

# **THE SEA IS NO LONGER SWEET**

Gender and kinship relations in Anomabu in times of dwindling fish stocks.

**PATIENCE AFUA ADDO**



Thesis  
Submitted to  
Department of Social Anthropology  
University of Bergen  
Norway

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for Master of Philosophy Degree  
In  
Social Anthropology of Development

November  
2016

## **Abstract**

Anomabu is a fishing community in the central regions of Ghana. In recent years, fisher families in this community have been experiencing dwindling fish stocks. Coupled with this is the fact that the seasons for fishing are also changing, and taken together, these factors are adversely affecting the main source of livelihood of the people of this community. This thesis uses ethnographic methods to explore the ways in which gender and kinship relations in Anomabu are undergoing change, and examines the significance of dwindling fish stocks for these changes. This line of enquiry is necessary because the fishing sector is very much gendered, in the sense that men go to sea while women process and sell the fish. The respective roles played by men and women in this sector affect how and to what extent they are able to access resources in the fishing sector.

This study draws upon perspectives from gender and political ecology to examine the ways in which gender roles are naturalized and used to rationalize social behavior and organization. Various feminist scholars have showed that the various meanings given to gender, as well as the socio- economic institutions within which these meanings operate, goes a long way to influence the ways in which women are made subordinate to men. Perspectives from political ecology have also contributed to the analysis in this thesis of how power structures and dynamics within the Anomabu community influence access to resources within the fishing sector. Anomabu is a matrilineal society, but very patriarchal in how power is organized and distributed. Women in this community play important roles in the post-harvest sector of fishing occupation. This does not, however, translate into women having a greater say as to how resources in the sector are shared. Men are the ones who decide to a greater extent how resources are distributed in this community; often with the implication that women's labor and efforts are made less visible.

Considering that most of the daily activities in this community revolve round the availability of fish, the thesis explores how changes in fish stock would affect gender and kinship relations. Evidence from the study shows that the fisher folks were concerned that the phenomenon of dwindling fish stocks was affecting their ability to live up to gender expectations and ideals. Evidence from the study also shows that the family as a social institution was undergoing some changes in the way in which it operates. There seems to be a shift from the communal way of living to a more individuated one. Fisher folks are now more concerned about taking care of the needs of their immediate family to the neglect of the larger extended family.

## **Acknowledgement**

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Professor Cecilie Odegard for her guidance and support throughout the entire process of writing this thesis

I am grateful to all my participants for taking time out of their busy schedule to offer their assistance when needed. I wish to also appreciate the effort of staff and colleague students of the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen. Thanks so much for your words of encouragement and support.

Finally I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my parents and siblings who helped in diverse ways to see the successful completion of this work. I am also grateful to my husband, Mr. Joshua Tagoe, for all the support I received to successfully complete this work.

**Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my son, Jesse Bjorn Nii Armah Tagoe.

## **Table of content**

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgement .....	ii
Dedication .....	iii
Table of content.....	iv
List of Maps .....	v
List of photos .....	vi
Glossary .....	vii
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
Introduction .....	1
Research Questions.....	2
Methodology.....	3
<i>Field Entry</i> .....	4
<i>Field Sites</i> .....	5
<i>Participant Observation</i> .....	6
<i>Interviews</i> .....	8
<i>Focus Group Discussions</i> .....	10
<i>Ethics in the Field</i> .....	11
<i>Language</i> .....	11
<i>Challenges Encountered</i> .....	11
Position of the researcher in the field .....	12
Profile of the study area.....	13
Historical Background and Political Organisation .....	14
Religious Organisation .....	15
History of fishing.....	15
Gender roles in fishing sector .....	16
Chapter overview.....	18
CHAPTER TWO .....	19
Introduction .....	19
Theoretical Framework.....	19
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	25
Gender relations in the Ghanaian fishing sector.....	25
Livelihood strategies for men and women in the fishing sector.....	27

Conclusion .....	29
CHAPTER THREE .....	30
Introduction .....	30
Notions about childbirth and gender roles.....	30
Naming ceremony.....	34
Marriage.....	35
Gender in the domestic setting .....	39
Gender in the fishing industry .....	41
Organisation of Fishing in Anomabu.....	41
Activities of males and females with regards to fishing in Anomabu. ....	42
Ownership of the means of production.....	45
Leadership among the fisher folks.....	46
Conclusion .....	49
CHAPTER FOUR.....	51
Introduction .....	51
Access to fish.....	51
Fish processing and preservation.....	56
Marketing networks .....	58
Livelihood strategies beyond fishing.....	60
Conclusion .....	64
CHAPTER FIVE .....	66
Introduction .....	66
Changes affecting fishing industry in Anomabu .....	67
Dwindling fish stocks and kinship relations.....	73
Dwindling fish stocks and gender relations.....	77
Conclusion.....	80
CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions .....	81
Summary of chapters .....	81
Concluding remarks and recommendations. ....	85
REFERENCES CITED.....	86

**List of Maps**

Map of Anomabu.....	6
---------------------	---

**List of photos**

A normal day in Anomabu.....5

Oven used for smoking fish.....7

Picture showing location of ovens within households.....8

One of my interview sessions with a fishmonger.....9

Focus group discussion session with the fishermen at the beach.....10

Activities of fisher folks at the beach.....45

Pans of fresh fish.....52

Fishmongers cleaning fish.....56

Processes involved in smoking fish.....57

Parked smoked fish ready to be sent to the market.....60

Smoked fish being sold in the market.....60

Scenes from the beach in Anomabu.....66

## **Glossary**

Abadinto	-	Naming Ceremony
Abosomfo	-	Traditional Priest
Abusua	-	Clan/ Family
Abusua Kyieme	-	Clan Spokesperson
Abusua Panyin	-	Clan/Family head
Apofohen	-	Chief Fisherman
Asafo	-	Warrior Groups
Beesoun	-	Council of Elders
Bosom Mpo	-	Sea god
Endohen	-	Head of Divisional/sub chiefs
Konkohemaa	-	Queen of Fishmongers
Mpena aware	-	Informal Marriage Arrangement
Obaapanyin	-	Elderly Woman
Omanbaatan	-	Mother of the State
Omanhen	-	Paramount Chief
Omansofo	-	Spiritual Mediator
Tufuhen	-	State Linguist Staff Custodian



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

Fishing has been an important source of livelihood for most communities in coastal Ghana. Over the years, fishing communities have been under pressure from overfishing, habitat degradation and other sea and coastal land use patterns which can be attributed to human activity (Cochrane, De Young, Soto, & Bahri, 2009). Alterations in weather patterns due to climate change have also added to the challenges mentioned above. There have been studies which show how changes brought about by climate change has implication for fish production and invariably affecting the livelihood of people who work in these sectors and food security (Brander, 2010; Daw, Adger, Brown, & Badjeck, 2009; Katikiro & Macusi, 2012; Perry & Sumaila, 2007; Wiafe, Yaqub, Mensah, & Frid, 2008). These changes in the weather coupled with environmental factors lead to changes in fish stock.

Fishing in most Ghanaian communities is a gender segregated activity. Men go to fish while women take charge of the processing and marketing of the fish. This creates a situation where men and women operate different domains and where the success of the female domain becomes dependent on the amount of fish that the men are able to bring home. Aside the fact that fishing is a gender segregated occupation, ownership of the means of production is also highly gendered (Carsten, 1989; Odotei, 2003a; Overå, 2003).

The aim of this thesis therefore is to examine the ways in which gender and socio-cultural dynamics operate in Anomabu with regards to access to resources and how these gets affected by changes in fish stock. This focus is necessary because fishing communities in Ghana, have certain gender as well as kinship ideologies which regulate participation as well as access to resources (Odotei, 2003a; Overå, 2003). Gender and kinship relations in fishing communities determine how fisher folks behave and this translate into the level of power they hold in the fishing industry (Overå, 2003). Gender and kinship relations vary between matrilineal<sup>1</sup> and patrilineal<sup>2</sup> societies. These kinship ideologies influence a person's primary access to resources and also show the direction into which a person invests his or her labour and resources (ibid).

---

<sup>1</sup> Lineage membership and inheritance of lineage property descend through maternal line in the matrilineal kinship system.

<sup>2</sup> Patrilineal kinship system on the other hand descends lineage membership and inheritance through the paternal lines.

Anomabu is a matrilineal society which reckons descent through the female line. In this community, children born in a union belong to their mother's family, but tradition demands that their father provide for their upkeep. The fact that this community is a matrilineal society does not necessarily mean that women have greater autonomy to make decisions. Men are the ones in charge of power and authority in this community. Women have certain positions of authority but their duties are to oversee issues of women and children wellbeing. The manner in which the fishing sector is organized also regulates how men and women access resources in this sector. The gender segregated nature of fishing assigns specific tasks to men and women based on gender ideals as expressed in this community. These gender and kinship arrangements place certain impediments in the way of women with regards to access to resources in the fishing sector and invariably affect how they perform their duties.

Current trends of dwindling fish stocks in this community also come with certain challenges. These challenges will be explored and discussed in greater detail in later chapters of this thesis. It is expected that changes in the quantity of fish caught which directly affects the livelihood of women and men and this invariably influence existing mechanisms for sharing resources. High incidence of dwindling fish stocks could therefore intensify existing resource-based tensions between men and women and even trigger new ones in the community.

My interest in this current thesis developed largely out of experience working on my MPhil thesis in African studies. For my thesis I examined the role that members of the extended family play in the reproductive decision making of couples in Anomabu. While undertaking my fieldwork, I was confronted with the harsh realities of the effects of dwindling fish stock on the main source of livelihood of the people in this community. Through my interactions with the fisher folks, I heard several complaints of ways in which this phenomenon of dwindling fish stocks affect gender and kinship relations. Aside my academic interest, I am also an indigene of this community and have relatives living there and engage in the fishing sector. I therefore feel the need to explore some of the issues that affect this community and how the people are responding to these issues.

### **Research Questions**

This research project aims to explore three interrelated problems affecting the fisher folk in Anomabu by addressing the following questions:

1. In what ways do gender norms prevalent in this community organize life in the domestic and public spaces?
2. How do changes in fish stock affect gender relations and create conflict with existing gender ideals.
3. Do changes in fish stocks affect kinship arrangements and income strategies related to fishing and beyond?

### **Methodology**

This study is based on an ethnographic approach to study the effects of changes in fish stock on the livelihood of men and women in Anomabu. According to Bernard (2011), ethnographic studies are mainly concerned with people and events as they happen in their 'natural habitat'. This approach is therefore ideal when examining issues concerned with individuals as well the community as a whole.

Data for this research is sourced from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include information gathered through participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Secondary sources include End of Year Performance Reports from the Mfantiman Municipal Assembly and relevant literature that addresses the themes of this research.

The population for this research included households working in the fishing industry. The sample for the research were randomly selected from all fishing communities in Anomabu. Participants from 10 households were selected for in-depth interview sessions. In the selection of participants for the in-depth interview sessions I paid particular attention to the type of ownership of the means of production that they were involved in. This is because I realised that the type of ownership greatly influenced the way in which fish is shared and also determines who gets a greater share. Four focus group discussions were held. Issues explored in this research focused mostly on the socio-cultural organisation of the community and their relationship with fishing.

Themes that emerged from interviews, participant observations and focus group discussions were analysed thematically in conformity with the research objectives and will be discussed in subsequent sections of this thesis. In order to improve accuracy, credibility, validity and transferability of data collected, I made use of member check (respondent validation). In accordance with NSD regulations, all data collected from the field is anonymized and will later be deleted in keeping with the ethics of doing ethnographic research.

### ***Field Entry***

I arrived in Anomabu on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2016. That day was a Wednesday, and as I arrived I saw a few women selling their wares at the lorry station. The market was very quiet with a few traders; this was because that day was not a market day. I got to my family house and as I was trying to rest and also map out strategies to commence my data collection, I heard a knock on the door. I met a young man outside carrying a basin of fish and he asked whether one of my cousins was around. Initially I thought he was a fish vendor but I later got to know that the young man was my cousin's husband who had come to give her fish to sell and also use a portion to prepare the evening meal. The event that transpired in my family house set the tone for my initial data collection. This practice of bringing fish home I later got to know is a common practice among the fisher folk in this community. The men bring fish home for their wives to process and sell and use a portion to also prepare the evening meal.

After resting awhile, I set out to visit the sea shore and observe what was happening. Since it was in the afternoon I only saw a few fishermen mending their nets and chatting. There were also women selling fish while others were processing their fish for smoking. I also took the opportunity to go round and greet participants that I had worked with during my previous study and observe as well. I told them about the new focus of my current research and inquired whether they were interested. I met and introduced myself to the chief fisherman<sup>3</sup> and queen of fishmonger<sup>4</sup> of Awianu fare.

---

<sup>3</sup> Also known as the Apofohen, he serves as the leader of all the fishermen in the fishing community.

<sup>4</sup> This is the leader of the fishmongers in the community. She is called konkohemaa.



Photo 1- A normal day in Anomabu

### ***Field Sites***

The fishing community in Anomabu is made up of two fishing blocks<sup>5</sup> namely Awienu Fare and Etsiwa Fare. These two blocks have six landing sites namely Bakano, Awienu, Fare, Abanenyim, Etiwa and Krokesem. I visited all the landing sites but focused most of my attention at the Awieanu Fare and Bakano for my on-shore observations. These sites were chosen because they were bigger in size and closer to the place I was staying making it easier for me to move about in between the sites with ease. Awienu and Bakano are both located in the Aweinu Fare block and according to the chief fisherman these sites inhabit about 500

---

<sup>5</sup> A fishing block is a fishing area under the jurisdiction of a chief fisherman.

canoes of varying sizes. These landing sites also served as the main point of sale for fresh fish before it's carted to other parts of the community for further sales and processing. Other sites that I concentrated on were the various work stations of the fishmongers, the homes of the fisher folks as well as the main market in the community.

### ***Participant Observation***

The earlier part of my data collection exercise relied extensively on participant observation combined with informal interviews. I realized that I got so much data by observing and participating in what was happening around me and taking notes. I also spoke to people about their experiences with regards to life in general and the fishing industry.

My data collection exercise starts in the morning and goes on throughout the day till evening. I, however, take breaks during the day to rest and write out my thoughts and observations. I start my observations as early as 5 am, because it is at this time that most of the fisher folks set off to the shore to wait for the canoes to start arriving with the fish. At this time the shore is relatively quieter with a few women preparing food to sell. The shore comes to life once the canoes start arriving and you see the young men and women at work. The big size of the beach coupled with the myriad of activities happening within the same space made it difficult for me to concentrate and record my data. One method I, however, found very helpful was the use of photographs. I was able to capture most of the activities in just one shot then later in the day I provide notes to it. So anytime I saw anything happening of interest to me, I took a shot with my mobile phone and asked questions for clarification.

When I arrive on the shore, I pick a spot where I could sit and observe all that was happening. Once the fishermen arrive, I move about the beach observing and take shots of things that were of interest to me. Since my main interest was on gender and kinship relations, those were the issues I looked out for. Aside from the beach, I also follow some of the fishmonger to the market place and observe how they go about their duties. At the market place I look out for how the fishmongers related with each other as well as the fishermen. I also look at their negotiation skills with regards to bargaining for fish prices. I also look out for how they are able to transform the money gotten from fish sale to other items that they sell. In this regards, I asked questions about alternative livelihoods options available to women aside from selling and processing of fish. As afternoon sets in I focus my attention on the fishmongers who are now processing the fish at their various work stations. At the work stations I assist the fishmongers with their work and this gives me the opportunity to stay around them and observe as well as ask questions. I observe the various processes that the

fish goes through to be processed and ready for the market. I also look out for ways in which children are socialized to take up their various roles in the fishing processing activity.



Photo 2- Oven used for smoking fish



Photo 3- Picture showing location of ovens within households

### ***Interviews***

As the data collection exercise progressed I selected a number of participants from among the households I was working with for in-depth interview sessions. In all, I interviewed 11 participants 6 being females and the remaining 5 being men. I used a semi structured interview guide for this part of the research. Interviews were conducted in a congenial and relaxed atmosphere devoid of fear, suspicion, and compulsion and above all guarantying the security of both interviewer and interviewee. In this regard interviews were conducted at a suitable venue agreed upon by both the interviewer and interviewee.

Participants were properly briefed about the aims and objectives of the study as well as the intended use of the information they were going to provide. Respondents were also



assured of their protection and confidentiality. During the interview I looked out for changes in body language and composure to ensure that participants were comfortable in answering certain questions. In situations where participants appeared not to be feeling comfortable to answer some of the questions I took note of this and made reference to it in my final analysis: however no respondent was under any obligation to answer any question and participants were assured that they could drop out of the study at any time they so desired.

Most of the interviews with the women were conducted at their homes and workstations. Issues discussed with the women focused on their knowledge about daily routines in the home. I asked about their general impression of the fishing industry and how it has performed over the years. I asked specific questions that relate to the organisation of fishing and how the fish is distributed after getting on shore. I asked them about their roles in the fishing industry and how these roles were evolving. I was also interested in finding out about the various processes that fish goes through to be transformed into money and the various uses that they put the money to.



Photo 4- One of my interview sessions with a fishmonger

Finally I inquired about the ways in which the respective roles played by the fisher folks get affected by changes in fish stock and the various strategies that they adopt to mitigate the effects of these changes. I met with the fishermen on the shore on selected days of the week to discuss their general overview of the fishing industry. Since they were the ones who went to sea to fish they would be able to give me information on the variations of fish stock that they got daily. They also gave me information on the mechanisms for sharing the fish at the shore. I also inquired about how they finance their activities and how they are able to manage their working relationships with the fishmongers. I wrote my observations in a field note book and recorded conversations using audio recorders. I took note of place and time of the action and later wrote my thoughts out.

### ***Focus Group Discussions***

The focus group discussion sessions were composed of a minimum of 5 people and a maximum of 8 people. Discussions were held in a conducive environment that ensured relaxed exchange of views and opinions on topics to be discussed. The same set of questions was discussed in all the sessions to draw out similarities or points of divergence. Two sessions each were held separately for men and women. The issues that were explored were similar to those discussed during the interview sessions. The aim of these sessions was to validate the responses given earlier and check for any inconsistencies that may have arisen during the interviews and informal conversation sessions. Participants also had the opportunity to throw more light on issues raised during the interview sessions.



Photo 5- Focus Group Discussion sessions with the fishermen at the beach.

### ***Ethics in the Field***

Spending about five months collecting data in the field brought me into close contact with my participants and their community. It was therefore imperative for me to take into consideration ethical issues in order not to create any problems between myself and my research participants. My main aim in the field was to try as much as possible to protect the interests of my participants and not expose them to any harm by way of my research. To adhere to the ethics of conducting an ethnographic research I sought the informed consent of all my respondents. These were done verbally because most of them were not highly educated to be able to read and fully understand my consent form. I first read the consent form to them in the Fante language and asked whether they understood what I had read and were also willing to voluntarily participate in the research. In my final discussions, I made use of pseudo names in order to protect the identity of my participants. With regards to the use of photographs in this thesis, I informed all my participants whose pictures I would use of my intentions and they all agreed.

### ***Language***

All interviews were conducted in the Fante language. As a native speaker of this language I was able to interact with my participants effectively. Translations of responses from Fante to English were done by me. In situations where it was not possible to find appropriate meaning for certain words, the closest meaning of the word was adopted.

### ***Challenges Encountered***

Even though the data collection process was a success I encountered a few challenges which I would like to elaborate on and show how I was able to deal with them. My first challenge in the field had to do with the difficulty of withdrawing from my community and observing. This is a community which despite its large population is closely knitted, most people are related in so many ways so it made it difficult for me to withdraw from these attachments and present myself as a researcher doing an academic work. I was able to overcome this challenge by constantly reminding myself of my aim in the field and also making my participants aware of my mission in the field. I also tried as much as possible not to include any direct member of my family in my sample.

