrilineage is thought of as the descendants of one woman, including both her sons and daughters, but only the children of her daughters, not her son's children (Ibid.). Inheritance of property also goes through the maternal line. Men do not inherit the property of their father upon his death. A father comes from a different "womb" than his children. His sons therefore inherit from their mother's brother. Through this inheritance practice, a man's property

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion on matrilineal kinship ideology, see Poewe (1981).

<sup>7</sup> In Moree the clans are named Aboradze, Abadze, Nsona, Anona, Adwenadze, Twidan and Akona. The latter is the clan of Adzekase and the first people who settled in Moree. The *ohene* of Moree is thus always elected from the Akona clan. Source: The *ohene* of Moree and Mr. Nana Amparbin.

does not "disappear" into other lineages through transfer of his property to his own children (who are not members of his own, but of their mothers' lineages), but remains within the matrilineage through the transfer of his property to his own sisters' children (primarily their sons), who come from the the same "womb" as himself. Neither are widows nor widowers entitled to inherit their late spouse's property. It belongs to the *abusua* of the dead person.

In this analysis I will categorise the matrilineage as a social field of great importance in the lives of people in Moree. It is a field that children are socialised into and towards which they feel a strong loyalty throughout life. The *abusua* bonds further give access to a socioeconomic network that reaches far beyond one's home town. When Sarpong (1977) writes of how the Asante relate to the *abusua* at different scales, it is quite illustrative of how Akan people in general associate with this field:

"Although no clan members of the different local matrilineages can even as much as name the ancestress from whom they claim to have descended, nevertheless members of the same clan behave towards one another as though they were distant kin. Through a wide network of relationships therefore, a man is linked with his near kinsmen, his fellow citizens, and his society, for wherever he travels he is likely to find someone who shares with him lineage or clanship ties" (Ibid:5).

Each matrilineage has an *abusua panyin* - an elder or head of the *abusua* - who is always a man. He represents the lineage in the chief's council. As the *abusua* often has branches in many different towns and villages, he may have to travel widely to fulfil his duties as negotiator in internal family matters or in cases where members of the *abusua* are in other kinds of difficulties, for example with the police. The women of the lineage also have an elder, a *basia panyin*, but she mostly deals with internal issues particularly concerning female lineage members. She heads the women of the lineage, but the *abusua panyin* heads both male and female members of the lineage. As we see, the *abusua* is organised as a dual-sex system with parallel hierarchies for women and men, where age to a large degree decides a person's rank. The male leader position is, however, imbued with more power than that of the the woman elder, in that his influence extends beyond the male hierarchy and includes the whole *abusua*.

The *abusua* is also associated with a lineage house, the *abusua fie*, in its town of ancestral origin, which the members also regard as their home town, even if they are not born or grew up there. In one *abusua fie* (ancestral house) that I visited, there is a clay

pot that forms a part of the wall in the house. The pot contains the spirits of the ancestors. Every time libation is poured for the ancestors - that is in all rituals, and when visitors come to the house - some drops of the liquor which is used for the libation is poured into the water in the pot. In this way the pot contains all the libations that have been made for the ancestors, and therefore contains their spiritual power. A barren woman may therefore go to her *abusua fie* and go through a ritual where she is bathed; "the liquid from the pot is rubbed on her stomach and she will get pregnant", as the *abusua panyin* said. Visitors to the *abusua fie* are given some drops of the liquid to drink out of a small nut. In that way one is blessed and protected by the ancestors, and one's spirit is cleansed. The most unclean state a person can be in, is when he or she has "left the family", and has not paid attention to both living and dead members of the matrilineage for a long time. This is regarded as asocial behaviour. In such an unclean state, one's life will not be happy and successful. One needs to ritually drink some of the liquid from the pot of the *abusua fie* to be cleansed. In that way the ancestors can include the "lost" or "distant" member into the *abusua* again and restore harmony in his or her life, restore the balance within the *abusua*, and secure its continuity.

As Sarpong (1977) points out, a good Akan society is thought to result from a harmonious composition of all its elements, and its members are through rituals reminded of the importance of this balance: "The female must be one with the masculine; separate matrilineages should be helpful towards one another; the old must co-operate with the young, and so on" (Ibid:59). In my interpretation, then, the pot in the *abusua fie* is a symbol of the female "womb" that contains the "children" - the spirits of both living members and dead ancestors - of the *abusua*. The matrilineage itself is thus a container. The pot represents the balance and harmony of the lineage - its unity - and this unity has to be maintained through a constant involvement and fulfilment of duties and rights by its members. The unity of the *abusua* is an ideal people in Moree place great emphasis upon. It is a moral value that can be used to mobilise *abusua* members to work for a common good and for their own peace of mind (what Bourdieu (1977:178) calls "a capital of rights and duties"). One woman in Moree, for example, who partly relied on the labour of male *abusua* members in the crew of her canoe, appealed to the fishermen's *abusua* morality and loyalty in her management strategy of the company. For the Moree festival, which is held at the end of the fishing season in September, she had bright T-shirts designed and printed for all her crew members to be worn in the procession through town. On the back of the T-shirts these words were printed: "Original 6&9 [name of the canoe]. *Unity we stand*". Although not all of the crew members were from

the same *abusua*, their employee tried to create a "family" or "team" atmosphere, a feeling of belonging to the same canoe, the same "womb", and of unity with a common matron, their *Maame*.

In each village or town the *abusua* is divided into many matrilineal extended family residential entities called *fie*. The *fie* refers both to a physical structure, a house, and to the people who live in it; their home. The *fiefuo* are the people who live in the *fie* ("house people") while *abusuafo* are the consanguines or lineage members beyond the house (Woodford-Berger 1981:10). The *fie* can thus be seen as a concrete, physical expression of the same matrilineal principle and emphasis upon the value of unity as represented in the *abusua* ideology. The *fie* is a visible sign of one's social belonging, it is so to say an emotional and physical "container" for the members of the matrilineage.

The building of a house is often done very gradually, and many families live in uncompleted houses. These uncompleted houses in Moree can literally be seen as physical manifestations of people's life projects. To buy cement and blocks is a much better way of storing material capital than to open a bank account; the inflation in Ghana "eats money". Thus one can for example see the structures of a new house in the middle of Moree town without a roof where maize is grown in the ground floor. The builder may have invested some of the money he or she earned while away on seasonal fisheries. While going away for a new season a few months later and, after having bought building materials and built some walls, family members who stay in Moree the whole year are allowed to grow food there in the meantime. Perhaps when the builder returns after the next season the house will get a roof. As one room after the other is completed, people gradually move in. Other houses have rusty iron rods and unfinished walls on the roof: The owner planned to build a "two-storey" house, but never managed to buy enough cement, or a family conflict stopped the plans, or a sister's son never managed to complete his uncle's plans. Thus the state of a house in itself tells a whole story about the careers of its *fiefuo*. The house shows whether ambitious life projects were completed, if those who took over were able to maintain the physical outcome of their ancestor's career, and of whether the *fiefuo* are able to live by the *abusua* unity ideal. In addition, the state of houses of course say something about the general development and levels of prosperity in fishing and marketing. Both the internal relations of families and external relations beyond the local community become visibly evident, and are concretely expressed in houses.

The *fie* is usually a relatively big house, with many rooms for the various members. There are often also tenants, for example young fishermen. Frequently between ten and twenty persons, but sometimes as many as forty or fifty, reside in the house more or less permanently. The members of the *fie* seldom eat together, since each woman cooks for her own dependants. The smallest unit of the *fie*, then, is what Woodford-Berger (1981) calls the matricentral cell - "a mother and her children and the complex relationship between them" (Ibid:32). As I shall discuss in more detail later, husband and wife have separate residences. A man lives in his own *fie*, so he does not reside in the same house as his wife and children (who live in her *fie*), but he eats from his wife's cooking pot. With such residence and cooking arrangements it becomes difficult to speak of households in a conventional way (cf. O'Laughlin 1995). The same applies to a common term like "head of household", and I, as Woodford-Berger, prefer to use the term "househeadship". With reference to the situation in Moree, "househeadship" means a position of ownership and/or a position of age in a *fie* which contains one or more "matricentral cells" that are linked to other *fie* through kinship and marriage relations.

The owner and/or the oldest woman or man in the house, the *fie panyin*, has a position of authority within the *fie*. Woodford-Berger, in her study of the organization of Brong (Akan) residence and work, writes that:

"Control over the collective production unit that a house potentially represents through its members, and control over the space that a house, its rooms and courtyard contain, is an important source of local authority and of political and economic power (...). It is practically the only form of authority and control over a group of people larger than the matricentral cell to which most people can aspire" (Woodford-Berger 1981:18).

The control over people in a house can be noticed in the way an owner or elder of a house controls space. He or she is in possession of keys to vital rooms in the house; the toilet and the bathroom. These rooms are open for collective use by the *fiefuo* at regular times of the day. The same applies to the padlock that closes the water tap. If one needs to use any of these facilities outside the "opening hours", the house owner or elder in the house must be consulted.

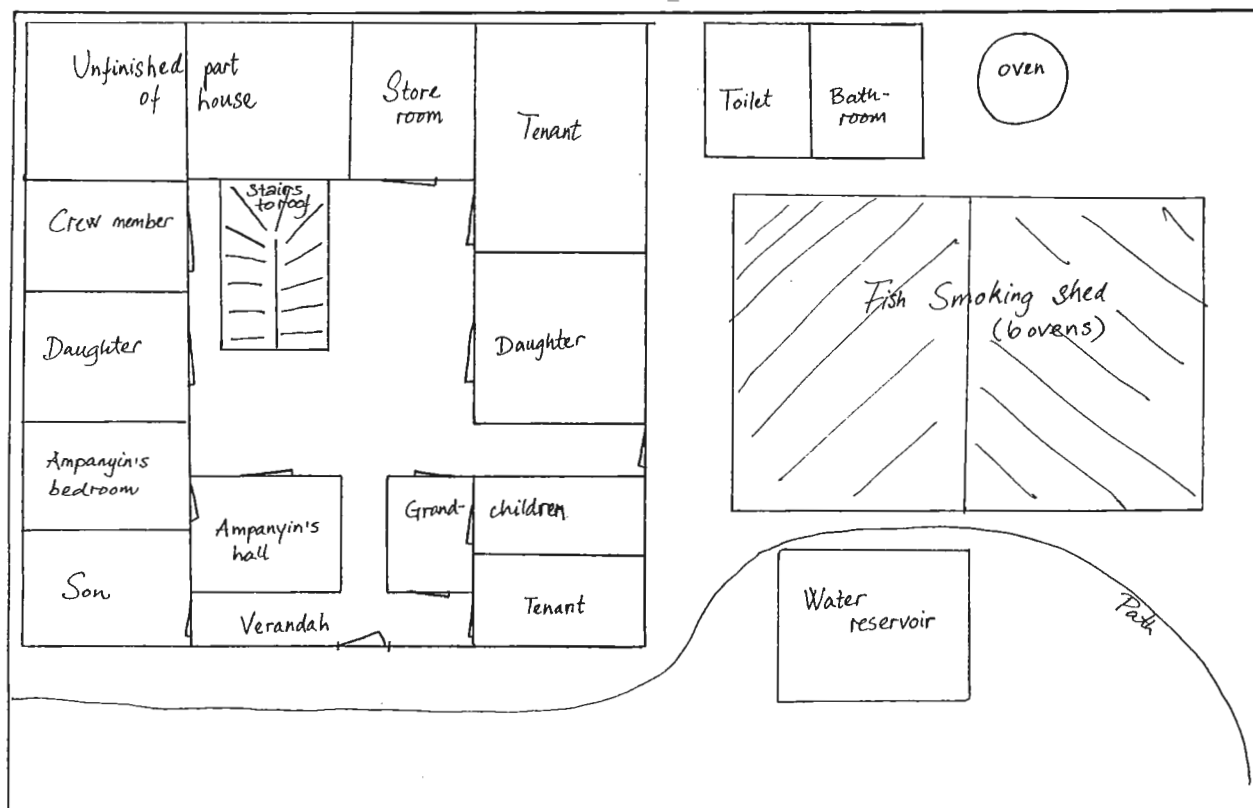
To have a room also indicates a person's social status. When a woman has her first child she gets her own room (if there is one available). For men it is particularly important to have their own rooms when they get married, since their wives come visiting at night. This is so important that a man's sister may have to move in with another sister to give



him space. If the *fie* is so crowded that it is impossible to get a private room, a married man may rent a room for himself in another house, in order to be able to receive his wives. His dream is of course to build his own house or; "a house for my mother".

To become the head of a *fie* happens either when a person builds a house and thus becomes its owner and head, or through inheritance. When a *fie panyin* (house head or elder) dies, his or her oldest maternal relative takes over this position. That means that his or her oldest brother or sister takes over. If these are not alive or do not reside in the house, the househeadship goes to the oldest sister's son or daughter (in that order), if the *fie panyin* was a man. If the *fie panyin* was a woman, her oldest sister, daughter, or sister's daughter takes over this position. But while the person who built the house is still alive, he or she is head of the house. The *fie*, then, often consists of a male head, his mother, sisters and their children. In other cases the head of the *fie* is a woman, who either has built the house herself or has inherited it from her mother or mother's brother, and lives there with her children, the mother, mother's brother, sisters and brothers. The figure below shows the *fie* of Ampanyin, who is a fish trader and canoe owner in Moree. Her name is an abbreviation of Maame Panyin, which means senior or elder mother.

Figure 6. Ampanyin's *fie*.



As we can see, the *fie* is not only a place to live and a sign of one's social belonging. It is also a place to work. Outside of the house the women of the *fie* have their smoking ovens. The *fie* is in other words the center for production and processing of fish and for reproduction of the matrilineage. It is thus not strange that the main target for practically all women entrepreneurs in Moree is to create a *fie*; to build a house for their children and maternal relatives. This is, however, not only a means to give them shelter and to achieve a position of authority within the *fie* and *abusua*. A woman who has secured her supply of fish needs a location where she can build many smoking ovens, and where she can organise people effectively to do the laborious work tasks involved in fish processing. The establishment of a *fie* by a woman trader therefore in practice means that she has actually built a "workshop" for her enterprises which is necessary for her further business expansion. Through "househeadship" and the material manifestation of her wealth, she is able to extend her power from the *fie* into the fields of both fishing, marketing and marriage. How such manoeuvring and pooling of resources from many social fields in the establishment and expansion of an enterprise is done, will become apparent later in the cases where I present individual career paths and career networks.

To establish a *fie*, then, is a stage in the career of an entrepreneur; a strategy applied to combine resources from one's social network and convert them into other fields. But the strategy of converting social capital into material capital must go both ways; material accumulation can only be acceptable if it is rechanneled into the social network of the entrepreneur. To have success in trading and fishing enterprises and to display one's wealth by the building of a house, by wearing expensive clothes, buying other luxury items or adapting a life style beyond the possibilities of others, and without letting any of one's wealth "trickle down" to the members of one's *abusua*, has no meaning in the eyes of people from Moree. Especially the disregard of members of the entrepreneur's own *fie* is considered morally reprehensible by the surrounding community. To be able to create a *fie*, then, and to redistribute one's wealth to its members, and thereby to control the labour, loyalty, company and emotional support of the *fiefuo*, is a morally acceptable and desirable way of converting material wealth into symbolic capital in Moree.

Building a house is not only a way to store accumulated capital from the fisheries; it is also a way to become a "node" in a network of social relations, and to draw on these resources in one's further business expansion. But most of all it is a sign of one's achievements in life, a concrete sign that is still standing and still containing one's family

after death. This is an important aspect, since the living and the dead are in close contact, and the dead return to the living through reincarnation. To honour the dead is therefore an important value in Akan society. There is a continuity in the careers of mothers and daughters. Daughters (and to some extent sons) can build their careers upon the material, cultural, social and symbolic capital their mother accumulated through her life. But this continuity does not happen without the participation and consent of the *abusua*, the *fie*, or without the moral judgement of the community. By showing respect for the ancestors, the living acquire honour, which further enhances their "luck" and "success".

In one case a woman from Moree, Esi, had built a huge house where she sheltered her two daughters and their children, as well as the widow of her brother with her children. As many of the children were grown-up and had moved out, tenants were renting some of the rooms in the house. Esi and her husband both had canoes, and they lived for many years in Sassandra in Ivory Coast. When they returned, Esi moved into her *fie* where her sisters lived. Esi's husband died not long after their return from Ivory Coast. Gradually Esi built her own house. She invested the money she had earned while away on long term migration, and also acquired another canoe in Moree. In addition Esi bought corn from Techiman and other markets. Especially during the early eighties, when corn was scarce in Ghana, Esi made good money on the corn business she had on the side of the fish business. She sold corn to people in Moree, and she cooked *kenkey* (fermented corn dough boiled in palm leaves) for sale. It took Esi ten years to build the house. Six cemented circular smoking ovens are standing in front of the house.

Fifteen years after her *fie* was established, Esi died. Of the ten children she had given birth to, only three were still alive; a son who was "educated" and lived in Tema, and two daughters, who were now in their forties and fifties and fully experienced fish processors and traders. Though Esi was rich, she had not been able to paint the huge house she had built; all her capital had gone into the running of her two canoe companies, and during her old age she had spent a lot on hospital bills due to many health problems. But before the "wake-keeping" (inquest) where Esi's corpse was laid in state, her daughters and sisters were able, through their own and the contact network of their late mother, to borrow enough money to have the huge house painted in bright pink and blue colours. It was a way for them to enhance the prestige of their late mother.

They had kept the corpse in the mortuary (or the "fridge" as is often said in Ghanaian English) for one month until they had managed to arrange everything for the "wake-



*Photo 17. The late Esi's house; painted for the funeral and with the cemented smoking ovens in front, still inactive after her death. But piles of firewood indicate plans of further fish smoking activity.*

keeping". The mortuaries charge high fees, so the longer a person is kept there before the wake keeping, the more elaborate the event is expected to be, and the more money the family actually has to pay. To keep one's lost family members for a long while in the "fridge" is therefore an indicator of high social status. Esi's daughter explained that the mother normally would have been laid in state in the *abusua fie*. But since many people were expected come from the Ivory Coast, in addition to all the friends, colleagues and *abusua* members who would come from Moree, Yamoransa, Accra, Kumasi, and so forth, the *abusua fie* would be too small: "We therefore put her in her own big house so that everybody could come".

The people who came to honour Esi at her wake keeping were impressed by the beauty of the recently painted house, and this was imprinted in their memory of Esi, their late kinswoman and colleague. This was of great importance for Esi's daughters and sisters, and the "wake-keeping" was an important event for the whole *abusua*. Afterwards Esi was "just" buried. That means that the actual funeral, which is an enormously important event, would take place one year afterwards, when the family had managed to mobilise

enough resources. This is common practice in Ghana, especially upon the death of prestigious persons. Since funerals, which are more like commemoration ceremonies, are such big events, families often need many months to prepare (and to recover). I once attended a funeral which was held for five members of the same *abusua*. They had all died at various moments over the year preceding the funeral. By having a collective funeral ceremony, it was possible to pool resources, and to turn it into a grandiose event where the unity of the *abusua* was reinforced through the honouring of the ancestors.

After her death, Esi's canoes were in the custody of her oldest sister. Both of Esi's daughters now cooperated closely with their mother's sister (as they had done with their mother). When the aunt once died Esi's oldest daughter would take over. She was now *"learning about all the property and how to make the accounts"*. However, because of their indebtedness after the wake keeping, and the preparations for the funeral, the new generation of women were not able to run both of the canoe companies they had inherited. Two months after the "wake-keeping" only one canoe company was in operation, and Esi's sister and daughters had to sell most of the fish fresh to get money to pay their debtors quickly. An important aspect of the "wake-keeping" had also been to raise money for the later funeral that they were going to organise. The *abusua* members were informed that they had to *"try and see what they could do to bury her"*. To contribute to funerals is one of the major *abusua* duties. It is also a way to gain prestige. Prominent traders often show up at funerals or send a representative. The name of each contributor, and the sum of money he or she is giving, is actually written in a protocol, and taken notice of by everybody, in particular by the *abusua* elders.

In the process of mobilising resources for the funeral, the painting of the house was a way to call upon the *abusua* morality and feelings of obligation of lineage members, and to signal that they should try their best to contribute to this *abusua* event: *"Everybody should 'try hard' for the funeral"*. The prestige of their mother in town and in the *abusua*, and thus their own reputation, was more important than to keep the canoe companies they had inherited running. In fact, to honour their mother and the *abusua* was in many ways a long-term strategy to make the canoe companies running again. The daughters and sister of Esi were indeed indebted to their mother. After all she had provided for them while she was alive, the painting of her house - so to say the crowning of Esi's lifework - and the mobilisation of *abusua* unity through the funeral in her honour, was the least they could do. It was a way for them to draw on the symbolic capital that Esi had accumulated through her career. Through an elaborate funeral Esi's

daughters and sisters further enhanced their mother's "capital stock". They moreover enhanced the prestige of their *abusua*. In the reciprocal relationship of obligations and rights between Esi's *fie* and their *abusua*, the funeral would transfer Esi's stock of symbolic capital onto her descendants. Thus to pay tribute to their mother's memory was perhaps a better long-term investment than a short-term concern with the profitability of fishing and trade.

The ultimate goal of an entrepreneur, then, whether man or woman is to build a house; a container in which one can shelter one's maternal relatives, and through which, and with increasing age, one becomes an important person in the *abusua* and in the *fie*. It is a way to acquire authority and prestige. This is an investment that contributes to the unity of the *abusua* and to the continuity of the community. To build a *fie* is to create a position from which one can gain influence in other fields.

### ***Bragoro: From daughter to mother and wife***

While unity is the main principle of the matrilineage, Fante marriage is characterised by duality; the duality of masculinity and femininity, the separate economies and separate residence of husband and wife, of reciprocity between the lineages of two spouses, and by the differences in father-child and mother-child relationships. Meyer Fortes characterised Akan marriage in this way:

"Matrilineal marriage [in Ghana] tends to be associated with an open domestic system with split residence - split in space, split over time, both in the individual's life time and in the sequence of generations, split for the spouses, split for the children, and so on" (Fortes 1974:13-14).

In Moree both women and men continue to live in their *fie* after marriage, and they often continue to live there for their whole life or until they establish a *fie* for their own maternal relatives. During childhood and youth the *fie* is the main resource pool. At marriage new possibilities open up in the fields of marketing and fishing. With the social status of father or mother a person is considered an adult, and is expected to establish his or her own career. But throughout the life-cycle both husband's and wife's loyalty towards the *fie* and the *abusua* remains very strong. The dilemma of fulfilling both one's conjugal obligations on the one hand and matrikin responsibilities and family ties on the

other has been pointed out in many Fante (Akan) studies (Oppong 1981; Abu 1983; Hagan 1983; Bleek 1987; Vellenga 1986). The balancing of social, emotional and economic investments between the fields of kinship and marriage is constantly negotiated in daily life.

In order to understand the relative importance of the *abusua* compared with the conjugal relationship, I will explore the transition from child to adult - from girl and daughter to mother and wife, and the role of the man who becomes the father of her children.

The occasion of a marriage in Moree is only marked by a handing over of a bottle of liquor from the groom to the parents of the bride, and a symbolic sum of money. In describing the Akan marriage ceremony Abu says that "The atmosphere is more that of a contract being concluded than an important stage in the life-cycle being celebrated" (1983:157). This stands in contrast to the elaborate celebration of *bragoro*, the puberty rite, or nubility rite as Sarpong (1977) prefers to call it, where the reproductive abilities of a girl when she gets her first menstruation is celebrated by the lineage and her age mates, and is made public in town. Thus the *bragoro* is often referred to as a girl's marriage. It is in other words her "marriageability" which is celebrated, and although members of the lineage of the man she is going to marry take part in the ritual, the main "celebrators" are the members of the girl's *fie* and *abusua*. They celebrate that their daughter is now ready to provide new members for the lineage<sup>8</sup>.

The biological and social mothers of a girl (her mother, grandmother and maternal aunts) spend lavishly (if they can) on her dresses and other equipment needed for the ceremony. In today's girls' grandmothers' generation, girls were often betrothed to a man by their fathers at a very early age. It was important that the girl remained a virgin, or at least did not get pregnant, before the *bragoro* had been "done for her". After the *bragoro* the young woman was sent to live with the husband until she got pregnant and returned to her own *fie* again. Today's girls are very seldom betrothed before they get married. The marriage ceremony, "the handing over of the bottle", may be skipped altogether, and the couple gradually enters a relation where the girl becomes pregnant, and gradually begins to cook regularly for the man. "To cook for" is the main factor that decides whether the relation is considered a marriage or not. Cooking and eating has clear sexual connotations, as the verb *di* means both "to eat" and "to have sex". The public

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<sup>8</sup> Boys do not go through any elaborate puberty ritual or circumcision. Neither are girls circumcised.

recongnition of a cooking relationship, then, means that the sexual relationship is known and accepted as permanent.

Not all girls go through the puberty ritual of *bragoro* today, especially if they have education. If a girl's mother and other maternal relatives are very poor the ritual may be performed, but in a very modest manner. The *bragoro* can be celebrated many years after the girl has reached puberty, and the timing and amplitude of the ceremony often depends on the mother's financial means. In fact, to have an elaborate *bragoro* performed for one's daughter, is a way for a wealthy woman to acquire prestige though the display of her material and social capital; a display of her *fie*, and of the women who will give birth to children and secure the viability of the *fie* and *abusua*. To perform a *bragoro* for one's daughter is also a way to enhance a young girl's social position in the marriage she is about to enter.

In the case of Aba, the granddaughter of a wealthy canoe owner and trader, the *bragoro* was held when she was six months pregnant at the age of sixteen. Since she was going to marry the father of the child, her grandmother (who had been Aba's "mother" after her biological mother died at a very young age) decided that it was high time to arrange the *bragoro* for her.

In earlier times the marriage ritual would have been performed three months after an elaborate celebration of *bragoro* lasting for six days before the marriage was concluded with the "handing over of the bottle". The family would have guarded the virginity of the girl during these three months. In the case of Aba, the *bragoro* was done in two days, and was concluded on the last day with the performing of the customary marriage ritual. It was easy to see that Aba was pregnant and thus, as the grandmother said, they did the *bragoro* only "half" for her. This was her opinion:

*"These days everything is left loose. The girls cannot wait. They do not sit down and wait until they have done the bragoro. So they start chasing men and get pregnant. And they do not know that they are pregnant until the stomach starts swelling".*

Nevertheless, the grandmother bought an expensive golden cloth and had a *bragoro* dress sewn for Aba. She rented a wig, jewellery and other necessary refineries, and sent her to the local photographer to have the compulsory photo taken of the girl together with the little girl who serves her during, and for three months after, the ritual. Her "servant"



must not have reached puberty yet and is "given" to her from the *abusua* of the man she is going to marry.



*Photo 18. Young "queens". Bragoro (puberty ritual) photograph. The girl seated is going through the ritual. Her little assistant is standing. Photo: Uncle Fynn's Photo Shop, Moree.*

Such *bragoro* photographs are always on display in the rooms of rich women, in addition to other items that can easily be seen through the glass doors of their cupboards. These can be anything from bottles of liquor, piles of soap, or (empty) perfume flasks, or a radio, a sewing machine, a television set or a (not connected) telephone, etc. When a girl goes through the *bragoro*, she is for the first time in her life given such luxury items that she can display as a sign of her maturity and of her new social status of woman and future mother.

These were Aba's *bragoro* items: 25 "powder" (talcum) boxes, 4 boxes of pomade, 4 bottles of lavender water (eau-de-cologne), new panties and beads, an eye brow pencil, lip-stick, a white cloth to be used as a sanitary pad, a sponge, a soap, a towel, and a bottle of schnapps (for the pouring of libation).

On the day of the puberty/nubility ritual, a Saturday, Aba was brought to the beach *Obrofo Mpoano* with 20 girls who were her age mates and whom Aba had invited, and six elder women; two from her own *abusua*, and one from the *abusua* of the man she was going to marry, and three other experienced women from the town. Two men, who were drumming, were standing at a distance, while the girls and women were singing. In the cheerful atmosphere the women were playing draught, *oware*, and other games that normally only men play. This was done with great amusement, since none of them knew the rules of the games.

Aba and the other young girls were naked, only wearing their waist beads<sup>9</sup>. The elder women threw Aba into the sea three times together with the other girls. Three of the women had sponges, the other three had soap, and they washed Aba three times, pouring water on her. To keep one's body clean is very important, and is an important educative element in the *bragoro* rituals, together with knowledge about sex, birth and child rearing and the wifely duties of cooking (see Sarpong 1977). The other girls also bathed and "powdered" themselves (each girl was given one box of talcum as a gift out of the 25 boxes Aba's grandmother had bought). The elder women dressed Aba in new white beads and a white cloth. Singing and drumming they walked to Aba's *fie*, where her grandmother and the other female *fiefoo* had been cooking the whole morning.

Aba was given mashed yam with palm oil and hard boiled eggs. She went through the *anoka* ceremony, where she was given yams and palm oil, and then an egg divided into three parts. Each bite of food Aba was given, had to be spit out on the ground three times. This symbolised that she shared the food with her ancestors. All the girls eat together with Aba while the guests were encircling them singing. Now it was time for everybody to eat, and Aba's grandmother had cooked *fufu* (a highly valued staple food made of plantain and cassava) and groundnut-, palm nut-, and light (tomato, onion and pepper) soup to the choice of everyone. All the guests gave Aba money. The food that Aba's grandmother had cooked was a gift from the *abusua* of the man Aba was going to marry. Members of the man's *abusua* had brought it to Aba's *fie* early in the morning to be cooked in her *fie* while Aba went through the rituals on the beach. In this manner

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<sup>9</sup> Women and girls in many parts of Ghana wear beads around their waist, sometimes as many as 12 strings. Some women are said to hide magical power in their waist beads and, as the statement from this man clearly illustrates, beads increase a woman's sexual attraction: "*Beads make a woman look beautiful and the wearing of beads makes her different from men. One can even see the beads move under a woman's cloth when she makes some special movements. I like beads*".

the exchange relationship of provision of food from the husband and cooking by the wife is manifested in the exchange between the two matrilineages in the *bragoro* ritual.

After the meal Aba was brought into her grandmother's room and dressed up in the shiny yellow silk dress. "Gold or yellow stands for royalty, continuous life, and its influence in society", Sarpong (1977:71) says; "it also stands for warmth and controlled fire, prosperity, glory, maturity and the prime of life". In their beautiful outfit Aba and her little "servant" walked around in town and greeted the community together with the other young girls. This public display could be seen as a celebration of Aba's fertility and the potential fertility of her friends. They were hailed and given gifts of money by the people they met, and they went to the local photographer to have their picture taken. Afterwards everybody went home to rest.

The following day, Sunday, Aba was dressed in a white and blue dress. "White symbolises (...) purity, virtue, joy, victory, and all such virtuous spiritual entities as God, and the spirits of the ancestors" (Sarpong 1977:70). Blue "is related to love, female tenderness and is said to be likened to the serene appearance of the crescent moon in the heavens" (Ibid:72). Aba and her friends went to the Catholic church (an exceptional event for Aba). Aba had now become a respectable woman in all regards. When she returned to her *fie*, her husband-to-be (and father of the child she was going to give birth to only two months later) arrived with the customary marriage gifts; 5000 cedis (\$5) and two bottles of *akpeteshie* (local liquor made of sugar cane or palm juice) and one bottle of whisky. The *bragoro* (puberty/nubility ritual) as well as the marriage ritual had now been finalised, and Aba's husband returned to his *fie*.

Two months after the *bragoro*, Aba was taken to the Moree health station by her grandmother, and gave birth to a baby girl. Aba's husband came to the hospital and paid the bill, and brought Aba home to her *fie*. Afterwards he brought a gallon of kerosene, a packet of match boxes, some money for food, and three sets of clothing for the baby. In the following weeks he came visiting quite often. Aba stayed with her baby in the room of her grandmother for almost three months. After her "maternity leave" in her grandmother's room, Aba moved in with her late mother's sister in the next room, but as she grew older and had more babies, a room would be cleared for her, and she would get her own place in the *fie*. The new little member of the *fie* was not at all viewed as a burden for the family. On the contrary, the baby girl was highly valued, despite her mother's young age.

Aba's baby was called Esi, since she was born on a Sunday. On the eighth day of her life little Esi had tiny white beads put around her waist, her knees and wrists. Aba's grandmother explained that the white colour of the beads signifies "From danger to victory". The baby had now become fully human and would not return to the spirit world with the ancestors who brought the child to the world.

After three months a father is expected to give his baby a proper name in addition to the name the baby is given after the day he or she is born. The *mpuei* ritual is then performed: "*The child is brought out to see the sun and to release the ancestors to go back to the spirit world*", as an *abusua panyin* explained. The baby has now "come to stay". The father names the child after someone he wants to honour, whose personality he wants the child's personality to resemble. Through the actual naming ceremony; the *dzinto* ("to name"), the father officially recognises paternity of the child. A representative from his *abusua* pours a libation with water and liquor. He puts his finger with some of the liquid into the mouth of the child and says: "*Nsu a nsu a. Nsa a nsa a*" ("If you see water, say water. If you see palm-wine, say palm-wine"). The child should learn to always say the truth.

The child's father is also expected to provide the mother of the child with a white dress, signifying that the child now has come to stay. She walks around in the town with the child and visits relatives to introduce the child to them. These give small gifts to the child. The husband is also expected to give the wife a lot of other things, like food, powder, soap, pomade, or money. With the expenses this involves, it is no wonder that few husbands can afford to do it. They usually do it only for the first wife, and the dimensions of the ritual depends on the man's wealth and social position. But by having an elaborate *mpuei* for his child and wife he enhances his social position. He is now considered both as a generous and responsible representative of his *abusua* and as a husband and father to whom the wife and children owe respect.

### **Marriage: Cooking and chop-money**

Women and men continue to live in the *fie* with their matrikin after marriage; the Fante practice a duo-local pattern of residence. Husband and wife further have separate personal economies, but have joint duties in catering for the children. Husbands are expected to contribute with school fees and *chop-money* (money for cooking), and wives

are expected to give birth to children and cook good food for them and the husband. Children mostly reside with the mother, but adolescent boys often spend a period with their father. One important reason for this is that boys must be trained to become fishermen.

The wife works and cooks in her *fié*, but in the evening she goes to the *fié* of her husband to bring him his evening meal, and to sleep with him. In polygynous marriages, which is the rule rather than an exception in Moree, the wives alternate on a monthly basis in this arrangement. If a wife has her menstruation during her month of serving the husband, she can not cook for him. She is "behind" (*ko ekyer*), which refers to a former custom of menstruating women to stay in a hut behind their husbands' house (see Sarpong 1977:42). Since a woman is unclean during this period she may ask her daughter to cook and bring the food to the *fié* of the father instead.

Young wives bath and dress nicely and often accompany their husbands for the whole evening. If they have small children they bring them along, but when they are three or four years old the children are often looked after by other relatives in her *fié*. As a woman grows older and the importance of becoming pregnant declines, she can be less focused on the husband, and direct more of her time and resources towards the children and the *abusua*. She may relax her wifely duties somewhat, as a middle-aged woman said: "*First I send the food with one of the children to his room. Then, when I am ready, I go there myself*".

The essence of marriage lies in the exchange of fish and money for food and sex. In fact the quality of the food is perceived as a symbol of the quality of the relationship between the spouses. It is not acceptable that a woman lets other women cook for the husband. Cooking has, as mentioned, sexual connotations, and deviations from the reciprocal exchange of fish and money for food and sex would make the marriage relationship ambiguous and lead to gossip. To cook for one's husband is in other words an important moral value in Moree.

In estimating the severity of a marriage conflict, for example, one often says: "*Is she still cooking for him?*". Or when a woman expresses discomfort with her marriage, she says that: "*Now I don't even cook for him*", indicating that she refuses to contribute financially to the marriage and that the relationship no longer involves sex. The "food boycott" may only be temporary in order to make her dissatisfaction clear. Thus the quality of the food

is a way for a woman to communicate love and satisfaction when the husband gives her plenty of *chop-money*, and contempt and anger if he gives her little or treats her or the children badly. Conversely a man can express his feelings of love, sexual desire, or dissatisfaction, jealousy, and so on, with the amount of *chop-money* he gives to the wife. If a wife notices a decline in the *chop-money*, the first thought that strikes her is that the husband has extramarital affairs and/or plans to marry a second wife. With the amount of meat and fish pieces in the soup, or a juggling with the quantity of pepper and salt in the soup according to the taste of the husband (that she knows so well), a wife can say a lot about sensitive issues without words.

Food is the product of the symbolic exchange between husband and wife in a marriage, something that a wife in public carries (in a pot in a basket) from her *fie* to the *fie* of the husband. It is not entirely the wife's product - the cooked meal is her transformation of what her husband produces into nutrients and pleasure. The quality of the food is estimated, not only by the husband, but also by other members of his *fie*. If his wife brings inferior or cheap food, he loses prestige as it both indicates a low income on his part and lack of authority over his wife. Although women have a strong position in Moree as such, they are expected to have a subordinate position in relation to men. However, other social statuses than gender influence the power relations in marriage. Age is an important factor. Since men often marry younger women, the respect for the husband as an older person comes very naturally. Another important factor is the wife's level of economic independence. If she is relatively wealthy in relation to the husband, she has more possibility of manoeuvring things in the direction she wishes<sup>10</sup>.

A woman's social position and the amount of *chop-money* a husband contributes, establishes a level of expectations in the marriage towards food quality and value (i.e. how much money the wife literally puts into the cooking pot). Much more than the actual money and food is at stake here. The power relations between the two, and the honour, love and pride of both husband and wife is "baked" into the food relationship. One woman, for example, who is married to a canoe owner, says that the husband does not accept "simple" food for more than one or two days (and then only because he knows she is very busy or has travelled): "*Fufu is his favourite food. If I bring kenkey or banku, he*

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<sup>10</sup> Wolf Bleek observed (in Kwawu) that "in conjugal unions where the husband has no socio-economic position of importance" (1976:118), the wife has to pretend that she does not have power in order to make it work: "It is a subtle game of female cunning versus male pride, in which the male partner receives status and prestige from the woman and gives her power in return" (Ibid.).

*will eat it, but not the next day. He will complain and complain and complain!*" It takes a long while to cook and pound *fufu* (made of cassava and plantain), while *kenkey* (made of fermented corn dough) is often bought as a quick meal on the roadside. *Banku* (which is a thick "porridge" made of fermented corn flour) is both easier to cook than *fufu*, and it is not considered as "traditional Fante food" and is eaten more in the areas around and east of Accra. As a Fante fisherman the husband expects to eat proper "Fante food" prepared with care by his own wife, and not just something she has made in a hurry while smoking fish, or bought on the roadside on her way home from the market. And women do spend a considerable number of hours cooking to fulfil these expectations. On the other hand, a husband who does not contribute much to the cooking pot, has little possibility to complain about his wife's food. He can only be glad she cooks, and that she often adds her own money to be able to make proper food for him.

Wives in many ways function as "banks" for their husbands. It is a wife's duty to make wise dispositions of the income from the fishing season to carry the family through the lean season, and lend the husband money when he is broke. This is a mutual relationship; women borrow money from wholesalers, matrikin, friends, *susu* groups (saving groups, see Bortei-Doku and Aryeetey 1995) and sometimes a bank. However, as much as a third of the women I talked with in Moree mentioned their husband as their most important source of credit. Marriage, then, opens channels to resources that extend beyond the *abusua* network for both women and men, whether it is credit in the form of food from the wife during a crew member's unemployed period, or in the form of credit for the wife of a canoe owner to buy her own canoe. It is also clear that the social status of being married gives a person a social position through which symbolic capital can be acquired in both the fields of the lineage, marketing and in fisheries.

Divorce rates are, however, very high in Moree. Marriage is not looked upon as a moral sphere that must be maintained monogamously in a life-long relationship. Men often marry two or more wives, and divorce some of them. Most middle-aged women I spoke with had divorced and remarried at least once in life.

In most marriages little is at stake compared with societies where husband and wife live together, maybe own property together, or where a wife is economically dependent upon the husband. In Moree a woman who is economically independent can withdraw from the marriage, practically by "sending back the bottle" from the marriage ritual, by ceasing to buy her husband's share of fish, and then continue to live in her *fié* with her children

as usual. The loss of the right to buy her husband's share of fish on credit may, however, mean so much for some women (if they have little access to resources in other fields) that they endure an unsatisfactory marriage.

During her child-bearing years the most important reason for a woman to divorce is when the husband does not fulfil his economic responsibilities towards the children. When he is involved in extramarital affairs or takes a second, third, or fourth wife, her main concern lies in the fact that he spends money on her "rival". She fears that her *chop-money* will be reduced proportionally with the money he spends on his new lover. And of course this is surely what often happens. When a woman gets older, divorce often happens because an aged husband may no longer be able to contribute economically; she now relies on her children and her own incomes.

The Moree situation is quite in line with Hagan's (1983) findings from Winneba, a nearby Effutu town, where he found that the divorce rate varied with the fishing seasons of the year, and with the life-cycle of the spouses. Hagan observed one divorce peak in April, when the fishermen return to their families after months of seasonal migration, often having been involved in extramarital relations, and another in September after the fishing season, when the annual account between husband and wife is made. As in Moree the wife is expected to pay for the fish she got on credit and has sold in the market. If the wife fails to pay, the husband will be charged by the canoe owner or the *enam enyi* (wholesale fish seller) instead, so this is clearly a cause for conflict between husband and wife. In addition to these "seasonal" divorces Hagan observed an increasing divorce rate with age. The two most important reasons were that the man was either not able to support his wife anymore due to his advancing age, or the wife did not need his support any longer. Many women around the age of fifty are at the height of their careers; the children are grown and can work for them, and she may have established her own *fie*. The husband, on the other hand, is growing old, maybe he is twenty years older than his wife, and is more and more dependent on support from the children and his *fie*.

The divorce patterns illustrate two important aspects of marriage. On the one hand, marriages are fragile due to the economic and residential separateness of the spouses, and on the other hand, marriages easily break because of the great importance, support and influence of the matrilineage in the lives of both husband and wife. Generally, both men and women have less to lose by divorcing a spouse if they have a strong position in the lineage, fishing, marketing, or in other fields.



There are of course married couples in Moree who live together, for example if they have rented a room, or if economic problems or family conflicts makes it impossible for one of the spouses to live in his or her own *fie*. Co-wives, however, never reside together. Co-residence of husband and wife is considered as undesirable for a lot of reasons. For a man to live in his wife's *fie* is difficult, since he has no position or rights in her lineage. It is also difficult for a woman to live in her husband's *fie*, since she does not have any rights or belonging in his lineage. Moreover, she lacks the support of the family network if the husband treats her badly. There are also some "educated", "modern" couples who reside together, or couples who cooperate in the fisheries and invest in a house together. The latter was thought of as quite unwise by women who preferred to keep their economy separate from that of their husbands and had established their own *fie*. When they talked of couples in Moree who resided in the same house, they portrayed a relationship where they perceived the position of the woman as inferior to that of the husband. Such wives also often experience the emotional stress of having to put up with the husband's "expeditions" out of the house in his frequent extramarital affairs. But worst of all is a woman's lack of security in the case of a husband's death if she has not "secured herself" by investing her separate income in separate property.

Adjoa, for example, was a rich 37 years old woman. However, after the death of her husband, her wealth quickly eroded. She is a fish smoker and trader, and managed the two canoes she owned together with the husband. He was in addition the manager of three trucks that were mainly used in the transport of fish to Kumasi. Through their marriage, Adjoa and her husband managed an enterprise where all links in the production and distribution system were integrated; from fishing and processing to transport and marketing. Adjoa and her husband lived together in a big house, a house which even contained a "video-theatre"; the local variant of a public cinema. But then the husband died. This is Adjoa's story:

*"When we married, we moved from Moree to Brafoyaw [a village on a hill-top just outside Moree]. My mother came to live with us there, and we were smoking fish. My husband borrowed money from my mother to buy a truck, and gradually we built our business, and we built the house and moved back to Moree.*

*My husband and I lived together in this house. We did everything together. Together we had two canoes and three trucks. My oldest daughter is 21 years old, and learns to sew in Cape Coast. It is ten years between her and the second born, and he goes to secondary school in Cape Coast. So I live here with the two smallest children.*

*Fifteen months ago my husband died, and now his abusuafoo want to take everything away from me. First they made me pay 300,000 cedis for the funeral. He had three other wives, but they were not proper wives [he had not performed the customary marriage ritual for them], so his family said that 'you who have lived with him all your life should pay'. I had already spent so much on hospital bills for him too.*

*And then, less than a year after the funeral, they came and demanded everything. They want me to move out of the house, and they do not give me my shares of fish from the canoes. So now I can not pay my children's school fees. His people even want to take the money from the video-theatre from me. My brother tries to help me, but I don't know..."*

In 1985 the P.N.D.C. No. 111 Intestate Succession Law was passed in Ghana. According to this law a surviving spouse is entitled to three-sixteenth of his property, his children to nine-sixteenth, his surviving parent to one-eighth, while the remaining one-eighth goes to those who by customary law are entitled to his property<sup>11</sup>. One of the objectives of the law was to secure the wife and children upon a man's death in a matrilineal setting when they have joint residence or have both contributed to the material wealth that is left when he dies. However, as Dei (1994) points out; "...it is largely elite women who have been able to utilize the laws and the courts to assert their rights" (Ibid:132).

Adjoa did not know about the new Intestate Succession Law, but when we informed her about it she became very interested. Her brother was also informed. One year later, however, Adjoa was still "sitting in the house" (often said in Ghanaian English when a person does not have much work to do), and she and the brother had not taken the step of contacting a lawyer. Adjoa's husband's *abusuafoo* were still demanding the property, and the case was still moving back and forth between his and her *abusua*. Adjoa could thus not plan the future, and was only running a very modest fish smoking business. The new national law thus had very little relevance in the local context of Moree. The wealth that was accumulated in the marriage of Adjoa and her husband dissolved as a result of the matrilineal principle of inheritance, whereby the husband's *abusua* legitimately could appropriate the material capital that he had accumulated in the fields of marriage, fishing, transport and marketing.

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<sup>11</sup> Source: A copy of the P.N.D.C. No. 111 Intestate Succession Law which was given to me by an *abusua panyin* in Cape Coast who used the document in negotiations involving his lineage members. The customary and the formal laws thus exist side by side.

In the following cases I will show how the various fields I have described - fishing, marketing, lineage and marriage - are interrelated at various levels in the life careers of individuals and in career networks.

### **Marriage, lineage, fishing and market relations in practice**

This is the story about how the fields of fishing, marketing, lineages and marriage, are interrelated in the lives of Kobina and his two wives, Araba and Efua. The case shows how the resources that each of them have access to within various fields, influence their marriage relations and how the resources each of them get access to through the marriage influence their careers in fishing and marketing.

Kobina is a fisherman who grew up in Econ, a small fishing community two kilometres west of Moree. Kobina's mother was from Yamoransa and moved to Econ when she married Kobina's father, who was the *apofohene* of Econ (see map 10). Kobina's father's mother was from Econ, and the father's father was from Moree. When Kobina was young he learned fishing and worked on his father's canoe in Econ. But when his father died, the father's *abusuafoo* in Econ took over the canoe. "*I got nothing*", Kobina said, "*and my mother moved back to Yamoransa*". Kobina, who by then was a fully trained fisherman, moved to Moree instead and started as a crew member on his father's paternal cousin's (father's father's brother's son's) canoe. With his skills in fishing, Kobina's labour was a welcome resource in his father's father's *abusua*. Gradually, with the money he could save during seasonal fishing migration trips, Kobina made a good career as a fisherman.

In 1976, at the age of 25, Kobina married Araba, an experienced fish trader who was five years older than himself. Some years later, with credit from Araba's accumulated capital in fish trade, and with credit from his father's paternal cousin, Kobina was able to establish his own canoe company. He became a canoe owner. After some years he stopped going to sea with the crew himself. The *bosun* (captain) on his canoe is now his sister's son from Yamoransa, whom Kobina took to Moree as an apprentice when he was still a young boy.

Kobina thus built his canoe fishing enterprise upon resources from many fields. He got training through his father and his father's *abusua* in Econ, and later employment in the fisheries through his father's father's *abusua* in Moree. The latter is not so common, but since Kobina's mother was from Yamoransa, which lies a bit inland and where most people

make a living in farming and not fishing, Kobina, as a fisherman, did not have much neither to offer nor to achieve in the *abusua* he was born into by his mother. Instead he was able to get access to resources in the field of fishing through the paternal line. His main asset was his knowledge and practical experience in fishing. Later, through marriage, Kobina established a channel into the field of marketing as well, by which he got credit from his wife to buy a canoe.

By 1995 Kobina was almost 50 years old, and had two wives. He had married a second wife, Efua, who is five years younger than himself in the early eighties. His first wife, Araba, to whom he was still married, was now approximately 55 years old. Since Kobina does not belong to any *fie* in Moree, he lives in a room he rents in town. The wives each live in their own *fie*. The two wives cook one month each for Kobina. They also (every second year each) have the opportunity to accompany Kobina on his annual five to six months stay in the communities further west that receive great numbers of Fante fisher people every lean season from October to Easter. The migration trips are thus shared equally between the two wives; the wife who went on migration last year, stays in Moree during the following year's lean season. Consequently, the wife who stays in Moree has to manage without the fish from Kobina's canoe while he is away. The wife who is with him on migration, on the other hand, is the *enam enyi* of his canoe. She also smokes fish that she sends to Agona Junction, or with the train from Takoradi to Tarkwa, Obuasi and Kumasi. The wife who stays behind in Moree gets *chop money* from Kobina upon his return from the migration trip, but in principle she supports both herself and the children on her own while the husband is away.

Kobina and his wives thus experience a cyclical variation in their marriage, according to fishing season and turns of the wives in migrating, and in the cooking arrangements when they all are in Moree from around Easter until Kobina and one of the wives leave again in October. The marriage thus involves a seasonal and monthly cycle of absence of the husband for the wives, while Kobina is accompanied by one of them all the time.

When Kobina's canoe is fishing in Moree (during the bumper season) his two wives share the pans that are allocated to the canoe owner. When Kobina's canoe comes in from a fishing trip, he goes to the beach, and when the catch is landed Araba and Efua turn up as well. Together with Kobina, Araba and Efua count the pans of fish and make sure that the owner's shares of the catch are divided equally between them.

