

MAMA, I WON'T GO TO SCHOOL

Conflictual Relations between Education and Fishing among the children of
Anomabo in the Central Region of Ghana

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Thesis
Submitted to
Department of Social Anthropology
University of Bergen
Norway

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

June 2014

I don't ask my parents for money because they know when I come to the shore I make money by hassling. They know that the cloth I am wearing, my short pants and this pair of slippers were all bought by me. I sometimes even purchase food for my younger siblings when I have the money. I can't stop coming here (shore). Any time I don't come I will lose my 'bonus' (money). School can't do this at all for now (Interview, 2013).



Photo 1: “If I get this fish (bonus) from the shore, then why should I worry about school?” (Interview, 2013)

ABSTRACT

It is on records that the Central region along the coastal stretch of Ghana was the first to have received formal education during the colonial period as early as the 18th century. This is evident by the fact that the region serves as the hub of one of the best and oldest educational institutions in Ghana, which have produced many scholars. After making such early strides in education, one would have expected steady progress in school enrolment among children in most communities in the region. Paradoxically, recent reports show rather a gloomy picture of declining school enrolment among children in the region, even compared with other regions of the country.

The ongoing debate about the low school enrolment in Ghana's coastal areas has widely centered on cost. From the 1990s, the government of Ghana has undertaken several educational programs and policies intended to increase school enrolment in these fishing communities; notwithstanding, nothing has come out of these policies. The central assumption of these debates is that access to educational facilities is significantly impaired by high costs and hence least-cost option interventions would increase school enrolment.

The thesis elucidates that beyond these economic factors highlighted as decisive of the recent school enrolment trend in the region, sociocultural factors are equally important in such analyses and hence deserves attention in the country's educational policy debate. Based on an ethnographic approach, the thesis discusses the broader factors that account for school enrolment trend in a fishing community in the Central region of Ghana to shed light on this debate.

In the course of the fieldwork, both the parents and the children of Anomabo expressed the relevance of education, yet they are confronted with several quandaries for choosing between education and their traditional occupation (fishing), hence this conflict. The preference for fishing and related businesses over school as expressed by most parents and children cannot be reduced to solely economics (poverty) but also the fact that the livelihood is extricable entwined with their way of life. Children from fishing households are therefore torn between choosing fishing livelihood and school or at best ought to struggle to manage the two simultaneously.

My argument in this thesis is that, even though cost plays a cardinal role in influencing access to education, a range of sociocultural factors nonetheless are more telling on school enrolment in Anomabo.

The major focus of the study is to examine the conflictual relations existing between education and fishing among the children of Anomabo. The "conflict relations" does not only denote factors that inhibit school attendance but also issues that may constrain proper concentration in classrooms. The study sheds light on how fishing and its related activities such as fish trading attracts and keep children from school. The world views of the people are explored using political ecology framework, phenomenological perspective and the concept of intergenerational relations.

DEDICATION

To my three senior dependable partners; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It is all about you Jesus!

Secondly, to all the children of Anomabo who as a result of certain circumstances beyond your reach you are not in school. I want to urge you not to give up. There is always light at the end of the tunnel. My heart goes for you all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the course of conducting research on the people's culture, travels and interactions, I have entered into many corridors of learning and have incurred ineffable debts. My most heartfelt thanks go to the Lord Almighty for His guidance and loving kindness which have brought me to this far.

I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor, Prof. (Associate) Bjørn Enge Bertelsen, who made me think outside the textbook definitions and sheer data collected. It had been a great learning platform for me to work under the tutelage of Prof. Bjørn Enge Bertelsen, not only on the range of the theoretical perspectives in Social Anthropology and its related fields, yet, also on critical thinking and academic veracity. What is much thrilling is, in spite of his busy official schedule, he was more than ready and welcoming whenever I needed him. I am grateful Prof. I wholeheartedly thank the Norwegian Educational Loan Fund for sponsoring my entire MPhil education.

I am deeply indebted to the people of Anomabo, especially the fisher folks. Few among them are Uncle Fifi Andoh (canoe MADINA 5 *bosun*), Uncle Oyibo (canoe MADINA 4 *bosun*, also the overall *bosun*), Uncle Ebo (canoe MADINA 3 *bosun*) and Nana Kwow (Mason). I wish I could mention all of you individually, yet very impossible. My heart really goes to you all for your willingness to open even your private spaces for me. The success of this work is attributed to the access you gave me for the six months stay with you.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Prof. Vigdis Broch-Due, the coordinator of the MPhil Program, Prof. Ragnhild Overå at the Geography Department, University of Bergen for her motherly support in the course of this work and Pavla Jezkova, the administrative officer for providing all the technical assistance and for the friendly atmosphere in the department for the MPhil Program. Prof. Ståle Knudsen, I am very grateful for your assistance. My resounding thanks go to Festus Boamah (PhD Candidate, Dept. of Geography, UiB) and his loving family for the great thoughtfulness, support and encouragements. Hei bro, I am grateful. My further gratitude goes to all my 18 MPhil classmates. It had been lovely living together for these two years. Though we had different nationalities, yet the cohesiveness was unparalleled. We really had wonderful experience and great memories. Surely, I will miss you all. My appreciation also goes to the entire membership of my church, Christ's Believers International Ministry (CBIM), Bergen-Norway for the unflinching support. Hei friends, both here (Bergen) and back home (Ghana), you are never forgotten. Hans Christian Robberstad of AB Solutions, you have been very instrumental in my life in Bergen; thank you so much. I appreciate you all.

Ultimately, I am short of words to express my deepest affection to my ever reliable and loving family, especially Regina Ansoma Sackey (Mrs.), Reginald K. Sackey, Winnifred A. Sackey, Christabel N. Sackey, Enoch T. Sackey, Clement K. Sackey, Maa Sabina A. Sackey, Eben K. Sackey (Mr.), Adora Nortey, Comfort Nortey (Mrs.), Daddy Nortey, Rev. Lawrance K. L. Amartey and his wonderful family, Unisis Ankapong (Mr. & Mrs.), Faustina Acheampong, Georgina Acheampong and Daa K. Acheampong. I am so grateful to you all.

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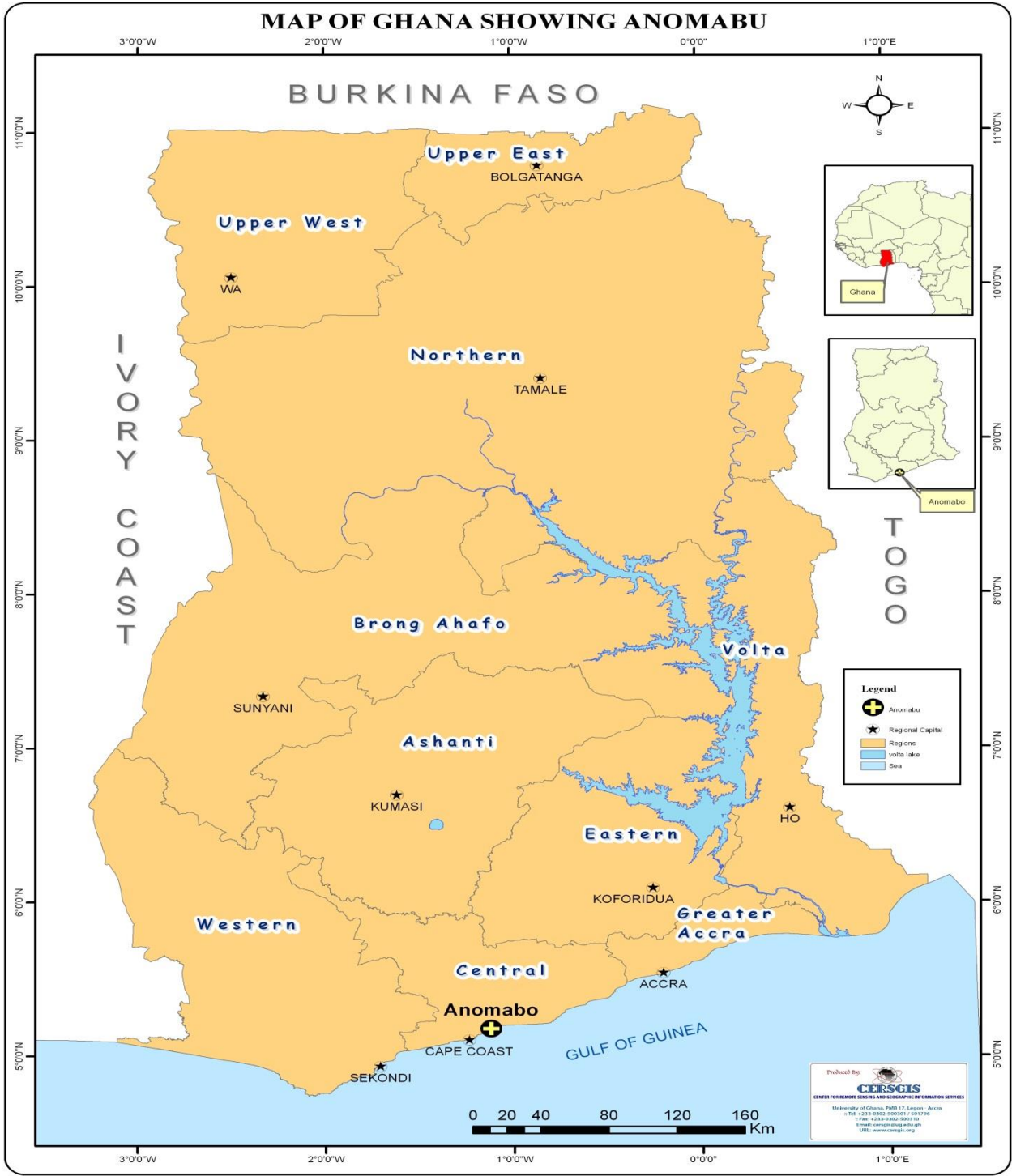
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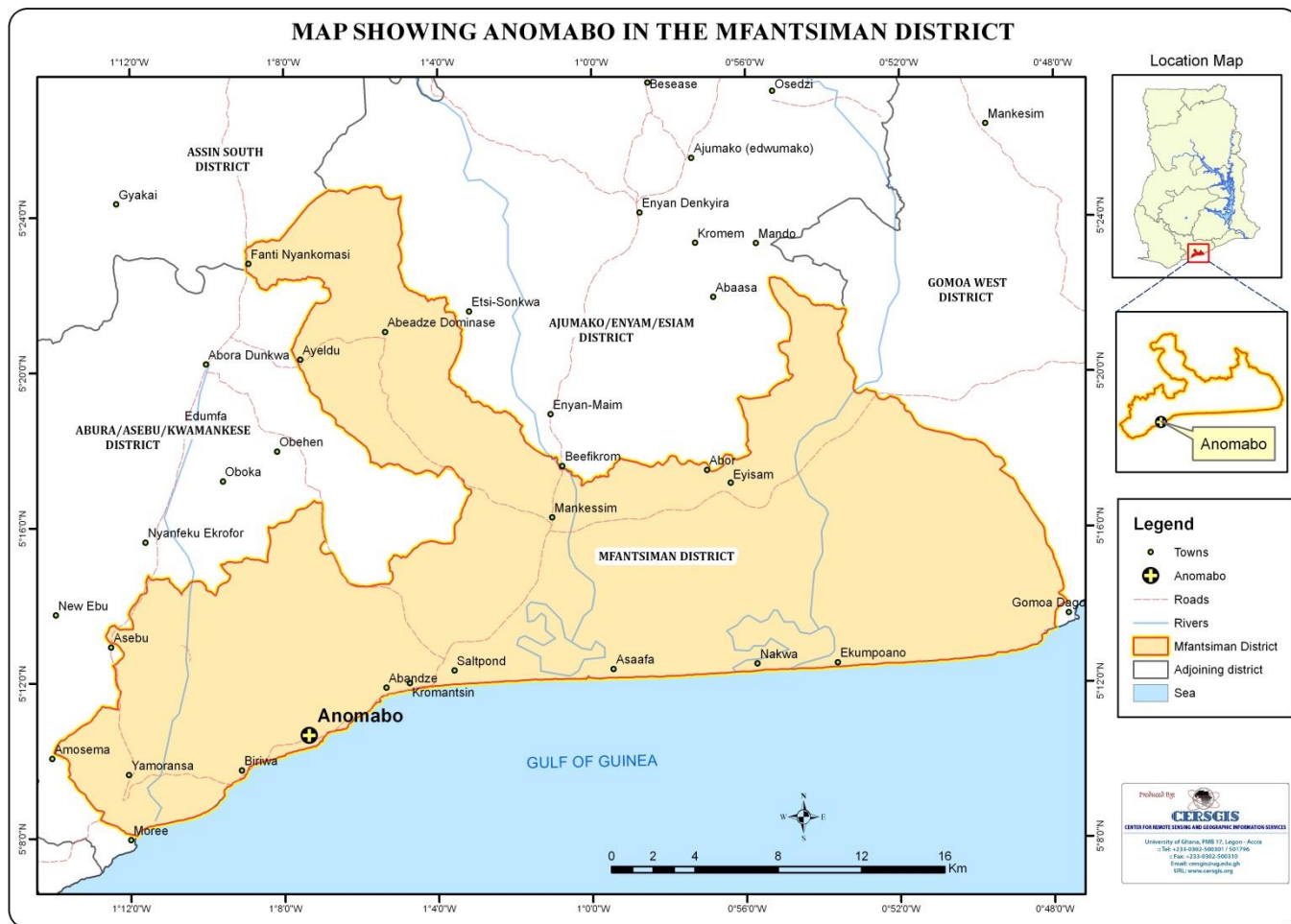
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Map 1: Map of Ghana showing the ten regions and their respective capital towns



Map 2: A map showing Anomabo in the Mfantseman Municipality

GLOSSARY

Abosomfo	-	Fetish priests (Plural)
Abusua	-	Lineage (Matrilineage)
Abusuapanyin	-	Head of the lineage (matrilineage)
Apofohen	-	Chief of the fishermen
Asankɔfo	-	Crew (fishermen) on board of a canoe
Asɔfo	-	Christian pastors (Plural)
Banku	-	Ghanaian food prepared from maize (corn)
Bosun	-	Captain of the fishing crew on board of a canoe
Buta	-	A small rubber container Muslims use for ablution
Fufu	-	Ghanaian food prepared from cassava
Gari	-	Ghanaian food prepared with cassava granular
Gyaawano	-	Fishing method applied during the lean season
Dɔkon	-	Ghanaian food prepared from maize (corn)
Krakyɛ	-	Secretary to the canoe owner
Mbrantseenam	-	Additional fish for the canoe owner for his errands
Namhɛmaa	-	Queen mother of the fish mongers
Obosomfo	-	Fetish priest (singular)
Osankɔnyi	-	A fisherman on board of a canoe
Osɔfo	-	Christian pastor (singular)
Okyir	-	It is an annual festival for Anomabo peop

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Fishing and fish trading constitute important livelihood strategies in the Central region and other settlements along the coastal stretch of Southern Ghana. In addition to the underlying economic logic of the fishing and fish trading businesses, the livelihood strategy has a certain sociocultural connotation in terms of the identity of the people actively engaged in it. For example, residents of Anomabo, a fishing enclave in the Central region of Ghana, believe that once they are born fishers, they can hardly do without fishing. This is also reflected by oral history in Ghana where they are known as the people who "speak fish, sleep fish, breathe fish, and walk fish". It is therefore not surprising that their enthusiasm in the fishing and fish trading is often likened to the Ghanaian adage, *'the tortoise which cannot move without the shell'*. This metaphoric expression which frequently pops up in discussion with my informants indicates how deeply connected the people are to the fishing activities. The fish is their life and their life is the fish.

The strong sociocultural attachment to the fishing livelihood among descendants of fishing communities is also clearly expressed in the quote by a 67 year old Ghanaian university professor who is a native of the fishing community Anomabo telling me; *"I am an academician by accident, a lawyer by divine intervention and a fisherman by profession"*. This epitomizes the ideology of fishing livelihood as an expression of cultural identity. If a man at his age with such academic prowess still thinks that, should there be any chance he will go into fishing, then it is not out of place to see children from his community actively engaging in fishing and fish trade like the tortoise and its shell at the expense of education.