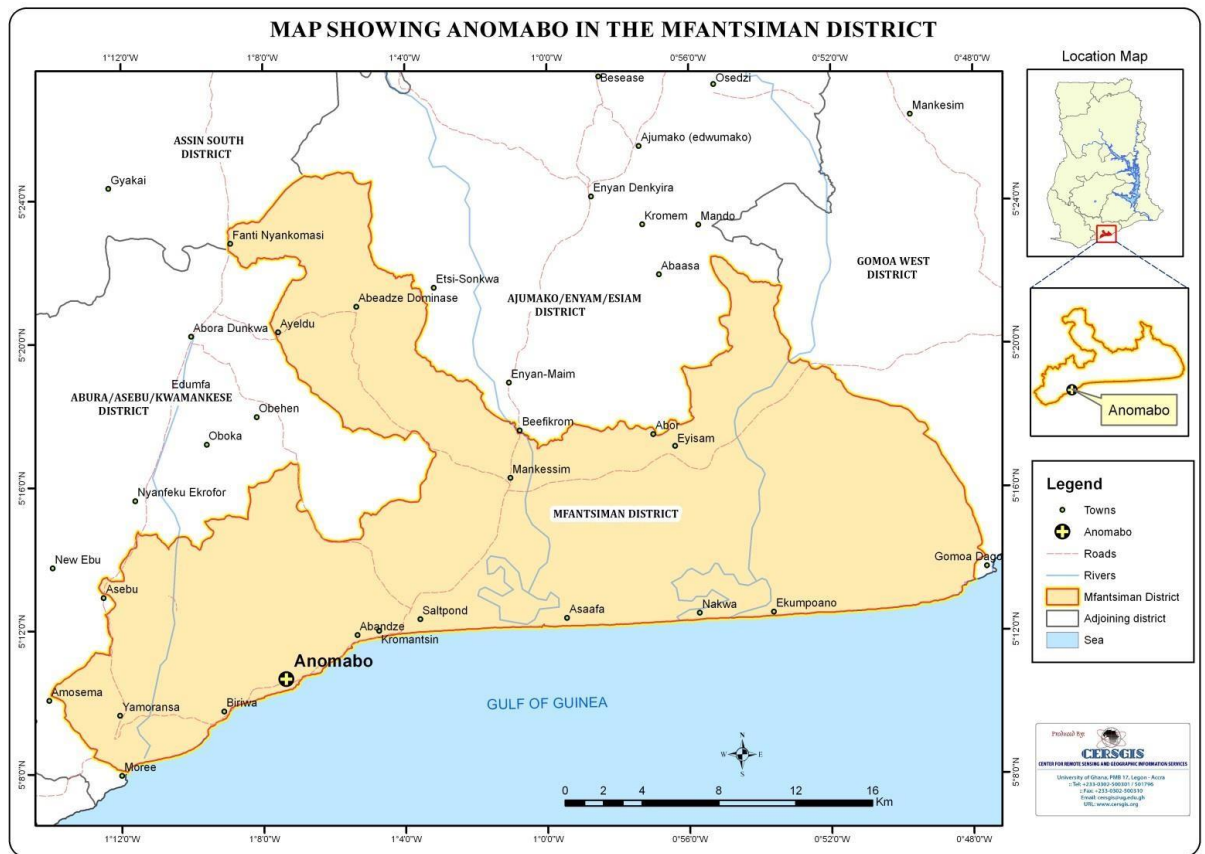
The problem of erratic power supply being experienced in my country was a major challenge. The power rationing regime was so severe that it made it very difficult to observe my respondents in their home at nights when the lights were out. What I did was just to make the best of my time observing during the day and taking time off to rest on the nights that the

lights were off. The last major challenge I encountered was participants seeing me as a government official who was coming with solutions to their many problems. Initially, most of my participants saw me as a government official and tried to draw me into existing political and leadership problems that they were facing. This made most of them apprehensive in opening up and freely talking to me. However, I gained their trust over time with my constant interaction with them and assuring them that I was a student conducting fieldwork.

### **Position of the researcher in the field**

Debates about the ways in which anthropologists write about the communities they study is a long standing one, made more profound during the reflexive / post-modernist turn. Since the beginning of the development of anthropology as an academic discipline, several schools of thought have emerged, each proposing ways in which the world that anthropologist study can be represented. The issue of representation is still very important in current anthropological studies and as such is important to consider. The importance of representation is further stressed by the fact that culture, which is an important framework in anthropological study is a 'domain of contested and negotiated meaning' (Moore, 1994, p. 108). The anthropologist must therefore be very careful when writing about his or her own culture or that of other people. This is important so that the anthropologist, while trying to present his or her findings, do not end up creating knowledge that do not present the communities being studied (Moore, 1994).

I was confronted with the issue of representation during my 5 months stay in this community. With regards to my relationship with the community, I am an indigene of the town. My mother is actually from this town and I have conducted fieldwork in this town for my master's degree in African studies. I must admit that this has been my very first time of spending extensive time in my own community. This made me aware of so many things that I hitherto took for granted and thus would normally gloss over. I found myself having to tread cautiously when asking my questions and reporting what I was observing on the field. I tried as much as possible to avoid the danger of essentialising as well as avoid the tendency of not also reporting what was happening. My other challenge was being told about what was happening, but in my daily interactions I also got to see that most of what was happening was not being correctly reported to me. I had to strike a balance between what I was observing and what I was being told in order to represent my community well.



Map 1 - Map of Anomabu. Source: (Sackey, 2014)

### Profile of the study area

Anomabu is one of the fishing communities in the Mfantiman Municipality of the Central Region of Ghana. It is located 12 kilometers east of Cape Coast on the main road to Accra. Anomabu falls within the southern part of the Municipality. Its boundaries stretch 21 kilometers along the coast and about 13 kilometers inland constituting an area of 612 square kilometers. Anomabu has a population of 14,389.<sup>6</sup> Fishing is the main occupation of the inhabitants. Apart from fishing a small percent of the population are farmers and usually work on subsistence levels. In addition to fishing and farming, the inhabitants of this community are engaged in other economic activities like trading and pottery making. The inhabitants are also engaged in other artisanal jobs like masons, carpenters, plumbers, auto electricians, etc. These jobs serve as a fall back for most of the fisher folks when there is lean fishing season. Fante is the main language spoken in Anomabu. Infrastructurally, Anomabu has 3 public schools and 4 private schools: These offer both primary and junior high school education. Anomabu has a senior high school. The town is also supplied with electricity from

<sup>6</sup> World Gazetteer online. [www.worldgazetteer.com](http://www.worldgazetteer.com)

the national grid and pipe-borne water. Some residents also have boreholes which they use for their domestic as well as economic activities. Most of the streets in Anomabu are tarred and in good shape but the same cannot be said of sanitation in this community. The community has a number of public toilets but they are not well maintained so the inhabitants prefer to use the beach as a place of convenience. Most of the gutters in this community are filled with rubbish making them breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

### **Historical Background and Political Organisation**

The people of Anomabu are believed to be a sub-group of the *Borbor* people who migrated from Southern Sudan through Techiman to their present location<sup>7</sup>. As the narration goes, internal struggles and conflicts led to the emergence of sprinter groups within the bigger group at *Abora*. The various leaders that emerged out of this process, however, came together to form what was then known as *Aboraman*. While on their journey various groups broke off and settled at villages along the way. The core group continued on the journey and settled at *Egyaa*, however, at *Egyaa* the land was so rocky making it not conducive for fishing and farming. These conditions notwithstanding the migrants settled there. As oral tradition has it, a hunter on an expedition one day discovered a number of birds perching on a rock and decided to go have a look. This took him to the *Kakawua* brook located a few yards from the shore behind where Fort Williams now stands. This hunter settled and brought in all his family members; in the course of time other settlers came in. This settlement was called *Obonuma* which literally means “birds rock”. This name underwent several modifications and is now known as Anomabu.

The significance of Anomabu in the history of Ghana cannot be over emphasized. Anomabu was a core member of the Fante Federation before its expansion in 1710-1724,(Getz, 2003). With regards to trade, Anomabu became a very important trade destination for the European merchants during the early seventeenth century. This town was noted as a link between the coastal trading areas and other places in the hinterlands of Ghana. During this period, Anomabu benefited from enormous infrastructural developments. The establishment of Fort Charles by the Royal African Company, in the year 1672, was one of

---

<sup>7</sup> For further reading on the historical formation of Anomabu please refer to James Sanders (1985) “Village Settlement among the Fante: A study of the Anomabu Paramountcy, in *Africa* 58(2), Trevor R. Getz ( 2003) Mechanisms of Slave Acquisition and Exchange in Late Eighteenth Century Anomabu: Reconsidering a Cross-Section of the Atlantic Slave Trade, *African Economic History* , No. 31, pp. 75-89

such examples (Getz, 2003; Priestley, 1956). This Fort was however replaced by the present one Fort William in the 1756. As Priestley (1956) asserts, there are controversies surrounding the name Fort William. According to him, evidence from archival material at the time shown that the fort was known as the ‘Annomaboe Fort’.

Present day Anomabu traditional council is made of 51 towns and villages headed by the *Omanhen*. Kantanmanto Ammonu 11<sup>th</sup> is the current Omanhen of Anomabu. He is at the apex of the authority structure in this council and is assisted by the Endohen who acts in the absence of the *Omanhen*. The *Endohen* is the head of all divisional and sub-chiefs of the various town and villages that make up the traditional council. The third political office in order of importance is the *Tufuhen*. He is the custodian of the Anomabu state linguist staff and oversees the activities of all the seven *Asafo* companies. The office of the *Omanbaatan* is another important political office worthy of mention. The occupant of this office is a direct descendant of the first *Omanhen* of Anomabu and is thus accorded some level of respect within the traditional council. The last political office I would like to talk about is the *Omansofo*. He serves as the spiritual mediator between the community and its deities.

### **Religious Organization**

Religiously, Anomabu has a fair representation of the three main religious faiths in Ghana: Traditional, Christian and Islam. However the population of Christians forms about half the population. One interesting feature of this area is the co-habitation of the various religious faiths.

### **History of fishing**

Historical accounts of fishing in the Central Region of Ghana dates as far back as 1471, (Britwum, 2009). Fishing at this time was organised by using small vessel which were operated by house-hold units. This type of fishing involved the use of dug- out canoes and was mainly propelled by the use of human labour. Another feature of fishing at this time was the dependence on labour from kin members. A fishing crew was mainly consisted of adult males and young boys from the same family. The implements used at that time were simple gears and nets. Over time, however, this occupation spread to other parts of the coastal line of Ghana, specifically Greater Accra and Volta Regions (Odotei, 2002). As the fishing industry grew, new implements were introduced to help increase efficiency, one such was the introduction of the outboard motor in 1960 (Koranteng, 1990). The introduction of the outboard motors marked a significant change from a type of fishing which relied on human labour to one which was mechanised. This helped to increase fish stock but also came with its

attending increase in the cost of fishing due to the use of fuel to power these outboard motors. Outboard motors replaced and improved the paddling method which prevented fishers from going far and staying at sea for longer periods (Odotei, 1991).

The introduction of outboard motors thus marked the beginning of the mechanisation of fishing which moved this sector to one which was becoming capital intensive. Moving the organisation of fishing from a family oriented one to a more capitalist form introduced two types of production. According to Verdujisse (1983) one form of production involved fishermen working as crew members on a boat who were paid their wages with a portion of fish after the expedition, the second one was more of a collaboration between fishermen with some providing the vessel and other implements to fish and sharing the proceeds accordingly. In spite of the advantages and convenience that came with the mechanization process, the fishermen experienced problems with the cost that came with it. Aside the cost incurred in purchasing these motors, the fishermen also had to fuel these motors and also repair them. As a way to remedy this situation the government of the time instituted a credit scheme to advance credit to the fishermen. These schemes were not however successful due to the problems that the fishermen encountered in accessing them (Odotei, 1991).

### **Gender roles in fishing sector**

Historical accounts about fishing in the central region of Ghana suggest that women played an active role in the fishing sector as early as 1900 (Walker, 2002). Over the years the roles that women played in this sector has gone under several transformations to its present form. In the artisanal fisheries sector, women were not only visible but also important to the survival of the sector. The activities of women span from production, processing and distribution of fish to the final consumer (Overå, 1992). Women dominate the processing and distribution aspects of fishing and act as indirect participants in the production aspect of the fishing industry. The roles played by women in transforming fish are indispensable due to the perishable nature of fresh fish.

Roles played by women in the fishing sector can be classified as follows; intermediaries, marketers and distributors, creditors, financiers and entrepreneurs. Women's roles as intermediaries start at the shore when fishermen return from sea. The women receive the fish and either sell it raw or process it. In different ways, women serve as intermediaries at the various stages in the fishing sector. Overå (1992) identifies two groups of intermediaries based on the roles that they play. She talks of the standing and lodging woman respectively. The standing woman could either be the wife of a canoe owner, a woman that



the crew is indebted to or the owner of the canoe. She can be described as the intermediary between the fishermen and the processors of fish. The other intermediary, the lodging woman, usually resides in the towns where the fishmongers go to trade their ware. She provides accommodation as well as a place for the women to sell their fish. The role of the lodging women in the marketing of fish is very important because they serve as a form of support system for fishmongers who have to travel long distances to the market centers to sell their fish.

Ghanaian women have played active roles in the marketing of goods and services. Women dominate most of the market space in the country; this is because trading is seen as being a female job. In recent times, however men have ventured into this hitherto female space but on the whole; women still dominate the market spaces. Odotei (1991) identifies two types of marketing with regards to the fish trade, namely wholesaling and retailing. The wholesalers are very large processors and distributors. These groups of women usually deal with boat owners directly or are boat owners themselves. They have easy access to fish which they process themselves and sell to their customers. The retailers deal on a relatively smaller scale. They usually get their supply of fish from the standing woman or wholesalers. The retailers sell more directly to the final consumers. The retailers usually buy on credit from the wholesalers and make payment after the goods are sold. The marketers ensure that there is adequate supply of fish during the lean season hence ensuring the all year round supply of fish

As stated in earlier sections of this chapter, the introduction of new technology into the fishing sector came with opportunities for men and women to benefit from the fishing sector. While the fishermen were able to increase their fish stock and reduce the dependence on human labor; the women engaged in this sector were also given the opportunity to venture into other aspects of the fishing industry. The need for money to finance the fishing expeditions accorded women the opportunity to weave their way into these formally male – held positions in the fishing sector. Women started providing financial support to the fishermen who gave them fish after each expedition. Some of the women also ventured into owning the means of production and this gave them some leverage to gain control in the fishing sector. Evidence given by Overå in her study of Moree showed that as at 1992, women owned 100 out of a total of 400 canoes in the fishing village (Overå, 1992). Walker (2002) also asserts that 38% of canoes in the Fante town of Anomabo were owned by women. Owning a canoe gave women prestige in their respective family and this extended to the society and ensured that they were able to take care of their households. The ownership of the

means of production also ensured that the fishmonger got constant supply of fish to guarantee her means of livelihood.

Overå (1993) gives an overview of the important roles that women play in the fishing sector. Basing her study in the matrilineal society of Moree in the Central Region of Ghana, she describes women as the backbone of the fishing sector in the community. This is because they serve both as intermediaries and mothers and thus help contribute economically to the upkeep of the family while also helping in the reproduction of the lineage and teaching of cultural ideals. Aside from possessing considerable knowledge in the fishing sector women also serve as important producers of labour needed in the fishing sector. However the rate of success of women in this sector is very much dependent on how best they are able to use their marital as well as kin networks to their advantage. Examples provided by Overå and my current study shows that a woman's access to fish is very much dependent on the type of relationship that she builds with a fisherman. Another factor that shapes the rate of success for women in this fishing sector is how they are able to merge their productive as well as reproductive roles together and this reflects the cultural constructs of gender in their respective communities (Overå, 1993). The values of motherhood and women as family providers thus go hand in hand with the requirements of success in the fishing sector. These examples show how gender roles and ideologies determine ways in which women participate in the fishing sector.

### **Chapter overview**

Chapter two discusses the theoretical and analytical framework and a review of relevant literature. Discussions in chapter three, focuses on the role of gender in the day to day activities of the community. Here, I will discuss the specific gender roles of both men and women and how these have evolved over the years. I will discuss the various gender roles as they are played out in the domestic as well as socio-political spaces of this community. The role of gender in the fishing industry will also be given extensive attention.

Chapter four will focus on looking at the livelihood strategies of the fisher folk in this community and how they respond to changes in fish stock. I will also be interested in tracing the various processes that fish goes through to be transformed into money and the factors that come into play. The fifth chapter will discuss challenges that confront this community and explore how dwindling fish stocks affect gender and kinship relations in this community. Chapter six will offers general conclusion to the entire thesis.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Introduction**

Discussions will examine theories that relate to gender in anthropological studies. This chapter will discuss the various meanings given to gender in feminist anthropological studies and what each meaning connotes. Of importance to this study is the examination of gender roles and relations as expressed in fishing communities and how these regulate access to resources and use? One important focus in this thesis is how gender roles are naturalised and made to appear as given and used to rationalised societal organisation. Perspectives will be drawn from the field of political ecology to show how power structures and dynamics in the family and to a larger extent the society are used to influence access to resources and distribution.

The second section of this chapter will provide a review of relevant literature that discusses gender in the fishing sector. The section will start with an overview of fishing in Ghana and look also at how gender roles in this sector have evolved. The role that men and women play in the sector will be highlighted. The section will end with an analysis of the various livelihood strategies that men and women resort to in response to changes in the fishing sector.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Earlier anthropologists raised certain arguments which sought to explain the universal subordination of women. This subordination of women is however dependent of consideration of gendered relations. According to Moore (1988), anthropological analysis of gender has been done from two perspectives. Gender could either be seen as a ‘symbolic construction or as a social relationship’ (ibid, pg. 13). These perspectives according to her went a long way to determine the types of explanation given for the origins and nature of women’s subordination. I will now discuss the various arguments and criticisms espoused by proponents of the various perspectives mentioned above.

Sherry Ortner’s essay in the year 1974, provided anthropologists with a framework to study the problem of women subordination through the analysis of gender symbols. Ortner argued that female subordination was universal; this was however not linked to biological differences between the men and women (Ortner, 1972). According to her, biological differences between man and women become significant when they are viewed through

culturally defined value systems. In other words, the meanings given to biological differences between men and women cannot be understood without looking at the value systems of the culture which they come from. Ortner wanted to find out one particular thing that was common to all cultures which makes them see women as lower than men. In this regard women had to be associated with something that all cultures did not value and this according to her was nature. She argued that all cultures recognize and make distinction between human society and the natural world. She furthers her argument by stating that since culture attempts to control and transcend nature it was to be seen as superior to nature. In the same line, women are also symbolically identified with nature while men are identified with culture. Men, just like culture, are thus seen to dominate and control women.

This close association between women and nature in this perspective stems from their physiological and specialised reproductive functions as well as social roles. These roles confine them to the domestic space where they are concerned with the care and rearing of children. Men on the other hand are more associated with the public space which is the arena for making important interactions that are seen and valued. Moore (1988) asserts that Ortner's arguments does not mean that in reality women are closer to nature than men but that she sought to identify and locate cultural variations which makes women appear closer to nature. Despite the many problems inherent in this frame of analysis it nonetheless provided anthropologists of the time with a very powerful analytical framework to understand the subordination of women across cultures. This is because it offered a way to link the sexual ideologies and stereotypes both to the wider systems of cultural symbols and to social roles and experiences (Moore, 1988).

Critics of Ortner's framework have, however, raised concerns with the totalising effects that such analysis seeks to create. First is the creation of a binary opposition between genders and upon which other oppositions are built. There is also a problem inherent in thinking that all societies see a dichotomy between nature and culture and most importantly see culture as dominating nature. Strathern (1980) in her discussion of nature and culture as it applies or not apply to the Hagen of Papua New Guinea raised certain salient arguments. Strathern's work provides anthropologists with a critique of the universalized model of nature as opposed to culture. She also critiques the superimposition of western thought systems onto that of other societies and the problems that can arise from such analysis. Strathern further reiterates that since no single meaning can be given nature and culture even in western thought it would be problematic to assume a dichotomy between these two and thus impose them on male and female relations. Using the Hagen example, she argues that nature and

culture as categories of order do not exist in this society as such it would be problematic to conceptualize gender in these terms.

Examples provided by Moore (1988) from the Gimi and Kaulong societies showed that people in other societies do not necessarily conceptualise nature and culture in those strict terms. The same point is raised by Broch-Due (1993) in her discussion of the Turkana worldview of nature and culture. She argues that the Turkana's construction of gender takes shape within "a plural perspective of gender" and does not fit in a "single gender system" but rather in complex and conflicting sets of gendered ideas and practices (ibid, pg.81). From the above examples, I argue that gender symbols and relations are given meaning by the interpretations that societies within which they are assigned give to them. There is therefore the need to understand the specific context within which gender symbols and relations operate to be able to make a nuanced analysis.

Feminist anthropologists, who argue against the notion of universal subordination of women, approach their discussions by considering gender as a set of social relations between men and women. The emphasis here is placed on what men and women do in the society rather than on the symbolic significance of their genders as argued by Ortner. According to Moore (1988), these anthropologists seek to provide a sociological explanation of gender and thus see gender as a social relationship between men and women. A review of literature by anthropologists who support the argument of seeing gender as a set of social relations brings to the fore certain salient points.

The first is a rejection of the notion of universal subordination of women espoused by Ortner and her contemporaries. Eleanor Leacock, one of the anthropologists who supported these claims argued that assumptions inherent in the universal subordination of women arise from an 'ahistorical mode of analysis' (Leacock, 1978, p. 254). These assumptions according to her do not take into account the effects of colonisation and capitalism and can be seen to be ethnocentric and male biased. Leacock in her analysis rejects two arguments raised by earlier feminist writers. These are the fact that women's status are directly linked to their 'functions of giving birth and rearing children' and the fact that 'domestic /public distinctions are valid frameworks for the analysis of gendered relations' in all cultures (Moore, 1988, p. 31).

In a nutshell, Leacock's argument showed that women made contributions to the economic organisation of their societies and that their status as women were more dependent on whether or not they had access to the various means of production and all other factors that influence the uses of these means. This status had nothing to do with their roles as mothers or their location within the domestic space.