There are very few occasions other than when fish pans are counted on the beach that Araba and Efua meet face to face. They are in many ways competitors, but they also accept their duties and rights as wives. Moreover, the two wives have common interests in Kobina's earnings in the fisheries. Araba and Efua never openly confront each other, but they carefully watch Kobina's dispositions of *chop-money*. He has to manoeuvre quite carefully in order that the two wives feel that they are treated fairly. As we shall see, the two wives represent different kinds of resources for Kobina. The first wife's main asset in the marriage is her fishing and trading enterprises. The second wife's main asset is the symbolic capital the children she has with Kobina represents for him, and the security and pride they both hope the education of their oldest son is going to give them.

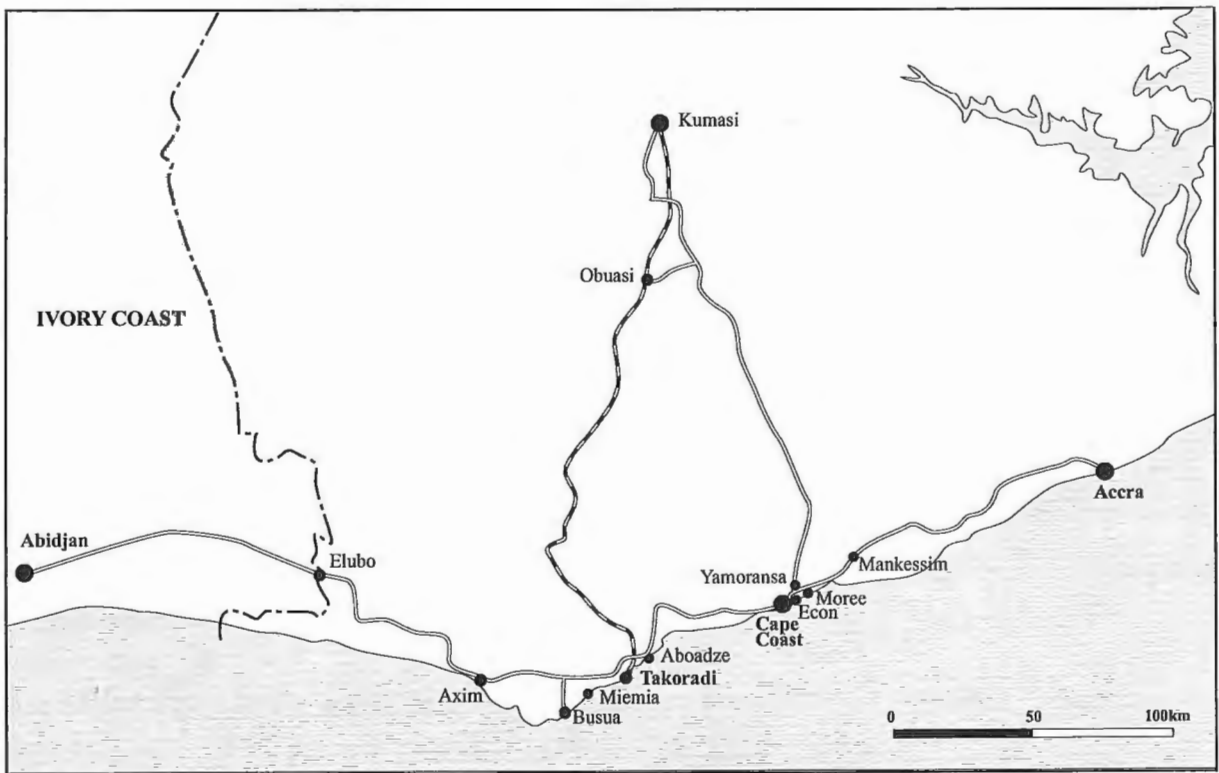
In 1991 an important event happened; Araba, the first wife, bought her own canoe. Through the eighties Araba had been able to save so much from her trade (which was primarily based on fish from Kobina's canoe) that she could buy fishing nets. She put the nets in Kobina's canoe and was thus entitled to these net-shares when Kobina's crew members fished with them. In 1991, then, Araba was able to buy an outboard motor as well, and with credit from Kobina she bought her own canoe and hired a crew. Thus she was entitled to the shares of the motor and nets, and half of her canoe's share. The other half of her canoe's share went to Kobina as repayment of the credit. Although she now had her own canoe, she was still entitled to share equally with Efua from Kobina's canoe.

When Araba bought her own canoe, she no longer stayed behind in Moree those years when it was Efua's turn to migrate with Kobina. Araba now went on seasonal trips with her own canoe and crew herself. From 1991 onwards, Kobina and his two wives organised their migration trips in this manner (the locations mentioned below can be found on map 10):

- 1991: This was the year when Araba bought her canoe. It was, moreover, also Araba's turn to migrate with Kobina to Aboadze, since Efua had been there with him in 1990. For the first time, Kobina and Araba went to Aboadze with one canoe each. Efua, the second wife, spent the lean season in Moree, earning very little by occasionally selling smoked fish on a small scale in Mankessim.
- 1992: This year it was Efua's turn to migrate, and she and Kobina spent the migration period in Takoradi New Town (fishing community near Takoradi). Araba, who normally would have stayed behind in Moree, now went with her canoe company to Busua where she earned money both as canoe owner and fish trader.

- 1993: It was Araba's turn go with the husband again, and she and Kobina went with both of their canoes, to Miemia. Efua stayed in Moree, and gave birth to her and Kobina's third son.
- 1994: This year it was Efua's turn and she went with Kobina to Miemia. Araba went to Busua again with her canoe company. Her canoe and motor got spoilt while fishing in Busua.
- 1995: Araba and Kobina spent the migration season in Miemia, this year only with Kobina's canoe (since Araba's canoe and motor still were out of order). Efua stayed in Moree again.

Map 10. The spatial extension of Kobina, Araba and Efua's marriage, lineage, fishing and marketing relations.



Source: Field notes, 1991, 1994, 1995.

As we see, Kobina's two wives live quite different lives. While Araba has become the co-manager of a canoe company and owner of a canoe with equipment, with the opportunities of increased earnings but also the responsibilities and risks that involves. She is now involved in round-the-year canoe fisheries and fish trade. Efua, on the other hand, continues the biannual cycle where she is buying fish from Kobina's canoe the whole year when it is her turn to migrate, and only half the year every second year when she stays in Moree during

the migration season. Araba has become a full time canoe manager while Efua is a "seasonal wife".

Araba and Kobina run the two canoes (his and hers) as one company where he is the manager, since he has the expertise in fishing. When Araba recruits crew members for her canoe, for example, she sends the fishermen who approach her and ask for work to Kobina, and then he "interviews" them. The weekly Tuesday-meetings, where the canoe owners and crew members share the money that gradually is paid after the women who bought fish on credit have sold it, are held in the house where Kobina rents a room. Araba is, however, always present.

Although Kobina and Araba manage one company of two canoes together, they keep separate economies. They have a book where the earnings from his canoe, net and motor, and her canoe, net and motor, are accounted for separately. Both of them mutually borrow from each other's "account" in the company. Thus, when any of them borrow from the other, the sum is written in the book and has to be repaid.

Kobina's and Araba's relationship as business partners is, however, not unaffected by their relationship as husband and wife. In 1994, for example, Araba's canoe was damaged and the outboard motor got spoilt while she was in Busua for the migration season. She returned to Moree with her canoe company. Araba tried to have the canoe repaired and the motor replaced, but it took time and it was impossible to get spare parts. As the bumper season, which in Moree normally starts in July, approached, Araba got more and more anxious to get a motor on her canoe. She thus planned to go to Abidjan, where she has some relatives whom she partly grew up with. Araba wanted to spend at least a month there buying, smoking and selling fish, in order to save up money. However, despite the fact that Araba owed Kobina 150,000 cedis, and that she somehow had to earn money to replace the motor, Kobina would not let her go to Abidjan. It was Araba's month to cook for Kobina, and she said: *"I cannot go because a wife has to inform the husband of where she wants to go. If he tells her to stay, she must stay"*. Paradoxically, Kobina would not let Araba go to Abidjan, even though that might enable her to repay her debt to him. Perhaps he thought that Araba's plans were unrealistic, or he felt that she did not manage her canoe company well enough when she was on her own, and wanted her to give up her own canoe, and focus her activities full-time on his canoe again. Certainly Kobina needed her as *enam enyi* on his own canoe, and did not want Araba to leave just before the season started in Moree. Whatever the reason was, Araba never went to Abidjan, and her canoe was still lying idle

in October, when she went to Miemia with Kobina for the migration season. And she had still not been able to reestablish her canoe company when the Moree bumper season approached in June 1995. Nevertheless Araba was still cooking for Kobina and continued to buy fish from his canoe.

Araba is barren. This is not an easy situation for any woman. But through househeadship and fostering of her sister's children she has managed to establish a *fie* from whose members she recruits labour and to whom she gives food, employment and shelter. Araba lives in the *fie* that she took over when her mother and senior sisters died. She thus lives in the house in which she grew up, and which now is rather rundown, with six children that she has fostered from childhood to adulthood. She has four children - two girls and two boys - after two of her sisters who are dead, and Araba is now regarded as their mother. Both of the girls, who are grown, help Araba in fish smoking and trade. They send the fish they smoke to another sister's daughter who lives in Kumasi. She receives and sells the fish through the sending system, with Araba's "symbol cloth". The older of the two boys that Araba fostered, is captain (*bosun*) on her canoe, and the younger boy is a crew member. Araba also has two other young women living in her house. One of them is Kobina's brother's daughter, who came to her (from Yamoransa) as a "helping hand" when she was very young, and the other one is Kobina's sister's son's (Kobina's *bosun's*) wife. Thus, all members of Araba's *fie* are employed by her and Kobina's enterprises.

As we see, Araba and Kobina have woven a whole network of his and her relatives around them, a network of persons whom they in one way or the other employ in either fishing or fish processing and marketing. Thus, since Kobina and Araba do not have children together, their marriage is mainly based on the link it has given both of them to resources in the fields of fishing and marketing. Through the marriage, Kobina got credit from Araba's fish trade accumulations. And Araba could, at a later stage, get access to credit from Kobina's capital earned in the fisheries. Their marriage and their fishing enterprises are tightly integrated. In spite of their lack of *abusua* resources they have fused the human resources to which they have access: Through fostering of both Araba and Kobina's sister's children they have found a way to substitute the children Araba could not have, and a way to draw on the labour of Kobina's *abusua* members although they were not originally fisher people and lived in Yamoransa.

The marriage of Kobina and Efua, the second wife, is a different type of relationship. Their three sons have created a strong bond between them. Efua depends quite much on the



support Kobina gives her as the mother of his children. And as a husband for Efua, who is a much more subordinate wife than Araba, and in his role as a father, Kobina finds much joy and pleasure. Both Kobina and Efua expect that the children will provide some support for them when they grow old. They send the oldest son to school and hope he will become something else than a fisherman. Efua's dream is to build a house in which she can accommodate her mother as well as three grown daughters from a previous marriage. Efua originally lived in a *fié* headed by her mother's sister in Moree. Since the house became ever more congested, she moved out and now rents a room where she lives with her children. Two of the grown daughters and their babies live with her. Efua receives half of Kobina's shares on his canoe, but she has no plans of buying her own canoe. She is most of all focused on earning money and caring for her small children. This also seems to be a good strategy to keep Kobina happy and affectionate. He is very fond of her sons and pays the school fees and provides Efua with sufficient *chop-money* when they are together.

As we see, Kobina's relationship with Efua is less focused on fish, than is his relationship with Araba. Not only do Efua and Araba's marriage to the same man represent different types of relationships. In many ways Efua and Araba represent two different types of fish traders as well. Araba is much more entrepreneurial than Efua, in the sense that she diverts her capital into other fields than marketing; she constructs a social network around her for this purpose, and she takes greater risks.

As in her marriage, Efua pursues security rather than big fortunes in her fish trading strategies. For example, Efua always travels herself to Kumasi with the fish she smokes during the bumper season, because, as she says: "*I don't trust anyone to go with the fish for me*". She thus runs little risk in her business, and thus trades on a relatively modest scale. Araba, on the other hand, trades through a network of sisters' daughters so that she can focus her own effort on the extension of her business into other fields than marketing. And while Efua limits her trading activities to selling smoked fish at the market in Mankessim during the lean season, Araba invests in a canoe and goes on fishing migration during the lean season. When it is her turn to migrate with Kobina, Araba goes with him and his canoe with her *own* canoe and crew, and earns money on both fishing and trade. When it is Efua's turn to go with Kobina, Araba goes on migration with her canoe and crew somewhere else. She does no longer stay behind in Moree during the lean season. While Araba seeks to extend her business to find a solution to the lack of opportunities during the lean season, Efua waits in Moree (with fish trading activity on a very low level) for the return of her husband.

The fact that Kobina still remains in the marriage with Araba although she has not given birth to any children can, as far as I can see, basically be explained by their mutual interest in the fisheries. Through Araba, Kobina got access to credit to invest in a canoe. From Araba's point of view this can be seen as an investment of capital from trade into fisheries, which at a later stage enabled her to enter the field as a canoe owner herself. Araba was by no means an exceptionally rich trader by local standards, and she had little resources in other fields. Particularly, she was inhibited by her lack of children who could have given her a position as mother in the *abusua*, and who could work for her, and who could be her pride and honour. In fact, her position as head of a *fie*, was only achieved because she took over the position as well as the children of her senior sisters when they died. Perhaps this responsibility urged her even more to establish her own enterprise. She thus became a canoe owner despite her position as a barren woman with little prestige. In a way she succeeded through the marriage because she could offer Kobina the resources he also was short of since he is not born into an *abusua* in Moree.

Araba thus has to live with Kobina's obvious affection for his second wife and the children. And she has to look at how the money with which she repays the credit from Kobina, is transformed into food and clothes for Efua and the children and into an education for Efua's oldest son. Efua, on the other hand, has to accept that Kobina is not able to pay her *chop-money* in periods when Araba is not able to repay her loans, as when her outboard motor got spoilt. In sum, both of Kobina's wives have more to gain than to lose by remaining married. After all, both of the wives regard him as a better husband than most other husbands, and much better than their previous husbands. He is kind to them, and they regard him as a wise and honourable person. Kobina himself is satisfied to have found one wife who is his business partner, and another wife who gives him children and makes him feel like a proper father and man.

## The extraordinary career of a priestess

In this case we are going to meet an extraordinary entrepreneur, Ama, whose career path has taken quite different directions than those of Araba and Efua's, and whose enterprise is on quite a different scale.

Ama has six canoes, and she employs about one hundred fishermen as crew on these canoes. Nobody else has that many canoes in Moree. Ama grew up near Obrofo Mpoano, but she has built her own house on the outskirts of town. Outside her house Ama has 16 cemented fish smoking ovens in all. The ground around the ovens is plastered with cement, and Ama has had a shed built to protect the ovens when they are used during the rainy season. Ama has been married twice and has given birth to twelve children. Ten of them are still alive. Ama claims to be 70 years old, although she looks much younger, and is now a widow. She is a very powerful person and manages a large enterprise. How did Ama's extraordinary career develop?

Ama's career is built up with hard work, and by combining resources from the matrilineage, from her husbands and children, and even through exchange with foreign trawlers. We shall come back to how all these factors contributed to Ama's career, but her activities in these fields do not in themselves give a full explanation of her success. In order to understand what kind of person Ama is, and how she to such a degree has been able to benefit from resources various fields, we must go back to her childhood.

In both her own eyes and in the eyes of others, Ama is helped by powers outside herself: Besides being an entrepreneur in fishing and trade, Ama is a *mmoetia komfo* (priestess). *Mmoetia* is "the little people" (see Bannerman-Richter 1987). They are dwarfs who live in the forest, and they have to be treated well by humans. Otherwise, they can cause big trouble. They choose some people to whom they show themselves, and if their chosen ones treat them well, the *mmoetia* are very generous and helpful. They give the person they have chosen wealth and happiness in life. Ama is chosen, or created, by the *mmoetia*, and she is a *mmoetia komfo* who has managed the gift she has received very wisely. The field of religion has thus played a significant part in Ama's life, and has not been insignificant in her fishery-related career either.

As an explanation of how it all started and why Ama has come to own as many as six canoes, another priestess explains:

*"Ama's mother had a farm. One day she went there to weed. Then the mmoetia came to her and gave her Ama. So she became pregnant with Ama. When she gave birth to Ama, she saw that the baby was very short. So Ama's mother asked the mmoetia: 'Where did this little thing come from?' They said: 'Take her, it will benefit you very much, we shall bring you anything you need'. So the mother started performing rituals for the mmoetia. Therefore the mmoetia came and they started moving with Ama and keeping her with company. The mmoetia said to her mother: 'We were the ones who brought that girl to you, so anything you need, we shall bring them to you'. And the mother would have to give the things to Ama. After that, anything the mother wanted for Ama, the mmoetia would bring it to her. So anything Ama holds becomes money".*

During her childhood, then, the *mmoetia* "moved with" Ama through her mother. So how did she become a priestess who was directly involved with them? Ama narrates the story herself:

*"When I was in labour with my second child, I fainted and was very sick. In fact I died. A man suddenly came, he came from far away, and he told my family to sneeze my nose with Florida water [eau-de-cologne]. They said: 'What is the point of doing that with somebody who is already dead? It will make no difference'. But then somebody took the Florida water to my nose. The people around me called me and they said their names. Finally I woke up and came to my senses and I felt as if I had been far, far away. Then one day when I went to buy some charcoal, I heard drums and I went to the priestess' house and danced. When I came home, I started to climb my mother's house. I climbed up on the roof and to me it seemed like a very high two-storey-building, which it was not. And when I screamed that I wanted to eat and they brought food, I could not eat, because my teeth were sealed. So they had to force food into me gradually.*

*I spent some time at the Seventh Day's Adventist and Twelve Apostles Church, where I went for healing. But I was not healed. Then I went to the priestess' shrine. I could not come back to my mother's house, because every time I tried, I turned mad. So I stayed in the priestess' house for six months and underwent training, and then I was initiated. I belong to the mmoetia. They live in the bush. Formerly there was forest around Moree. Now there is only bush, and so many houses, so you cannot easily see the mmoetia. But they also live in people's houses. They can give you good luck and dash you money".*

Ama receives wealth and luck from the *mmoetia*, and she can protect herself from evil powers and jealousy from the people who envy her. The protection is given to her by the *mmoetia* and from other gods through the *komfo* (priestess) in the religious society she belongs to. There are four male and twenty female *akomfo*, and they meet every Thursday. In her apartment in her house, in addition to her cupboard with glass doors where luxury items are on display, armchairs and a sofa, a television set, and *bragoro* (puberty ritual)

photos and other photos of family members, Ama has numerous enlarged photos of herself in priestess-outfit. To be a *mmoetia komfo* is thus an important part of Ama's identity.

The *mmoetia* help Ama, and not only in her fish related activities. Their protection also includes her children. One day I visited Ama, she was on her way to the hospital with her youngest daughter. The girl had been run over by a car. Luckily and miraculously she had fallen right in the middle under the car, so that the wheels had not driven over her. She got away from the accident with some bruises, and some skin was peeled off her forehead. The *mmoetia* had protected Ama's daughter.

Ama is aware that she has extraordinary powers. The capabilities of her body and her fertility are also extraordinary. Ama says she is seventy years old, but that it is only recently that she stopped having her period. Her last husband died three years ago, and Ama says she had her period four times after his death. How can this be possible? Ama says:

*"To tell you the truth, I do not believe that you stop having children necessarily around the age of fifty. Older women than that get children, but maybe with six years between them. My last born, for example, is only twelve years old. And in fact, when I had my first born, the pregnancy did not last for nine months, it took twelve months."*

Ama is thus a woman who is very fertile, she is protected from evil, and she is known to possess the ability to let "everything she holds become money". She is the embodiment of spiritual, corporal and material power. And she is able to convert this symbolic capital into economic capital in fishing and marketing. Ama's entrepreneurial career "took off" long after she had become a priestess, and it is not unlikely that her powers from the religious field were significant in her ability to recruit labour and get access to other resources in the fisheries. This imbued her with authority and the ability to control other people.

All of Ama's ancestors come from Moree, and she has lived there all her life. She has travelled a lot also, in the marketing of fish she travels to Kumasi, and in her purchase of frozen fish, she frequently travels by bus or truck to Tema. Ama started smoking fish independently when she was approximately sixteen years old (in the mid 1940s), before she had her first child. Ama lived in her mother's house and cooperated closely with the mother, aunts and her sisters in the processing and marketing of fish. Her main source of fish supply, however, were from the canoes of people to whom she was related beyond the matrilineage; from her mother's father and from her father's brother. Nevertheless, in fish processing and trade Ama mainly drew on the resources of female members in her *fié*, such as their

cooperation and labour, the skills they taught her, and the mutual trust between them in trading activities. Through her mother's and her own paternal relations, Ama also had an opportunity to buy fish on credit. A precondition for a continued supply of fish from these sources was, however, that she built up a solid and viable career in the fish trade as a trusted, hard working and creditworthy woman.

Ama continued this life after she married her first husband, whom she was married to until he died while she was pregnant with their seventh child. Both the first and the second husband were fishermen, but neither of them were canoe owners. They must, however, have been quite wealthy, since both of them were able to build their own houses. The first husband was also very generous with his *chop-money*. In the late sixties, after more than twenty years as a professional fish trader, Ama bought her first canoe. Ama remembers her step-by-step strategy:

*"I used the money I had earned on fish smoking. I always put some of it aside, and I did the same with the money my husband gave me. Finally I told my husband that I wanted to buy a net, so I gave him the money and he went to Accra to buy it for me. Then I made people fish with the net for me, and gradually I had enough money to buy a canoe and an outboard motor. It took many years from I bought the net until I could buy the canoe. All the motors I have bought over the years, were bought through the ADB [on credit]. My husband knew a man in the bank, and the apofohene also helped me. The motors in Accra are too expensive, so I don't buy from the whites."*

The expertise of her husband in the fisheries, then, and his contacts in the bank and friendship with the *apofohene*, helped Ama in converting her capital accumulated through fish trade into net ownership and recruitment of male labour as a first step, and then into canoe- and motor-ownership at a later stage. Ama was now in the positions of both owner and trader, and in these combined capacities she became an intermediary between the fields of fishing and marketing.

Some years after Ama had bought her first canoe, in the early seventies, she built her own house, about a year before she lost her first husband. This is how she built the house:

*"Since I have many children, I knew that I also would have to do something for them. Otherwise I would suffer very much during my old age. So I gradually put up a house. Every time I could, I bought some sacks of cement, and then I started building. This was at the time when I had brought forth my sixth child [in the early seventies]".*

A year later her husband died, and two years passed before she married her second husband. He was also a fisherman, but not a canoe owner. At this stage in her career the husband's resources was not as important as in her young days when she mainly had her family to rely on. During these years another and unexpected field became present in Moree. In the seventies the trawlers (*seiko*) started selling by-catch to women in Moree. Ama was one of the first women who got a *seiko* contract. In Chapter 5, I will examine more closely how this new field was utilised by female canoe owners in Moree. Suffice here to say that those who got access to this new source of fish supply, got a possibility of accumulating wealth on a scale with which those who solely relied on the fish caught locally could not compete. Ama was among these few women in Moree, and it was at this stage in her career that she began to increase her number of canoes by reinvesting the capital she accumulated into more canoes, nets and motors. This is now her strategy: *"Usually I sell the old canoes so that I can buy new ones"*.

In the seventies, another of Ama's assets also began to become apparent. Ama's sons and daughters were beginning to grow up, and they were working very hard for her. The young men worked as captains and crew on her canoes, and her daughters supplemented the labour of other maternal relatives and paid helpers in the fish processing and trade. In a way, she could supplement or substitute her paternal relatives with her own children in relation to whom she could demonstrate a much stronger authority. Today, Ama employs both maternal and paternal male relatives as crew on her six canoes, and a great number of unrelated men too. I wondered how Ama managed to be in control of all these people. Ama answered: *"I am working with my sons, so I believe that they are working very well"*.

Ama trusts her sons with large sums of money for the purchase of petrol. They are loyal to her, and they often buy the petrol on credit from the Hausa petrol seller. He knows that they are Ama's sons, and he thus counts on a secure repayment. Ama has a reputation: "Everything she holds becomes money", and Ama's sons can utilise this in the fish business. Together with her daughters, they are going to inherit Ama's property, and thus have a lot to gain by helping her in the management of her business and in controlling her crew.

Ama's business is managed from her bedroom. She does not arrange meetings for the crew in her house. Her sons divide the money among the crew under the sun-shed on the beach. They come to Ama with her earnings, and she keeps the large bundles of money in her bedroom. When they need money for petrol, her sons send somebody to Ama's house to

collect the money. Ama discusses the matter with him in the hall, and then goes into her bedroom where she finds the money, which she then entrusts to the messenger.

In a system like this, there are many persons involved and many loopholes for cheaters. The only way it can work is through the control mechanisms Ama can apply with her own personal authority. Her spiritual power and authority is efficacious in creating a fear for what can happen to those who cheat her. As Ama says herself, the *mnoetia* are in her house. They see everything. She also knows that she has to behave well herself. The *mnoetia* sanction immoral behaviour. Someone who belongs to the *mnoetia* and treats other people badly, will always experience bad luck, illness, economic misfortune and other disasters.

Ama thus rewards her workers so much that they feel that they have more to gain than to lose by being honest, loyal and hard working. In short, Ama is a good manager of her enterprises. Through a combination of trust, fear and loyalty, Ama is able to draw on symbolic capital obtained in the fields of marriage, lineage, and religion, in her combined positions of wife, mother, and priestess. She has become a matron who uses these resources in both marketing and fishing. By a combination of the labour and loyalty of the people who work for her in the production and processing of fish from the canoes that she has acquired through her accumulations in market trade, she is able to increase the scale of her sale of both fresh and smoked fish.

When Ama explained how many pans of fish one of her canoes had landed, she denied that she made a lot of money from the sale of the fish. Ama said:

*"No! I sold the fish to some women, eight women. But I sold it on credit, so the women will have to bring the money later, and they may not get a good price at the market. I have to go around collecting the money. Some never manage to pay. Many, many women are indebted to me. The only thing I can do is to refuse to sell fish on credit again to those who fail to pay".*

As long as the women finally pay (and they do, since they otherwise will not get fish on credit from Ama again) Ama earns money. And in the inequality that exists in the relationship between a creditor and a debtor, Ama has a strong hold over the women who buy fish from her. Through material capital accumulated in trade and fisheries she can exercise symbolic power as a priestess, and vice versa. Ama's career, then, exemplifies how entrepreneurial activity can enable a person to enter a cumulative "spiral" of exchange of material and symbolic capital. And in Ama's case, she got access to resources in not only the



fields of lineage, marriage, marketing and fishing, but also in the industrial fisheries, or field of the *seiko*, which, as I later shall discuss, extends far beyond the local level, and in the field of spiritual and religious power.

## Summary

As we have seen from the analysis of the fields of fishing, market, kinship and marriage in Moree, these fields are interconnected, and the boundaries between them are not clear-cut. The intersection between kinship and marriage, and the conversion channels that marriage and kinship represent as avenues to accumulation of capital in fishing and trade, clearly demonstrates this interconnectedness. The fields of fishing and market are defined as male and female spheres, but as the large number of female canoe owners in Moree shows, the fields are not separated by an impermeable boundary in this context. The beach and the *fie*, for example, are arenas where all the fields come into play in people's performance of their various roles. By extending their position in the female market hierarchy, and their central position in the *fie* and in the matrilineage, into the position of matron at the beach, women in Moree are able to perform the role of canoe owner and manager within the field of fisheries, without losing their femininity or morality. By relating to the fishermen as a powerful matron with a lot of personal authority acquired in the *fie* and in the market, and by actually being the mother of the captain of her canoe (in whose accumulation of capital her son, as her daughters, has an interest), a woman in Moree can cross the gendered boundary of the market and convert capital into ownership of a fishing enterprise. Her position of canoe owner further enhances her position within other fields.

We are now going to look at which resources are at stake within fishing, market, kinship and marriage in two other contexts. In Kpone, and then in Dzelukope, I will examine the significance of the interconnectedness of social fields for the structuring of opportunities and constraints in men and women's careers, and for their strategies to pursue channels of conversion of capital across gendered boundaries.

## 3.2. Kpone

Kpone is the easternmost of the Ga-speaking towns, and has close ties with the other Ga-Adangbe peoples on the coast and the Accra Plains<sup>1</sup>. Adangbe or Ada, which is spoken further east is to some degree integrated in the Kpone dialect. In 1950 Manoukian (1950:66) wrote that people in Kpone were bi-lingual in Ga and Adangbe, but considered themselves Adangbe. Today the Kpones still consider themselves as a "distinct town"; the border town between the Ga and the Adangbe. Linguistically, the Ga influence has increased over the years, and young people now speak a dialect closer to Ga than Adangbe. Akan words are also integrated into their language. Such dynamics, however, represent a historical continuity rather than a new phenomenon in Kpone. This is an area where there has been a lot of interaction with people coming from overseas and from the hinterland. And as in so many other coastal communities, there are old cannons lying in the centre of Kpone, which are the remnants of a Dutch fort built there around 1700 (Van Danzig 1980:55).

According to the elders in Kpone, the town was originally located by the Sega beach (see map), and the main religious shrines are still there. Due to conflicts with neighbouring communities, the population moved to the present location. Others moved further east, as far as to Agotime in the Volta Region. People in Kpone still have close connections with relatives in farming villages further inland and in the other Ga-Adangbe communities, for example through fish trade. The Ga communities are now more or less integrated into the urban area of the capital city of Accra and the harbour and the industrial city of Tema.

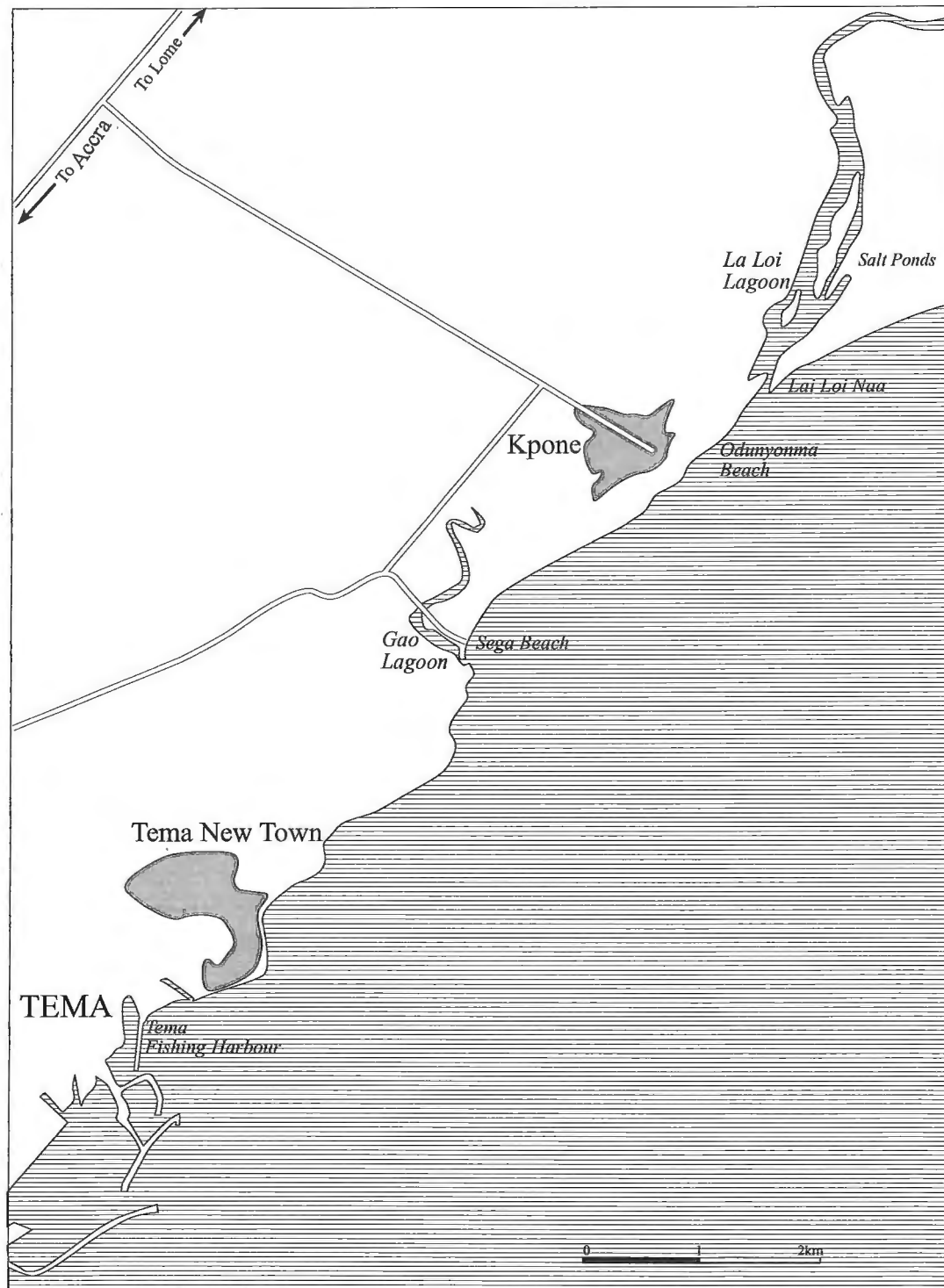
Until the nineteenth century Kpone was mainly a farming town, with fishing taking place in the two lagoons Laa Loi and Gao, and with casting nets from the beach. According to the Kpone chief fisherman or *woleiatse* ("father (*tse*) of the fishermen"), Fante fishermen who came on *aprodo* ("fishing expedition"), introduced the Kpones to deep sea fishing. Manoukian (1950) wrote of coastal Ga-Adangbe communities that: "Fishing, formerly confined to streams and lagoons, [was] extended, under Fante tuition, to the sea

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<sup>1</sup> Ga-Adangbe (often spelled Ga-Adangme) is the common denominator of many peoples in the area roughly corresponding to the Greater Accra Region, including the Ga (Accra, Osu, La, Teshi, Nungua and Tema), the Kpone (which in the ethnographic literature is often mentioned as either Ga or Adangbe, or both), and the Adangbe peoples; Prampram, Ningo, Krobo, Shai, Ada and Osudoku (see Field 1940, Manoukian 1950, Quaye 1972, Azu 1974, Robertson 1984, Knudsen 1994, Fayorsey 1992/93; 1995).

with the aid of large hand-nets used from canoes (...) in the latter half of the eighteenth century" (Ibid:71, see also Quaye 1972, Azu 1974 and Robertson 1984). The Fante influence is recognised by the Ga fishermen. In Labadi, for example, the *woleiatse* is always provided by the Abese-Fante clan, which was constituted by the descendants of the first Fante fishermen who lived in a particular quarter of the town (Azu 1974:9).

Map 11. Kpone.



Today approximately 8,000 people live in Kpone (the total population was 6,933 in the 1984 Ghana Population Census). Many people work in Tema and Accra in the public sector, as drivers, or in the manufacturing industry, etc. But the main occupations of people in Kpone are fishing for men and fish processing and marketing for women. The fisher people migrate a lot, especially during the low season from October to May. They move to Benin, Nigeria and Ivory Coast, and to other fishing locations along the Ghanaian coast, such as Ada, the Accra and Tema areas, Winneba, Axim, Sekondi and other towns in the Fante area (see Odotei 1991a; 1991b). Often wives and children join the fishermen on *aprodo*, and often fishermen meet new wives when they are on seasonal fisheries.

Fishing and fish marketing activities in Kpone are heavily influenced by the town's localisation five kilometres from Tema, the main harbour in Ghana. The harbour was built in 1961 and supplemented the harbour in Takoradi (which was built in the 1920s). Most of the goods exported from and imported into Ghana today go through Tema. Tema Fishing Harbour is also located there. This is the main harbour for the industrial trawlers and for import of frozen fish, and for the landing of fish from the inshore vessels (small trawlers or purse seiners). Many women are central in the exchange of fish from both trawlers and inshore vessels, and a few of them are very rich by national standards (see Odotei 1991 Vol II). These women operate on a much larger scale than fish traders in rural fishing communities. Adjacent to the industrial fishing harbour there is also a canoe fishing harbour. This is a fish landing-site for canoes, and a base for predominantly female canoe owners from all parts of the coast. In the Tema Fish Market women retail fresh fish they have bought from the wholesalers of both canoes and industrial trawlers. The cold storage plants (called "cold stores" in Ghana) where fish from the trawlers and imported frozen fish is preserved are also located there. Tema Fishing Harbour is thus a source of fish supply for fish traders from the whole country.

For many women in Kpone, participation in fish related activities in Tema and Accra has been a stage and an important resource in their careers. Many women were apprentices or living with foster parents in Accra during their childhood, or they got married or worked there for a period of their life. Competition from the urban markets, however, also inhibits the viability of their fish processing enterprises in Kpone, which, when based on only local production, are on a much smaller scale compared with the largest enterprises in the city. For example, Kpone fish traders sometimes face the problem that Kpone canoes land their fish in Tema instead of Kpone, if they get a better price there.

And since there is such an important fish market in Tema, canoes from other communities and canoes that are on seasonal migration seldom land their fish in Kpone. They go five kilometres further west to Tema instead. On the other hand, fish from Tema is an important source of supply for some Kpone fish smokers when the Kpone canoes have small catches.

Furthermore, the population of Kpone face severe pollution problems due to the town's location near the industry in Tema, such as cement and aluminium industry. Already along the road leading from the motorway down to Kpone, one is struck by the large deposits of industrial waste dumped and often burned there. Thick, black, and bad smelling smoke often rises from the waste heaps. This, however, does not yet represent a major problem for people in Kpone, as it is only when the wind blows in a certain direction that they are affected by the pollution. I am not aware of the extent to which the ground water is contaminated by chemicals.



*Photo 19. Canoes and trawler wreck at Sega beach.*

The most striking sight from the beaches of Kpone is the wrecked industrial trawlers lying close to the shore. There are dozens of rusting wrecks lying on the coastline from Tema and eastwards to Prampram and Ningo. These represent a big problem for the canoe fishermen. When it is dark, or when the sea is rough, it is difficult to berth the canoes without bumping into the wrecks. Many fishermen in Kpone have had their

canoes damaged, and have lost or had their fishing equipment torn when it gets stuck on the rusty iron parts of the wrecks. The chief fisherman and his people in Kpone have appealed to the Government many times, but nothing has been done so far.

The wrecks drifted ashore in 1987 as a result of the failed fishery policy of the Ghanaian Government and of miscalculated foreign aid. The SFC (State Fishing Cooperation) and foreign and Ghanaian private companies bought a number of large fishing vessels in the sixties (see Lawson and Kwei 1974). When the management of the vessels and of the industrial fishing companies failed after some years of success in the seventies, the trawlers were left to rust in Tema Fishing Harbour. Gradually they came to occupy too much space in the harbour, and in the mid eighties the Government simply ordered the owners of the vessels to get rid of them. And, according to my informants in Kpone, instead of taking the vessels far out at sea, the owners towed them just a few miles off the coast and let them drift ashore a little further east: Tema Harbour got rid of a problem, and the canoe fishermen were facing a new one.



*Photo 20. "Ada" and other wrecks on the beaches of Kpone.*

One of the wrecks outside Kpone is a trawler built by the Norwegian Akers Trading Company. The name of the vessel is "Ada", and it was handed over to SFC in February

1969 as the fourth of seven trawlers from Norway (see Hernæs 1991:72). "Ada" is now an appalling sight (see photo above).

As I will discuss further in the analysis, Kpone's location so close to the most urbanised area in Ghana represents both constraints and opportunities for people who make a living out of fishing. I will now give a brief outline of the fields of fishing, marketing, kinship and marriage in Kpone, and then take a closer look at how people's positions and resources within the various fields are interconnected in their careers.

### **Fisheries in Kpone**

According to the Ghana Canoe Frame Survey of 1992 (Koranteng et. al. 1993) there were 160 canoes on the three fish landing beaches of Kpone, and 89 (55%) of these had outboard motors. There were 1,190 fishermen. It is plausible that many canoes were on seasonal migration when the survey was conducted (March-May), and that a total number of 250 canoes, as suggested by the chief fisherman, is possible. Twenty-six of the canoes in the 1992 survey had *ali* (large gill-nets) and *watsa* (purse seines), and about the same number of canoes had *nifa-nifa* (drift gill tuna and shark nets), lobster drifting nets, and *frikilo yaa* (gill net for flying fish). The majority (107 canoes), however, use hook and line from small canoes with 25 hp motors or with paddles and sails. Parts of the year these canoes also fish with *toga* (bottom gill nets). While there is a variety of equipment at the beaches of Laa Loi Naa and Odunmayonma, there are predominantly hook and line canoes at Sega beach (see map 11).

In Kpone, then, a variety of fishing methods are in operation at the same time. Small scale fishing with hook and line canoes is more common than in Moree, where most canoes nowadays are large and motorised, fishing with *ali* or *watsa*. Kpone fishermen thus stick to their old methods of fishing at the same time as many of them have taken part in the motorisation of the canoe fisheries. In some cases the old members of a family stay in Kpone and go hook and line fishing in a small and unmotorised canoe the whole year, while the younger men operate a motorised canoe, with which they go on seasonal fisheries elsewhere. They return to Kpone during the main fishing season, which for both *ali*, *watsa* and line lasts from June to September, while the main season for drift gill-net is August and September, from December to February for set-nets (Koranteng and Nmashie 1987).



*Photo 21. Young men pulling in a hook and line canoe at Sega beach.*

Line fishing was established first in this area, and it is a fishing method which is now considered by the Ga (and others) as a Ga speciality. As the Kpone fishermen say, "*we fish the large fish*". This means that Kpone fishermen mainly catch a variety of species in line fishing, such as *tan* (red fish), *tsile* (sea bream) and *odaa* (tuna), and not for example small fish like *amoni* (anchovy), which is caught with *watsa*. The hook and line canoes usually go out between midnight and dawn and come back in the afternoon. The fishermen observe the direction of the wind, and the moon and the stars, to decide the best time and location for fishing. At sea they throw anchor and fish with their baited lines on one spot after the other. At times the crew sleep in the canoe with the lines out. Some of the hook and line canoes have outboard motors and go further out than the canoes with paddles and sails. They bring ice in an insulated box and stay at sea for two or three days to fish large species, such as barracuda and swordfish. This fishing method is called *lagaas* (from French "la glace"; ice). Ga-Adangbe fishermen learned the method from Senegalese migrant fishermen in Abidjan (Odotei 1991b:39).

The crew of an unmotorised hook and line canoe usually consists of four to six men who are paternally related, such as a father and some of his sons, brothers or nephews. Such



small scale fishing has "family-business" value connotations attached to it, even though the crew members not in all cases have close kinship ties. Although wives of canoe owners have the right to buy more fish than crew member's wives, and canoe owners earn more than crew members, the differences in incomes are looked upon more as fair allocation of resources within an authority structure defined by age and position in lineage and in marriage, than as a result of capital investments. The canoe owner is regarded as a custodian and administrator of fishing equipment, which, although he sees it as his own property, is inherited from his lineage and therefore should benefit other lineage members than himself as well. An old fisherman put it this way:

*"This fishing business is not an individual's establishment. Rather, it is a family business. It is something I inherited from my father. Before my father died, he handed over the whole business to me. It is a family business in which we all pull our resources. I cannot therefore claim it all alone for my property".*

In this case the old fisherman goes to sea in the canoe himself, and although he sells fish to his wife and daughters, he also makes sure that his old sisters are allocated some fish from his catch: "...the type of fish I know is their favourite". The sisters cook the fish for themselves to eat, but also share it with their brother by sending a cooked meal of fish to his house.

Although this family solidarity ideology still prevails as a moral value in Kpone, social relations are more "commercial" in the capital intensive motorised canoe companies. When nets, such as *toga (tenga)* and later *ali* were introduced, the size of canoes and number of crew members increased. For example, eight men could put their *toga* nets in one canoe, paddle to sea together and divide the catch according to the number of nets of each man. With the introduction of *watsa* and outboard motors, the size of canoes and crew increased even further. These crews are still to a large extent recruited from the patrilineage of the owner. However, due to the large capital requirements of *watsa* fisheries, the authority of the owner is not based on age and position in the lineage to the same degree as in the unmotorised canoe companies. Wealth is more important. Thus, the larger the canoes and the more capital intensive the equipment, the greater is the difference between the income of the owner and the crew members, and the less likely is it that the owner participates in the fisheries at sea.

Until the chief fisherman institution was formalised by the Fisheries Department in the

1950s, the elders of the founding lineages in Kpone appointed a *woleiatse* as head of all fishermen, who functioned in this office for one year until they appointed a new leader for another year. To form their own fishermen's institutions had become necessary with the intensification of marine fisheries by the turn of this century (see Manoukian 1950:71). The Ga fishermen had also observed how the Fante *apofohene* institution functioned. The Kpone *woleiatse* is now elected for his life-time, and he represents the Kpone fishermen in the Ghana National Canoe Fishermen's Council. The *woleiatse* is still both a religious and a professional leader for the fishermen. With his council of elders he ritually opens and closes fishing seasons for the various species of fish, sanctions fishing activities on Tuesdays (the non-fishing day also in Kpone), and negotiates among fishermen in various conflicts. The chief fisherman is also a link to fishermen's organisations, to the Fisheries Department and other institutions at the regional and national level. As in Moree, he is also instrumental in the allocation of outboard motors through governmental credit schemes. But as a spokesman for local fishermen's rights, as in the trawler wreck problem, he finds himself in a powerless position beyond the local level.

The Kpone fish traders do not have a leader as the Fante women have. Some years ago three women, one from each fish landing beach, were appointed by the chief fisherman and the canoe owners. The intention was to formalise the negotiation of fish prices, so that fishermen and women could operate according to a more standardised price level on the various beaches. They were also to negotiate in conflicts between women and in conflicts between fishermen and traders. It was difficult, however, for the women to unite around these leaders, since they had not elected them themselves. The women the chief fisherman appointed were, moreover, the most prominent fish traders who were married to the richest canoe owners (at least one of them was married to a member of the chief fisherman's council). Women at the various beaches thus felt that the women's leaders were more loyal to their own and particular canoe owners' interests, rather than to the common interests of women fish traders. Many women in Kpone today, however, express a need to organise collectively, in order to stand stronger in relation to the fishermen and also to attract attention to their own problems from governmental and non-governmental organisations, and from the banks. To get better credit facilities from sources outside the local community was the most important reason for women's wish to organise themselves better.

The sharing system of the motorised canoes in Kpone is similar to the one I described in Moree. The wife of a canoe owner is in charge of the wholesale of fish from his canoe,

and the catch is divided *fifty-fifty* between the owner and the crew after the expense for petrol has been deducted. The sharing system of the unmotorised canoes is slightly different, but follows the same logic. The following is an example given by Korkor, the wife of an owner of an unmotorised hook and line canoe.

Korkor's husband goes to sea with his crew of five men. His son is among the crew members. In all, then, they are six men on the canoe. They fish with hook and line sometimes (June to September), and other times with set nets (December to February). Korkor and the wives of the crew members wait at Sega beach when the canoe comes in. As soon as the canoe arrives, the catch is counted in crates if the catch is big, or in number of fishes if the catch is very small or consists of large fishes. The catch of the canoe is divided into ten shares. This is how the shares are allocated:

- 1 share is deducted for the expense of bait,
- 1 share goes to the canoe,
- 1 share is for the net,
- 1 share for the hook, line and lead, and the remaining
- 6 shares are divided among the five crew members and Korkor's husband (1 share each).

In practice this means that the catch is shared *fifty-fifty* on the unmotorised canoe as well, with five shares to the crew and five shares to the owner (when his "crew share" is included). Since both the volume of catches and the number of crew members are comparably smaller than on motorised canoes, the income differential between the owner and the crew is smaller. The capital and maintenance costs are more modest for the owner of an unmotorised canoe than for the owner of a canoe with an outboard motor, which requires constant repairs, replacement maybe every third or fourth year, and most of all petrol for every fishing trip. Korkor's husband is thus not necessarily poorer than a motor owner, and he is much better off than his crew members.

Korkor buys the fish from her husband's canoe on credit, and pays when she has processed and marketed the fish. One of the crew members is responsible for the finances of the company, and the sharing of the money. He is a *fotrotse* ("father of the money-bag"), and Korkor always has to make sure that she can pay him some of the money she owes before her husband and his crew go to sea again. They cannot wait until she has processed and marketed all the fish because Korkor's husband needs cash to buy both bait for the hooks and food for the crew for the next trip.

Usually Korkor sells the shares of the crew member's wives as well as the ones she is allocated, and hands over the money to them later when she has processed and marketed the fish. In a way she sells the fish "on commission" for the crew's wives: She agrees with the crew and her husband on a price for the catch (based on the current price level on the beach), for example 5,000 cedis per crate of fish. This is also the price their wives must pay if they buy the share of their husband. But usually Korkor sells it for the women, and then she adds 1,000 cedis for each crate of fish. This is the income of the wives from the fish their husbands have caught (1,000 cedis each). The fishermen's wives' "commission" is called *nofoo* ("putting on top") (Odotei 1991 Vol II:72). The *nofoo* is the fishermen's wives' housekeeping money (*chop-money*). Their husbands casually contribute money in addition, but only for special purposes (mainly concerning the children) or if they have plenty.

On top of the *nofoo*, Korkor adds 500 or 1,000 cedis if she sells the fish fresh to other women. That is her profit. This means that Korkor earns less on the fish she sells for the wives than on the shares she is allocated as a canoe owner's wife.

If we take a closer look at the above mentioned example, we see that if the canoe caught 10 crates of fish worth 5,000 cedis each, Korkor had to pay 50,000 cedis for the whole catch (she pays parts immediately and the rest later). The crew members thus earn 5,000 each and the canoe owner, Korkor's husband, earns 25,000 cedis (five shares). If Korkor sells all of the fish fresh, she adds 1,000 cedis on the crates she sells for the crew members' wives (their *nofoo*) and she adds another 500 cedis before she sells the fish to other women. She thus sells each crate of fish for 6,500 cedis. Korkor then earns 500 cedis on each of the five crates she sells for the wives, in all 4,500 cedis. On each of the five crates she sells for herself, however, she earns 1,500 cedis, in all 7,500 cedis. In sum, Korkor earns 12,000 cedis on selling her husband's canoe's catch, while the members of the other fishermen earn 1,000 cedis each.

Apart from the "class" difference in income that this example shows, there is a clear gender difference in the income of the owner and his wife, and in the income of the crew members and their wives. The example so far does not, however, show how much women and men earn in relation to each other. The income of the wives is earned at a later stage in the production process; when the fish has reached the market.