Existing statistics shows that the trend of education now in the Central region of Ghana is contrary to history. Formal education in Ghana started from the Central region along the coastal stretch by the colonial masters. This is because the colonial activities¹ were taking place along the coast and the locals had to be educated to foster effective communication and better transactions between the Europeans and the locals. As a result Ghana's most well-endowed

¹ Colonial activities in the 17th and 18th Century in Ghana included slaves' trade and general mercantile activities between the locals and the Europeans along the Coast predominantly in the Central region of Ghana.

senior high schools such as Mfantipim School, Adisadel College, Wesley Girls, National College, St. Augustine's College, Holy Child College were established. It was no surprise that Central region of Ghana was termed as the "citadel of education" (from Ghanaian oral history). The region has produced brilliant scholars such as former United Nations (UN) Secretary General, Kofi Annan, former and late president of Ghana, His Ex. Pres. Prof. J.E.A. Mills and Dr. Kwagir Aggrey.

Paradoxically, some sociocultural issues are presently threatening the school enrolment which was seen to be enrooted in Central region and Anomabo community. Put differently, the light of education which once glowed from Central region to the other parts of Ghana is now dim – a historical process of dimming I will return to below where the conflict between education and fishing activities among the children of Anomabo has necessitated this project.

The statistical data I had from the head teachers of three primary schools within the community indicated that, there were 60 pupils² in class 5 from each school on average. Out of that number, it was only on Tuesdays which because there were no active fishing activities so attendance could be about 40 on the average. Nonetheless, for the rest of the days (Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays), none of the three schools could have attendance more than 20. Even according to the head teachers, those 20 registered were pupils from the nearby villages and the neighbouring settlements. This shows how enrolment is affected in this community as a result of both economic and structural factors. According to the head teachers, some of the pupils who might even come to school unceremoniously leave upon hearing the docking of the canoes at the shore.

In Anomabo, one will see the children³ always at the beach engaging in various forms of activities ranging from economic to recreational. Almost all the children especially the boys go to "hassle"⁴. The thronging of the children to the beach intensifies relatively upon the docking of the boats. Children usually have to suddenly leave school as most fishermen dock at the shore

² Pupil(s) as used in the Ghanaian context implies any school-going person (male or female, young or old) at the basic or the primary (first cycle) level of education.

³ In the course of this thesis I may use both children and youth interchangeably because I am considering the persons within the age brackets of 6 to 18.

⁴ Hassle as used here implies a situation where the school-going age children troupe to the shore aimed at getting fish through struggling and sell this in order to meet their immediate needs which are not met by their parents.

during school hours.⁵ Sam (class four pupil) posited when I asked him the exact time he and his colleagues leave the school to the shore to engage in their fishing business, *“Most fishermen dock at the beach in the afternoon... I stay in school in the mornings... Anytime we hear that the fishermen have come...we run away from school to the beach to work... we sometimes work in our uniforms when we are unable to escape school early”* (interview, 2013).

Though there is no active fishing on Tuesdays until 16:00, these children could still be found at the shore busily playing. They see the beach more recreational than being at school to be flogged by the teachers should they misbehave or get the class exercise wrong. Ebo (class 3 pupil) stated when I met him at the beach; *“I did not go to school today because my teacher always canes us when we get our class exercises wrong. Can’t you see how I am enjoying here with my friends? It is more fun at the beach than school.”*

This view expressed by the child clearly opposes the developmental vision of education being inherently good. As a result, this work will explore the various ways in which the sociocultural factors inhibit education.

Although in the course of the this chapter I will make a brief historical trajectories of educational and economic policies the government of Ghana has made in order to get all the school-going children back to school. All these remedial steps were pivoted on cost reduction because it was assumed that cost is the determinant of education, yet, as I have shown by statistics, there was no serious effect to these.

Interestingly, during the 2012 presidential election in Ghana, there erupted again the need to make school more affordable for the “poor” masses. The profound campaign message from the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) “Free Senior High School for all” became a mantra in the country. However, NPP lost the election, especially among the fisher folks. What could be the cause? From all indications, there may be several factors explaining why enrolment is low in the fishing communities. One thing we should not lose sight of is the fact that, economic issues are always bundled with sociocultural factors and the vice versa. As a result, this work will explore the factors which are in conflict with education. So, what do I mean by sociocultural factors?

⁵ Although I will treat pseudonym under ethical issues at the methodology section, all the names I used for the informants in this work are purely pseudonym.

For one, I think an individual's socialization plays a cardinal role in one's life world. According to Kerckhoff (1986), the individual's involvement in both the family and peer relationships serve as the potential source of formative experiences, experiences which can influence values opinions, skills and attitudes relevant to the formal education process. At the same time the individual is not viewed as a passive recipient of that influence. I believe that all social ties are reciprocal, and the individual's effect on the "other," whether peers or family member, is as great as the "other's" effect on the individual. There is some level of agency here where the children have choices to make from what their parents instil in them. They could also influence their peers or end up being influenced by their peers. The children at this point face multifaceted problems of choice as far as opinions, attitudes, etc. are concerned.

I see this influence from their peers as two-way traffic. It is either going to reinforce what their parents are socializing them into or weaken them. For more analytical purposes, I will discuss three arenas of conflictual influence that these children are exposed to within the community later in the work. They include the home, the shore and the school which all have certain roles to play in the formative stage and ultimately cast a reflection on this conflict.

One thing which is worth exploring is the concentration of the children at school. Though the children could be compelled to be at school, as result of factors such as the amount they intern losing for not hassling at the shore, some of the friends who might be playing at the shore with them and among others can have great influence on their level of concentration in the classroom. Bodily the child may be present in the class but his mind may be at the shore imaging what is going on there. This I think will not yield to any benefit for attending school.

Besides, the age at which the children start school is also important to be considered. This is because, at the formative stage, if the child grows up in the school, all the playing mates will be located within that arena. However, as the children grow up at the shore, they end up carving their world around such setting and such imagination is not easily done away with. It is as result of these problems that this work seeks to explore.

In this thesis, the analytical perspectives, research questions and the methodology will be treated in this chapter (1). The chapter 2 is devoted for the study area and the general life patterns of the people to provide over the view of the community. Political ecology and phenomenological

perspective will be used in chapter 3 and 4 to ascertain how the people relate to their environment, its embedded resources available to them and how power mediates in relation to their daily lives. I will therefore explore their fishing activities, its organization and seasonality, mode of sharing, recruitment of crew members, hierarchical structure of the fishing folks and their financial differentiations in chapter 3. In chapter 4, attention will be paid to their world views far as religion (multiplicity of religious outlook), fishing on Tuesdays and how they negotiate their uncertainties. In chapter 5 I will explore education, how they see it and their livelihoods. I will go further to examine their livelihood strategies and the possible uncertainties both parents and their children have with education. Chapter 6 will capture the structural factors acting behind the existing conflict between education and fishing. I will use both phenomenological, materialistic perspectives and the concept of intergenerational relations to analyze these structures. Chapter 7 will cater for the conclusion and some recommendations for future researches in the area.

1.1 ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES

Theories according to Creswell (2009) offer framework to find answers to questions. To explore the research questions, two perspectives and one concept are engaged.

Per the data collected, I am briefly resorting to political ecology, phenomenological perspectives, and the concept of intergenerational relations of Ghana to help explore the world views of the locals as far as their local knowledge in fishing, their perception about education and their livelihoods are concerned. Who knows if these could be the structural forces which may be fueling the ongoing conflict between education and fishing in the community?

Political ecology as a term was used in its neo-Marxist sense by the anthropologist Eric R. Wolf (1972) to signify the study of how power relations mediate human-environment relations. In her introductory essay in *Reimagining Political Ecology*, Biersack (2004) shifts this field of inquiry from what can be called the structuralism of neo-Marxist dependency/world systems-inspired political ecology to a political ecology sensitive to the challenges of constructivism and moderated by practice theory, giving more space to for agency. I therefore agree with Knudsen (2009) that, political ecology does not constitute a grand theory but instead designates an agenda or a field of study. It is rather a broad, comparative and interdisciplinary effort to study complex

interrelationships between ecological processes, natural resource management, environmental problems, socioeconomic marginalization and politics. This agenda, according to Knudsen (2009), is closely related to the emergence of politically potent environmental issues, and studies primarily aim at unravelling dynamics in individual cases while attending to a larger cultural, social and economic context.

As indicated above, political ecology has gone through a lot of transformations, changing itself from neo-Marxism of world system theory to perceptibly post-Marxism frameworks. Out of the numerous provocative theoretical orientations, for the benefit of this work I will like to mention one to help analyze this material. According to Biersack (2004), political ecology in its first generation and the cultural ecology that preceded it tended to think in terms of structures, systems, and interlocking variables and had little to say about actors and their agency. Today's political ecology inevitably engages to some degree with "practice theory" (Bourdieu 1977; Ortner 1984), a theory that attends to the constraints of structure but also to the indeterminacies of agency and events.

The phenomenological perspective will help bring to bear the real life situation of the locals and how they conceptualize socio-cultural phenomena in relation to their environment. This I believe will help determine the constraints to the education domain despite the cost relief interventions made by the successive governments in Ghana.

I will in this work explore the social embeddedness of knowledge among the fisher folks as far as their occupation is concerned against the background of what is considered as the objective or the universal view of education. A contextualized understanding of what makes possible, or obstructs, different kinds of knowledges and discourses about knowledges requires us to historicize traditions of knowledge. This historicizing made me highlight the expectations from a Ghanaian child in the course of this work, and the trajectory of education in Ghana. Great deal of knowledge is explicitly embodied, lived, local and embedded in biophysical and social contexts. However, I will use the concept of the intergenerational relations to bring out more of the internalized social orientations of the people.

Notwithstanding, the "way that the fishers know" about their work and livelihoods including education seem knotty to grasp as not being much explained by embodiment. Though theories of

embodied cognition may be of some help, much remains speculative. Knowledge although has its starting point in personal experience, there is a belief that, the condition of situatedness cannot be reduced to “being internal to the body” (Knudsen, 2009:84). Thus, the body per se cannot be the embodiment. [C]ulture and self can be understood from the standpoint of embodiment as an existential condition in which the body is subjective source or intersubjective ground of experience (Csordas 1999: 181). By virtue of this backdrop the life worlds of the people are going to be explored to elicit the constraints of their lives as fisher folks on education.

Intergenerational relations: To help better understanding of children’s work, the concept of intergenerational relations in Ghana I believe provides a formidable framework to probe the ideals of children’s material and social responsibility to their parents, siblings and kinsmen. The communal structure of the Ghanaian society is pivoted on the traditional value of intergenerational relations (Gyekye,1996). This embodies the social relations, attitudes and behaviour that exist between members of a family who share a social life and strive towards a common good. According to Tsai & Dzorgbo (2012) intergenerational relations can be defined as mutual and exchange relationships among members of a family, individuals or community.

Intergenerational relations are seen in diverse ways, including respecting, sharing, caring, showing solidarity and positive regards to one another. Within Ghanaian family system, everyone irrespective of age, sex or capability is culturally considered to engage in some acts of exchange, either materially or immaterially. According to Gyekye (1996), every member of the family and community acknowledges the prevalence of common, obligations, values and feels a sense of loyalty and dedication to the family and the community which is expressed through the willingness and readiness to improve the well-being of the family and the community. One of the generally acceptable beliefs underpinning intergenerational relations in Ghana is of the fact that every man is born into a society which existed before. This is reflected in and could be traced to an Akan maxim, “*When a baby descends from heaven, he/she descends into a society*”. This adage implies that man is both social and communal in nature. This portrays that no individual person can live in isolation or is self-sufficient. This indicates the essence for social relations in families and the community in general.

Currently, there are changes ongoing both globally, politically and economically besetting intergenerational relations in Ghanaian families (Nafstad, et al., 2013). In spite of these changes

that are putting pressure on intergenerational relations in Ghanaian families, children, parents and kinsmen are regularly honouring responsibility of sharing towards one another (Nukunya, 2003 & Tsai & Dzorgbo, 2012). With the concept of intergenerational relations and the other theories I think they may help explain part of the reasons why this conflict exists between education and fishing.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this thesis, I will look specifically look at firstly, what are the various aspects of fishing which keep the children from school. This question will help explore what I intend to discuss in both chapters 3 and 4 which include the aspects of fishing such as the organization of fishing, cycles of fishing, recruitment of crew on board of the of a boat, the mode of sharing the catch (fish) and the multiplicity of religious outlook within the community. Political ecology and phenomenological perspectives will be used in the course of the discussions.

The second question relates to how do people (parents) and their children (youth) see the domain of education. I will discuss education and their livelihoods in chapter 5 and the chapter 6 will capture the sociocultural forces which are acting as catalyst behind this conflict. These two chapters will help us answer the second question properly. Phenomenological theory and the concept of intergenerational relations will be the analytical perspectives to build the discussions on.

1.3. METHODOLOGY

1.3.1 COMMUNITY ENTRY

Who presents you and whom you initially get into contact with, what is commonly and colloquially known in anthropology as the figure of “the gatekeeper” will have great implications for how you are perceived in the community, and might not guarantee consent by others in the community (Curran, 2006: 210). On the 10th of July 2013, when it was exactly 11:04, I and a friend of mine landed on the “promised” land (Anomabo) where I was going to embark on the ethnographic study for 6 months. I was “lost”. Everything seemed strange; new milieu, yet I was beaming with zeal as being the first time in my life that I was also going to study people in their

daily lives and tell their story as an “anthropologist”. We strolled through the community with our backpacks without asking anyone anything. This friend I went with is also an MPhil (Sociology) student at University of Ghana-Legon. We have been friends for more than a decade. I told him about this work and he volunteered to go with me for the first one week of the feasibility study. We all come from the same place but one of his maternal uncle’s wife comes from Anomabo so through her we could both access information as well social networks.

Prior to that, a friend who hails from Anomabo had given me a gist of information about the place and the people. Besides, the community is along the main Accra-Cape Coast main road to which I normally passed whenever I travelled from Accra to Cape Coast and vice versa. I had also read a little about the people and the place.

We incidentally ended up at the shore after walking about 1 kilometer from the car station. The scene at the shore was very lively as one could identify all classes of persons; the youth (children), babies at the back of their mothers, school-going children, men and women engaging in different activities, sailors pulling their nets, fish mongers, and bystanders (like us for the first time) etc. The most common dress one will identify upon entering the shore is football jersey(s). These are worn by both fishermen and non-fishermen, male and female, young and old. This according to them makes them more sporty and agile for their fishing activities.

We stood behind one boat labeled MADINA⁶ 3 for some time (almost half an hour) keenly observing what was going on. Although, as pointed out above, both I and my friend could speak the language (Fante), surprisingly, we could not understand quite some terms they were saying especially when we were quite distanced from them until we drew further. When it was around 18:30, we left the shore to a guest house we rented for the one week feasibility studies.

⁶ MADINA is a name of a suburb in Accra (the capital city of Ghana) where the boat owner stays and plies his career. For easy identification, and as a tradition among the fishermen, every boat has a name, colours or paintings and flags depicting it, so the owner of these boats uses the name MADINA on all his boats.



Photo 2: A scene from shore showing people with varying missions

On the second day, we walked through the community to places such as the basic schools (Methodist Anglican and Catholic), markets, churches, the hospital, the police station and fetish shrines. We planned to spend most of the day at the shore to get to know what happens there as we saw part the previous day. I really enjoyed the sight of people heartily chatting, wading, swimming, babies crying, and the rushing waves with its cool breeze refreshing us.

We were at the shore at 09:20 on the second day and coincidentally met the docking of the boats which went for fishing in the night of the previous day. There were a lot of people than we saw at the first day. *“Look at their dressing, how they are gazing at the fish and the way they speak, I think they are strangers. They could be among those people who come around and look at the fish we catch. They hardly see fresh fish as these ones straight from the sea”*. This is the welcome message I eavesdropped from one of the ladies at the shore telling a colleague. This offered me the opportunity to draw more closely and I began engaging them informally as to their mission at the shore. We had a long conversation which brought to light so many interesting things. Prior to that, I told them our mission and they were so much ready to talk to us. *“I said it. They are not from here”*, the lady who passed the first comment I quoted above said that again.