Another anthropologist who made important contributions to the development of gender as a social role is Karen Sacks. As noted by Moore (1988), Sacks modified Engels's thesis that women's subordination began with the development of private property. A point of departure of Sacks' argument from that of Leacock is the fact that she does not assume an equal and autonomous status of women in pre-class societies (ibid). Her line of thought affords feminist anthropologist the opportunity to examine the peculiar nature of women in different societies. This is necessary because while in some societies women have equal rights as men; the same cannot be said of others. Such lines of thought help to stay clear of the danger of having a totalising argument similar to the assumption about the universal subordination of women. Sacks concerns herself mainly with discussing women's differing relation to the various means of production in non-class societies (Moore, 1988). In furthering her arguments, Sacks identifies two modes of production in non-class societies i.e. communal and kin –corporate modes (Sacks, 1979). In the communal mode, all persons whether male or female have the same relationship to the means of production. This means therefore that they stand as equal members of the community with regards to ownership of the means of production. The second mode deals specifically with the varied ways in which women access the means of production. Sacks highlight the position of sisters and wives with regards to how much right or leverage that they possess by virtue of their position in the kin group.

Even though Sack's arguments provides useful insights on the discussion of gender, a focus on wives and sisters can be problematic because there are other forms of relationships that exist in the kin group that she does not talk about. Another criticism of Sack's work is also the muting of issues of cultural ideology in defining the position of men and women according to their relationship to means of production (Moore, 1988). A focus on the means of production alone does not help to have a much nuanced discussion about gender. This is because there are several underlying factors that affect the ways in which gender is operationalized in the various societies. There is therefore the need to open up the discussion of gender to factors in other spheres of social life to help with the frame of analysis. This calls for a combination of both the symbolic and social related dimensions of gender as well as other factors within the society in order to provide a wider framework for analysis.

Jane Collier and Michelle Rosaldo in their analysis of gender take into consideration both the symbolic as well as sociological perspectives. The reasons why they do this is because they believe that productive and political processes cannot be understood in isolation from the cultural perceptions which people have of those processes, and that any analysis

must focus both on what people do and on the cultural understandings which underlie their action (Collier & Rosaldo, 1981). They focus their analysis on bride service societies and argue that gifts exchanged between sons-in-law and their in-laws create certain obligations and social relationships which are different from what pertains in societies that accept bride wealth. This is because in societies that accept bride wealth, items given by a son-in-law is seen as payment to the wives' kin in exchange for rights to her labour, sexuality and off springs. They therefore suggest that gender in small scale societies must be studied through the institution of marriage. Marriage and the relationships that are created by it could therefore serve as important pointers to ways in which gender-based productive relationships are organized (Collier & Rosaldo, 1981). In other words, kinship and marriage could serve as powerful determinants of the ways in which gender ideas are constructed in a given society.

Anette Fagertun (2009) resonates some of the arguments raised above in her examination of ways in which gender is used to structure work relations in two fishing villages in Indonesia. Fagertun argues that the subordination of women in these communities to men is embedded in kin, neighbourhood relations and notions of complementarity. According to her, the socio-cultural organisation of these fishing communities places women in disadvantaged positions to men and this affects how their economic contributions both at home and the public spaces are viewed. In this regard, the financial contribution made by women to their household incomes is seen as 'helping out' and as supplementary to their husbands', even when there is evidence that they are earning more than their husbands (ibid, pg. 305).

Earlier sections of this chapter examined the various perspectives from which gender has been analysed. Each perspective in spite of its shortcomings provides anthropologists with a framework to analyse issues of gendered relations and how they result in the subordination of women. These perspectives have also showed how social institutions such as marriage and ways in which economic modes of production are organised in a society influence gendered relations. Going forward, I would now like to discuss notions related to work and how the various values attached to work done by men and women contribute to the subordination of women. This line of enquiry is necessary because the gendered nature of fishing assigns different tasks to the various sexes. These tasks are valued differently and also affect how the fisher folks have access to resources in the community under study.

Work can simply be defined as what people do to earn a living or guarantee a source of livelihood. This conceptualisation of work, according to Moore (1988), is not complete. According to her any definition of work must also take into consideration the conditions

under which work is performed as well as its perceived social value within a cultural context (ibid). This recognition of the social value given to work thus helps to understand why some activities are thought to be more important than others. Societies are organised such that men and women are assigned to different tasks. The rationalisation of these differences often refer to biological differences between men and women and is built on binary oppositions that have been created in earlier debates about gender (Moore, 1988). These binary oppositions create a situation whereby much value is given to work done by men. This definition and values attached to work has persisted despite attempts by researchers to show that this does not reflect people's experiences and expectations.

Now, with regards to how access to resources is mediated in the fishing community under study, I draw on perspectives from political ecology. Political ecology is a neo-Marxist term which explain the way in which power relations mediate human-environment relation (Wolf, 1972). This concept was known to have grown out of the dependency and world system theories to examine the relations between worker on the third world countries known as the 'periphery' and the capitalist nations at the centre (Biersack, 2006). In the discussion of gender, political ecology has been very instrumental because it draws attention to other forms of inequalities that exist outside class as was seen in classical Marxist analysis. One example is perspectives focusing on the naturalisation of gendered notions and roles which are built upon biological differences between the sexes. This create a situations whereby inequalities in the society with regard to gender are seen as natural, pre-given and eternal (Moore, 1994; Yanagisako & Delaney, 2013). Exploring ways in which differentials of power embedded in culture, Yanagisako and Delaney (2013) argue that cultural domain just like social institutions are human made and are only made to appear as natural. These domains are also culture specific but usually come with claims of universality in ways in which they legitimise inequalities between man and women.

Themes raised so far from discussions in this chapter have showed linkages between gender, social relations and economy. These linkages resonate with the main theme of this thesis which seeks to analyse the ways in which gender and kinship relations are affected by dwindling fish stock. Anomabu is a matrilineal society. Being a matrilineal society does not mean that women are equally placed to men. In fact evidence from the field showed that this community was very much patriarchal. Men are the ones in charge of many positions of authority both in the home and the public domains. The tenets of matriliney applied very much to issues of inheritance and succession. These communities are organised such that women and men perform specific tasks and are thus assigned to specific domains.



Work in fishing communities is very much gendered, men go to sea and women take charge of the fish after it has been brought to the shore. However, societal norms and prescriptions allow for men to cross over into the domain of women, but women on the other hand are not allowed to go fishing. Aside being in charge of the home, women in this community are very much involved in the public domain due to their special roles in the post-harvest sector of fishing. Their involvement in the processing and distribution of fish makes them very visible in this community. This visibility does not however translate to equity between men and women in this community because women's work is valued less. Women in this community do not go to sea. Certain socio-cultural as well as gendered prohibitions bar them from going to sea. They therefore depend on men to supply them with fish to be able to perform their duties in this community. This creates a situation whereby men and women in Anomabu are placed in different positions with regards to access to resources and how these resources are used.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Gender relations in the Ghanaian fishing sector**

Earlier works done by researchers in this sector examined the various gendered dynamics and relations at play in the operations of the fishing business in Ghana (Britwum, 2009; Odotei, 2003a; Overå, 2003; Vercrujssse, 1983). Emile Vercrujssse's work in the Central Region of Ghana, explored how issues of production, distribution and exchange in the fishing communities are gendered (Vercrujssse, 1983). He also explored how this gendered organisation of fishing changed form with the introduction of capitalist relations of production, and the potential problems that could arise. He describes the relationship that exists between fishermen and their female counterparts as one of exchange in which both sexes play a specific role. The males after a fishing expedition hand over the fish to their females who can be their wives if they are married or mothers and sisters. The females either sell the fresh fish or process it to sell later. No direct payment is made between the partners and accounts are only rendered after the fish is sold. Portions of money gotten from the fish sale are given to the man to reinvest in the business while the woman is also expected to use her share to engage in other economic activities. This creates a form of financial security for the family during the lean season.

According to Vercrujssse (1983) the relationship between the fisherman and his wife can be described as one being between a supplier and an agent. In this regard both have specific roles that they play and these roles are not going to change much even in the face of

an introduction of a more capital intensive system of fishing. This is because the roles that both play in this sector is very much structured to fit into the sexual division of labour that exist in the fishing communities. This assertion might be true to some extent, but other studies conducted in fishing communities have showed that men and women involved in this sector have crossed into the domain of each other (Odotei, 1991; 2002; Overå, 1992). In spite of these crossovers the fact still remains that women do not go the sea. Men on the other hand have ventured into the area of selling fish and a few of them now process fish.

Production and exchange of fish in most African communities is regarded as a gendered exchange system intertwined with varying degrees of power and authority (Overå, 2003). Men and women have their respective roles that they both play in this sector and are thus seen to partake in different domains. In most African societies men go to fish while women on the other hand process the fish. Women in these communities are tasked with transforming fish into food or money with which children as well as other members of the family are provided for (Britwum, 2009). Traditions in fishing communities require fishermen returning from an expedition to provide fresh fish for household meals. After this the remaining fish goes to female relatives of the fishermen, mainly wives, if the fisherman is married, for processing. Young unmarried fishermen on the other hand give fresh fish to their mothers or female siblings to process and sell after which they offer accounts. Women, after selling the fish, keep a portion that is reinvested back into the business to ensure its smooth operation. This role of women sometimes serves as an important leverage for them to acquire capital, fishing equipment, and to enter into the highest positions on the production chain. However the success of this leverage is dependent on men since they are barred from going to sea (Odotei, 2003a).

According to Schultz (2005), the fishing industry provides a classic case of cooperation or complementarity where the organization of production systems makes female and male economic activities inter-dependent. This system of exchange is complementary in the sense that both genders depend on each other. In this regard it would be very difficult for men to fish without women to process the fish; the same applies to women who depend on men to be able to perform their duties. The notion of complementarity does not however, mean equality and equity in access to resources and distribution. This is because men hold considerable power in fishing communities and this translate into the manner in which resources are shared. Complementarity must therefore be understood as only relating to the respective roles that men and women play in the fishing industry.

Overå,( 1992), describes the relationship between the fisher men and fishmongers in terms of a partnership, where both parties depend on each other for the success of their respective businesses. The relationship between the fisher folks can also be described as one of a trade relationship. By advancing credit to a fisherman, a trade relationship is created between the fish trader (lender) and the fisherman (borrower). This type of arrangement is favorable to both parties because unlike the government scheme, repayment of the loan to the fish trader is not in cash but through the supply of fish. By providing the solution to the problem of lack of credit, the women are enabled to consolidate their position as stakeholders in the fishery.

Both descriptions above try to portray a hitherto informal relationship between two persons into one which is described in strictly business terms. This creates a situation of monetization of intimate relations and provides an avenue for exploitation. A look at the trade relationship between men and women in fishing communities show that the men usually turn to their female counterparts because the terms on which they secure loans are much more favorable than what they get from the formal banking institutions. Formal banking institutions have very strict repayment terms which come with accompanying sanction when the terms are not adhered to.

The relationships between men and women in the fishing sector described in this chapter, show how sexual division of labor determines which roles should be played by the sexes. As per tradition in the fishing communities in Ghana, men are in charge of the more hazardous and energy requiring job of going to sea. Women on the other hand are tasked with taking over from the men after the fish is brought to the shore. From the surface, this working relationship between men and women in the fishing sector look cordial devoid of any form of inequality. However, careful study of this relationship shows that it hides issues of inequality and makes them appear as natural, mutually beneficial and nonnegotiable. A careful study of the gendered relations that exists between fishermen and their female counterparts will bring out issues of inequality and provide a more nuanced analysis of the factors at play.

### **Livelihood strategies for men and women in the fishing sector**

The last section of this chapter will discuss literature about the various alternative livelihood strategies that are available to men and women in the fishing sector. There has been documented evidence of the changes that the fishing sector globally is going through. These changes can be attributed to natural changes in the environment as well as changes caused by human activities. The literature is replete with effects of climate change on the

fishing sectors and how these changes are reorganizing the livelihood strategies of people who depend on this sector (Brander, 2010; Daw, Adger, Brown, & Badjeck, 2009; Katikiro & Macusi, 2012; Perry & Sumaila, 2007; Wiafe, Yaqub, Mensah, & Frid, 2008).

There are a number of livelihood options open to fisher folks in the face of changes affecting their work. Fisher folks normally change their fishing practices, engage in other income earning activities or move out of their respective communities of residence to seek alternative livelihood options (Badjeck, Allison, Halls, & Dulvy, 2010). The ability of fisher folks to engage in other income earning activities has been identified as one of the means through which fisher folks are able to reduce the risks and as well as uncertainties related to fishing (Barrett, Reardon, & Webb, 2001; Eakin, 2005; Ellis, 2000). Examples provided by Skaptadóttir (2000) showed that women in Eyri, a fishing community in Iceland organized themselves and train in handicraft making to be able to provide for their family needs. In the face of dwindling fish stocks and competition from multinational companies in the sector, these women came together and acted in a communal manner. The men in the community however reacted differently by looking for other alternatives livelihood options on their own.

Migration has been showed to be one of the ways in which fisher folks respond to changes in their livelihood patterns (Njock & Westlund, 2008; Odotei, 1992, 2003b). There are many reasons why fisher folks migrate. A study conducted Fregene (2007) showed that fishermen men in Nigeria migrated in response to the seasonal migratory pattern of certain fish species. The fishermen study the movement of these species and move in accordance with them to provide a guaranteed form of livelihood for their respective families. In broader terms, migration of any kind in any sector has been showed to come with accompanying physical and mental health stressors (UNFPA 2005). Some Fisher folks who migrate out of their communities in search of alternative livelihood options return with illnesses that add up to the healthcare burdens of their respective households. According to Seeley and Allison (2005), fishing communities are among the highest risk group in countries with high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates. Most fishermen who migrate enter into sexual relations with women in their host communities and this has implications for the spread of HIV/Aids. There is also a phenomenon of fish-for-sex, this involves fishmongers who engage in sexual relations with their male counterparts to secure their supply of fish (Béné & Merten, 2008)

Gender has been described as being a very important factor with regards to the various livelihood strategies that both men and women take in response to changes in the fishing sector (Ellis, 2000; Ngozi Akosa & Oluyide, 2010). The various roles played by the men and women in this sector go a long way to influence the ways in which they respond

respective to changes in the sector. Men and women thus experience these changes differently and react to them in differentiated ways. In the face of changes to livelihood, women are more vulnerable (Bennett, 2005). This is due to existing socio-cultural inhibitions that serve as a hindrance to women's access to work outside the home. Women generally do not own or control the means of production and are not in full control of the money that they earn. Despite the efforts made by women to consolidate their profit margins in the fishing sector, they do not have control over such monies. The money is either given back to their male counterparts or used to provide for the household needs. As Bennett (2005) asserts this lack of control for women with regards to their finances can be attributed to cultural norms that often police the movement and actions of women outside the home. While men have full control over their earnings, the same cannot be said of women.

### **Conclusion**

Discussions in this chapter examined the theoretical perspective from which this study is undertaken. The chapter started with a discussion of gender and the various interpretations given to it from feminist anthropological writings. Discussion also looked at how gender roles reflect sexual division of labor and clouds issues of inequality. This was followed by a review of relevant literature which looked at gender roles and relations in the fishing sector and how these have evolved. The last sections of this chapter examined the various livelihood strategies that men and women take in response to changes in the fishing sector.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Introduction**

The preceding chapter offered an explanation of the various meanings given to gender in anthropological studies and how these meanings seek to explain the universal subordination of women. Arguments and counter arguments raised by proponents of the various perspectives showed that gender as a concept is multi-faceted which has embedded in it issues of power, sexuality, identity and a host of other issues. Even though the various perspectives failed to give an all-encompassing explanation to the issues of female subordination, they nonetheless helped to provide anthropology with useful frameworks to work with. Of importance to my study are how the various perspectives show the linkages between gender, social relations and economy and how notions attached to these result in the subordination of women.

My main aim in this chapter therefore is to discuss the conceptualization of gender within the broader socio-political landscape of Anomabu. I will use examples from notions about child birth, naming ceremonies and marriage to show how these social institutions influence and reinforce gendered norms in this community. I will discuss the specific gender roles assigned to men and women and how these have evolved over the years. Discussions will also show how gender is used to organize work in the home as well as the fishing sector.

### **Notions about childbirth and gender roles**

One characteristic of this community and common for most fishing communities in Ghana is the issue of high population growth. According to Marquette, Koranteng, Overå, and Aryeetey (2002), fishing communities form part of the most populated areas in Ghana, and reasons given for this phenomenon range from the high demand of labour for the fishing job to high level of poverty. Aside the issues of high population growth, fisher folks in this community have preferences with regards to the sex of children born in a union. These notions about childbirth, specifically the sex preference of children, born, provide useful insights into any discussion about gender in this community (Addo, 2011). These notions serve as a starting point into exploring the complex ways in which gender and for that matter gender roles are assigned and played out in the community.

As mentioned, inhabitants in this community have certain preferences with regards to the sex of children born. These preferences are normally justified by referring to the respective roles that males and females play in this community in general and the fishing sector specifically. Despite this community being matrilineal, preference is normally given to

male children. Evidence from an earlier study showed that in as much as most of the parents preferred both boys and girls, there was a slight preference for male children (Addo, 2011). Reasons given for this preference ranged from the social prestige that a male child brings to the family to the various stereotypical views of males being stronger than females. Some also argued that they would like to have boys because of the help that they will receive in fishing. This assertion is rather interesting considering the fact that this is a matrilineal society, where the female is needed to perpetuate the family line.

Against this background, I decided to find out whether these views about the preference for boys had changed since my previous study. I found out that most of the people still held to this view. This is illustrated by the responses below.

*I wanted to have 2 boys and 2 girls, but I had all boys so I want to have a girl who will help me in my household chores. As a woman it is also proper that you have a daughter. (Adjoa<sup>8</sup>, 30, fishmonger)*

*I would prefer a boy but God knows best and gave me a girl, but I still prefer a son. This is because a son would have made my childbearing complete. (Ekua, 40, fishmonger)*

*As a man, I would prefer a son. I need a son who can inherit me. A girl cannot inherit me taking into consideration the kind of work that I do, a boy would be more suited to take after me. The rule of succession of the office that I currently occupy does not allow for a female child to inherit her father. (Chief fisherman of Etsiwa)*

*My sister, to tell you the truth, I would prefer to have both boys and girls, but if I have to choose then I will choose a boy. In this community you can be called impotent if you don't have a male child. I had to marry another woman because my first wife at the time was giving birth to only girls. (Kwesi Mensah, 38, fisherman)*

A look at the various responses above shows the varied ways in which boys and girls are seen in this community. The first issue I would like to discuss is how these responses show an idea about the productive roles of males as set against the reproductive role of females. Participants prefer male children because according to them male children are able to help with the fishing job and also work and help take care of the home. Females on the other hand are desired first to help perpetuate the family line, and also to help cater for the domestic needs of the family and society as a whole. The responses given by Kwesi Mensah and Ekua offer another dimension to the broader discussion of gender and gender roles in this

---

<sup>8</sup> This is not her actual name.

community. For Kwesi Mensah, his 'manhood' was being called into question because he was having only females. For fear of being labeled impotent he had to marry another woman who fortunately had males. Would he have continued marrying if the second wife was also having girls? I guess he would have married again; the social stigma on him alone would have been too much to bear.

I observed in this community that people are quick to refer to the number as well as sex of their children whenever the issue of child birth came up. It was common practice for both men and women to be told to keep quiet at social gatherings if that they have not delivered a child or do not have a son. The common phrase used here is 'are you a man'. Women also suffer their own share of stigmatization; they are normally blamed when a union does not produce children. They are also not spared the pressure to have boys as Ekuia's example shows; her childbearing would only be complete if she had boys. The personal fulfillment that comes with achieving this feat alone is enough motivation for her to keep having children till she reaches her goal.

The need for both men and women in Ghana, to prove their maleness or femaleness by becoming a parent has received some academic attention (Addo, 2011; Ampofo, Okyerere, & Pervarah, 2009). The institution of marriage itself is said not to be complete if the union does not produce a child. Most Ghanaian societies do not tolerate barrenness in a marriage, (Nukunya, 1969, 1997; Sarpong, 1977). Women normally feel the brunt of childlessness in a marriage in most Ghanaian societies but as evidence from Ampofo et al. (2009) study show, men also have to deal with their own share of pressure from the society. They go further to stress that 'an important reason why men have children is that it enables them to be viewed as real men, by proving their phallic competence to father off springs (ibid). Women on the other had have had to conform to the popular notion of womanhood which centres around biological motherhood that is, the ability of a women to have children (Anarfi & Fayorsey, 1999).

These views by my participants I believe set the tone for the discussion of gender and gender roles in this community. This is because already at childbirth, the various paths with regards to gender are curved for boys and girls. This is further re-enforced through the various processes of socialization as the child grows. Children learn to distinguish female and male chores and roles by either watching the adults around them or being taught by members of their immediate family and community. Girls are taught to be modest and learn household chores like cooking, cleaning and generally taking care of the home. Boys on the other hand are taught to be strong, adventurous and provide for their families. In decision making, girls



are implored upon to defer to their male counterparts. They are not supposed to speak up in public when males are around.