Korkor often hands over the money she owes the crew members' wives when she pays

for the catch to her husband or to the *fotrotse*. He then hands it over to the crew members. But often the crew members' wives come to Korkor's house and collect their 1,000 cedis of *nofoo* themselves. They also borrow money from Korkor, or buy fish from her on credit.

With such a sharing system, Korkor has a very central position in the canoe company of her husband. She is entrusted to make money out of the men's fishing. Korkor is responsible for the payment of the crew members' wives, and her husband holds her responsible for the money he has to earn in order to pay his crew, as well as his own income. And in most cases, Korkor earns more than the sales price of the canoe's catch, because she and her daughters smoke and market most of the fish themselves.

### **Processing and marketing**

When women have bought fish on the beach, they bring it home and smoke it. In Kpone, the beaches of Laa Loi Naa and Odunyonna are close to town, but from Sega beach it is 2 km to the centre. Both men and women walk frequently back and forth between their homes and the beach, often heavily loaded. Innovative young men in Kpone, however, have found an excellent alternative to the heavy carrying of fish this long way. Drivers, fitters and car mechanics in Ghana are artists to their fingertips when it comes to the re-



*Photo 22. Women going to the beach to buy fish. Local fish "lorries" have also arrived.*

paration of cars and construction of spare parts. Special fish-transporting mini-trucks have been put together out of different car-parts, welded together and equipped with wooden dropside bodies at the back of the cars. Women hire these locally constructed "lorries" and their drivers to transport fish home. Thereby a few young men have found a new niche in the provision of services for the fish traders.



Photo 23. A local invention.

Women in Kpone mostly smoke fish on ovens made of empty oil drums (barrels cut into two) with wire mesh or thin iron rods onto which the fish is laid. Firewood is lit on the ground, and smoke and heat rise up through the oil drum to the fish layers on the top. The oil drum ovens are durable, since they are not so affected by rain as mud ovens are, and are well suited to smoke types of fish that the hook and line canoes catch. Many women also have Chorkor smokers, but this smoking technique, although its efficiency is recognised by the women, has not become predominant, since there is a lack of supply of small types of fish. As mentioned, anchovy is mainly fished with *watsa*, and there are not so many of them in Kpone. One of the women who has a Chorkor smoker also mentioned that the canoes that fish anchovy, sometimes prefer to sell it for ready cash to women in Tema and Accra, rather than selling it on credit to their own wives in Kpone. In any case the Chorkor smoker is a more suitable processing tool for the relatively few women who buy fish from *watsa* canoes than for the majority of women who buy a variety of types of fish from the hook and line canoes.

Apart from local sources of fish supply, women in Kpone often go to Tema Fishing Harbour and buy fish from the canoes there. For most of them, however, it is more expensive to buy fish in Tema than in Kpone. A canoe owner's wife, for example, must pay a much higher price when she buys from a wholesaler in Tema than when she gets it on credit from her husband's canoe. In Tema she has to pay the intermediate addition in the price that she herself adds when she sells fish directly from her husband's canoe. Ordinary crew members' wives can seldom afford to buy fish in Tema. Their profit margins are often so low that the cost of transport inhibits them. Thus, purchase of fish in Tema is mainly a source of supply for the women who already have good access to resources (fish on credit) in Kpone fisheries.

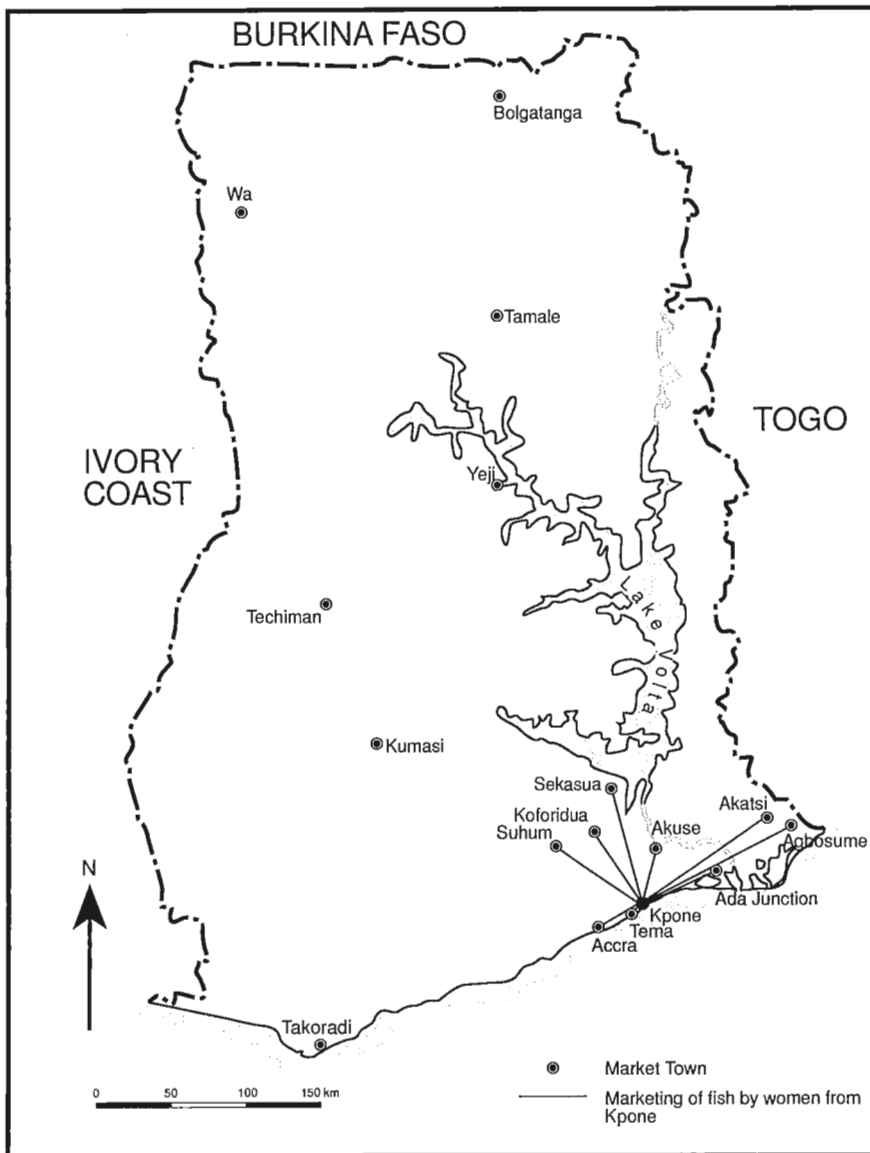
It is mainly the same category of relatively privileged women who buy imported frozen fish from the cold storage plants in Tema: They have either purchasing capital accumulated in fish trade, or good credit links with the wholesalers in Tema through personal relations.



*Photo 24. Gutting of imported frozen mackerel.*

Marketing of fish, as of most other types of food, has long been women's domain in Kpone. It is regarded as a wifely duty to market her husband's fish. For example, Manoukian almost forty years ago wrote that: "All trading [among the Ga-Adangbe], except that initiated by foreigners, is carried on by women (...) Markets are entirely run by women" (1950:72). Apart from Accra and Tema, fish traders from Kpone go to the small villages on the Accra plains on market days: "The women study the markets so they can go when there is a market day". Kpone women also market fish at Ada-Junction, which is a market on the main road just before River Volta, and to the Agbozume and Akatsi markets in the Volta Region. They further go to Suhum, Sekasua, Akuse and Koforidua.

Map 12. The marketing region of fish from Kpone.





At the market in Koforidua there is a large wholesale market for fish, and many women in Kpone have sisters, colleagues or friends living there. There they receive and sell fish for them through the sending system. However, since most of the Kpone traders operate on a medium scale, they travel to the markets with the fish themselves, although some of them send their daughters during the main season, when fish smoking is at its busiest. Also the Kpone women's sending system is based on personal relations and trust, whereby they send their fish baskets marked with a personal "symbol" cloth, receiving money tightly wrapped in a bundle marked with the same cloth in return.

Kpone women's main markets are Accra and Koforidua, rather than Kumasi. If fish from Kpone ends up in a cooking pot as far away as Kumasi, Ho or Bolgatanga, it is likely that it has been purchased and transported northwards by a travelling wholesaler from a market in Accra (such as Agbobloshie or Salaga markets) rather than by a Kpone woman. A woman who is the wife of a *watsa* canoe owner, who has both Chorkor smokers and oil drum ovens, and is thus one of the largest scale fish traders by Kpone measures, says that:

*"I go to the markets in Accra, Koforidua, Suhum, and so on. I patronise only these places because our market does not expand to cover other areas. Well, it is possible to go to markets in other regions, like Kumasi, Techiman, Tamale and Wa, but the volume of our fish is too small for that (... ) I have friends around Chorkor and Tema who have quite an amount of money. They can afford as many baskets of fish as possible which they take to far away places. They have money and they buy and store a lot before travelling up north. This could be possible for us in Kpone if only we had money enough for such [long-distance] trading. But we are always in a hurry to smoke and sell the fish quickly at the nearest market so that we can return the money to our fishermen to operate their canoes.*

*Customers [wholesale fish-buyers] who come from other regions to buy fish in this region do not come to Kpone. We rather meet them in the various markets that we patronise and they purchase fish from us to take far away".*

Kpone women thus seem to operate with smaller volumes and with shorter distances in their marketing of fish, than the large scale traders in Moree. Neither do they reach the level of the largest scale Ga traders in Accra and Tema. Kpone women themselves attribute this problem to their lack of fish supply, i.e. a too low level of production by Kpone canoes and too high prices on external fish supply.

Women in Kpone have the same monopoly over fish trade as women in Moree. My impression is, however, that given the smaller volume of their trade and the shorter

distances to their market destinations, the profit potential of the average fish trader in Kpone is comparably lower than that of the average fish traders in Moree. A consequently lower accumulation of market capital could thus be one of the reasons for women's more limited investment in canoes, nets and motors in Kpone, as compared with women in Moree.

One could further hypothesise that a more limited capital accumulation by women in fish marketing gives men in Kpone less access to credit, which could be one of the explanations for the lower level of motorisation of canoes in Kpone (55%) as compared with the Moree canoes (88%). Moreover, women's lack of accumulation of market capital (as a result of low effort in the local fisheries) would then explain why no women are owners of motorised canoes in Kpone. It is my contention, however, that not only economic variables influence the degree to which women are able to invest in new technology in the male dominated fisheries, but also attitudes formed by local gender ideas.

If we follow the two hypotheses above (i.e. that 1) a low fishing effort leads to low market accumulation and 2) a low market accumulation leads to low levels of investment in fishing technology, especially by women), a negative attitude based on gender ideology towards women's investment and entering into powerful positions in the fisheries, could become a barrier against innovation through motorisation and increased fish landings. If this way of reasoning is in line with what happens in Kpone, one could say that the potential dynamics that lies in the complementarity between the male sphere of fishing and female sphere of marketing, is not fully utilised. Let us look at the opportunities and constraints that women in Kpone, who try to enter a "spiral of accumulation" by extending their entrepreneurial strategies into the male sphere, encounter.

### **Invisible canoe owners**

Though women in Kpone are central in the provision of credit for purchase of equipment, petrol, provisions and repairs, for their husbands and other fishermen, they seem to have problems when it comes to the conversion of their market capital into ownership of canoes and management of male crews. None of the owners of the twenty-six *watsa* canoes owners in Kpone are women. There are several stories of women who have tried

to buy large canoes with *watsa* and 40 hp outboard motors. But all of them have failed. There are, however, women who own small hook and line canoes with 25 hp motors. Yet it was difficult to find any of these female owners of small canoes on our interview rounds in Kpone. The people we asked were even reluctant to mention their names. Of course, they did not necessarily know the names of these women either, since most of them had male relatives (husband, son or brother) in charge of the canoe company. Thus, in contrast to Moree where female canoe owners were publicly known and highly visible, female canoe owners in Kpone, to the extent that they existed, were in a way "invisible canoe owners". They had either failed, moved elsewhere or owned canoes through men.

A more common strategy for women who had accumulated capital in trade was to invest in fishing nets. An example is a woman who has invested in three nets that she puts in her son-in-law's canoe. Two other fish traders have three nets each in the same canoe. In all, then, the three women have nine nets. The women have one fisherman each to fish for them with their nets, in addition to the canoe owner who also has a young man to help him with the outboard motor. Thus when the expenses for the motor, canoe and the crew of four men and an apprentice are deducted, the women get the shares of their nets. In this way they get access to fish directly from a canoe, without the intermediary expenses, such as additional cost of a canoe owner's wife's profit. Investment in nets is thus a strategy to increase one's profit potential in fish trade. A woman net owner explains:

*"It is a very lucrative business for a woman to own a net because she has access to all the fish that her net will catch. The catch fluctuates from time to time. At times it turns out to be very little or nothing at all, but sometimes there can be so much fish caught that one cannot smoke it alone. That is when I get very happy because I am sure to make a lot of profit. On the other hand, it is better to own all the sets of fishing equipment [canoe, net, motor], than to own little bits of it and join with other people as I am doing now".*

The important question to ask when women express their awareness of the profit potential that lies in canoe ownership, is of course: Why do they not invest in canoes? Can their reluctance or inability to risk their capital in the investment in canoes be explained by their alleged low volume of trade and level of accumulations? What happened to the women who were able to accumulate enough to buy canoes, and who tried? Why could they not run large canoe companies with 40 hp motors, *watsa* and 20 men crews?

A fisherman and canoe owner who is 75 years old, who has a lot of experience and is

still active in fishing, had many thoughts about female canoe owners in Kpone. His views illustrate some of the gender barriers that exist between the female and male fields of marketing and fishing. These views also partially explain why women have failed as canoe owners and why they are so "invisible". The old man says:

*"In the past, some women tried to buy canoes but it couldn't work out for them. That is, those who had money would approach some of their male relatives or friends and discuss their intention of acquiring a canoe, so that they, the young men, could manage it for them. Because the canoes are constructed in the forest, women cannot risk going there themselves. They must by all means send the men to buy and transport it home for them. After getting the canoes, the women bought nets and entrusted them into the hands of the men. They did good business in those days, but all of those canoes are now grounded.*

*Some of these women gave the canoes, nets, and so on, to the men, and then became loonye [fish-mother, i.e. wholesaler of fish] for their own canoe. The men then worked and paid for the use of the equipment.*

*In all of these cases, women could not own canoes and be very successful with them. This is because they had problems with the men, who did not handle the canoes very well. There is always controversy over money. The women always picked up quarrels with the men for having been cheated. In the end, the women found it difficult to replace the nets with new ones because the men could not account properly for the volume of fish they caught. The women lost all their savings and the canoes are now grounded.*

*Women are simply not encouraged to acquire canoes, even though they could afford them. They fear the men will cheat them and that they will lose, rather than gain. All this is also because women don't go to high seas to catch fish and bring home. It is always the men who must go.*

*Sometimes, women must also be blamed for the problem. Some of them become overanxious to make a lot of money within a short time, to pay off the cost of the equipment to recoup what they have invested. In the process they lose sight of the fact that they have engaged the services of men who need to be remunerated well from the catch they themselves make. The women always want to take a greater portion of the sales made, leaving the men with virtually nothing. When the men complain, the women can get angry and start shouting at the men. The men are insulted and humiliated. Most men face this kind of attitude, which they don't like. When it becomes too much for them, they quit the canoes and abandon them on the beach. When another group of men come and work for the woman, they face the same problem, and go away. It is thus very difficult to work with women. They are not flexible with money.*

*This is the reason for the inability of women to keep canoes for long. Even up to date, no man likes handling a canoe for a woman for fear of being humiliated. Women are too aggressive when it comes to money. And when they have their own sons in the canoes, they forget that the other men in the canoes need to be paid well".*

My interpretation of the old man's views, is that he represents an image of women as unable and unfitted to participate in the male sphere of the fish production system.

According to him, they can handle money in the female marketing sphere, but not in fishing. Women are perceived as overanxious, aggressive and insulting. Women who attempt such an enterprise encroach upon the men's brotherhood based on male knowledge and expertise in fishing, and women do not understand their claims to equality and their needs as fishermen. In my interpretation the cultural capital (knowledge and strategies) women have acquired in the market cannot be applied in the fisheries. The old man's explanation is simple: Women do not go to sea. He also says that women must not go to the forest to buy canoes themselves. They would not know how to pick a good stem for a canoe and how to handle the people who sell the trees, and the men who transport and build the canoe. Canoes are men's domain. Markets are women's.

It seems like a contradiction when the old man says that women are problematic when they deal with money. On the contrary, Ga-Adangbe women, as women in Ghana in general, are known as very capable of handling money in order to feed their children and cook for their husbands. What the old man says rather, is that women actually *are* good at earning money, so good that many of them *can* afford to buy canoes. The problem with the "aggressive" way women earn and handle money, occurs when they try to employ female strategies in a male context, by "extracting" money from the male field of fisheries. Women do not understand how to value and remunerate men's work, and they exploit their male workers (except their sons). Through such female behaviour, by which women show disrespect for the particular qualities, qualifications and risks involved in the fisherman profession, they actually humiliate men. One is left with the impression that female and male activities and strategies in the field of fishing represent incompatible value systems or moral spheres. Thus, the strategies that women apply in the female market sphere and the feminine symbolic capital they acquire there, are not considered as gender-appropriate behaviour, or applicable symbolic capital in the masculine fishing sphere.

The old man once tried to overcome this gender barrier, this incompatibility, and accepted his own wife's wishes of becoming involved in the fisheries. He gave her credit to buy a canoe and, moreover, provided his expertise on canoes and equipment as an input into her enterprise. However, after a while the project failed. With this concrete example based on personal experience, the old man confirmed his general statements about women canoe owners:

*"My wife was interested in acquiring a canoe. One day when I was going to buy a canoe, she*

*gave me some money to buy her one. The amount was less than expected. I added my own money to what she gave me, and I bought her one canoe and two other ones for myself. I spent an extra amount on transporting the canoes from the forest down to this beach.*

*My wife entrusted the canoe to some fishermen. In the course of business, however, things were not moving well. She complained several times and we agreed to sell the canoe. The reason why we decided to sell the canoe was that the fishermen on the canoe were not being honest with the amounts, and she was making no profit. I tried to sell her canoe in Denu, but I couldn't. I continued to Cotonou in Benin where I finally sold the canoe. As soon as I came back, my wife was not patient with me at all. She wanted all her money back. She would not even listen to the expenses I had in taking the canoe beyond the border of Ghana. She had already fixed an amount for the canoe and wanted the money back. I was so furious with her and decided to just give her all the money she requested.*

*As you see, this is an example of how difficult it can be to work with women. They never consider the efforts made by others. It is only their money that they want. She even took the case to the elders to handle".*

In order to understand the conflicts that arise when women challenge male authority and ways of doing things in the fisheries, and the gender ideology that forms the basis of such ways of thinking and such experience, I will examine the fields of kinship and marriage in Kpone: Ideology and practice in these fields are formed by, and themselves shape, gendered relationships.

### **Patrilineal ideology: Coming from the same house**

The Ga patrilineage, the *we* (which also means house or physical dwelling place) is a corporate group in which members trace descent through men to a known common ancestor or founding father. Every *we* has a founding lineage house, an *adebo shia*, and several lineage houses, *weku shia*. The former is associated with what Azu (1974) calls the maximal lineage (or clan) and the second with the major lineage, which I will refer to as the lineage, or as the Kpones do, the *shia* (which means both lineage, house and home). *Weku* refers to a group of *we* members, or, literally, children of the same house (Ibid:14). The maximal *we*, then, is segmented into *weku shia*, or houses containing lineage members<sup>2</sup>. The Kpones usually refer to their *shia* when they identify their

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<sup>2</sup> A constant fission of *shia* into smaller units takes place. Azu (1974) calls these units minimal lineages (a man and his children). However, as Azu (Ibid:15) points out, because a man does not have much jural, ritual, or economic authority when his father is alive, the effective minimal lineage corresponds to between two and four generations of agnates, for example a group of brothers and their son's and son's sons, often with common residence.

patrilineal affiliation.

The members of the patrilineage include men, women, and the children of male members. The children of female members are not members of their mother's *shia*. When a woman marries, she does not become a member of the husband's lineage, but remains a member of her father's. Her children belong to their father's lineage. Children's ties to their mother remain very strong throughout life, though. This is particularly the case with daughters who often live together with their mothers. Boys stay with their mothers until they are seven or eight years old, or sometimes until they reach puberty. Then they move to their father's house. Girls remain with their mothers. However, sons maintain strong links with their mother, and visit her and eat from her cooking pot every now and then. The relationship between brothers and sisters also ideally remains very close throughout life.

In Kpone, separate residence for male and female members of the lineage is common practice. Every *weku shia*, or lineage house, is made up of a male section, a *hiiamli*, and a female section, a *yieamli*. Originally the male and female sections were located within the same *weku shia*, but with time and with expansion in the number of lineage members, female and male sections were built outside the *weku shia* as separate houses. When a *hiiamli* becomes congested, for example, brothers often go together and build a new house, where they can lead their lives relieved from the authority of senior men in the *hiiamli* of their father. The brothers' house later becomes a new *hiiamli*, when their sons or other members of the patrilineage move in. The different *yieamli* and *hiiamli* of the same *shia* are thus often located in different parts of the town. In Kpone, the following is the most common residential arrangement: Men live in a *hiiamli* with their father, brothers and other paternally related men, and women live in a *yieamli* with their mother and sisters, sisters' daughters, and the children of these women.

In this gender divided and duo-local system of residence, husbands and wives live separately<sup>3</sup>. Generally, no women live in the *hiiamli*, and no adult men live in the

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<sup>3</sup> Separate residence of male and female lineage members, and of husband and wife, is also practiced in other Ga towns. In Accra, this pattern has been modified by the introduction of Christianity, education and reliance upon other occupations than farming, fishing and trade. The establishment of nuclear households seems, however, to be a tendency among couples who move to the suburbs and to parts of Accra outside the "original" Ga areas, like Jamestown, for example. Fayorsey (1995) notes that there is a strong tendency towards

*yieamli*. An exception is when men marry women from outside Kpone. Since these wives are not members of any lineage in Kpone, they do not belong to a *yieamli*. They are therefore allowed to live in the *hiiamli* of their husbands. Women, however, usually prefer sharing residence with other women, instead of being the only woman in a male house. An "outside wife" can thus also live in the *yieamli* of her husband's sisters.

Thus in practice, as Robertson (1984) points out; "Residential rights are passed patrilaterally for men and matrilaterally for women" (Ibid:59). This gender division of residence, which could be seen as a reflection of the West African dual-sex gender discourse, has consequences for inheritance rights. Manoukian (1950:73) noted that the emphasis on patrilineal descent is modified in that inheritance of women's property goes in the female line. The inheritance practice is often as follows: A man's property, such as a house or a canoe, is inherited by his children, sons receiving a larger share than daughters. If the man has more than one wife, the children of each of them are regarded as separate units that are treated equally (Azu 1974:59). Upon a man's death, his property is given to his surviving brother in order of seniority by age. Children therefore do not inherit their father's property until the death of his brothers. Since a daughter does not go fishing and usually does not live in a *hiiamli*, her interests are not vested in her father's property. Nevertheless, as long as she lives, she is allowed to buy fish from the canoe she has inherited together with her brothers.

A woman's property is divided between her sisters and all her children, sons and daughters being treated equally (Manoukian 1950:75). If a woman's daughters are very young when she dies, her sister becomes their "mother" and takes care of them and their mother's property until her own death. A son's share of his mother's property is however for his lifetime only and reverts to his sisters or his sisters' heirs when he dies (Ibid.). The most common types of property that is transmitted from a woman to her children, apart from jewellery, clothes, and fish smoking equipment, is a house. In practice, then, given the forms of material capital women usually accumulate, a woman's son does not have much use of the property that his mother leaves behind, since he neither can wear her personal belongings, does not smoke fish, nor lives in a *yieamli* (woman's house), but in a *hiiamli* (men's house).

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matrifocality in the Ga parts of Accra, where men who do not live in the *hiiamli* of the original *weku shia*, tend to live elsewhere in town, while their children and old and other marginal men live in the *yieamli* and are supported by female relatives.



Thus, considering both residential and inheritance practice in Kpone, the patrilineal kinship ideology has elements of bilaterality. As Robertson (1984) writes:

"Although patrification can be considered a norm in Ga society, inheritance rights are not transmitted unilaterally, perhaps because they are subject to manipulation for economic ends. For instance, women's very lack of authority, ideologically and practically, within the patrilineages gave them an incentive to expand their authority where they could - economically" (Ibid:48).

Ga women thus focus on self-acquired property (Ibid:51), which mothers leave to daughters who fulfil their reciprocal obligations; "Given that a woman's financial identity is inextricably tied to that of her daughter(s) because they were in business together, it only makes sense that a house built with the profits from that business would go to her daughters during her lifetime" (Ibid:55).

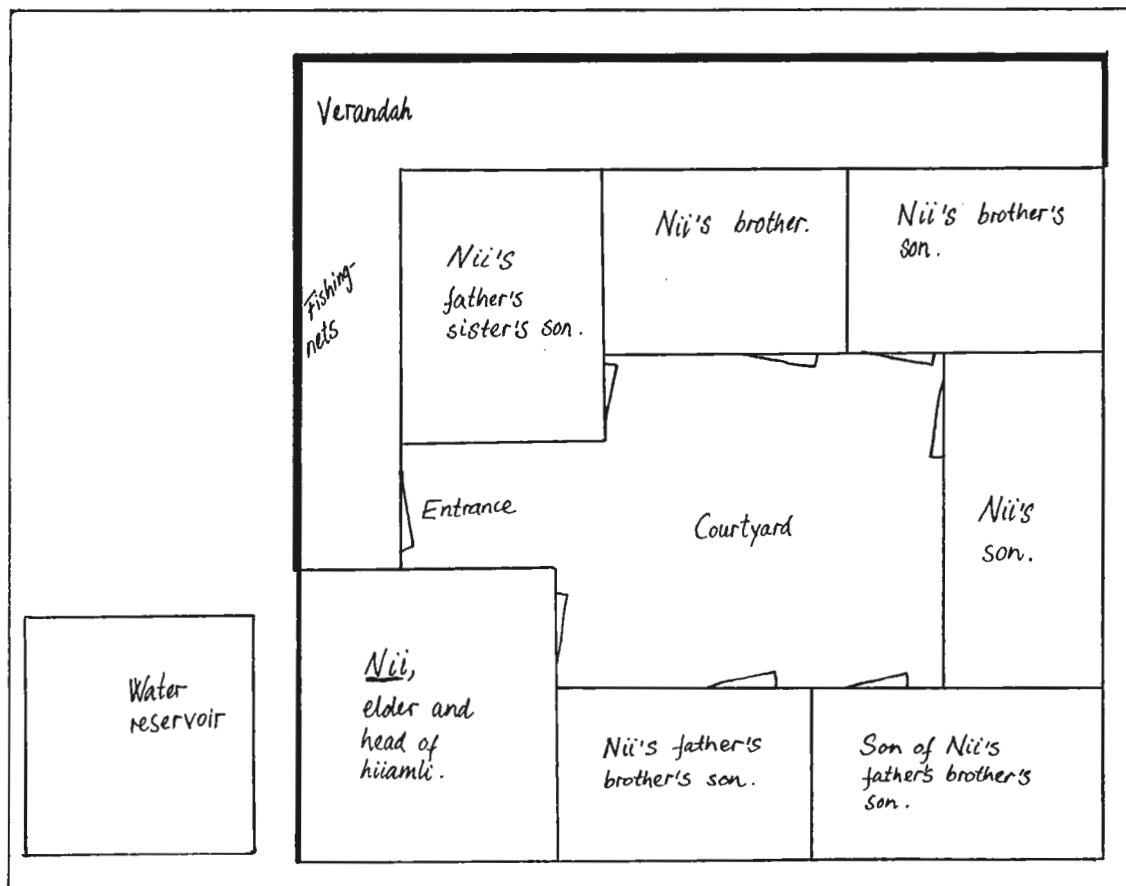
When a woman builds a house (or a husband builds it for her and his children, which is very unusual), it gradually becomes a new *yieamti*, in which she lives with her daughters and their children. As generations pass, the women in the *yieamti* marry and get children who belong to other *shia* (lineages) than themselves. After two generations, then, a *yieamti* may contain the granddaughters of the daughters of the women who built the house. The new generation in the *yieamti* thus belong to different *shia*, since their mothers married men from different *shia*. Thus, although paternal relations play a major role through the patrilineage, matrilineal relations are maintained, both emotionally and practically through the residence pattern, and in the passing on of property from mothers to daughters. The implications of such a bilateral dual-sex system is, in my view, that sons' interests are vested with their fathers and the field of fishing, while daughters' interests are vested with their mothers and the field of marketing. As I shall come back to, this has consequences for the possibilities of women to become canoe owners. Let us first look at what it is like to live and cooperate in separate female and male houses.

### **Living in male and female houses**

As we have seen, men's houses contain men who are all of the same lineage whereas women's houses contain women and children of several different lineages (see also Manoukian 1950:74). In spatial terms, the female members of a patrilineage may live scattered in many different *yieamti*, while the male members tend to be united in a few

*hiiamli*. To illustrate how this in practice works, I will in the following describe the *hiiamli* in which Nii (grandfather) is the head, and the *yieamli* in which his sisters live.

Figure 7. A *hiiamli* (a men's house).



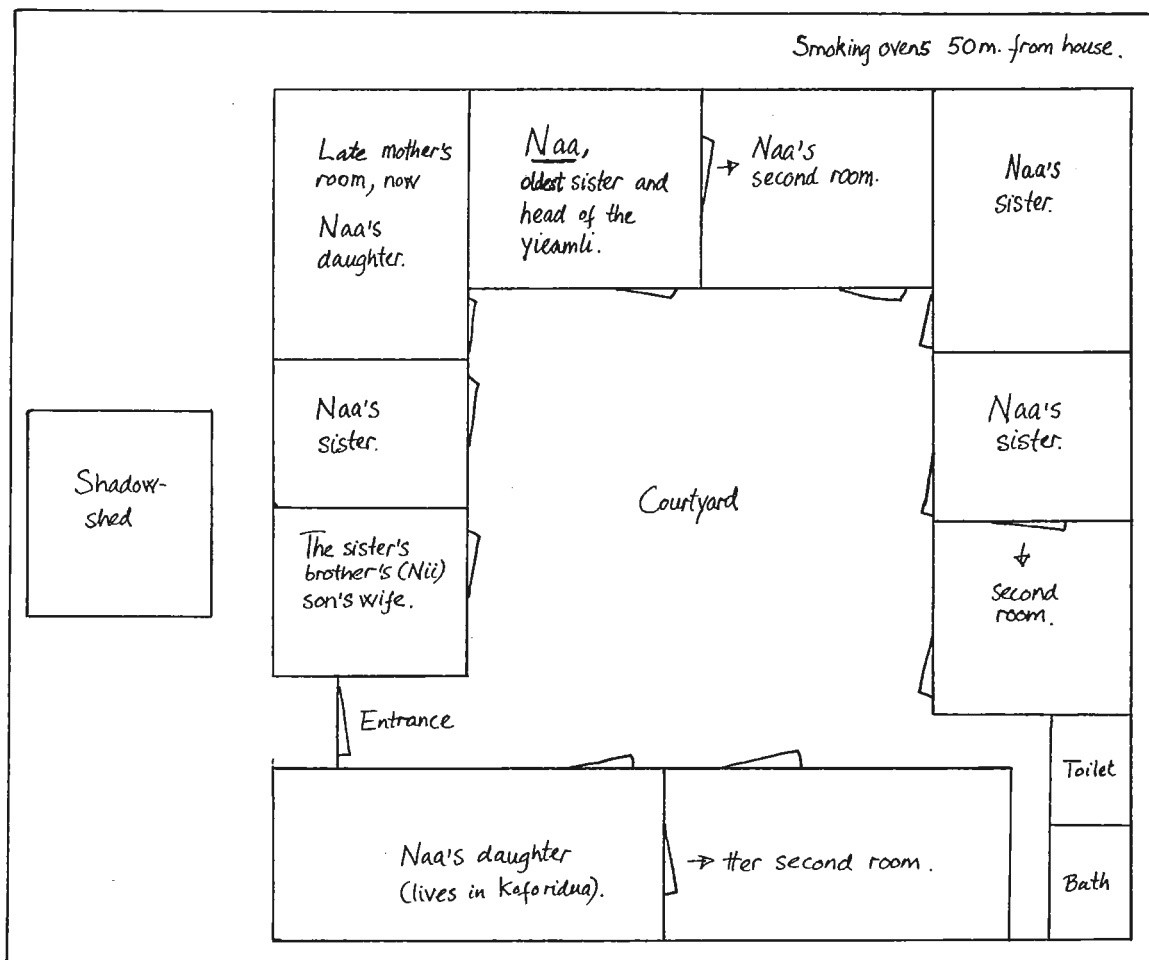
Nii's father's father built the house in which he now lives. When Nii's father died, the oldest surviving brother became the head of the *hiiamli*. When this uncle died, Nii became the head of the *hiiamli*, since he was the oldest man in the house. Nii is now 75 years old. As the figure shows, he shares the house with his paternal cousin, the son of this cousin, his brother and his son, a paternal aunt's son, and one of his own sons. There are also many other young boys and men in the *hiiamli*, who have not got their own rooms yet. They sometimes sleep in one of the men's rooms if they are empty, or no woman is visiting their room, or they sleep in the courtyard or on the verandah surrounding the house. The wives of the men in the *hiiamli* come with food for their husband and to sleep with him in the evening. They often clean their husband's room and sweep the courtyard. Apart from that, it is the duty of the young men in the house to keep the *hiiamli* clean. The men often sit on the verandah during the day mending fishing

nets if they are not out fishing. In the evening they sit in the courtyard eating the food their wives bring from their *yieamli*. During the night they stay in their rooms with the visiting wife, who may bring one or two of the smallest children.

During *Homowo*, which is an important Ga harvest festival ("chasing away hunger") taking place in August, all members of the lineage, both men and women, gather in the *hiiamli*. Family events or problems that happened in the previous year are discussed and settled. *Homowo* is an important lineage event, and brothers and sisters are happy to see each other and to have a reunion with patrilineal relatives who have moved from Kpone. The *weku*, the "children of the house", share delicious food and sing and dance together.

Nii has not always lived in the *hiiamli*. Until he was four years old he lived in his mother's *yieamli*. His sisters still live there, and he visits them often. The oldest sister Naa ("grandmother") is the head of Nii's late mother's *yieamli*.

Figure 8. A *yieamli* (women's house).



About five hundred metres from Nii's *hiiamli* his sisters live in their *yieamli*. It was their mother (who was married to Nii's father) who built the house. When Nii's mother gave birth to daughters she formed a new female section with members from Nii's patrilineage; Nii's sisters. Nii, as his other brothers, lived in the *yieamli* with their mother and sisters when they were small boys, but as they grew up they moved to their father's *hiiamli*, the house in which Nii now is the head.

The mother, who was the former head of the *yieamli*, died ten years ago. One room in the house is still considered as hers, but now her granddaughter resides there. The senior sister, Naa, who is more than 80 years old, became the head of the *yieamli*, and she and the other three sisters all have rooms in the house. Their daughters and their children live in their "second rooms". The senior daughter of Naa has been allocated two rooms in the house. She lives in Koforidua and is involved in selling fish for women in Kpone there. Although she is more in Koforidua than in Kpone, her rooms are in the *yieamli* for her.

Cooking takes place in the courtyard. Activities in the courtyard cannot be observed from the outside. Only a small entrance leads from the outside to the courtyard. Outside the entrance of the house there is a shadow-shed where the women of the house often sit and rest and talk with passers-by. Their fish smoking ovens are located fifty metres from the house on a site where also women from other houses have their ovens.

When we visited Nii's sisters' *yieamli*, the women in the house were all in a state of mourning; another of Naa's daughters, who had built her own house, had died six weeks earlier. As part of the mourning process, none of the sisters or daughters were to do their fish business for two months. The twenty-nine year old daughter of the late sister was selling cooked rice and beans instead. She was going to become the new head of the *yieamli* her mother had built, but as long as her aunts (Nii's sisters) were alive, they were responsible for her mother's property.

The only person in the *yieamli* who is not a daughter, granddaughter or small grandson of Nii's mother, is Nii's daughter-in-law. She is from Ada (near River Volta), and is married to Nii's son who lives in his father's *hiiamli*. Since she does not belong to any *yieamli* in Kpone, she stays with her husband's paternal aunts. Her daughters will continue to live with her in the house that her father-in-law's mother built, while her sons will move to their father in the grandfather's *hiiamli* when they grow up.

The daily rhythm of activities and the use of space vary in female and male sections. During the day the *hiiamli* is empty and quiet; the men are either out fishing or sleeping after a night's hard work. This stands in contrast to life in the *yieamli*, where there is loud activity during daytime. The compound is particularly busy in the afternoon when the women have come back from the beach, children are crying and the evening meal is being prepared. Fish smoking ovens must constantly be tended if there is "fish on the fire". As cooking activities are finished, women and children have taken their bath, and the smallest children are falling asleep, life in the *yieamli* calms down. The women who are married send food to their husband's *hiiamli* (if it is not another wives' turn). Sisters also sometimes send food to their brothers, and daughters to their father. The men eat the food together with the other men in the *hiiamli*. For a man who has recently married, it is therefore important that the other men can see and taste that his wife is a good cook. As a man in Accra said of his relatives in Kpone: "*For the fishermen their whole life is food*". Later in the evening the wife walks over to the husband's *hiiamli*, and sleeps with him there. She brings small children with her, while the rest are taken care of by her sisters in the *yieamli*. The *yieamli* is thus less crowded during the night than during the day. The *hiiamli* that was so empty during the day, on the other hand, is now inhabited by both men, women and children as the night comes on.

The separate residence of men and women is formative in both the moulding of gender roles as a child grows up, and in the development of his or her skills and professional identity. Fostering is very common, and the idea is that the child should learn a profession from the foster mother or father. Apprenticeship is another important institution, where the parents agree upon an apprenticeship contract with the person whom their child or teenager live with and work for. Azu (1974) points out that the situation for a foster child or an apprentice is not always rosy. Sometimes children are used as cheap labour rather than learning a trade. In any case, whether children grow up with their own relatives or in other houses, they have role models of their own gender, and they connect the profession they learn with their own gender.

Girls are taught the skills of fish smoking and trading, and of course cooking, washing and other wifely duties by women in the *yieamli*. By living in a *yieamli*, girls also learn to identify with the women surrounding them, who give birth, leave the house for their husbands in the evening, raise children, etc. Women in a *yieamli* also help each other with child care, fish smoking and other activities, although they each have separate economies. However, a mutual relationship in economic matters is common, and a moral

value. Some of the younger women expressed a wish of living together with their husbands. They meant that co-residence would promote a mutual understanding between husband and wife, more sharing of resources and of responsibility towards the children. Few fishermen's wives, however, lived with their husbands.

Many women expressed an uneasiness by the thought of having to live in the same house as men, i.e. in a *hiiamli*. They felt more free in sharing their daily lives with other women, and less restricted in their physical movements, in exposure of their bodies, and the way they speak. A woman from Accra who married a man from Kpone, moved from her *yieamli* in Accra to the *hiiamli* of her husband and his brothers in Kpone. She compares the two situations:

*"In the yieamli a woman has the liberty to do a lot of things and she is accepted by other women living there with her. She can wrap a cloth around her waist, baring her shoulders, which she cannot do in the hiiamli. Women understand that it is because she feels warm, but men could think that she is indecently dressed. There also are certain words and expressions that could be used within the yieamli, especially when we crack jokes, that are not permissible in the hiiamli, as for example, "Onye soomi!" ("go back to your mother's vagina!").*

*When a woman lives in a hiiamli her life-style becomes rigid, almost oppressive. All the time she feels one of the men in the house will appear, and she has to be very cautious in how she dresses and talks. Women who live in a hiiamli are also restricted from petty gossip. They cannot say anything about other women. When a woman does something bad in town, women in the hiiamli cannot discuss it amongst themselves, unlike in a completely female yieamli. And a woman can enter any room at any time in a yieamli without hesitating, but this cannot be done in the male hiiamli."*

It is perhaps no wonder that when boys reach a certain age they "feel like" moving to their father's house. It is considered improper for a boy who is reaching adulthood to continue living in his mother's *yieamli*: He must (and wants to) move to a place where he can become a proper man.

A major reason for boys to move to their father is that they must learn the profession of fishing, and are taught to do everything they need to know by their father and other male relatives. Thus the identification with fishing is important for men who share a *hiiamli*. An indication of the strong identity with fishing, is perhaps that educated men tend move out of the *hiiamli*. They rent a room or build their own house if they live in Kpone, but mostly they move to Accra and Tema (since there are not many jobs for them in Kpone). It is thus mainly fisher people who keep up the male and female division of postmarital

residence. More "modern" couples often establish nuclear families. This is an uncommon strategy of fishermen, they prefer to live with their brothers and fishing colleagues in a *hiiamli*. The *hiiamli* is thus associated with unity of the patrilineage, and with the profession of fishing. Ideals of masculinity in Kpone are strongly connected with a good performance in both of these fields.

As we see, houses are both symbols of patrilineal affiliation, but also of gender identity. While both men and women identify themselves with a paternal *weku shia*, they live their daily lives in male and female *hiiamli* and *yieamli*. Men's and women's residence are therefore spatial arenas of both lineage and marriage.

Now that we have an idea of how spouses organise their marriages between houses, I will further examine the relation between husband and wife, and also look at how marriage is interwoven with fisheries.

## Marriage

According to Azu the "pattern of separate residences for the different sexes (...) creates a barrier between husband and wife, and rather strengthens the tie between brother and sister, mother and daughter, and father and son" (1974:73). Marriage is, however, an important institution where the ultimate goal for both men and women is to have children. Other, but nevertheless secondary, aspects of marriage are also important. One widow, who chose to remarry although she was beyond her childbearing age, said that: "*People marry not always because of children but for the fact that everyone needs someone to rely on and confide in*". In her case, the new man she married was also a *watsa* canoe owner, which gave her rights to buy fish and a possibility to save money to gradually build a house. It is thus clear that the social status of being married gives access to both material and immaterial resources, needs that lineage membership alone cannot cover.

In Kpone, marriage rituals are more elaborate than the celebration of a girl's fertility upon her first menstruation. Puberty rituals, *otofo*, are expensive and most girls do not have *otofo* performed for them. There are particular lineages, however, whose members are obliged to perform *otofo* for their girls. Otherwise the girl will only meet misfortune

in life. For girls from the other *shia*, however, puberty rites are very seldom performed<sup>4</sup>. Neither is the guarding of the girls of the lineage's virginity as important as before (see Knudsen 1994). Virginity upon marriage is rare, and many men do not marry their lover until she gets pregnant: He often prefers to know that the woman is capable of having children before he goes to the expensive stage of marrying her.

Marriages these days are seldom arranged by fathers, but a man has to ask of his parent's consent for his choice of wife. The woman informs her mother. The marriage involves an elaborate procedure in many stages. The first stage is the "door-knocking" ceremony, *agboshimo*, where female and male representatives from the man's lineage ask for the consent of the parents of the girl. They "knock" at the girl's father's door, and bring some money and bottles of liquor to announce their intentions. If the girl's parents agree, the marriage process enters the second stage, the "engagement", where representatives of the two lineages meet (about a week later). More liquor and money is given by the man, which is shared between the girl's mother and father. This is the *weku daa*, and many marriage ceremonies end here, as the man and woman are now considered as a legitimate couple, as husband and wife. After the payment of the *weku daa* any children resulting from the relationship belong to the man's lineage. What often happens is that when an unmarried woman becomes pregnant, the man pays *weku daa* to her parents, so that the children can become legitimate members of his lineage. If he fails to do so, the children are integrated into the woman's patrilineage (see Azu 1974 and Fayorsey 1995).

The third stage is the handing over of the "head money" or *yinii* (the marriage payment or bride price). The man gives the parents of the woman an amount of money that corresponds to his rank and wealth as well as that of the woman he marries. He also provides them with liquor and mineral water (for the pouring of libation and for the party). To the woman he gives a steel trunk (in which women keep their private belongings), head kerchiefs, a ring (and a Bible for Christians). The man can also give the woman other gifts if he likes to and can afford it, but most importantly, he has to give her six "half-pieces" of cloth (six yards each). By giving the *yinii*, which (if at all) often is done many years after the *weku daa* when the man has become more wealthy (see Azu 1974:32), the husband raises both his own and his wife's social status. The wife becomes a *bo ekpaa yoo*, a "six cloth woman". If a man ever affords to perform the *yinii* ceremony, he usually does it only for the first wife, and not for the subsequent wives.

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<sup>4</sup> Boys are circumcised when they are eight days old, but do not go through any elaborate puberty rites.



Many men in Kpone marry more than one wife. Especially the richest men (i.e. the canoe owners) tend to marry a second and third wife when they have had a number of children with the first wife. Women generally prefer to be the only wife of their husband, since competition from other wives drains resources from the husband (i.e. fish on credit and economic contributions to the children). A woman said that: *"No wife is ever happy if her husband decides to marry another wife"*. There is, however, not much she can do about it, since polygamy is widely accepted. A woman hopes that her husband will not take another wife, but she can never know: *"Presently I am the only wife of my husband. I am his first wife, but along the line he tried to take a second wife, but it could not work for them. They had a child but it died"*.

Fishermen often have one wife in Kpone, and another wife in a town where they migrate regularly for fishing. Wives from Kpone sometimes join their husbands on the migration trip, even if the husband has another wife in the other town. The two wives then share the catch of his canoe. It is, however, more common that the husband shares his resources by selling fish to his wife in Kpone when his canoe is fishing there, and to his wife in, for example, Nyanyano when he fishes there. The women that the Kpone men marry on migration trips are either women from Kpone who are on seasonal migration themselves, or women from other Ga-Adangbe towns where Kpone canoe companies go fishing, or women of a different ethnic origin. I met one Fante woman who was visiting her husband in Kpone to seek help from him because their little baby girl was very sick and needed treatment. She explained how she had met her husband:

*"I got married to my husband who comes from this town [Kpone]. We got married at Nyanyano when he came on a prodo. I am the first wife of my husband, but he has another wife who comes from this town. We got married when my husband came to stay in Nyanyano for three continuous years. He now lives in Kpone but we see each other quite often when he comes to Nyanyano, and I also come to Kpone. My husband comes to stay in Nyanyano any time there is movement of fish to that place. He comes to stay there and fish until the fish disappears. I prefer to stay at Nyanyano because that is where my business is established. I cannot therefore live here in Kpone doing nothing"*.

Those of the Fante women who have moved to Kpone through marriage have established themselves as fish smokers there. None of them are canoe owners.

Like Kpone men, Kpone women meet husbands when they migrate. They often fall in love with Kpone men while they join Kpone canoe companies on migration. Moreover,

women who had been on fostering or apprenticeship in Accra, Tema or Ada when they were young, and had met Kpone men on migration, moved back to their home town upon marriage.

Marriages are not easily dissolved. Upon the death of one of the spouses, the surviving spouse must go through elaborate widowhood rituals, lasting for many months. This has to be done by both widows and widowers. The period of seclusion lasts longer for women than for men. The bonds between husband and wife that are created when a contract between their lineages is "signed" with the *weku daa*, are strong, and even divorced spouses go through widowhood rituals when ex-husbands or ex-wives die. Divorces are not very common. If a man wants to divorce his wife, he must pay a compensation to the wife, and if a wife wants a divorce, her lineage must return the *weku daa* to his lineage. To get a divorce is thus rather expensive and complicated. As one woman put it:

*"We do not have many divorces here. This is because marriage is considered as a very important and sacred institution and should not be broken easily. The lineage plays a very important role in transacting marriages. For this reason, when there is a problem, the lineage again plays a very important role to resolve problems between husband and wife. Thus a couple cannot decide on their own to break a marriage without consulting the lineages of both husband and wife".*

Nevertheless, separation is common:

*"At times, some problems in a marriage keep recurring and all attempts made by families to resolve them do not yield any good results. The problems become so complicated that even the families can approve of divorce for the couple concerned, though this is not common. A man can frustrate a woman by starting with a small problem. This may result in conflict, then tension and frustration. The next thing is aggression towards each other, leading to the route to divorce. Beating of wives is not allowed in our society. It can easily lead to divorce [or separation]".*

By separation the wife simply stops cooking for the husband and sexual relations between them come to an end. She no longer buys fish from his canoe, and they see each other as little as possible. But unlike the husband who can take another wife, a woman who is only separated cannot remarry, although she in practice is divorced from her husband. Children remain members of their father's lineage but they maintain their strong mother-bonds, and girls remain in her *yieamli*. Women thus usually have a network to fall back upon in case of separation or divorce. When women are not satisfied in their marriages,

they thus tend to remain in their marriages, but put more emphasis on their network of children and female relatives.

During an interview with a young woman who expressed how happy she was in her marriage, a middle aged woman, who was visiting, broke into the conversation. Speaking from a more experienced position, she wanted to balance the somewhat glorious image the young woman presented of Kpone marriages, and said:

*"The essence of marriage is for the couple to assist each other. But it is a fact that marriage can contribute in improving a woman's situation, or it can worsen it. For instance, some men can ask for assistance from their wives. There are indeed times when the man may not have any money. The woman has to work extra hard to cater for the house. We lend them money, look after the children alone when their business fall, but at the end of it they may not pay back the money they have borrowed from us. All your savings are ruined and you have to start struggling on your own again without any contribution from them.*

*At times the men actually worry us. A woman has to cook for her husband, wash his clothes and even make him happy in bed without any reward. This can be very frustrating. But then we keep doing these things for the sake of love - ye suomo hewo - because of love."*

Marriage thus also gives men, and not only women, access to economic resources. A woman who is wife of an owner of a canoe with *watsa* and 40 hp outboard motor explains her credit relationship with the husband. As the interview below shows, she distinguishes between personal loans and loans concerning the canoe company.

- Do you and your husband lend money to each other?

*"Yes, we do, when one of us is in need. If my husband needs money to maintain his fishing equipment I do lend money to him. And when I need money I just have to ask him, and he gives me. There is no fixed period for paying loans back to each other. We do not have the system of writing an agreement when we lend money to each other, as is done with the Rural Bank. We take records of it in our heads. But accounts relating to the canoes are recorded by the secretary. Every amount that is borrowed from any source is recorded and paid back. When my husband borrows money from me for the fishing equipment, he tells the secretary to write my name in the account book of the company and it is directly paid back to me. It is only personal loans that we keep in our heads".*

- Your husband's fishing equipment is very expensive, since he has a *watsa* canoe. Did you help him financially?