From there I got into contact with one *osɔfo* incidentally at the shore who said he has been helping one particular group of sailors (MADINA 4) spiritually by praying with them for barely 3 years. The statement by the *osɔfo* will be explored deeper in chapter 4. I explained to him my mission and he subsequently introduced me to one uncle⁷ Fii who became my key informant. Uncle Fii was the deputy *bosun* of a boat (MADINA 4) of 26 *asankɔfo* by then, but before I left the field in December, 2013, he had become a *bosun* of a new canoe (MADINA 5).

The *osɔfo* mentioned to him my mission there and added that I attend school at Norway. This paved a great way for me and I was wholeheartedly received by all the people around. In fact, I can state emphatically, that mentioning Norway made the people accorded me much respect because only few according to them can study internationally (abroad); hence their willingness to support me support me achieve my purpose being there.

Uncle Fii immediately invited me to join them in Christian prayers as they were preparing to go fishing in the evening. He introduced all the 25 *asnkɔfo* on board of his boat to me after the prayer session including the *bosun* (uncle Red). Uncle Fii later introduced me to the rest of the *asnkɔfo* and non-fishermen, both male and female, people of different social class and statuses within the community. He took me to his house and introduced me to his entire household consisting of his wife, their four children and three other women (each with two children) who support the wife to process (smoke and store) the fish. Uncle Fii's wife also helped me with information pertaining to the fish mongers' activities, their social roles and the issues concerning the women in general within the community.

One among the non-fishermen who uncle Fii introduced me to was Nana. Nana is a mason with some level of education unlike uncle Fii and his colleague fishermen who are all illiterate. This man though hails from the town, yet stays most of his time in Accra working as a mason. Because of his little background in education, he moderated most of the issues I put forward in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) after I had outlined the questions and made him aware of the rationale behind every discussion. Besides, he also introduced me to some of his friends at the other neighbourhood in the community whom I had the opportunity to interact with on

⁷ Uncle is respectful term use for any elderly male within the community and generally in Ghana.

various issues which will be unfolded in detail as this thesis advances. As a result of those social ties, I was well integrated into the community.

1.3.2 METHODS

This thesis is based on my six-month ethnographic fieldwork embarked on from the period of July to December, 2013 among the fishing folks of Anomabo.

The predominant method used for the data collection was participant observation including other methods like personal interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to which I think will help ensure holistic representation of the data collected.

Besides, the participant observation method also brings to light Bourdieu's phenomenologically reflexive approach to participant observation (Bourdieu 1977). This is because, I mentioned in the introduction that one of the foci of this thesis is to explore the sociocultural forces within the community which serve as barriers to education. I think staying with the people and immersing oneself into their lives will assist bring out all the "invisible" forces to bear, once the value of custom is derived from practice. Invariably, it brings to mind the statement of the professor I quoted in the introduction. This I believe will ensure better analysis of the ongoing conflict between education and fishing among the children within the community.

To explain further, because I come from the area, I was able to surmount most of the challenges which might have been a frustration to any foreign researcher in understanding the social world of the fisher folks. I however believe that, being either an insider or outsider has its own advantages and disadvantages. As the foreign researcher will be at the position to question many of the cultural practices encountered; yet, the local researcher too will be able to understand the meaning of certain processes in local terms much better.

Knowledge, according to Haraway (1989:58), "is always partial sight and limited vision... the only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular". Participant observation is deemed as an effective tool for livelihood studies (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2001), as it helps in the contextualization of my work focusing on school-going children who instead of being at school are rather at the shore plying different life activities for their livelihoods.

According to Bernard (2001:136), “participant observation involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives.” Per my focus being on the practices in the social domain, I meticulously both observed and participated in many practical aspects of daily life. I was on the sea with the fishermen, helped in mending the fishing nets, carted fish from the boats, measured the fuel for them, smoked fish with the fish mongers, sold fish at the markets, etc. I was also at their community meetings, play grounds, festivals, funerals, churches, fetish shrines, schools and in the entire township. In practical terms, I was a “local”⁸ of Anomabo for the six-month period I was there.

As part of the participant observation, I had informal personal interactions with the people within the community. I most often than not went through the routine of introduction and sought consent prior to any form of discussion. A lot of such conversations were used in the collection of the data for the purpose of expanding and corroborating the understanding and the conception of youth into fishing instead of education. I also interviewed many people about their livelihoods strategies. I interacted with some at the shore, those in their houses, at the markets, at churches, the *abosomfo* in their shrines, teachers and pupils at the school settings, taxi drivers, and etc.

All the interview sections went smoothly and uninterrupted, except the women at the market who were intermittently called upon by their customers as they came to purchase their fish, but that was very normal with respect to the prevailing environment. Notwithstanding, this did not affect the process significantly as I stayed very focused on my questions and ensured that we comprehensively exhausted all planned questions for that material moment.

To complement the methods for the data collection, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was considered as one of the vital methods for exploring the informants’ views and experiences (Kitzinger, 1995). The unambiguous use of group interaction amidst individuals with similar characteristics enhanced the discussion and brings to what is being sought for.

⁸ Everyone in Anomabo is considered local provided you come from the place. In addition, any migrant who has stayed with them more than a year or more but the one has adapted to their socio-cultural practices and behaves as one of them is accorded the status of a local.

FGD according to Madriz (2000), is able to bring out information that other methods cannot give. It is able to unearth areas of understanding that often remain unsearched by the usual face-to-face interview or questionnaire. The informants here stood for resources upon which the members drew information. This urged the informants to motivate each other to verbally coin their thought and make observations which had not been mentioned in the former individual interviews.

This method is also known for its interactive nature as a method for data collection as it holds the potential to bring forth open and emotional opinions from the participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As participants were least restrained in the group it aided breaking the ice for bashfulness in the discussion of issues which enmeshed the sharing of discrediting information.

In all, I had six focus group discussion meetings with my informants. Two were organized for the children, the first one was on the topic “*why are you into fishing and not school?*” and the second was on “*How do you see education in your daily lives?*” In the first one, I had 11 of them of which all were males (guys), while the second they were 12, 6 females and 6 males. The mixed group in the second was aimed at ensuring diversity and deeper understanding of male and female perceptions about education within the community. The mixture was purposed to ensure that the group members state their experiences in a manner that disassociate itself from the bossy male cultural constructions of issues in Ghana (Kitzinger, 1995).

With the *asankɔfo*, I organized 4 focus group discussions and in all they were 11 in number averagely. The topics were; “*why are the children into fishing and not school*”, “*why are they a lot of asɔfo and abosomfo in their community?*”, “*why are they (asankɔfo) having big family sizes*”, and “*their livelihoods and livelihood strategies especially during the lean season of fishing.*” There were very important issues that ensued as a result of these discussions which will be unraveled as the work progresses.

In all the 6 FGD were organized and I ensured that the number did not exceed 12 or less than 6, which fell within 6-12 as considered very appropriate for FGD (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2007; Willig, 2008). Amidst the group discussions, I followed up on the previous conversations with them in the individual interviews to authenticate them.

The FGD for the children were held at two different places. The first one was organized at a place called “*Clap for Jesus camp*”⁹ which is an open hut built by the youth themselves. The second one for both sexes was organized at the premises of the head *osɔfo* of the Church of Pentecost after permission had been sought with the help of uncle Fii who is a member of this church.

However, with all the four FGDs with the *asankɔfo*, we had 3 of them at their parliaments¹⁰ and one at uncle Fii’s house. In all the discussions, Nana (the mason mentioned above) moderated, as I sat, listened, writing and recording (audio). In all these, the FGD lasted two hours each.

All the methods discussed above are used altogether to appreciate a process since only a holistic knowledge can explain the internal and external articulation of a system (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992).

1.3.3 CHOICE OF LANGUAGE

Knowledge of the local language enables richer and more textured data to be collected and generates greater opportunities to interact and join the company of others in the research community (Devereux, 1994). This implies that, the lack of local language can lead to inappropriate or even invalid data and can generate feelings of frustration and low morale.

Once the approach to this study maintains that social reality is constructed and negotiated through language (Willig, 2008), I was left with no option than to resort to a language my informants in the study were very familiar, cozy with and felt easy using it. With the exception of the school teachers and selected few from the other part of the community (elite), who preferred to blend English and Fante language, I communicated with my informants in *Fante*. I

⁹ Besides the closed huts, the youth and this time round including the elders come together to form social supporting groups which are organized around the kin ties, soccer club supporters, and among others which they call such groups as camps. Every camp has an open hut where they rest under it, especially in the afternoons. There are several camps within the community so for easy identification, each camp has a name. Such is the one I used here; “Clap for Jesus”. There are others like Champions, *Ateasefo* (Survivors), Warriors, *Ahenfo* (Royals), The Blues (this one shows that they are Chelsea FC supporters), etc. In fact, the etymology of these names I was told they just picked any name the deem fit for them.

¹⁰ These are huts which are not fenced with benches where the fishermen gather to host meetings, play games, listen to news via radio, debate on issues, eat, drink, dance, etc., when they are less busy. Sometimes, some of them even pass the night there.

was very meticulous about my role as the researcher and a likely feeling of mediocrity among the respondents.

1.3.4 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Base on the fact that this work is a qualitative study, all procedures that were embarked on in the study investigation were comprehensively and scrupulously documented to guarantee evenness and truthfulness. The underlying fact is to meet the criterion for qualitative studies which states that to ensure reliability of results there should be thorough documentation and report of all processes used in the study (Opare-Henaku, 2006).

Through the period of the data collection, meetings and discussions, intermittent and follow up questions were used to determine and validate the informants' responses. For the assurance of authenticity of the findings from the study from the point of view of the researcher and the informants, detail debriefing meetings were held for all the informants after every data collection meeting (Creswell, 2003).

1.3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical issues in relation to ethnographic study is about building mutually beneficial relationships with people you meet in the field and about acting in a sensitive and respectful manner (Scheyvens, et al, 2003).

For the respect for the independence of the participants and the protection of the children in the study, informed consent was put in place. The individual consent was aimed to ensure that participant come to the full awareness of the study and to also safeguard them that their participation in the study was voluntary (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005).

All mechanisms were put in place for the entire study to ensure that prior to any participant giving any kind of information; the one understood the content and the need of the study.

Confidentiality of the participants was assured in the course of the study. Efforts were put in place to ensure that anything that could reveal their identity as a result of any private information they reveal to me was curbed.

Although I have pictures in this work, however, no individual picture was used except that of the *abosomfo* and the child (Yaw) who displayed what he had through hassling. Even that, agreement had to be reached with the parents before I could use them here and I ensured also that nothing in this work derails their reputations. The rest of the pictures are group activities which they agreed to be used in my work and do not express any person's opinion on a matter.

Most importantly, all the names of the informants as used in the study are purely based on pseudonym. I randomly picked them before any data was collected. Some of the names of the informants were coined per the day the of the interview session. For instance, Fii is a name of a male born on Friday, Kweku, male born on Wednesday, Esi, female born on Sunday, Akua, female born on Wednesday, etc. All these are purely Akan (*Fante*) names in Ghana. Even in the course of the FGDs, participants were made to use pseudonyms.

1.3.6 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

At the initial stages, I was seriously misconstrued for a government official in some of the informal conversations. A proportion of the informants I approached were not willing to participate in the study as they claimed that most often the information they volunteer to provide to researchers is not used for anything. They saw the participation in this one as not anything different from the previous ones and as a result my work was seen, initially, to be a waste of time. The only option I was left with was to be extremely fortitudinous and keep on explaining the purpose of my study and status as a student.

There were countless occasions my informants requested money prior to their participation. They reckoned me as wealthy person owing to the fact that I was coming from an abroad university. To the greatest extent, some of the informant (the fishermen) asked me if I could even help them purchase a new boat. I endeavoured very hard to convince them to believe that I was just a student on a mission.

Yet, as I “hanged out and hanged in” with them, some (majority) of the people came to see me as a student who was only on a mission and with no ulterior motive and what I think distinguished me from the local were my backpack and the field notes' pad which were always with me.

1.4 CONSTITUTION OF GHANAIAIAN CHILD

For better understanding of the meaning of childhood in Ghana, it is therefore important to fathom the position of the child (youth) within their families and communities. Children in Ghana according to Twumasi-Danso (2009), have the responsibility to respect and obey their parents and adults - a view buttressed by the Africa Charter on the Rights and Welfare (1999) of the child. This particular Charter obliges children to show profound respect to all adults.

A great deal of importance is put on what is termed 'respect' to the extent that every child is scared to be engrossed in any form of activity which could be regarded as tantamount to insubordination. It is therefore accepted that involvement in any contemptible act could attract curses from their parents. This is expressed in Christine Oppong's profound statement (1973: 38) "*a child who does not obey his/her father suffers illness and death as a result of father's curses*".

In addition, children are subjected to punitive measures when they disobey and show gross disrespect to their parents and any other grown up person within their community. Twum-Danso (2009) mentioned that, some of the punitive measures include parents putting water up the nose of their kids and sometimes too they put fresh pepper into their anus. In addition, it is also argued that a good flogging usually awaits the child who disobeys or disrespects. Children are therefore made to observe the strict practices of respect and obedience so that they will not bring discredit the name of their families.

According to Boakye-Boaten (2006), Ghanaian children are made to work. For the purpose of learning and earning money, adults involve children in work related activities for such purposes. Nukunya (2004:111) sees early engagement in activities of their families as "an indigenous instrument that is used to integrate children into the social fabric and economic life of their families with little effort". As a result children undertake adults' roles early in life on the sea, farm, etc,. According to Mensah-Bonsu & Dowuna-Hammond (1996), as tradition demands, children are expected render support to their parents in their businesses.¹¹

¹¹ There are additional frameworks that place great onus on children to work help their families and communities. For instance, The Africa Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child (1999) resonates with that law of the 1981 Africa Charter on Human and People's Rights (The Banjul Charter) that all individuals, including children have responsibilities towards their families, community, society and state. The provisions in the law about children's responsibilities according to Van-Bueren (1995) should help people understand the potential economic and social importance children could render to society.

Children in Ghana according to Twum-Danso (2009), begin to take up obligations very early in life. Normally, in the midst of these early stages, responsibilities are apportioned per their capability, size, and gender of the child. For example, in fishing communities, boys normally work at the shore while the girls sell at the market. The children's responsibilities compound and become detailed as they advance in age (Nsamenang, 2004).

According to Twum-Danso (2009), children mentioned their involvement in work in with respect to the contributions they offer to their family households. There is therefore a fervent accordance of work by children. It is therefore not unusual to find children who are actively involved in various fields and contributing to their quota to their personal and family up keep.

1.5 HISTORICAL TRAJECTORIES OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN GHANA

Education has gone through series of policies since the 1990s in Ghana all for purpose of ensuring high enrolment especially among the fishing communities. I would like to throw a little light on government policies for those decades in order to flaunt this rupture between education and fishing.

In 1995, the government of Ghana introduced the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). It was in pursuance of the idea that cost was the main factor keeping most children out of school (Akyeampong, 2007).

However, schools continued to charge maintenance fees as the funds from the FCUBE were inadequate for schools to run their programs. Ten years under the line of the introduction of the FCUBE, school attendance and school dropout unabatedly continued to be great concerns for the government (Ananga, 2007).

In order to realize its objective of Education For All (EFA) by 2015, the government of Ghana in 2005, introduced a "Capitation Grant Scheme" to replace all fees charged by the schools. The capitation grant pulled both children who had never enrolled in school and those who had

According to Twum-Danso (2004:423), the article 31 of the Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children highlights the duties which are supposed to be undertaken by the children. The following quotation gives the summary; *"every child has the responsibility towards his family and society, the state and other legally recognized communities including the international community"*

dropped out. Conversely, low enrolment and dropout rates never stopped to be high in some basic schools, especially schools in the fishing. This low enrolment and high dropout rates breathed threat on the achievement of the government's "golden goal" of universal basic education for all by 2015 (Akyeampong, 2007).

To further address the challenges posed by enrolment and dropout problems in the poor, fishing and farming communities to the EFA agenda, the government of Ghana introduced another policy, "School Feeding Program" in 2006. It was merely a year after the implementation of the capitation grant. The motive of the school feeding program was to increase school enrolment, attendance and retention.