Every society prescribes appropriate roles for males and females, and these are imbibed through various processes of socialization. As Adomako Ampofo (2001) asserts, these prescriptions come with varying levels of sanctions for individuals who “deviate” from these norms. Some of the sanctions include being ridiculed at public functions and also being given derogatory names. By observing the actions of older people in the society, children are able to pick up appropriate gender roles as sanctioned by their respective societies. The socialization process of a child, which is started at birth, is maintained throughout the child’s life until adulthood. Even at adult status socialization is still taking place.

In this community I observed that young children stay with their mothers and are cared for until they are at the age of adolescence, which I must say is not fixed. What I observed is that the moment that boys are old enough to work, they are sent to live with their maternal uncles in the male sections of the family home. When I inquired about why this is done, I was told that this enables them to learn the ways of being a man from their uncles. To them, if this is not done and the boy continues to live with his mother, he might become one of them. ‘Becoming one of them’, I believe is saying that he might lose all his masculine attributes which is not desired. Girls on the other hand continue to stay with their mothers and are also trained to be good women. The fear of becoming one of them is so profound among the males in this community that they are quick to refer to their masculine attributes whenever the possibility of doubt arises. On one of my usual runs in the community, I saw a fifteen year old boy who was preparing fish to be smoked. This caught my attention because it was quite rare to see males smoking fish. The following are excerpts of the conversation that ensued between us.

*PAA: I can see you are very busy this afternoon*

*KOFI: Yes I have been here since 12 mid-day*

*PAA: Aren't you supposed to be in school?*

*KOFI: I have completed junior high school, waiting to enter senior high next year*

*PAA: How long have you been smoking fish?*

*KOFI: Madam, (he laughs) this is not my job*

*PAA: What do you mean by this?*

*KOFI: Am only helping because my mother is gone for a family meeting*

*PAA: How often do you help your mother?*

*KOFI: I only help when am free.*

*PAA: Do you have female siblings?*

*KOFI: Madam doesn't mind them they are very lazy. They are supposed to be doing this job. Am only doing it because of the empathy I have for my mother.*

*PAA: That's interesting, why are you saying that your siblings are lazy?*

*KOFI: ... this is a female's job. See how I am smelling, it's not good at all. I should be on the field playing football with my friends but you see am here.*

The above conversation provides a further example of the ways in which male and female roles are viewed in this community. Kofi only sees what he is doing as 'helping' his mother. Phrases like 'this is not my job', 'my sisters are lazy', highlights the uneasy feeling that he has about the task that he is performing. At several point in our conversation he was quick to point out to me that what I was observing was not the norm in the community. This I must say is true, because throughout my stay in this community I never saw a man smoking fish; it was mainly the preserve of women. Discussions here have shown how notions about child birth and gender roles are conceptualized and operationalized in the daily activities of the fisher folk. I will now discuss how ceremonies like naming and marriage rites also go on to re-enforce existing gender norms and ideals in this fishing community.

### **Naming ceremony**

*Abadinto* is the Fante word for naming ceremony. This ceremony, according to Akan mythology, is an important component of the spiritual anatomy of the human being. Names given to children are so important to the extent that a person without a name is said not to exist. After a child is born, the child is kept indoors for eight days; this is done to ensure that the child does not return to the spirit world from where it came from.

Child-birth is a very important event among the Fante of Ghana and by extension the inhabitants of Anomabu. The need to procreate and propagate the family line is seen as the most important reason why fisher folks in this community marry as such a marriage that does not bear children is likely to collapse (Addo, 2011). Among the Akan for example, the maternal uncles of a woman have rights to end a marriage if children are not forth coming (Sarpong, 1977). Socially, childlessness is not desired and a childless individual is not accorded the status of an ancestor (Nukunya, 1969). Both males and females experience their own share of societal ridicule in the event that their union does not bear a child. Whiles woman may face serious problems from their in-laws, men on the other hand will also have their manhood being called into question. Anecdotal evidence from most Ghanaian societies shows that women are mostly blamed when a union fails to provide children. Men are not usually open to options of seeing help with regards to issues of infertility in the marriage. These opinions are, however, changing with the increasing awareness on issues of infertility in the mass media but women are nonetheless blamed when a union does not produce off springs.

These scenarios therefore make the birth of a child in a marriage a very welcomed occasion. My interest in discussing naming ceremony among the people of Anomabu is to highlight the various ways in gender and gender roles that pertain in this community are portrayed and re-enforced. I will discuss the various attitudes that people have toward the birth of a child, the role that both parents play at childbirth and finally how gender roles are re-enforced during the performance of the ceremony. As already stated above, the announcement of the birth of a child is heralded by much merry making and thanking of God for the safe delivery of the child. The initial contribution that the man sends to his wife is called the 'welcome package' for the child. It is believed that if this is not done the child will not feel welcomed and return back to the spiritual world it came from. The items presented normally include food stuffs like cassava, plantain, palm nuts, chicken, vegetables like tomatoes, onions, pepper. Some also add charcoal and money for other expenses. This is what the mother and the child will be depending on for the first week that they are to be kept indoors before the naming ceremony. If the baby and the mother are in good health, the naming ceremony is held a week after the birth of the child.

The naming ceremony is normally held at the house of the mother; since the child will be finally incorporated into its mother's family. On the morning of the ceremony, the father accompanied by members of his family come to the house of the woman with the name that they want the child to be called by. It is required that the father makes the initial payment of the welcome pack else the naming ceremony will not come on. During the ceremony, prayers are said for the child and the child is admonished to lead a good life and become a worthy member of the community. Boys are usually admonished to be hard working in order to provide for their families. Girls on the other hand are told to be virtuous and diligent in their work in order to become good home makers. After this ceremony the responsibility of catering for the child is then left to the parents with the family offering support.

### **Marriage**

Similar to what pertains in many African societies, marriage is obligatory among the Fante (Awedoba, 2007; Mbiti, 1990; Sarpong, 1974). Marriage forms part of the many lifelong experiences and social developmental processes that a person goes through, it is therefore expected that a person marries at a certain stage in life (Mbiti, 1990). In African societies, marriage is contracted through negotiations between families and the payment of bride wealth. According to Wilson (2011), marriage among the Fante is negotiated in two ways.

One way is as follows: Ego's<sup>9</sup> father approaches another man, probably a friend, and asks if he could claim his daughter as a wife for Ego. The second way was that Ego meets a woman. The two of them discuss the possibility of marriage. If they agree, the bride-to-be directs him to her father's house. Ego then informs his father so that the father can check the background of the young woman and that of her household or lineage (pg. 159).

These two ways discussed above are however not exhaustive. This is because I observed, and people also told me of different ways in which marriage is negotiated in this community. One very common one is called in the local language as *mpena aware*. This refers to an informal kind of marriage arrangement where a couple live together as husband and wife although the requisite marriage prestations have not been paid. This type of marriage has increasingly become common in this community and most of the older participants I spoke with blamed this for most of the problems of social deviance that they see the community to be experiencing.

After successful negotiations, the marriage is finally contracted by the payment of prestations. Awedoba (2007) described prestation as the totality of all the goods, services and money that are given from the bridegroom's family to the bride's family. The payment of prestations has implications for power relations for both men and women within the institution of marriage (Bawa, 2015). An understanding of these power relations, according to Wilson (2011), is needed to understand the dynamics of Fante marriages and its implication for social organization among these people. He goes further to stress that the payment of prestations provides the framework for kinship and social organization among the Fante, with its corresponding rights and responsibilities. My interest in discussing marriage in this community is to show how perceptions about mate selection influence the relative leverage that both partners in the dyad have to make decisions. I proceeded by finding out the notions or opinions that my participants have about the right process to go about a marriage proposal.

*As a man, if I see a woman and am interested in her, I first approach her and make her aware of my intentions. There are times that I also use friends as 'go between', but that can be very dangerous because your friend can take the girl away from you. If the girl agrees you start moving with her to study her behaviour, then you marry her. (Kojo, 20, fisherman)*

*Things have changed very much these days. When we were young our parents or elders in the family made these decisions for us. In my case it was my father*

---

<sup>9</sup> Male.

*and father-in-law who went about negotiating my marriage. My wife was not staying in this community, she only moved here after we married. The arrangement was left to my elders. But nowadays that is not the case, our children are choosing for themselves and you can see the problems that this is creating. (Opanyin Kojo, 70, fisherman).*

*I will feel suspicious if a woman approaches me for marriage that is unheard of. I hear it happens in the big cities but here in Anomabu everybody will get to know and the woman will become a laughing stock. As for a woman, you have to wait for a man to make the initial move, so that you are not called a prostitute. (Kwaku, 40, fisherman).*

*Madam I don't think it is right for a woman to ask a man's hand in marriage. This is not how it has been, it brings honour to you if a man comes and asks for your hand in marriage. (Ekua, 40, fishmonger).*

Responses given here show that men are the ones expected to start or initiate the process of showing interest in a woman. After this is done, the man is still obliged to make the initial steps in decisions that concern the union. It's unheard of for a woman to initiate this process else she will be branded as a loose woman or prostitute. This view held in this community is very similar to what pertains in other Ghanaian as well as African societies. One of the virtues expected by African women is the need to be chaste and not show any form of initiative when it comes to issues about their sexuality and intimate relations (Adomako Ampofo, 2001). Issues about sex are supposed to be the preserve of males. Even in situations where males lack knowledge about issues of sex, they feel reluctant to seek help from their female counterparts. Such an act would be seen by them as well as other males in the society as undermining their authority. After a man expresses interest in a woman, the next stage is to contract the marriage proper. This is done by the payment of prestations which include bride wealth.

Bride wealth payment helps to secure rights over the woman to the man and his family with respect to her household labour, sexual and reproductive rights (Goody & Tambiah, 1973). In patrilineal cultures in Ghana, the payment of bride wealth gives man rights to the children that the union produces. According to Fuseini and Doodoo (2012), this rights secured by husbands as a result of the payment of bride wealth has implications for a woman's autonomy in the dyad. This is because, some equate the payment of the bride wealth to buying the woman, and that she is made subject to the wishes and decisions of her husband. This payment, as Bawa (2015) asserts has been blamed for an increase of abuse towards women in marriages in Ghana. To further show the link between bride wealth

payment and the autonomy of women in marriages in Ghana, Fuseini and Dodoo (2012) illustrate the implication for the payment of bride wealth:

This suggests that a woman whose bride wealth has been fully paid is less autonomous than a woman whose bride wealth has been partially paid and she is also less autonomous than a woman whose bride wealth has not been paid at all. Even though in casual relationships men usually have some level of authority, it is not as exerting as when he has paid some bride wealth. When some bride wealth has been paid the man does not have full authority over the woman until the full bride wealth is paid (pg. 15).

Opinions expressed by participants during the focus group discussion sessions gave me the impression that they do not support violence against women in any form. However, when I further probed to find out their views about violence towards women in marriage, the responses I got were very interesting.

*Madam no man beats a woman in this community unless the woman's attitude demands it. For example you are my wife, but you don't listen to anything I tell you. I will be forced to try and correct you, (Kwaku, 40, fisherman).*

*The attitudes of the woman sometimes call for the beating. Some do not respect their husbands at all. As a woman you are required to take care of you family and make your husband happy at all times. If you don't do this he can beat you. Sometimes the beating is just to show how much your husband loves you, (Ama, 45, fishmonger.)*

*We don't beat our wives we only discipline them. They have the tendency to go wayward so we are required to bring them on the right path, (Kojo, 40, fisherman).*

The men saw it as a duty to correct their wives who go wayward. In their perspective, women have to respect their husband and adhere to whatever they tell them, if this does not happen; the men have the right to correct them. The woman here is seen as being a contributory factor to the abuse and must therefore check her character so as to stop future abuses. It is very interesting how some of the female participants also seem to support this view; this could be attributed to the ways in which they get socialized. Further interviews with my participants showed that incidences of wife beating in this community were very common. This was, however, not only limited to women in properly contracted marriages. Women in informal marriages were also abused. This means that the status of a woman's marriage does not exempt her from being abused in a marriage. The issue of spousal abuse has more to do with gender ideologies in the community and how they are expressed.

### **Gender in the domestic setting**

Men and women in Anomabu perform specific roles in their attempt to achieve what they perceive as the smooth running of the home. Most households in Anomabu are divided into male and female sections. Members of the same family have split their living arrangements into two, with women and children living apart from the males sections. There are, however, a few households that accommodate both male and female family members. This creates a situation where we have male as well as female headed households but they belong to the same family. Couples who stay together most of the time find themselves going to their respective family homes in the morning to begin their daily activities. The daily activities of the women start very early in the morning: as early as 4 am. This is because they have to prepare the morning meal for the children to eat before they go to school. Some also undertake their laundry as well as house cleaning activities. After this they prepare their children for school and hurry off to the sea shore to wait on the canoes to start arriving. Below are a few responses from my participants which show the various activities they perform in the morning.

*When I wake up, I first ensure that the children are well prepared for school. I help them take their bath and prepare their breakfast after that I see them off to school. After that I look round for any dirty laundry then I wash them. While am done with this I go to the sea shore to buy fish and start my trading activity. (Esi, 30, fishmonger)*

*At my age when I wake up I sweep my house and put the house in order. I also help my daughters take care of their children. Since I work together with my daughters, I make sure I help them with their household chores so they can also concentrate on the job that we are doing. I prepare my grandchildren for school. After that I wash my laundry. (Naana 60, fishmonger)*

*I wake up around 3 am to prepare and go to sea... I don't have any child to take care of ....because they are staying with their mother. In this community it is the duty of our wives to make sure that the children are well catered for. We only go out to work and make sure that there is money at home. (Kwesi 40, fisherman)*

*In my day of active service in the fishing industry I used to leave the house very early to go to sea. I normally spend the whole day at the sea shore, because after returning from sea, I have to mend my nets and see to it that my canoe and other equipment's are in good shape for tomorrow's work. I lived in the same house with one of my wives and children but it was their mother who took care of them in the morning. They hardly see me at home in the morning. But now at old age I stay home more often and only come to the shore when my canoes start arriving. (Opanyin Kojo, 70, fisherman)*

A look at the responses above shows the dichotomy between tasks the men and women perform in this community with regards to child care. This fits into already existing gender literature which seeks to highlight the reproductive role of women as against the productive role of men. I got a feeling while in the field that these chores performed by women were often taken for granted and seen as their natural role to play, so that if a woman was not performing these chores, she was seen as lazy or a deviant. As showed by my conversation with Kofi, the young boy who was smoking fish, he said that smoking fish was not his job and that his sisters were lazy for not helping him out. This naturalization of the roles performed by women has consequences for how they are viewed and treated. As Yanagisako and Delaney (2013) assert, making reproductive roles performed by women appear natural and thus not to be questioned, only show how patriarchal views are made to stand and be legitimized. Views expressed by my participants fall in line with long standing gender and feminist debates which seek to problematize assumptions inherent in a division between the public and domestic (Babb, 1986). This is because assumptions inherent in the supposed division between the public and domestic spaces are part of ideologies which seeks to legitimize inequalities.

According to Hansen (1992) the idea of women being relegated to the domestic space is an ideology which is linked to patriarchy. This ideology is intrinsically linked to issues about gendered power relations and their effects on the relative autonomy that men and women enjoy with regard to decision making in the home and the larger society. Most proverbs and wise saying in African societies are laden with innuendoes which seeks to suggest that the whole existence of women is to get married, have children and care for their homes. As Tamale (2004) further reiterates these domestic roles of women as mother, wife and homemaker become the key constructs of a woman's identity in African societies. These roles assigned to women are seen to be altruistic and taken for granted (ibid). This assertion does not only apply to women, because observations on the field showed that the 'provider' status given to men was also seen as altruistic. In this regard, if a man is not able to live up to this expectation he is given derogatory names and not viewed with much respect by his peers and wife.

Views given by my participants during the focus group discussion session re-enforced these opinions. In one of the session that had 8 participants, all but one of them agreed that it was the role of women to take care of the home and children. Men were however not left out with regards to the naturalization of gender roles. Evidence from the field showed that the chores and roles performed by men in this community as well as their claim to authority are



seen as natural. Observations in the field also show that women in this community are not necessarily confined to the domestic space. They are very present in the public space due to the gender segregated nature of the fishing industry. Women play very active roles in the sale and processing of fish. Their presence in the public space, however, does not give them the needed leverage with regards to decisions that are made in the home and the public space. This situation was really made evident during informal interactions with the fisher folks. I observed during discussions, most of the women among the group deferred to the views expressed by their male counterparts. I realized, however, that the women were very free to talk to me when I met them alone than when they were in the company of their male relations.

### **Gender in the fishing industry**

Discussions in this section will focus on exploring the various duties assigned to men and women in the fishing industry in Anomabu. The section will start with a description of the organization of the fishing industry in Anomabu. This will be followed up with an examination of the various roles played by men and women in this sector. Discussions will highlight daily activities of males and females with regards to fishing, ownership of the means of production and leadership among the fisher folks. Illustrations here will show the respective roles that man and women play to ensure the smooth running of the fishing industry.

### **Organisation of Fishing in Anomabu**

Anomabu has two fishing blocks<sup>10</sup> namely Awienu Fare and Etsiwa Fare. These two blocks have six landing sites namely Bakano, Awienu, Fare, Abanenyim, Etiwa and Krokesem, which make up the fishing community in Anomabu. These fishing blocks are headed by the *Apofohen*, (chief fisherman) who is assisted by the *Konkohemaa* (queen of the fishmongers). The *Apofohen* is in charge of the management of the sea shore and the settlement of disputes that may arise between the fishermen. The *Konkohemaa* is the one who determines the prices at which fish should be sold; she also deals with all issues that arise among the fishmongers.

According to the Chief Fisherman of Estiwa, Anomabu has over 600 fishing canoes with an average of 5 people working in a canoe. The number of people who work in a canoe depends on the size of the canoe. A small canoe may employ 3-5 persons, while a very large canoe may employ about 15 people. There are two types of fishing practices in Anomabu;

---

<sup>10</sup> A fishing block is a fishing area under the jurisdiction of a chief fisherman.

one which involves the use of canoes and the other known as trawling<sup>11</sup>. Fish caught from trawling are usually smaller in size and do not command good market prices. The fishing season in Anomabu runs from May through to August. Fishermen in Anomabu do not go to sea on Tuesdays; these are days when the fishermen meet to settle all disputes as well as render accounts for the week's fishing expeditions.

There are three types of ownership and operation of the fishing industry in Anomabu. The first is the family owned; the fishing implement may be part of property bequeathed to the family and this becomes the family's property and is managed as such. This type of ownership is very common in Anomabu and relies on close kin as a major source of labor. The second type involves private individuals who buy the fishing implements and engage the services of fishermen. The third type is partnership; in this situation two or more people come together and provide the various implements needed for fishing and then recruit labor. One person might provide the canoe while the others provide the remaining equipment which includes fishing nets, out-board motors etc.

#### **Activities of males and females with regards to fishing in Anomabu.**

The activities of fishermen start very early in the morning as they prepare to go to sea, and while this is going on, the women are also at home taking care of their chores. Once the canoes begin to arrive at the shore, the men help pull the canoe up to the beach, and then start offloading the fish. After each fishing expedition, the fish is shared to cater for the cost that is incurred. Firstly the fish is shared into two equal portions. One portion is used to defray the cost of implements used for the fishing. The remaining portion is then shared between the owner of the canoe and the crew members in an agreed manner. The owner of the canoe gets a larger share of the fish than the crew members. After this is done the fish is then given to the women to sell or take home to start processing. This was the normal way that the fishing industry operated but I observed that some men were selling fish in smaller quantities at the shore. Some were also helping to clean up the fish. These activities were traditionally known to be the preserve of women. Women on the other hand are not allowed to go on the fishing expedition and when the canoe arrives it is only men who help to bring it to the shore. I did not see any women helping to mend the fishing net after the days' work. I decided to find out the reasons that accounted for the gendered division of labour that I observed at the shore. First I wanted to find out why women were not allowed to go to sea.

---

<sup>11</sup> Trawling is done by dropping of a fishing net into the sea and then two groups of men pull this net to shore.

*Since growing up, I have never seen or heard of a woman go to sea. It's not possible. How will she do it? Fishing is for the men. (Esi, 50, fishmonger)*

*We were told by our elder that women used to go to sea in the past, but due to their greedy nature they were not coming home after the expedition. If we allowed women to go to sea, all the fish in the sea would finish in no time. Women are very greedy. (Opanyin Kojo, 70, fisherman)*

*If we are allowed to go to sea, what will the men be doing, who is going take care of our household chores. That will be very chaotic. I think things should be left just the way they are. (Ekua, 35, fishmonger)*

My question as to why women do not go to sea was received with much surprise from my participants. Both my male and female participants felt that it was not necessary to ask such a question because the practice of men going to sea had existed for a long time. Asking that question was considered as a taboo. According to them, women were not supposed to go to sea, because that was what their forefathers had told them. It was wrong therefore to question it now. To further explain their stands, participants argued that fishing was a job which required more energy which women do not have, so it was not possible for them to go to sea. Others also claimed that women could contaminate the sea during their menstrual period, and that this was a reason why they did not go to sea. Some of the responses expressed also had stereotypical undertones. As the views expressed by Opanyin Kojo show, one reason why women were not allowed to go to sea was the fact that they were greedy. This greed, according to him meant that women would spend the whole day at sea trying to catch enough fish and never return home. Surprisingly, this view was also expressed by some of my female participants. This goes to show how gendered views and opinion that denigrate women are given legitimacy in the community.