*"I did not assist my husband in acquiring the canoe and outboard motor. He got assistance from*

*two of our sons. But as time went on, I lent them money to maintain the equipment. When a net is torn I give them money to buy a new one. They pay back when they make catches".*

As we see, marriage gives a man access to credit from his wife, and the wife gets fish on credit from his company. But in Kpone, unlike in Moree, women assist their husband and sons in acquiring a canoe rather than investing in one themselves.

It seems difficult for women in Kpone to convert capital from the market field into fisheries. The strategic divorces to marry canoe owners that occurred in Moree, for example, did not appear to be a strategy available to women in Kpone who were aiming at increasing their scale of fish business, since the lineages of both husband and wife do not approve of divorce. The social capital women obtain through marriage, by having children, and belonging to a lineage, is not convertible into a position in the field of fisheries.

In my interpretation women are not able to obtain the authority they need to cooperate with, have control over, and to establish mutual trust and a feeling of common interest in relation to the fishermen. Outside the *yieamli* women have no access to the symbolic capital that men get through wealth and age in the *hiiamli* and in the lineage. Neither do women have access to the knowledge and expertise they need as managers of male fishing companies, nor do they have sufficient authority and control over men who possess this knowledge. Masculine authority seems to be required in order to manage a canoe company and to get respect from the fishermen. The symbolic capital women obtain as mothers that are "symbols of love" (Azu 1974:68), as senior women in the *yieamli*, as strategic market traders, and as exchangers of fish, and providers of children, food and sexual pleasure for their husband, seems not to give them access to power in the field of fishing. Marriage gives wives access to material capital obtained from the husband's fishing, but only as a means to enhance her position in the feminine spheres of markets and the *yieamli*.

Daughters are an important labour resource for women. Sons also help their mothers economically, for example by fishing with their mothers' nets. For sons, however, their main interests are at stake in their father's sphere of the *hiiamli* and in the profession of fishing. They respect the male elders of their lineage, and they are the main heirs of their fathers. Men prefer working for male canoe owners who know what they are doing and whom they thus cannot cheat, nor feel cheated and humiliated by. Fishermen share the same codes for appropriate behaviour according to their gender and profession, and feel that female codes cannot be integrated into the masculine field of fishing.

I think the residence pattern is of great importance when we try to understand why it is so difficult for women in Kpone to involve themselves in male spheres. By using the residence pattern as a metaphor, one could say that a woman who tries to manage a male canoe company would feel like the woman who has to live among men in the *hiiamli*. And when men feel humiliated by female canoe owners who employ their "aggressive" market strategies, it is perhaps a feeling they recognise from childhood when they began to "feel like" leaving their mother's *yieamli* and move to their father's *hiiamli*. Men distance themselves from a sphere that they connect with their mother's food, love and caring, and with their grandmother's and aunts' authority, language and exposed bodies. They rather wish to identify themselves with the sphere they belong to; their father's *hiiamli* which is not filled with children's noise and women's gossip and the smell and smoke of fish that is processed. Women's compounds are further connected with menstruation. Women who menstruate are not to cook for any man, and is not to visit the *hiiamli*. Both sacred medicines and men's potency can be contaminated in the presence of menstruating women (Azu 1974:20). Men thus seek the purity of male companionship in both *hiiamli* and in canoes. When their father and grandfather's authority feels too heavy, men ally themselves with their brothers and build a new male space into which they receive women who give them children and enhance their position in the lineage. Through such fission men create a new lineage unit, and thus strengthen the lineage itself and the common interest they have with the other men of their house.

Women's main interests are vested in the *yieamli*, in their daughters, and in the female market hierarchy. Material and symbolic capital obtained in these fields are not convertible into entrepreneurial activity and accumulation of capital in the fisheries. Even when marriage to a husband who is willing to lend her capital becomes a channel to invest in the fisheries, the conversion barriers of masculine ideology that she meets in interaction with the fishermen she employs, inhibit the success of her enterprise and makes female strategies in female spheres more worthwhile.

In the following, I will look in greater detail at the careers of some of the women in Kpone and examine which strategies they have had access to and have employed in their enterprises, and which constraints they have met in their attempts at climbing in the female hierarchy and converting capital into other fields.

## **Building a house with fishing nets**

For four years Akosua has been building on her house. She is 56 years old, and lives in the house with three daughters and her grandchildren: Akosua is establishing a new *yieamli*. Presently, these are Akosua's aspirations:

*"I believe the most important thing on this earth is life. If the Almighty gives you long life, you can do a lot of things. With life you can live and plan, and work. When you work you get money with which you can buy a lot of things and expand your business. Now that God has granted me life to be alive today, the only thing I need now is money to expand my business and accomplish my building project. I have been able to roof about three rooms now and I moved in only four months ago. If I get money, I'll be able to roof the rest of the house".*

To build a house is a gradual process. Akosua has a bank account, and every time she has saved enough money, she goes to the bank and withdraws the amount she needs to buy eight bags of cement: *"Then I do another a portion of the building. I have continued that way and have been able to reach this stage"*. Akosua also wishes to acquire her own canoe and outboard motor. She has her doubts about whether she will manage that because the fish supply of local canoes is so irregular and seasonal, and since she uses her savings on house building, she has no money to go to the cold stores in Tema with. However, the "stage" she has reached as a house owner with eleven fish smoking ovens, is a good achievement. We shall take a retrospective view on Akosua's career and see how she got there.

Akosua was born in Kpone in 1940, and her mother only had Akosua and her sister. She lived her first years in her mother's *yieamli*, but was fostered to a paternal aunt in Ada. The aunt and her husband (who was also from Kpone) were in Ada for some years fishing and smoking fish. When they moved to Accra, Akosua moved with them. In Accra, when Akosua was about twelve years old, a woman who was a dressmaker asked the aunt if Akosua could come and stay with her. However, after four years of working with child care, cooking and cleaning in the dressmaker's house, Akosua's father wanted her home:

*"He objected to the idea that I lived with someone who was not even our relative and did not live in the same place as us. Simply put, my father was not happy with my continuous stay with other people. He wanted me to live close to them."*

Thus Akosua moved to her mother, who lived in Accra at the time. She met a man from Kpone who was a carpenter, and whom she married. Later they moved to Kpone; the husband to his *hiiamli*, and Akosua to her mother's *yieamli*. For many years she lived there,

assisting her mother in fish smoking and trade together with her sister. Akosua did not have direct supply from a canoe since her husband was a carpenter, and not a fisherman. She thus bought fish from various Kpone canoes and from Tema. But she cooperated very closely with her mother and her sister and as long as their mother lived, they more or less shared expenses and income from the fish trade. They used their mother's ovens and the mother *"directed the business while we only assisted her in every aspect of the job."* Then the mother grew weaker and weaker:

*"When she became very old, she couldn't do much. She therefore did everything possible to see to that we would become as successful in the business as she was. [When our mother retired] my sister and I had to operate the business separately because we had to start establishing our own business independently for the sake of our children. My mother then approached her colleagues and borrowed money for us to operate our business. She introduced us to people from whom we could get fresh fish for sale".*

At this stage in her career, Akosua was still married to her carpenter. She was his only wife, and she had given birth to eight children. Some years before her mother retired, he died. Akosua also lost three of her children. One died while still a baby, one of the boys died while he was fishing in Cotonou in Benin, and another suddenly fell ill and died. She has three daughters and two sons now. Both of the sons are fishermen, crew members on Kpone canoes. Her daughters live with her and are fish smokers.

One of the investments Akosua made with the money her mother borrowed for her was to buy "flying-fish-nets" (*frikilo yaa*). Together with two other women she puts the nets in the canoe of her daughter's husband. Thus through initial capital from her mother and with access to male labour and expertise through her daughter, Akosua was able to invest in fishing equipment and to get direct access to fish. She also bought more smoking ovens, in addition to the ovens she inherited from the mother. The investment in fishing nets was an important stage in her career, since she so far had been dependent on buying fish from other women who added their profit on the sales price. Gradually, Akosua began to save money for the building of a house.

Another important event in Akosua's life was when she married again. This is only six years ago, so Akosua was fifty years old. She did, however, not feel too old to marry, and even though she had been the only wife of her first husband, she accepted to become the second wife of her new husband. Akosua felt she needed a man. Besides he was a canoe owner: *"I now collect fish from his canoe"*.

Thus, apart from the fish from her own nets, Akosua got access to fish from her new husband's canoe. Only two years after she had remarried, Akosua started building her house. Akosua is now operating her business in a similar manner as her mother:

*"My children and I do a kind of joint business transaction. They take the fish to the market to sell and come home to render accounts to me. They are my children, as such there is no rigid system of sharing money with them. They are very honest in dealing with me in the business. As a mother, I provide for all their needs in this house. They have children so I make sure I provide everything to cover both adults and children. Their husbands also provide for them and their children directly in any case. Since we are all smoking together, I also give them money to save and buy things for themselves. I provide them with cloth on festive occasions, jewellery, sandals, and so on".*

Akosua is in the process of accumulating material capital. Moreover, she invests in her position as a providing mother. When she gets old, her daughters will provide for her, and her death will be a great loss for them. She is in the process of establishing herself as "somebody", who eventually will become a respected elder. Her main field of investment is not her patrilineage, but her daughters. Akosua hardly mentions members of her lineage, her attention is focused on her mother, daughters and their children. Her sons are also very helpful. They come over from their late father's *hiiamli* every now and then, help her with lifting heavy things, and give her some money.

Akosua's sons are entitled to inherit property from Akosua. However, her sons cannot in practise (despite a patrilineal kinship ideology) pass on their mother's house to their children; it will revert to Akosua's daughters (which illustrates the tendency towards bilaterality in the Kpone kinship system). Akosua's investments in a *yieamli* and in fish smoking ovens, is thus not of much value for her sons. Her property is literally inhabited by her daughters and used in their occupation of fish trade.

When Akosua has finished her house, she aims at acquiring a canoe and an outboard motor. She is, however, pessimistic when she talks about that project. Irregular and insufficient supply of fish are the main obstacles she sees in her aim of becoming a canoe owner:

*"The problem with women in this town is that there is no other good business apart from fish business. And even the fish is not always available. It would be nice if we could deal in fish throughout the year, but that is not possible because we get fish only from our local canoes. When there is no fish, one needs to go to the cold stores [in Tema] but there is no money. We first have to sit down and wait till the next fishing season before we get fish from our local*



*canoes".*

Another obstacle is in the management of a canoe company. It would be in the interest of Akosua's sons if she invested in a canoe they could go fishing with. They could manage the canoe company for her. It would provide them with an occupation for the rest of their lives. It is, however, questionable if they would invest their labour in such a project. If they did, Akosua's sons would in practice be working for the future of their sisters' children who belong to other lineages than themselves and their children. Upon Akosua's death the canoe would be in the custody of her sister as long as she lives (even though it in practice probably would be managed and used by her sons), and then revert to Akosua's daughters. Working on a paternal relative's canoe would therefore be a better long-term solution for Akosua's sons.

At the moment, Akosua's highest aspiration is to complete her house. Akosua has converted capital from fish trade into nets that "*can go fishing for her*", and she is converting the fish acquired through her new marriage into further accumulation in fish trade and house building. So far, Akosua's strategies have resulted in accumulation in female spheres. She enhances her stock of both material and symbolic capital in her *yieamli*. If she ever manages to become a canoe owner, it is with the aim of getting access to more fish for further accumulation, not primarily in her patrilineage, marriage or in fisheries, but in trade and ultimately for her children. Both sons and daughters are entitled to inherit the self-acquired property of their mother. In practice, however, since sons have their interests vested amongst the male members of their patrilineage, and have moved from their mother's house to the *hiiamli*, it is the daughters who continue living in their mother's *yieamli*, who benefit most from the inheritance of their mother's property. They will inhabit and use the material results of their mother's effort and carry on her work.

### **Mary's career: A downward spiral**

Mary, who is 59 years old, had a childhood similar to Akosua's, but presently she finds herself in a situation where she is barely able to feed herself. Mary sums up her life:

*"My whole life has been centred on how to get money for my fish business, how to cater for myself and look after my children. Every moment of my life I have been thinking so much, even at night. Now I have resigned myself to fate, hoping that one day all will be well with me. Life can be really tough for a woman, especially when there is nobody or anywhere to look up to [get*

*support from]. The only person I can put my hope in is God. I know that I still have strength and can work to change my life for the better, but the means are not available so that I can do what I am capable to do. For every person in this world, be it man or woman, work is the only way to get money to achieve anything in life. Ironically, without money it is difficult to get anything done, which is trading in my case".*

Mary was formerly a fish trader, but has given it up. She now sells cooked yam with *kantomire*, a popular dish in Ghana, which she daily goes around in Kpone selling from a pot that she carries on her head. Why has Mary given up fish trade?

Mary was born in Accra to parents from Kpone in 1937. Her mother was a fish smoker and her father was a fisherman who established a store where he sold nets, lines, hooks, cork, and so forth. At the age of five, Mary was sent to her maternal aunt in Akuse in the Eastern Region, where she stayed for ten years. Her aunt was a trader who was married to a man who worked at the Post Office in Akuse. At the age of fifteen, Mary moved back to her parents, who still lived in Accra. She and her mother began to buy fish from the motor boats of the Workers Brigade<sup>5</sup>. Mary sold the fish fresh from these motor boats to processors and traders. She was a middlewoman, not a fish smoker, although she had learned to smoke fish from her mother. By the end of the fifties the Brigade ceased to operate, and Mary had to find other sources of fish supply. The construction of Tema Fishing Harbour and the motorisation of the canoe fisheries provided new opportunities. Mary moved to Tema and bought fish from various of the motorised canoes that began to land fish there, and from a "wooden trawler" (inshore vessel) which was owned by a woman from Koforidua. Between the age of thirty and forty Mary was at the height of her career as a middlewoman in Tema. She not only sold fish but also provided credit for fishermen and other traders.

Until 1976 Mary lived together with a driver from Tema. She got many children with him, but he never performed the marriage rites for her. After the fifth child, Mary "*started insisting on it*", and her parents also tried to persuade him. The marriage was very problematic, and after the eighth child, they separated. Mary was almost forty years old. Thus, during her main childbearing years, Mary lived with a man who did not support her very much, and without the support and help of female relatives in a *yieamli*. However, through her trade in fish in Tema Fishing Harbour, which during the sixties

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<sup>5</sup> According to Nukunya (1969:169), the Workers Brigade was established by the Government in 1957 to employ ex-military-service men and unemployed school leavers, mainly in farming, construction and fishing.

and early seventies was expanding considerably, Mary was able to support her increasing number of children. In the mid seventies both her marriage and her fish trade in Tema collapsed:

*"As time went on, more people started acquiring more canoes. The volume of fish increased. But fish traders also became many. Profit margins became lower. The beginning of bankruptcy had set in. There are many ways a fish trader's business can collapse, and I will tell you a few examples.*

*Firstly, the volume of fish that fishermen catch fluctuates from time to time or even day to day. When the early canoes arrived (...) we either sold the fish fresh at the beach or kept it at the cold store to be sold later. But if the canoes had small catches, we usually waited for the other canoes to arrive before we bought more. If one is unfortunate the subsequent canoes may come with very large volumes of fish which attract very low prices. Those who bought their fish early at high prices had to compete with the low price buyers. Both early and late fishes attract the same price that day. Since fish is a perishable item one only has to sell it at a loss. Fish is not like cloth you can store for a long time and sell later, it spoils.*

*A second problem is that women usually lend money to the canoe owners who supply them with fish to buy fuel or to repair their equipment, with a promise of paying the women back when they catch fish. If one is unfortunate, the canoe may not catch any fish. All the money invested may be lost and one cannot get any money to even buy fish elsewhere.*

*The third problem is that a fish smoker may buy and store fish in small quantities for a period of time, especially when fish is abundant. After some time when she decides to send it to the market to make huge profits, it may happen that other traders have also brought their fish to the market. Fish becomes so abundant in the market that the price may fall drastically, and this affects you. The fish you bought at about 50,000 cedis may sell at 30,000 cedis, then you have lost 20,000 cedis which you cannot get back. Your customers won't consider renegotiating with you. These, and many other problems contributed to my downfall in the fish trade at Tema".*

Facing both economic and marital problems, Mary decided to move back to Kpone with all the children *"to start life afresh"*. She got a room in her mother's sister's *yieamli*. Mary now had to try other strategies: *"I came without any money and decided to start selling something that did not require much starting capital"*. Mary began to sell cooked yam. She was able to get yam on credit from some women she knew in Tema, and gradually paid them back as she sold her cooked meals in Kpone. After a while she was able to start the fish trade again, smoking the *"bigger fish"* of the Kpone canoes.

Mary married a new driver. He had worked for the State Transport Corporation in Takoradi, and had moved back to Kpone upon his retirement. Mary has no children with him, and he does not have much money. Nor is he the father of her children, so he has not supported her very much. Mary managed, however, to support her children and to sent some

of them to school. After about ten years of smoking fish in Kpone, Mary again encountered serious problems in her life:

*"I lost four of my children, two sons and two daughters. Eight years ago I lost my first daughter. She died as a result of excessive bleeding when she gave birth at the hospital. The other daughter suffered from a sudden stroke. Then my son died of jaundice. All this in addition to the boy I lost when he was one year and ten months old. It is, indeed, a very painful experience for a woman to give birth to children, suffer to bring them up hoping that they are the greatest social security for me when I am aged. But suddenly death comes and destroy four out of them. The worst of it all is that these children were sick for some time while I spent almost all my money to pay for their medicine and treatment. Just when I thought they would survive, death claimed their lives. It is a very terrible experience".*

The father of the children did not contribute to the children after the separation, and since he had not performed the marriage rituals, the children were not formally members of his lineage. Mary's children's hospital bills and deaths left her indebted and miserable. Four years ago she had to give up the fish trade again. It was difficult for her to get fish on credit in Kpone, since she has no son, father or husband through whom she has rights to buy fish. When catches are small, which Mary claims that they increasingly are, she is not high up on the list of fish buyers: *"I stopped because the fish I got from the fishermen was virtually like nil. I began to sense danger. I quickly had to turn to something else"*. Mary thus returned to her selling of cooked yam, which she earns less on than on fish trade. Her profit margin is very low, so she is not even able to send her grandchild, who lost the mother, to school. If she had money to start fish trade again, she would do it, but she is not able to get credit.

Mary never invested in fishing equipment, and her investments in trade and motherhood failed her. She had more access to buy fish during her years in Tema, but when both fish trade and marriage failed her, she faced many difficulties because she did not have a close network of relatives and the companionship of women in a *yieamli* to support her. Although Mary had a good start in her career, her case shows that there is a sharp edge between success and failure in fish trade, and that investment in the field of kinship through co-residence with sisters is a wise long-term strategy, rather than the risk it is to go in for co-residence with a husband and an individual trading career. Apart from petty trade, Mary now participates in another field where she feels she gets, if not material, at least moral and emotional support; Rama United Church, which is one of the many spiritual Christian congregations.

## Coming from the outside

The stories of two other women, allow us to compare Kpone with a rural Fante (Nyanyano) and an urban Ga (Accra) context. They both moved to Kpone through marriage to men from Kpone, and thus interpret the context they moved into in light of past experience. One of them is Auntie Mansah, a sixty year old Fante woman from Nyanyano, who has lived in Kpone for twenty years. The other is Dei, a fifty year old Ga woman from Accra, who is married to one of the members of the chief fisherman's council in Kpone. They come from fishing communities where many women at their age have canoes. Both Auntie Mansah and Dei are firmly established in fish processing and trade in Kpone. Neither of them have, however, been able to invest in canoes there. I attempt to let their cases tell us something about opportunities and constraints for female canoe ownership in the context of Kpone, as these "immigrants" compare it with their home towns.

Dei is a woman who brought with her new ideas from the "outside". Speaking from her Accra background, Dei puts emphasis upon the lack of fish supply and diversity of preservation methods in explaining the lack of investment in canoes by Kpone women. Dei is from Chorkor on the western side of Accra. After three children and a divorce, Dei "*relaxed for some time*" before she fell in love and got pregnant with a man from Kpone who was on seasonal fisheries with his canoe in Chorkor. He performed the marriage rituals and has remained her husband ever since. They have five children together. Her husband has two other wives in Kpone, but after some years Dei also moved to Kpone. She now lives in the *hiiamli* of her husband's brothers. Her husband is a member of the chief fisherman's council, and an influential man in Kpone. In Accra, Dei was smoking "Keta school-boys", smoked anchovy, which is the type of fish which is best suited for the Chorkor smoker. Dei comes from the area where the new smoking technology was first promoted by governmental agencies, and the Chorkor smoker is widely used in her home community. One of the first things Dei did when she moved to Kpone was to build Chorkor smokers:

*"Hardly any women smoked small fish in Kpone because it is not their tradition. The women are used to smoking only the big fishes and they only have oil drum ovens. My coming here has injected a new outlook into the fishing business in Kpone. Before I came, nobody was interested in handling the anchovies. Quickly I organised the equipment to smoke the small fish, and to dry some as well. What the women of Kpone don't realise is that handling these tiny fishes can be very lucrative. Thus I can claim I am the first person to introduce the skill and technology in*

*handling small fish in Kpone. Now some people here have acquired the Chorkor smoker and handle small fish very well."*

As we see, Dei tried to improve her profit potential of fish trade through the adaptation of new fish smoking technology when she moved to Kpone. According to herself, she has been a great innovator. Dei is an entrepreneur who has fused her skills and knowledge about fish processing technology with marriage to a powerful man in Kpone. She has given birth to many children and is a respected person in Kpone. She aims at building a house, which eventually will turn into a *yieamli* for her daughters. However, despite of being married to a man who owns two canoes (one of them a *watsa*) and of being one of the wealthiest women in Kpone herself, Dei does not convert capital from her Chorkor smoking enterprise into canoe ownership, as many women have done in Accra. Commenting upon the constraints she faces in Kpone, Dei says:

*"I have always wished to own a canoe but it is a big problem. When I came to Kpone I continued with my fish smoking activities. But it is more difficult to deal in fish here, it is not a lucrative job. In Accra people come from all over the country to pay a lot of money for fish, which makes one able to make huge profits. Since the profit margin is not big here in Kpone I cannot save enough money to buy the equipment. I tried to save some money but it was not enough to buy fishing equipment. I started to drain my savings, and it all got finished."*

Dei thus relates her inability of owning a canoe to the problems of earning enough money on fish smoking in the context of Kpone. However, since she portrays herself as one of the most successful fish traders in Kpone, it is tempting to assume that the reasons are more complex. The experiences of Auntie Mansah from Nyanyano may throw some light on other factors than the financial aspect of fish smoking.

Auntie Mansah met her husband when he was on seasonal migration to the Fante town Nyanyano. It is more than twenty years since she moved to live in his house in Kpone. They have six children, and she is his only wife. Her husband has a motorised canoe with *nifa-nifa* nets (gill-nets for tuna and shark). One of their sons is captain on his canoe. Eight years ago, Auntie Mansah invested in three "flying-fish" or *frikilo yaa* nets. Her nets are put together with the nets of five other women into a man's canoe. The canoe owner also provides the outboard motor, a steersman, and is himself the captain. The women net owners provide crew members who handle their nets<sup>6</sup>. Two of Auntie

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<sup>6</sup> Men are also often net owners, and may go fishing with the nets themselves.

Mansah's sons go fishing with her nets. The six women operate on an individual basis: Each of them has her own container in the canoe, where "her" fisherman puts the fish from her net.

Through net ownership Auntie Mansah has direct access to fish supply, in addition to the fish she gets from her husband's canoe, and the fish she buys at the cold stores in Tema. Net ownership seems to be an acceptable investment for women in Kpone. In this form of ownership the fishermen relate to a male canoe owner, who is the manager of the activities of the crew, and of the nets of the various women. As long as the female net owner gets her fish, she does not interfere with the fishing operations. Female net ownership does not alter the authority structure in the canoe company, and can thus be seen as an extension of women's market strategies, and not as a positioning within the field of fisheries.

Auntie Mansah's sister in Nyanyano has invested her market capital in both canoe and outboard motor in order to increase her supply of fish. This is, however, not a strategy that Auntie Mansah has considered employing in Kpone. Neither have the six net owners considered to join their capital and invest in a canoe and outboard motor together. We asked Auntie Mansah about why women in Kpone do not own canoes. She explains the extent of female canoe ownership in Nyanyano with a multiple set of reasons; the scale of fishing, processing and trade; institutionalised female leadership; and credit from family (i.e. matrilineage and husbands).

The scale of fisheries, and hence the volume and variety of fish types, and the Fante fish traders' ability to *"satisfy people all over the country"* are, according to Auntie Mansah, factors that enhance the financial position of women in Nyanyano, and thus their ability to invest in canoes. She also mentions the *konkohene* ("leader of fish traders") as an institution which strengthens women's bargaining position in relation to the fishermen: *"The men [there] cannot dictate a price to the women as it is done in Kpone"*.

However, as other Kpone women, Auntie Mansah mainly sees the inability of women to own canoes as a financial problem related to the lack of access to credit. For example, she complains about the banks that do not consider women as creditworthy customers. She admits that this is the case also in Nyanyano, but as she says: *"Some women [there] have very rich people in their family whom they rely on to finance their canoes"*. As we remember from Moree, members of the matrilineage, but in particular canoe owning

husbands, are important sources of credit in addition to women's own savings when they purchase canoes.

In Kpone, male members of the patrilineage are seldom mentioned as sources of credit for women. Women mainly get credit from other women; mothers, other female relatives, and trading colleagues. And significantly, although Kpone husbands sell fish on credit to their wives, they are not very supportive to the idea of their wives owning canoes. Neither are there any cases of sons working as captains for their mothers (on motorised canoes). Women in Kpone therefore lack conversion channels in the form of male relationships (i.e. social capital) that can give them access to resources (credit and knowledge, i.e. material and cultural capital) beyond female domains. Women's kinship and marriage relationships with men only give them access to resources that enhance their female positions as fish traders, wives and mothers, not as authority persons in fisheries in positions with masculine connotations.

Women in Kpone thus limit their conversion of market capital into fisheries to the least expensive of the fishing gear; nets. They also invest in the fisheries indirectly by the credit they give for maintenance of equipment and other investments to their husbands, sons, or canoe owners for whom they are middlewomen. Thus, women's capital is converted into the male sphere of fishing in Kpone through the extension of credit, but their capital is "invisible" because women do not enter authority positions in male spheres. As creditors for canoe companies, but not owners of canoes, women remain firmly located within the female market sphere.

In my interpretation, there are not barriers against conversion of capital from the market sphere into fisheries, as such, in Kpone. It is when women become canoe owners and managers, perhaps what could be called *embodied positioning within the field of fishing*, that men have problems with the presence and "visibility" of women's material and symbolic capital in fisheries. This value orientation results in a willingness by husbands to give credit to their wives for market and child care purposes, but an unwillingness to support them with credit and crucial expertise in a canoe enterprise. Moreover, women in Kpone lack one of the most important factors for success in the management of a canoe company that female canoe owners usually possess in Moree; a son who has interests at stake in his mother's enterprise. Kpone sons work for their fathers to enhance the continuity of the patrilineage. By working with his brothers on his father's canoe, and pooling of resources with them and other agnates, a tangible result could for example be



the building of a new *hiiamli* (men's house). The patrilineal kinship ideology and the bilateral elements in residential and inheritance practice thus creates quite different interests for a son in relation to his mother in Kpone than the interests of a Fante son, who works for his position in the matrilineage and lives in the tangible expression of his mother's or mother's brother's (not his father's) enterprise; the *fie* (matrilineal residential unit).

Thus, Auntie Mansah's constraints are not only of an economic nature. She also lacks matrilaterally related women to rely on (since she is not born in Kpone), and her sons' affiliation is primarily with their father's lineage to which she does not belong. Through net ownership she mobilises the labour of her two youngest sons, but only as crew members on another man's canoe. Her oldest son, however, is captain on his father's canoe, where Auntie Mansah buys fish. The labour, skill and capital of her husband and sons thus increases her access to fish supply, but their male expertise in fisheries is not available for Auntie Mansah in a way that she can utilise in the management of a canoe company. Her strategy is thus to build up her enterprises within the field of fish marketing: Even though Auntie Mansah has daughters who help her, she also adopted a teenager girl some years ago, who is now twenty-nine years old and her closest cooperation partner in fish processing and trade. In other words, Auntie Mansah compensates for her lack of female relatives in Kpone, and aims at establishing her own *yieamli* with time.

Both Dei and Auntie Mansah face the same constraints as other women in Kpone. Their strategies to overcome the constraints are "coloured" by their experiences from their home towns: Auntie Mansah invests in nets and has thus been able to convert capital from the market sphere into the fisheries, but in an acceptable and "modest" manner. Dei invests in new fish processing technology, a particularly profitable strategy when this was still a new idea in Kpone. But even though her fish smoking business was successful, she is not able to apply her entrepreneurial strategies in becoming a canoe owner.

As the cases of Auntie Mansah, Dei, and other women's careers in Kpone have demonstrated, women *are* able to build houses and Chorkor smokers, to buy nets, and to finance their husbands' fishing equipment, but they are *not* able to become canoe owners, despite their knowledge of the profitability of such an enterprise. The lack of female canoe owners in Kpone is clearly related to variables like scale of fisheries and trade, collective organisation of traders, and fish smoking technology. However, the fact

that women are able to accumulate capital from fish trade *despite* these constraints, but are *not* able to manage canoe companies in Kpone successfully, indicates that the patrilineal kinship ideology, and the dual-sex residence and inheritance practices, create a situation where men's interests are vested in the fields of fishing and in the male section of the patrilineage. To invest labour and capital in women's enterprises, and thus in the long-term interest of these women's children (in practice primarily their daughters), would be a short-sighted strategy for a man in Kpone. In a long-term perspective the material outcome of his investments would be inherited by daughters whose children belong to other lineages than himself. Therefore, credit from husbands for the purchase of a canoe, and the recruitment of sons as captains, are not channels for the conversion of market capital into fisheries and profitable canoe enterprises, that are available to women in Kpone. Women's entrepreneurial strategies therefore remain within the fields where they have access to resources; in fish marketing and in the *yieamli* (women's house). This hypothesis is in line with Robertson's (1984) contention mentioned above, where she says that Ga women's lack of authority within the patrilineage, "both ideologically and practically" (Ibid:48), is an incentive for them to expand *where they can*; in fish marketing but not beyond.

When women like Auntie Mansah and Dei, who move *to* Kpone are not able to overcome the barriers of male domains, I asked myself whether women who move *out* of the local context are able to be managers of male canoe companies. In order to find out whether women who "stepped out" could employ other strategies, we went to Tema to look for Kpone female canoe owners. We found one.

### **Becoming visible in Tema Fishing Harbour**

The fish market in Tema represents an opportunity for women to be large-scale dealers. This gives them an opportunity to accumulate capital and to get access to credit from other large-scale dealers. The majority of women in Tema Fishing Harbour are from Tema, but there are also many women from Ada, and women who do not come from a fisher family background. The latter may be educated, having worked in the formal sector, or have acquired capital in other sectors of the economy, which they invest in fish trade (see Odotei 1991 Vol II). A lot of women invest in canoes and motors in Tema, often after long careers as middlewomen and providers of credit for various canoes and inshore vessels.

In Tema there are many fish dealers from Kpone. This is one of the reasons for Kpone *watsa* canoes to land "small fish", anchovy, in Tema. They often deliver fish to a middlewoman from Kpone in Tema, who is able to give the fishermen a better price for the anchovy in Tema than in Kpone. These women resell the fish to other women in Tema who smoke "Keta schoolboys" on Chorkor smokers on a large scale. Instead of the kinship and credit based fisheries in their home town, Tema Fishing Harbour canoe owners and fish dealers operate in a more commercial manner. With the opportunity to operate on a large scale, they hope to make more money out of fishing than at home. Between Tema Fishing Harbour and Kpone, a community has thus evolved, which best can be characterised as a "fish smoking factory". In Tema New Town, as it is called, many of the fish dealers and fishermen from different parts of the country have constructed simple houses or shanties, where they live permanently or parts of the year, in order to make the most out of the good fish supply available in Tema Fishing Harbour.

Kpone women thus pursue careers as commercial fish dealers in Tema, but not many of them become canoe owners. However, we found Dede, who was pointed out by the other fish dealers as the only canoe owner from Kpone at the moment (in May 1995). How did Dede become a canoe owner, and how does she manage her canoe company?

Dede, who is approximately fifty years old, was "*born into fish business*" in Kpone. She has given birth to five children, of whom two girls and a boy are alive. Dede's son is a carpenter in Kpone, her daughters help with her fish business. Her husband died one and a half year ago. He was a fisherman, but did not own a canoe. Dede's father, on the other hand, was a canoe owner, and when he died, his children inherited his canoe, motor and *watsa* (purse seine). Dede was running the canoe company together with her brothers in Kpone; the brothers were in charge of fishing activities, and Dede was the wholesaler of the canoe's catch. It did not go so well in Kpone, so the brothers started selling their fish in Tema. Dede thus put up a house in Tema New Town and continued selling fish from her late father's canoe in Tema. Together with her two daughters she also smoked fish there.

After four years in Tema, Dede was able to buy a new canoe, an outboard motor and a *watsa* with the capital she had earned as middlewoman for her brothers. She also got credit from wholesale traders in Tema. For six years now, Dede has been a canoe owner. Dede is, however, reluctant to say that the canoe is hers alone: "*Both my brothers' canoe and my own canoe are ours*"; the canoes represent the continuity of the heritage of their

father. Nevertheless, Dede is the manager of a canoe company with a crew of eighteen men.

While Dede's brothers fish together with men from Kpone, Dede has hired fishermen from Ada instead. Dede finds it problematic to work with fishermen from Kpone:

*"They expect to get something out of the fishing every day, so the money can never grow. In Tema I pay my crew about once a week, so that when they sit down and share the money, all of them have achieved something."*

As canoe owner and employer of the Ada crew, Dede mainly deals with the captain. He organises the crew for her, and allocates the money he receives for the crew between the men. Dede and the crew share the catch according to the *fifty-fifty* system. After petrol has been deducted, Dede owes the crew half of the total amount of the "beach price" of the catch. Her daughters smoke the fish, or Dede sells the whole catch fresh to the Tema fish dealers. In this way, Dede is able to earn substantial amounts of money.

Dede's daily interaction with the fishermen goes through the captain. She bargains the price through the captain on the beach, and provides them through him with money for petrol for the next fishing trip. She does not provide the fishermen with food and has nothing to do with their wives. Dede buys the whole catch, sells it, and pays the crew their share once a week through the captain. Dede is not the mother, wife, sister or cousin of any of her crew members. For the crew, Dede is the owner of the canoe with which they go fishing, who so to say has employed a "managing director" - the captain - who is the person with whom the fishermen interact in their daily work.

Clearly, the captain of the crew is a crucial partner for Dede in the management of her canoe company. There must be a relationship of mutual trust between them. Dede has to know that the fishermen are professional and that she is not being cheated. The captain must feel that Dede is not pricing the fish too low and that the crew members are remunerated sufficiently for their effort in comparison with what they get from other canoe owners. The fact that a female canoe owner from Kpone employs a man from Ada as her captain and most trusted partner, and that she employs crew members from a different place than her home town, is significant.

While female canoe owners in Moree employ sons as captains, whom they feel they can

control and who have a common interest in the success of their mother's canoe company, women in Kpone must seek other strategies. Their sons' interests are vested in the work and property of their father and the patrilineage. It is thus difficult for women to find men whom they can employ as captains, in relation to whom they necessarily must, as canoe owners, have a position of authority. Men respect their mothers as symbols of love and providers of food. They come from the womb of their mothers, but belong to the house of their fathers. The respect they have for their fathers is different. A father's word is law. Sons feel an obligation to help their father with fishing (as daughters feel towards their mothers in fish smoking). Boys receive knowledge about manhood and fishing from their fathers, and when they support their fathers, they feel they are working for their own future.

Even when women in Kpone try to employ men to whom they that are not related (through kinship or marriage), they meet barriers against female intrusion in the male field of fishing. Men in Kpone, in their home town, do not consider women's knowledge and strategies as relevant for their fisheries. Moreover, the fishermen know the woman's husband, her father, uncles, cousins and sons, and find it difficult to be "managed" by a woman, whose male relatives are their equals. In other words, since the male members of a lineage or a husband have authority over a woman in her roles of granddaughter, daughter, sister, or wife - even if she is a canoe owner - it becomes difficult, not only for her relatives or husband, but also for other men to take her orders. Subordination is gender-appropriate masculine behaviour for men in relation to other men in the field of fishing, but it is *inappropriate* masculine behaviour in relation to women, particularly when the woman is located in a male field where *her* behaviour is gender-*inappropriate* too.

Dede "stepped out" of the Kpone context and employed men from Ada, towards whom her relationship is solely connected with fishing. By avoiding the fields of kinship and marriage in management issues, Dede could invest her market capital into the field of fisheries. Dede's lineage resources were, however, important in that she inherited production capital in fishing from her father, and accumulated market capital through her brothers' carrying on fishing with their father's canoe. Dede cannot transfer the inheritance from her father (i.e. the right to buy fish from his canoe) to her own children. When she dies, this right reverts into the patrilineage, of which her children are not members. However, by converting capital acquired through marketing, indirectly derived from resources she got access to through her patrilineage, Dede was able to acquire a

canoe that makes it possible for her to employ her daughters, to secure their future and her own old age. It is not clear what will happen when Dede's children inherit her canoe. Since her only son is a carpenter in Kpone, and is not a skilled fisherman, he would not be in a good position to manage the canoe together with his sisters. Possibly, Dede's daughters will continue the fish business in Tema through an unrelated manager, as their mother does.

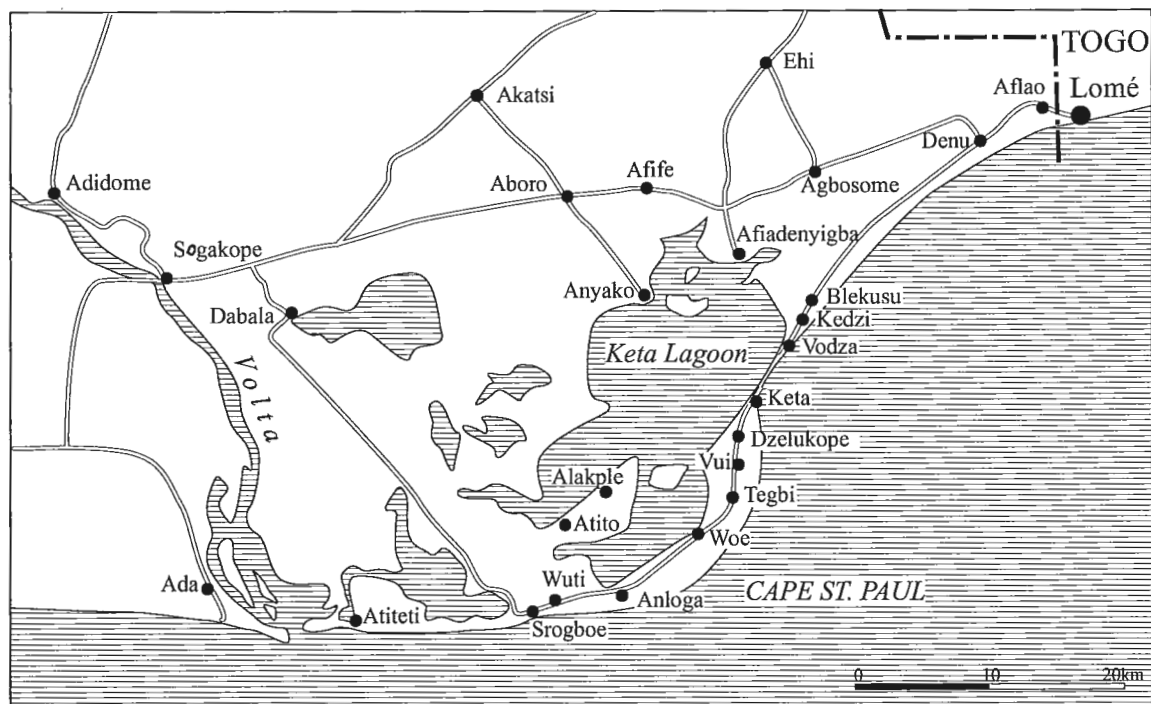
## Summary

This chapter has shown that resources in the fields of marriage and kinship (rights to buy fish and access to other women's labour) are important in the careers of women in Kpone, and in their accumulation of both material and symbolic capital in the market, in the women's house, and in their roles of mothers, sisters and wives. However, while Moree women negotiate and cross the gendered boundaries between fishing and marketing through kinship and marriage relations, Kpone women with the aim of establishing profitable enterprises beyond the market field must remain "invisible owners" in their local context through provision of credit or net ownership, or become "visible" somewhere else. By moving her fishing activity out of the sight of men in Kpone, Dede found a channel through the gendered barriers between the fields of fishing and marketing. Through capital from marketing, she could employ a mediator - her Ada captain - of the barriers between the male and female spheres.

I will next examine how gendered boundaries create opportunities and constraints for Anlo-Ewe women in the fish-based economy of Dzelukope. As we shall see, the characteristics of the fields of marketing, fishing, kinship and marriage in Dzelukope, and the intersections between them, constitutes a context, and a pattern of female entrepreneurship, that is different from both Moree and Kpone. Nevertheless, we will recognise many similarities in the strategies and lives of both women and men in these three coastal communities.

### 3.3. Dzelukope

Dzelukope is a predominantly Anlo-Ewe town on the strip of land between the Keta Lagoon and the Atlantic ocean. *Kope* means a village; Dzelukope was founded by Togbui Dzelu I. The town is located three kilometres west of Keta, which was a major trade post during the slave trade era and an important port far into this century (see Greene 1996). The Anlo-Ewe, or Anlo, is one of several Ewe groups which trace their origin from the northern part of Yoruba-land (Nigeria), which they left about five hundred years ago, and the town Notsie in Togo (Bukh 1979:15). They have never comprised one political entity, but their various dialects and cultural practices have common traits. The Ewe group distinguishing themselves as Anlo were refugees escaping from the advancing armies of the Akwamu state at the end of the seventeenth century (Greene 1996:20). The Akwamu, however, later occupied the Anlo area around the Keta Lagoon for one hundred years (1734-1833), and it was plundered by the Ashanti armies in 1868-71 (Amenumey 1964).



Map 13. Dzelukope in the Anlo-Ewe area surrounding the Keta Lagoon east of the River Volta.

The area east of River Volta was incorporated into the colony of the British in 1874. Quarrels between the colonial powers later resulted in an arbitrary division of the various Ewe groups in the area; first between the British and the Germans, and after the first world war between the British and the French. After a referendum in 1956, Trans-Volta (the

English administered half of the Ewe area) became the Volta Region in the new independent Ghana in 1957, of which the Anlo constitute the southern and coastal part (see Bukh 1977:18). Other parts of the various Ewe groups remained under French administration in Togo. There is still a lot of interaction between relatives and trading activity across the borders of Togo and Ghana, although contact has been difficult in periods when relations between the two governments have been tense.

During and between the periods of war and colonial expansion, European traders extended their operations and brought in new opportunities for acquiring wealth on the Anlo littoral. During the era of slave trade and later palm oil export, Dzelukope was an important victualling centre because of its location near Keta. Wealth acquired through European and Trans-Atlantic trade was a main factor behind investment by local entrepreneurs in new fishing technology (Nukunya 1989:171). As mentioned, the first beach seine was imported by an Anlo female trader in Woe between 1850 and 1874 (Greene 1996:165). Until the introduction of the large nets, lagoon fishing had been a rich source of fish, but already at the end of the eighteenth century signs of overfishing were observed in the Keta lagoon (see Greene 1996:165). With the introduction of beach seines, marine fishing became an important industry in the coastal Anlo towns after overseas trade came to an end and Keta's importance as a port dwindled.

The sandy and saline soil of the Volta delta has been a relatively poor area for farming. However, intensive irrigated shallot farming was developed, especially around Anloga, and poultry farming and sugar cane production (see Nukunya 1975). Copra was also important until the coconut palms were destroyed by disease in the 1940s and 1950s (Nukunya 1989). Moreover, Anlo men began to find employment in the public sector in the nineteenth century. With the limited space and farm land on the littoral, the Anlo put an effort into education of their sons. Many of these went abroad. Others came to occupy important positions in the Ghana government or state bureaucracy. Their feeling of belonging to the ancestral land is however strong. During my fieldwork in Dzelukope somebody of importance was brought home to be buried in the Anlo towns practically every other weekend. Posh cars from the capital and funeral dressed people travelling in overfilled public buses and mini-taxis came home to participate in these important events. The visitors stayed for at least three days, and funerals are thus a notable source of income for those who provide goods and services for the bereaved family and guests.

Today Dzelukope is a lively and densely populated town, with several schools and churches,



a hospital, a hotel, telegraph, post office, a bank, and the District Administration. These institutions are located along the road, while along the beach there is a substantial fishing community. Dzelukope has developed into a district centre with fishing as only one of many occupations.

The main cause for the growth of Dzelukope is the decline of Keta, caused by sea erosion. The strong surf and currents (possibly changed and enforced after River Volta was dammed up in 1966) have gradually reduced the width of the strip of land between the Keta Lagoon and the Atlantic ocean. Keta has thus literally disappeared into the sea, while sand has accumulated on the beaches of Dzelukope and the surrounding area further west. Since the 1960s, and especially in the mid 1980s, several big floods swept away houses at the shores of Keta. Keta's population thus declined from 16,719 in 1960 to 12,595 in 1984 (Ghana Population Census 1984), and now less than 10,000 people live in the town, or perhaps not more than 5,000. Many people have migrated to other parts of Ghana or abroad. Most of them, however, moved to the neighbouring villages. Therefore, the population of Dzelukope increased from 1,249 in 1970 to 2,131 in 1984. I would estimate that the town has more than 7,000 inhabitants today. More than a thousand of these make a living out of fishing<sup>1</sup>.

The days "*when Keta was Keta*" are remembered with nostalgia. Coming to Keta is now almost an encounter with a ghost town. The sea shore reaches up to Fort Prindsensten, which was built by the Danes in 1784. The fort once lay in the middle of town, but now only half of it is left. The road towards the east, connecting Keta with important markets in Denu, Aflao and Lomé, is no longer passable by car. Keta has thus become an end stop. Important institutions have been moved to Dzelukope, and the Keta market, one of the largest in this region, is no longer very important.

Throughout all these changes, fishing has continued. We shall now concentrate on the fishing community of Dzelukope.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the canoe frame survey of FRU in 1992 (Koranteng et. Al. 1993), there were 470 active fishermen in Dzelukope. With their estimate of 1.5 "dependants" per fisherman, the number of men, women and children who depend on fishing should be 1.112 persons. This is a very modest estimate.

## Organisation, work, and social relations in beach seine fisheries

While little fishing is taking place in Keta itself anymore, the number of beach seine companies has remained relatively stable the last ten years in the fishing community in Dzelukope. According to the District Chief Fisherman Dzelukope had twenty-two beach seines and four outboard motors in 1994. The canoe frame surveys of the Fisheries Department's Research Unit from 1986, 1989 and 1992 suggest that it was not until the nineties that a few of the companies bought outboard motors for their canoes in Dzelukope. Hill (1986:10) however reports that some Anlo beach seine companies were beginning to introduce outboard motors in the sixties. Most fishing activity, however, still depends on muscle power and paddled canoes.

In Dzelukope the predominant fishing technique is the beach seine - *yevudor* - which literally means "European net", or "white man's net". It was presumably introduced as a copy of Portuguese nets in Congo and Angola (Hill 1986:8) more than a hundred years ago (Greene 1996:165, Nukunya 1989:156). Some *agli* fishing (Ga *ali*, Fante *adii*) had been practised before the introduction of the beach seine. Fante fishermen used to come for the *afafa* (a type of mackerel, *caranx hippos*) season (Odotei 1991 Vol. II:131), but the rough surf on the Anlo coast did not provide ideal conditions for canoe fisheries on the high seas.

The environmental changes following the big dam project of Volta Lake (completed in 1966) had a detrimental impact on fish species that used the lower areas of River Volta as a spawning ground (see Odotei 1991 Vol. II, Nukunya 1989:166). *Afafa* and other fish stocks have thus been reduced. Fishing remains, however, a predominant occupation for those who remain on the Anlo coast (Nukunya 1989:165).

Seasonal and long term migration is an important feature of Anlo fisheries. Dwindling catches on the Anlo coast is one reason for fishing companies to move to places like Elmina, Cape Coast, Winneba and Half-Assini, and abroad to Benin, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Gabon and Congo (Nukunya 1989; Haakonsen and Diaw 1991). Migration is not a new phenomenon, and equally important as constraints in the home communities, such as overpopulation and reduced fish stocks, are the opportunities waiting for those who travel to fish elsewhere (Nukunya 1989). Women join the companies on migration, as wives or as company members. They cook for the crew and sell and process fish. Sometimes they have met strong competition from local women, such as in Benin (Odotei 1991a). However, while some Anlo migrants are fishing with a variety of methods, such as *agli* and *watsa*, beach

seining remains the predominant fishing method on the Anlo coast.

Beach seines are huge with long ropes on each side wing. Large nylon seine nets began to replace the cotton nets in the late 1950s<sup>2</sup>. At that time *afafa* nets could have side wings as long as 600 yards (548 metres) and a *yevudor* could have 200 yards (183 metres) side wings (Odotei 1992 Vol. I). Polly Hill observed a *yevudor* that was 300 yards long (1986:36). The size of beach seines thus varies. A net-owner in Dzelukope, for example, said that he had "one very big net, one big one, and then a small net for the young ones of the family". The beach seines are stored in houses built for that purpose on the beach.



*Photo 25. The texture of a beach seine spread out on the beach to be repaired. The net "contains" many generations of fishermen's work.*

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<sup>2</sup> I use the words *yevudor*, beach seine and net interchangeably. Beach seine is the correct technical term for a *yevudor*, while the English word used in Ghana is drag net, or just net.