From official statistics, 85 per cent of children of school-going age attended to school in 2001 and between that period and 2006; overall enrolment was said to have reached 90 per cent (MOESS, 2007). Nonetheless, Ministry of Education Youth and Sports amidst 2007, reported that while enrolment in Ghana has improved remarkably in recent years, one great problem looming has been high levels of dropout (MOESS, 2007).

This brings to mind what the sociologists have argued, namely that economic issues cannot be disconnected from sociocultural issues. Also low enrolment per the government of Ghana's definition may be caused by economic factors. Despite all the promising interventions, no serious headway has been made as far as school enrolment in fishing communities are concerned. The question therefore is; what is the cause of this low school enrolment among the children of this fishing enclave? This brings to the fore the need for my study to explore the questions above. Is it indeed the case that the tortoise cannot move without the shell?

According to statistics, the attendance and enrolment rates among children in the fishing communities are below the national average (Mensah et al, 2006; GSS¹², 2005). 64.2 per cent of people employed in fishing have never been to school (Overå, 2011; GSS 2005). The greater percentage who had been to basic school dropped out, and were unable to read and write. Can the drop out still be attributed to cost factor?

According to Mensah et al. (2006) dearth of appreciation of the value for education, high demands for unskilled labour and lack of finances were cited as the main constraints that tended

¹² GSS stands for Ghana Statistical Service which is responsible for all official statistical data in Ghana

to hinder fishers and farmers from sending their children to school. They also mentioned that early recruitment and long years of apprenticeship for succession in fishing as additional factors that contributed to poor school enrolment and attendance.

This thesis will probe the general validity of these claims and explanations. Are they, for instance, in keeping with dominant sociocultural factors and do these invariably inhibit education in such communities?

CHAPTER TWO

STUDY AREA

Anomabo is situated in the Mfantseman West Municipal which is located along the Atlantic coastline of the Central region of Ghana and extends from latitudes 5° to 5°20' North of the Equator and longitudes 0°44' to 1°11' West of the Greenwich Meridian, stretching for about 21 kilometers along the coastline and for about 13 kilometers inland and constituting an area of 612 square kilometers. The Municipal capital is Saltpond to which Mankessim and Anomabo are the additional principal towns within the Municipality (CIA Factbook, 2007).

Economically, the inhabitants are mainly employed through fishing activities, trading and farming. However, fishing is the mainstay income generating activity in the community. Conversely, farmland in the area is unproductive and as a result, those who practice farming are very few. These agricultural activities are practiced on subsistence level. The fishing is done by the locals, especially those living close to the coast.

Besides fishing, there are others who undertake petty trading by selling in shops, stalls and kiosks; others selling oranges or homemade cakes, bread, doughnut display on tables and others running errands with, etc. Anomabo has a shop where fishing equipment are sold, 3 drug stores, 1 petrol station for only premix fuel for the boats, and 2 flour and corn mills.

There are masons, carpenters, plumbers, auto electricians, fitters, tailors, taxi cab drivers etc. These are, then, alternative occupations for both men and women but the number of people making living on other activities other than fishing fluctuates with success of the fishing seasons and the purchasing power of the *asnkɔfo* and fish mongers, which above all is the principal occupation of the people.

The poverty level in Anomabo, and for that matter, Central region is considered the highest in Ghana owing to its slow growth (Agyei-Mensah, 2006; Boakye & Opoku-Agyeman, 2008). Agyei-Mensah (2006) opined that, the only region in southern Ghana that has recorded increase in the incidence of poverty is Central region (2006).

The predominant language (dialect) is Akan (*Fante*) which is widely spoken in Ghana even among the non-Akan tribal groups. I belong to this tribe and can speak the language fluently. Some can speak English language especially the elite¹³.

The town is supplied with electricity from the main grid (hydro electrical power). There is clean water flowing through the pipelines. In addition, boreholes are available for those who cannot afford the pipe borne water for their household chores because the pipe borne water is sold and those having them in their houses pay monthly bills. There are also 5 Nurseries, 6 Primary, 6 Junior High Schools and 2 Senior High Schools in the community. This might sound very impressive, but according to some “unfounded” statistics I had and my own observations, those of school-going age that attend school within this community is less than 20%.

According to a survey conducted by Committee in Defense of the Revolution (CDR) in September 1990, the adult literacy rate was only 21.7%. This is not an unusual situation in fishing communities in Ghana: In 1976, the literacy rate for the population in Cape Coast on average was 57%, whilst for the fisher community within Cape Coast it was 15% for men and 13% for women (Mansvelt, Beck & Sterkenburg, 1976). Sanitary facilities are available, yet in very dilapidating states which had diverted the people’s preference to easing themselves at the beach, either at the dawn or dusk. Other social amenities include a hospital (which caters for the community and the surrounding villages) and a police station. Anomabo has more than 15 churches among which are Methodist, Roman Catholic, Pentecost, Anglican, New Apostolic, Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC), Saviour, The Twelve Apostle with mosque and about 8 fetish shrines.

Because *asankɔfo* like entertainment especially in the midst of the lean season and their normal time offs, there are numerous drinking bars and “video theaters” showing mostly Ghanaian and the other African movies, with a fraction of action movies from Hollywood.

The people are also notable soccer fans. I realized that on Saturdays and Sundays whenever there were foreign football matches, especially when there was clashes in the English Premier League

¹³ In Ghana, anyone who speaks and write the English language is considered as an elite person. This is because English language is seen as the queen’s (Queen of British) language so the respect accorded to the queen is equally given to anyone who speaks the language in Ghana. IS THIS TRUE? IT SEEMS QUITE FAR-FETCHED TO SAY THAN AN ENGLISH-SPEAKER ENJOYS THE SAME RESPECT AS THE QUEEN...

(EPL) involving, Liverpool/Arsenal, Chelsea/Manchester United or at La Liga (Spanish Premier League), where Real Madrid FC clashes with Barcelona FC then anyone who wanted to be part of the game must be there 2 hours prior the kick-off. I mention these football clubs not only because they have a great supporter base among the fisher folks but, as we will see, this influences their social organization and processes of identification. All the video-theatres would be packed to the brim with the late comers standing outside listening to commentaries emanating from the loud speakers placed outside the video theaters. It is not out of place at all to meet the fishermen (both old and young, including females) anywhere anytime and the only attire one will see on them is the jersey of one's football club.

2.1 THE SETTING OF THE COMMUNITY

The Anomabo town is divided into two distinct geographical areas which at the same time divides the town into variously ranked social orders. Other neighbouring settlements along the coast which include Aweano mpoano, Annkanyi, Abe Ekyir, Kyama, Tuntuminim, Feli, Krom mpoano, Etsewa mpoano, Baka ano, and Castle Ekyir are inhabited mainly by the fisher folks. Upon arrival, the first objects to set eyes on are the numerous circular fish smoking ovens (so-called chorkor smokers), squeezed into all open spaces. At the zenith of the fishing season, one can hardly breathe owing to the whiff emitting from the fish processing activities. The vicinity is widely interspersed with open gutters where they throw the water used to process the fish into and as a result makes the place very smelly.



Photo 3: The milieu for fish processing with firewood and "chorkor smokers"

Besides, these gutters serve as the abode for mosquito breeding and invariably give people malaria – something I also learnt as where I stayed for the first month for the fieldwork was so close to one of these numerous gutters.

Upon my investigation, the total population of the school-going children within this area (along the shore) is about 800. Almost all of them are into fishing activities with the exception of some few who manage to complete or dropout at Junior High School level. There are few especially among the women who under take apprenticeship such as seamstress and hairdressing.

One thing which makes this vicinity unique is how the huts¹⁴ are scattered all over the place. These huts are built purposely to serve as shelter for these guys especially in the night. The family structures weaken during the lean season of fishing because money becomes very scarce. More seriously also, their large family sizes make accommodation a problem for their youth especially the boys in the house to pass the night. Besides, some of the youth also prefer to sleep outside the family house owing to the fact that they consider themselves matured enough to find their own shelter because they cannot have their girlfriends with them under the same roof with their parents. We will see more to this when I discuss the household compositions in chapter 5.

¹⁴ The huts are structures erected by using coconut logs, roofed and enclosed with boards and coconut fronds which serve as shelter for the average of 10-20 guys especially in the nights.

These huts are scattered all over this particular vicinity. According to one of my informants, it is in such structures that they lure the girls into and have sex with which leads to what one might term as “unwanted pregnancies”. The huts are deemed as their complete shelter. There are also open sheds (unclosed huts) with benches (chairs) which serve as resting places for the *asankɔfo* in their time off and also serve as their parliaments. Unlike the formal parliament, this one has no speaker or leader neither do they formalize activities there. Everything is informal and sometimes very individualistic. They gather there when they are off duty or when someone has nothing to do. As their numbers are increasing under these huts, issues crop up. The number of *asankɔfo* who congregate at these places ranges from 6 to 30 on the average. Each will give his opinion on the issue being discussed and in the course it they divide on opinion. A leader incidentally will emerge and acts as the speaker.

This leader at the heat of the moment assumes a neutral position in order to moderate the discussions. Those who consent to each other’s view see themselves in one side and upon counting will therefore be assumed as either the majority or the minority depending on the numerical strength, hence, the name parliament. Topics discussed ranges from soccer, politics, economics, social problems etc. These issues are sometimes picked from the news items from the local TV or radio stations in Ghana. Besides the debates, they engage in activities like cooking, drinking, dancing, singing, playing games like draught, “*ludu*” marbles, etc. Sometimes too, formal meetings are held there especially concerning their fishing activities.

Contrary, the other half of the community which is at the right side of the Accra-Takoradi main road has a completely different social and spatial organization. This place looks quite organized with respect to their house arrangements and the environment in general. This neighbourhood settlement include Estates, New Site, Bethlehem, Asomdwee Ekurase, Hwemaemmpo, Adaano etc. The names of these neighbourhoods even tell it all as one informant mentioned; “*even their place names are exotic. They are the elite*” (interview, 2013). Interestingly, some of the place names are in English which tells tentatively the caliber of people who inhabit there just as the informant was implying. The people residing at these areas are mostly in the cities plying their

careers and come home occasionally, especially during their *Okvir*¹⁵ festival. Also, the funerals of their kin's men most often times bring them back home and others sometimes also come to spend the weekends.

Besides, the people inhabiting these places are seen as the "elite group" and form the "upper" class of the social stratum within the community. One of the things which distinguish them from the fisher folks is how almost all their children are being enrolled in school.

This is a case I will look into it; why the children from this part of the community are found in the domain of education (chapter 5 and 6) and not so for the children of the fishing folks meanwhile they all live in the same community. I think it goes beyond economic issues as I demonstrated by tracing the historical trajectories of education Ghana pulling out all the cost reduction policies the Ghana government had embarked on. Could it be considered that the life world of the children of the fisher folks is all about the sea they have been orientated towards? May be it is drawing our attention to the pervasive tortoise and shell belief which is more sociocultural than economic.

This assertion of disparity between these two groups about education was confirmed by the head teachers I interviewed both at the Methodist, Anglican and Roman Catholic Basic schools in the community. There was an indication that, from the basic level, that is, from class one to class three, roughly, all the children from the community attend school, but as they progress those from the fishing community drop out drastically. Attitudes of the children of the fisher folks towards school are not as serious as their colleagues from the other side of the community. They will be in the class learning but the moment it will be hinted that the boats have arrived, before the teachers would realize, they had jumped through the windows and gone. This statement by the head teachers will be reiterated in chapter 5.

2.1 THE PATTERN OF LIFE AMONG THE PEOPLE

There are patterns of behaviors that are worth noting among the people. Some of which I would like to discuss below.

¹⁵ This is the annual festival which comes off the first Friday of every of September. This brings home all those who hail from the Anomabo community including foreigners and other dignitaries in and outside Ghana. The period of celebration expands from Friday to the Wednesday of the following week.

2.1.1 OVER BEARING OF CHILDREN

One remarkable thing about Anomabo is how the place is densely populated. In one of our Focus Group Discussions, it came out that because fishing is a labour intensive venture, more people are needed to help.

The old *asankɔfo* (those within the age bracket of 35-60) shared with me their family size and averagely each has about seven (7) children. Five out of the eleven (11) men gathered have eight (8) children each. Three of them have six (6), two have five (5) and one has three (3), while some are still counting (expectant fathers). Ironically, they are very wealthy in numbers but empty in finances.

There were other factors they recounted which also cause the over bearing among them. Upon our discussions, some expressed their loathsome perceptions about the use of contraceptives. Paradoxically, their wives go for the family planning methods when they have already gotten about six to seven children. The reason been that, there are a lot of untold health implications associated with the contraceptives. Some also opined that, their wives are so ignorant that, they could hardly even read their own menstrual cycles to alert them to abstain from sex during the ovulation periods to avoid “unplanned” pregnancies.

Their large family sizes are great worrying according to them sometimes, especially in the midst of the lean season. During this period, the few who want their wards to be in school find it very difficult to provide for the children so the only alternative is for the children to drop out of school.

Ekua (19 year old lady) mentioned, *“I would have been able to continue my education when I came to Anomabo from Accra after my auntie’s ailment. However, we were seven and I was the eldest, so I had to drop out and start working because there was not ample money to support us.”*

2.1.2 CLOTHING

I was thrilled to notice that the best and most ubiquitous costumes for the fisher folks in Anomabo are football jerseys. According to uncle Fii (key informant), fishing is a sporting activity and very competitive so by putting on the jerseys, they become literally equal to those on the soccer pitch. They even have a “league” where at the end of the fishing year, winners are

declared based on those who had the biggest cash. The results are cumulated and finally declared by the *krakye* of the group. The *asankɔfo* who emerge winners receive cash awards from the canoe owner. This indirectly motivates them to work harder.

They wear all sorts of jerseys ranging from local to international soccer teams but predominantly, the replicas of the European teams. Every individual wears his favourite team's jersey. The common ones include Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester United, Real Madrid, Barcelona, Inter Milan, Bayern Munich, etc. There exists only a group of *asankɔfo* who wear one jersey (Barcelona); hence, they are called "Barca Group" which makes them so popular in the community.

Each person owns more than a jersey; both the top and the short pants especially the youth among them. After all fishing activities, they wash down and again they put on their jerseys. This has boosted the marketing of jerseys in the community. Even the very young ones who do not go for fishing also wear them. Wearing of jerseys has almost become synonymous to fishing.



Photo 4: Fishermen gallantly dressed in their football jerseys going to push a canoe into the sea



Photo 5: A portion of market scene displaying football jerseys

2.1.2 GENDER DIFFERENTIATIONS

There are clear lines of distinction of masculinity and femininity or what should be in most fishing community like Anomabo is not exclusive. The metaphoric representation of the sea as a masculine domain, while the gender division of labour where men fish and the women process the catch, is common in many part of the world (Acheson 1981; Cole 1991; Firth 1984; Gerard 1987; Neis 1995; Palsson 1989; Robben 1989; Stirrat 1989). As a result it is normally thought of in terms of land/sea, and female/male dichotomies (Strathern, 1980).

It has become more or less “natural” that men are responsible for the risky and physically involving fishing endeavours at the sea, while the women take care of the children, stay at home, or embarking on all the required duties to reproduce society and the daunting task of converting the fish into a marketable and edible commodity.

According to Rappaport (1968), the dichotomy brings out the interdependency of each other, thus, functional aspects of both variables as among the Tsembaga and the other Maring speaking groups in New Papua Guinea, as the women and the children take care of the pigs and nurse the garden, while the men hunt and engage in ritual battles. To imagine a fishing community without

the labour of women on the land, the “ground crew” (Gerrard 1987), is difficult. Even in the high-tech fisheries operated from industrial trawlers in international waters, the fishermen depend on their wives who stay at home and give birth, wash, cook and wait for the days or months when “fathers come home” (Overå, 1998;9).