Views expressed by participants during the focus group discussion session also support the opinions illustrated above. It was a taboo for women in this community to go to sea. They were however of the view that this prospect of women going to sea could be possible in the future, if sophisticated fishing canoes are invented. With the current energy requirement in the fishing industry it would be very difficult for women to go to sea.

What then happens after the fish is brought to the shore? I observed that, it was males who help to pull the canoe to shore. This is normally done with singing and accompanying movements. It is common to find men of all ages, from young to old, helping to pull the canoe. After the canoe is brought to the shore, the fishermen help to carry them out in basins, and then give them over to the fishmongers. The work of the fishmongers then starts. The

fishmongers are the ones who help to clean the fish and sell some at the shore. Some also carry the fish home to smoke and sell later. While on the shore, I saw a few of the fishermen selling their fish by themselves. I also saw some of them helping to clean the fish and also assist with the smoking. This observation was of interest to me because; conversations with my participants gave me the impression that cleaning and selling of fish was the preserve of women. It was a chore that was reserved for females in the community, and younger children were socialized to acknowledge this. After inquiring further, I was told that men were now selling fish at the shore and also helping to clean and process fish, but the number of women in this section of the fish trade was still very high. With this explanation I wanted to find out how the fisher folks felt about this and whether this upheaved existing norms in this community with regards to fishing. Most importantly do women feel that men coming into their domain of processing and selling fish a threat to their position in the fishing sector?

*I cannot tell when men started selling fish in this community. This practice has been going for some time now. This fact notwithstanding, the number of women engaged in the sale and processing of fish out number that of men. The men who usually sell their fish on the shore are those who do not have wives or female relations in this community. Some migrate here to work so that could be the reason. Others who help on the shore are sometimes given fish which they also sell but those fishes are small in quantity. ... I don't think there is a time that men will take over the sale of fish. It will always be the preserve of women. (Opanyin Kojo, 70, fisherman)*

*Men are now bargaining and selling fish with us. In fact they give us stiff competition, because their prices are good. They have ventured to other areas of trading which were predominately female. This is due to the lack of job opportunities. It can be worrying, but since there are no jobs nowadays, we try and cooperate with them. There are no tension between us and them (Ekua Tawiah, 40, fishmonger)*

As Opanyin kojo opines, the fishermen who usually sold their fish had no female relations in the community to help them sell. His assertion might be true but while in the field I saw some fishermen still selling even though they had female relations in the community. The fishermen who sold their fish at the shore told me that they wanted to get back their money quickly so they preferred to sell themselves. The common practice with regards to selling fish in this community is to give the fish to fishmongers on credit. These fishmongers after selling the fish pay back the cost of the fish and keep the profit. According to the fishermen, there are times that the women do not pay back the monies owed in time so they prefer to sell their fish themselves and get their money.

The general consensus was that even though men were now venturing into hitherto female spaces with regards to sale of fish, this was not problematic. But probing further, I gathered that the fishmongers were not very happy with the fact that men were now selling fish at the shore. The response given by Ekua above illustrates some of the frustrations expressed by the fishmongers. Conversations with some consumers on the shore showed that they preferred to buy from the men because their prices were cheaper than that of the women. They saw the fishmongers as middlemen who also added their cost to the fish, thus making theirs a bit expensive. The fishmongers felt that if this situation does not stop their source of livelihood will be threatened.



Photo 6- Activities of fisher folks at the beach.

### **Ownership of the means of production.**

Discussion here will show how the ownership of the means of production in this fishing sector in this community is highly gendered. As already stated, there are three types of ownership in the Anomabu fishing sector. The family owned, individually owned and partnership. Due to the rules of succession in this community, all the family owned businesses are supervised by family heads who are men. These men are therefore the ones who take decision with regards as to how the family business is run. The number of women who own fishing implements as individuals is very small.

However, I observed that most women were very much involved in the partnership type of ownership. It was common to hear of a woman or group of women coming together to partner with their male counterpart to go into business. Women were also very instrumental in providing money for fuel to operate the outboard motors used by the canoes for fishing. The women, by paying for the fuel, are guaranteed their share of fish when the fishermen return from the expedition. This is because, in instances when they do not get enough fish, whatever is gotten is used to defray the cost of fuel. This involvement of women as entrepreneurs in the artisanal fishing sector started from the 1960's with the introduction of outboard motors (Overå, 2003). It can be argued that the movement of the fishing sector from a hitherto labor intensive practice to one that is mechanized, gave women the opportunity to find other spaces of maneuver within this highly male dominated space. What then happens to gender norms and relations in this community with women venturing into these male held domains?

Initial responses from my participants, especially the fishermen, showed that the men did not feel a threat to their position by women financing their operations. Most of them described what was happening as business transaction and nothing more. The fishmongers were helping their operations in return for fish, so they did not see how this could affect their position in the community. However, when the responses given by the fishermen about women financing their work are examined, it exposes pertinent arguments with regards to gender. First is the issue of invisibility, describing this arrangement in purely business terms, seeks to hide the various relations that exist or operate in these arrangements. It tries to obscure attention from the very important role that the contributions made by women make to the success of their work. Issues like exploitation are usually not dealt with. These arrangements are usually described as being mutually beneficial to the fishermen and their female counterpart, but evidence from the field shows that this is usually not the case. There were reports of fishermen refusing to pay back money given them by their financiers. Some of the fishermen also complained that the women were also cheating them. These accusations and counter accusations have led to the suspension of some of these arrangements and have led to problems within families.

### **Leadership among the fisher folks.**

Fishing communities in Ghana are usually under the jurisdiction of chief fishermen. They are assisted by queen mothers and a council of elders who help with the day to day running of the community. The role of this institution in the fishing community is very important to foster peace and unity. Some of the roles performed by this Chief fisherman are

resolving conflicts between fisher folks, serving as the link between the community and the larger society, and also governmental agencies. The chief fishermen also represent their respective communities at meetings and lobby for developmental projects for their communities. Their role in the community is therefore very helpful and commands lot of respect.

Anomabu, just like any fishing community in Ghana, has two chief fishermen who help to run the fishing community. They are known as Apofohen and are assisted by the konkohemaa (queen of fishmongers) and a council of elders. They are in charge of managing the two fishing blocks of Anomabu, namely Aweianu Fare and Estiwa Fare. Following on in my discussion of gender roles in fishing sector, I would like to examine the significance of the office of the chief fisherman and that of the queen of fishmongers. My aim here is to show the relevance of these two offices in the current dispensation of the fishing community. The chief fisherman of Estiwa fare is known as Nana Kwabena Sankah, he is motor technician by profession and owns five canoes. He is 50 years old and has been involved in the fishing sector for about 20 years. He does not go to sea but tells me that he inherited the position from his late uncle. He has a strong presence among the fisherman and is always adjudicating cases between the fishermen. He has been able to build a storey building and can be described as one of the rich men in the community. He has a council that sits on Tuesdays to settle disputes between the fisher folks.

Nana Adjoa Ammissah is the queen of fishmongers in Awianu Fare. She is 70 years old and stays in her family house with her daughters. Due to old age, she is not able to do much work so it's her children who help to smoke the fish and sell on her behalf. She does not own any canoe, but tells me that she gets fish from her husband canoe to sell. Her main duties include settling cases between the fishmongers and ensuring that they work in harmony. She represents the interest of the women and children in the community. In the past she used to be the one who determined the price at which fish had to be sold at the beach. She did this by looking at the quantity and quality of fish that was caught. After she had determined the prices, every fishmonger was obliged to sell at the approved price. This role gave her much importance in the community.

Comparing these two key positions among the fisher folks I realized that the office of the chief fisherman was very vibrant and visible. His influence in the community was very profound. The same could not, however, be said of the office of the queen of fishmongers. In her own words, the queen of Aweinu Fare whom I interviewed claimed that her office is now for ceremonial purpose only. She is not allowed to undertake her traditional roles due to

changes that the whole fishing sector in this community is undergoing. One key role of the queen was to determine the price at which fish brought to the shore was to be sold, but they are not able to perform this task anymore because of the many factors that now determine the price. The price of fish is now determined by the quantity that is caught against the cost that is incurred while embarking on the expedition. This is what Nana Adjoa Amissah had to say about her current position in this community:

*My role as the queen was very important in the past because we were the ones who used to price all the fish that was brought to the shore before it was sold. Everyone was obliged to sell at the price that we had determined. But nowadays when we try to do our work with regards to pricing of fish we are met with stiff opposition. We are not allowed to do our job. They even insult us at times. We had the right to even take some of the fish but we can't do that now.*

I wanted to find out whether these changes to their authority was due the changes that were happening in the fishing sector, and this is what she had to say

*No the people here are just not changing their mind. They are very rude and do not respect authority. So now we go and buy just like any other person. People now have their money to buy. Also, some of the fishermen already collect money from the women before going to sea so by the time they come back they have to give them the fish.*

As her response shows, the younger generation does not respect authority and thus do not see why they should heed to her authority. This assertion by the queen was, however, contested in the field. Through my interactions with the fishmongers, they acknowledged her as their leader whom they go to with their problems. They accorded her the needed respect in the community. What then could be accounting for the perceived erosion of the authority of the queen of fishmongers? One reason I could give for this might be changes that were happening in the operations of the fishing sector. As she herself acknowledges, fishermen were now entering into business arrangements with the fishmongers before going to sea. This meant that she could not determine the price at which the fish must be sold. Also in the face of dwindling fish stocks it was gradually impossible for her to perform her duties. Aside determining the price of fish which according to her gave her much prestige, I saw that she was performing her other duties without any hindrance in the community. Her position might not be vibrant as compared to that of the chief fisherman because he owns canoes and thus has people who depend on him for the livelihood. Nana Sankah has over sixty crew members who work for him so he is able to have leverage and thus have his authority recognized in the community.



The erosion of the authority of the queen of fishmongers can also be linked to what is happening in the broader Ghanaian context with regards to the authority of queen mother vis-a-vis that of their male counterparts. Traditionally, queen mothers have played diverse roles in the communities. In addition to serving as counsel to the Chief, they mediated and participated in negotiations on issues important to the people in general, and are directly responsible for overseeing family matters, in particular issues around women and children. Despite this significant role in society, Queen Mothers and other female traditional leaders are excluded from participation in local, regional and national decision-making bodies such as the Regional House of Chiefs and the National House of Chiefs on the basis of their gender (Fayorsey, 2006; Odotei, 2006). This exclusion of the female traditional leaders from these key institutions has become a major concern, because it create a situation whereby the interests of Ghanaian women are not represented and protected at these traditional decision-making bodies.

Erosion of the power of queen mothers in Ghana has been blamed on the exploits of colonialism and missionary activities. These foreign visitors came with their Eurocentric concepts of gender relations which idealized women's' responsibilities in the domestic domain and thus minimised their role in the decision making in the public domain (Manuh, 1988; Odotei, 2006; Rattray, 1923). This imposition of the colonial systems in Ghana led to the exclusion of some of the roles women played in most Ghanaian societies and thus reinforced women's subordinate position in society. The post-independence development initiatives continued to draw from and build on existing patriarchal structures in ways that resulted in the deepening of social and gender divides (Fayorsey, 2006; Odotei, 2006). In this regard, the authority of queen mothers came to be seen as subordinate to that of chiefs and is not accorded the needed recognition.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter examined gender within the socio-cultural organization of the fishing community in Anomabu. Discussions here explored how gender norms and ideals are expressed in the day to day activities of the community. Most importantly, discussions highlighted roles plays by men and women in the community and how they reflect the gender ideals of this community. Analysis of the ways in which cultural practices like naming ceremonies and marriages are conducted showed how gender roles and norms are played out in this community. Examples from this chapter examined the various roles that men and

women played in the fishing sector. Discussions showed how the roles played by women and men placed them in different positions to be able to access resources in the fishing sector.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Introduction**

Scoones (1998) defines livelihoods as the capabilities, assets and activities required to make a living. Ellis (2000) goes further to define sustainable livelihood framework as having the following components: human, physical, social, financial and natural capital. The ability of an individual to make the most out of a livelihood strategy depends on how he or she is able to combine these capitals effectively to maximize benefits. The success or other wise of a livelihood strategy is also mediated by social factors and exogenous trends and shocks (Ellis, 2000). With the main livelihood of the population in Anomabu being fishing, it is important to examine how the various actors involved are able to employ the various capitals at their disposal to make a living. Simply put, how are men and women in this community able to use the various opportunities available to them to make a living? What factors mediate the success or otherwise of how they are able to take advantage of the opportunities available? How are they able to make shifts in their livelihood strategies in the face of dwindling fish stocks?

This chapter discusses the livelihood patterns of the fisher folks related to fishing and beyond. The first part of discussions will focus on the fishing sector which happens to be the main source of livelihood for members of the Anomabu fishing community. Here, I will illustrate the various processes involved in accessing and processing fish for the market. Emphasis will be on the role that fishmongers play in the post-harvest sector of the fishing industry in this community and the challenges they encounter. The second section of this chapter will examine alternative livelihood strategies available to the fisher folks in the face of dwindling fish stock and the factors that influence these decisions.

### **Access to fish**

I start discussing this chapter by looking at how fishmongers get access to their supply of fish. I am interested in examining the various mechanisms that they use to guarantee their supply of fish. I am also interested in exploring how the fishmongers use their social networks to access fish. Here I want to find out whether gender, kin or other forms of relationships play a significant role in a fishmonger's chances of getting fish.



Photo 7- Pans of fresh fish

Responses given by my participant and my own observations showed that most of the fishmongers got their supply of fish from their husband's canoe<sup>12</sup>. The difference, however, is that a fishmonger is guaranteed a supply of fish if her husband owns the canoe. This is because after the fishing expedition, a portion of the fish is given to the owner and this invariably goes to his wife. In some instances, the owner shares it between his wife and other female relations. Let us now look at some of the responses given to the question of how they access fish.

*We (fishmongers) get the fish from the men who go to sea. I get my fish from my husband, at times I also get it from other fishermen- (Araba, 35, fishmonger).*

*My husband used to own a canoe but now due to old age he does not go to sea anymore. I, however, get fish from his canoe when the workers return from the sea. There are times I also buy fish from other fishermen- (Naana, 50, fishmonger).*

---

<sup>12</sup> This is reflective of the sample size that I selected since I concentrated on couples engaged in the fishing business together.

*Aside from my husband, I also get my supply of fish from my other family members. The canoe that they work on belongs to the family so they are expected to give all the female members some fish when they return from their expedition. Due to the large number of people who depend on them they select who to give the fish to. They normally give to those who offer good accounts- (Adjoa, 45, fishmonger).*

Responses given above show the various ways in which fishmongers in this community access fish. As stated above, most of the fishmongers get their supply of fish from their husbands. This is because after a fishing expedition, the whole catch is divided into two equal parts. One portion is given to the owner to be used to offset the cost incurred for the expedition. The other portion is shared among the workers who went to sea. The fishermen in turn give their supply of fish to their wives or other female relations or other fishmongers who they already have prior business arrangements with. After selling the fish, the fishmongers are required to render accounts to their respective partners and then keep their share of the profit. The money realized as their profit is then reinvested into the fishing business or other businesses to ensure a steady line of income. Aside from trading and processing fish, the fishmongers are engaged in other income generating activities like trading and farming to supplement their incomes.

Aside from relying on husbands and other male relations to get their constant supply of fish, I observed that the fishmongers also had other arrangements to get fish. These arrangements serve as an alternative in case they are not able to get fish from their usual suppliers. There are instances where conflict arises in the rendering of accounts between spouses and family relations and this may lead to suspension of these arrangements. Conflicts usually arise when both parties do not agree on the quantity of fish sold and thus have conflicting figures during the accounting process. This is because the trading arrangement goes on for a long time before accounts are rendered allowing for mistakes to be made. The fishmongers therefore devise other means to get fish and this is done by relying on other fishermen. Fishermen on the other hand also look for other fishmongers who have money to readily purchase their fish and this normally leads to conflict in the home. In instances when trading arrangements are suspended between couples due to bad accounting, it affects how the home is run. There are even instances in which such problems have led to separation and eventual divorce of couples. Among siblings or other family relations, the suspension of trading arrangement creates rift between the family and affect the cordial relationship that exist in the family. Other means through which the fishmongers guarantee their access to fish

is by pre-financing the fishing expedition. This is done by providing money for fuel and other expenses incurred by the fishermen. So after the fishing expedition the fishermen use a portion of the fish to pay back the money given and also shares the rest among themselves as agreed.

With the forgoing descriptions, I wanted to illustrate the extent to which spousal or familial relations were very necessary to gain access to fish. How does an unmarried fishmonger who is not from this community get access to fish? Even though my participants acknowledged the fact that having a relation working in the fishing sector helps to access fish, they also argued that a fishmonger is better placed to get fish if she has money to readily buy the fish. In this regard, the ability of a fishmonger to readily provide money to buy fish is considered very critical because the other forms of business transactions were done on a credit basis. Below are a few of the responses to the question whether having a husband or male relation working in the fishing sector is critical or not for getting fish.

*It depends on the money that you have, there are times I even sell all my fish at the shore if I need money urgently or don't have time to smoke the fish. A good relationship is not needed the most important thing is your money. Some even run away with the fish after it is given to them on credit, so it's important that you have your money to readily buy- (Ama, 35, fishmonger).*

*I don't think my situation would have been different, most of the time it's your purchasing power that show the quantity of fish that you will get, the more money you have the better. There are times when you might not have the money readily available so you plead with the seller to give it to you, but you must be credit worthy or else no one will give you fish to sell. If you are friends with someone it helps to also get fish- (Esi, 40, fishmonger).*

A review of the responses above show that even though having a relation in the fishing sector helps fishmongers access fish, there are several other ways through which they can access fish. Ama is married to a fisherman who owns a canoe so she is guaranteed a constant supply of fish from her husband's canoe after every fishing expedition. As she says, there are instance when the fish that she receives are too much for her to process so she sells some on the shore. Even though she acknowledges the fact that having a male relation helps to access fish, the ability of a fishmonger to readily pay for fish at the shore also assure constant supply. Esi reiterates Ama's arguments, but goes further to mention that having good human relations also helps to access fish. According to her, a fishmonger had to be credit worthy in order to get fish. Being credit worthy here means offering proper accounts after purchase of fish and paying back debts in good time.

Conversations with some fishermen also gave me the impression that they were likely to suspend giving fish to their wives and other family relations if they needed money urgently. They preferred to give the fish to fishmonger who can readily pay. The need for money thus goes a long way to determine who gets fish to sell in this community. I observed that some fishmonger also devised other means, aside from those already mentioned above to get fish. Some enter into informal relationships with some of the fishermen, and through this offer services like cooking, washing their clothes and offering sexual favors in exchange for fish. This phenomenon is gaining grounds in this community especially among the teenagers, and has been blamed by opinion leaders as the cause of high rates of teenage pregnancy and school drop outs. Béné and Merten (2008) describe this phenomenon of offering sexual favors in exchange for fish as 'fish –for sex'. This is a type of transactional sexual activity which exists between men and women in the fishing communities to secure their supply of fish. It is normally expected that women who engage in these activities are widows, divorced or generally poor women in the community who do not have money to buy fish. However, as Béné and Merten (2008) show in their study, some women engage in this practice to cut down on their operational cost with regards to selling fish. They form these relations to ensure that they get fish at a reduced rate and in effect get more profits. This practice is very widespread and has been linked to increases in the rate of HIV/AIDs in fishing communities (ibid).

Another factor that also determined access to fish in this community was the quantity of fish gotten after a fishing expedition. The higher the quantity, the more likely that more people in the community will get fish to undertake their daily activities. The quantity of fish also determined to a large extent the price at which fish is sold. Aside from this, however, others factors namely; the cost of fuel, the size and type of fish, the amount of time the fishermen spend at sea before coming back to shore, also determine the price. I observed that the time at which fish is sold was also important in determining the price. I discovered price disparities between similar quantity of fish sold in the morning and in the course of the day. Prices of fish sold in the morning were relatively higher than those sold during the rest of the day. On days when the quantity of fish is high, fishmongers are compelled to reduce the price to prevent losses due to the lack of storage facilities for preserving the fish. The fishmongers also made mention of the fact that it was cheaper to get fish from their husbands and other family relations than from strangers. This, according to them, helped to increase their profit margins and ensure that their livelihoods are secured.

### **Fish processing and preservation**

This section will discuss what happens after the fish is brought home from the shore. This is the point on the production chain of fish when women are fully in charge. Fish can either be sold fresh, salted, fried or smoked to preserve it. I discovered that the fishmongers in this community preferred to smoke their fish to preserve it. Smoked fish had the ability to stay for long before going bad. The process of preservation starts with scaling and cleaning of the fish and after that the fish is arranged on ovens to be smoked. The body of the ovens is made from clay and fitted metal mesh with wooden frames. The frames are placed in stacks in the oven; this is where the fish is placed to be smoked. A work station can have between 5 to 10 ovens placed under a wooden shelter. Fire wood is the main source of fuel used in smoking the fish in this community; there are a few people who use Liquefied Petroleum Gas to smoke their fish. Even though this process of smoking was described as being environmentally friendly, it was nonetheless expensive and not widely used by the fishmongers.