Repairing the *yevudor* is a constant process. The net is almost like a living organism which gradually is replaced in bits and pieces. Thus it is common that a net owner says that the net is older than himself: The "same" net has gone from father to son for generations, although it has been totally replaced time after time. Polly Hill (1986) writes about the "immortality" of the beach seine. The net owner thus does not only inherit a material object, he inherits the responsibility to transfer the traditions of the family to new generations and is the custodian of the honour of the lineage. The net company is named after the owner. When a net owner dies, the elders of the family "sit down" to discuss the transfer of his property. Ideally, his oldest son is entitled to inherit the beach seine. However, if the oldest son is regarded as incapable, or perhaps is educated and has moved to Accra, another worthy candidate can be decided upon, preferably the brother who is closest in age to the oldest son. As I shall discuss in further, the image of the *yevudor* as a symbolic and physical continuation of the patrilineage represents a barrier that to some extent explains the lack of female ownership in Dzelukope fisheries.



*Photo 26. Dragging the canoe ashore after the yevudor has been hauled in.*

70-100 men may be required to drag the largest beach seines ashore. Thus a beach seine "crew" or *company*, which is the local word in use, often consists of a core of 50 men with an addition of casual workers. The work of the company consists mainly of hauling the long ropes of the seine from the sea to the beach. First, the net has to be set from a canoe in a half

circle from the beach by the *vukualawo* ("paddlers"), who are still called paddlers when the canoe is equipped with an outboard motor. The distance between the ends of the ropes is long, and one end of the rope is fastened to a tree or something else at the beach. The company hauls and hauls in the other end for some hours, fastens the rope and starts hauling in the other end. When the seine comes closer to the beach they haul in both ends until the bag in the middle, where fish is caught, is dragged up on the beach. As the seine comes closer to the shore, some of the men swim along the net, which is held up by cork floats, and make sure the *yevudor* is in order and does not get damaged. The whole process can take four to ten hours, depending on the size of the beach seine, the weather and the wind.

An owner (*doto*) of a beach seine is the ultimate leader of the company, and the company is named after him. A company also has two "captains" or *bosuns*; the *amega* (elder) and the *amega evelia*; first and second leaders. Together with the owner they decide when the net shall be cast. They consider the weather, the moon, the stars and other factors that influence the fishing. A company must always have at least one secretary. A secretary must of course be literate, he must have some experience with fishing, and he ought to be of some age. One secretary said:

*"You cannot come directly from the classroom because you have to know about the fisheries and you have to be very good in accounting. You also need some age, so that people will listen to you".*

Often the secretaries are men who have been employed in the military service or public sector and have returned to their home town upon retirement. They keep the accounts of the company, register the catch of the day, to whom it is sold and for how much, as well as the loans and payments to the company members each day.

Some owners run "freelance companies"; *kplormei* ("cast, draw and share"). Young boys who go to the beach after school, or others who are unemployed, work on these nets and are paid a share on the spot. For their participation in the hauling, they get at least a few fish that they sell or bring home to the cooking pot<sup>3</sup>.

Women are also employed in the companies. They are called *kakorviwo* - "those who carry the rope", and *tsikuviwo* - "those who fetch water". They coil up the rope as the men haul,

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<sup>3</sup> The *kplormei* may be a variant of the *mavee* system that Hill (1986) describes as a system where net owners who lack capital lets out his nets to someone else, so that the proceeds from selling the fish is equally divided between the net owner and the hirer (and his company) (Ibid:11).

they fetch water for the men to drink, or dig a hole in the sand to fetch fresh water from ground water level. Most of the women workers on Dzeluko companies, have moved



*Photo 27. Tsikviwo dig for fresh water on the beach.*



*Photo 28. Hauling. Female members of the company, the kakorviwo, carry the ropes.*

from Tegbi and from the villages on the northern side of the Keta lagoon to find employment. Often they are married to men who have migrated to work as fishermen, but husband and wife do not necessarily work for the same company.

Wives of the company members are entitled to buy fish from the beach seine. They come with their head pans to the beach when the *yevudor* is approaching the seashore. The wives are not members of the net company as such, but through marriage they are entitled to buy fish from the company where their husband works. The right to buy fish is organised in a rotation system, and the system varies from company to company. In one Dzelukope company the rotation goes all the way from the wives of the canoe owner and down to the last company member's wife until it starts at the top again. As the owner explains: "*Every woman is the doto srowo ("head woman") one day each*". In an other company the daughter of the elderly owner is entitled to buy the first pan every time, while the fishermen's wives have to wait for their turn in the rotation cycle. In yet another company the net owner's first wife buys the fish on the first day of the rotation cycle. Then follow two days when fishermen's wives buy fish, then a day where the canoe owner's second wife buys, followed by two days for the company members, and so on - until the canoe owner's fourth wife has had her turn. Then the rotation cycle starts with the owner's first wife again with the company members' wives in-between.

A rotation system is particularly important during the lean season (October to June) since the company often catches as little as one or two pans a day. During the main fishing season from July to September, there may be fish to buy for all the wives every day, apart from the non-fishing day, which in Dzelukope is on Wednesday. In such bumper periods, it is the ability to purchase fish that decides the quantity a woman can buy, and that ability usually depends upon her access to credit. The advantage for a net-owner's wife, then, lies in her possibility of making money during bumper catches when her husband can give her more credit than an ordinary crew member. As we shall see, and as Nukunya (1989:163) points out, the net owners are among the richest people in their communities. They are therefore normally able to give their wives credit to trade with. From my observations, however, credit relationships often caused conflict in the marriages of net-owners and their wives. Because net-owners had ambitions of having as many wives as possible, they were often unable to fulfil their economic responsibilities according to their status, and according to the expectations of their wives.

The hauling of the net takes many hours and is a tiring job, but the process is also a social

event. Many women go to the beach every day, even during the lean season on days when they know it is not their turn to buy fish from the net. They sell snacks or buy a little fish from small boys for the daily cooking. Some of them also feel that they "*have to show their face*" often, as a sign of commitment and availability, in order to increase the goodwill of the company members, to be given a "dash" (a small gift) of fish, or to buy on credit when there is a bumper catch.



*Photo 29. Waiting for fish.*

While the *yevudor* is dragged in, the fishermen sing with the rhythm of their labour. Two or three men are employed as singers, and they beat a gong-gong or bamboo sticks, and lead the singing of the company members. A good lead singer who knows the traditional songs and proverbs that express norms and values, and who can elaborate on the joys and sorrows of life, is highly appreciated. The singer must also be good at improvising, commenting on day-to-day activities and problems, events in one of the others' life, or telling jokes and stories.

Song themes could be wishes of prosperity and long life, dangers at sea, or the suffering of the ancestors. Death is a frequent theme. One song is about a fisherman's loss of his sister who died on her way to farm. The fisherman also appeals to his brothers to take good care of his body should he die, and he elaborates on his feeling of loneliness when he lies in his



grave and everybody goes home after the funeral. The death of a dear wife is another theme. A fisherman feels as if his arm has been cut off, and he is unable to do anything without his wife. He appeals to the others to take good care of the orphans, and asks the ancestors for help. Bad wives (who are quarrelsome, thieves, and not even beautiful) are another theme. They must be divorced or sent back home to receive more training. Other songs were about how disgusting and dishonourable it is to rape a young girl, and that one should stop damaging the lives of others through spiritual forces. To belong to a beach seine company thus involves much more than fishing. Company membership also involves companionship with other men, moral education and a social position within the company and in the community.

Beach seining requires dedicated work, discipline and solidarity among the members. When a man is recruited as a member of a company, he signs a contract for a "fishing year". A "fishing year" lasts for some months, a season or a year. If the company is on migration, the contract may last for two or three calendar years. The size of each fisherman's share is agreed upon at the signing of his contract. That is the annual salary he is going to be paid by the end of the "fishing year" - *donowuwu*. The fisherman receives an advance on his annual salary; first when the contract is signed, and then when the fishing year starts - *dogomedzedze* ("starting up the work").

The fishermen are remunerated according to effort; strong, middle-aged men earn more than the old and the very young. The women who carry ropes and fetch water are paid half as much as men. Company members must pay a fine (*ese*) if they are troublesome or offend somebody. They also have to pay a fine if they are late. Similarly a good effort can be remunerated with *vutega* - "extra payment when you help pushing the canoe". The company needs a core of strong men, but in many ways it also functions both as an educational institution and a social security system. Young boys are trained to become skilled fishermen, and old men are not kicked out of the company if they have lost the strongest power of their youth. There is also room for some hopelessly alcoholised men, or others with special problems. Lack of physical strength can to some extent be outweighed by wisdom or wit.

The net owner has an unquestioned position of authority and is, together with the *amega*, the manager of the capital of the beach seine company. It is the owner's responsibility to cover all losses, unforeseen expenses and investments on the net. He is thus in charge of the *agbadoho*; the capital fund of the net. The *agbadoho* is put in the bank or is kept in the net owner's bedroom. The size of the *agbadoho* is fixed, and is supposed to be in balance by the

end of the "fishing year". In case of major investments, such as an outboard motor, the company can decide to raise the size of the fund so that their annual payment as a consequence has to be reduced. The fishermen also borrow from the fund throughout the



*Photo 30. A beach seine owner with members of his company.*

year. All the loans are registered by the secretary, and are deducted from the yearly share by the end of the year. Interestingly, if a woman has bought fish on credit from the company and is not able to repay the debt, the sum will be deducted from her husband's "account" in the *agbadoho*. One easily sees the potential for marital conflict embedded in this arrangement.

Below follows the division of the annual income of a net company. The figures are in "£", which is equivalent to 2 cedis. Accounts are often made in "£", which was the currency in pre-independence days. These are accounts from 1991:

Figure 9. Calculation of the annual profits of a beach seine company.

Total earnings		£ 6, 558,675
Capital fund ( <i>agbadoho</i> )	-	£ 1, 269,000
Balance	=	£ 5, 289,675
Common expenses for drinks, rituals etc. ( <i>nugblegble</i> )	-	£ 17,750
Balance	=	£ 5, 271,925
Payment to casual workers	-	£ 120,000
Balance	=	£ 5,151,925
Various expenses ( <i>amegáxoxo</i> )	-	£ 500
Annual profit	=	<u>£ 5, 151, 425</u>

Source: Field notes, 1995.

The annual profit is divided in four parts. One part is for the net owner, and the three other parts are shared among the company members. In this company, which has 70 workers, the owner earns twenty-four times as much as the average company member.

In addition to an annual share the fishermen get "morning money" (*nyidiga*) every day and a little fish for the daily cooking; "chop fish". Most of the fishermen nonetheless receive such a small *nyidiga* that they constantly have to borrow from the *agbadoho*. The *nyidiga* may be 500 or 1,000 cedis for each working day (about enough to buy a piece of soap and a small roadside meal, or a bottle of beer). Their annual share is thus often "eaten up" by the end of the "fishing year". Thus fishermen look forward to the *dogomedzedze* - "starting up the work" - when they can sign a new contract and receive an advance of 20,000 or 50,000 cedis. The advances are subtracted from their shares by the end of the year; *donowuwu* - "the end of the fishing year". In this way the fishermen are almost always indebted to the owner<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Nukunya (1989:167) points out that the owner of a company runs a financial risk, while the fishermen mainly run a physical risk. If the catch is so low that the company members are unable to repay their advances because the owner can not pay them their annual share, the owner in practice has to cover the losses. The fishermen, on the other hand, risk to get no pay at all if the catches are so low that the owner cannot pay them what they agreed upon when signing the contract. According to Nukunya, an owner can be indebted for years after such a season. Platteau and Abraham (1987:474), on the other hand, point out that credit or "wage advances" can be seen as a labour-tying device. By extending credit to fishermen, the owners of equipment secure their access to labour when it is in great demand (during the main fishing season).

Sharing procedures of income in a beach seine company show the division of labour and the differentiation according to social status, physical strength, age and gender. Women are given half the share of a man, but are paid the same amount of daily *nyediga* and "chop fish". The example below is taken from a secretary's notebooks. He has one sales-book (*nufle-gbale*), where the fish sales to each woman, whether she has paid in cash or on credit, and whether she has paid her debt, is written down. The secretary also has a debt/loan-book (*gado-gbale*), where the daily payments to the fishermen and their loans and repayments are registered. The following is the annual balance of accounts of a *yevudor* company at the end of a "fishing year" (*donuwuwu*). The sums are in "£".

Figure 10. Allocation of a fishing year's income (27th May 1993) of a canoe company according to age, social status, relation by kinship to owner, and gender. Source: Field notes, 1995.

Status of company member	Annual share ("£")	Loan	Balance
1. Net owner	55 000		55 000
2. Senior brother	55 000	35 625	19 375
3. Brother	55 000	35 550	19 450
4. Amega (bosun)	52 000	18 900	33 100
5. Amega avelia	52 000	13 000	39 000
6. Secretary	52 000		52 000
7. Secretary	52 000	43 150	8 800
8. Secretary	52 000	52 650	Debt 650
9. Senior man	52 000	30 500	21 500
10. Net owner's son	52 000	44 700	7 300
11.- 14. Senior men	52 000		
15.-26. Young men	50 - 43 000		3 indebted
27.-53. Old men	43 - 25 000		6 indebted
53.-59. "Lazy ones"	23 - 15 000		
6 men who became members after the "year" had started	10 - 20 000		
The motor fitter	25 000		
10 women workers	25 - 8 000		



*Photo 31. The daily "chop fish" for the company members is separated from the fish that is sold to the women, and portioned out to each fisherman.*

Beach seine fisheries in Dzelukope, then, is a system where the net owner is at the summit of a hierarchy of workers. The fishermen are highly dependent on their patron, since he is the owner of the means of production. The owner is in custody of the capital of the company, and takes all major decisions for them. However, the owner depends upon the loyalty of his workers to make profits in fisheries. He thus has to compensate them sufficiently for their effort; in other words, to provide them with social security. One net-owner's widow expressed the relationship of mutual dependence between the owner and the fishermen like this: *"The fishermen will remain with you if you treat them very well. Earlier the net-owner's wife was responsible for cooking. Nowadays they rather share chop-money"*. A generation ago the work and treatment of company members by the net-owner's wife was important in the management beach seine companies. Nowadays the daily cash-payment has replaced her input.

Cash and material goods are, however, not the only forms of capital involved in the relationship between the owner and the workers he is able to recruit. The net owner also builds up his following through kinship ties, through a reputation of generosity when somebody is in bad need of money for a funeral or when a festival is approaching. By depicting himself as a fatherly (but powerful), generous (but firm), wise (but efficient) and

virile (but responsible) man, a net owner can mobilise reliable labour and maintain his position as a "big man" in the community. Such symbolic capital further enhance his position as patron among his company members. The *yevudor* owner's positions within his lineage, in marriage or in other fields, such as religion or politics, are therefore significant for his esteem among his company members.

Relations of production in Anlo fisheries have been discussed as "indigenous capitalism" (see Hill 1970, Jorijon 1988, Nukunya 1989). I will not enter that discussion here. In my view, a class perspective alone cannot capture how relations of production are interlinked with other social relations that are producing differential access to material and symbolic capital within - and beyond - Anlo fisheries. Why, for example, are there no female beach seine owners in Dzelukope?

### ***Yevudor* ownership and gender**

Nukunya (1989:162) points out that beach seines are acquired in two ways; through inheritance or through entrepreneurship. The female *yevudor* company owners I have heard of, clearly belong to the latter category. Women have either invested capital from fish trade, primarily accumulated on migration trips, they have invested capital accumulated in trade of other goods than fish (such as cloth trade in Lomé), or they have acquired capital through kin or a husband. Although there are no female beach seine owners in Dzelukope at present, there are Anlo women owners elsewhere. Nukunya (1989:161), for example, mentions a woman in Abidjan who became the effective owner of her husband's beach seine upon his death. The beach seine company is now successfully run by her son (who will inherit his father's net when the mother dies). I was also told about a Dzelukope woman who owned a *yevudor* company in Sierra Leone, which was run by her son. Another Dzelukope woman has a *watsa* canoe company in Tema. Further, a woman in Kedzi, east of Keta, owns *agli* and *watsa* canoes (prevailing fishing methods in that particular Anlo town). She has however moved her canoe companies to Tema. There are also women owners among Anlo migrants in Benin, but they primarily have *watsa* and *agli* canoes with outboard motors (Odotei 1991a)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Hill (1986:11) mentions that there were a few Anlo women net owners (in 1963) who were among those who let out their nets under the *mavee* system, sometimes on a daily basis.

To my knowledge, then, the few Anlo women who are owners of means of production in fisheries are either 1) living outside their home town, or, 2) not owners of beach seine companies, but of canoe companies, and mostly, 3) operating their companies through a male relative.

In my interpretation of fishing activity in Dzelukope, *yevudor* ownership is very much connected with masculinity, male authority and succession of both material and symbolic capital within the patrilineage. An owner must have control over as many as one hundred men (as compared with twenty in a *watsa* company). To be the manager of a beach seine company thus involves other problems than to be manager of a *watsa* company. Women may not have access to the combination of both symbolic and material capital that comprises a patron position in the field of fishing. An indication of the difficulties involved in female leadership of *yevudor* companies, could be that that the women who have substantial amounts of market capital choose to invest in *watsa* equipment instead of a *yevudor*.

As Odotei's (1991 Vol II, 1991a, 1991b) interviews with female canoe owners in Tema show, they face the same management problems in relation to their canoe crews as male canoe owners. They also face some additional problems because they are women (lack of knowledge about fishing and net types for example). Anlo women are, however, as other women, able to run such enterprises, especially when they migrate abroad or to an urban context like Tema. Some of them even own beach seine companies (operated through a trusted man) when they are abroad. What Anlo women nevertheless rarely do is to run beach seine companies in their home towns.

Significantly, then, Anlo women can own beach seine companies when they have removed themselves out of the local context. The parallel to the Kpone situation seems apparent: Women are able to be owners when they step out of the local context where they are not to the same extent primarily identified as wives, daughters or mothers. Wealthy Anlo women seem to experience the same when they migrate; fishermen no longer primarily see them as a woman who is a daughter or wife of a man, but as a provider of capital and employer in a foreign environment where they have travelled solely to fish. Social control from other fields, such as the patrilineage, is possibly also reduced in a foreign environment. I must however stress that I have no evidence of whether the opposite actually happens in some cases (that male control over women increases when they leave their home communities in groups).

As far as I can see, one can identify different types of constraints in the fields of fishing, the patrilineage, marriage and trade that inhibit women in establishing fishing enterprises: The construction of fisheries as a masculine field, the patrilineal ideology of continuity through men, the expectation of wives' subordination in relation to husbands, and declining opportunities for capital accumulation through fish trade as a result of reduced fish landings on the Anlo coast. In combination, and to a various degree in each woman's life, these factors impede female entrepreneurship in Dzelukope.

Before I examine the fields of the patrilineage and marriage, I will look at how processing and marketing of fish is done in Dzelukope, and to which extent capital from the market field can be accumulated and converted into fisheries or other fields.

### **Trade, processing and fish marketing**

Market trade has particularly in the twentieth century become an important occupation for Anlo-Ewe women. Until the latter part of the nineteenth century Anlo women had mostly been involved in exchange of surplus from their husbands' farm and their own plots. According to Sandra Greene (1996) Anlo women farmers and fishermen's wives were marginalised during the colonial period. Women had previously inherited land and been given usufruct rights to farm on some of their husband's land. British rule undermined men's profits in palm oil trade; British administrative control, posting of Hausa troops in Keta, and imposition of import duties (on the goods for which Anlo traders exchanged palm oil) meant that Anlo traders could no longer compete with their Gold Coast competitors (Ibid:161). Men therefore entered cash crop production, and some of the richest men (and a few women) invested in *yevudor* companies (Ibid:165). Poorer men attached themselves as company members working for these wealthy owners. With men's diminishing opportunities in export and import trade, and their entering into cash crop production, land became more valuable. Conflicts between lineages escalated, and it became rare for daughters to inherit land. "Husbands no longer allocated specific portions of their agricultural plots to their wives to do with as they pleased" (Ibid:170). Fisheries were also commercialised; fish was no longer exchanged between husband and wife, but was bought on credit by women fish traders from the companies. Greene also emphasises the fact that fishermen who were dependent upon rich owners, and husbands who migrated for longer periods, were not able to contribute much to the household. Women increasingly had to supplement the *asigbe* ("market day money") they were given by their husbands with their own incomes.



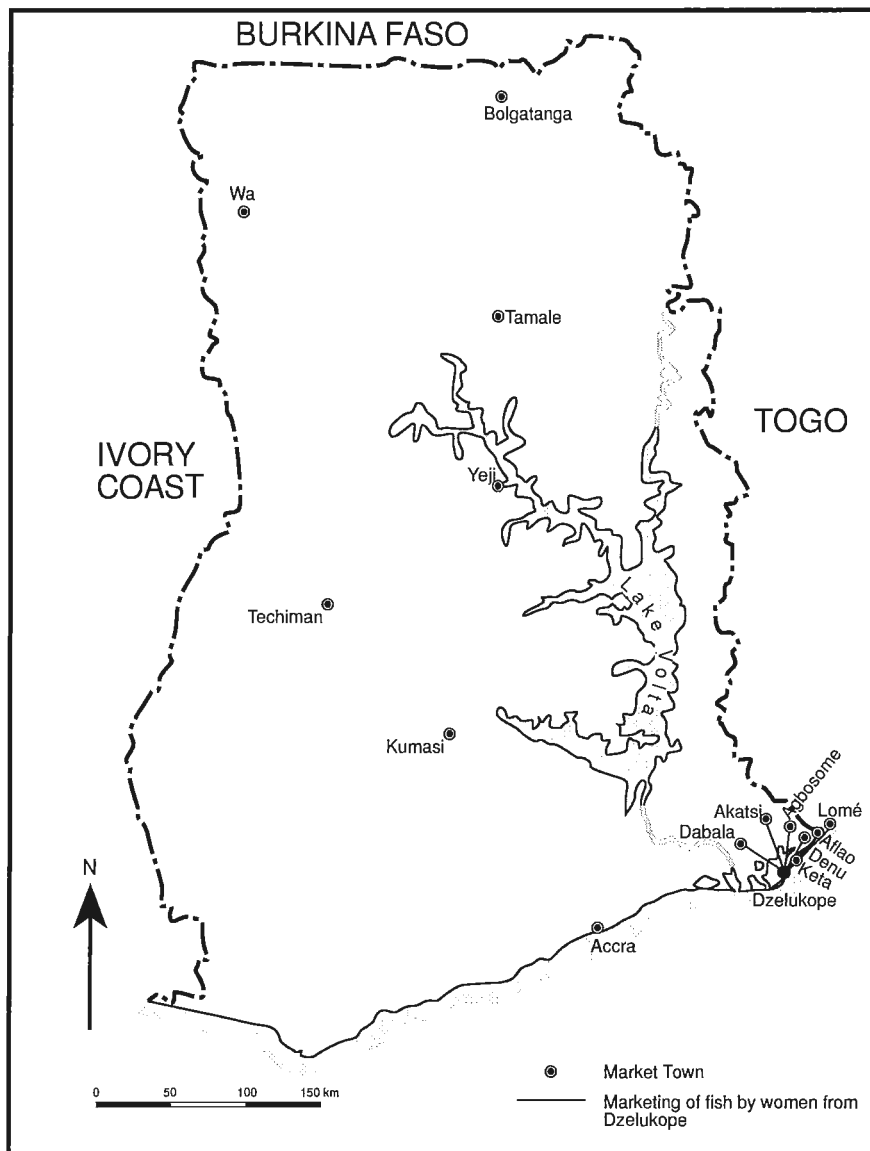
Therefore, while being pushed out of subsistence production, women were pulled into activities where they could earn an independent income. With growing commercial agricultural and fishery production women, with encouragement and support from their natal families (Ibid:174), found a niche in market trade. Women formed marketing networks. Tomato and shallot traders, for example, formed market organisations with their own women leaders (*asisidada* - "market mothers") (see Clark 1994:321, Kwawukume 1995:271, Greene 1996:176). Anlo fish traders, however, mostly concentrated their efforts in the local markets. They left the long-distance trade in the hands of wholesalers (*asisiwo* - "market spouses") coming from Kumasi, Accra, Tamale, etc. Many of these wholesalers were Ewe (not necessarily Anlo) women who were operating as what Gracia Clark (1994) calls travellers.

"When Keta was Keta", it was famous for its market, and it was the most important market for fish traders from Dzelukope. Traders from northern Ghana, Togo and Benin, Burkina Faso, and even Mali, came in large numbers to buy "Keta schoolboys"; dried and smoked anchovy (*aborbi*), for which the Anlo area is well known. *Aborbi* is suitable for marketing far away from the coast where fish is scarce; it is durable and it can be used in small quantities. Smoke-dried anchovy is also used to produce pig- and poultry-feed, and the wholesalers continue to visit the market in Keta whenever there are significant quantities of fish to purchase.

As map 14 shows, Dzelukope fish traders still concentrate their activities in local markets. There is a four-day market rotation cycle that goes as follows: From Keta (1st day) to Denu and Akatsi (2nd day), then to Dabala (3rd day), onwards to Anloga and Agbosome (4th day), and then back to Keta again (see map 13). Since Keta market is no longer accessible by road from the east, and the volume of fish caught in the area has dwindled, it is no longer an important wholesale market. Nevertheless Dzelukope women still sell fish in Keta, but they also go to Denu, Akatsi, Agbosome, Aflao and Lomé. Often they send fish through their daughters. A few women from Dzelukope travel to the fish markets of Accra and Kumasi, but most of them sell through wholesalers (when they have large quantities) who come from Accra, Kumasi and towns in the north, like Tamale and Bolgatanga.

The majority of women resident in Dzelukope thus seem to leave the profit that lies in long-distance fish trade in the hands of professional wholesalers. If this is the case, their ability to invest on a large scale in the fisheries is inhibited and, in fact, their role as creditors for the fishing companies is limited compared with, for example, large-scale and long-distance

Map 14. The fish marketing region of Dzelukope.



traders in Moree and Tema. This may also partly explain why some Anlo women invest in beach seines abroad (i.e. Sierra Leone), where wholesale fish traders do not control the marketing of their fish to the same extent.

Dzelukope women's profit potential thus mainly lies in processing and regional marketing of fish caught locally. I did not hear of women in this area who travelled to buy frozen fish in Tema. They therefore depend quite heavily on the fluctuations of the local beach seine fisheries.



*Photo 32. Anchovy (aborbi) is dried on wire mesh in a compound.*



*Photo 32. Processing aborbi on a Chorkor smoker.*

Processing mostly takes place within the compound. The fish is dried, salted and smoked and/or smoked on circular or square mud ovens called *agbado*. Since it is well suited for the processing of *aborbi*, the Chorkor smoker is also common in Dzelukope.

We shall now take a closer look at kinship relations, marriage and residence, and on what opportunities and constraints women meet in their economic activities from within these fields. Women's limited spatial mobility in fish trade could, for example, be related to their position within their lineages and marriages.

### **Patrilineal ideology: "A net should never die"**

The Anlo trace descent patrilineally. Each person belongs to one of the fifteen Anlo clans, or *hlo* (Nukunya 1969:21), whose members are believed to be the descendants of male ancestors who arrived during the waves of migration from the east. Greene (1996) presents a thorough analysis of how strangers found strategies to achieve membership in the most prestigious clans, and of how marriage alliances within the clans were used to increase the number of members and consolidate the position of each clan. The Anlo clans have their ancestral shrines at Anloga, the traditional capital, and their own ritual observances, totems and taboos.

The clans are further segmented into patrilineages, or *afeme*, meaning ancestral home. The word *fome* is also often used, which generally means kindred (Nukunya 1969:27). The lineage head, the *afedo-mega*, is usually the oldest surviving member in the oldest generation of the *afeme*. The lineages have their own gods; *tro*, and a lineage house; *afedome*. Nukunya describes a recent past where members of a lineage were entitled to a number of rights and privileges:

"...every man has a plot of land to cultivate, a creek to fish in, a place to live and a group to care for him in time of difficulty. With these rights and privileges go duties and obligations such as helping needy members, working towards maintenance of the lineage's good name, promotion of its unity, reverence to the wishes of his lineal ancestors and obedience to the lineage head and other older members" (Ibid:26).

The unity of lineages and obedience by its members to the elders' decisions has diminished, and so has the extent to which the lineage represents a resource pool. By the early twentieth century, the Anlo had begun to define the bases of social prestige not only in terms of connections to Notsie (where the Anlo originated from), time of settlement, and wealth, but also in terms of literacy and association with Christianity (Greene 1996:153). Further, with introduction of a money economy, wage labour, and commercialisation of fishing and farming, more emphasis was put upon self-acquired wealth by both women and men. Land

became scarce. Clan and lineage elders (whose main resource was land) thus lost the ability to maintain the social and economic status of their members: Clan and lineage identity "no longer determines the economic assets to which one has access" (Ibid:178). Other fields, such as education, religious affiliation, one's occupation (like marketing and fishing), and marriage (in cases where the spouse has a good income), are now more important for both men and women's acquisition of a stock of material and symbolic capital. As Hilden in a recent Anlo study writes; "In terms of household economy, individuals make use of a range of relational options, of which descent is only partly constitutive" (1997:39).

Nevertheless, inheritance of fishing equipment and leadership in fishing companies is passed on through the paternal line. Polly Hill in "Talking to Ewe Seine Fishermen" (1986) says that "nets are often regarded as a perpetual non-vanishing form of property, analogous to inherited land" (Ibid:11). Further; "A net is a living thing, which can be enlarged, improved, developed" (Ibid:30). To divide a set of nets between a group of heirs is regarded as undesirable, and it is considered shameful if a son is not able to carry on his father's fishing company, and to improve the net during his lifetime. In other words; "A net should never die" (Ibid:26).

From Hill's study and from my own findings in Dzelukope, it seems clear that an heir to a *yevudor* should have two qualifications: He must be an experienced fisherman, and he should preferably be related to the former owner in the paternal line. In Dzelukope, for example, there was a man who was only twenty-four years old when his father died. He was called to return from migrant fishing and take over the beach seine company (which his grandfather had "started"). His elder brother was "useless", an alcoholic, and the elders of his lineage thus "*sat down and agreed on me*", as he says, since he was the next male with knowledge in fishing in the paternal line who could inherit the responsibility and potential wealth involved in *yevudor* ownership. The secretary of this net owner was, by the way, an educated man, retired from the GNTC department store in Accra, and, moreover, the owner's paternal cousin. To be a son or male member of the patrilineage of a beach seine owner thus represents a social capital that can be converted into the field of fishing: Provided an acceptable degree of knowledge, experience and physical fitness, a man can get access to material capital in the fisheries, and a prestigious social position, through inheritance in the paternal line.

For a woman to inherit the beach seine of her father is very rare. This makes sense according to patrilineal ideology (represented by the "eternity" of the net): To pass on a *yevudor* to a

daughter does not enhance the continuity of the lineage, since her sons are not members of her patrilineage. A woman can thus not pass on a net received from her patrilineage to *her* sons; the continuity of the patrilineage would be broken. She would in such a case have to pass the *yevudor* to her brother's sons. Hill expresses this logic clearly:

"If a man dies sonless, a daughter may operate a net, but it will not pass to her sons. If a man's brother has helped him to operate his net, then he (rather than a daughter) will be the preferred inheritor in the absence of sons" (1986:25).

Thus women can "operate" the net for the lineage during her lifetime, until a suitable heir can take over. Women with financial means also seem to be able to use their capital to "secure" or "maintain" ownership for male relatives who are entitled to inherit a beach seine when it is her interest. One example is the case of the widow in Abidjan who used her market capital to become the effective owner of her husband's beach seine company when he died, a net that is now managed by her son. In Dzelukope I encountered a similar case. I interviewed the widow of a net-owner who explained how she had prevented the loss of her son's inheritance of his father's property:

*"[My husband] sold fish to me in abundance. I processed it and took it to the market (...) so I relied on that and gained from it (...). My husband had five nets in Dzelukope. I did not inherit anything when he died. But many people thought I got a big share. You see, in fact it was me who saved the only net which was left for my son".*

What happened was that the net-owner had to sell some of his nets during his lengthy illness before he died, and when he died his three wives had to sell more nets in order to contribute to the funeral. This widow however, his first wife, was able to retain the last net by supplying the company with credit from her own market capital (accumulated through sale of fish from the very same net), and was thereby able to ensure that her son (who was her husband's oldest son) was able to inherit his father's net. Thus she "got a big share" for her son, and she still buys fish from that net.

Although Anlo put great emphasis upon patrilineal affiliation, children retain rights in their mother's patrilineages (Nukunya 1969:43). Children maintain very close bonds with their mother's relatives, especially their maternal grandparents and their mother's brothers and sisters. Non-agnatic links can give access to usufruct right to farmland, for example, or to residence in the house of a matrilineal relative. According to Nukunya, non-agnatic kinship ties are not as durable as agnatic ties (which are ideally as "eternal" as land or a net); active

participation and nearness in generation to matrilineal ancestors influence the closeness of the social relations and access to resources in the maternal line (Ibid:45). Nukunya thus found that *mixed descent* was an apt term to describe the Anlo lineage principle because of its flexibility. In particular this "flexibility" was reflected in inheritance of personal property: Material capital used by men, such as "men's clothes, guns, handlooms and fishing nets" (Ibid:46) passed to sons, while women's personal property, such as women's clothes, valuable ancient beads, and gold and silver ornaments went to daughters, or what Nukunya calls "a group of female users of property" (Ibid.). The Anlo kinship system therefore has elements of bilaterality. Thus, while the passing on of fishing equipment through women is problematic, it is not so when women invest in houses. Although a woman who has built a house passes it on to the children as a group, and the oldest son is appointed to make decisions over the inherited property, the "group of female users" of the house, are the ones who have an interest in it and continue to live in it. The late woman's sons can of course also live in the house, but often they have built their own or live in their father's compound.

The flow of resources in the patrilineal kinship system is therefore modified by many factors. One is the importance of the mother-child relationship and of matrilineal kinship ties. Another factor is the emphasis on gender duality, which is reflected in inheritance of personal property by persons of the same sex. Links of reciprocity in day to day activities, in cooperation in economic activities, in pooling resources to make ends meet, and in residential arrangements, create social relations where kinship, both maternal and paternal, is only one of the defining factors. I maintain, however, that given the preference for inheritance of fishing equipment from father to son, the patrilineage represents an important resource for men in fisheries to a far greater extent than for women. The patrilineage is thus still a field where resources are at stake within the fishing community in Dzelukope.

Let us turn to marriage, and see what men and women's positions in this arena mean in terms of opportunities and constraints in marketing and fishing.

### **Opportunities and constraints in marriage**

Marriage alliances between exogamous lineages were a strategy to strengthen the endogamous clans in eighteenth and nineteenth century Anlo society (see Greene 1996). A young woman's virginity and proper behaviour were thus guarded by clan elders and her parents. Elaborate puberty rituals were performed, at least within some of the clans, and

marriage rituals were important events for the two lineages involved.

In the 1930s when Arugba, a seventy-five years old woman in Dzelukope, was young, it was still important that she was a virgin until she got married, and the marriage was considered as a contract between two lineages. Arugba explains how she got married:

*"Some lineages performed puberty rituals for their daughters in those days. It was done when the girl had her first menstrual period, xexemekpokpo ("she now sees the world"). During that particular period I was taught how to handle myself, but after that there was nothing like a puberty ritual. From then, your parents knew that you "had come to see the world", so any time a man could come and ask for your hand in marriage.*

*Before your parents could agree with the man, they had to make sure you had not had any sexual contact with any man in your lifetime. The two families would negotiate, and come to an agreement. Leprosy or madness would be a disaster for the family. They take you to the man's house, and this is the first time you touch him. They must make sure you are really a virgin. Your parents take you to the man's room and lay you on his bed. The man has to bring the result [a bloodstained bed-sheet] to your parents to prove that you are really a virgin. After that the man is supposed to perform the customary marriage ceremony. He had to buy an engagement ring, a wedding ring and a set of earrings, and a necklace; all in gold. Then your parents knew that you were a good daughter.*

*When your first child is four months old, you put on the things your husband provided for the marriage, together with the baby. It is now time to show up in the market. And when you wear these things people know that you really, in true speaking, were a virgin. Whether one was educated or not in those days, we all performed the same rites. Then everybody knew that you respected your parents highly, and you would be highly respected yourself".*

With the diminishing power of Anlo clans in this century in terms of economic resources (land), and with new avenues to prestige (education and Christianity) and new sources of wealth (in cash crop production, fishing, migration and marketing), the importance of marriage beyond the interests of the spouses also declined. Today hardly any lineages perform elaborate puberty rituals for their daughters (see Knudsen 1994:69). Even marriage rituals are often skipped, or postponed until the man can afford it. Christianity and education stamped these rituals as "pagan", but a combination of the customary marriage ritual and a subsequent church wedding is common (Nukunya 1969:172). Virginitly until marriage is rare, and young girls are often pregnant before they get married. Parents do however worry



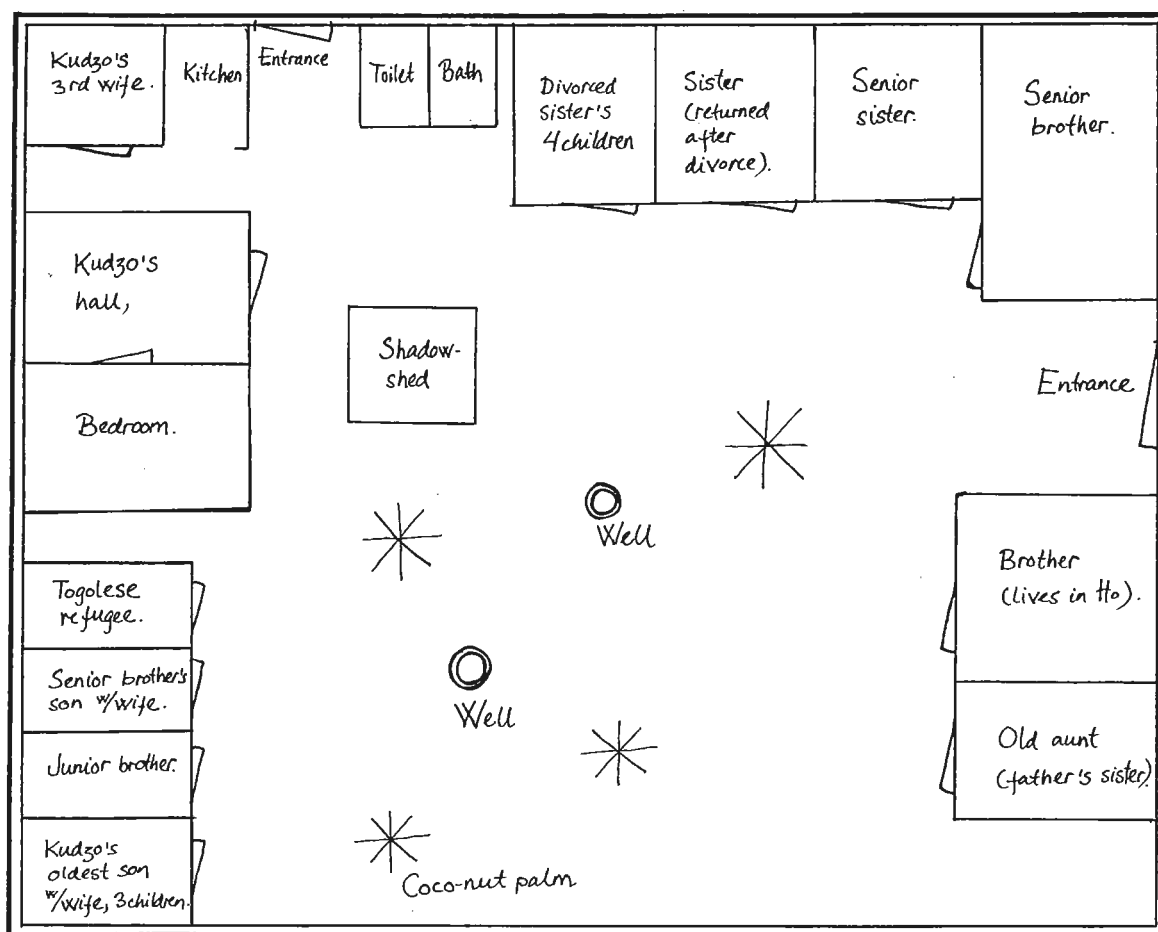
about how early their daughters "*start with men*", as one mother said: "*Suddenly a boy has made her pregnant, and the two families start quarrelling*". Since it is difficult for a young man to afford the cloth, drinks and jewellery he needs to perform the marriage rituals, the girl simply moves in with him, or she remains in her parents' home until the man eventually can perform the marriage and provide her with a place to live.

When a man marries, he is expected to establish his own household (Ibid:38). Anlo postmarital residence is thus ideally virilocal: Women move to their husbands when they marry, and their children belong to the husband's patrilineage. If the man has not got his own house, he could live with his wife in a room or a separate house within his father's compound. In polygynous marriages, a husband should preferably build a house for each wife, and he is expected to support them economically. Marriage thus potentially gives a woman access to both housing and *asigbe* ("market day money"). To have many wives is a sign of wealth, and gives a man prestige within the fishing community. As we shall come back to, it is therefore mostly net-owners who can afford to marry more than one or two wives. We shall now visit the compound of a net-owner in order to get an idea of residential practice in Dzelukope. The joint localisation of two or three generations of agnates, combined with the ideal of virilocality, are, as we shall see, two main residential principles that are modified by matrilineal kinship ties.

We are on our way to *yevudor*-owner Kudzo's compound. Compounds in Dzelukope are surrounded by tall walls; protective shields surrounding houses and people. The passages between the walls of compounds are quiet, but when people meet they greet each other "*good-day*". The sand is soft and hot to walk on, but palmtree trees and coconut palms provide shade. Before entering a compound, one knocks at the gate. The gate is often flanked by the lineage's *legba*, a house god. Compounds are always neatly swept. Sweeping is the morning duty of every young girl. During the day the compound is sometimes empty; everyone has gone to the beach.

At present, twenty-three young and old persons live in Kudzo's compound. The compound is spacious, with many coconut palms for shade. When a child is born the father buries the afterbirth and the umbilical cord in the compound and sometimes plants a tree over it. Even when the baby is born in a hospital, some fathers make sure their son's or daughter's umbilical cord is buried to signify their belonging to their father's lineage. The smallest coconut tree in Kudzo's compound was planted when his son who is now six years old, was born.

Figure 11. Kudzo's compound.



In a compound there is always a water well. In Kudzo's compound there are two. There is also a shadow-shed. In the evenings Kudzo often relaxes under the shed, and this is a good time to visit him. Since Kudzo is a net-owner, he is consulted by an almost constant stream of fishermen and relatives. His wives consult him in private.

Kudzo is forty-eight years old. He inherited the *yevudor* from his father, who got it from his father. It was in other words Kudzo's grandfather who "started the net". At present Kudzo has four wives. He has 26 children. Some of them are with ex-wives and some with girlfriends. One of Kudzo's wives, the third wife, lives in a small house next to her husband's with three children and a sister who helps her. The other wives live in their parents' compounds, except the first wife for whom Kudzo has built a house. Although Kudzo often goes to his first wife's compound to have his meals, he does not often sleep there. Since Kudzo is a net owner he is busy and must be available in his own compound.

Apart from Kudzo and the third wife, Kudzo's senior brother occupies one of the other

houses in the compound. He has two wives, but they live elsewhere. Since he is Kudzo's senior brother, he was the one who should have taken over his father's beach seine company. However, because of mismanagement of money and alcoholism, he was not capable of such a task. The net thus lay idle for many years until Kudzo took over. Nevertheless, Kudzo's brother is one of his company members.

Two junior brothers have a room each in the compound. One of them is educated and works in the regional administration in Ho. The other one is a company member. His wife and seven children no longer live with him, they have moved to the wife's father's compound.

Two of Kudzo's sisters live in the compound. One of them has lived there all her life, and her children have now moved out. The other sister moved in with four children when she got divorced from a man who had twelve wives. She says she left him because of quarrelling between the wives. She does not have the same mother as Kudzo, and grew up in her mother's father's house. However, upon her divorce, she was welcome in her father's (now brother's) compound. Both of Kudzo's sisters smoke fish that they buy from his beach seine.

Apart from Kudzo's brothers and sisters, his senior son with his wife and three children, and his brother's senior son (who is the only man living in the compound who is not a fisherman, he is a Kente cloth weaver) with his wife, have one room each. Lastly, one room is occupied by the husband of a female member of Kudzo's lineage who lives in Togo. Because of political problems in Togo, her husband is allowed to stay with her relatives in Ghana. He works on Kudzo's net.

As we see, Kudzo's compound contains both male and female lineage members in all walks of life. All of them, apart from the Kente weaver and the educated brother, make their living out of Kudzo's beach seine. As in the fishing company, Kudzo is responsible and takes the major decisions in the compound, advised by his elder brother, sisters and old paternal aunt.

Kudzo's compound represents a typical example of organisation of residence in Dzelukope. As the situation of both Kudzo and the other members of his compound shows, wives do not always reside with their husbands. I shall come back to this, but let us now turn for a while to the duties and rights involved in the relationship between husbands and wives.

The ideals of virilocality in marriage and duty of supporting their wives, reflect the extension of patrilineal ideology into the field of marriage. One man in Dzelukope who had two wives

expressed his role in marriage as follows: *"A husband must be an umbrella for his wives"*. He saw himself as a firm "pole" under whose "protective shield" his wives could seek support. As Nukunya says, a husband and father is regarded as an *afeto*; "the owner of the house and everything within it" (1969:39), and he should have the ultimate authority over his wife(s) and children.

The authority position of the providing and protecting husband requires suitable behaviour by his wives. Arugba, whom we met above, and who is the widow of a net-owner who had seven wives, describes ideal wives and ideal husbands, and the relationship between them:

*"How can I describe a good wife? Some women are lazy and do not go to the beach because they cannot face the sea. But we were born close to the sea, as we have been for generations up until our time. We prefer the fish business, it is very precious to us. So if you want to be a good wife for a fisherman, you have to be hard working in the fish business.*

*But we do not have any good husbands. Well, you cannot know if he is good or bad until after you have married him (...), not unless you get closer to him. Then you have to lower yourself down and give him the due respect. Sometimes he will come and tell you to do the washing for him. The next day he will ask you to do this, the next day to do that, and the next day something else. You have to do all these things to get respect from him. If he is a clear-minded man he will understand that you respect him by the way you help. Maybe he will call on the other wives to do the same things, but they will not do it. Then he knows that you are a good wife, and he also becomes a good husband".*

A wife thus has to work hard, both in exchange of fish and in domestic chores. Moreover she is expected to "lower herself down" in order to both give and receive respect. Such behaviour, can be seen as way to activate the symbolic capital attached to a woman's role as a wife. Co-residence of co-wives is rare; they are "rivals", as is often said in Ghanaian English. The Ewe term for co-wife is *atsui*, or *atsunyesi* ("my husband's wife"), which also connotes "to be jealous" (Nukunya 1969:160). Co-wives often compete in satisfying their husband in cooking, in their physical appearance, and in giving birth to many children and raising them well. All these efforts increase a wife's stock of symbolic capital in relation to her husband and in relation to the other wives. She tries to get a fair share of her husband's resources; money and other gifts, credit, his sexual favours, his children, and housing. By behaving as a "good wife", she expects that she will get material capital in return.

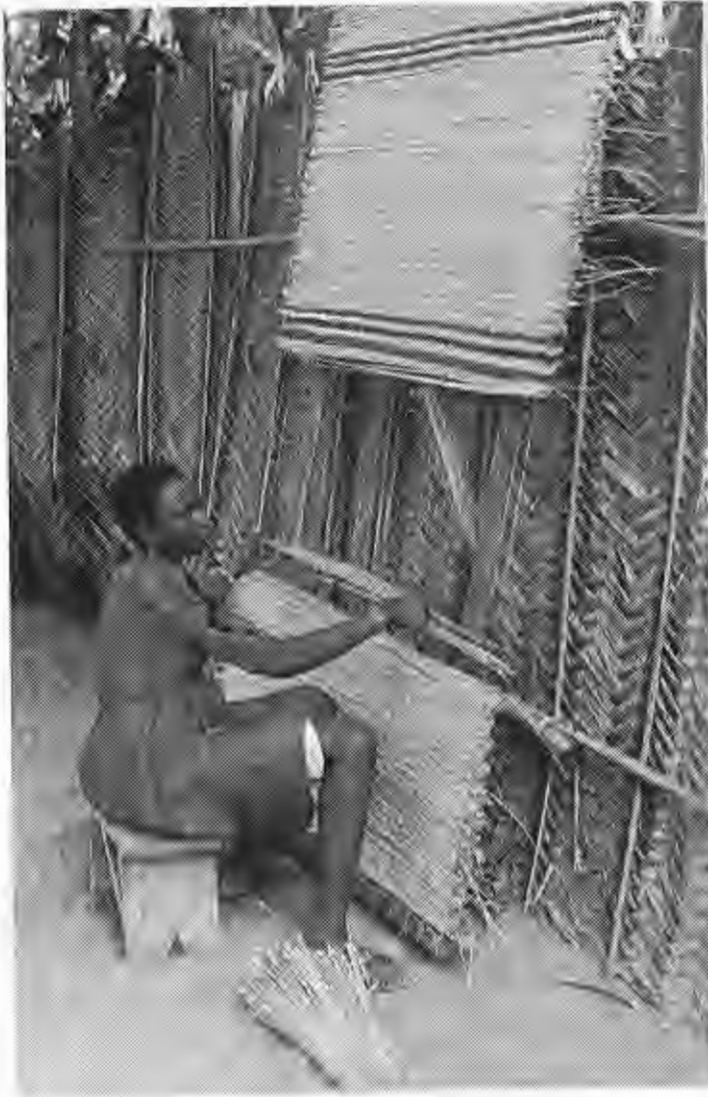
According to one of the net-owners, wives do not respect a husband if he does not have

many wives. He thus felt that it was important for him to marry many women, not only to give an appearance of wealth and to gain prestige in the community, but also to prove his authority position within the field of marriage. Social fields are interconnected, and prestige in the field of marriage has relevance in both the field of fishing and in the patrilineage.

The authority positions of men in relation to women in marriage in many ways, I suggest, resemble a net-owner's patron-relationship to his company. A wife's husband-relationship could also be seen as analogous to her position in relation to an elder brother, or in relation to any senior male. The husband's seniority is often real; a wife is usually younger than her husband, and she should preferably not address him by name. Women thus often call their husbands *efo*, which means "elder brother", or *wofofa*; "father of the children" (Ibid:155).