For the fisherman who is always either on the sea or at the shore spending so much time with his working colleagues, it will be nonetheless, difficult to lead a family life and maintain a social position on the land. Thus, the image of the fisherman’s wife as “mother as ‘anchor’ for others” (Massey 1994:180), expressed in titles like *to work and weep* (Nadal-Klein & Davis 1988), *Those who stayed behind* (Norwegian TV documentary), *Not drowning but waving* (a book title), has gained definitely a global character. According to Overå (1998;8), Ghanaian “fish mummies” in many ways live up to these images.

In Ghana (and Anomabo for that matter), women have totally monopolized small-scale, large-scale, local and long-distance domestic fish trade (Christensen 1977; Nukunya 1989; Ninsin 1991; Lawson and Kwei 1974; Odotei 1991). Women are connected with trade to the extent that the “market mummy” has a symbol of the Ghanaian industrious woman; a national symbol- a colourful motive on postcards- to love for their distributive services and provision of ingredients for the cooking pot, but also envied and hated for their abilities to accumulate wealth and for their alleged selfishness and manipulative powers (Robertsen 1984; Clark 1994).

The stories about source of market women’s power to attract customers through the magic of scorpions or snakes kept in their private parts or hidden in their market stalls (Bannerman-Richter 1982) and the danger of witchcraft often in the markets (Masquelier 1993) are many. The feminine space of the market place looks very risky place. Kwame, a fisherman informant said this when we were at the shore discussing issues of uncertainties, *“The women in these markets are all using ‘juju’ (charms). My wife had to stop selling in these markets because she had been bewitched several times...no man will ever compete them in the market.”*

Interesting, because the men almost sell everything to their wives at very moderate prices, they pretend to leave the entire family up keeping at the care of the women. This is because the women control the family’s income.

2.2 THE GENERAL OBSERVATION

As per their daily routine, I realized that they live very simple life with respect to their dressing, feeding, shelter and among others. They live in both mud and concrete houses roofed with both iron sheets and palm fronds.

They are physically hardy who enjoy working outdoors , and extremely proud of their identity as fishermen which they will sometimes emphasize even when fishing activities take up only a small portion of their total working time each year. Thus, John B. Gatewood and McCay (1988:126) conclude from their study of job satisfaction among New Jersey fishers: “Fishermen derive a considerable “satisfaction bonus” from their work. Fishing is not merely means to an end, but is intrinsically rewarding Fishing is not just a livelihood; it is a way of live”.

Another identifiable feature of these people is their specialized and intimate knowledge of the marine ecosystem they exploit. Their level of “know-what” and “know-how” as I mentioned earlier is of great depth yet they have to rely on “spiritual personalities” (*asɔfo* and *abosomfo*) in order to negotiate the uncertainties in their career for success.

When it comes to formal education, however, they are very disadvantaged compared with the nonfishers. This has been the part of the reason why they are often held in low esteem by their neighbours and even among themselves.

Also, their propensity for risk taking and their relatively unsettled lifestyle also contribute to the issue of low esteem, as do certain other characteristics for example, their supposed disinclination for deferred gratification, such as savings, investment, alcoholism and sex.

To couple with, they are easily identify with the use of profane language and tendency for aggressive behavior, brawling and physical violence. Because they are every now and then pulling their nets in and out of their canoes, they are very muscular and always want to display their strength so there is “macho” attitude and behaviour which attract a lot of criticism from the nonfishers and even among themselves. Their youth are naturally aggressive and daring but jovial at times too.

There is also high incidence of alcoholism among the fishermen. Just along the shore, I counted not less than 6 drinking spots all selling alcoholic beverages. In this community, the only

activities the nonfishers see the fishermen engaged in are those associated with chatting, relaxation, leisure, play, arguments, drinking alcohol and recreation and not work especially in the midst of the lean season of fishing where there are no serious activities at the shore.

The phenomenon of high birth rate among the fisher folks cannot be look down upon. They are poor economically, yet very wealthy in human capacity, i.e, social capital. Averagely, those that I had encounter with via informal interviews, Focus Group Discussions and observation, each can boast of 6 children. They believe that human capacity plays cardinal role in the “artisanal” fishing industry so everybody considers it a priority to have a large family size. Their children are seen as their wealth, paradoxically, their upkeep is left to destiny to determine. However, they outlined some other factors which are seen as unfortunate causes of this overbearing of children among them which I just mentioned above.

With respect to feeding, nutrition is something never thought of as far as the fisher folks are concerned. They eat anything they lay their hands on. In those days I was with them on the field, the brunch they took was *gari* and octopus with coconut sometimes. When quantify as far as the nutritional value is concerned, is all carbohydrate and fat (oil) with little animal protein. As a result, there is the tendency of stunted growth among the children though they fish.

From the foregoing discussions, it could be infer that, over bearing of children is one of the core factors that oils the wheels of poverty within the community. It was obvious in the community that, those who are burnt on educating their children have very small family sizes and owing to that can take proper care of them. It is as a result of the need for financial support that compels the girl-child especially into begging and ultimately results in pregnancies. This is one of the causes for dropping out of school among the girls. This is the over view of the community where I stayed for my six-month fieldwork.

CHAPTER THREE

ORGANIZATION OF FISHING

3.1 CYCLES OF FISHING

Fishing, when thought of as an occupation or means of livelihood, evokes a variety of images in people's minds. For some it is a romantic image, such as Hemingway's "Old man and the sea" (McGoodwin, 1990:7). For others it is a small, rundown fleet of ragtag trawlers, sitting at their berths in an urban seaport. Fishing is often big business, of course, and for many urbanities big business is mainly what comes to mind a fleet of agile tuna seiners on the hunt in the tropical waters, or a huge factory ship plowing through heavy seas in the cold and remote northern ocean, burly fishermen at stern, dressed in heavy rubberized slickers, hauling back nets full of fish, dumping the catch on the deck, sorting it, and sending it down chutes to be processed, packaged, and quick-frozen below. For most people, however, fishing connotes something decidedly smaller in scale a fleet of small work boats scattered across a bay, for instance, several dozen canoes outrigger pulled up on the beach next to vacation hotel in an exotic, tropical country (McGoodwin, 1990)

This chapter discusses the organization of fishing in relation to annual cycles of fishing, the benefits and challenges each phase poses, and its general impacts on the livelihoods of the people. The methods adapted at each season will be analyzed to bring to light their level of "knowledge" in the field of fishing, including how the *asankɔfo* are selected for a new boat. In this chapter I argue that, although fishing among these people has no root in formal education, the selection of *asankɔfo* is based on knowledge, and it is as a result of this knowledge that enable them to vary their fishing methods in different seasons. I will also the mode of sharing the catch which as result leads to the financial differentiation among them. Additionally, the hierarchical structure of the fisher folks will be considered. In these discussions inspiration would be drawn from phenomenological perspective to help understand the world life of these people. This section will help us answer the first question of the thesis as what aspects of fishing that displace children from school.

3.2 HOW IS FISHERIES TO BE STUDIED?

To begin defining the term as it pertains to the area I am looking at, in the literature of fisheries and fishing peoples, as well as in the everyday parlance of national and international development agencies, scientific institutions, and so forth, small scale fishers are identified in a variety of ways. Among development organizations, a favourite tag is “artisanal” fishers. In other circles, we find the terms “native”, “coastal”, “inshore”, “tribal”, “peasant”, “traditional”, or “small-scale”. In essence, what all of these fishers have in common in these approaches is their relatively small capital commitment. Hernes (1991) also writes about canoe fishing as the “traditional sector”, others call it “small-scale” and again the “artisanal sector” (Haakonsen 1989,1990; Tvedten 1989; Johnson 1992; Odotei 1990).

Fishing in this sector is based on the way fishing traditionally has been done on a relatively small scale- and though as for Ghana some of the companies are very productive and fish in large quantities with advanced equipment. Here artisanal fisheries means small and large scale marine fishing. This best describes what is basically embarked on at Anomabo, typical small scale fishing.

In Ghana, canoe fishing has existed as a means of subsistence from the early beginnings of the permanent settlements in the coastal communities (Hernes 1990). The canoes are mostly made of the *wawa*¹⁶ tree, which grow in the rain forest areas in the South Western and Eastern part of Ghana. According to uncle Red (informant), he has travelled to the Eastern region of Ghana where there are mature and quality trees for the carving of the canoe, not less than three times. *“I have spent sleepless nights in the bush all because we wanted a new canoe. It was such a tedious expedition. Later Uncle¹⁷ realized the ordeal involved and we stopped going there. Now the lumbers themselves bring the logs to the shore to sell. So for the rest of the three canoes, we bought the base from them”*, he added. There is a carpenter who works on the prepared base of the canoe, then he expands it by using *wawa* boards which have been treated against pest infestation.

¹⁶ ¹⁶ This a type of a wood specie for carving purposes in Ghana

¹⁷ The uncle used here is the canoe owner



Photo 6: The base of the canoe which is being expanded into a complete canoe



Photo 7: Wawa boards to be used for the expansion of the canoe



Photo 8: The complete state of the canoe ready to be used

3.3 CYCLES OF FISHING AND ITS METHODS

Fishing, to a large extent, is a seasonal enterprise and there are a lot of vicissitudes in the fishing industry, especially the so-called “artisanal” fishing sector. Within the twelve months in the year, the peak season just extend from mid-July to mid-September, which is less than three months within the calendar year. Besides, from mid-November to end of December, there are intermittent catches which in most cases reaps little for their efforts.

As a result, there are various types of fishing methods which are embarked on during these periods. The type of fishing done from the July mid to the September mid is the peak season fishing. This is where fishing activities are brisk and intensive. There are fishing activities throughout the week except Tuesdays which is based on their own rules (to be explained below). Even on Tuesdays they go to fishing after 16:00. When everything is set and done, latest by 17:00 they launch into the sea and off they go. They return the following day from the hours of 07:00 till may be 13:00. Because they spend the night on the sea, they really prepare in terms of food and sometimes too, they cook some of the catch on the sea. At times too, the work becomes so intense that they do not get the chance to even eat. I had the privilege of tasting some of the

fish which they cook on the sea. That was their busy moment so they spent very little time at home. Some could arrive at the shore by 13:00 where they would have full “load” of fish, yet after transacting all businesses, they spend less than three hours and off they push their canoes into the sea and they are gone, provided they have enough petrol.

Basically, their reach is much wider than Anomabo. They have wide network of fish mongers they transact with beyond the region. They sometimes end up at other places like Takoradi, Secondi, Axim, etc., and even international places like Ivory Coast, Liberia and among others. What normally happens is that, anytime they travel far from their locality for fishing, they at times spend days on the sea ranging from two days to a week or even beyond. As a result, they are compelled to sell their catch at the nearby shore because travelling back home with the catch may result in the catch going bad (they normally do not have storage devices for preservation).

Interesting, at every shore apart from their own, they have agents (fish mongers) whom they fall on should they arrive there to sell their catch. When it happens that they should arrive at a different shore, they call these agents who prepare for their arrival which includes accommodation, feeding and anything that will make their one-night lodging quite snug. Early the following morning, after all business is done, they continue their fishing expedition. It is at this period that every money must be made for the fishing years so no stone is left unturned to ensure continuous fishing.

The question therefore is, why are these fishermen spending sleepless night on the sea meanwhile the sea is always available for them? Per their traditional knowledge about their ecology as Knudsen (2009) discussed about the Turkish fishermen, their know-how tells them that, mid-July to mid-September is when the weather is good, warm temperature for fish breeding, the preferable fish swim towards their direction so they have to work very hard. This shows the level of knowledge these fishermen have to enable them resort to the right method at each season of fishing.

If we look at this phenomenologically, the social embeddedness of knowledge and rules (in fishing) as argued by Verela (1999) in Knudsen (2009) is clear when he distinguishes between ethical know-how (as what it is good to be, i.e. living wisely) and ethical know-that (as what it is right to do).

In what manner is fishers' knowledge of the sea and fishing activities traditional? According to Knudsen (2009) fishing in the eastern Black sea coast of Turkey is a dynamic tradition with continuities in ethical standards and social relations underlying the observable changes in fishing practice and regular patterns, so as the fishers in Anomabo could discern to know when they should work extra hard and when they should rest. Their level of knowledge though may be purely traditional, yet very effective. This is because, even amidst the peak seasons, when the moon is "full" by 12:00 midnight, they stay home simply because they know that when they go nothing will come out of their effort. This is the "know-how".

Their knowledge about the bottom topography, the position of the moon, movement of the fish, and the sea chart etc., are the main assets to these fishermen though such knowledge are not sufficiently detailed to be studied unlike in the scientific realm where comprehensive documentation could be made available for study by any interest group. Most often than not, their familiarity with the general topography and other aspects of the marine is basically accumulated through the use of regular net positioning.

To the fisher in Anomabo, they consider it common-sense knowledge that flatfish to some extent are more abundant not far from the shore in the hours of 03:00 to 05:00 than elsewhere so they mostly use sein net fishing method which is fairly easy to catch them all year round. Though it usually provides some sort of income especially during the lean season, yet the possibility of making good catch is scarcely.

Their extensive knowledge about fishing enables them to set or cast the nets at the right place without piloting much. There are routine calculations connected with fishing trips which are the kind of embodied practice. Though it is not objectified, according to Knudsen (2009), fishers may very share a reasonably general model for regular operation of setting their nets which is instituted in practice and not organized as concepts.

Besides the flatfish catching, fishing done during November and December is termed by them as "gyaawano"¹⁸. This implies that, the fishermen upon casting the nets into the sea pull it to curl in a form "mouth" or the "armpits". Fish are seen to be able to identify the net, the "mouths" are

¹⁸ Gyaawano is a type of fishing method done in the lean season which expance from mid-October to February. This term literally means "relax your mouth" as fishermen on the sea relax the ends of the nets to form like the mouth to trap the fish.

supposed to increase their confusion as the fish endeavour to escape, by then too the fishers try to frighten them into the net. This type of fishing normally lasts for about four to five hours. Even with this type of fishing, it is not always the case that they get fish.

Normally, they will wait until they hear that some group went and had had some catch, then the rest may also put their accoutrements together and go as per the clues those who went earlier will give them. Even that, it fluctuates. Sometimes they get fish and sometimes too their efforts fall flat.

When the situation worsens, they adopt the “illegal” modus operandi by resorting to “light fishing”. Although not much attention is given to the activities of the fishers by the central government, however, there are laws prohibiting activities like pair trawling, chemical fishing and light fishing; because no supervisory role is played the *asankɔfo* during the lean season resort to these illegal methods.

Light fishing is where they use especial filament bulbs insulated with some rubber insulators to make it water proof, and powered by petrol generator. They connect the lights to long electric cables which could be about 100 meters long. With the lights available, they go back to the type of fishing done in the peak season as I have described above. Each canoe uses two of such powerful lights which when they arrive in the sea they lower them deep into the water which per their knowledge attracts the fish to come within the circles they can trap them. This type of fishing in most cases becomes very imperative when harvest really goes worse in their normal fishing method. This means that they adapt to a fishing method depending on the prevailing circumstances.



Photo 9: Fishermen preparing their lights for light fishing

3.4 HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE OF THE FISHERFOLKS OF ANOMABO

According to Mansvelt and Sterkenburg, “The position of the occupational categories of fishermen and fish traders ... cannot be clarified without making distinctions on the basis of the type of fishing carried out, the position of the individual fisherman... and the type of trading a fish trader owns or belong to” (1976:49).

This general and long standing observation in fishing studies may also be recognized in Anomabo where there are well defined and recognized hierarchies of position authorities among the fisher folks. The *asankɔfo* and the fish mongers as per their roles have leaders who steer their operations. The top of the hierarchy is the *Apofohen*¹⁹ who seeks to superintend all the activities of the fisher folks and also to unravel the squabbles that may ensue among the town’s fisheries. He also couples as a link between the fisher folks and any external organizations. This “powerful” person assumes this position by virtue of election by the members themselves. Prior to the elections, they lookout for someone with great prowess in fishing and unquestionable character.