Photo 8- Fishmongers cleaning fish.





Photo 9- Processes involved in smoking fish.

Smoking of fish can last the whole day and even continue for weeks depending on the quantity and type of fish being worked on. The number of people who also help to process the fish determines the pace at which the process takes. The fishmongers spend a great part of their time at their various work stations to smoke their fish. These stations are normally constructed in a cluster and closer to the homes of the fishmongers. This way, they are able to attend to other family duties such as preparing food for the home and looking after their children. Some of the fishmongers employ other people to help them smoke the fish but some also rely on female siblings and other family members to help out.

It was common practice for fishmongers to rely on siblings and family relation in the processing of fish. While in the field, I met Kakra who received help from her younger siblings to help her smoke fish. Kakra has been in the fish trading business for over twenty years. She started out by helping her mother and grandmother. Being the first girl in her family she is now charged with the responsibility of carrying on with the family business. According to her, a typical day starts at 6 am. She goes to the shore to wait on the canoes to arrive and bring fish. While at the shore her sisters help her to perform the household chores. She recounts to me that her sisters were of immense help when her children were younger. After getting her share of fish, she sends message to her siblings who come and help carry the

fish home. Once at home they all get to work and start processing the fish to smoke. I wanted to know whether she paid them for the work that they did. According to her, there was no formal agreement with regards to payment. She provides shelter for them and takes care of their children. During the annual festival and Christmas, she buys cloths for them and gives them money when they need it.

Akua Attah on the other hand is assisted by her children to smoke fish. She is 45 year old and has 10 children. The youngest is 12 years old and is the only one who is currently schooling. Her eldest daughter is a seamstress but helps her mother to smoke fish when the quantity is high. Her other children all help with the smoking of fish and selling. She does not pay her children but rather uses the money to provide the need of her children and grandchildren. According to her she had to take up this responsibility because the fathers of her grandchildren were neglecting their duties.

The processes involved in preparing fish for the market, shows how fishmongers make use of their social relations. Kakra had to rely on her siblings to be able to work effectively. Working with her siblings was more comfortably for her because they belong to the same family and are thus seen as contributing to the well-being of the family. Akua Attah on the other relied on her children to help her trade. There were other fishmongers who also employed people to help them smoke their fish and paid them at the end of the day's work.

### **Marketing networks**

The fishmongers make use of an elaborate network to market their finished products. Since the life-span of fresh fish is not long its easily sold off to markets that are nearer to Anomabu. Some of the fresh fish is also frozen and sent to other parts of the country to sell. The cash returns on selling fresh fish are faster than that of smoked fish.

The marketing network of the smoked fish available to the fishmongers in Anomabu spread to every part of the country. Communications with the fishmongers showed that they were able to take their finish product to different parts of the country to sell. They normally sell in Takoradi located in the Western region to markets in the Greater Accra region and the Ashanti region. The closest market available to the fishmongers to sell their smoked fish is the Mankessim market which is about 16 kilometres from Anomabu.

In discussing the role that women play in the fishing industry, I made mention of the role of lodging women in the sale and marketing of fish. They serve as partners with the fishmongers to effectively market their fish. Responses from my participants indicated that they depended greatly on the services of lodging women in the various markets of their

choice to make important decisions concerning their work. The lodging women served as market forecasters to the fishmongers, giving them vital information about the trend of prices and general sales in their respective markets. The fishmongers are in constant communication with their lodging women relying on the information that they give. Whiles in the field, I observed that most of the fishmongers had large stocks of smoked fish but were not willing to send them to the market. When I inquired as to why this was happening, I was told that in common local parlance that ‘the market was not sweet’. This expression summarizes the fact that conditions in the market with regards to the price of fish were not favorable, hence the hesitance on the part of the fishmonger to sell their fish. This information was relayed to the fishmongers from their lodging women.

Aside from providing information on the market trends, the lodging women also provide other services. These include offering the fishmongers spaces to display their wares, helping them with the sale of their ware and also taking care of their children whiles on the market. Some of the lodging women also provide accommodation for the fishmongers against a fee. The fishmongers acknowledge the important roles that these lodging women play in the success of their work. According to them it was nearly impossible to market their fish in these markets without the help of these women. In spite of the help offered by the lodging women there were also instances in which these women exploited the fishmongers. This they did by charging high prices for the space provided or even going to the extent of stealing money belonging to the fishmongers.

Once the fishmongers have been given signals that conditions on the market are favorable, they transport their fish to these marketing and sell. The journey is embarked on individually or collectively, in the latter case, a group of women may come together and hire a vehicle to transport their wares. The marketing expedition can last from a week to a month. According to the fishmongers, there are instances when they have had to spend over a month at the market centers in order to sell their fish. There are also times when they have had to return with some of their wares or leave it with their lodging women to sell and send the money back to them. The fear of incurring extra cost of transporting the fish back to their homes makes them spend longer days at the market. This, however, comes with increasing cost and expenditure to them. This is because they pay for the spaces that they use to market their wares on a daily basis. Some also sleep at the market centers, and complained that the longer time spent there exposes them to mosquito bites and attacks from people. Some of the fishmongers also go with their young children to the market centers and it is not advisable to spend longer hours with these infants under such conditions.



Photo 10- Parked smoked fish ready to be sent to the market.



Photo 11- Smoked fish being sold in the market.

### **Livelihood strategies beyond fishing**

The literature on alternative livelihood patterns in fishing communities suggest that these communities have certain in-built mechanism that help them to respond to the changes

that they experience (Allison et al., 2009). According to Badjeck et al. (2010), livelihood options open to fisher folks include : engaging in other income generating activities, moving out of the community or changing their fishing practice. Engaging in other income generating activities by fisher folks has been identified as one the means by which they reduce their risk levels and cope with uncertainties related to fishing (Barrett et al., 2001; Eakin, 2005; Ellis, 2000). Some fisher folks are able to move to other sectors of the economy of their respective communities to deal with the challenges that they experience. There are instances where fisher folk turn to farming, trading or engaging in other artisanal employment options to survive.

One way which fisher folks have responded to changes in the fishing sector is to migrate (Njock & Westlund, 2008; Odotei, 1992, 2003b). Both man and women alike migrate to areas of favorable fish stock. There are several types of migration. Some fisher folks migrate internally within the same country while some also move out of their respective countries in search better fishing grounds. Owing to the seasonal nature of fishing in Ghana, fishermen tend to migrate to localities that may be having more fish stock (Odotei, 1992). Fishermen in Nigeria also migrate in response to the movement of certain fish species (Fregene, 2007). In other words they tend to follow the fish around. After the lean season the fishermen return to base. Some fishermen migrate out for longer periods and establish permanent residences in their host communities. These movement lead to changes in the organization of the home since most of these fishermen do not move with their wives. Let's now turn our attention to specific examples from Anomabu with regards to alternative livelihood options beyond fishing.

Fishing in Anomabu is seasonal in nature, with the main fishing season starting from May through to August. The peak season for continuous fishing expeditions, according to the fishermen in this community, is usually from mid-July to the end of August. There are, however, instances of substantial catches of fish from November to end of December. This has been how the fishermen have organized their fishing expeditions all year round. During the lean season, the fishermen still go to sea, but normally venture into other waters outside Anomabu and return with smaller catches or nothing at all. Conversations with the fishermen showed that in recent times, there have been significant changes in the availability of fish. According to them, the seasons are changing and this is evident in the fact that there are times during the peak season when their catch is low. As one of them puts it '*there are so many uncertainties in the fishing sector nowadays that it is making it very difficult to plan effectively and take advantage of the industry*'.

I got a sense of what the fishermen were saying during my stay in the community. I arrived in this community in August, which was supposed to be their peak season. I observed that even though there was some fishing activities going on, the catch were not much. There were, however, few days when they got plenty but those were exceptions. In such situations, I realized that lesser numbers of the fishing crew went to sea. On the reverse, however, I saw that the fishmongers had larger quantities of smoked fish available but were waiting for favorable market prices to sell them. This meant that there had been good catches in the previous months before I got there. A look at the seasonality of the fishing industry in Anomabu shows that for a majority of the year, there is less or no fishing activity going on. With this as background I wanted to find out what alternative livelihood strategies are available or utilized by the fisher folks in the face of changes to their fishing activity.

With regards to alternative livelihood patterns beyond fishing in Anomabu, I identified some differences in the various jobs that both men and women engage in. I observed that almost all the fishmongers I spoke with engaged in other trading activities to supplement their income. Trading thus stood out as one of the main livelihood options to the women in the face of dwindling fish stock. Below are a few of the reasons why women in this community found trading as a better livelihood alternative.

*During the lean season I trade in other things that are available. I sell foodstuffs, cloths, shoes or anything that people want to buy... if I don't trade with the money it will get finished and I will not be able to take care of my children- (Adjoa, 35, fishmonger).*

*It's easier to turn to trading because we are already involved in the trading business; it's just that we have to sell other things. We normally rely on our children to also help us sell the things- (Ekua, 40, fishmonger).*

*I normally go to Cape Coast to sell other things on the market. I sell things that are in demand in order to recoup my money. Trading is very good, because people will always buy-(Ama, 40, fishmonger).*

Trading is seen as a better alternative for the fishmongers because it is still in the same line of business that they were engaged in. It is also easier for them to adjust to trading because it is seen as a female's job. None of the men I spoke with mentioned trading as an alternative livelihood option. Trading is seen as a flexible livelihood option because traders are able to combine it with other demands of caring for their homes. Sometimes women have to sell their personal effects during the lean season to survive. This was what Nana Esi, a fishmonger had to say as to other ways they devise to survive the lean season.

*As you can see, these heaps of baskets that you see there are all fish that I have smoked but have not sold. They cost about four thousand Ghana cedis. To survive we sometimes sell our personal belongings to provide for our families. The men also give us money, but it depends solely on you, the woman, to also save some money to use during the lean season.*

I would now like to shift attention to the livelihood patterns that fishermen turn to during the lean season. Aside from fishing, I gathered from my conversations with the fishermen that most of them had other skills and training they relied on. Some of them were trained as artisans namely as masons, carpenters, steel benders, drivers etc. These jobs served as a buffer for them to return to during the lean season. They normally travelled to other cities where their services were needed, and worked there. When they receive news that the fishing season is picking up, they return to the community to fish.

According to Njock and Westlund (2008), migration is one of the main strategies used by inhabitants of fishing communities to seek alternative livelihood options. There are two types of migration, internal and external. Internal migration involves moving from one location in a given community to another one within the same community. External migration refers to moving out of one's community of residence to another place which is different from his home community. Migration was also seen as a livelihood option for the fisher folk in Anomabu. A few number of the fishmongers also migrate to other parts of the country to work but not in the fishing sector. They mostly went to other cities with big markets to sell and returned home after a month or two. Comparatively while the fishermen undertook their migration to work in the fishing sector of other communities, the fishmongers went to work in other sectors not related to fishing. Some of the fishermen migrate to other fishing centers in the country where fishing activities are favorable. There are times when they even migrate to other countries along the West African Coast to fish. Most of the fishermen in Anomabu migrated out of the community in search of better fishing grounds leaving behind their families. I wanted to find out why it was more suitable for the fishermen to migrate out and leave their families behind.

*Madam have you ever seen the chicks following the cock anywhere. They always follow the hen. It is better for our wives to stay behind and look after our children while we go out and work and send money home. That way, everybody gets catered for- (Kwesi, 35, fisherman).*

*It's easier to integrate into the communities we go to without our wives. We went there to work so we need a clear sense of mind to work. There are times our wives visit but it's preferable they stay behind- (Yaw, 40, fisherman).*

*Our wives stay behind and look after our children. Leaving with our wives will mean that our children will have to be taken out of school. We need them back home to manage the house in our absence. Our wives also have their businesses here so it's not easy for them to leave that and follow us where ever we go- (Kwaku, 40, fisherman).*

The fishermen preferred to have their wives stay behind and look after their children while they went out to work. The fishermen created the impression that their wives were very comfortable with them migrating out of the community and had no problems with it provided they regularly sent money home. The issue of migration, however, evoked a different set of reactions from the fishmongers when I spoke to them about it. Some of them were of the view that their husbands hid behind the guise of migrating to better fishing spots to run away from their responsibilities back home. I heard reports about women who had not heard from their husbands for years since they left the community. Some also believed that their husbands contract other marriage while they are away and forget about them and their children. There are times they even followed up to check on their husbands, but the reception given them was not favorable so they had to return back home. With regards to receiving remittances from their husbands while they are away, this is what one fishmongers had to say.

*That is not always true, some send money home but it's not regular. They always complain that their businesses are not doing well, because they are away we can't tell whether it's true or not. The responsible ones among them find ways to send money back home regularly, but most of them do not send anything back home. The most annoying part is that some of them return home after several months away with nothing and still expecting you, the wife, to fend for him.*

The issue of migration as a livelihood option thus comes with mixed reactions among the fisher folks. This is because it leads to the re-organization of the home such that mothers or wives are now left to solely care of the home and their children. This re-ordering of the family system brings with it hardship on the women left behind and makes their situation precarious.

## **Conclusion**

Discussions in this chapter focused on examining the livelihood patterns of the fisher folks in Anomabu. The section was organized in two parts; the first discussed the various processes that fishmongers go through in their work. Evidence from the study showed that fishmongers rely greatly on their social networks to access fish and secure their means of livelihood. There were, however, other means through which the fishmonger secured their supply of fish. In this regard, the ability of the fishmonger to readily have money to purchase



fish and being credit worthy were very important. The fishmongers also relied heavily on the activities of lodging women to effectively market their fish.

In the face of dwindling fish stock, discussions in the chapter showed that both fishermen and their fishmongers also devised other means to survive. The kinds of alternative livelihoods adopted by the fishmongers and fishermen were very much dependent on their sex as well as family obligations. Fishmongers in this community saw trading in other goods as a better alternative because it was similar to what they usually do and gives them the opportunity to also take care of their home. The fishermen on the other hand relied on other skills to survive and usually migrated out of the community.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Introduction**

On a typical day in Anomabu when the fishermen return with enough fish, the whole town comes alive. Once you get down from a vehicle at the main lorry station, you will be greeted by a number of fishmongers selling fish. The mood of the whole town seems to be very lively when there is fish. The beaches become very busy with buying and selling of fresh fish. Fishmongers will be seen busily carting their fish in head pans home. The whole community will be filled with smoke emanating from the various ovens smoking fish. The sight of many houseflies feeding on the fish gives two impressions; one that has to do with insanitary conditions in the community and the availability of fish. The young and old, all get to have their share of good fish during the day's meal. Women will be seen frying fish and using it to prepare other dishes. Food sellers and other traders also feel the vibrancy that the availability of fish brings to this community.

On days when fishermen do not return with enough fish the mood of the town changes. The whole town comes to a standstill with most business activities slowing down. Fishmongers will be seen chatting with their colleagues and sharing their problems. Fishermen on the other spend a greater part of their day at the beach, discussing among themselves and strategizing about their next fishing expeditions. Some fishermen will be seen mending their nets. When chatting with the fisher folks it is common to hear this phrase 'the sea is not sweet'. This phrase captures the mood of the community when fish stocks are dwindling.



Photo 12 – Scenes from the beach in Anomabu.

The above scenarios illustrate the various ways in which availability or lack of fish affect life in this community. Most daily activities revolve round the availability of fish. In this regard, it is expected that when fish stocks are dwindling, its effects will also be felt in the community. Discussions here will illustrate how the availability of fish affect kinship and gender relations in the community. I am not in any way suggesting a causal relationship between dwindling fish stocks and these relations. This is because kinship and gender relations in this community are very complex, and thus, changes that affect them cannot be linked to one single factor. I argue rather that changes in the quantity of fish stock coexist with other changes happening with regards to gender and kinship relations in this community. Discussions will therefore explore this community's conceptualization of dwindling fish stock as it pertains to the fishing industry. I will also examine whether these changes in fish stock contribute in any way to challenge existing kinship and gender norms in the community.

### **Changes affecting fishing industry in Anomabu**

The literature is replete with the various ways in which the physical environment of most fishing communities is undergoing change (Allison, Andrew, Oliver, & Center, 2007; Allison et al., 2009; Badjeck et al., 2010; IPCC, 2001). These changes have been blamed on human as well as environmental factors. To further make the level of degradation high, is the issue of climate change. Climate change is said to be speeding up the rate at which environmental changes are taking place, thus making most fishing communities vulnerable (Allison et al., 2007; Allison et al., 2009). The various ways in which changes in the physical environment of fishing communities contribute to changes in fish stocks has also been established (Badjeck et al., 2010). Seeking to find out how the fishing community in Anomabu is experiencing these changes. I set out to find out from the fisher folks whether they can talk about any visible changes that the physical environment in the community is experiencing. Below are a few of the responses I got.

*There are visible signs of change going on. You see the area over there used to be a mangrove groove but now you can't see even one tree there. There were so many coconut trees at the beach but most of them have died off. I quite remember that growing up we used to climb these coconut trees and enjoy the fruits but now the beach is very bare. (Kwesi Mensah, 38, fisherman).*

*This place used not to flood during the rainy season, but anytime there's heavy downpour the whole place gets flooded. The sea is now entering our houses. This was not the case years back. The people have collected the sand on the beach for building so we are all suffering now (Kwesi, 40, fisherman)*

*What I can say is that just as human beings go through changes, the environment is also undergoing some changes. The visible ones I can talk about here is the beach behind the castle. There was quite a distance between the castle and the shore line. This has reduced to the extent that the area around the castle gets flooded during high tides (Naana, 50, fishmonger).*

The responses given above attest to the fact that Anomabu, just like other coastal towns in Ghana and for that matter the world over is undergoing some level of environmental change. There were also reports of periodic flooding in the area anytime it rained heavily. The beach is also reducing in size with the sea literally entering people's homes when tides are high. The Anomabu fort which stood at a considerable distance from the shore line now stands very close to the sea.

Views from participants showed that the activities of inhabitants along the coast also add up to the rates at which these degradations are going on. Visible signs of sea erosion are there for anyone who visits this community to see. One case in particular that caught my attention is the issue of sand winning at the beach. This is a practice whereby some of the inhabitants collect sand from the beach and sell to people who use it for construction works. It is very lucrative for those engaged in it hence being seen as a form of livelihood. I was told that this practice persist even though it is illegal. People go to the beach at night and collect the sand to sell. They blame the high level of poverty being experienced in the place as a reason for this.

With regards to challenges facing the fishing job itself, my participants spoke about a number of issues. Almost everybody I spoke with complained about the reduction in the quantity of fish they get from the sea. They also spoke about the manner in which the fishing seasons are fluctuating. There was evidence to the assertion that quantities of fish that the fishermen were getting were reducing. The fishermen use basins to measure the quantity of fish that they get at the end of each fishing expedition. The number of basins gives an impression of the quantity of fish caught. According to the Chief Fisherman of Estiwa, on days when fishing expeditions were good they were able to get about 30- 50 basins from a canoe. The price of a basin of fish ranges from 40 Ghana cedis to 80 Ghana cedis. The price is determined by the type and size of fish as well as the availability of fish. This quantity of fish is however dependent on the size of the canoe. Larger canoes are able to get more fish on good fishing days. The Chief Fisherman complained that there were days when the fishermen returned from fishing expeditions with lesser number of basins. According to him, there were days when fishermen returned from consecutive fishing expedition with no fish at all.

The fishmongers also complained about the effects of dwindling fish stock on their work. Nana Ama, a fishmonger takes me through the challenges that their work is experiencing as a result of dwindling fish stock. Nana has been selling fish for the past 10 years. She is married to a fisherman who does not own a canoe. She normally gets her daily supply of fish from her husband. This, according to her, is not enough so she relies on other fishermen in the community to get enough fish to sell. Since she does not have enough money to buy fish, she normally gets fish on credit and pays back later after selling the fish. This is how she has been taking care of her family. She complains that during the lean seasons, her work gets affected greatly. This is because she cannot get enough fish to buy. Aside from her husband, the other fishermen are not willing to give her fish to sell. The fishermen prefer selling to the well-established fishmongers who have more money. Ekua, another fishmonger I spoke with complained that since fresh fish stocks were dwindling, she had to rely on frozen fish to stay in business. She gets this frozen fish from Cape Coast. It is more expensive to trade in frozen fish than fresh fish. Aside from this, her customers do not like buying the frozen fish because the taste is not the same as fresh fish. She also spends more time processing the frozen fish to smoke and this increases her work load.

Dwindling fish stocks was making it difficult to guarantee a sturdy source of income for the fishmongers. They complained of lack of financial support to help them stay in business. As I have stated in earlier sections of this thesis, fishmongers were usually given fish on credit basis. After the sale they are required to pay back the fishermen and keep the profit as their share. Reduction in the number fish caught means that they have to compete with other fishmongers who have money to readily buy the fish. This competition meant that those without a good source of income are made to suffer. They also complained about the lack of storage facilities to store fish in the event of high catches.