The different positions of men and women in relation to each other in marriage can be seen in light of the emphasis in Anlo society on respect for age, and it further gives an indication of Anlo gender construction: In fishing companies, lineages, and in marriage, men's authority over women is legitimate. Authority ascribed to men through patrilineal ideology and the Anlo gender differentiated distribution of authority, is thus a form of symbolic capital that men can activate in many fields (although not in marketing of fish, it seems). A stock of capital can however be mismanaged, or remain unutilised; the conversion of symbolic capital into other forms of capital does not happen automatically. Authority or rank is not capital unless it is used. In other words, not all men are rich, and not all husbands exercise control over their wives. The maintenance of a man's authority position in marriage, for example, requires that he fulfils the expectations attached to his role as provider.

A wife's position of subordination in terms of age and gender can therefore to some extent be mediated by her equality (or even superiority) compared with her husband in terms of wealth. Expectations from wives and community towards the provider-husband cannot easily be met with the incomes that most fishermen earn. When the daily payments of a man who works as a company member are so low that he cannot even feed himself on what he earns, it becomes self-evident that the contribution of his wife towards the housekeeping and child care budget must be substantial. The wife is expected to contribute with the money she earns in fish trade or other income generating activities. Women in Dzelukope thus often rear poultry, weave mats and baskets, or sell farm produce or cooked food to supplement their income from fish trade.



*Photo 34. Young woman in Dzelukope weaving a mat.*

The ideal of a "supporting umbrella"-husband, then, does not always correspond to the reality of their wives' heavy economic responsibilities. Women do feel that their responsibilities are heavy, as the comment below from one of them illustrates. During my fieldwork in Dzelukope I soon found out that the burning sun on the beach required a headgear for protection. Therefore I followed the example of some of the men, and bought myself a straw hat. However, none of the other women wore hats. They wore head scarves to cover their short-cut hair. I thus asked a woman the somewhat ignorant question of why women do not wear hats, and she answered: *"Because we always carry a burden"*.

Fishermen's wives do literally carry heavy loads: They carry head pans of fish, water, firewood, and food from the market. It is their duty to cook for the husband, and they do it, even when the husband does not provide enough (or any) *asigbe* ("market day money"). It is a wife's duty to work hard. It is also a necessity because the husband in most cases does

not live up to the ideal of a provider. Nukunya does perhaps exaggerate when he writes that the kitchen is the centre of a wife's life (Ibid:125). However, seen from the husband's angle, his wife's duty to cook is, together with his rights to her sexuality, a central aspect of marriage. A wife usually has her own kitchen in the compound, a shed separate from the other houses. Women often receive guests in their kitchens. Our interviews with women in Dzelukope, for example, mostly took place in this "female space".



*Photo 35. Cooking banku (dough made of fermented corn) in her kitchen while being interviewed.*

Cooking is a great responsibility. If a husband gets ill after a meal, or if he dies of poisoning, the wife who cooked will be accused of causing his illness or death. Kudzo, whose compound we visited above, for example, only lets his first wife cook for him. He says that: *"Among wives there is always rivalry, and anything can happen. So if something happens with the food, that particular wife is responsible"*. Cooking is thus a significant and contested domain where tension in marriage can be given a tangible expression. A conflict can for example be expressed by the wife's refusal to cook, or by the husband's refusal to eat her food. If a husband shows disinterest in the wife's food, she has every reason to believe that he eats somewhere else, i.e. with another woman.

Economic realities in marriage often cause tension, not the least when a husband's extramarital affairs drain the housekeeping budget. Women complain about their economic burden, and men who are unable to ease their burdens with their meagre incomes often become peripheral in their role as providing husbands (see Hilden 1997). Wives suspect, and often rightly so, that a husband who does not bring money home has a girlfriend or intends to marry another wife. Inevitably such relationships sometimes end with separation or divorce.

A generation ago there was a moral stigma on divorce (see Nukunya 1969:107). Separation achieved by the woman moving back to her parental home was thus more common. Today the husband may not even have performed the marriage ritual, and thus has no bride price to reclaim from his wife's parents. The couple thus simply separate. Many women are however reluctant to divorce their husbands. They worry about the future of their children. Upon a divorce a woman has to move from her husband, or a house he has built separately for her and his children. Usually her only alternative is to move back to her mother's or father's house, or to move to one of her sisters or brothers, but these are not always viable alternatives, as it was for Kudzo's sister.

It is difficult for an ordinary fisherman to fulfil the expectations of building a house before he marries. Women therefore often continue to live in their father's or mother's house after they are married. This was often the case among those of my informants who were not their husband's first wife. Men often share residence with one wife, but are not able to provide housing for their second or third wives, so these remain in their natal homes (which they prefer to sharing compound with a co-wife).

Some of these women were able to build their own houses at a later stage in their careers, and established matrifocal households where they lived with their children. Arugba (who described her marriage above), for example, bought a plot together with her junior sister twenty years ago. They are still paying on the purchasing sum. Gradually, with her income from fish trade and with help from her sister, Arugba has built a compound with houses, where there are rooms for herself, her sister, one of her sons and one of her sister's sons, one of her daughters, a granddaughter who is grown, and ten grandchildren. Her compound also contains a store room, a kitchen, and a fish smoking-shed. By investing in a house, Arugba secures the future of her children and thereby her own. For her children, housing through matrilineal ties becomes an important resource.



Housing is also an important reason for net-owners wives to remain in their marriages. A woman's marriage to a rich man (i.e. a net-owner) is often a strategy to achieve the aim of a separate house for herself and the children. Net-owners are expected to have many wives: "*A man can marry as much as he can*". They convert their gains from their fishing company into prestige by marrying many wives. In the sixties Nukunya wrote that polygyny earns prestige and respect, and that only net-owners can afford it: "It is prosperity which makes it [polygyny] possible, and even increases the desire for it" (Ibid:159). Net-owners of today give the same impression. However, while they talked about their grandfathers who could have ten or twelve wives, they could not afford that many wives themselves. The expenses involved in marrying women are considerable, and the costs of building a house for each of the wives are huge. Net-owners are thus not always able to provide what is expected from a man of his position to all of their wives.

Paradoxically, many net-owners wives expressed less satisfaction with their marriages than the wives of ordinary fishermen. There was more cooperation between the husbands and wives who pooled meagre resources into one household. The net-owners' wives were expected to live with jealousy and always to be compared with their co-wives, as one of them said of her co-wives: "*We do not have much feeling for each other, but we do not bother each other.*" Net-owner's wives also said things like: "*He did perform the customary marriage for me. They [net-owners] often do that to impress a woman, and to make her think that she will prosper with him*" Or: "*In the beginning a man will pour cedis on you, but as soon as he gets you it is over.*"

Despite such disappointments, net-owners' wives had a lot to lose in a divorce. Even though a net-owner's wife would not be able to pass the house her husband had built for her and his children to members of her own patrilineage, she could live there for the rest of her life, with children and grandchildren who were responsible for her welfare.

Of the fourteen women we interviewed in Dzelukope, nine of them lived in houses where they were the head. Four of them were net owners' wives who lived in houses built for them by their husbands. Further, five of the women had built houses themselves. Three of these were net owners' wives who had fused their market capital with resources from other fields (i.e. economic and practical help from sisters, sons and daughters)<sup>6</sup>. The women who had

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<sup>6</sup> The two other of the five women who had built their own houses, were a priestess, the other was a migrant worker (helping with the carrying of ropes and fetching water in a beach seine company) who had out up a temporary palm leaf hut near the beach.

their own houses thus had either acquired them from their net-owner husband, or had acquired them themselves through capital from processing and marketing of fish.

Afi, for example, is a net-owner's widow who has built a house. She lived with her husband (who had two other wives) until about fifteen years ago. Then she was able to buy a plot of land. Afi moved to the plot and built a hut made of palm leaves. Gradually she built one cement house with two rooms, and she is gradually building another one. Afi likes her new situation: *"When I got my own house I could stay here and do my work, and not worry about whether my husband came or not"*. Afi's daughters live in her compound. Her sons live in their late father's compound. The eldest son inherited his nets, and Afi continues to receive fish on credit from this net. Afi invests what she earns from fish trade in a house and in her children. She says, *"I will give my house to all of my children [both sons and daughters], so that it becomes a family house for them. As long as they understand each other..."*. Afi has thus given her daughters security by providing them with housing for the future. Whether they marry men who provide houses for them or not, they will always have a house to return to. Afi's compound gives them security in case of divorce or widowhood, situations where they otherwise would have had to move to members of their lineage who not always have space or other resources to support them with, let alone their children.

For poor women, a more realistic aim than building their own house is to pool resources with their husbands and build a house together. Fishermen therefore often live with one wife. They do not have the economic means to seek prestige by marrying a number of wives and building houses for them. One fisherman's wife said:

*"It is not common for fishermen here to have more than one wife. Some of their fathers have many wives and they want to have the same. But most of them fail because of economic problems. The women divorce them"*.

Akuyo is the wife of a fisherman who has been an ordinary member on various net companies all his life. She expresses great satisfaction when she at the age of sixty looks back on her married life. Akuyo and her husband bought a plot of land thirty years ago. They got nine children, out of which eight are alive; seven girls and one boy. The boy became a fisherman. The youngest daughter is eighteen and attends school, and the oldest daughter, who is forty-five years old, is the first wife of a net-owner. Since the daughter married the net-owner fifteen years ago, Akuyo's husband has worked on the company of his son-in-law. Although they are poor, Akuyo is obviously proud of what she and the husband have achieved together, knowing that she has played a major part in it. And she

knows that if she becomes a widow, she has a place in the compound with her children for the rest of her life. Akuyo will not have to move to some poor relative or hope that one of the children would have space for her.

The exchange relationship of food for fish is central in fisherpeople's marriages in Dzelukope. Wives get access to buy fish on credit from the company where their husbands are members. Unlike a net-owner's wife, a crew member's wife may not be able to buy large quantities of fish. Nevertheless, the right to buy fish on credit gives her an opportunity to deal in fish trade on a small scale. If not much else, a fisherman can give his wife the daily portion of chop-fish to cook for the family. For an ordinary company member, his wife's food is a very important resource. She supplements his income with her own, and may feed both him and the children out of her own pocket for months at the time. Wives thus literally and physically represent a resource pool (a stock of latent capital) for poor fishermen, a reserve which in practice means survival through the lean season for their families.

Marriage, then, gives women access to security in children (provided she is able to support them or gets support from the husband) and to housing (provided her husband had the means to build one for her, or is willing (and able) to pool resources with her). Daughters' and son's labour, and a position as head of a house does not, however, seem to be a channel for women into a position of ownership and leadership in the field of fisheries in Dzelukope. Daughters' labour is of importance in her fish processing and trading activities, and in the house. Sons often support their mothers when they grow old, but cannot be said to represent a labour resource for them like the daughters do. Thus it seems, not even women who reach the position of househeadship can use male relationships, neither through marriage nor through the commitment and labour of sons or other male relatives, as channels of conversion of capital from market or other fields into fisheries.

Through a network case, we shall see how the fields of marriage, lineage, marketing and fishing are interconnected in the lives of Dzelukope fisher people.

### **A *yevudor* owner's maintenance of prestige through women**

In the following case, where we meet *yevudor* owner Yao and his four wives, I will attempt to illustrate how marriage represents opportunities and constraints in various ways for each of them. We shall also see how Yao struggles to "manage" his households (wives and

children located in various compounds), and how he allocates resources to each wife in a different way. Moreover, Yao's and his wives' marriage relations are interconnected with economic relations in Yao's fishing company.

Yao is nearly sixty years old, and presently he has four wives. Yao's father, from whom he inherited the net, had ten wives during his life. Fisheries are not good as they used to be, Yao complains, and it is quite problematic to have many wives.

Abla (52) is Yao's first wife. Abla has five children with Yao. The two oldest are girls; one is a typist, the other works in Accra. Abla also has two sons who are educated. Only the youngest son, who is seventeen years old, works on his father's net. Abla says that it is not Yao who has contributed economically to the education of the children. With help from her mother, who was an affluent fish trader, Abla has invested in the education of her children herself. She has worked with her mother and has always been rather independent from Yao. However, Yao bought a plot and built a house for her, and all the fish that Abla buys is from his net.

When Yao and his beach seine company migrated to Woe, as they did on a seasonal basis some years ago, Abla always went with them. Abla is a good fish trader. She gets fish from Yao's net on credit, and she is able to pay back the credit. She is therefore a good cooperation partner for him in the fisheries. Apart from exchange of fish there is not much contact between them. Abla never visits Yao at night. He comes to visit her during the day now and then, mainly to discuss the business.

Abla is economically independent, and thus causes little worry for Yao. This is Abla's strength: She is not solely dependent on resources from the field of marriage. Her mother has helped her in establishing a viable fish smoking enterprise. Moreover (and again with help from her mother) she has invested in her children outside the field of fishing. According to Abla's co-wives, her children are in the position of helping her economically. This could be a contributing factor to her ability of repaying debt to Yao's fishing company. Thereby she maintains a good relationship with her husband. By educating her children Abla reduces her dependence on solely fishing and marriage. This is a wise strategy, considering that her eldest son is not Yao's eldest son, and thus not entitled to inherit the *yevudor*. Yao's oldest son is the son of his second wife, Adzo.

Adzo (50) lives in Yao's compound. Yao lives in the main house, while Adzo lives in

another house with her two youngest sons and her daughter who is a seamstress apprentice and has a little boy (but is not married to the father of the child). Adzo's oldest son, who is twenty-eight years old and works with his father, moved out when he married. Another son, who is a tailor, has a separate room in his father's house. Adzo has lived in Yao's compound for ten years. She is, however, not on talking terms with her husband. For the past four years, Yao and Adzo have not exchanged a single word. *"We do not even greet each other good morning"*, Adzo says, and of course she does not cook for him.

The conflict is about money. Yao claims that Adzo is dishonest and that she has been indebted to his beach seine company for too long. Adzo claims that Yao does not provide for her children, and spends too much money on girlfriends, which gives her no possibility of repaying her debt. The conflict escalated when Adzo one day took money from Yao's bedroom. She says that she borrowed the money, but Yao claims that she is a thief. Adzo explains what happened:

*"My youngest boy had torn his school uniform. I and my daughter managed to get money for the cloth and to sew a new one, but the fee for the tailor was 700 cedis. So I woke up very early in the morning and went into his room and borrowed the 700 cedis. I did not wake him up. From there the problem started, and he has not paid school fees for the boy since. He says that he has divorced me. He has even informed me that I am no longer entitled to buy fish from the net. I once went to the beach and tried, but he refused me. I went to the beach as usual, and I started filling my pan with fish. He [Yao] took it away from me and threw it away. He slapped me in the face and I slapped back".*

As far as Yao is concerned, he is divorced from Adzo. But Adzo will not accept the divorce and refuses to move, even though it is terrible to share compound with Yao in this way. She has demanded compensation from him, and has informed him that she will not move until he pays.

*"But I know he will not even pay me a pesewa [1 cedi consists of 100 pesewa], so I will stay. It is for the sake of the children. If I go to my father or mother I have to take them with me and that is not possible. If I leave them here I am afraid my children will take to the street. So I will stay here until the children can fend for themselves and they can help me."*

Adzo is now a member of a saving cooperative that the Agricultural Development Bank is trying to organise in Dzelukope. She buys fish from other nets than her husband's and sells smoked fish at the Keta market. Adzo's strategy is thus to remain in Yao's compound in order to provide housing for the children, while she pursues sources of credit and supply of

fish from other sources than marriage. Yao is furious, but does not throw her out.

Ami (46) is Yao's third wife. Her oldest daughter is twenty-one years old, and after four girls, Ami was happy to finally give birth to a son. He is now two years old, but he has not learned to walk, and there is something wrong with his spine. Ami spends a lot of time caring for the son, and still hopes he will grow up. There is no end to Ami's complaints about her husband. As Adzo, Ami is indebted to Yao, and is not allowed to buy fish from his net. *"I have so many problems", she says, "but now I have become a born again Christian, so my life is in the hands of God"*.

Ami married Yao when she was twenty-five. He performed the customary rites very well for her. However, Ami now feels that Yao totally neglects her. She dislikes that he frequently brings in new girlfriends, and that he spends money on them rather than her children. He never gives her sufficient *asigbe* ("market money"). When Ami tries to get what is Yao's duty to give her, she feels that he humiliates her:

*"One morning early at dawn I went to his house to ask for money for school fees. One of his girlfriends was with him. I knocked at the door and he came out in the hall, but he refused to open the mosquito-net-door, so I had to stand outside and talk to him through the mosquito-net. I said I had to come inside because we had to sit down properly to discuss things. Then he just slammed the door in my face. I stood there for one hour before I went home. Later, I met him on the footpath and he asked me what it was that I wanted to discuss. But I did not answer him"*.

However, Yao has bought a plot of land where Ami and her children live in palm leaf huts. Gradually a concrete house is taking shape there; it now has walls. The house is Ami's opportunity in the marriage, and her aim is to make her children able to support themselves and to be able to take care of her in the future. Nevertheless, Ami is going through a hard phase at the moment: Her children are not old enough to support her, her fish business is not thriving, and she has little access to resources in other fields. She therefore seeks comfort in church, and she tries to satisfy Yao by cooking for him even though he has cut off the supply of *asigbe* for three months. Ami hopes to get more fish on credit (even though she has not repaid the former credit) when the season comes in four months' time.

Yao's fourth wife is a divorcee, and only thirty-two years old. She is not a fish smoker, and Yao has invested in a kiosk for her in town. At the time when Yao married her, he had four wives already. One of them actually divorced him because he went in for another woman. Yao's ex-wife remains however in the house he built for her with the children. Adzo and Ami

did not go to the step of divorce, but they were also furious because of the way he spent money on the new wife. Abla, the first wife, however, says that she knows nothing of any problems. She does not want to offend Yao, and she was not much affected by his spending on a new wife.

Now Yao has yet another girlfriend. She works in a hotel, and is (according to Yao's wives who dislike his wasting of money on the new woman) married and lives in the same house as her husband!

As we see, Yao constantly seeks new opportunities in marrying new wives, and in having girlfriends. The exchange of fish is not the primary reason for him to marry. He even seeks women without a fisher-background. What Yao gains from his relationships to women can thus not necessarily be measured in material terms. Equally important is the confirmation of his masculinity, and the demonstration of his status as *yevudor* owner that spending on women gives him. Virility and display of wealth through women are forms of symbolic capital that he potentially can convert into a strengthening of his authority position among the men in his *yevudor* company. It almost seems as if Yao's spending of time and money on women increases when fish catches are small and the profitability of his fishing company is low. In such a situation it becomes important for Yao to prove his position as a patron in relation to the fishermen to keep his workers loyal, and hope for a good "fishing year".

For Yao's wives, "success" in marriage is not equally distributed among them, neither materially nor emotionally. Each of them struggle with their own problems that they try in various ways to resolve in relation to Yao. Moreover, marriage does not appear as a channel into ownership in the fisheries for any of Yao's wives. The interests that are at stake for them are vested in the field of marriage in terms of housing and affirmation of their worth as women through their (and Yao's) children. They also have interests at stake within the field of marketing that are enhanced through the marriage; access to fish on credit from Yao and processing facilities achieved through his provision of a compound for them. Conversion of value (material and symbolic capital) from marriage and marketing into the field of fishing (beyond purchase of more fish and investment in the house, children, in a good cooking performance, and in giving assistance to relatives) does not seem to be a possible nor desirable (or relevant) aim in Yao's wives' life projects.

## Summary

In Dzelukope, there are no female *yevudor* owners. Women do accumulate capital through fish marketing. However, they do not invest it in enterprises within the field of fisheries. One conversion barrier is patrilineal ideology giving men the right to inherit the large beach seines. Women have to achieve what is ascribed to sons of owners. Moreover, the size of the companies (i.e. number of fishermen workers) and the function of companies as a field of male companionship represents a management problem for women. Women who run beach seine companies (in other locations) manage their companies through a man (often a son). Then they avoid the role dilemma of exercising authority over men who feel that it is difficult to subordinate themselves to a woman whom they cannot relate to as a patron.

A net-owner ought to behave as a "patriarch", whom fishermen respect for his position within a patrilineage, for his virility and ability to have many wives, and for his knowledge of fisheries and fishermen's way of life. Women cannot and do not desire to acquire this kind of symbolic capital. They rather reach prestigious positions by investing their material capital in good marriage relationships and in their children. Within their compounds where they provide for children, grandchildren, and sometimes sisters, women - among women - stand a better chance of becoming respected matrons than among fishermen. By expanding their investments beyond fish marketing - nevertheless *not* into fisheries - women enhance the viability of their enterprises.

As in Kpone, women in Dzelukope mainly engage in entrepreneurial activity within female spheres and accumulate material and symbolic capital within the female boundary of the dual-sex system. As the brief historical retrospective indicated, women's ability to extend credit and invest market capital in beach seines, seems to have decreased with the general economic and ecological constraints of beach seine fisheries on the Anlo littoral. When men struggle to maintain their patron positions, women not only face financial constraints, but also a more limited repertoire for gender-appropriate behaviour and less access to channels of conversion in the local context.



## 4. Contextual entrepreneurship

### Introduction: Gendered entrepreneurs in context

We have now visited three fishing communities in Ghana. I consider these places and their regions for fishing and marketing as three contexts. They are arenas within which entrepreneurial activity takes place. As I pointed out in the introduction, an entrepreneur always interacts with his or her environment. At various geographical levels the entrepreneur makes use of the resources and connections that are available, and must take the social surroundings into consideration in the performance of entrepreneurial activity. The entrepreneur meets opportunities and constraints according to the context within which he or she is present, or moves in and out of. An understanding of context thus allows for an understanding of the entrepreneur's strategies. Entrepreneurial activity is, however, not solely context-driven, but also context-generating (see Appadurai 1995). In the dynamics between people's actions and the context within which activity takes place, institutions, power relationships and landscapes are produced, modified, and changed. A contextual perspective is therefore not only an interpretive tool to understand human agency; it also considers the entrepreneur as a generator of contextual change.

In an analysis of entrepreneurial activity within various contexts, it is useful to be more specific about what context consists of. As Scharfstein (1989:1) reminds us, the term context, derived from Latin *contextus*, actually means to weave or join together. Thus, in order neither to lose sight of uniqueness in one's quest for a general overview of context nor to lose the possibility of seeing wider implications of knowledge from particular places, "we come to recognise that the idea of context must be broken up or qualified in order to bear systematic examination" (Ibid:62). I have chosen to look at context as consisting of interconnected social fields. For the study of entrepreneurship in Ghanaian fishing communities I have regarded the fields of fishing, marketing, kinship and marriage as central

to understand individual careers and career networks.

In a contextual entrepreneur perspective one sees that people's positions in webs of interconnected fields - contexts - give them differential access to resources at stake within each field. Such a conceptualisation of context is close to Massey's (1994) "mix" of social relations stretching out in space where people are positioned or located in a power geometry. In my view, the geometry metaphor provides a more relational perspective on power relations than a class perspective. Moreover, a power geometry clearly extends in time and space: Throughout the life cycle, each individual embodies a set of social positions in various fields; he or she is positioned in relation to other individuals who are also positioned within a number of fields. As we have seen, a person's position in one field, such as in marriage, can thus be relevant for the person's access to resources in other fields, such as in the field of fishing. Necessarily, both people's activities, positions and the fields themselves "happen", are "performed", and are "located" in a spatial context.

Social fields are permeated with what Linda McDowell (1997:27) calls assumptions about gender-appropriate behaviour. Interconnected fields at various geographical scales, from interpersonal relationships within and between houses, stretching out in the local community, and often far beyond, thus constitute a *gendered context* (both socially and spatially).

Among several aspects of someone's person, such as age, a person's bundle of positions within various fields is constituted of his or her gender, which is an imperative status with which one is born. Hence, a person's combination of social statuses and identities that constitute subject positions within many different fields (and thus his or her location in the power geometry) is gendered. It is clear, then, that women and men have differential access to resources according to the way the context they live in is gendered and their location in the power geometry. Gender ideologies; what perhaps could be defined as mainstream or dominant discourses about appropriate male and female behaviour and conceptions of femininity and masculinity, influence the repertoire of strategies that are available and acceptable for men and women in a given context. McDowell views such gender ideologies or discourses as "scripts" for "gender performance" that structure different types of exchanges within particular contexts (Ibid:22-23). In other words, the opportunities and constraints men and women face in their entrepreneurial activities, and thus their strategies, are gendered. I therefore think that it makes sense to distinguish between male and female entrepreneurship - gendered entrepreneurial performances - in the context of Ghanaian

fishing communities.

Inspired by the entrepreneur approach of Barth (1963), the field analysis of Grønhaug (1978) in combination with Bourdieu's (1977) forms of capital and social fields as arenas where resources are at stake, I have defined entrepreneurial activity as the conversion of one form of capital into other forms of capital, or conversion of capital in one field into capital in another field, in order to reach desirable social relationships and positions. Material wealth is of course both a means and an end in such exchange. But it is what the entrepreneur can gain with this wealth that makes his or her efforts worthwhile. In some contexts, mere accumulation of money could be a goal in itself. However, this does not make much sense in a West African fishing community (and not anywhere, I think). The entrepreneur seeks to convert material capital, whether it is a house, a considerable bank account or an extravagant dress, into symbolic capital, which can only be obtained in relation to other people. Such "desired goods" could be respect, prestige, social security, political influence, or the leading of a good life in general. Those who accumulate wealth may not necessarily seek to convert it into any of these forms of symbolic capital themselves; they receive it from the social surroundings. Thus some rich people try to hide their wealth in order to live an ordinary life, or achieve true happiness, or in the West African context, to avoid claims from relatives. Some entrepreneurial strategies and forms of accumulation are neither expected nor accepted. The entrepreneur therefore has to find solutions to the dilemma of necessary accumulation and expected redistribution (i.e. Evers and Schrader's, 1994, traders' dilemma), and *how* to accumulate and redistribute in each particular context.

The kinds of relationships and positions that are considered as desirable, what counts as symbolic capital, vary with gender. Women and men's desires, what is at stake for them in various fields, the types of capital they can accumulate, the channels of conversion that are open for them, and the opportunities and constraints they are facing, are influenced by ideas about femininity and masculinity, or gender ideology, in their society.

As pointed out, what counts as symbolic capital also varies with context. What women find desirable in one context may therefore not be desirable for women in another context. Moreover, even when women in different contexts share ideas about what they desire in life, they may not have the same possibilities to reach these goals. This is true both for different individuals within one context, and for women who live in different contexts. Men's desires and opportunities of course also vary within and between contexts.

An important issue in relation to entrepreneurship is therefore to identify what counts as symbolic capital in a particular context. How does a woman in Moree, for example, gain respect in her community? How far can she go in her entrepreneurial strategies and accumulation of material capital in the field of fisheries before she loses too much of her femininity? In other words, when does she begin losing instead of gaining symbolic capital, so that her behaviour is regarded as immoral and looked upon with disrespect? Following McDowell's idea of construction of gender as a performance, one could perhaps define female entrepreneurship as the ability to perform one's gender in male dominated fields in a way that is not "out of place". As McDowell writes, there are different ways of *doing* masculinity and femininity (1997:8). In such a perspective one could view the strategies of women who become canoe owners, who in other words locate themselves within the male field of fishing, as performances of femininity in relation to male crews in ways that do not threaten men's performance of their masculinity. I think Irene Odotei's study of female canoe owners in Tema clearly illustrates the same point:

"Female canoe owners interviewed at Tema Fishing Harbour claim that they combine both female and male 'tactics' in controlling their crew. They cajole, sweet talk, and provide welfare services for them. They show an interest in the personal life of the fishermen by lending or giving them money in emergencies when they are in need. They organise annual parties for them, provide them with uniforms, T-shirts and other items, especially during traditional festivals. The women call this '*lakamo*' (Ga) meaning enticing or cajoling. They also claim that they sometimes have to show the men that they can be as rough, tough and aggressive as they are. This calls for temporarily abandoning their female charm and shouting and threatening when they have to, not forgetting, of course, that they can be left in the lurch by the fishermen if they overdo it. *The male ego always have to be reckoned with*" (Odotei 1991 Vol II:180-81 [my italics]).

Women canoe owners thus have to find ways of performing their femininity that are not offensive in relation to men's masculinity. A woman's femininity, however, must be balanced against the need to perform her role as canoe owner so "roughly" that the fishermen do their best in making her enterprise profitable. The combination of female and male "tactics" is thus a way to find management strategies that work within the fisheries.

It is important to note that it is not the canoe owner's gender or femininity as such that defines her entrepreneurial performance. A woman's various statuses as mother, wife, daughter, sister, and so on, within the fields of kinship and marriage; her age, her position in the female market hierarchy and positions in other fields, such as religion, *in combination* define her position and range of strategies in the field of fisheries. Indeed, symbolic capital obtained within these fields can enable a woman to be a matron in relation to her workers.

While female workers locate their matron's position within the female hierarchy to which they belong themselves, it seems, as I shall come back to, that the degree to which fishermen are willing to be controlled by a matron instead of a patron, depends upon the wider context and how they relate to their female employer in fields beyond the fisheries.

In Ghanaian fishing communities there seems to be a clear limit for acceptable male behaviour when it comes to fish smoking and trading. Directing the question of gender and symbolic capital to men, one could ask how far a man can go in entrepreneurial activity before his masculinity dwindles. Perhaps he would be regarded as feminine if he smoked fish and entered the female hierarchy of traders? Nukunya, for example, in commenting upon Anlo men and marketing of fish and farm produce, writes that: "No man, not even a bachelor, will do any of these things " (1969:155). The only case of a male fish trader I have heard of in Ghana, is a man who is the trading partner of a woman who buys up fish from canoes in Accra (Odotei 1991 Vol II:213). The woman wholesaler buys up fish on the beach and her male trading partner retails it in the market. As Odotei writes: "This is an unusual partnership. [He] is a man who retails fresh fish (...). He is unique and mixes well with the women. *He behaves like them*" (Ibid.[my italics]). In this rare case, the male fish seller performs his masculinity in a "feminine" way. When he follows the rules for behaviour in the female dominated fish market, the other fish traders accept his presence and engage in transactions with him.

As we know from Europe and other places, men are often involved in fish trade, especially when it is commercialised in auctions and large scale processing and distribution companies. The definition of whether fish trade is a *female* or a *male* gender-appropriate activity, is of course contextual. Even in a location as close to Ghana as Abidjan, there are men involved in fish smoking and trade. Notably, these men are Moshie immigrants from Burkina Faso (Odotei 1991b). These are men who have removed themselves out of their local context. In Abidjan, Moshie men not only work as fish traders, but often as "house boys" and in other (for men) low-status occupations. However, these migrant workers are often able to send substantial amounts of money home to Burkina Faso and build up a position in a home-context to which they one day hope to return. In other words, what men who are part of the fishing community in Abidjan (mostly Ghanaians) are not willing to do, Moshie men compete with women in the fish market to earn money on. By coming from the outside, these inland men are able to "ignore" the female connotations of fish marketing on the coast, which, I presume, is constructed by the duality discourse in fishing communities expressed through the symbolic exchange of fish for food between men and women.

In my view, gender ideology partially explains why no men, neither in Moree, Kpone nor in Dzelukope attempt to accumulate capital (which they could have reinvested into fisheries) through fish marketing. It seems that men cannot "place themselves" within the female field of market trade without loosing respect, for example in relation to other men and in relation to their own wives. In practice a male trader would become his wife's colleague and competitor in the market. I also assume that male fish traders would meet severe resistance from both individual female fish traders and from their powerful market organisations. In the Ghanaian context, then, there is a gender barrier against conversion of capital from fisheries into the field of marketing when the trading activity is performed by a man. However, fishing makes no sense if the catch is not going to be cooked or marketed. Thus, following the logic of the dual-sex discourse, men's performance as good fishermen has no economic or social value if they do not transform the product of their work into the market sphere through an intermediary link embodied in the shape of a female fish trader. Only through a woman "transformer" of fish into a marketable product - food - can a man accumulate material capital in the field of fishing, which he eventually can convert into other types of capital in other fields, such as marriage. In relation to the perspective of moral exchange (Parry and Bloch 1989) one could say that the practical and symbolic significance of male-female relationships in the transformation of short-term transactions in fishing and marketing into durable, long-term continuity of lineage, community and production system, makes the maintenance of the complementary separateness of male and female spheres a way order daily life, work tasks, and one's world view in general. These are questions I will discuss in greater detail in the comparative analysis in the next section of this chapter.

I will compare the spatial variation of gendered entrepreneurship between Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope. As far as possible, taking the female "bias" of my data into consideration, I will try to see women's opportunities, constraints, and desires in relation to men's. However, since I mainly have dealt with women's activities and strategies in my study, it is female entrepreneurship which will be the main focus here. In other words, I attempt to understand and explain the variations in the extent of female entrepreneurship in three contexts which in many ways are very similar, but also differ in the way social fields are constructed, defined, interconnected and extended in space. The particular "mix" in each place creates contexts that are different from one another, and thus variations in entrepreneurial practice.

I will therefore look at how the interconnection - or intersection - of fields, which constitute permeable contexts, vary from place to place, in order to understand people's strategies

given the stock of capital they have at hand in various fields. As a second step in the analysis I will discuss how the dynamics between gendered entrepreneurial practice and context may have had consequences for economic, technological and social change in the production systems of fishing and marketing in each place. In other words, I will look at the relation between entrepreneurial activity and innovation. The local contexts do not, of course, exist in isolation, neither from each other, from the Ghanaian context, nor from the global. While I concentrate on the local and regional level in this chapter, I will take a look far beyond in the last chapter (5), where I look at local consequences of access to resources that are linked to international capital. Let us return to the places and some of the people we have now come to know.

### **Spatial patterns of entrepreneurship**

While I have tried as much as possible to let the voices of people in Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope be heard in my weaving together of what I have observed and have been told in the field, I will in this section compare people's careers within contexts on a higher level of abstraction. This is not to say that people's voices will be silent and their movements not be seen. On the contrary I hope they will be highly present in my selection of certain aspects of their lives in order to make the three contexts comparable.

The strength of a contextual approach is that it allows for complexity. However, a constant elaboration of the complexity of which every context consists, may lead to particularism and relativism (see Scharfstein 1989). Simplification and construction of etic categories is therefore necessary in order to make emic categories accessible to others than those who are studied and the researcher herself. From the first moment of studying Ghanaian fishing communities I have been involved in a process of translation and interpretation; in my reading of literature from the area, in the field, in my translation of my interpreters' translations into a text, and in my interpretations of the empirical material with theoretical tools. This involves an oscillation between levels of abstraction where I try to let empirical description inform theoretical analysis in order to see the empirical contexts in light of my own interpretations and secondary sources in a dialectical process.

Below is an overview of variables within the social fields of fishing, marketing, kinship, and marriage in the three fishing communities I have studied. The way the variables vary in the three places give us an indication of the spatial difference in the inventories of social

positions within comparable social fields, thus constituting different contexts. As we see, the differences are often a question of degree, rather than of total disparity. The figure is meant as a “map” to facilitate the reading when I go on to explain the similarities and differences that it displays.

Figure 12. Overview of spatial variation in variables within interconnected social fields, constituting three gendered contexts within which entrepreneurial activity takes place.

<i>Social field</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<b>Moree</b>	<b>Kpone</b>	<b>Dzelukope</b>
<b><i>Fishing</i></b>	<i>-type of technology</i>	Canoe fishing, large purse seines and nets	Canoe fishing, variety of fishing gear	Beach seine fishing
	<i>-level of motorisation</i>	88%	55%	18%
	<i>-ownership by women</i>	25% of canoes, motors, nets	Unmotorised canoes, and nets	None
<b><i>Market</i></b>	<i>-spatial extension of marketing region</i>	180 kilometres (Moree-Kumasi)	60 kilometres (Kpone-Koforidua)	30 kilometres (Dzelukope-Denu)
	<i>-volume of fish per trader (scale of trade)</i>	Medium to large-scale trade	Medium-scale trade	Small- to medium-scale trade
	<i>-supply of fish</i>	Local, regional, national and foreign	Local, regional, and foreign	Local
<b><i>Kinship</i></b>	<i>-kinship ideology</i>	Matrilineal descent	Patrilineal descent (with bilateral elements)	Patrilineal descent
<b><i>Marriage</i></b>	<i>-postmarital residence</i>	Duo-local	Duo-local	Viri-local/duo-local
	<i>-rights to buy fish through marriage?</i>	Yes. Marriage to canoe owner gives rights to selling of his canoe's catch.	Yes. Marriage to canoe owner gives rights to selling of his canoe's catch.	Yes. Marriage to beach seine owner can give access to more credit.

### *The field of fishing*

In all the three contexts, fishing is regarded as a male occupation. Men thus connect their masculine identity with this field. With regards to fishing technology, the beach seining in Dzelukope stands out as different from the fishing from motorised and unmotorised canoes



in Kpone and Moree. There are great differences between canoe fisheries and beach seining in the organisation of production, size of fishing companies, and sharing systems. In my opinion, these differences in scale and structural complexity (cf. Grønhaug 1978), or what I shall call size and social organisation of canoe companies, have important consequences for leadership and management practices. For example, because of the large number of workers that a beach seine owner must recruit and manage, his possession of symbolic capital in his patron role in relation to the company members becomes a major asset in addition to what he can provide materially. A masculine performance of his patron position is an important tool in the management and control over a large and socially complex crew, and can mainly be achieved by the possession of symbolic capital in the form of virility and the patrilineage's legitimation of his leadership position. One cause of the lack of female owners in Dzelukope, then, could be that since none of the above mentioned masculine forms of symbolic capital are available for women, female beach seine ownership and management is difficult.

However, as historical examples (as Afedima in Woe who imported the first beach seine) and the cases of Anlo-Ewe women who have moved out of the local context (for example to Sierra Leone) have shown, women have been able to overcome the lack of masculine symbolic capital when they have been rich enough. These Anlo-Ewe women were able to "replace" or "compensate for" their lack of the qualities that are required in beach seine ownership that are *ascribed* to men by their gender, with material capital from trade, which women *achieve* through an élite position in the market hierarchy.

By converting material capital through channels of conversion in the form of relationships to trusted men like a son or an unrelated male manager (in other words through social capital), wealthy women can become owners of even the largest beach seine companies. However, in the present situation on the Anlo coast, where fish catches are smaller than in the previous generation (Nukunya 1989), and living costs (as elsewhere in Ghana) are increasing, even male beach seine owners struggle with the maintenance of their patron positions. A successful management of a beach seine company requires not only a masculine performance but also a real, physical and visible provision of salaries, food and social security for the fishermen. These goods are the main inputs that female owners can provide.

Dzelukope fish traders lost a vital fish market when Keta's importance as a market town declined. Moreover, their volume of trade has been reduced with dwindling local fish catches. At present, no women in Dzelukope seem to be able to overcome the gender

barriers in beach seine fisheries by compensating for their lack of masculine symbolic capital with market capital. With the impact of patrilineal ideology on ideas about gender-appropriate behaviour (which do not approve of women's control over men), it is not surprising that female ownership becomes quite impossible when women traders neither possess the types of symbolic capital that are relevant in the management of Anlo fishing companies, nor sufficient economic capital.

Now, if we consider the aspects of size and social organisation of fisheries in Moree and Kpone in relation to female ownership, size of canoes and companies seem to have some relevance in Kpone. There are women owning unmotorised small canoes (which I presume - since I did not encounter any of these "invisible" owners - is mostly a reflection of the inheritance practice of brothers and sisters inheriting a father's canoe together) and women individually owning nets. As in beach seine companies in Dzelukope, however, it is difficult for women to run large, motorised canoe companies in Kpone. I think the explanation is similar to what I found in Dzelukope: Women lack the authority, expertise and other forms of symbolic and cultural capital that are ascribed to men by birth and achieved through experience in the field of fishing. This seems almost like an unsurmountable barrier for women against successful and sustainable conversion of market capital into fisheries in the local context. The strategy of compensating for lack of masculine symbolic capital with market capital does not seem to be a viable strategy for Kpone women at present. Instead, women with such desires and with sufficient material capital avoid the gendered barriers in the local context by moving their capital to Tema. By entering into contractual relationships with professional fishermen, relationships that are maintained through provision of material goods without any reciprocal fulfilment of kinship and marriage obligations, Kpone women find a channel for conversion of capital into fisheries. Some of them (as Odotei's 1991 study describes) adopt a "masculine" behaviour in the management of their canoe companies, which to some extent is acceptable in the specialised fishing context of Tema Fishing Harbour where the female owners' other roles and social relations in fields beyond the fisheries can recede into the background.

In Moree, size and organisation of canoe companies do not seem to represent barriers against women's opportunities of becoming owners in the fisheries to the same extent as in Kpone and Dzelukope. In general, however, I think that the management of a 10-20 man canoe company is easier for them than the management of 70 men required for a beach seine company would have been. Nevertheless, as we have seen in the case of the priestess who owns six canoes, a woman in Moree can be capable of employing and managing more than

a hundred men. The priestess/trader/canoe-owner/manager combines social capital (her employment of sons as managers and mediators in relation to her crew on the various canoes) and economic capital accumulated through large-scale and long-distance trade and materially manifested in a large house and numerous plastered smoking ovens (economic capital by which she does not only invest in equipment, but also provides credit as a way to tie the labour of fishermen and demand from fish buyers to her enterprises), with symbolic capital acquired through her priestess position, and furthermore with symbolic capital from her roles as mother and matron for her workers. As we see, sufficient material capital is a prerequisite for women's ability to invest in and manage canoe companies in Moree, as in Dzelukope and Kpone. However, a major difference seems to be that instead of becoming an owner in the fisheries *because* of accumulated market capital and *despite* the lack of the types of masculine symbolic capital which gives influence in the fisheries, women in Moree *combine* material capital from the market with *feminine* forms of symbolic capital, such as high fertility, motherliness, the respect that comes (especially from lineage members) with age, sensuality and charm, physical appearance and strength, and high competence in money-matters acquired in the market field. These forms of capital are relevant in relation to the social actors within the field of fishing in Moree, unlike in Dzelukope and Kpone, where men are provoked by the presence of women who behave according to female virtues or characteristics when they apply them in influential positions in the fisheries. In Dzelukope and Kpone, the activation of feminine forms of symbolic capital is acceptable only within arenas where a feminine gender-performance is "in place", i.e. in markets and houses, and not in fisheries where a performance of femininity is "out of place".

A major reason for the possibility of Moree women, in contrast to women in Kpone and Dzelukope, to perform their gender and activate feminine symbolic capital as a management strategy in the fisheries, is that they very often *are* the mothers of those who manage the canoe companies for them. Their sons, but also other male kin (in addition to female kin of course), have an interest in the thriving of the business of not only male but also female members of the matrilineage. Matrilineal ideology thus seems to facilitate female entrepreneurship in the fisheries. I shall return to this issue in a moment.

Before I compare the fields of fish marketing in the three contexts, I will discuss the level of motorisation which, I assert, is an aspect of fisheries which in the Ghanaian context is related to women's performance and accumulation of market capital. The level of motorisation of canoes in the three contexts is 88%, 55% and 18% in Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope respectively. These differences are related to factors within fisheries like fishing

methods and the negotiation abilities of chief fishermen in relation to banks with credit schemes for the purchase of outboard motors. It is interesting to note, however, that the level of motorisation is higher in Moree, where women themselves are involved in canoe ownership and a large number of women are involved in large-scale, long-distance trade, than in Kpone and Dzelukope where the marketing regions and volume of trade are less extensive.

With regards to the relation between accumulation in marketing and level of motorisation in the fisheries, I pursue the following line of reasoning: The larger the volume of fish and longer the distance of trade, the larger is the potential for profit and capital accumulation in the market sphere. The higher the level of capital accumulation in the market sphere, the more possibility do the traders have to extend credit to the fishery sector, and the more can they thereby enhance their supply of fish. Moreover, a high level of accumulation in fish trade (caused by increased fish landings when more fishing equipment can be bought with the credit from traders) makes it possible for creditor traders to finance capital intensive gear; large canoes, large nets, and outboard motors. We can thus assume (provided that the fish traders are integrated in the fishing community, are interested in re-investing their capital there, and are not prevented by internal or external forces from doing so), that in a fishing community where the fish marketing region is spatially extensive and volumes of fish sold are large, the motorisation level of canoes is higher than in a community where the marketing region and volume of fish traded is less extensive and intensive.

Lastly, and this is of course the main point in this context, when the traders who extend credit to the fishery sector are women, the level of female ownership of fishing equipment must be expected to be highest in the context where marketing activity is most extensive and intensive. Let us look closer at the interconnection between fishing and marketing.

### *The field of marketing*

Fish marketing is a female occupation in both Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope. If we compare the spatial extension of the marketing regions for fish which is processed in each of the three fishing communities (see map 7 in chapter 2), and volume of fish per trader (see figure 12 in this chapter), we see that the three contexts represent a continuum where Moree has the widest marketing region and the largest volume of fish per trader. Dzelukope represents the other end of the regional market hierarchy with a more limited marketing region and volume of fish. Kpone has a marketing region and volume of fish per trader that lies in the middle

range between Moree and Dzelukope.

With regards to the difference in spatial extension of the marketing regions of these three fishing communities, there are a complex set of reasons. I will not examine these in detail here, but point out a few variables. As I explained in the historical examination of the development of the market trade system, Fante women were “first-comers” as long-distance fish traders in Kumasi. The network of Fante traders in Kumasi could thus be one reason for Moree women’s preference for this market. Their understanding of Akan languages and familiarity with Akan forms of social organisation could also be factors that facilitate Fante women’s trading activities in Kumasi. The distance on the road between Kpone and Kumasi is slightly shorter than between Moree and Kumasi (via Accra), so the travelling distance should not be a major constraint on Kpone women’s fish trading in Kumasi. Many Kpone women also speak Twi (Akan). Nevertheless, Kpone women’s preference for the markets in Accra and in other Ga-Adangbe areas could thus (in a similar way as Fante women’s preference for Kumasi) be related to the social networks Kpone women are able to establish in these markets. Kinship relations and a common language are factors that facilitate interaction for Kpone women with other traders in Ga-Adangbe market towns.

Dzelukope women mostly trade within the Anlo-Ewe area. They could be inhibited in trading by prejudice against Ewe people outside their local context (see Wyllie 1969a), but Anlo-Ewe tomato and shallot sellers are well established in both Accra and Kumasi, and seem to be able to overcome such constraints through marketing organisations (Clark 1994; Greene 1996). Anlo fish traders have been accustomed to selling fish to travelling wholesalers coming to the markets in for example Anloga and Keta. The persistence of such established trading patterns and business relationships, I assume, makes long-distance trade less necessary for local women. It is more convenient (and less profitable) to trade within the Volta Region. I do not have enough historical evidence to speculate further on the reasons for why so few women in Dzelukope are involved in long-distance trade. One possibility, which is related to gender ideology in the local context, is that patrilineal ideals of female subordination could inhibit women from travelling far away. Social control over people who travel to distant cities and are away for days and weeks at the time, is difficult. One should, however, be careful in drawing the conclusion that Anlo-Ewe men limit their wives’ physical mobility, since there are many long-distance female traders in other commodities than fish.

An obvious factor influencing the extension of fish marketing regions, is scale of fish trade

(volume of fish per trader). As I indicated in figure 12 above, scale of trade correlates with extension of marketing region. The volume of trade reflects the access to fish supply in each fishing community. I have not been able to estimate the local supply, but I have been able to get information on the extent to which women buy fish from external sources which they add to local supply, especially during the off-season. Here it seems that Dzelukope fish traders solely rely on local sources of fish supply throughout the year (which does not mean that local fish supply covers the demand). Women in Moree, on the other hand, buy fish from the fish landing harbour in Elmina, they purchase by-catch from trawlers, and frozen fish from Tema<sup>1</sup>.

Women in Kpone buy fresh and frozen fish in Tema in addition to the local supply. There seems, however, to be a difference in the extent to which women in Moree and Kpone utilise the external sources of fish supply. Even though the distance on the road from Moree to Tema is much longer than from Kpone, this does not seem to inhibit large-scale traders in Moree from buying frozen fish in large quantities in Tema. They transport the frozen fish to Moree where it is often sold to less affluent traders in smaller quantities. The fish is smoked and then sold in local and regional markets. Long-distance traders also supply their customers in Kumasi during the lean season. Women in Kpone, on the other hand, also buy fish from the nearby cold storage plants in Tema, but they complain about lack of capital and access to credit to buy frozen fish. The majority of Kpone women are thus not able to buy large enough quantities and mostly market the frozen fish locally as food supply during the lean season. Some of them also take smoked frozen fish as far as to Koforidua, but for most women the travelling expenses prevent them from making that effort, considering the small quantities they are able to purchase in Tema.

The trading systems are very similar in the three contexts (in terms of the emphasis upon social relations and trust in the extension of credit, in organisation of sending systems, and in the reliance upon daughters and other female kin as labour and cooperation partners). The differences between the market fields of Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope are therefore more a question of scale (in terms of travelling distance and volume of fish) than of difference in marketing methods. As mentioned, the scale of trade has implications for the profit potential

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<sup>1</sup> Women in Moree also seasonally migrate with fishing companies, or solely in order to smoke fish, for example to Abidjan. Moreover, women from Kpone and Dzelukope also migrate in pursuit of good fish supply and markets. Since these migration patterns have not been examined in enough detail in this study, I will not include migration in the comparison of the three contexts. Migration is, however, an important factor in the understanding of people's accumulation and innovation in both fishing and marketing (see Chauveau and Samba 1988; Platteau 1989a; Haakonsen and Diaw 1991; Odotei 1991a, 1991b; Jul-Larsen 1992), and is a topic that calls for further study.

of each trader. Furthermore, the scale and profit potential of the traders have implications for their possibilities of accumulating capital and giving credit to fishermen and canoe owners. This means, of course, that the scale and level of accumulation by traders have implications for their ability to invest in the fisheries themselves.

As this study has shown, and to which I will soon return, other factors than market accumulation and integration of traders in the local context influence the extent to which capital from the market actually *is* converted into fishing equipment and other innovations in the fisheries. In the articulation between fisheries and marketing there seems to exist gender ideologies which prevent certain types of transactions, i.e. between market and fishing defined as female and male spheres, from taking place in particular contexts.

One could therefore add to the hypothesis of connection between market accumulation and innovation in fisheries (defined as investment in new technology resulting in increased fish landings) that an impermeability of boundaries between the spheres of fishing and marketing seen as gendered and incompatible spheres of exchange, prevents individual entrepreneurs from making transactions that could have the cumulative effect of innovation in either of the spheres. The constraints on entrepreneurship resulting from the separateness of male and female spheres of exchange goes both ways; when women are inhibited from making transactions in the male sphere and when men are inhibited from making transactions in the female sphere. I shall discuss this further in the last section of this chapter.

I will now summarise and compare the variables beyond the fields of fishing and market which influence women's activities within the very same fields.