¹⁹ Apofohen is the local term for the chief of fisherman

According to Odotei (1999) in order to be elected to this position, a person belonging to the eligible group must have a canoe and fishing gear; in order to be whole and complete for the position. According to my key informant (uncle Fii), *“Apofohen should be someone who has been a fisherman, responsible, well respected by all, understands the rudiments of the profession, with great arbitration skills, very affable, someone we can all call father.”* Yet, he was not sure *apofohen* should own a canoe, out board motor or net as Odotei emphasized. He is assisted by seven member council of elders who are all fishermen; not necessarily being active in fishing as a result of their ages, yet some could still be buoyant in the field. Their principal responsibility is to maintain law and order among the fisher folks and help the *apofohen* to discharge his duties. The *apofohen* is the sole person who can sanction anybody who goes contrary to their general rules, for instance, Tuesday fishing as I will discuss later in chapter 4.

Within every canoe, there is also some level of authority. The *bosun*²⁰ oversees the activities of the 20 to 32 maximum number of *asankɔfo*. He also has the power to punish or in extreme cases fire any of the *asankɔfo* who misbehaves. He is assisted by the deputy *bosun*, then the “engineer”²¹ in that order.

However, the fish mongers also have the so-called “*Namhema*”²². As Overå (1992) illustrates, she is selected by the other market women of her branch for her life time on the basis of the position she has acquired through her abilities in trade and her political talent. Her main responsibility is to be a negotiator and mediator where problems ensue between the women. According to Overå, “the market women themselves claim that the Queen mother does not have economic advantage or much power them, “only when there is a problem”” (1992:92). For Odotei (1999), virtues such as patience, tolerance, time and concern for others; are the qualities sought for in potential candidates. According to Adjoa (informant I spoke to at the shore) *“We women are very emotional and at times very difficult to handle because we easily pick on each other, so we normally elect someone who is very friendly, not easily provoked, who is expert in the business, trusted and very accommodating”*.

²⁰ The bosun is the captain (leader) among the crew on board of a particular canoe.

²¹ In the fishing parlance, the engineer is the one who operates the outboard motor of a canoe. This is quite a technical job and it takes only those who have the knowledge to do such job.

²² Namhema is the Queen mother of the fish mongers.

The position of the canoe owners is more or less peripheral, because in most times, such people though may be locals, yet do not live in the community. As a result, he/she does not deal directly with the *asankɔfo* working for him. He/she does not have any association with the *apofohen*, until there may be a problem concerning his/her *asankɔfo* which may go before the *apofohen* then he/she will be invited. He at times, distant himself even from the regular fishing activities and rather allows his or her *krakye* to stand in. Yet, the *krakye* also renders progressive reports to canoe owners.

Like any other enterprise where leadership is put in place to ensure the smooth running of it, so is the fishing activities. The roles every leader play from the *apofohen* to the engineer of a canoe to the *namhema* are all in place to ensure that whatever they doing within the community to sustain their livelihoods are done for the betterment of all. This ensures social cohesiveness and knit them together as one people though there may be differences at times.

3.5 RECRUITMENT OF CREW ON BOARD OF A CANOE

Fish production has traditionally been organized on the basis of kinship relations, and was to a large extent a family business. The matrilineal kinship group constituted the production unit (Ninsin 1991). The head of the kinship group owned a canoe, and hired men who individually owned nets, and the men in the family worked as the *asankɔfo*. It is as a result, that most of the fisher folks are not enrolled in schools. This type of fishing is highly labour intensive and more people are basically needed to help make the fishing business a reality.

However, the changes in technology in fishing, important cooperative activities have become unnecessary-the need to carefully hang up nets to dry, for instance, which is no longer necessary once nylon replace those made of cotton. Also there have been shifts to more impersonal modes of recruiting fellow workers. Old patterns of relations have given way to individualistic and competitive patterns, with the result that the organization of many fishing communities has become more atomistic. Many formerly cooperative fishing peoples have become more guarded in their dealings with one another and have found themselves embroiled in an increasing number of conflicts with other community members (McGoodwin 1990), yet more people are still needed on board.

Nowadays, the work is still labour intensive but not organized around the matrilineal kinsmen as Ninsin (1991) posited. Recruitment is basically in the hands of the canoe owners who in most cases delegate the responsibility to the *bosun* of his “company” per their in-depth knowledge in the fishing. Yet, he sometimes decides on who should be the leader of a canoe. Most often than not, the *krakye* will confer with the canoe owner who among the entire *asankɔfo* exhibits unparalleled leadership qualities so he could be the *bosun* of the new one. The two (the canoe owner and the *krakye*) will later call on the overall *bosun* to seek his approval based on their choice.

Interestingly, the *bosun* has the greatest influence to decide who to choose ultimately. “*I am the bosun and have worked with almost all the asankɔfo in all the canoes that belong to uncle. I know them. Some are very good, so others are very “troublesome”,* my informant, uncle Red (overall *bosun*) told me.

According to uncle Red, some of the qualities that map out a good leader are inconclusive. That is, the one should be; industrious, dedicated, experienced in the field (skillful and knowledgeable which is more important), friendly, team player, trustworthy, unifier, motivator, commands respect, reliable, etc. and not anyone could be the *bosun*.

After the choice of the *bosun* is settled, then a day is scheduled for a meeting composing the canoe owner, the *krakye*, the overall *bosun* and the newly appointed *bosun*. This meeting is normally held at the premises of the canoe owner or special place for that purpose. It is in such meetings that the formal introductions and the main purpose are made. The canoe owner uses this platform to mint out the guiding principles as far as the new canoe is concerned, though it may not be different from the already existing ones. The overall *bosun* on behalf of the new *bosun* thanks the owner for his good intentions. After the core reason for the meeting is dealt with, they both exchange pleasantries and share some alcoholic drinks to end the meeting.

Afterwards, the onus now behooves on the new *bosun* with the help of the overall *bosun* to decide on who to be part as *asankɔfo* of the new canoe. Previously, the overall *bosun* will announce at the shore when all of them gather and set date for recruitment. This involved a lot of lobbying and sometimes led to lasting contentions as far as the selection was concerned because

the information about the recruitment became public and many fishermen wanted to seize that opportunity to be on board.

What is much important to note here is that, almost every male in the community in one way or the other is affiliated to a canoe. There is high demand for unskilled labour in the fishing so no individual could be rendered redundant in the fishing field. The one could be a permanent member or temporary as the children under study them. Yet, everyone wants to be part of history for the new canoe, "I was part of the first *asankɔfo* for this or that canoe". This is their pride. The rationale here is that, for every new canoe, it is always the case that the first *asankɔfo* are considered as part of the most "knowledgeable" ones among the entire *asankɔfo*. As a result, those were not chosen felt very embittered and that could lead to unresolvable acrimony.

Though not much has changed this time round, one thing which is still considered in the recruitment is the individual's knowledge in the field such as ability to operate the outboard motor (engineer), to navigate perfectly, discern the movement of the shoal as the "know-how" I mentioned earlier on in Knudsen's material. Basically, the *asankɔfo* are largely dependent on the size of the canoe, yet averagely there are 26 of them.

Nowadays, the overall *bosun* together with the new *bosun* do secret consultative meetings and recruitment, so before anyone will hear that a new canoe will be coming, the recruitment is already done. There is no more mass gathering for any random selection. I had the privilege to sit in the first meeting of new recruits who were to handle the new canoe (MADINA 5) where my key informant (uncle Fii) was selected as the new *bosun*. I had the opportunity to address them during that meeting.



Photo 10: Fist meeting of new asankɔfo for a new canoe (MADINA5)

The phase of the recruitment changes when it comes to the sein net fishing. At this level, recruitment is very open, supple and very informal process. This is where young guys who are zealous to be on board as crew may join for some days a “friend” for some few trips. He may provide a helping hand here and there and at a point the *bosun* may inquire from him if he wants to sign on. Before then the *bosun* might have taken so many things into consideration including his knowledge, personality and social relations to other *asankɔfo*. Such apprentice from this level upon strong recommendation could be picked to join the big canoes. It is at this level that a lot of unskilled school-going children are found harnessing their knowledge and fetching their little money for their livelihoods. There is no occasion a child will be sacked from supporting in any form at the shore. Every male among these people is considered a potential fisherman. No matter how feeble the child may be, he is encouraged to do what is within his strength once practice makes the man perfect. This is done to perpetuate their identity and it more or less attracts the children’s concentration from school to the fishing. This structural force will be explored detail in chapter 6.

3.6 MODE OF SHARING (PAYMENT)

Basically, every catch is shared according to the number of people on board of that particular canoe. The general rule in fishing according to Mansvelt and Sterkenburg, offers equal shares for capital and labour in the total catch (1976) however. Those on board of the canoe besides the *asankɔfo*, include the canoe owner, his wife(ves) and any person the owner chooses as part of the people on board.

In most cases, they estimate how much the entire catch is going to be (how many “*pans*”). Before the actual sharing, each crew is entitled to a little “chop fish” (*bonus*) after every fishing trip. This is normally placed in their food rubber containers (blue band margarine containers) which are normally given to their wives and the unmarried ones give to their female relatives or sell them to any buyer at the shore.

After the estimation is settled, the first thing they do is to deduct the cost of the petrol and share the remaining which will be between the net, canoe, the owner, the *krakye*, the owner’s family on board, and any other person at the same proportion. If after deducting the petrol cost and what is left is may be 30 pans, then they all share equally. If there are still some extra, then the *bosun* will add to his. It is funny sometimes that, the apprentice would have to sacrifice theirs to satisfy the canoe owner and his family. This means that, at times, their estimation may be incorrect. So instead of getting one pan each, it would not be possible. When such transpires the apprentice receive half a pan each with the hope that they will be compensated on the next trip. Although the canoe owner takes that of the cost of the petrol, nets, and the canoe, he is still entitled to the remaining share in that, he runs all the errands and bear the costs of the petrol, maintenance of the canoe and the motor. The share he receives here is termed as “*mbranstee nam*” (which translates as “gentleman’s fish”).

3.7 FINANCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

Per the sharing details I just discussed, the canoe owner ends up taking the lion’s share. He gains more should the canoe go for many fruitful trips and vice versa.

In Anomabo, the fishermen in most cases sell their share to their wives or relatives who will process them and later sell and pay later. So the catch is relatively sold in the family. Those

unmarried ones also sell to the fish mongers or they may have regular buyers who upon tip off come around. On the average, every *asankonyi* on the “good day” could make about \$24.00. Unfortunately this amount fluctuates. On the contrary, the canoe owner on the same day could also make averagely \$1,240.00 just from one canoe which is 50 times that of the each of the *asankonyi*. The margin is unimaginably wide.

This disparity comes in as a result of who owns the means of production and not the one who provides the labour. Upon my investigation, as at the time I was leaving the field (December, 2013), a canoe in totality will cost \$41,280.00 to make. Yet, the owner could make up the cost within 2 years maximum *all other things being equal* and a canoe can last for more ten years. Meanwhile, serious maintenance begins after averagely 3 years and this may include some minor patches on the nets, and the out board motor. This in actual sense brings a very huge financial rupture between the *asankɔfo* and the canoe owners.

According to uncle Red (the overall *bosun*), “*The canoe owner is making a lot of money, yet we are not getting anything at all. Can you imagine we had MADINA 4 less than 2 years and he has gotten MADINA 5. If you have money come and we will help you get one. You will make a lot of money from that. I have spoken to people, but they are not yielding, thinking it is very expensive, but brother, it is very lucrative.*” He told me this in one afternoon when we were talking about how much they are making in their career.

However, the *asankɔfo* who are spending almost all their entire life on the sea at the expense of their families and love ones are not getting much. They find it really difficult to provide sometimes the basic needs for their immediate family which according to them pushes the girls among them into “sexual trade” more or less, and this invariably leads to unplanned teenage pregnancies.

By implication, this method of sharing leads to social stratification where the canoe owners by virtue of their position accumulate lot of power, wealth and prestige. The *asankɔfo* and their families perpetually become subordinates to their canoe owners because at any time they are looking up to their owners for help to make their livelihoods sustainable. The canoe owners have a lot of power in that their decisions are always carried out. “*Uncle can decide who should be part of the share of the catch of a particular canoe and not even I the senior bosun can challenge*

his authority”, uncle Red stated. I realized that the relationship between the *asankɔfo* and the canoe owners are very vertical, that is master-servant relationship. Anytime the *krakye* will alert the *asankɔfo* of Uncle’s arrival at the shore, everybody becomes engaged in one thing or the other. Nobody likes to be seen by Uncle as frivolous person. They just want to please him whenever he is around. This financial differentiation puts a lot of pressure on the *asankɔfo* especially during the lean season. *“It’s because we don’t make a lot of money from our work that is why we want our children join us. At least, each of us can make a little to live on. What I make can’t sustain the family in any way,”* one informant posited. In most cases they are left with no alternative than to sell almost all their possessions in order to keep the family from falling apart (see chapter 5).

3.8 DISPLAY OF WEALTH BY THE “RICH”

The conspicuous display of wealth is most prominent during celebrations in the community, be it funeral, festival etc. Because such occasions attract great throng into the town, the “rich” demonstrate what they have by virtue of buying drinks to the youth groups, showering money on the people who dance in the midst of the gathering, wear their expensive clothing, blowing up the fragrance of expensive perfumes all over, putting on glittering jewelry, making big public donations in support of the community projects, offering some sort of sponsorship for the apprentices in various vocations.

Besides, there are situations where by the “rich” are always invited to programmes like weddings, church annual harvest, end of apprenticeship, etc. They use such platforms to make the gathering therein realize how wealthy they are by dishing out huge sums of money to them who gave the invitation. *“Uncle is always invited by people whenever they organize a programme. When you are lucky and you get one of the rich men in this town at your programme, brother, don’t worry at all. What he alone will give is enough to suffice the greater portion of your debt. They have “power” and the “prestige” in this community”*, an informant told me when we attended a friend’s end of apprenticeship ceremony. What my informant said reminded me of one of the names of our (Ghanaian) “*adinkra*” symbols; *“wo sika sua a w’asem*

*sua*²³. This is purely a form of political appearance (gimmick) by these “rich” people in places like this. Their intention is to buy the conscience of the people with their money because according to my informant, as a result of giving money to the people, whatever they say becomes the ultimate.

Besides the “rich” being in festive mood and dishing out money to people publicly, on the ordinary days too, they sometimes lend money to them that petition them with their plights. These could be their own relatives or any external persons. This also goes a long way to earn them a good reputation within the community. Notwithstanding, there others who dislike them too, in that the loans they give out attract higher interest than even those taken from the banks. Every means that offers them the opportunity to show off their wealth, they do not hesitate because that is the avenue for winning the respect of the town folks.

This chapter has shown the various aspects of fishing organization and the requisite knowledge one is needed possess to be considered as a fisherman. It came to light that without this traditional knowledge, the various methods applied at each season would not be possible. Though at some point certain criteria must be at play but other times too, it becomes imperative to pick everyone who is prepared especially in sein net fishing. This is because the more the one practices, the more knowledgeable one becomes. It demonstrated how children are even attracted into the fishing career at a very tender age. The sociocultural exploitation of the fishermen at the expense of their canoe owners has also been discussed with its social, cultural, political and personal implications. So in order to make meaningful livelihood, what can the people do in addition to the traditional knowledge they possess in their fishing career? Within their environment, there are much to be done in order to unravel the uncertainties they face in their daily lives within the community and it as a result that the next chapter devoted for to help us understand how these uncertainties are negotiated.

²³ This is an Akan adage which literally means, “*the poor has few words*”; by implication, “those who are poor are not influential in society”.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PEOPLE'S LIFE WORLD

Reflecting in part the sociocultural setup of Anomabo, I would like to pose some intriguing and mind boggling questions regarding how societies negotiate the uncertainties of daily life. How do people obtain and manage luck and fortune in their attempts to reproduce their sources of life? Besides, are there societies without fortune, luck or faith? Normally, we associate fortune with the unexpected, the serendipitous, and the positive surprise. Astuti (1991), for instance presents the case of the Vezo of Madagascar, live a present oriented life and are constantly “surprised” by events in the ways “others” would mark as happenstances. For the Vezo, Astuti (ibid.: 101) states:

“This kind of ‘surprise’ is not an emotional reaction to the unknown and the unpredictable; rather, it is a positive strategy, an act of creativity. People’s disposition and willingness to be ‘surprised’ at every unfulfillment of their hopes about production preserves this hope...so long as one is prepared to be ‘surprised’ when things go wrong, one can continue to hope that things will never go wrong again and act accordingly. ‘Surprise’ allows the Vezo to avoid learning to ‘manage’ money and to continue enjoy wearing expensive clothes and eating rich food...Although no-one ever stated this explicitly, ‘surprise’, as a positive alternative to planning and saving, is what makes the Vezo Vezo.”