What then could be accounting for the dwindling fish stock in the fishing industry? The fisher folks enumerated a number of issues as being responsible for this.

*I think the fish stock are depleting because of the high number of people engaged in fishing. The numbers of canoes are increasing by the day. So when we go, we return with nothing. People will have to look to other occupations. The beach is getting crowded (Kwaku, 40, fisherman).*

*We are having these problems due to light fishing and the use of unprescribed nets by some fishermen. We have evidence of some even using dynamite to fish. All these are illegal but people are still doing it. People are just lawless (Kojo Mensah, 38, fisherman).*

*I think the gods are angry. We have been polluting the sea with so much filth. As you know the sea is a god so it can get offended and punish us with low fish sock, (Mansah, 47, fishmonger).*

The issue of so many people engaging in the fishing sector was one which received much attention from my participants. They claimed that the number of people engaged in the sector in Anomabu was too high and hence resulted in them having to compete for the limited quantity of fish. Known as the main occupation of the people it was easier for the inhabitant to take to fishing if other job avenues fail. Many children of school going age drop out of school and train to become fishermen. Fishing was more appealing to them than other occupational forms, so it was the first point of call if one needed to work. This claim was corroborated by the chief fishermen of Etsiwa, who said that his fishing block alone had about 300 canoes working there. This number, according to him was, too much to support the fishing industry considering the fact that the fish stocks are also depleting. According to my participants, due to the increase in number of people engaged in the fishing sector, it was very difficult to monitor their activities. This made it possible for some of the fishermen to make use of unapproved fishing methods, thus compounding the problem that they are facing.

The explanation given by Mensah brings into the discussion issues of spiritual beliefs and practices as it pertains in this community. There is a common belief among the fisher folks that the sea is a god called *bosom mpo* who blesses or curses. The fishermen do not go to sea on Tuesdays. This day is reserved as a day for the sea god to rest. Going to sea on this day will result in dire consequences for the person as well as the entire community. There are specific rites that the fishermen perform before going to sea to seek the direction and protection of the sea god. These rites are performed by *abosomfo* (traditional priest). The priests serve as an intermediary between the fishermen and the gods of the sea. They interpret the demands of the gods and are thus the first point of call when there is any misfortune in the operations of the fishermen. The fishermen hold the belief that it is the gods who bless fishermen with high yields. So when the gods have been offended they punish them by giving them low yields. In fact there is a widely held opinion among the fisher folks that the entire enterprise of fishing is greatly influenced by luck. The ability to get more or less fish is seen as being determined to a greater extent by luck. How lucky a fishing crew gets on a fishing expedition is determined by the sea god.

The fisher folks complained that the seasons for fishing were also changing. This, according to them, can also be blamed for the rate of dwindling fish stocks that the community is experiencing. Opanyin Kojo, a fisher man who has been engaged in fishing for

over forty years told me about how the seasons for fishing are changing. He spoke about the fact that in the past, they were able to go to sea for about three times a day. They returned with fish on each journey but nowadays it is even difficult to get fish on a single journey. Conversations with the Queen of fishmongers confirmed this assertion. There were also changes in the seasons for fishing such that the fishermen were catching less fish during the peak of the fishing season. October happens to be the peak season for fishing in this community, but the fishermen were catching less quantity of fish. This was evident while I was in the field in October. I observed that there were times when the fishermen did not go to sea for most part of the week. Those who went to sea also returned with very little catch. In spite of these dwindling fish stock, the fishermen spoke of times when they are able to get high catch during the lean season. They described these times are very few but they still happen. When this happens they either sell the fish very cheap or throw them away since they don't have adequate storage facilities for fresh fish.

Aside from the dwindling fish stocks, the fisher folks enumerated a number of challenges that affect their work. The fisher folks, especially the fishermen, complained that the operational cost for going to sea was increasing. Changes in the operation of fishing from one which was labour intensive to its current state of mechanisation and commercialisation has implications for the organisation of fishing. In the past, the canoes used by the fishermen were smaller in size and propelled by human power using paddles. While the fisher folks acknowledge the help that these changes have brought to their work; it has also come with additional increase in their operational cost. They now have to buy outboard motors and power them with premix fuel<sup>13</sup>. The availability of this fuel cannot be guaranteed, thus making their operations very difficult.

The Government of Ghana, as a way of helping the fisher folks started distributing premix fuel to the fishing communities in the year 1990 (Mofa, 2010). Over the year, this intervention was saddled with many problems. So in the year 2009, the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture constituted a national premix committee to oversee the allocation, distribution and sale of premix fuel. The mandate of the committee was to ensure efficient and effective administration and distribution of premix fuel. They were also supposed to monitor the distribution of premix fuel to prevent cases of diversion. To assist the committee in its operations, landing beach committees were formed at the various landing beaches of

---

<sup>13</sup> Pre-mix fuel is a special type of fuel used to power outboard motors used to propel canoes. The government of Ghana sells it at a subsidized price to the fishermen.

fishing communities. The main aim of these committees was to oversee the sale of premix fuel at the landing beach. Landing beach committees served as a link between the fishing communities and the national premix committee. Through the operations of these committees, the fishermen were able to buy affordable fuel and help with their operations. However, one criticism that fisher folks have of these committees is, that the members appointed serve as political agents of the government in power. This means that they normally give fuel to fisher folks whom they find support their political interest. The committee members were also accused of hoarding the fuel and later sell it back to the fishermen at higher prices. As at the time I was doing fieldwork, the operations of the Anomabu premix committee had been suspended because of the challenges I enumerated above.

The fisher folks also spoke of a number of illegalities in the operations of the fishing sector which affects their work. They complained about the issue of light fishing<sup>14</sup>. It is illegal to engage in this practise but some fisher folks still do it. None of the fishermen I spoke with admitted to using this method, but on my daily rounds in the community I saw lights being loaded into canoes for fishing. Since its use was an offence, the fishermen did not want to implicate themselves. They also spoke of the use of unprescribed fishing nets by other fishermen. These nets according to them had smaller holes which are used by fishermen to catch smaller fish thus making it impossible for the fish to stay in the sea and mature. The rate at which prices of implements used for fishing were increasing, was also of concern to the fishermen. They complained that the prizes of these implement were going up and this added to their operational cost. These increases, coupled with the fact that they were not getting enough fish, made their situation precarious.

The preceding section of this chapter discussed the various challenges that the fishing industry in Anomabu is facing. Most importantly is the ways in which dwindling fish stocks are affecting their main source of livelihood. In a community whereby much of the daily activities is organised around the availability of fish, I expect the effects of dwindling fish stock to be felt in other aspects of their socio-cultural organisation. I am not by this argument suggesting a causal relationship between dwindling fish stocks and socio-cultural changes taking place. I argue that these processes are happening independently of each other but their influences can be felt across each other because of the ways in which life in this community

---

<sup>14</sup> This is a situation whereby the fishermen go to sae with special lights to attract fishes to their canoe. It is illegal to use that in the Ghanaian waters.



is organised. The next section of this chapter will thus examine ways in which dwindling fish stocks intensify and complicate changes which are occurring with regards to kinship and gender relations in this community.

### **Dwindling fish stocks and kinship relations**

The social structure of Anomabu is based on matrilineal kinship and organized on the basis of clans (abusua). Every clan is headed by an Abusuapanyin, who is supported by the Obaapanyin, Abusua Kyieme (spokesperson) and a group of elders known as Beesoun. These persons come together to form a council which sees to the day to day running of the activities of the clan. Anomabu has seven major clans and these are identified by their totems. According to conversations with my participants, the clan in the past used to undertake the following task; seeing to the welfare of members of the clan, settling intra-familial disputes, contracting marriages as well as supervising the burial of its members. However, the position of the clan in performing these roles seems to be waning.

In spite of the change happening, the clans still play very important ceremonial roles in Anomabu. They feature very prominently during the performance of funeral rites as well as other rituals of the clan. I must state here that if an individual is not very active in the activities of the clan, they would normally not participate in the performance of his or her funeral. Clans are made up of several families with their respective family heads. These family heads serve as representatives of their various families during the performance of rituals of the various clans. They are also in charge of performing rituals on behalf of their respective clans in their families. Some of these rituals include puberty rites, marriage and naming ceremonies. They are in charge of the families which are also seen as a sub unit of the clan and help in the smooth running of the community as a whole.

Aside the performance of rituals, most families in Anomabu operated as economic units in the past. Most of the families owned canoes on which family members usually worked. At the end of each fishing expedition, a portion of the money gotten was put down to help the family in its operations. In recent times, however, families still own canoes but their management has been in the care of individuals. These are normally family heads who are charged with the responsibility of running the family business. This new development has been blamed as the cause of most conflicts between families. There are issues of accusations and counter accusations of mismanagement of the family businesses by the appointed heads. Whiles family members feel that their heads are not accounting very well to them , the heads of the families on the other head feel they are doing their best, but the current trends in the

fishing business does not make it so profitable. The family heads I spoke with explained that most of these conflicts do not arise when the business is going well. All these developments have a way of affecting the finances of the family, thus affecting the ways in which they go about their duties. I will now proceed to discuss changes that are occurring with regards to family relations in Anomabu and how their effects are heightened by dwindling fish stocks.

Anomabu, being a matrilineal society, operates such that children born in any conjugal union belongs to the mother's family. In matrilineal societies, inheritance and succession are also done through the mother's line. Children born in the union, therefore, do not have the jural rights to inherit the property of their biological father. They could inherit property as well as succeed to political offices in their mother's family. The maternal family used to be charged with the responsibility of taking care of the children born in the family

Maternal uncles were charged with the responsibility of ensuring the wellbeing of their sisters as well as their children. Since they were usually in charge of the control of the families fishing enterprises, they were expected to also perform this role of providing the needs of their nieces and nephews. Most of the older and a few younger participants I spoke with mentioned their maternal uncles as being the ones who introduced and trained them to become fishermen. With the advent of vocational and educational training, maternal uncles were still expected to pay for the cost of training their nieces and nephews.

Through my interaction with Opanyin Kojo and some older fisher folks I came to understand some of the ways in which the duties of the family were changing. Opanyin Kojo told me about how influential his maternal uncles were in his life when he was growing up. According to him, he moved in to live with his maternal uncles when he was about nine years old. He was not sent to school because at that time schooling was not a common practise. He normally followed his maternal uncles to the beach and learnt the fishing job from them. When he was old enough to go to sea, he was working on a canoe owned by his family. He told me that in those days, after each fishing expedition a portion of the money was kept aside to be used by the family in helping its members. The family normally came to the aid of its members when the need arose. The family at that time was very influential so it was in the interest of every member to tow the family line. Aside from providing him with a source of livelihood, it was his maternal uncles who arranged and contracted marriage for him. He tells me that his father also provided for him but he was not staying with him. When I inquired about how he was caring for his sister's children this is what he had to say. *I try my best for them. I used to pay their fees and also helped them to learn a trade. I also provided for my sister. Some of my nephews even work with. I am not able to help them as I should*

*because I am now old and the fishing job is also not lucrative. I also have my own children and grandchildren to also cater for. I wish I could do more for them but my current circumstances do not allow me.*

While in the field, I observed and also deduced from most of my participants that this practise of uncles caring for their nieces and nephews was changing. Uncles were now mainly concerned with taking care of their own children sometimes refusing to help their nieces and nephews. They were accused of using money from the family to care for their children and even handing over family properties to their children. In the past, nephews were the ones who inherited their maternal uncles' property and not their children. These developments, according to my participants were the root cause of most intra familial conflicts Anomabu. I will now discuss a few cases of familial conflicts I heard of while in the field.

My first case was narrated by Aba who is married to a man who owns canoes and is also in charge of managing one canoe which belongs to his family. Aba has been married to her husband for 15 years and they have 5 children. She used to sell and smoke fish but now is into trading. She, however, gets her share of fish from her husband and sells to her friends. She describes the relationship between herself and her husband's family as being very cordial. When I asked her when he last spoke to them, she just smiled and told me that it's been a while. Further conversations with her revealed to me that she stopped being directly involved with her husband's business because of the problems her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law were having with her. She spoke about instances of being accused of profiting from their family business. As she puts it; *anytime they see me wearing something new, they think it's their brother's money. I don't have the right to wear or eat what I like because I am married to their brother. They forget that I also came into this marriage with my own money. They should be glad to have a sister-in-law like me.* These accusations of wives profiting from their husband's businesses to the neglect of his family members are very rampant in this community. Wives are sometime accused of using charms on their husband's to make them act the way they are doing.

Ama shares her experience with me. She has been married to a fisherman for 20 years. Her husband does not own a canoe but is the captain of the canoe he works on. She tells me that her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law were very helpful during the initial stages of her marriage. They were the ones who helped to take care of her children while she went to the beach to buy fish and sell. They helped with smoking as well as selling of fish, and she paid them at the end of the day's works. As time went on she started having problems with

her sisters-in-law, because they were not rendering proper accounts to her after selling the fish. She tells me that when those problems started her mother-in-law was supportive of her, but with time she started supporting her children. Over time she had to stop working with them and employ other people to work with. Even though the cases provided above do not make direct reference to the issue of dwindling fish stocks, I concurred from my fieldwork that prevalence of these problems are higher during times when stocks are reducing.

It was obvious from my daily interactions and observations in this community that the family as a social institution was undergoing some form of changes. Literature on the African family seems to suggest that just like any social institution; the family undergoes some form of changes over the course of time (Oheneba-Sakyi & Takyi, 2006). Evidence shows that the introduction of trade into the economy affected the ways in which African families were organised. Colonisation and its resulting aftermath were also said to have altered the way in which most African families operated. In current discussions, modernisation, urbanisation and globalisation have all been said to modify the manner in which most families operate. What then could be accounting for changes in the family as being experienced in Anomabu?

Most of my participants attributed the changes that the family was undergoing to the following; higher education, relocation of family members into cities, generational gaps and most importantly changes that are also going on in the fishing sector. Due to higher education, people were now engaged in more formal jobs and have moved away from the community. They only come around during festivals or the performance of other family activities. Some of the educated family members see the family way of doing things as outmoded and do not heed to their advice. A practise in the past was that marriages were arranged between families. In recent times, however, the individuals contract their marriages and only invite the family in when it is time to perform the marriage rites. Some people even get married without the knowledge of their respective families.

Another factor that I could talk about as accounting for these changes is intergenerational differences in thinking and ways of doing things. My conversations with older fisher folks showed that they were in support of fishermen taking care of their nieces and nephews in addition to their own children. According to them, in spite of the current harsh economic conditions being experienced in the community, the fishermen still owed it as a duty to their families to provide for their needs. In as much as my younger participants admitted that caring for members of one's extended family was important, they argued that this practise was not sustainable and would make parents irresponsible. The various responses that they gave showed evidence of a move from the communal way of living to

one which is more nuclear and individuated. They argued that people now ought to be more concerned about taking care of the needs of their nuclear families, and offer to help the extended family if they so wish. The older fisher folks argued that it is this new thinking among the younger generation with regards to the extended family that has to be blamed for high incidence of child neglect being experienced in the community. They were of the view that if things continue like this and do not change the extended family will be made redundant. This development they argue will not help in the socio-cultural cohesion of Anomabu.

### **Dwindling fish stocks and gender relations**

How does dwindling fish stock also affect gender relations in this community? Discussions in chapter three of this thesis explored gender ideal that are dominant in this community. The fishing community in Anomabu has clear cut definitions for the respective roles that men and women play. This is evident in the types of chores that men and women perform both at home and also in relation to work in the fishing sector. The gender norms in this community, places the care of children and the home in the hands of women, while men are supposed to be seen as the ones who work outside the home and bring money home. This differentiation does not mean a strict adherence to the public/ private divide as found in most gender literature. This is because in as much as women in this community are in charge of the domestic space, their presence is greatly felt in the public arena of the trade and commerce. How then do gender ideals and norms respond to changes being experience in the main source of livelihood?

My observations from the field suggest that there are no role reversal with regards to existing gender norms and ideals in this community. Women were still tasked with the responsibly of caring for the home. Men on the other hand had to still perform their role as providers for their respective families. Children were also being socialised to conform these laid down norms and ideals. With regards to gender norms and ideals as they pertain to the fishing sector, not much had changed. Men were still going to sea and women were predominately in charge of the post-harvest sector of the fishing industry. Women were engaged in the processing and sale of fish, even though there were evidence of a few men venturing into the sale of fish.

Through my interactions with the fisher folks, I noticed that they were concerned about the fact that they are not able to live up to the gender norms with pertains in the community. For example, a father in this community is someone who is able to provide for

the needs of his home. How are men in this community able to live up to this community's expectation of a father in the face of dwindling fish stocks? Kwasi Mensah talks to me about some of the stress that men go through. Kwasi Mensah is 35 years old, married, with four children. He has been fishing for 12 years. Fishing is the only job he does. He works as a crew member with about 6 other fishermen. After each fishing expedition, he gets his payment of fish, he gives, this fish to his wife and other fishmongers to sell. After the sales, he uses the money he has gotten to pay for his children's school fees and also provide housekeeping money in the home. He also uses the money to take care of other family needs.

With the current trend of dwindling fish stocks being experienced in the community, he tells me that life has not been easy. According to him, on days that his crew returns with less catch or nothing at all, he spends most of the day at the beach and only sneaks in at night to sleep. He does this so as to avoid running into his children and wife who will be demanding money from him for their upkeep. I felt a drop in his voice and composure when we were talking about the challenges that dwindling fish stock brings to the community. At the start of our conversation, Kwasi Mensah was very lively and the tone of his voice was high, but at this point he spoke with a low tone and mostly smiled and sighed. He went further to tell me that a man can be looked down upon if he continuously returns from sea with no fish.

The sentiments raised by Kwesi Mensah resonate with those shared by most of the fishermen I spoke to. During one focus group discussion session held for fishermen they made me aware of some of the problems that dwindling fish stock creates in their home.

*Woe onto you if you come back from sea and return with little fish, you will be seen as a lazy man. The situation is even worse when your other colleagues return with fish. This fish might have been gotten using illegal methods but they don't care. We are sometimes forced to resort to these methods in order to get fish (Nana kofi, 50, fisherman).*

*There is nothing more fulfilling for a man than to return from sea with plenty of fish. On days like that we are given special treatment from our wives. News of your great catch will travel thorough out this community and it makes us feel proud. Due to high rates of dwindling fish stocks some men have run away from home (Ekow ,39, fisherman).*

Fishmongers on the other hand also spoke to me about some of the challenges that dwindling fish stock brings to their ability to perform their roles in the community. Living arrangements are such that most children stay with their mother until they are old enough.

This means that the mothers are the ones who see to it that the needs of children are taken care of. It is therefore expected that dwindling fish stock which affects the livelihood of these fishmonger will invariably have an influence on how women are able to undertake these responsibilities.

Ekua is 35 year old fishmonger with 5 children. The eldest is 17 years old while the youngest is 2 year. She stays with her children in her family house with other relatives and their children. All her children except the eldest go to school. She tells me that the eldest has completed Junior High School and is awaiting her results to enter the senior high school. Her husband stays with his family members, so she goes to her husband's place at night to sleep and return to her home in the morning to ensure that the children are ready for school. She tells me that her husband is very supportive and makes sure that the needs of the children are taken care of. She provides the children with food while her husband pays for the school fees and gives the children money for school. Sometimes her husband gives her housekeeping money in the form of fish when there is fish. She tells me that during the lean season she has to devise other means such as selling foodstuffs to ensure that her family is catered for. With the current rates of dwindling fish stock being experienced in the community, Ekua tells me that parents, especially mothers are under pressure to provide for their family. She refers to a local adage in the community which translates *'it's the mother hen who knows what her children will eat'* to illustrate her point. She goes further to tell me that *'the children stay with us so when they wake up we have to feed them and prepare them for school. If we don't have money how will we do this? We normally buy food on credit to feed our family. This is what good mothers do; our children have to be our priority'*. I wanted to find out how her husband helps out during these times. *'My husband is very supportive. He gives me money when he has it. When he goes to sea and returns without fish, I know. He does not lie to me. I use the money I have to provide for the family, hoping that things will get better'*.

Esi Attah has a different story to share. She is married to a fisherman and has 4 children. She is 30 years old and has been selling fish for 8 years. She lives in a rented apartment with her husband and children. All her children go to school. Aside from selling fish she also sells bread and others things that are in demand in the community. On days that she does not have fish to sell, she wakes up very early and leaves for Cape Coast to sell the bread. Her husband normally helps to prepare the children for school, while she is away. According to her, neighbours and in-laws see her as being a bad mother because she normally leaves home early and come back late. They complain that she is not around most of the time to take care of her children. This makes her feel bad but she has find means to support her

family. She tells me that when they have enough fish she spends her time selling in the community so she is able to combine her household chores with work.

Analysis of the responses above show how conceptualisation of gender roles and norms are re-formulated by dwindling fish stocks. Dwindling fish stocks affects the livelihood of fisher folks and invariably influences how they are able to cater for the needs of their respective families. With regards to gender relations, there seem to be a synergy between availability of fish and local notions of gender roles. Responses from my participants above showed that dwindling fish stock affects how they are able to perform their respective roles as mothers and fathers. The fishermen argued that they are able to perform their duties as men in the community better when everything is going well with their job. The fishmongers on the other hand were concerned about juggling their livelihood strategies and living up to expectation of good mothers in the community. They were confronted with a double burden of devising means to feed their families while also making sure that they do not neglect their motherly duties.