### *The field of kinship*

At the structural level, in terms of descent system, people in Moree practise a matrilineal descent system, while Kpone and Dzelukope have patrilineal descent systems. Descent systems are based on ideas about the procreation of children (Poewe 1981:49); a crucial ingredient in the construction of male-female relationships. These kinship ideologies, as I prefer to call them (see also Shimizu 1991), have consequences for inheritance practices, residential practices and thus the "direction" of people's loyalty, investment of labour, and the "location" of resources and interests that are at stake for them.

Karla Poewe (1981) refers to Geertz' view of kinship as a "model for behaviour" which

defines different patterns of male-female interaction (gender systems), and writes that; “kinship is an ideology which defines the room each of the sexes has to manage their affairs” (1981:11). The way kinship define gender systems as patterns for behaviour thus structure, in interaction with many other factors I must hasten to say, the extension of men’s and women’s spheres of production, exchange and prestige.

Simply put, the contrast between the matrilineal and patrilineal system can be expressed like this: In a matrilineal system elementary social relations consist of siblings born of one mother, while in a patrilineal system the most elementary relation is that between siblings issuing from one father (Poewe 1981:5-6). Children visibly come out of the womb of women. In the matrilineal system children (without further “evidence” than this self-evident relation) are seen as continuing the lineage through the transfer of blood from mother to child. In the patrilineal system the continuity of the lineage through the semen or spirit from father to son has to be proven, and the social control of women (especially over their sexuality) becomes important in order to ensure the continuity of the lineage through men (Ibid.). This line of thought has two implications that I will attempt to let throw some light on the comparison between the three contexts in this study: 1) The sexual and economic activity of women in the matrilineal system need not be controlled to the same extent as in the patrilineal system, and 2) while men’s interests in patrilineal systems are vested in the patrilineage and continuity from father to son, men in the matrilineal system have interests vested in the continuity of the lineage through their sisters’ sons with whom they share the “same blood”.

As pointed out, sons are a most important tool for Fante women in the management of their canoe companies. One could say that a son works for the continuity of his matrilineage by investing his labour in his mother’s enterprise, which enhances his own position in the present generation of the matrilineage, and further enhances its continuity by the transfer of property through his sisters’ children to new matrilineal generations. After his mothers’ death, the son continues working with his sisters and their children, in relation to whom he is mother’s brother, an important person in the matrilineal system. The son inherits the canoe together with his sisters, but upon his death, his children have no right in it: The canoe is passed on to the new generation originating from the same womb as himself; to his sister’s children. The same logic would apply to the relationship of a female canoe owner and her brother. However, I did not encounter cases in Moree where a woman’s brother was her captain. Possibly this is connected with the generational aspect; a captain must be relatively young and strong, and a woman naturally has more authority over her son than over an elder



or equally old brother.

In Dzelukope, lineage continuity is represented by the transfer of the beach seine from father to son. It is thus important for a man to marry and get sons through whom his lineage and fishing company can continue. His brothers' children are also "his" children and his brothers' sons thus represent the same continuity. To invest in his sisters' enterprises would therefore be "wasted energy", since it would enhance the continuity of other lineages than his own; his sisters' children are not "his" children but are members of the lineages of other men. To work for his mother could be rewarding, but he would inherit her property together with his sisters and it would thus not in the same way enhance the continuity of the lineage in the paternal line. The rare cases of female beach seine ownership (abroad) indicate, however, that some of these women manage their companies through sons. Another case was the woman in Dzelukope who secured the inheritance of the beach seine for her son. However, this did not seem to be a strategy aimed at female ownership, but a strategy for the mother to secure her old age and her sister's and daughters' supply of fish on credit in order to earn money on fish smoking and maintain their independent household.

As far as I can see, there are striking parallels between women's strategies within the two patrilineal contexts of Dzelukope and Kpone. As pointed out, given women's limited "room to manage their affairs" (Poewe 1981) within a patrilineal context, they expand where they can; in the market and in female positions in female houses. Women in Dzelukope who make money on fish trade invest in houses. The building of a house is a gradual process and does not require as much capital as the investment in a beach seine. It is thus primarily the future of her daughters, or "group of female users" (Nukunya 1969:46), that is secured through a fish trader's house-building, since her sons usually live in their father's compound or are focused on building their own house.

Patterns of residence can be seen as a spatial expression of kinship ideologies at the practical level. In Kpone, the centrality of the male house is an expression for the patrilineal ideology. The division of female and male members in female and male sections or houses, on the other hand, can be seen as a tangible expression for the elements of bilaterality in the Kpone kinship system on the level of inheritance and residence practice. One could also say that the dual-sex residence system can be seen as an institutionalisation of women's strategy of investing in the female line. For women in Kpone, the parallel residence system gives them good opportunity to expand in the female sphere. Women who share residence cooperate in fish smoking and trade, help each other with child care, and acquire respect, authority and

prestige within the female house. Wealth, a high female rank, and numerous child births also gives her respect in the wider community. Nevertheless, the extent to which these forms of symbolic capital can be converted into the male sphere of the male house (lineage) and the fisheries is very limited. Men's (including women's sons and brothers) interests are vested within the male sphere and the dual-sex system, explicitly and visibly expressed in the dual-sex residence practice, which facilitates women's strategies within the *yieamlia* and the market, also tend to restrain their opportunities beyond female spheres .

Moree and Dzelukope have in common the unity of the lineage expressed through co-residence of men and women of the same lineage. In Moree, brothers and sisters in the matrilineal residential unit of the *fie*, centred around a male or female head, live together with their descendants. In Dzelukope, brothers and sisters live in the compound of the patrilineal residential unit of the *afeme*, with a male head, together with the brothers' descendants and wives. The mixed residence of male and female members of the patrilineage, however, does not seem to provide women with (male) labour and other resources (relevant in the fisheries) in the way that the united residence of matrilineal family members does.

According to patrilineal ideology men must prove their procreative power, in Dzelukope symbolised by their image of themselves as “supporting poles” or “protecting umbrellas” who carry the responsibility for the lineage's and community's existence and thus limit women's room to manage their affairs (since it is men's task to manage *most* affairs, to paraphrase Poewe above). As a contrast, matrilineal ideology focuses its ideas about continuity of the lineage and community around women, who are seen as redistributive focal points connected with abundance and generosity (Poewe 1981). It then becomes men's task to enhance their mothers' and sisters' redistributive power, from which they themselves will benefit. If we recall the story from Moree about Asebu Amanfi and his sister Amenfua (see photo 4), the brother is carrying the heavy load of his sister who sits in her hut, frying corn in her pan with which she constantly feeds him. On the level of kinship ideology, one could perhaps say that men in the matrilineal system carry the heavy load of securing the continuity of the lineage and community through the enhancement of their sisters' redistributive and procreative powers. There is therefore no contradiction for them in working for their mothers (whose property will be transferred to their sisters) because it secures the continuity of their own lineage and not, as in the patrilineal system, the continuity of their sisters' children's father's lineages.

Although kinship ideologies always are contested and negotiable, and constantly changing over time and with influence from other ideologies, I think, having observed and compared social and economic practice in three fishing communities, that matriliney and patriliney provide some guidelines for the interaction between men and women, and thus for the room that each of the sexes have to manage their affairs. According to matrilineal ideology in Moree, then, men see women's enterprises as a resource pool for themselves because of the moral value of redistribution to lineage members<sup>2</sup>. According to patrilineal ideology in Kpone and Dzelukope, men are expected to be resource pools for their wives and children (especially sons and other lineage members) in order to enlarge and enhance the interests of the lineage. Women's enterprises in fisheries thus would compete with men's role as providers and redistributors.

### *The field of marriage*

While in both Moree and Dzelukope male and female lineage members often share residence, there is a major difference in the postmarital residence practice in these places. In Dzelukope, the virilocal ideal is that at least one wife should reside in the compound of the husband, while in Moree, spouses ideally do not reside together. In Kpone, spouses also usually reside duo-locally. The separateness of spouses in Moree and Kpone, I believe, implies a flexibility for women (and men) in the accumulation of capital on their own. Upon a divorce, for example, a woman in Moree simply remains in her *fie* and continues with her economic activities (except for buying the husband's share of fish). In Kpone, there are moral sanctions connected with patrilineal ideology that often prevent or postpone a divorce. However, because of the duo-local residence of husband and wife, the practical consequences of a divorce are about the same as in Moree; the woman remains in the *yieamli* and continues the cooperation with her sisters and daughters and the man remains with his brothers in the *hiiamli*.

Although separateness of spouses is often the reality in Dzelukope as well, because of polygamy or the inability of the husband to establish his own household, this does not give women the same flexibility. The viri-local ideal that a husband should provide a house for

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<sup>2</sup> Should the moral value of redistribution lose its importance, such as in a purely capitalist system, I think that female entrepreneurship, also within the matrilineal setting, would be less in the interest of men. In a West African context where the social security that extended families (both patrilineal and matrilineal) can provide is so important for people's social welfare, the disappearance of this security-net, and a highly unsatisfactory compensation for the extended family's security by the state or the market forces, the importance of the social dynamics between the entrepreneur and his or her community cannot be overvalued.

his wife means that he is expected to invest a lot in the marriage, which implies an imbalance in the power relationship between them (at least in material terms). One hypothesis could be that when a husband has invested a lot materially in the marriage, he expects (not necessarily material) goods and services in return, like sexual pleasure, children, food, and a behaviour by the wife which enhances his masculine prestige. Combined with a patrilineal ideology, viri-local residence then gives the wife very little manoeuvring-space in between the marriage and the lineage, which could inhibit her income-generating activities. I am not aware of the extent, for example, to which husbands disapprove of wives' travelling on long trading expeditions. However, men's wish to control their wives (especially their sexuality) could, as mentioned, be one explanation for the limited fish marketing region of Dzelukope. Neither does a woman's wealth on the scale of beach seine ownership seem to enhance the personal prestige of either her husband or brother. Moreover, upon a divorce, women are often left with the choice of leaving a house provided by the husband or moving back to her natal home. As we have seen, some women avoid this dilemma by investing in houses themselves. They pool resources with their sisters and daughters in order to achieve more independent positions in relation to husbands and elders in their patrilineage.

According to Greene (1997), female house ownership has increased in Anlo society since the 1960s. Quoting a study by Sonia Patten from 1990, Greene says that women invest in houses where they "now live apart from their husbands [not in their father's or brother's house, but] in housing which they provide for themselves. (...) In the past (...) men would have been offended by such an openly competitive display of wealth and sought supernatural reprisals. Today, women fear such reprisals for other kinds of behaviour, but not for the building of houses" (Sonia Patten in Greene 1997:37). The tendency I observed among fish traders to invest economic capital in houses could thus be viewed as entrepreneurial activity in that they break out of domains previously confined to male control. However, beach seine ownership seems to be a kind of behaviour for which women "fear reprisals" (Ibid.).

In all three communities the exchange of fish is essential in the relationship between husband and wife, both economically and symbolically. Marriage gives women the right - and duty - to sell her husband's fish. A wife cooks the fish (or converts it into money in the market) that she directly (or indirectly through a canoe company) receives from her husband, and provides food and female sexuality in return. In both Kpone and Moree, marriage to a canoe owner gives the wife a wholesaler position in the canoe company, and a much greater profit potential than that of the average fisherman's wife. While in the matrilineal system this gives canoe owner's wives unique opportunities to combine resources from all the fields of

marriage, fisheries, kinship and market and thereby can enter a spiral of accumulation which eventually may enable them to extend their capital into ownership in the fisheries, the wives of owners in the patrilineal systems encounter barriers against the latter transaction. Although in Dzelukope a net-owner's wife gets more credit from the beach seine company than the average company members' wives, her increased profit potential does not result in beach seine ownership. As in Kpone, the entering of a spiral of accumulation by combining resources from many fields is only accepted as a moral and gender-appropriate feminine performance within the female sphere.

In conclusion on this section, we see that the three cases represent a continuum where women in the context of Moree have greater opportunities than women in Kpone and in Dzelukope in particular, to convert market capital into fisheries. Moreover, feminine symbolic capital and social capital in the form of kinship and marriage relations, combined with economic capital from marketing, can also be activated as relevant forms of capital in fisheries in Moree. Matrilineal ideology thus in practise facilitates women's entrepreneurship because of both male and female lineage members' interest in a share of the outcome of these enterprises. Moreover, children belong to the lineages of the women who give birth to them, and marriage is thus not an institution for male control over women's sexual or economic activity to the same extent as in a patrilineal context. In the matrilineal system the support of male lineage members and lack of control by husbands, I believe, reduce the constraints on women's entrepreneurial activity. Nevertheless, women who are canoe owners encounter severe gender constraints in the masculine field of fishing. They therefore define their activities as extensions of their female marketing and creditor roles, and draw on resources from the field of kinship in the form of sons' labour and from the field of marriage in the form of husbands' supply of fish and credit. For wealthy women in Moree, these forms of male relationships thus become channels for conversion of capital from the female to the male sphere of exchange.

Even if the labour of sons, and credit or other support from husbands, often are available for women in Kpone and Dzelukope as well, women's access to utilise these resources in the conversion of capital into the fisheries is limited. One cannot say that lack of these "male" resources represent a *barrier* against conversion as such, but I believe that they are not *channels* for conversion in the same way as they are for women in Moree. On the contrary, one could perhaps say that women's role of transforming fish into money, and their provision of credit in the form of cash (and not in the form of fish, which is mostly the form of "credit" with which men can provide women), represent channels of conversion that

enable *men* to combine resources from many fields in order to enter spirals of accumulation within the male sphere in the fields of fisheries and patrilineage. The gendered fields of fishing and trading thus remain divided but nevertheless interdependent in the patrilineal contexts; the interaction between women and men in market and fishing makes female and male entrepreneurship within the two separate fields possible. However, the boundaries around the male and female spheres, make male entrepreneurship in marketing and female entrepreneurship in fishing, difficult.

The remarkable point, I suggest, with regards to entrepreneurship in the matrilineal context, is that the dynamics between female entrepreneurs in the market sphere and technological and institutional innovation in the fishing sphere has resulted in a cumulative effect of intensification of production and distribution in the localised system of fishing as a whole: Women's investments in new technology were promoted rather than inhibited in the matrilineal context, and as a consequence the levels of fish production, fish trade, employment opportunities, and provision of protein rich food for Ghanaian customers, increased immensely. This development has taken place all along the Ghanaian coast, and whether the matrilineal gender system in general has facilitated this expansion more than that of patrilineal gender systems is an impossible question to answer. However, the correlation in this study between levels of motorisation, fish supply, scale of trade, and extension of marketing regions with types of gender system ("measured" with the variables of kinship ideology and marriage relations), seems to indicate an affirmative answer to that question.

I will next discuss this comparative examination of the three contexts in relation to the theoretical tools that have been used throughout the analysis.

### **Entrepreneurial strategies, gender and innovation**

The types of entrepreneurship examined in this study have mainly been 1) gendered entrepreneurial strategies seen as the conversion of capital between social fields within separate female and male spheres, and 2) entrepreneurship seen as the conversion of capital from the female market sphere to the male sphere of fishing. In this section I will discuss the distinction between these two types of entrepreneurship, which I shall call 1) position-building and 2) the crossing of boundaries, and the extent to which these forms of entrepreneurship have led to innovation in Ghanaian fishing communities.

In the introduction I outlined my approach to entrepreneurship as inspired by Barth (1963), thereby viewing entrepreneurship as an aspect of a role, and entrepreneurial activity as the conversion of value between separate spheres of exchange. Building further on Bourdieu's (1977) types of capital, Grønhaug's (1978) social field analysis, and gender theory (i.e. Moore 1988; Massey 1994; McDowell 1997), I defined entrepreneurial activity as conversion by positioned and gendered persons of various types of capital from one field to another, or the transformation of one type of capital into another, in order to enhance one's stock of material and symbolic capital. As I see it, the latter definition allows for a somewhat wider inclusion of activities that can be categorised as entrepreneurship than the former definition. This is, as I will explain, not a contradiction but a question of level of analysis, and about how analytical tools are used.

The main difference between the two definitions derives from the difference between the concepts of spheres of exchange and social fields. According to the manner in which I have used these concepts, the conversion of capital between various social fields can take place without the crossing of boundaries between male and female spheres of exchange. In other words, spheres of exchange consist of several social fields. Social fields, just think of kinship, for example, can also extend across male and female spheres of exchange. Hence, social fields and spheres of exchange are not synonymous as analytical concepts, and, as pointed out, these analytical tools are etic categories that I have theoretically constructed with basis in empirical observation. In this study the construction of male and female spheres of exchange is based on the West-African dual-sex gender system.

A dual-sex type of gender system provides a value-system or pattern for behaviour, whereby separate status hierarchies for men and women with gender-appropriate behaviour attached to them, are socially constructed (Errington and Gewertz 1987; Moran 1990). Nevertheless, and in line with the gender duality discourse (Kalu 1996), although male and female spheres are separate, they are complementary in relation to each other. According to a dual-sex conceptualisation of the world, I suggest, one can see the male and female hierarchies as interconnected but separate spheres of exchange, "with unity within and boundaries between, in which goods and services circulate freely" (Barth 1963:10). Taking the social embeddedness of economic activity into consideration, economic activities in fishing and marketing are associated with the separate and dual-sex prestige hierarchies, or male and female spheres.

Social fields, on the other hand, are in themselves gendered. The dual-sex conceptualisation

permeate each field, whether it is fishing, marketing, kinship or marriage, which are the fields I have selected as relevant for closer examination in this study.

Hence, according to the spheres-of-exchange-definition of entrepreneurship and my categorisation of spheres of exchange as male and female, male strategies (conversion of capital between social fields within the male sphere) and female strategies (conversion of capital between social fields within the female sphere) cannot be characterised as entrepreneurship in the sense of conversion of value from one sphere of exchange to another. Rather, such male and female strategies could perhaps be characterised as circulation of value within separate spheres.

If we look at fish trade, for example, we see that market women's strategies are definitely entrepreneurial according to Barth's model, in that they are characterised by maximisation of both material and symbolic profit (capital) and a willingness to take risks. Those who find new niches in distant markets, travel far to find new sources of fish supply, or find other alternative strategies to expand their trade, also display an experimental and innovative attitude, which is an important feature of entrepreneurial activity. However, in their re-channelling of market capital back into the female sphere (expansion of marketing scale, hiring of female labour, house-building, etc.) most market women remain, despite risk-taking and profit-making, in female positions. They neither enter positions that normally are embodied by men in male spheres nor convert value in terms of wealth or rank from the female sphere into the male sphere.

As shown in the historical examination of the development of the market trade system (in chapter 2), women's role and predominance in West African local market trade was established centuries ago, and generations ago in long-distance trade. Thus, in the Ghanaian context, and particularly in the context of Fante women's fish trade, risk-taking and profit-making in the regional marketplace system cannot be said to express a very experimental or innovative attitude. To paraphrase Haggett (1983), whom I referred to in the introduction, today's female fish traders are not "early innovators", they are almost "laggards", or, as Lewis (1977) said about the strategies of Cape Coast women, their traditional market strategies are "imitative" (of previous generations of women) rather than innovative. Seen in a spheres-of-exchange-perspective, then, the female market strategy mainly consists of the circulation of value between kinship, marriage and market, but nevertheless within the female sphere.



In relation to the empirical cases in this study, one could say that virtually all women in Dzelukope, the majority of women in Kpone, and most of women in Moree (with the exception of female canoe owners to whom I shall soon return), are involved in accumulation strategies *within* female spheres; in conversion of capital between the fields of kinship, marriage and market. Very few women engage in exchange *outside* the female sphere, as for example in the fisheries or in politics beyond “women’s issues”.

However, according to the wider definition of entrepreneurship as conversion of capital between social fields, women who make a career in the market sphere and men who accumulate material and symbolic capital in the fishing sphere *are* involved in entrepreneurial activity. One could say that they through exchange of capital between various fields enter gendered spirals of accumulation within separate spheres of exchange. In this perspective, such female and male strategies are gendered entrepreneurial performances. In other words; men and women pursue gender-appropriate entrepreneurial strategies within separate male and female spheres.

The following would for example be a typical male gender-appropriate strategy: When a man converts capital from fishing into marriage (invests in his position as husband), he gains prestige (since the marriage is a sign of his wealth) and a reputation of virility (since it is assumed that the marrying of a new woman involves a certain sexual appetite and results in more children). Indeed, he is applying entrepreneurial strategies in the sense that he converts capital from one field into another. Further, such exchange may be instrumental in his accumulation of not only masculine *symbolic* capital, but also in the accumulation of *material* capital in the fisheries: Through a good performance of his masculinity in the fields of kinship and marriage, he may actually enhance his position and enter a spiral of accumulation in the fisheries. He remains, however, within the male sphere. There are no moral boundaries between fishing and marriage, of being a fisherman and a husband at the same time (as probably the combination of being husband and fish smoker/trader would). Both wealth and masculine symbolic capital can circulate (be converted and re-converted into different forms of capital) within the male sphere.

In the case of male and female spheres in the West African context, there are often limitations on the degree to which value can circulate freely within them, given the hierarchical nature of these spheres of exchange. In my opinion, this is an important point with regards to gender studies where the focus often has been on gender relations viewed as an antagonistic pair of oppositions. As this and other studies from a variety of contexts

have shown, “Woman” or “Man” are not homogenous categories. Relationships between women are imbued with various degrees of power, as are the relationships between women and men, and between men. This view is also what has led me to talk about male and female entrepreneurial strategies. However, since both dual-sex relations and single-sex relations to a various degree are asymmetrical, men and women can seek entrepreneurial strategies both within and beyond gendered hierarchies.

Lewis (1977) identified a female entrepreneurial *style* when she analyzed Fante women’s economic strategies in Cape Coast. As far as I can see, this strategy or style, consisted exactly in the circulation of value within the female sphere, or the conversion of capital between social fields in a (for women) gender-appropriate way. Thus, in relation to gendered accumulation strategies in separate spheres, one could thus talk about male and female entrepreneurial styles. However, as far as I understand Lewis, these gendered entrepreneurial styles are not *innovative* as long as they remain within the established dual-sex framework. A point that should not be forgotten, of course, is that while women’s market strategies may not be very experimental, innovative or path-breaking in a West African context, they certainly would be in, say, an Afghanistan context or a Mormon context: Both gender and entrepreneurship must always be seen in relation to context.

After having analysed the interconnectedness of social and economic relations in fishing and marketing in three Ghanaian contexts, I suggest that we distinguish between economic strategies and innovative strategies.

On the one hand, I see men and women involved in *position-building*, the enhancement of one's position through gender-appropriate accumulation of material and symbolic capital, drawing on the resources available within one's network of positions in interconnected fields. Such strategies enhance the career of the individual, and beyond, to the continuity of his or her reputation and descendants' welfare. Position-building is thus a gendered performance within dual-sex hierarchies or separate spheres of exchange: Men enhance their position by a masculine performance within the male hierarchy consisting of the interconnected fields of fisheries, kinship and marriage. Women enhance their position in the female hierarchy through a feminine performance within the interconnected fields of market, marriage and kinship. Through gendered economic strategies, women and men pursue gender-appropriate careers within the webs of people and resources surrounding them, and within which they build up positions.

On the other hand, there are those who involve themselves in strategies that take them beyond position-building, that take them into fields where they otherwise would not have access to resources, and thus increase - at least diversify - their potential for accumulation of capital. Such strategies could be called *crossing of boundaries*, which clearly echoes Barth's entrepreneur model. Crossing of boundaries comes close to what often has been called innovation, and in connection with Ghanaian fishing communities I am particularly thinking about the boundaries of gender and local context. In this form of entrepreneurship, innovation, the entrepreneur finds a new niche, a new way of organising production, exploits a new technological invention, and "gets things done" (Schumpeter 1950). Innovative strategies are also entrepreneurship on the level of individual careers. The difference is, however, that the entrepreneur's innovative strategies can lead to innovation on the level of social and economic structure. Thus, innovative strategies are not only context-generating, as is all human agency, they are also context-changing.

One form of entrepreneurship in the sense of innovation and "path-breaking" in the context of Ghanaian canoe fisheries, could be defined as to cross the boundary of the dual-sex system, both in terms of exchange and in terms of embodied participation. Since very few men cross this boundary, I would say that the most common type of entrepreneurship in the sense of crossing of gendered boundaries, is that of female canoe ownership.

Another boundary is that of local context. I see it as innovative when a person moves out of a context where his or her position is defined by his or her location in the local power geometry (as constituted by interconnected social fields). Through migration the person positions him- or herself in a new way in a new context, and can thus find new ways of combining positions and getting access to resources. Yet another way of crossing the spatial boundary of local context, is to introduce new types of resources from beyond the local context (such as new technology or new sources of fish supply), which can be used to increase one's stock of capital within various social fields.

Ghanaian fishermen's adaptation of outboard motors on their canoes in the 1960s, was thus an innovative strategy. Likewise, women's recognition of the potential of the new technology for their fish trade enterprises, which encouraged them to finance outboard motors and sometimes invest in them themselves, was clearly not only an entrepreneurial strategy, but also resulted in innovation in the canoe fishing sector as a whole. Lastly, women's purchase of fish from beyond local supply is an innovative strategy which generates employment and investment in the local context.

From the preceding analysis of the three contexts it seems clear that women in Moree to a greater extent than women in Kpone and Dzelukope are able to find conversion channels that enable them to enter not only female strategies of position-building within the female sphere, but also the innovative strategies of crossing both gendered and spatial boundaries.

Women in Moree engage in the conversion of material and symbolic capital between social fields within the female sphere in their fish marketing enterprises. However, some of them also convert economic capital from the field of marketing, social capital in the form of relationships to men in the fields of kinship and marriage, and symbolic capital particularly in their roles as mothers - all acquired within the female sphere by virtue of their gender - into material and symbolic capital in the male field of fishing, which belongs to the male sphere. By becoming canoe owners, women extend their potential for accumulation of material capital beyond the market field. When women are able to let the accumulation of capital in both fishing and marketing reinforce one another, their profit potential increases. Value no longer circulates only within the female sphere enhancing the woman's position in the female hierarchy; female canoe owners also build up powerful positions imbued with authority, prestige and respect in relation to fishermen. These forms of symbolic capital in the fisheries are not only relevant in relation to the crew and in the management of their canoe companies. Female canoe owners also increase their stock of capital in female spheres. They re-convert material and symbolic capital obtained in the fisheries back into power and prestige in the female sphere, particularly in the matrilineage. Through the vertical integration of production and distribution into one enterprise, which can be said to be a new organisational form of production, female canoe owners are often able to accumulate more capital than male canoe owners, whose entrepreneurial activities are limited to the male sphere, and who rely on female intermediaries in profit-making in their enterprise.

In Kpone, women to some extent manage to convert material capital from marketing into the fisheries. This happens either through investment in nets, or by becoming owners outside their home town. In the latter case, in addition to moving out of the local context, the strategy of recruiting men as crew members in relation to whom her social statuses in the fields of marriage and kinship are irrelevant (i.e. not linked to the crew member's statuses in these fields), prevents a "masculine" gender performance in the field of fisheries from being perceived as problematic as it is in her home town. Thus, in order to cross the gender boundary of the male sphere to which the field of fishing belongs, women in Kpone must cross the boundary of local context. But the boundary is open and porous (cf. Massey

1994). The fact that a woman in Kpone moves her fishing enterprise out of her home town does not mean that she cannot invest material capital acquired through canoe ownership in Tema in a house in Kpone. On the contrary, her locating of her enterprise outside her home town is most probably aimed at the building of a position of respect and prestige in Kpone that she will enjoy during her old age.

Women in Dzelukope do not convert capital accumulated in the female sphere into the male sphere to any large extent. The material outcome of their fish trade and other enterprises tends to circulate within and between the fields of kinship, marriage and market, in other words within the female sphere. Their main area of investment and achievement of respect are their children<sup>3</sup>. For similar reasons as in Kpone, those of the Dzelukope women who have become owners of beach seine companies, have done so outside the local context. Given the constraints of patrilineal ideology, the strategy of investing their capital beyond the domains of their husbands, brothers and fathers, could be seen as an innovative strategy that in the long run may change the gender system in the Dzelukope context.

To sum up this argument, one could say that while women in Moree are able to cross the boundaries of gender *within* the local context through entrepreneurial strategies in the female sphere, women in Kpone and Dzelukope must go *beyond* the local context in order to cross gendered boundaries in the fisheries. Moreover, Kpone women do this to a greater extent than women in Dzelukope, probably because of Kpone's proximity to Tema Fishing Harbour, where gender is defined according to supra-local criteria. Dzelukope women increasingly invest market capital in houses, but not in the male sphere of fisheries.

However, migration (stepping out of the local context) does not automatically mean that gendered boundaries can be crossed. From my interviews with Anlo-Ewe women in the migrant fishing community Twuwiiim near Moree (see Overå 1992), it appeared that the patrilineal ideology and viri-local postmarital residence pattern (duo-local in polygynous marriages) was maintained in the migration context (long-term migration, not seasonal). No women had invested in beach seines, canoes, or motors in Twuwiiim. Furthermore, from Odotei's (1991b) interviews among Ghanaian migrants in Abidjan, it also appeared that the gender division of labour was maintained, and that Ghanaian men did not apply the innovative strategy of male Moshie migrants who competed with Ivorian and Ghanaian female traders in the fish market. Apparently a gender ideology which inhibits the crossing

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<sup>3</sup> Another important field where women in Dzeluokope invest a lot of time and commitment, which I have not focused on in this particular study, is religion (see Greene 1996; Hilden 1997).

of gendered boundaries (in either direction) is maintained when gendered power relations are moved along to the new location. A *detachment* by the entrepreneur from social relations that inhibit crossing of gendered boundaries, such as in some cases marriage relationships, is necessary for the stepping out of the local context to result in a crossing of gender boundaries. Likewise a *maintenance* of relationships that can be utilised as channels of conversion in the crossing of gendered boundaries, can be moved along to a new context where they sometimes can be even better employed than in the home context. Thus, the Kpone woman's strategy of employing fishermen from outside her home town in her enterprise in Tema, and the Dzelukope woman's strategy of moving both her beach seine company *and* her son (detached from his patrilineage) to Sierra Leone where she could rely on the labour of Anlo-Ewe migrant workers and local men controlled by her son, are innovative strategies where both barriers of local context and gender have been crossed.

Women's strategies in Moree are different. When men and women from Moree migrate, they move the matrilineal gender ideology along with them to the new location. Women can thus utilise male relationships in a new context. Araba in Moree, Kobina's wife who bought her own canoe, is an example. Araba brought her own canoe company (established in her home context through resources from marketing, marriage and kinship) with her on seasonal migration. Unlike women from Kpone and Dzelukope, who avoid local constraints by moving out of their home context, Araba took parts of her home context *with* her to another context in order to utilise alternative fishing grounds. Besides, many female canoe owners in Moree do not move at all, since they are able to cross gendered boundaries within in their home context. This has resulted in a considerable number of female canoe owners in Moree who enjoy high prestige in their local community.

I suggest that when women have opportunities to apply innovative strategies within the local context, this can further enable them to utilise resources beyond the local context. Apart from migration, I am thinking about two additional strategies that relate to fish traders' demand for fish supply. Because of the scale of their fish trade enterprises, women from Moree (and to some extent women from Kpone) are able to invest capital from long-distance fish trade in the purchase of imported frozen fish during times of the year when local supply is low. A certain amount of trading capital is a prerequisite to enter this niche. Moreover, because of their ownership of canoes, women from Moree have found a channel to another supra-local source of fish supply; purchase of by-catch from trawlers. Canoe ownership appears to be a prerequisite get a "contract" with the trawlers in order to engage in this type of exchange. Through assets acquired in the local system of fishing and

distribution, women are able to get access to resources linked to the national and international level. The manner in which women perform these innovative strategies will be illustrated in chapter 5.

An aim with my clarification of the distinction between economic strategies and innovative strategies in this chapter, was to demonstrate the difference between entrepreneurship on the level of individual careers on the one hand, and on the other hand the effect of entrepreneurial activity on the surrounding context.

While Barth's (1963) entrepreneur model aimed at the analysis of entrepreneurial careers, in the sense that he saw careers as processes, a series of transactions between the entrepreneur and his environment, the analysis of entrepreneurship as an aspect of individuals' roles was not Schumpeter's (1950) project. In his engagement with the theme of entrepreneurship, he was more concerned with the understanding of the *function* of the entrepreneur in (post-war) economic development, and with the entrepreneur's role in the development of democracy (within a modernization paradigm). Schumpeter was in other words more occupied with the *effect* of entrepreneurial activity on an aggregated level than with the analysis of entrepreneurial careers as such. He looked at how entrepreneurs exploited new inventions, whereby entrepreneurs functioned as innovators in the diffusion of these new inventions, participating in an innovation process beyond his own career, on the structural level.

My concern in this study has been in line with Barth's entrepreneur approach: I have used a contextual entrepreneur approach in analyses of the career paths of women, and to some extent the career paths of men, in order to understand how women and men's options and strategies in the pursuit of maximising of material and symbolic capital vary within and between gendered contexts. I have studied entrepreneurship, individual careers and gendered accumulation strategies with an emphasis on female entrepreneurial styles, or typical economic strategies. In my discussion of the articulation between marketing and fishing, I also looked at the effect of market women's entrepreneurial activity on innovation in the canoe fisheries. I found a correlation between gender ideology, female entrepreneurship and motorisation of canoes. However, the question about how women's entrepreneurial activity and innovative strategies have affected organisation of production, levels of motorisation and productivity in the system of fisheries and general welfare in the various fishing communities on a more aggregated level (as Schumpeter would have done), goes beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, I think, a precondition for the understanding of both

positive and negative effects of entrepreneurial activity and innovation processes, lies in a thorough understanding of both social and economic aspects of entrepreneurs in context.

On the level of individual careers and career networks, the distinction between economic strategies and innovative strategies can throw some light on the question about the relation between the entrepreneur and his or her environment. This takes us back to Keith Hart's (1975) problem of whether one should view the entrepreneur as a "swindler or a public benefactor in his community" and Evers and Schrader's (1994) traders' dilemma of accumulation versus redistribution (which also is a moral dilemma for entrepreneurs). This discussion also relates to Parry and Bloch's (1989) notions of short-term and long-term transactional systems.

As far as I comprehend the notions of short- and long-term transactional systems, I use them in a discourse that goes beyond gender boundaries, but which nevertheless is interconnected with local gender discourses. According to the gender duality discourse, male and female are seen as incompatible but complementary categories. Thus, in a gender duality perspective, short-term transactions in male-female relationships make the economic activities of fishing and marketing possible. Men and women's activities are made sense of, made meaningful, ordered and organised according to this dual-sex logic. Hence, through short-term transactions in male-female relationships, metaphorically expressed with the provision of fish to be cooked in a pot, the female as container for the male contained, the long-term viability of social relationships, communities and production systems is sustained. In my interpretation, then, the maintenance of a dual but complementary gender system is seen as a precondition for long-term continuity of both relationships and communities, and thus a moral value in itself. If this order is distorted, the viability of the local production system would be threatened, or at least it would have to change.

I thus see entrepreneurial activity in marketing and fishing as part of a short-term transactional system of individual accumulation and consumption. The economic strategies of those who accumulate wealth, and especially if they do it in a way that changes the system, are subject to "moral evaluation" in the social environment (Parry and Bloch 1989:26). In my view, the degree to which entrepreneurial activity is regarded as moral or immoral depends on the degree to which the innovative strategy enhances the viability of a wider collectivity. If short-term transactions are perceived as detrimental to the long-term continuity of households/lineages or the system of fisheries as a whole, the entrepreneur's activities will be evaluated negatively.



Entrepreneurial activity is thus evaluated as immoral and damaging if it is performed in a gender-inappropriate manner *or* in an inappropriate context. One could thus also talk about transactional systems not only according to gender, but also according to geographical scales, i.e. as *within* the local context and *beyond* the local context. Hence, if “foreign” moral values or external resources are brought into the local context, they must be moulded through the local gender discourse in order to fit into the local transactional system of male-female exchange.

By viewing female entrepreneurship in this perspective, one can see that female fish traders’ entrepreneurship in fisheries, which changed the manner in which male-female exchange took place, had to be moulded in the local gender discourse in order to be accepted as non-threatening for the viability of the system as a whole. In Moree, women’s entrepreneurial activities in fisheries and “male” canoe owner roles were redefined and seen as an extension of women’s marketing and creditor role. Then women’s investments, activities and social positions in the male sphere could be conceptualised in line with typical female market strategies as a way to increase the redistributive capacity of matrilineages in the same manner as their marketing activities had been conceptualised. Female entrepreneurship could thus fit into the local gender discourse, and could be seen as a reinforcement of long-term continuity of both lineages and of the collective livelihood made from fishing. In the patrilineal contexts, women’s activities in fisheries are more problematic in the local gender discourse. Female economic strategies and accumulation are not in the same way as in the matrilineal system seen as enhancing the long-term viability and redistributive capacity of patrilineages. Female entrepreneurs thus in a way become competitors and not exchange-partners. Their accumulations in fisheries compete with men’s possibilities of becoming (and power to remain) the primary redistributors through success in fishing. If female entrepreneurship is regarded by men in this manner, female entrepreneurs in fisheries most of all threaten men’s accumulation of symbolic capital in the male hierarchy, which is a precondition for the gender duality and sustenance of continuity through male-female exchange. Women’s crossing of gender barriers within the local context can therefore be sanctioned as morally reprehensible.

In the preceding chapters I have mainly described entrepreneurship as the crossing of gendered boundaries in the local context. In the next chapter I will illustrate how women utilise resources from beyond the local context - foreign fish supply - in order to expand their fish-based enterprises and to enhance their personal prestige.

In a case from Kpone, we are going to see how a woman enhances her career in the female sphere through purchase of frozen fish in Tema in order to be able to build a house for herself and her daughters. Lastly, we examine the exciting story from Moree about how access to purchase of by-catch from trawlers owned by foreign companies has provided an opportunity for some of the most innovative female canoe owners in Moree to expand their business and accumulation of symbolic capital. The case will also illustrate where the limit goes for appropriate behaviour by entrepreneurs in the crossing of boundaries of gender and context. When the principle of unity and continuity of the matrilineage through redistribution is broken, the entrepreneur has a moral dilemma which does not seem possible to solve in the local context.

## 5. Local linkages to global capital

“The global is in the local in the very process of the formation of the local” (Massey 1994:120).

### Introduction

With time, the world has increasingly become more interconnected across space. No place remains unaffected by the forces of capitalism and modernisation, and the encounters between the local and the global are becoming more frequent and intense. This accelerating globalisation process has by geographers been called time-space compression (Harvey 1989), and is a result of the development of communication technology, capitalist market expansion, migration flows, and so forth. In a global perspective, peripheral places on the margin can hardly be seen as isolated localities any longer, but are in various ways connected to the outside “modern” world. This spatial interconnectedness of power relations is a challenge in contemporary studies of local communities. As Watts (1992) has put it, the realization of

“how the ‘outside’ is part of the constitution and construction of the ‘inside’ ...[leads us to]...seek to unravel (...) the various historical configurations of capitalism in an effort to understand how difference, connectedness, and structure are produced and reproduced within some sort of contradictory global system, within a totality of fragments” (Ibid:2).

The social, economic, political and cultural implications of the encounter with the dynamics of globalisation by positioned, gendered individuals and groups in particular places and times, have been central themes in the recent work of many scholars (i.e. Pred and Watts 1992; Comaroff and Comaroff 1993; Massey 1994; Appadurai 1995; Connelli et.al. 1995; Grosz-Ngate and Kokole 1997; McDowell 1997). This is not the place for a thorough review of globalisation theories, but I point out these as some out of many scholars who are preoccupied with globalisation in one way or the other, and who have influenced my own realisation of the global connectedness of power relations. However, for the generation of “global backpackers” (of which I am a product), who experience the influence of media,

technology, and mass consumption every day, thinking in terms of a global perspective has become more or less self-evident. Media exposure and direct encounters with “Others” in distant, small, rural, peripheral and “exotic” places, who often expose a world-embracing perspective themselves, have moreover de-mystified the differences between us, but have also made both the traveller and the “encountered” aware of the gravity of inequalities between us. In my view, social science has a task in constantly developing adequate theoretical tools for analysis of why and how such differences and inequalities in various places are produced, beyond personal encounters and beyond the world-wide availability of enormous amounts of facts and information.

My perspective throughout this study comes close to Grosz-Nagaté’s (1997), who “explore[s] the interplay between global historical forces and local social relations (...) through the prism of gender” (Ibid:1). This approach, I would say, is very different from the Marxist approach of Vercrujisse (1984), who in a way analysed exactly the encounter and the degree of integration of local fishing communities in Ghana with global capitalism. Gunilla Andraë (1981) similarly refers to Wallerstein and Frank in her study of structural and spatial form of production in the Ghanaian society as resulting from the historic process of its incorporation into the world market. Andraë perceives “that this process entails that a ‘formally’ organised export economy largely based on high-level technology and market principles of organisation is being superimposed on a ‘traditionally’ organised and highly locally oriented structure based on artisan and peasant skills” (Ibid:16). While Vercrujisse saw the changes as an irreversible process of *Penetration of Capitalism*, and Andraë uses the term superimposition, I see it as a dynamic process where international capital represents both constraints (such as competition over fish resources and fishing grounds by foreign trawlers, or local constraints resulting from Ghana’s integration in the world economy which influences petrol and food prices) *and* opportunities (such as access to new technology, and other resources or markets) in its encounter with differently situated actors in specific contexts. New opportunities and constraints often alter or reinforce power relations on various geographical levels. While some people find new niches in the encounter and integration of local and global economies and world views, others may be squeezed out or lose power. Globalisation can therefore produce new *mixtures* of social relations of which places are constituted. Significantly, new constellations of power, forms of production, or aesthetic expressions, and so on, are always moulded through already existing forms.

Clearly, as we are going to see in this chapter, local actors are *active* in the encounter with global forces. Globalisation is thus not a one-way process, where the modern world is

necessarily imposed upon local communities, and people's responses are unequal according to their location in the local power geometry.

### **Historical continuity in a coastal borderland**

Global integration has been a continuous process throughout history. As I have stressed earlier, coastal Ghana has been located in the intersection between local and global forces for as long as information about the area exists. Across the Sahara and the Atlantic, through regional migration and trade, people on the coast have always encountered strangers who brought with them new resources and ideas. Local-global encounters accelerated with the arrival of Europeans in the fifteenth century and with colonialism in the nineteenth century. The twentieth century has been characterised by national integration through the building of infrastructure and a national identity, and a further economic, cultural and political integration into the world market. Towards the end of the twentieth century, a considerable number of business-men (and a few women) drive around in Accra with mobile telephones or communicate on the internet. Moreover, people in even the remotest village now have abundant access to buy imported consumption goods. Nevertheless, the majority of Ghana's population experience that their economic capacity to purchase these items is decreasing, and their daily lives are by no means facilitated by any time-space compression. This development has implications for fisheries and fish marketing.

With regards to the dynamics of fisheries development in developing countries, Platteau (1989a) writes:

“From colonial times (and sometimes even earlier), forces have been working towards increasing integration of the national economic space of many developing countries. These forces, which became even more powerful after the Second World War, are: the improvement of communication and transport systems; a quickly rising population and, concomitantly, an increasing rate of urbanization; a development and strengthening of centralized political systems; a continuous rise in real incomes of at least a privileged fraction of the population (the urban and rural elites) and, consequently, an increased demand for both imported and domestically produced goods. Production of fish had therefore to be stepped up not only to meet the quickly expanding demand resulting from both population growth and economic progress, but also to earn foreign exchange” (Ibid:589).

In Ghana, increased domestic demand stimulated growth, technological improvement, and increased fish landings in the artisanal fishing sector, particularly from the 1960s onwards

(see fig. 1 in chapter 1). Practically 100% of this fish has been consumed in Ghana. Parallel to this development in the artisanal sector, state-supported industrial fisheries were established, mainly planned to provide foreign exchange and to increase the GNP. However, compared with the canoe sector average Ghanaians did not eat nor earn much money on fish caught along the Ghanaian coast by industrial trawlers. A large proportion of this fish was exported, and the earnings of foreign exchange by the state, and Ghanaian or foreign industrial fishery companies have not brought much welfare through redistribution to the Ghanaian population. Paradoxically, while much of the industrially caught fish was exported, canned and frozen fish produced in other regions of the world was imported.

Even though production (despite very little state-support or foreign aid) in canoe fisheries has increased, the domestic demand is not covered. Fish traders, who “connect localized spheres of production with the sources of demand” (Ibid.), therefore do everything they can to get access to fish which can be marketed. As a result of the integration of Ghana’s economy with the international market, fish traders have found two sources of fish supply beyond the localised spheres of production - imported frozen fish and by-catch from trawlers - that they connect with the sources of demand. Common for both of these sources of industrially caught fish, is that Ghanaian fish traders make available for the Ghanaian consumer the fish that is of such low quality that it cannot be commercially sold to consumers on the commercial world market.

I will not examine the structure of the international fish market and the international field of industrial fish production in detail here. The main focus will be to provide an account of the local consequences of the integration of Ghanaian economy into fields that stretch out on a global scale. During my fieldworks I had the opportunity to observe how local fisher people actively involved themselves in the encounter with international capital. While globalisation has often been proved to be detrimental to the position of women in developing countries, the same cannot be said to have happened in Ghanaian fishing communities. On the contrary, women have found new career paths in their encounter with international fish markets and industrial fish production. However, it is mostly the already privileged women who have been able to enter the new niches in fish marketing provided by international and industrial sources of fish supply. Power-relations beyond the local thus continue to structure power relations within local contexts.

While Ghanaian female fish traders for a long time have been mediators between local fishing communities and interior markets, they have also become mediators between local

and global capitalism. We have seen how the process of incorporation of new technology in artisanal fisheries took different forms from place to place, and how this process was interlinked with gender relations. In the following, I will show how the encounter with international capital in very direct and concrete ways influence the career paths and innovative strategies of female entrepreneurs.

### **Norwegian mackerel for Ghanaian fishermen**

This is an account about how mackerel caught by Norwegian fishermen arrives in Ghana and ends up in the stomachs of fishermen who go canoe fishing. Through this global production- and distribution chain, the mackerel goes through a number of intermediary links. One of these intermediaries is Korkor in Kpone, who is a fish trader and the wife of a canoe owner. By purchasing imported fish in Tema, Korkor increases the scale of her fish smoking enterprise. Whenever she is able to accumulate a surplus, Korkor buys concrete building blocks. Her aim is to enlarge the *yieamli* in Kpone in which she lives with her mother, sister and daughters. Korkor's strategy is thus entrepreneurial in that she pursues sources of fish beyond local supply. However, her strategies mainly result in position-building within the female sphere, and aim at the enhancing of her positions of fish trader, wife of canoe owner, and senior woman in a women's house. Let us look at how Norwegian mackerel becomes a resource for Korkor in her career.

On the west-coast of Norway, the mackerel season starts in July-August. The fishermen deliver the mackerel caught with highly advanced fishing technology to processing plants along the coast. One important fish landing site is the small town Måløy, where several fish processing plants and export companies are located. Apart from the Norwegian and European market, Japan is the most important market for Norwegian mackerel. The Japanese pay a good price for mackerel weighing more than 600 g. When the mackerel quotas in Norway are low or the quality of the fish is low, the Japanese accept mackerel between 400-600 g. The mackerel below 400 g, on the other hand, is either sold as bait, sold to the canning industry, or exported to Africa, mainly West Africa and Egypt. Low quality herring and horse mackerel is also sold at the African market. According to Norwegian fish exporting companies, this trade is not very profitable for them. Africa is the last resort when the fish cannot be sold in Europe or Japan<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Information about fish export to Ghana has been obtained from the Norwegian companies Maaløy Seafood (Måløy), Domstein (Måløy), and Pelagic Partners (Stavanger).

When the fishermen land their fish in Måløy, it is preserved in a cold storage plant until it is loaded in a freezer cargo ship. Loading gangs load fish into the ship, and they are able to load about 500 tonnes per day. Before the cargo ship is full, it may have loaded fish in both Måløy, Florø, Ålesund and Hjørungavåg. The ships usually carry 4,000-8,000 tonnes worth up to \$ 1 million per shipping. The annual amount of fish exported from Norway to Ghana fluctuates with the Norwegian fish quotas and with fish quality, and with the financial capacity of the Ghanaian import companies. The constant devaluation of the Ghanaian cedi, for example, often makes it difficult for Ghanaian import companies to purchase fish on the international market, since it must be paid for in US dollars. Apart from Norway, Ghana mostly imports frozen fish from the Netherlands.

Once the fish is loaded in Måløy, the freezer cargo ship embarks on the trip to Ghana, which takes about one month. The ship has a Norwegian captain and mechanical engineer, otherwise the crew is usually from the Philippines. The trip goes past Shetland and the Orkneys through the Irish Sea. After a stop-over in Las Palmas the ship continues, sometimes unloading fish in other harbours before it reaches Tema.

The Norwegian export companies either sell the fish through dealers in Europe or have direct contact with a Ghanaian import company. In one case, a Norwegian company have sold fish to the same importer in Ghana for eleven years (since 1986). The Ghanaian company is owned by two men who have studied abroad. They, in turn, have a group of about a dozen regular wholesalers. These are all illiterate women, who have been cooperating with both the Ghanaian and the Norwegian company for many years. They regularly get briefings about the conditions of agreements when the Norwegian company arranges meetings in a hotel in Accra with the import company and their wholesalers. Since not all of the women speak English, the managers of the Ghanaian company translate for them. Moreover, as a kind of bonus for a good performance, every year one of the wholesalers and the Ghanaian manager, are given a trip to Norway where they are booked into a hotel, discuss business, observe the Norwegian fish processing industry, and have a holiday. Needless to say, such trips to Europe are not detrimental for the prestige of the wholesalers when they return home!

The Ghanaian managers and wholesalers meet the cargo ship when it arrives in Tema Fishing Harbour. Some of the wholesalers own small cold storage plants and trucks. Because of the heat, the mackerel, which is covered with plastic and packed in 20 kg cartons, has to be unloaded and put in the cold storage plant quickly. Unloading the whole cargo takes at least



two weeks. Some of the fish is transported in trucks to cold storage plants in Kumasi, Tamale and other inland towns (of which some are owned by the wholesalers in Tema). A lot of the imported fish is also sold directly from the “cold stores” in Tema. The task of the wholesalers is thus to sell the frozen fish and get cedis in cash at the Ghanaian market. Once they hand over the cedis to the Ghanaian import company, the cedis are exchanged into US dollars and transferred to Norway. The wholesalers thus fill an important intermediary function between the Ghanaian and the international fish market.