At this point of the thesis, I will provide an ethnographic account and analysis of how and why the people negotiate uncertainties within their community as they relate to their ecological environment. I want to argue at this chapter that, it is basically due to the uncertainties of life boggling man’s mind that make him seek “spiritual” answers from any available source considered to be reliable. The aim here is to demonstrate the landscape of different religious orientations bringing out the hierarchy internal to diversity of beliefs. This is a moral-cosmological field (sin, transgression, treachery) with centripetal and centrifugal orientations. This chapter will also enable us to answer part of the first question as to what aspect of fishing keep the children from school. Political ecology will be used as the analytical perspective.

One neologism will be considered and that is Escobar's (1999) term *nature regime* within the perspective of political ecology as Biersack (2004) used to indicate the human-nature (history-biology) articulations. This is viewed as something like Mauss's (1969) total phenomenon: at once significant, social, economic, ecological and always political. Escobar advanced the concept as a contribution to an "antiessentialist" notion of nature, one that accepts the sociohistorical production of nature in and through discursive constructions and human activity. In this chapter, I will argue from a similar standpoint of Escobar where he demonstrates that nature and society are not separated ontologically but tend conceptually to interpenetrate and/or fuse, and its politics of nature and moral premised upon equal access to resources and the benefits that flow thereof (1999).

Specifically, the people of Anomabo are closely connected to the sea as it is their main source of livelihood, yet, there are some level of uncertainties they need to negotiate to enhance full utilization of the resource and the benefits thereof. To demonstrate my argument, I will look at what I call their system- effectively an assemblage of stands of various cultural and religious systems. This means looking at the interplay of Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR), to examine why there is no fishing on Tuesdays until 16:00, to look at the so-called "spiritual leaders " in the community and to, not the least analyze what many fishermen think is the need for seeking spiritual assistance.

4.2 MULTIPLICITY OF RELIGIOUS OUTLOOK

Generally, Ghanaians and for that matter early settlers along the coast in the Central region of Ghana including Anomabo as Ghanaian oral history shows were deeply rooted in ATR before the introduction of other religions like Christianity and Islam by the Europeans in the 17th Century. As per their knowledge, they believe strongly in the existence of "powers" which go beyond human realms and specifically they see the nature around them as inhabited by "spirit beings" who through their effort they receive the resources within their environment. ATR is also highly influential on the people of Anomabo as they have all their lives pivoted on the sea which is seen as the provider of their livelihood. They richly acknowledge the importance of the sea and they revere it as the "god" who provides their needs. This indicates that, their nature is not distance from them or "outside of history and human context" (Escobar 1999:1). It is more or

less familiar and there are intimate and multiple connections between them as the fish and the Anomabo fisher folk. The people of Anomabo are very much identified with fishing like I mentioned earlier on in that metaphoric statement as “the tortoise and the shell”. It is seen that anything that will cause damage to the marine environment jeopardizes human life and this is considered as inimical. This is the level of nexus between man and his marine environment.

As Biersack (2004) puts it, as incarnate subjects, human beings are immanent rather than transcendent, dependent upon the resource base, the earth or ground. They deemed the sea as the provider of their needs and as a result, total obeisance has to be paid to it. All necessary precautions should be observed critically to ensure their perpetual dependence on it. This led to the initiation of ritual practices, where those inclined with spiritual insight; the *abosomfo* began to act as the intermediaries between the people and the spiritual entities in the sea and were later joined by the *asɔfo*.

Though Christianity came in later, yet it is greatly affecting the existing religious view of the people, which is ATR. Now, many of the fisher folks are converting from ATR (belief in lesser spirits) to belief in Jesus Christ. Christianity is now spreading widely all over the country. The “born again” (the new converts) are denouncing their former beliefs, discarding some rituals practices, and making new friends and clinging to the new found faith (Christianity). All these transformations are taking place because Christian doctrines are seen more transparent and devoid of mystery, unlike ATR which places a lot of demands on the followers. This is what uncle Fii (my key informant) one Tuesday around 14:15, when we were mending their fishing net at the shore said, *“I will no longer be a part taker of any ritual practices, neither any of my asankɔfo. After all, it is God who created everything including the sea. Only God can give us “excellent” protection and bumper harvest. I am now a Christian and I am proud to be labelled as one.”* This is what one *obosomfo* I visited in the shrine one morning around 09:20 with bear chested also said; *“Now we are seen in this community as witches and wizards because we share a lot of blood. Yes, most of us have the “third and the fourth eyes” to be able to see the spirits and communicate with them. It is sad though, because, before their so-called Christianity, our ritual practices were robust and their fathers and mothers depended on us solely.”*



Photo 11: Christians going to church on Sunday in the morning around 09:30



Photo 12: Christians worshipping God in the church at Sunday morning

Interestingly and crucial for this chapter, some of the converted fishermen are still oscillating between the two belief systems. That is, they do not know whether to go to church and continue their rituals as far as fishing activities are concerned. They are indecisive as to whether they should depend on the lesser gods of the *abosomfo*, or they should solely relied on the Christian God who is considered sovereign and supreme as the *asɔfo* purport? All these point to the fact that, they want best source to help them solve these uncertainties they find themselves in.

However, I had several encounters with some of the *asankɔfo* who while professing to be Christians, yet were pouring libation to invoke the gods as they used to. Instead, this time, it is done very clandestinely and not as recurrent as it used to be. They do not want others to see them and be labelled as “polytheists” which Christianity frowns at.

Meanwhile, there are those who are in fact devoted and have purposed “no turning back”. This is what uncle Red (informant) who was chatting with me at the parliament one Friday evening around 20:10 said, *“I want to die a Christian and I am proud to be seen as one. I have thrown away all the items the obosomfo gave us. I have denounced all abosomfo and their ritual practices. I believe the Christian God can help me better.”*

In actual sense, many people both within and outside the community see the activities of the *abosomfo* as no longer helpful. Even among some of the fisher folks, they do not believe those activities are still ongoing. Yet, my visit to some of the *abosomfo*'s shrines revealed that, they are though not much engaged like previously, their activities are not dead at all.

According to one of the fetish priests, what is making their activities look like they are no perkier is the fact that, the attendants now prefer the rituals being done in the nights instead of the usual day time. The implication of this “subterreneaziation” of ritual activity is that, those who now patronize their services want to shy away from the public view once some have made public confessions of their Christians faith.

Besides, their activities are now seen as scaring to the children in the community so for the betterment of all, there is the need to move to more secluded area. This is related to the increasing view of them as witches and wizards within the community. From the discussion above, both religious orientations are running parallel to each other within the community though

there are internal hierarchies. In diverse ways each is helping the people to find answers to the “unknown” making life more meaningful, hence their patronage.



Photo 13: Obosomfo at his shrine immediately after ritual activity

4.3 FISHING ON TUESDAYS

The fisher folks in Anomabo hold the belief that Tuesdays are sacred days for the marine spirits – a rule they claim (when asked) was given by fore fathers. According to this belief, it is on this day that the spirits (mermaids) with their families also rest and entertain themselves. As a result any attempt to fish on this day is a taboo and the repercussions are severe. One can even lose his life. This I was informed by both the *apofohen* and the *abosomfo* in the community as I already dealt with.

They added that, because the canoes use outboard motors with very noisy engines, the noise emanating from the engine, the singing, shouting and jeering from the fishermen create a very boisterous atmosphere which destabilizes the serene milieu the spirits desire for their recreation. As a result, there is the belief that any attempt by any human to mar such occasion attracts the

wrath of these spirits. To add to, any sign of disobedience leads to low yields as the spirits withhold the catch from the fishermen.

However, as I was on the field, I realized that there has been some level of laxity where fishing was taking place on Tuesdays, but it was usually after 16:00. I was not offered any concrete reason for this laxity when I tried to asked, notwithstanding, fishing at any time before 16:00 is punished by the *apofohen* and his elders when the culprits are caught.

Because no serious fishing is done on Tuesdays, the day is used for some basic activities like mending nets, repairing canoes if there are leakages, holding family gatherings to settle awaiting issues and or fixing days for funerals, etc. Above all, Tuesdays are characteristically marked with rest among the fisher folks especially in the midst of the lean season. It is during this time that their parliaments become very engaging. The strong believe in the sea as “spirit” and the uncertainties associated with the flouting of their demands within the environment is highly revered of hence the abstinence of fishing on Tuesdays until 16:00. Could not it therefore be envisaged that once again, it is this Christianity which is demystifying the Tuesday fishing taboo?

4.4 NEGOTIATING UNCERTAINTIES

Man is always confronted with the multifarious meanings ascribed to the set of cosmological forces expressing the element of vitality in varying societies, and those events that are considered to bolt the symmetry of recognized forms of causality and the direct control of human intentionality. The fisher folks of Anomabo, as I mentioned above, encounter such a dilemma in the question whether they ought to surrender all their livelihoods to the marine spirit beings in order to make success in life or conversely, devote their life to the Christian God. But the basic rational underlying whatever path one chooses to take is pointed to the attainment of the backing of the “supernatural forces” within the environment in all his endeavours. This has made them all seek for this spiritual backing from diverse sources.

According to da Col (2012), anthropologists have rarely addressed the role played by terms such as “luck” and “fortune” in constituting distinctive and alternative “economies” (da Col 2012), though there are some few trying to throw light on this matter as, while showing concern of non-Western notions of accidents (e.g, Goldman 1993; da Col and Humphrey 2012), misfortune (Evans-Pritchard [1937] 1968; Fortes 1959; Herzfeld 1981; Whyte 1997), uncertainty and risk (Caplan 2000; Dougl1994; Douglas and Wildavsky 1983), or (in) auspiciousness (Parry 1991; Raheja 1988). Yet, the semantic field of fortune and luck entails that once man is limited in unfurling the conundrums of life especially among them that deal with nature in the form of the forests, the land and the sea must be treated with enough knowledge. Further argument spearheaded by da Col is that, this in the Western cosmology, such forces and events fall within a semantic province contoured by terms such as “luck”, “Godspeed”, “fortune”, “auspiciousness”, “chance”, “providence”, “grace”, “fate”, “destiny” and among others (da Col 2011).

Although not much has been done, yet, negotiating the unknown for meaningful livelihood has become part of man’s daily life all over the world has caught the attention of social scientists, specifically anthropologists to probe into it. Among the anthropologists who have pursued this academic discourse, some of them have contributed to and/or offered advice on these issues. Inge Daniels (2003) has outlined how in Japan material “good luck” (*engi*) is not an innate property of things but is produced through an appropriate circulation of spiritual gifts. Rebecca Empson (2011) has also observed the relational component of fortune and prosperity (*hishig*) in Mongolia and its topology of separation and containment, which guarantee the continuity and social imagination of Mongolian ideas of property and personhood. For Strathern (2004:53), “A world obsessed with ones and the multiplications and divisions of ones creates problems for the conceptualization of relationships.” Hamayon remarks importantly that, an event is attributed to someone’s luck only when an agency or intentionality is thought to involved. Luck thus implies both a non-empirical type of causality attributed to external sources (stars, gods, charms, spirits, etc.) and a subjective explanation.

The fisher folks of Anomabo believe that the sea is a spirit though some have become devoted Christians as I have already mentioned. They therefore foresee their actions and intentions very

empty without the support of either the *asɔfo* or *abosomfo* or both. They believe that all their fortunes, luck and faith could be secured as far as their career is concerned if only they are hooked to them who are apt when it comes to “spiritual” matters. This belief in the marine powers has made the presence of the *asɔfo and abosomfo* very inevitable in the community. There is also a belief that, once the sea is a god with its ancillaries, it has its preferences, which could best be understood and interpreted by the *asɔfo and abosomfo*. They see the level of uncertainties to be very high without the mediation of these spiritually inclined people. My informants told me and it is been confirmed by several others that the rocks in the sea represent some of the auxiliary gods which always reminds them of their presence.



Photo 14: Some of the rocks “presumed” to be gods showing in the sea

According to Nana Egya (*obosomfo*), the *abosofo* travel to different places to collect these gods they work with. He mentioned that he most often travels to the northern part of Ghana for his. He further stated that, some of his colleagues even travel as far as Nigeria, Benin, Togo, etc. for these gods. He opined that, the enormity of the power from the gods is directly in relation to the number of gods one possesses and it must be a concerted effort by the different gods at one’s disposal to be very effective.

Actually, the physical presence of these gods varies. His (Nana Egya), as he took me to his shrine the gods were in the form of boulders, water in bottles, animals' desiccated carcasses, animal bones, concoction, tree logs, pieces of metals, etc. The *obosomfo* mentioned that, he has travelled several times to the Northern Ghana (the site where he collects the gods). According to him, the materials as I have mentioned above which inhabit these lesser gods are mainly found in rivers and on top of mountains.



Photo 15: Obosomfo (Nana Egya) at his shrine displaying the various gods he possesses

As he took me to his shrine, I saw some black metals, bottles containing water, hour-glass drum, red shroud, animal skin, “*buta*”. There were also in the shrine items like knives, spears, machetes, images of mermaid and other mystical beings on the wall which I cannot explain. He mentioned that all the things I saw in the shrine represent different gods with unique functions. I took particular interest in the mermaid and he made it clear to me that she (mermaid) controls the sea so whenever the *asankɔfo* come to him for assistance, he seeks all the guidance from her. The mermaid according to the *obosomfo* knows everything in the sea and predicts correctly.

According to him, real presence of the gods in the sea makes their existence as *abosomfo* very cardinal to the fisher folks. According to him, the *abosomfo* combine different leaves, water, animal blood and many other things to perform rituals for the fisher folks. They communicate with the marine spirits as to what is required of the fishermen. This according to him is exclusive to them only. The fishermen no matter their level of knowledge in the fishing career can never possess such ability. This man attested that after all the requirements are met, harvest would always be good. *“We can understand the marine spirits better because we have the powers to hear them speak through the gods we possess. Whenever there is ensuing problem we are alerted to act on behalf of the affected people. But, hmm... unless the one realizes the looming danger and runs to us else, we can’t mediate. But if he or the entire group come to our shrine we help them and harvest will be good”*, the *obosomfo* said it.

However, this *obosomfo* lamented how things are changing especially as Christianity is gaining root and changing the belief system of the people in the area. Their activities are now adversely affected. *“It is because so many things are now taken for granted, all in the name of “church” which has spelt out the doom of today’s youth. When you came, couldn’t you see that they don’t go to fishing regularly? It shouldn’t have been that. Yes, they are not following the dictates of the gods in the sea. You tell them, don’t go to fishing on Tuesdays and they pay death ears to it. This is the results they are reaping now.”* he remarked. *“This thing I am doing [as an obosomfo], I am the fourth generation. It has been in my family more than 120 years. When we were growing up as children, it was a competition among the siblings. It was a great prestige to be the heir of these gods. Nowadays, surprisingly, even all my twelve children are Christians attending Roman Catholic Church. None of them shows any interest but I can’t force any of them too.”* He continued.

So this statement caught my attention to ask what becomes of the gods when nobody takes after him when he dies. He hastily retorted, *“As at now, the owners are demanding them, only that I promptly pay my vows and offer a lot of sacrifices to them, else I would have lost them already. So when I am dead and gone and nobody assumes my position, they will all go back to where they came from.”*

He told me that, when you fail to pay your vows as *obosomfo* the gods depart to where they come from but continue to pester you until the vows are paid. At times too, the gods unleash their

anger to the descendants of the *obosomfo* who brought them in. This could lead to a generational curse unless something is done to appease them if not, the gods could sweep away the entire generation to the grave to placate their wrath.

However, the existence of both the *asɔfo* and *abosomfo* are considered very important because the uncertainties and the uncontrolled relatedness of their activities within the environment are numerous and go beyond their reach as human, so the best way to make life meaningful is to have these spiritual people running parallel to each other within the community. Therefore there is no way they can set themselves apart from nature. This leads to our next discussion as the other reasons why they seek spiritual guidance from the *asɔfo* and *abosomfo*.