### **Conclusion**

Discussions in this section showed how the availability of fish affects the organization of life in this community. The effects of environmental changes that this community is experiencing and how it affects their source of livelihood were also explored. As discussion in this chapter has shown, the fishing community in Anomabu can be said to be going through changes on different levels. While their main source of livelihood is undergoing changes due to dwindling fish stocks, their socio-cultural organizations were also going through some transformations. Responses from the fisher folks showed that their work is greatly affected by the socio cultural as well as environmental changes that are taking place. They could also attest to the fact that these changes were altering their livelihoods and also affecting gender and kinship relations.



## **CHAPTER SIX: Conclusions**

The aim of this thesis was to examine ways in which gender and socio-cultural dynamics in Anomabu operate and how these affects access to resources in the fishing sector. The thesis also examined the various ways in which dwindling fish stock affects gender and kinship relations in Anomabu. In doing so, the thesis relied on the understanding of gender in anthropological and feminist studies, with respect to the ways in which gender ideologies affect gender relations and often entailing a subordination of women. This line of enquiry was necessary because fishing is an occupational sector which adheres to strict gender role segregations and ideals. Men and women are assigned specific tasks and these affect the ways in which women are able to access resources in the fishing sector. This concluding chapter presents a summary of the study, major findings as well as concluding remarks and recommendations for further studies.

### **Summary of chapters**

Chapter one of the thesis served as a general introduction to the whole thesis. The chapter gave an overview of the background to the study and introduced reader to the various methods used in the data collection process as well as challenges encountered. The chapter also presented readers with an account of the socio-political organization of Anomabu from historical to current times. The main research questions that this thesis sought to address were also outlined. The concluding section of this chapter gave an account of the history of fishing in the Central Region of Ghana where Anomabu can be found. This historical account showed changes that had occurred in the organization of fishing and how these changes provided men and women engaged in this sector with alternative spaces of maneuver. The chapter also gave an account of the various roles that men and women played in the fishing sector of Ghana.

Chapter two provided the theoretical and analytical frameworks used in the study as well as a review of relevant literature. The main focus of this chapter hinged on the understanding of gender in anthropological and feminist studies, and how these perspectives have sought to explain the universal subordination of women. Arguments presented by Ortner (1972) sought to explain the universal subordination of women using gender symbols as expressed in culturally defined value systems. Arguments raised by Ortner were critiqued for its totalizing appeal as well as a creation of a set of binary opposition between men and women.

Problematizing Ortner's (1972) explanation of the universal subordination of women,

other feminist anthropologists were of the view that notwithstanding the widespread subordination of women, this is not universal. These anthropologists argued for an examination of what men and women do in a society as this helps to explain issues of inequality and subordination. They argued that gender should be seen as a set of social relations between men and women rather than looking at the symbolic significance of their genders in the society (Leacock 1978; Sacks 1979). Collier and Rosaldo, (1981) in furthering the arguments raised by the earlier feminists anthropologists, advocated for a combination of symbolic meanings as well as sociological perspectives in any discussion of gender. They argued that social institutions, such as marriage and kinship, determine the ways in which gender ideals are constructed in a given society.

To explain the ways in which work is valued in a fishing community and how access to resources is mediated by gender and kinship relations, I also drew upon perspectives from political ecology (Wolf, 1972; Biersack, 2006). Discussions here further showed that the naturalization of gendered notions and roles has consequences for the ways in which gendered inequalities operate.

Chapter three explored the various ways in which gender is used to organize life in Anomabu. The chapter also showed how the various roles assigned to men and women in this community reflect the socio- cultural organization of the people. Discussion in the theoretical chapter of the thesis established linkages between gender, social relations and how the economy of a society is organized. The perspectives discussed seem to suggest that the meaning given to the various roles played by men and women in a society goes a long way to determine the types of social relationship that exist between them as well as affect how they are able to operate within the economy. The chapter started with an exploration of the various notions about child birth and sex preference in this community. Noted for its high population growth, which is similar to what pertains in other fishing communities in Ghana, fisher folks also had certain expectations with regard to the sex preference of children born in a union. Reasons given for the preference of boys over girls in this matrilineal society show how gender is conceptualized and used to organize life in Anomabu. Participants preferred to have more boys than girls because according to them boys were more stronger than girls and could help them go to sea and fish as well as take care of the family. These ideal about male and female roles are also expressed in ways in which naming and marriage ceremonies are organized in this community. Discussion of the chores performed by men and women in this community both within the domestic and public spaces showed ways in which gender ideals and norms in this community are operationalized. Evidence from the community showed that

women in this community were very much present in the public space of this community due to their special roles within the fishing sector. The presence of women in the public space does not, however, translate into leverage to make decision in the fishing sector. Men still occupied the important positions of power and authority in this community, and determining to a greater extent how resources in the fishing sector are shared. There were, however, a few women who are able to acquire some form of leverage either through marriage or owning the means of production. These women were very few and their influences are not greatly felt in the community.

Chapter four explored the various processes involved in accessing and processing fish for the market and household consumption. With regards to accessing fish, the fishmonger enumerated a number of ways through which they get fish to sell. Most of them had husbands and other male relations who worked in the fishing sector, so they relied on them to get their daily supply of fish. Some also had working relationships with other fishermen and this guaranteed them access to fish. These facts notwithstanding, I observed that the ability of a fishmonger to get fish was also dependent on her ability to readily pay for the fish and also have good working relations with fishermen. The fishmonger had to be truthful and credit worthy to be able to sustain a working relationship with a fisherman, irrespective of family relations.

Examination of the various processes engaged in the procession of fish brought to bear the various webs of social relations that fishmongers rely upon to aid their work. Fishmongers relied on siblings, children and in-laws to be able to process their fish and also perform their household chores. These social relations are reciprocal in nature, with the fishmongers taking care of the needs of their siblings while they also helped with the work.

The last section of this chapter examined the various forms of livelihood options available to the fisher folks aside from fishing. Evidence from the field showed that most fishmongers engaged in other trading activities to supplement their incomes during the lean season. The fishermen on the other hand relied on other skills they had acquired to be able to make a living during the lean season. Some of the fishermen also migrate out of the community to work in other fishing communities. Their migration out of the community leads to a reorganization of the family, with women having to step in and take care of their family needs all by themselves.

Discussions in chapter five elaborated on the various challenges that confront the fishing sector in Anomabu. Responses from participants showed that the physical environment of Anomabu was undergoing some changes and this is affecting life in the

community. There were complaints of flooding and other environmental degradations which can be attributed to human as well as natural causes. The fisher folks enumerated a number of challenges that directly affect their work. High cost of fishing implements and lack of availability of premix fuel were mentioned as some of the major problems that they faced. The fisher folks also complained about reductions in the quantity of fish caught as well as changes in the seasons for fishing. The effects of dwindling fish stock were very profound because much of the socio-economic organization of this community revolves around the availability of fish. Some of the effects include lower incomes, more need for alternative income earning, reordering of household organization etc.

Coupled with the issue of dwindling fish stock was the fact that most social institutions in the community were also undergoing changes. Evidence from the field showed that there were changes with regards to family relations in the community. There seem to be a move from communalism to a more individuated form of family relations; and from matrilineal kinship organization to nuclear family. Fisher folks were now more concerned about taking care of their immediate or nuclear family needs to the neglect of extended family obligations. Reasons assigned for the changes being experienced in family relations included higher education, generational gaps, relocation of family members into cities and also changes that were happening in the fishing sector. Most participants were of the view that they were not able to fulfill their obligations to their extended families because the fishing sector nowadays is less profitable.

With regards to gender relations, I observed that the issue of dwindling fish stock was not affecting the various roles played by men and women in the community. I did not observe any profound situation of role reversals between the fishermen and fishmongers. I must state, however, that I saw a few fishermen selling fish, but I got to know that this practice had been going on for some time now and could therefore not be linked directly to dwindling fish stocks. However, I observed that dwindling fish stock is contributing to intensify dilemmas with respect to gender and kinship ideas; as well as conflicts of interests when it comes to fishing resource sharing and income. The effects of dwindling fish stocks were however evident in ways in which the fisher folks themselves conceptualize their gendered roles. An examination of responses by fisher folks shows that most of them were very much concerned about living up to particular gender ideals. The fishermen were more concerned about the fact they are not able to adequately provide for their family needs. The fishmongers on the other hand also spoke about the fact that dwindling fish stock affects their ability to provide for their families and makes their situation very precarious. I observed that Anomabu as a

community was undergoing changes on two levels; one had to with their main source of livelihood which was diminishing due to reductions in fish stocks and the other being socio-cultural. I do not suggest a causal relationship between these two changes being experienced; however. I argue that even though these changes are happening irrespective if each other its influences can be felt on each other.

### **Concluding remarks and recommendations.**

Discussions in this thesis showed the various ways in which gender norms and ideals are expressed and re-enforced in Anomabu. The ways in which socio-cultural institutions such as marriage and the family operate in this community were also explored. Most importantly, the thesis showed the ways in which gender and kinship relations are changing in current times characterized by migration, industrial fishing and changes in fish stocks. In order to explore this issue further, it would be useful to replicate this study in other fishing communities, to see whether the same issues apply there, and to be able to make a more nuanced analysis. Further studies will also be need to explore the issues that still make women's work in this community is made to appear invisible despite their enormous help and presence in the community.

Issues explored in this thesis brought to the fore certain challenges that the fishing community faces. Topmost among these challenges is the fact that the community is experiencing high incidence of dwindling fish stocks. This is adversely affecting their main source of livelihood and creating economic hardship for the people. I therefore recommend that the fisher folks are trained in other sustainable livelihood models to ensure that they are better placed to deal with the challenges that confront them. These models should not be devoid of gendered consideration. This is because evidence from this study seeks to suggest that men and women in this community experience the effects of dwindling fish stock differently.

## **REFERENCES CITED**

- Addo, P. A. (2011). *The influence of the extended family on couple's reproductive decision making: a study of Anomabu, a fishing community in the central region.* . (Master of Philosophy Master's thesis), University of Ghana.
- Adomako Ampofo, A. (2001). " When Men Speak Women Listen": Gender Socialisation and Young Adolescents' Attitudes to Sexual and Reproductive Issues. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 196-212.
- Allison, E. H., Andrew, N. L., Oliver, J., & Center, W. (2007). Enhancing the resilience of inland fisheries and aquaculture systems to climate change. *Journal of Semi-Arid Tropical Agricultural Research*, 4(1), 35.
- Allison, E. H., Perry, A. L., Badjeck, M. C., Neil Adger, W., Brown, K., Conway, D., . . . Andrew, N. L. (2009). Vulnerability of national economies to the impacts of climate change on fisheries. *Fish and fisheries*, 10(2), 173-196.
- Ampofo, A. A., Okyerefo, M. P., & Pervarah, M. (2009). Phallic competence: Fatherhood and the making of men in Ghana. *Culture, Society and Masculinities*, 1(1), 59.
- Anarfi, J. K., & Fayorsey, C. K. (1999). Male Participants in the Commercialization of Aspects of the Female Life Cycle in Ghana. *The Continuing HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Africa*.
- Awedoba, A. K. (2007). Culture and development in Africa with special references to Ghana.
- Babb, F. (1986). Producers and reproducers: Andean marketwomen in the economy. *Women and change in Latin America*, 53-64.
- Badjeck, M.-C., Allison, E. H., Halls, A. S., & Dulvy, N. K. (2010). Impacts of climate variability and change on fishery-based livelihoods. *Marine Policy*, 34(3), 375-383.
- Barrett, C. B., Reardon, T., & Webb, P. (2001). Nonfarm income diversification and household livelihood strategies in rural Africa: concepts, dynamics, and policy implications. *Food policy*, 26(4), 315-331.
- Bawa, J. (2015). BRIDE PRICE IN GHANA: AN ASSESSMENT OF ITS SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS IN SELECTED COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN GHANA. *UDS International Journal of Development*, 2(2), 61-76.
- Béné, C., & Merten, S. (2008). Women and fish-for-sex: transactional sex, HIV/AIDS and gender in African fisheries. *World development*, 36(5), 875-899.
- Bennett, E. (2005). Gender, fisheries and development. *Marine Policy*, 29(5), 451-459.
- Bernard, H. R. (2011). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*: Rowman Altamira.

- Biersack, A. (2006). Reimagining political ecology: culture/power/history/nature. *Reimagining political ecology*, 3-42.
- Brander, K. (2010). Impacts of climate change on fisheries. *Journal of Marine Systems*, 79(3), 389-402.
- Britwum, A. O. (2009). The gendered dynamics of production relations in Ghanaian coastal fishing. *Feminist Africa*, 12(2).
- Broch-Due, V. (1993). Making meaning out of matter: perceptions of sex, gender and bodies among the Turkana.
- Carsten, J. (1989). Cooking money: gender and the symbolic transformation of means of exchange in a Malay fishing community. *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, 117-141.
- Cochrane, K., De Young, C., Soto, D., & Bahri, T. (2009). Climate change implications for fisheries and aquaculture. *FAO Fisheries and aquaculture technical paper*, 530, 212.
- Collier, J., & Rosaldo, M. (1981). Gender in Simple Societies. *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gen-der and Sexuality*. SB Ortner and H. Whitehead, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press. *Collier Politics and Gender in Simple Societies Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*.
- Daw, T., Adger, W. N., Brown, K., & Badjeck, M.-C. (2009). Climate change and capture fisheries: potential impacts, adaptation and mitigation. *Climate change implications for fisheries and aquaculture: overview of current scientific knowledge*. *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Technical Paper*, 530, 107-150.
- Eakin, H. (2005). Institutional change, climate risk, and rural vulnerability: Cases from Central Mexico. *World development*, 33(11), 1923-1938.
- Ellis, F. (2000). *Rural livelihoods and diversity in developing countries*: Oxford university press.
- Fagertun, A. (2008). *The gender of work and the work of gender : on social transformations in two fisher villages on Jimbaran Bay, Bali, Indonesia*. University of Bergen, Bergen.
- Fayorsey, C. (2006). gender, Culture and governance: Ghanaian Queenmothers as Leaders in Development. *Chieftaincy in Ghana. Culture, Governance and Development*, edited by IK Odotei and AK Awedoba. Legon, Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers.
- Fregene, B. T. (2007). Profile of Fishermen Migration in Nigeria and Implications for a Sustainable Livelihood: Ibadan: University press.
- Fuseini, k., & Doodoo, F. N. A. (2012). " I bought you, i own you"; bride wealth and women's autonomy in Ghana.

- Getz, T. R. (2003). Mechanisms of Slave Acquisition and Exchange in Late Eighteenth Century Anomabu: Reconsidering a Cross-Section of the Atlantic Slave Trade. *African economic history*(31), 75-89.
- Goody, J., & Tambiah, S. J. (1973). *Bridewealth and dowry*: CUP Archive.
- Hansen, K. T. (1992). African encounters with domesticity.
- IPCC, II. (2001). Climate change 2001: Impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability.
- Katikiro, R. E., & Macusi, E. D. (2012). Impacts of Climate Change on West African Fisheries and its Implications on Food Production. *Journal of Environmental Science and Management*, 15(2).
- Koranteng, K. A. (1990). *Ghana Canoe Frame Survey 1989*. Retrieved from Tema, Ghana:
- Leacock, E. (1978). Women's status in egalitarian society: implication for social evolution. *Current Anthropology*, 19(2), 247-275.
- Manuh, T. (1988). The Asantehemaa's court and its jurisdiction over women: a study in legal pluralism. *Research Review*, 4(2), 50-66.
- Marquette, C. M., Koranteng, K. A., Overå, R., & Aryeetey, E. B.-D. (2002). Small-scale fisheries, population dynamics, and resource use in Africa: the case of Moree, Ghana. *AMBIO: A Journal of the Human Environment*, 31(4), 324-336.
- Mbiti, J. S. (1990). *African religions & philosophy*: Heinemann.
- Mofa. (2010). Revised premix fuel guidelines (report). Retrieved 09/09/2016, from Ministry of Food and Agriculture [mofa.gov.gh/site/page\\_id=8910](http://mofa.gov.gh/site/page_id=8910)
- Moore, H. L. (1988). *Feminism and anthropology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Moore, H. L. (1994). *A passion for difference*: Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ngozi Akosa, T., & Oluyide, A. (2010). Gender and Climate Change—Case Study of Oko Agbon Odooyi Community: Case Study Series, Lagos, Nigeria: Centre for 21st Century Issues.
- Njock, J.-C., & Westlund, L. (2008). Understanding the mobility of fishing people and the challenge of migration to devolved fisheries management. *Achieving poverty reduction through responsible fisheries. Lessons from West and Central Africa*, 85-97.
- Nukunya, G. K. (1969). Kinship and Mariage among the Anlo Ewe.
- Nukunya, G. k. (1997). Social and political organization. *A handbook of Eweland*, 1, 62.
- Odotei, I. K. (1991). The introduction of new technology in the artisanal marine fishing industry in Ghana. Vol. II. *Unpublished typescript IAS, Legon*.
- Odotei, I. K. (1992). The migration of Ghanaian women in the canoe fishing industry. *Maritime Anthropological Studies*, 5(3), 88-95.



- Odotei, I. K. (2002). *The artisanal marine fishing industry: a historical overview*: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana.
- Odotei, I. K. (2003a). 'Man-Woman', Gender and Management: A Case Study of Women Canoe Owners at the Tema Fishing Harbour.
- Odotei, I. K. (2003b). *Migration, fishing, and development: a case study of Ningo*: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon.
- Odotei, I. K. (2006). Women in male corridors of power. *Chieftaincy in Ghana: culture, governance and development*, 81-100.
- Oheneba-Sakyi, Y., & Takyi, B. K. (2006). Introduction to the study of African families: A framework for analysis. *African Families at the Turn of the 21st Century*, 1-26.
- Ortner, S. B. (1972). Is female to male as nature is to culture? *Feminist studies*, 1(2), 5-31.
- Overå, R. (1992). *Fish Mammies. The Role of Women in the Artisanal Fisheries of Ghana*. Masters thesis.
- Overå, R. (1993). Wives and traders: women's careers in Ghanaian canoe fisheries. *MAST. Maritime anthropological studies*, 6(1-2), 110-135.
- Overå, R. (2003). Gender ideology and manoeuvring space for female fisheries entrepreneurs. *Institute of African Studies Research Review*, 19(2), p. 49-62.
- Perry, R. I., & Sumaila, U. R. (2007). Marine ecosystem variability and human community responses: the example of Ghana, West Africa. *Marine Policy*, 31(2), 125-134.
- Priestley, M. A. (1956). A Note on Fort William, Anomabu. *Transactions of the Gold Coast & Togoland Historical Society*, 2(1), 46-48.
- Rattray, R. S. (1923). The Drum Language of West Africa: Part I. *Journal of the Royal African Society*, 22(87), 226-236.
- Sackey, W. K. (2014). Mama, I won't go to school. Conflictual relations between education and fishing among the children of Anomabo in the central region of Ghana: The University of Bergen.
- Sacks, K. (1979). *Sisters and Wives: The Past and Future of Sexual Equality*. Westport , Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- Sarpong, P. (1974). *Ghana in retrospect*: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
- Sarpong, P. (1977). *Girls' nubility rites in Ashanti*: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
- Schultz, U. (Ed.) (2005). *Buying Food and Stretching the Money: Changing Gender Roles in Sudanese Households*. Munster: Lit publisher.
- Scoones, I. (1998). Sustainable rural livelihoods: a framework for analysis.
- Seeley, J. A., & Allison, E. H. (2005). HIV/AIDS in fishing communities: challenges to

- delivering antiretroviral therapy to vulnerable groups. *AIDS care*, 17(6), 688-697.
- Skaptadóttir, U. D. s. (2000). *Women coping with change in an Icelandic fishing community: a case study*. Paper presented at the Women's Studies International Forum.
- Strathern, M. (1980). No nature, no culture: the Hagen case. *Nature, culture and gender*, 194, 174.
- Tamale, S. (2004). Gender trauma in Africa: enhancing women's links to resources. *Journal of African Law*, 48(01), 50-61.
- Vercrujisse, E. (1983). Fishmongers, big dealers and fishermen: Co-operation and conflict between the sexes in Ghanaian canoe fishing. *Female and male in West Africa*, 179-191.
- Walker, B. L. E. (2002). Engendering Ghana's seascape: Fanti fishtraders and marine property in colonial history. *Society & Natural Resources*, 15(5), 389-407.
- Wiafe, G., Yaqub, H. B., Mensah, M. A., & Frid, C. L. (2008). Impact of climate change on long-term zooplankton biomass in the upwelling region of the Gulf of Guinea. *ICES Journal of Marine Science: Journal du Conseil*, 65(3), 318-324.
- Wilson, A. J. (2011). *Mothers' wealth: matrilineality and inheritance among the Fantse of Ghana*. Ohio University.
- Wolf, E. (1972). Ownership and political ecology. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 201-205.
- Yanagisako, S., & Delaney, C. (2013). *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis*: Routledge.