Imported frozen fish is a vital resource for Ghanaian fish traders and consumers. Since the Norwegian mackerel season starts in July and export starts in September-October, the frozen fish arrives in Ghana from October-November, and sometimes as late as in February. This is the time of the year in Ghana when the canoe sector is unable to supply the Ghanaian market with sufficient fish. Hence, imported fish transported in a frozen condition to inland markets (usually thawed upon arrival), or processed in coastal communities and then transported inland, represent a vital source of protein during a period when fish is hard to get. Moreover, imported frozen fish is an important resource in the careers of numerous fish traders at various levels. The wholesalers who receive the fish directly from the cargo ship, are quite wealthy by Tema standards. Some of them have huge bungalows and cars, and own both “cold stores”, trucks, inshore vessels, and even trawlers. These women, in turn, have regular fish buyers who themselves have regular retailers. The Norwegian mackerel has now entered the female market hierarchy.

Korkor lives in Kpone, and is one of the traders who buys imported frozen fish from the wholesalers in Tema. Korkor’s husband has an unmotorised hook and line canoe. When his canoe has small catches, Korkor supplies her savings with credit from her husband, so that she can buy frozen fish in Tema. Korkor does not get any credit from the wholesalers there. According to Korkor, processing and trade of fish from her husband’s canoe gives her much more profit than the sale of frozen fish from Tema. In March 1995 the price of a carton of frozen fish was 23,500 cedis (\$ 24). Korkor paid 100 cedis for head portorage per carton. In addition to the bus-fee, the expense of firewood for smoking of the fish was 1,000 cedis. Hence, Korkor calculates that if purchase, transport, and processing of one 20 kg carton of frozen mackerel costs her 25,000 cedis, she sells it for 26,000 cedis and earns 1,000 cedis per carton. She usually does not buy more than two or three cartons at the time. I think that Korkor’s estimation of her profit per carton is very modest, and that she earns somewhat more. Nevertheless, her purchase of frozen fish is small-scale and is not as profitable as trade in regional markets of the fish she gets on credit from her husband’s canoe. However,

instead of sitting idle when local supply is low (as is often the only alternative for crew members' wives), Korkor supplies Kpone with food and earns a small income by selling imported fish.



Photo 36. Smoking Norwegian mackerel in Kpone. Note the bricks behind.

Korkor puts the smoked mackerel on trays and sends her daughters around in town to sell it in suitable pieces as snacks with a fresh pepper sauce. They peddle the fish in various houses, display it along the street, or sell fish at the entertainment centre where there are films and video shows in the evenings. Early in the morning, often before dawn, the mackerel is carried to the beach and is sold to fishermen who go on *watsa* (purse seine) fishing trips. Unlike on the unmotorised canoes where the canoe owner is responsible of providing the crew with provisions for each fishing trip, the crew members of *watsa* canoes bring their own food. Along with *kenkey* or *banku* (both made of corn), bread, *garri* (made of cassava), fruit and vegetables, they sometimes bring smoked fish, like mackerel with pepper sauce. In this way, mackerel caught by Norwegian fishermen on highly mechanised vessels in the North Sea outside Måløy, ends up as provisions for Ghanaian canoe fishermen on *their* fishing trip outside Kpone.

Since Korkor's husband provides the crew on his unmotorised canoe with food for the

fishing trip, his wife's processing of imported frozen fish is a good contribution when she sells it to him at a "special" price. Even though Korkor does not earn large amounts on selling imported fish locally, she is able to reduce the draining of her capital reserves during the lean season, and gradually invests in building blocks to enlarge the *yieamli* in which she lives with her mother, sister and daughters. Korkor thus builds a position as a reliable wife and provider of credit to her husband's canoe company, by which she also gets credit herself, and a position as provider of housing, employment and food for her female relatives. Purchase of imported fish is thus an extension of the female market strategy for Korkor, and is not aimed at accumulation for conversion of capital into the male sphere of fishing.

As we are going to see in the next case, women who *have* invested beyond the female sphere in order to become canoe owners, can get access to another source of fish supply; by-catch from trawlers. Canoe ownership is a precondition for access to this kind of fish supply, since instead of the traders buying the fish where it is landed, the trawlers hand over the by-catch at sea wherever the women's canoes can pick it up. Because of the relatively large number of female canoe owners in Moree, by-catch became an important resource which altered power relations in the community and provided a new career path for a few privileged women. However, this alteration, brought about by the active encounter of the local population with international capital, has sometimes been problematic, particularly when trawling activity along the coast declined and supply of by-catch dwindled.

### **Innovative strategies in the encounter of canoes and trawlers**

This case is about the encounter and interaction between economic actors in small-scale fisheries and industrial fisheries; production systems that are very different in terms of technology, social organisation, scale, and spatial extension. The case is also about how semi-educated men found a niche for themselves as mediators between these two systems. Basically, I will examine the manner in which a few people in Moree by local standards have become rich through direct access to by-catch from the industrial sector. By-catch is also called trash-fish or let-go-fish in Ghana, or *seiko*-fish, and is processed and distributed at the domestic market in the same manner as locally produced fish. *Seiko* is Japanese and means "very good"; the local terminology reflects the foreign involvement in the industrial fishing sector.

The first industrial trawlers in Ghana were purchased by Mankoadze Fisheries in 1962-63,

and in the latter part of the 1960s other private Ghanaian companies like Ocean Fisheries, and furthermore the State Fishing Corporation acquired several vessels (Hernæs 1991). All the vessels were built abroad, like in the Soviet Union, Japan, South-Korea, the UK, and in Norway. By 1970, about 30 long-range industrial vessels were based in Ghana (Ibid:75). In addition to Ghanaian owned vessels, the US based multinational company Star-Kist Foods Inc. operated a large tuna export industry through chartered foreign-flag vessels (Ibid:56). Even though the Government in the 1970s adopted a policy of “Ghanaisation” of the industrial fishing companies, Ghanaian/foreign joint venture companies were established, and were allowed to open foreign bank accounts for the proceeds from tuna export (Ibid:97). Most of these joint ventures were Ghanaian/Korean, like AFKO and GHAKO, owning both tuna vessels and industrial trawlers. On these vessels, the captains and engineers are always Korean, hired through an agency in Seoul, while Ghanaian fishermen “hanging around”, as one of the Koreans put it, in Tema Fishing Harbour are recruited as crew members. The Korean involvement in industrial fisheries has continued until today, and the second generation of Koreans are now establishing their own Ghanaian/Korean companies<sup>2</sup>.

People along the coast are thus used to seeing trawlers passing by. Moreover, Ghanaian fishermen are frequently involved in direct encounters with industrial vessels at sea, since the vessels usually fish within the limit of the 30 fathom line. Sometimes the canoe fishermen’s fishing gear is destroyed by trawlers. Many of the fishermen have also worked aboard the industrial trawlers at some point in their lives. However, not much is known about the extent to which by-catch from the industrial vessels has become a resource in some fishing communities, and about the social drama that is played out around the local management of access to this resource.

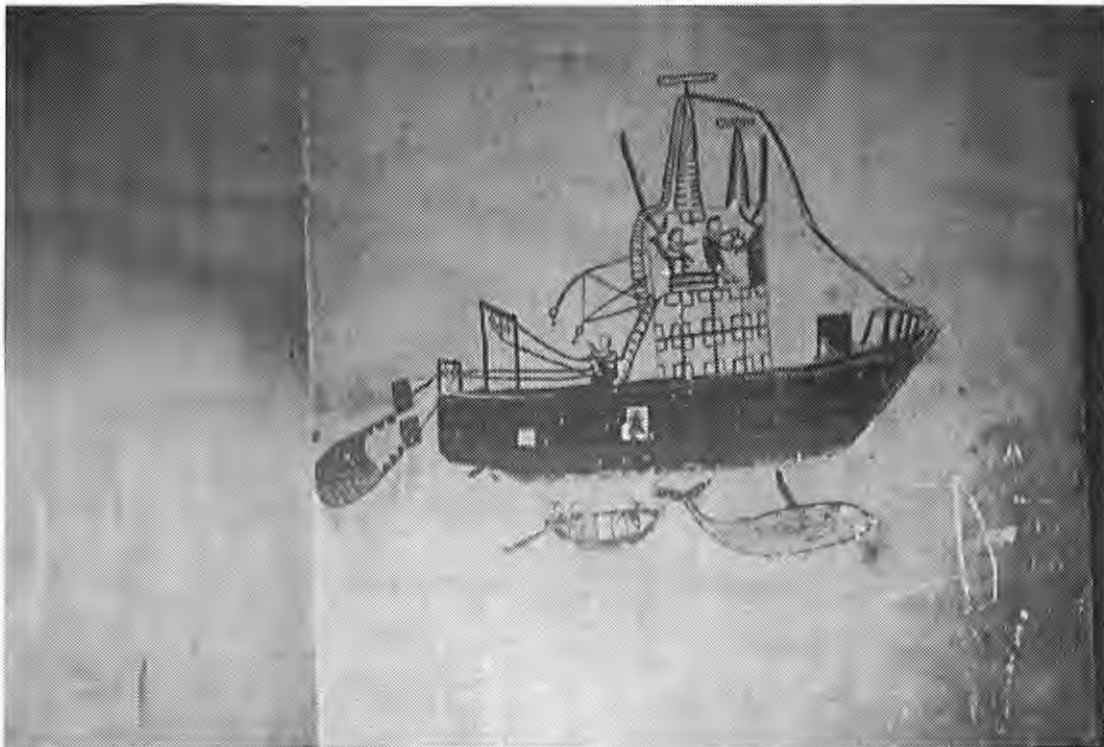
This case is thus also about the interconnectedness - within and beyond local contexts - of economic relations with kinship and marriage relations, and about how accumulation of material capital becomes a problem if economic strategies are in conflict with gender-appropriate behaviour within these fields. We are going to meet two sisters who built up their fish trade careers together, but who later (to their matrilineage’s great worry) became enemies in the competition over the new resource that arrived with the trawlers. Moreover,

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<sup>2</sup> As mentioned, there were 49 trawlers and 25 tuna boats in Ghana in 1995 (personal communication with Fisheries Department’s research Unit, Tema). I have no overview of the extent of Ghanaian and foreign ownership in this fleet. However, the foreign involvement was confirmed to be mainly South-Korean. An interview with the Korean manager of a Ghanaian/Korean company in Tema provided some of the information for this case. Otherwise, the case is based on numerous interviews and participant observation in Moree in 1990-91 and 1994-95. The names are, as in all the cases of this study, pseudonyms.

new ideas of accumulation in marriage instead of redistribution to the matrilineage also caused conflict among the sisters, divisions within their matrilineage, and disregard of their behaviour from the wider community. We shall enter the story in 1976, when the first direct encounter between a Korean trawler and female canoe owners in Moree happened.

The *seiko*-business in Moree commenced with the entrepreneurial activities of a “copper-coloured” man (an albino or *ofiri*). Mr. Annan, as I call him here, worked as a booker at the Moree truck station, and he was semi-literate and could speak some English. Through his registration of fish baskets going to Kumasi and other market destinations, Mr. Annan was well known and well liked by the fish traders in Moree. However, in the early seventies Mr. Annan was employed as a crew member on a Korean trawler based in Tema<sup>3</sup>. One day when the trawler was on its way to Tema, loaded with frozen fish caught along the Ghanaian coast, its engine suddenly broke down outside Moree. Luckily for the Korean captain and engineers, they had a man from Moree among their crew, Mr. Annan. The Koreans sent Mr.



*Photo 37. The Korean trawler “Banko” painted in the room of one of the first women who got fish from the trawlers in the seventies. We see the trawl, the foreign officers, and the Ghanaian crew giving out fish through the hatchway to an approaching canoe. The sacred whale observes the transaction.*

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<sup>3</sup> I am not sure about whether the vessel was a trawler or a tuna boat. Anyhow, the vessel was owned by a Ghanaian/Korean company in Tema. Even though it may be incorrect in some cases, both in terms of type of vessel and foreign nationality, I will hereafter refer to the industrial vessels as Korean trawlers, as people in Moree do.

Annan ashore, and before he went to Elmina in order to fetch a tug boat, he contacted one of the female canoe owners in Moree. She bought pineapple, water melon, bread, beer, etc., at the market in Cape Coast, and she had her canoe crew bring the provisions out to the trawler anchored close outside Moree. While the engine of the trawler was being repaired in Elmina, the fish aboard was melting. Canoes from Moree went back and forth to Elmina and were given most of the fish. Contact was established, and the Korean trawler started calling at Moree every time it passed by.

The transactions between the trawler and Moree mainly involved female canoe owners and their crews, and the Ghanaian trawler-crew. The trawler-crew needed provisions of fresh food, and the Korean officers did not prevent them from engaging in the exchange of by-catch, instead of throwing it overboard. This was a way for the Ghanaian crew to earn a little extra, and to keep relations between them and the Korean officers favourable. As long as the food-for-fish exchange did not involve high-quality fish, the trawler company did not see this system as any inconvenience either. According to one of the first canoe owners in Moree who engaged in the *seiko*-business, the transactions mainly involved exchange of provisions for by-catch, and gradually a considerable number of women extended their enterprises to include such activity:

*"In the beginning we only brought food, no money, and the fish that the seikos [trawlers] gave us was the bad one that they didn't like themselves, and could not be put in cartons. More and more trawlers from Tema started doing the same thing. It was only women who did it, and at the most about thirty canoes from Moree were doing this business".*

Mr. Annan stopped working as a trawler crew member. Instead, he became a middleman between the trawler-crew and the women in Moree. He frequently travelled to Tema and received information from the trawler company's Ghanaian clerks about when the women in Moree could expect the arrival of trawlers, so they could prepare and purchase provisions. Moreover, Mr. Annan organised the female canoe owners, and made sure that only trustworthy women (including his wife) got commissions to deliver provisions. One of the women remembers that: *"He did the writing for us, and the women who were doing the seiko-business were referred to as Mr. Annan's people".*

Through the entrepreneurial strategy of organising the female canoe owners in Moree and linking them up with the trawlers, Mr. Annan in his mediating position became what Barth calls a "broker" (1963:42) who connected the and coordinated the activities of economic actors in the two production systems. Because he could speak English, could make

accounts, and had acquired a car, Mr. Annan could be the mediating link, through whom female canoe owners in Moree got information about the spatial movements of the trawlers, the extent to which there was by-catch aboard, and the extent to which the crew needed fresh provisions. After some years, the transactions between trawler-crew and female canoe owners also came to involve purchase of by-catch in cash. Thus, when the exchange became more commercialised, Mr. Annan also transferred the women's advances of cash to the trawler-crew and Ghanaian clerks in Tema. He made accounts and controlled that the women received volumes of by-catch (and possibly sometimes fish of better quality) that corresponded to the amount they had paid in advance. In this position Mr. Annan became a rich man, and "Mr. Annan's people" became rich women. Moreover, the innovative strategy of connecting processing and distribution to a new source of fish supply, brought about social and economic change in Moree.



*Photo 38. Sorting of thawing by-catch in Moree.*

Through their access to by-catch the women, who in their positions of large-scale traders and canoe owners, and who already were among the richest in Moree, got an opportunity to make profits on fish trade during other periods of the year than the bumper season from July to September. Although by-catch is not of export quality, it is in high demand by Ghanaian consumers, and this gave the female canoe owners an opportunity that other fish traders could only dream about. In addition, women who were the trading partners of these female canoe owners could accumulate more capital when supply of by-catch brought about

an intensification of fish trade in Moree, and furthermore the trading partners could get more credit from the “*seiko*-women”. Hence, some of the women who had kinship and/or professional relations with women in the *seiko*-business, could buy their own canoes too.

The number of female canoe owners in Moree increased substantially during the seventies (as appearing in the life histories of the female canoe owners that I interviewed). The supply of fish caught with industrial vessels owned by either the state, Ghanaian companies, or Ghanaian/foreign companies, thus reinforced the emergence of a group of wealthy female canoe owners that had appeared with the introduction of the outboard motor, which further reinforced social and economic stratification in the community. Established gender-patterns in the fisheries, i.e. the Ghanaian trawler-crews’ preference for women as providers of food and exchangers of fish, facilitated women’s role in this innovation process.

Two of the women who made careers on *seiko*-fish, were Ampanyin (which means “senior woman”, and whose *fi*e we visited in chapter 3.1., see fig. 6) and her younger sister Ekua. Their careers are typical examples of how successful fish trading in Moree can turn into house-building and canoe ownership. Their careers also exemplify how the pursuit of economic capital and accumulation of material capital becomes a threat to the continuity of the lineage, and results in a decline in their stock of symbolic capital, when wealth is not converted from the system of short-term transactions into the long-term system of continuity through redistribution.

Ampanyin, who is born in 1939, is the oldest daughter of her mother, who taught her the skills of fish smoking and trade. Ampanyin had her first child at the age of nineteen in 1958, and “started her own” by going to Aboadze (near Takoradi) where she bought smoked fish that she distributed further to Kumasi. By 1970, Ampanyin had given birth to three children, had divorced her first husband, and had started buying fish from the “cold stores” in Tema. Ampanyin gradually established a considerable fish-smoking enterprise in which she employed her sisters, children, carriers, and women from other villages as seasonal helpers. Ampanyin’s closest business partner was her younger sister Ekua, and she taught her everything she had learnt from her mother and colleagues. In practice, Ampanyin, Ekua, and their younger sister Aba, operated one fish smoking enterprise together, centred around their mother’s house, with Ampanyin acting as the “managing director”. Thus, at the time when female canoe owners in Moree started buying by-catch from trawlers, Ampanyin was among those who could afford to purchase this additional source of fish from them, and thereby intensify both her own and her sisters’ fish trade. A tangible result of this intensification, was



Ampanyin's building of her own *fie*.

In 1977 Ampanyin married again. Her second husband was a rich canoe owner. Ampanyin became his second wife, and thus one of the two *enam enyi* on his canoe. Around 1980, after more births and a growing fish business, Ampanyin bought her own canoe (with savings from her fish trade and credit from her husband). Her oldest son from the first marriage was now twenty years old and became her captain. The acquisition of a canoe enabled Ampanyin to get access to buy *seiko*-fish, and she became one of "Mr. Annan's people". Ampanyin's career now reached a "take-off"-stage, and as an effect of this economic success, her sister Ekua's trading business thrived too; Ampanyin started supplying Ekua with her own canoe's fish catches in addition to by-catch at favourable conditions.

Around this time, Mr. Annan's activities and the transactions between trawler-crews and female canoe owners appear to have gotten somewhat out of hand for the Ghanaian clerks in the trawler company in Tema. The extent to which Mr. Annan and "his people" sometimes also illegally bought fish of export quality is not clear. In any case, one of the clerks/middlemen was sent from Tema to Moree in order to investigate and tidy up the situation. This was Mr. Brown who, like Mr. Annan, was a semi-literate Fante (but not from Moree). The number of women who were allowed to provide provisions and have "contracts" (making advances in cash in order to purchase by-catch) was now reduced to a number of ten women.

With the arrival of Mr. Brown, Mr. Annan was no longer the only middleman. In the beginning, Mr. Brown cooperated with Mr. Annan, and lodged with him whenever he stayed in Moree. Mr. Annan also drove Mr. Brown back to Tema after his stays in Moree. After a while, however, these two middlemen came to have conflicting interests, both in relation to the group of female canoe owners who had *seiko*-contracts and in relation to the trawling company in Tema. The problem was that Mr. Brown began to involve his own personal interests in the *seiko*-trade with strategies that were not acceptable in Moree.

Since Ampanyin was one of the ten women who got a "contract" from Mr. Brown, he also got to know her sister Ekua, who was divorced at the time. Soon Mr. Brown married Ekua, and soon Ekua bought a canoe with money she had borrowed from her new husband. Mr. Brown also signed as a guarantor for a loan with the Agricultural Development Bank, so that Ekua could get an outboard motor on credit. Of course, Ekua also got a *seiko*-contract.

Three years later, in 1983, Ekua had built a house next to Ampanyin's, and Ekua's house was slightly bigger and more outstanding than her senior sister's house. Mr. Brown began to spend more and more time in Moree with his wife in their new house. In fact, Mr. Brown had similar arrangements with one wife in Tema and one in Winneba, so he commuted between these wives and the trawler companies in Tema, and made sure that his wives were favoured over the other women in the *seiko*-business. Through his fusion of marriages to female canoe owners in three different towns with a middleman position in a Ghanaian/Korean industrial trawling companies, Mr. Brown made a lot of money. He also owned a *watsa* canoe and an inshore vessel himself.

During the latter part of the 1970s and in the 1980s, fish landings by the industrial sector declined drastically (see fig. 1 in chapter 1), and several vessels became inactive (Hernæs 1991:84). Trawlers in need of provisions thus became a rare sight on the horizon outside Moree, and female (and male) canoe owners largely had to rely on what their own canoes could catch. Because of Mr. Brown's favouring of Ekua whenever by-catch was available, there were often conflicts between her and the other women, and between Mr. Annan and Mr. Brown. Since Mr. Brown had close contacts with powerful men in the trawling companies in Tema, there was not much neither Mr. Annan nor the women could do in order to prevent him from manipulating with their access to by-catch. Mr. Brown even had a Motorola (walkie-talkie) with which he could communicate with the trawlers at sea. Mr. Brown's economic strategies did not take into consideration the Moree trader's consensus about fairness in trade organised through a hierarchical order (a pattern by which M. Annan had operated and by which he became the trusted partner of the female canoe owners), nor did Mr. Brown respect the value of redistribution to lineage members. On the contrary, he urged his wife to accumulate for herself, and to share her profits with him. One event, which made Mr. Brown very unpopular, and for which he is still remembered, was when Mr. Annan died in the late eighties. In Moree, it has never been forgotten that Mr. Brown did not contribute to his funeral. He did not show up for the grand ceremony either. Such display of disrespect, and for a rich man to be so mean, led to a reduction of Mr. Brown's esteem and gave him an unfavourable reputation.

The relationship between Mr. Brown and practically everyone in Moree and, moreover, between Ekua and Ampanyin, became more and more strained. Thus, as a consequence of Mr. Brown's efforts to promote his wife's enterprise, and of his (in Moree) unacceptable strategies, the sisters were no longer partners in fish trade; they had become competitors over by-catch. Such a relationship between sisters contradicts the matrilineal ideology of

unity. The conflict that developed between Ampanyin and Ekua was unheard of, and they were often talked about in town as greedy troublemakers.

The conflict between the sisters reached a climax in 1993 when Ampanyin had received a commission to supply a trawler as far away as in Takoradi with provisions. She went to the market in Cape Coast and bought the provisions, and her canoe went to Takoradi. Meanwhile, Mr. Brown had talked with someone he knew on the trawler via the Motorola, and had ordered the trawler-crew not to accept the provisions from Ampanyin and not to give her any fish. Instead, the trawler should wait for Ekua's canoe. Ampanyin wasted a lot of petrol on the trip and the food in the canoe was spoiled. And the event was humiliating! Ampanyin and Ekua fought physically over this matter, and Mr. Brown reported Ampanyin to the police for having bitten his wife. Moreover, Mr. Brown engaged an *okomfo* (fetish priest) to put magical medicine in her canoe in order to sabotage Ampanyin's fishing activities. Whenever Mr. Brown and Ekua's business had problems, he accused Ampanyin of witchcraft. One night, for example, Mr. Brown put his huge stereo sound-system outside the house, and with a considerable level of decibel he played a song by the famous Ghanaian high-life artist A. B. Crentsil with the refrain: "*Anyaa nye wo huoo*" ("you really are a witch"). With such means, Mr. Brown tried to damage Ampanyin's esteem.

Another example of how Mr. Brown divided the sisters, was his creation of a physical boundary between their houses (which are located only five metres from each other). Mr. Brown had stairs built up the hill to Ekua's house so that he, Ekua, their children and their fish carriers would not have to walk on the foot path passing by Ampanyin's house. Mr. Brown moreover disconnected the electricity cable that went through Ampanyin's house to Ekua's. He bought a new expensive cable which he connected directly to the electricity pole down the hill. In this way he cut off the need to negotiate with Ampanyin about electricity bills, and Ekua's house was now freed from the evil powers that might have been led through the electrical power passing by Ampanyin's house on its way to Ekua's and Mr. Brown's light bulbs. According to Ampanyin, these drastic actions were evidence good enough to show that Mr. Brown feared spiritual reprisals for his unfair tactics, and that he himself therefore was guilty of the problems that he accused her of causing.

The conflict between the sisters is of course perceived as a big problem for not only the matrilineage, but for the whole community. In general, people in Moree sympathise with Ampanyin, even though she was often envied and feared in earlier days. However, both lineage members and colleagues feel uncomfortable with the conflict, since each person is

somehow forced to take side for one of the parties. Thus the conflict between the two sisters sparks off further conflicts in the network surrounding them: Aba, the younger sister of Ekua and Ampanyin, tries to be neutral, but she continues to cooperate with Ekua in the fish business. Therefore, when she tries to walk on the foot path past Ampanyin's house on her way to Ekua, Ampanyin shouts to her that she had better walk Mr. Brown's stairs.

The children of Ekua and Ampanyin, who are close neighbours and members of the same matrilineage, are not allowed to talk to each other when their mothers see it. Nevertheless, the children play together in their mothers' mother's house by the beach (the house in which Ampanyin and Ekua built up their careers in cooperation). The old mother thinks that her daughters are hopeless, and she is very ashamed. According to her, the whole conflict is caused by Mr. Brown. The rest of the family tries to spare her for the most ugly details. Furthermore, Ampanyin is of course not on talking terms with anyone in Moree who buys fish from Ekua. Thus, when the second wife of Ampanyin's oldest son (her captain) continued to buy fish from Ekua, this was more than Ampanyin could tolerate. She told her son to divorce the woman. Ampanyin's son and captain did as he was told, and went to his second wife's parents and dissolved the marriage.

When I left Moree in 1995, the sisters were still not on talking terms and the family regularly tried to find solutions through mediation meetings in the matrilineage, presided over by the *abusua panyin*. They moreover had meetings with representatives of Mr. Brown's matrilineage coming to Moree from his home town. Mr. Brown himself, however, sabotaged these meetings by refusing to show up, and by refusing to listen to advice from members of his own lineage. Mr. Brown's behaviour is thus not only regarded as inappropriate in Moree, but also in his home town.

Ekua and Mr. Brown are very unpopular, since they try to squeeze others out of the *seiko*-business and cause so much trouble in their lineages. Ekua nevertheless continues the expansion of her business, and has - as some women in Elmina have done but nobody in Moree has done before her - built an ice box in order to keep the frozen by-catch longer and increase her profit potential. She is now one of only six women in Moree who have *seiko*-contracts. However, many people think that Ekua must be mad, and that she is not able to see that Mr. Brown destroys her life. She must somehow be bewitched by love for him and his money. Ekua's priority of her marriage above her matrilineage is not approved of.

In Moree, both women and men who earn money and employ many people gain prestige.

However, if they use unfair means and are not generous, such behaviour is neither perceived as industrious nor entrepreneurial, but as immoral behaviour. In such cases, innovative strategies can actually become detrimental for the entrepreneur's building of a position in the community. Persons who apply economic strategies like Mr. Brown and Ekua are thus looked upon as outsiders in the community. This is, of course, a typical reaction by the collectivity when their (long-term) interests are perceived to be threatened by the individual (short-term) interests of entrepreneurs.

As we have seen in this case, women's investments of market capital in canoes and outboard motors in Moree enabled them to get access to fish supply beyond local production. This innovative strategy of vertical integration of external fish supply and distribution became possible through the activities of Mr. Annan, who acted as a mediator between the local production system and the national/international field of industrial fisheries. Mr. Brown too was a mediating link between the industrial and the canoe systems of fisheries. However, Mr. Brown put into practice ideas from the commercialised system in Tema, where economic strategies to a greater extent than in Moree (and, as we have seen in other cases, in Kpone and Dzelukope) can be detached from kinship obligations. Mr. Brown nevertheless used marriage as a strategy to get a position in Moree, but his economic strategies were not in correspondence with matrilineal ideas about appropriate behaviour, neither for proper men nor proper women, and neither within the fields of fisheries, marketing, kinship, nor in marriage. In Moree, Ekua's adjustment to Mr. Brown's methods in her performance as wife, sister, daughter, fish trader, and canoe owner, was not legitimate when she did not redistribute her wealth to her matrilineage, and moreover prevented others from getting access to a vital resource.

Although Mr. Brown's accumulation strategies are innovative in that he converts capital between several fields at various geographical levels, they are not at all acceptable in Moree. This shows that accumulation of material capital cannot be detached from ideas about what counts as symbolic capital in a local context. Hence, the strategies that had enabled Mr. Brown to accumulate both material and symbolic capital in Tema, also enabled him to accumulate material wealth in Moree, but did not enhance his accumulation of symbolic capital there. When access to by-catch became scarce, and when the man who had been his most powerful patron in Tema died (and the "Motorola" was taken away from him), Mr. Brown's influence in Moree dwindled. At the moment, unless the trawlers increase their provision of by-catch again, and unless Mr. Brown is able to acquire new powerful contacts within the industrial fishery sector, he seems to be caught in-between two systems (a niche

in which he earlier made huge profits), since he has lost respect in both Moree and in his matrilineage in his home town.

The strategies of Mr. Annan, on the other hand, which even though he favoured his wife and built himself an important position, were accepted in Moree because he was generous towards his lineage and, moreover, because his activities enhanced the careers of a large number of women in Moree and brought resources and employment to the community as a whole. Mr. Annan's strategies were thus perceived as favourable for the continuity of the Moree production system to the extent that his strategies were perceived as detrimental to the trawling company in Tema. He was therefore replaced by Mr. Brown, who was seen as representing the interests of the trawling company (i.e. the Ghanaian middlemen and crew) to a greater extent than Mr. Annan. The interested parties in Tema suspected that Mr. Annan paid too much attention to local interests in Moree. His rank among the middlemen of the Tema company was thus reduced. In Moree, however, Mr. Annan gained symbolic capital because his strategies were appropriate both in relation to "his" traders and in his lineage. Mr. Annan's activities and connections were thus perceived as enhancing not only the careers of female canoe owners, but also as strengthening the expansion and continuity of the Moree system of fisheries and marketing in manners that were in line with the moral value of redistribution of wealth by matrons and patrons.

### **Gendered mediators in the local-global interface**

Through the gendering of the domains of fishing as male and marketing as female, women have become mediators between regional and national markets and the local fishing community. In their vital market role, they transform fish produced by men into food and money. In this chapter we have seen that fish traders have economic and social linkages to resources at both national and global levels. However, local women's linkages to global resources are mediated through middlemen, or brokers, who have access to resources beyond the fields of canoe fisheries and the market trade system. It appears that men to a greater degree than women have access to the types of capital that are required in order to activate economic strategies at this level. These assets are primarily literacy and knowledge of English, and, moreover, first-hand experience from industrial fishing vessels and Ghanaian or foreign industrial fishing companies in Tema. Such experiences furthermore provide access to relevant knowledge and personal contacts. Thus, social and cultural capital acquired outside their home towns, enable semi-educated men like Mr. Annan and Mr.

Brown to connect and coordinate exchange between actors in industrial fish production and actors in marketplace fish distribution. Without the mediating activities of middlemen and wholesalers, the industrial system of fisheries and the domestic distribution system would be largely separate spheres, both economically, spatially and socially, unlike in the canoe system of fisheries where production and distribution are vertically integrated. Semi-educated (mostly male) brokers are thus crucial links between economic actors in production systems at highly disparate geographical scales. They made new types of enterprises possible by connecting the regional distribution system to industrial and international fisheries.

In the case from Kpone, we saw how large-scale wholesalers in Tema Fishing Harbour in cooperation with educated men who run import firms with contacts abroad, make available a foreign fish resource to those of the local fish traders who have sufficient financial capacity. And in the case from Moree, we saw how men who had other types of qualifications than local fishermen, were able to connect local fish traders (with canoes) to supplies of industrially caught fish.

Thus, in order to get access to foreign fish resources, whether it is fish caught near the North Pole, or fish caught near Equator with vessels financed with capital from Europe, Asia, by Ghanaian capitalists, or by the state through loans from the World Bank, local fish traders need an intermediary link between their position in the female market hierarchy and the actors in the national and international capitalist hierarchy. Women get access to such links through personal contacts, experience, their personal reputation, and through access to credit and ownership of material capital. By converting such types of capital through men who have personal contacts in the fields of international fish marketing and industrial fisheries, women are able to get access to external fish supply in much the same way as they get access to fish from fishermen at home; through commercial exchange, through marriage, and through kinship relations.

Through these innovative strategies, women “get things done”, as Schumpeter would have said. They supply, not only their own enterprise, but also the community as a whole, with an increased amount and new types of resources. However, a precondition for a female entrepreneur’s success is her redistribution of her gains to those in the matrilineage who brought her forth, supported her establishing of an enterprise, and whose blood will continue through her.





## 6. Conclusions

### **Social embeddedness of economic relations**

Through a comparative study of gendered careers and enterprises in three Ghanaian fishing communities with marketing regions, the interconnectedness of social and economic relations in the canoe fisheries has been examined. The social embeddedness of economic relations in the production and distribution of fish has been shown to have different implications for the extent of female entrepreneurship according to spatial variation in gender systems and socio-economic organisation of fisheries. Throughout the analysis, the main task has been to explain the spatial variation of opportunities and constraints on female entrepreneurship, defined as strategies by which women are able to establish enterprises in the male sphere of fishing, in other words beyond the female market sphere.

As a theoretical tool I chose Barth's (1963) model where entrepreneurship is regarded as an aspect of a role, and the entrepreneur's career as a series of transactions between the entrepreneur and the environment. This approach was combined with Grønhaug's (1978) social field analysis and Bourdieu's (1977) types of capital, and I defined entrepreneurial activity as the conversion of one form of capital into other forms of capital, or conversion of capital acquired in one field into capital in another field, in order to accumulate various forms of capital. The fields of fisheries, marketing, kinship and marriage were regarded as central for an analysis of entrepreneurial careers in Ghanaian fishing communities. Inspired by Massey's (1994) approach to space as socially constituted and constitutive, I viewed entrepreneurs as positioned within, and interacting with, a context consisting of webs of power relations stretching out in space. Basically, I attempted to analyse how differently situated individuals get access to resources from various fields during their life cycle, and the manner in which they apply them in their careers and enterprises.

As a major focus in this endeavour, I argued on the basis of recent feminist and gender

theory (i.e. Moore 1988; Rose 1993; Massey 1994; McDowell 1997, etc.) that gender is a crucial factor for a better understanding of entrepreneurship. A gender approach is particularly relevant in the system of Ghanaian canoe fisheries, where the gender division of labour and the integration of gender relations in the production process is so obvious. Moreover, gender is a “missing link” in much of the entrepreneur literature, and one aspect of my project has thus been to “gender” the concept of entrepreneurship. By taking gender seriously, along with other important aspects of entrepreneurs’ social person, economic activity by implication appears as socially embedded. As this study has shown, social aspects in addition to maximation of economic profit necessarily play a role in the direction that entrepreneurial careers and processes of innovation take, when those who employ the labour and other resources of their closest environment in their enterprises are connected through relationships of kinship and marriage with those, whose labour and resources are activated. In my view, a greater emphasis on social embeddedness and gender in studies of contexts where the social and economic interconnection may seem less obvious than in West African fishing communities, would take research on entrepreneurship, economic activity in general, and of the interconnections between workplaces and other spheres, into exciting and unexplored areas of knowledge. Doreen Massey’s (1995) study of home/work duality and masculinity in high-technology companies, and Linda McDowell’s (1997) study of gender and body identity in the career paths of personnel in banks and the Stock Exchange in the City of London, are recent and excellent examples that have inspired my analysis of gendered career paths in Ghana, as did Gracia Clark’s (1994) study of gendered power relations in the Kumasi Central Market. One of the strengths of these studies is that they take into account not only *how* social processes unfold, but also *where* these take place.

An interesting aspect of the development of gender theory, is how it has been informed by gender models from a wide variety of cultures (see Errington and Gewertz 1989; Overå 1995c). Thus, while women and men’s lives in Africa and Other places in the world often have been analysed with theories based on Euro-American gender models (as argued by Amadiume 1987; Dolphyne 1991; Lutz and Collins; Innes 1994; Mikell 1994), the growing amount of ethnographic knowledge that has become available during this century has provided alternatives that have informed gender models in studies of our own societies. One outcome of a study of social embeddedness of economic relations in coastal Ghana is thus that it could inform studies of gendered careers, not only in other parts of Ghana or Africa, but also, say, in studies of gendered entrepreneurship in coastal Norway or in Malaysia. I have in other words undertaken a comparative analysis of localised contexts within one country with the aim of developing an analytical approach to gender and economic activity that can be used in other contexts than in the three particular places examined here.

Through a comparative examination of gender ideologies, i.e. mainstream patterns for gender-appropriate behaviour, as they are manifested in kinship systems, residence patterns and marriage relations in Moree, Kpone and Dzelukope, I have tried to understand the basis of how opportunities and constraints on women's and men's careers in each localised system of fishing (stretching far beyond local communities) are created, recreated and negotiated. In order to explain the spatial variation in the extent of female ownership in three systems of fisheries that all relate to the same national and global context, I looked at how gender is socially constructed within the webs of interrelated fields by which these three places are constituted differently. This is in essence the kind of understanding a gendered and contextualised entrepreneur approach is meant to accomplish.

In order to develop a contextual entrepreneur approach that could capture the complexity of social embeddedness of economic relations, I made an outline of both the chronological and chorological context of the study: I selected those aspects of time and space that I considered relevant for the understanding of female entrepreneurship in the fisheries. The dynamics between structural changes through history and the dual-sex conceptualisation of gender in the process of feminisation of the marketplace trade system, was examined. Furthermore, I outlined the main technological innovations in Ghanaian canoe fisheries. My aim was to show how structural changes, such as colonialism, introduction of cash crops, education, the development of improved infrastructure, population growth and new consumer demands, were met by innovative responses in the fisheries, and how the definition of market trade as a female domain to a large extent explains the important role that female fish traders came to play in this process.

As I made clear in my methodological discussion, I am aware of how methodological and theoretical selections in the course of the research process structure the construction of knowledge. My aim with the contextualisation of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship was thus not to provide an exhaustive and complete historical or geographical analysis, but to make people's actions and choices in today's system of canoe fisheries more comprehensible. In that regard, contextualisation can be seen as part of the interpretation process and as a method by which important aspects of the life-worlds of those, out of whose own constructions the researcher constructs a representation, is clarified for the reader.

One dilemma of a comparative approach with regards to interpretation, is that less time is available for in-depth study of historical sources, natural environment, the learning of local languages, and extensive fieldwork in each place. However, a methodological approach that

looks beyond the unique in both time and space also has its advantages. In this study, the comparison of integrated systems of gender and fisheries in Kpone and Dzelukope with the apparently unique extent of female canoe ownership in Moree, enabled me, I believe, to reveal aspects of both male and female entrepreneurship in these systems that would not necessarily have become apparent through separate studies of each place. While a lot is missing in ethnographic detail and interpretation at the level of symbolic interaction and discourse analysis, a more extensive approach can sometimes open up perspectives that otherwise would have remained concealed. For example, the weight in this study that initially was assigned to kinship systems for women's economic opportunities, was gradually modified when I looked closer at the implications of the differences in residence patterns and organisation of fisheries in the two patrilineal kinship systems. Thus, although matriliney appears to be a major explanatory factor for the extent of female entrepreneurship in Moree, the balancing of kinship ideology with other factors in the two patrilineal systems, led me to be more cautious about other factors in the matrilineal system as well.

I therefore think that there is a lot more to gain from comparative studies of the genderedness of production systems and economic activity. In my view, we need intensive studies of unique places, but if they cannot inform us about the relevance of this uniqueness to the lives of people in other places, such studies do not tell us much beyond the realisation that "they" are different from "us". This study has been an attempt to balance the particular against the general, and I will summarise some of the main empirical findings and theoretical conclusions.

### **Female entrepreneurs: Partners and competitors**

In all the three contexts it appeared that the immediate social networks surrounding the women who established their own enterprises was their main resource pool for access to labour, credit and access to buy fish. Entrepreneurship through individual competition without the partnership and cooperation of a wide network of kin, children, spouses, colleagues and clients, is impossible in this context. Moreover, the entrepreneur's career network is the *raison d'être* of the establishment of an enterprise: Through accumulation of material capital the entrepreneur is able to become a redistributor in her network, whereby she gains symbolic capital. Significantly, to obtain respect and prestige from the social environment seems to be a prerequisite for a sustenance of the success of an enterprise. With reference to Parry and Bloch's (1989) transactional systems, one could say that short-term acquisition of individual wealth (which is mainly achieved through exchange between actors in the male sphere of fisheries and actors in the female sphere of marketing)

is acceptable as long as it is redistributed in a manner which secures long-term continuity of lineages, the community and the production system as a whole.

Great importance is attached in the three fishing communities to the moral value of redistribution of wealth by both matrons and patrons. However, differences appear between the three places in terms of where the resources for the establishment of women's enterprises come from, and in the direction that the redistribution of wealth from these enterprises are expected to take. One could thus talk about resource flows in and out of enterprises, or input and output, and these two directions of resource flow appear to be closely connected. Kinship ideology, i.e. ideas about procreation of children and continuity of lineages, have important implications for the sources and directions of resource flow in both fishing and marketing enterprises.

Husbands were important as "keys" to access to buy fish and for access to credit (depending on the social and economic position of the husband, of course) in all of the three communities. However, female relatives were the most important cooperation partners for women. Women activate other women's labour in their enterprises through economic and symbolic capital obtained in the female market hierarchy, through the authority of older women over the younger, through trust and mutual benefit in long-distance trade, and through a creation of dependency between creditors and debtors in the market. Moreover, women's wealth was also redistributed back into their network of female relatives. Not only in the matrilineal system, but also in the two patrilineal systems, women tended to transfer their wealth to their sisters and daughters through the extension of credit, building of houses, transfer of knowledge, skills and business contacts, and inheritance of "female" goods, like fish smoking ovens, cloth and jewellery.

An important difference appeared between the patrilineal and matrilineal systems in terms of resource flows in and out of women's enterprises: In the matrilineal system not only *female* relatives, but also *male* relatives have an interest in enhancing their mothers' and sisters' redistributive potential. Since the continuity of men's matrilineage goes through their sisters' children, and not through their own children, the investment of men's resources, as for example their investment of labour and loyalty, is directed not only towards their own and male members of the matrilineage's acquisition of wealth, but also towards their mothers', sisters', and eventually their sisters' sons' accumulation of wealth and human capital. Hence, I suggest that matrilineality has provided women in Moree with opportunities to establish enterprises in the fisheries. Even if women meet gender barriers, they have found strategies and channels to convert their market capital into the fisheries through male relatives.

The lack of men who have an interest in investing their time, labour, knowledge and loyalty in fishing enterprises run by women, seems to be a major obstacle for women in the two patrilineal communities. Women's sources of resources and network into which their surplus is redistributed, largely remain within the female domains of fish trade and women's houses in the case of Kpone, and fish trade and a growing tendency by women to build their own houses for women in Dzelukope. In a similar manner men (although the transformation of fish into cash, the birth of children, and the enhancement of virility and other forms of masculine symbolic capital, necessarily depends on relationships to women), focus their energy within the male domain of fishing and accumulation and redistribution to lineage members in the male line.

In the analysis of the system of fishing in Moree, fishing and distribution appear as separate male and female spheres. However, as the large number of female canoe owners in Moree indicates, the boundary between them is not impermeable. By extending their position in the female market hierarchy and their central position in the matrilineage into a position in the fisheries, women in Moree are able to perform the role of canoe owner and manager of canoe companies without losing their femininity: Because their position of power in the fisheries primarily is perceived as an extension of their feminine market role, women are able to become canoe owners with relationships to men through marriage (for initial credit), and kinship (for the management of the fishing enterprise), as the main tools or conversion channels. In other words, feminine symbolic capital acquired within the female sphere in the fields of marketing and matrilineage, are relevant in the activation of material capital and social capital (male partners) in the fisheries. As far as I can see, it is the matrilineal gender ideology, whereby women's accumulation of capital is seen as legitimate in the enhancement of both female and male lineage members' welfare, that prevents female power in the fisheries from being perceived as detrimental to men's dignity and masculinity, despite a matron's ambiguous status on the beach where she is standing with one foot in the fisheries and another in the market.

Nevertheless, a woman's achievement of positions of power in the male field of fishing are not convertible into positions of power in political spheres (with the exception of important religious positions) beyond the matrilineage, her own canoe company, and the market hierarchy. Female canoe owners are still primarily categorised according to their gender, *as women*, whose power is expected to be achieved within the female prestige hierarchy in accordance with the dual-sex system. This was clearly demonstrated in the case of access to by-catch from trawlers: When women in Moree pursued resources

beyond the above mentioned arenas for female power, they needed male mediators who could connect them to resources beyond the female market hierarchy and local system of fishing.

In Kpone, resources in the fields of marriage (rights to buy fish) and kinship (access to other women's labour) are also important in women's careers, by which they accumulate material and symbolic capital in the market, in their women's house, and in their roles of mothers, sisters and wives. However, while Moree women negotiate and transcend the gendered boundaries between fishing and marketing through matrilineal kinship relations and marriage relations, women with the aim of establishing profitable enterprises beyond the market field in Kpone, remain "invisible owners" in the fisheries through provision of credit or net ownership, or step out of the local context. A gender ideology that defines women's economic strategies as gender-appropriate behaviour in the market but not in the fisheries, and a patrilineal kinship system that encourages sons to invest their labour and loyalty in their father's or other agnates' enterprise, inhibits the entering by women into positions of power and ownership in the fisheries.

Women who accumulate capital in fishing enterprises outside the local context can convert it back into material and symbolic capital in Kpone in the female sphere of markets and women's houses. However, symbolic capital and skills obtained by women in fisheries outside their home town are not reconvertible into the male sphere of fishing in Kpone, nor into politically influential positions beyond the female sphere. The forms of symbolic capital that are required to manage a male canoe company are not gender-appropriate for women in Kpone. Moreover, since women tend to invest their wealth in women's houses and redistribute their wealth to their daughters, women may be perceived as competitors in the fisheries rather than partners in relation to both husbands and sons, who are members of other patrilineages than their wives and mothers.

As in Kpone, women in Dzelukope mainly engage in entrepreneurial activity within female spheres and accumulate material and symbolic capital within the female sphere of markets and management of houses. Either they do this through a good wife-performance in a viri-local marriage, or they establish their own household where they focus on providing for their sons in order to be provided for themselves during old age, and on pooling resources with their daughters in fish trade. Neither of these strategies aim at entrepreneurship in the male sphere of fisheries.

## Gendered entrepreneurship and innovation

While Fante women could use their home towns and the webs of relations there in their establishing of enterprises in fisheries, acting as “redistributive nodes” in their matrilineages, Ewe and Ga-Adangbe women had to create networks outside their patrilineages in which they could be “redistributive nodes”, either in a network of female relatives and colleagues, and/or as managers of fishing companies outside their home towns. Women who employ this strategy in many ways become entrepreneurs *in spite* of their locally defined gender roles, but also *because* they could connect themselves to gender models on a higher geographical level; in the regional female market hierarchy, and through the “masculine” model for gender-appropriate behaviour by female canoe owners that has been constructed in Tema Fishing Harbour. It appears that social construction of a new gender role has taken place in the specialisation and concentration of female entrepreneurs in one location, through a process of entrepreneurial networking and “cooperative competition” (Mcdade and Malecki 1997:270) .

In line with Green and Cohen (1995) who argue that women who enter traditionally male niches are entrepreneurs, female owners and managers of motorised canoe companies in Kpone and female owners and managers of beach seine companies in Dzelukope, would be entrepreneurs by virtue of their gender, even if they operated within an already established niche in the fisheries. However, entrepreneurship in the form of crossing the gender boundary between the spheres of fishing and marketing does not appear to happen at the moment. Women in Kpone and Dzelukope who aim at “breaking new ground” in the fisheries, move their capital out of their home town (or move out in order to accumulate capital), and can as such be seen as employing the innovative strategy of crossing the boundary of local context. As a contrast, women in Moree use their “home ground” in “breaking new ground” (Ibid.) in the fisheries. In this way women have induced a process of innovation in the fisheries by the promotion of the motorisation through extension of credit, and by inventing new forms of organisation by integrating production and distribution into one enterprise. The high motorisation level of canoes in Moree, and the large number of women involved in large-scale and long-distance trade, can be seen as to indicate that female entrepreneurship has been crucial in the interplay between the endogenous dynamics in the system of fisheries and structural changes and encounters at higher geographical levels.

My focus in this study has been on the land-based activities in fisher people’s home contexts, i.e. on women and markets, and on those of fishermen’s activities that can be observed and



inquired about on land. This choice of focus is clearly coloured by the researcher's gender, both in terms of research interest and in terms of practical possibilities in fieldwork. However, I see other aspects of the Ghanaian system of fisheries that appear as important topics for future studies. Through a stepwise contextualisation of phenomena on higher geographical levels of inclusion, fields with other types of social complexities that stretch out on more extensive geographical scales than I have been able to include here, emerge.

The significance of fisher people's migrations for innovation in canoe fisheries, for capital accumulation in their home context and in the migration context, for diffusion of knowledge, institution building and resource management, and for regional integration in West Africa, are topics that call for further study.

Furthermore, the state of the marine resource situation in the Gulf of Guinea has not been thoroughly studied, and I think that the need for more knowledge in this research field cannot be overemphasized. We need to know the effect on fish stocks of both canoe fisheries and industrial fisheries, and to which degree the latter threatens the livelihood of those who make a living out of the former. It would also be interesting to know more about whether and how local resource management systems change as a result of technological innovation and other structural processes, such as urbanisation and rural marginalisation.

Lastly, the degree to which the state has played a role in terms of fishery management policies, national economic policies, and foreign policies, in the developments that have taken place in coastal fishing communities, and whether the state could or should play a role in the development of small-scale fisheries and fish marketing, remains to be investigated further. I think that this study has shown that small-scale fisheries in Ghana should be given better structural conditions, not because "small is beautiful", but because high-technology industrial fisheries cannot compete with canoe fisheries in terms of employment for men and women in rural areas, in its provision of cheap and nutritionally valuable fish at the domestic market, in its ability to be financially self-sustainable, and in its flexibility to adapt to changing structural conditions. In this regard, the gender duality and complementarity by which fishing and marketing is organised, has proved to be vital for the viability of the canoe system of fisheries and for its ability to change.



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