4.5 OTHER REASONS FOR SEEKING SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

As part of the arguments on fortune, luck, auspiciousness, etc., as I discussed earlier, the people of Anomabo are still battling with security as far as spiritual and the “unknown” fortunes for their livelihoods are concerned. Both Wagner and Graeber (2001) argue that, the notion of fortune and luck are manifestations of the quandaries of the inherent limits of human knowledge. Unlike the *asɔfo* and *abosomfo*, the *asankofa* can hardly see beyond the physical, yet they believe that their activities transcend the terrestrial world which must be unlocked to unleash their fortunes and luck in their daily lives. To a large extent, these quandaries make the presence of both the *asɔfo* and the *abosomfo* very indispensable. Some other reasons besides what I have already discussed that make the people seek spiritual guidance include the following;

Firstly, in some cases, according to them, fellow *asankofa* may bewitch the productivity of their own group; a practice I will refer to as *infighting* (centripetal orientation). In such cases, this “wizard” who is within the *asankofa* may have conceived initially of becoming the *bosun* but could not so he wants to do everything within his power to mar their productivity so he can get the chance to lead the group. This according to them is very common and when precautions are not taken their entire year productivity could be adversely affected.

Secondly, *asankofa* of one group work against another. This I will call *outfighting* (centrifugal orientation). This happens when one group realized that things are not going on well with them

yet others are making it. When such transpires, non-performing group begin to siphon the prospering group's catch spiritually. This is done by sending some of the young boys hassling at the beach into that particular canoe they want to harm to scope some of the brine from the canoe. This brine is sent to the *obosomfo* where they seek spiritual aid from and then rituals are performed for the harm to be effected. This according to them will overturn their fortune the very moment the rituals are effected and until the affected group also consult for the right remedies to executed, things will never be the same for the previous prospering group.

To add to, a member of a crew may commit sin (adultery, fornication, stealing, etc.) and such act may attract a curse on this culprit which will invariably affect the fishing exploits of the group he belongs to. Most often than not, the culprit may not reveal this bad conduct, so the onus lies on the *bosun* to enquire the cause of their failure. It is in the midst of the consultation that all secrets would be unearthed and the necessary remedial measures are taken. The culprit according to them, are sometimes sanctioned upon the discretion of the *bosun* and his deputy.

Every *asankonyi* anticipates such occurrences so they will not wait for any such calamity to befall them before they seek spiritual protection. They are very proactive to put measures in place to avert these unfortunate phenomena as they commonly say "prevention is better than cure". These make they always ensure that nothing is left to chance.

In summary, this is a moral-cosmological field (sin, transgression, treachery) with centripetal (what I call infighting) and centrifugal (what I call outfighting) orientations. All these uncertainties gang up on them to make the roles play by the *asɔfo* and the *abosomfo* very indispensable within the community. But until all the uncertainties man is battling with within the environment are solved he will never stop seeking solutions because man and his nature (environment) are inseparable. As they are still finding solutions to these quandaries, the next question is; how is this state of spiritual uncertainties influencing their perception about education and livelihoods?

CHAPTER FIVE

EDUCATION AND LIVELIHOODS

The notion of education ideally is conceived as purely beneficial and is seen as the panacea for the future generation. Ghanaian parents have high expectations that their children after graduation will be able to procure “white colour” jobs to cushion their financial burden. This is what Aunt Ama (informant) said as I was chatting with her in the house while she was processing her fish one Wednesday evening at about 18:05; *“Though it is expensive educating your children here in Ghana, yet if you strive to do that too, you end up having doctors and engineers. They will get better jobs with better remuneration. They will not do our work (fishing).”*

Notwithstanding, education has its own challenges among the fisher folks of Anomabo as it is influenced by their livelihoods. In this section, I will map and discuss the various relations between the domain of education and their livelihoods within the context of the community. This chapter seeks to show how the people and their children see the domain of education. This will help answer the second question of this thesis as how do the people and their children see the domain of education.

In the course of the discussion, attention will be paid to their households and livelihoods strategies to help understand their world life in relation to education. I will use materialistic perspective to argue that the domain of fishing creates a forum of agency for the children that education does not. From the discussion we will realize that fishing in short term makes the children providers unlike education which makes one to be provided for where you are subjected to pay back later. A quote from Yaw (7 year old school dropout) and Bismark (25 year old university graduate) will help bring the reality of my argument to bear.

5.1 FEATURES OF EDUCATION IN GHANA

In Ghana, the pre-school, (nursery and kindergarten) lasts for 2 years. Notwithstanding, this level is not available in the public schools, rather at the private and the Montessori schools and they

very expensive to enroll the children. The first cycle is divided into two that is the primary level and the Junior High School (JHS) level. One has to spend 6 years at the primary level and 3 years at the JHS. Normally, it takes one 9 years, in addition to the 2 years spent at the pre-school to complete the first cycle. By the age of 6 years a child is supposed to be at primary (class) one.

At the final year (JHS3), one has to take the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) which is the final examination organized by the West African Examination Council (WAEC). From this phase, the successful candidates will be placed at the various Senior High Schools (SHS) by the Computer Schools Selection and Placement System (CSSPS). Those who do not get placement have to attend the National Vocational and Technical training Institutes (NVTI). This is the second cycle of Ghana's education. It takes one 3 years to complete this phase. There are those who end their entire education at this level due to several factors which may include early employment (into traditional occupations), pregnancy, financial support, etc., as some also fail the BECE woefully. Some of such people apply for apprenticeship while others do not.

The graduates from the second cycle could begin to get employed or set up their own small businesses. However, those who get employed at this level are not properly remunerated because of their level of expertise which is deemed not comparable to those from tertiary level.

At the tertiary level, there are several institutions awarding various diplomas at different fields of studies. Besides the universities, there are the polytechnics where both those who excelled in their SHS and NVTI can enroll. There are also the Institutes of Education for training professional teachers to feed the first cycle schools. Nursing Training Collages for training personnel for the health sector can also be found here. All these tertiary institutions last for three years except the degree courses which lasts for four years.

To complete this level, one might have spent 15 or 16 years, *all other things being equal*, in education besides the pre-school level (2 years). It is after this level that one can become gainfully employed to which even there is greater level of quandary as to whether there will be job readily available or not. In Anomabo, besides the three public basic (first cycle) schools, as Methodist, Anglican and Roman Catholic, there are about three private basic schools which go

further to provide spaces for the nursery and kindergarten children. In addition, there is one public SHS (Kwagir Aggrey) named after one great scholar, Dr. Kwagir Aggrey who hailed from the place as I mentioned his name in my introduction, in honour of his great academic feat. There is also one private SHS. There is no tertiary institution in the community.

5.2 A DAY AT THE METHODIST PRIMARY SCHOOL

It was a cloudy Tuesday morning, around 07:30, as the pupils were already present tidying up the school compound. Everyone was joyfully sweeping both the compound and the classrooms; the boys in particular collecting the rubbish and dumping them in a very big blue metal trash can which was situated outside the school premises. All these activities were supervised by the school prefects and their respective “sectional” leaders. There were four teachers standing by watching proceedings.

By 08:10, the bell rang and all the pupils ran helter-skelter from different directions to the assembly ground for morning devotion and announcements. The pupils in pairs smartly marched into their classrooms afterwards. One boy nippily ran and cleaned the chalk board to be made ready for the day’s lesson. No sooner than later, the classroom was as quiet as the cemetery as the class teacher entered. The male teacher greeted; “Good morning class”. In harmony, all the pupils stood on their feet and responded unanimously, “Good morning Sir”.

The teacher checked the attendance by marking the class’ register. He afterwards he reviewed the previous lesson by asking them series of leading questions. The pupils who had knowledge about the questions raised their hands. Randomly, the teacher called the pupils to answer the questions. As some of the pupils struggled to catch the teacher’s attention to answer the asked questions, some were also clandestinely ducking their heads under their desks; they were not prepared at all. The pupils who answered the questions correctly were applauded. Those who had their answers wrong were made to stand for sometime.

The teacher then wrote the subject and the topic for the lesson on the chalk board. He called one of the pupils to read to the class to repeat after her. It was class 5 and the lesson was “English Language” with the topic “Auxiliary Verbs”. The teacher carefully explained verbally the

concepts he intended for the pupils to grasp. Spasmodically, he would tell them to keep quiet and pay attention when he realized some were making noise. He also interspersed the explanations with the questions as the lesson progressed.

No pupil could chip in any question or contribution unless the teacher had given the green light. He also allowed the pupils to ask questions whenever one did not understand something being said. But prior to that, you had to raise your hand first to be called. When the actual teaching was done, he put five questions on the chalk board for the pupils to answer. He moved among them as the children were working to ensure that they did cheat. The children exerted more effort in concealing their answers from their colleagues than the effort they applied in reasoning. They were closely sitting in pairs. It was unimaginable how they could prevent their colleagues from craning their necks to peep their answers.

When the time stipulated for the exercise was due, he made the class prefect collect them and place them to his table. He marked the exercises and scored them over 10 and awarded the outstanding pupils with pencils. Those who had some wrong were made to write the corrections.



Photo 16: Class 5 pupils in the classroom writing their exercise

As shown in this ethnographic snippet above, the structure of the school as this is articulated in Anomabo (and beyond) could be described as hierarchical. The entire school from the Primary to the Junior High School level is headed by one of the teachers who by dint of hard work, long service, competence, etc., had been promoted by the standards of the Ghana Education Service's (GES) code of ethics. She superintends over the daily running of the school. She has a deputy (assistant head teacher) who also executes quite similar responsibilities as directed by the head and acts in her stead when the head is not around. Each teacher acts as a class teacher ensuring smooth running of that class.

Among the students, there are school prefects who act on behalf of the teachers. Though they are seen as colleagues, yet they carry the authority bestowed on them by the teachers. As a result, their colleagues accord them the necessary respect. In every class too, there are class prefects who act on behalf of their respective class teachers if the teachers are not present.

Within the community the people see the education domain as a very hopeful that has the potential to compensate current economic plights social changes impose on them, yet they have their own uncertainties as to how real these hopes could be achieved.

5.3 THE PERCEPTION OF THE PEOPLE ABOUT EDUCATION

Intrinsically, the children are motivated to stay in school by concentrating on what they hope they will become, like accountants, bankers, teachers, physicians, engineers, lawyers nurses, etc., if they endeavour to complete their studies successfully. This rationale, and against all odds given the level of structural processes of marginalization that is unfolding, is keeping some of the children, especially those from the "elite" side of the community, on their oars.

According to Kweku (a class 3 pupil); *"School has what it takes to shape my future for the best life. It is through school that I will be able to secure better job in future so I can support my family, community and country."* This is his response when I asked him about the purpose of education in life. His statement "school has what it takes to shape my future" points to a fact that, children are future oriented in their daily lives and it is through education that such futuristic aspirations could be materialized.

The notion of school brings to bear the economic benefits among the members within the community as they anticipate the children will be able to secure jobs with better remuneration than the traditional occupation (fishing) after they have graduated. The children for that matter enroll in schools with a hope of the knowledge required for their entry into future activities. According to Mark (class 4 pupil), *“Provided I am able to complete school successfully, I will be equipped with the knowledge that can offer me a better job in future and consequently earns me sustainable salary that I will be able to support my family”*. The statements indicate the inventive consequences that education is setting in the community where information is transmitted to the children for the aim of empowering them with requisite skills and knowledge to procure profitable jobs in the future.

Additionally, the notion of education is associated with the greater optimism and high aspirations among the members of the community especially among the non-fishing folks (parents) in Anomabo. Their dream is to see their children graduating to become accountants, teachers, lawyers, health practitioners, bankers, etc. Therefore, if there is no strong financial support for sending the children to school, they work so hard even to their wit ends to provide for their kinds. Once again, this is purely the vision of the non-fisher folks of the community. *“If it comes to the point that I should sell myself to educate my three children I will do that wholeheartedly because education pays, only that it is a long time investment.”* This was a statement by Emmanuel (a policeman a local who came to spend the week end).

Besides the economic importance connected to education in the community, education once again is seen with a rise in social status. Schooling is seen as the conduit through which the status of the youth can be raised. This is what uncle Fii (my key informant) said; *“Traditional occupation like fishing wins no respect from the society.”*

It is also an established fact that, the families in which educated children hail from within the community are highly respected. Sister Ama (parent) indicated; *“It is just great to have your children educated. The families that have educated their members are accorded greater respect within our community.”* If these are their general views about education, then why this conflict?

Despite the positive connotations people conceive about education in the community; education has its own propensity for shortcomings. In this community, very urgent questions are raised for the handful graduates who are in the community with no promising jobs to answer. Circumstances as these are looked with great contempt especially among the fisher folks. For instance, uncle Red (informant) remarked; *“it is abomination for one to graduate from school and just walk about in this community, it is unimaginable”*.

Children are motivated to go to school based on what they could see themselves becoming in the future after graduation. Conversely, this hope is beset with a lot of uncertainties as to whether they should opt for education or continue their fishing career, hence this conflict existing between these two domains.

5.4 PARENTS' QUANDARY ABOUT EDUCATION

Parents at times are found at the crossroads when it comes to the certainty of acting in the best interest of their wards as far as education is concerned. This is indicated in what uncle Fii, my key informant said when we were sharing thoughts on the prospect of education for the children in Anomabo; *“We appreciate the fact that our children take education in future; notwithstanding, the money involved in educating the children is very frightening and it is enough to deter us from making education a number one priority for them. This is because, getting employment after school is another headache... there are no jobs after school so the children can pay back what they were provided for.”* Aunt Akua (informant who is a parent of 6) also chided, *“I heard on the news recently that there is an association of University graduates who are unemployed. This is very appalling. Hmm! Will our children have jobs to do after their graduation?”* This is very unfortunate brother. It is no surprise my nephew (Bismark, the university graduate I mentioned in the early part of this chapter) *who had completed university is still being catered for by my brother in Accra. His colleagues here are well off than him after all. Even the very small ones are all hassling at the shore. So it is not easy deciding on what the children should do, whether to go school or join us in fishing.* For records purposes, indeed, there is an tention group as Unemployed Graduates Association (UGA) in Ghana. I will soon compare Bismark's case with 7 year old school dropout (Yaw) very soon to augment my argument that the agency of fishing makes one a provider unlike the education domain.

Besides, lack social ties (“whom you know” as we normally say in Ghana) also discourages parents from sending their children to “first class” schools. This is reflected in social connections the parents “have” to enable them send their children to “better” schools, and finding lucrative jobs after graduation. According to uncle Yaw (informant), *“If you don’t have or don’t know anybody, it is very knotty to get a good school for your ward. It is the same story when seeking for jobs after graduation. There is a very intelligent boy who came here from Accra recently (referring to auntie Akua’s nephew-Bismark), he has completed university (first degree), yet he has no job. He is just staying at home doing nothing. His father doesn’t know any “big” man to assist him secure one. This is very hard for us...”* This will also lead us to turn to the children to unfold their uncertainties.

5.5 CHILDREN’S UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT EDUCATION

When the youth were given the opportunity to voice out their views in the course of our Focus Group Discussions (FGD) concerning their dilemma about education, they did not hide their feelings at all. They are aware of the numerous espoused importance of education, yet there are several constraints which serve as bottlenecks for reaping such well-drummed benefits. Their feelings of uncertainty were encompassed in the doubts they have about their capability of matching up to the financial onus and the intelligence level required for higher education. This is what Kweku (a pupil) had to say, *“You see, it is feasible to go through the first cycle because it is free. But, it doesn’t end there...one has to proceed to the SHS, but there, it is not free and my parents can’t afford that.”* Lizzy (class 6 pupil) also added, *“Some of us are not intelligent enough to match up to the studies at the SHS level. Our level of concentration in the classroom is very low.”*

The youth also expressed their dismay in relation to the lack of social ties as their parents must have to get them to good schools. They opined that, one needs to be admitted into a good school before one can pass properly which is the prerequisite for entering into the tertiary institutions. According to Wofa (a pupil who was part of the FGD), *“You see, my parents are fisher folks and they can’t speak English language. They are not connected to somebody at a school like Mfantshipim. They don’t know anybody there. The schools we can attend if possible are the less endowed ones in our villages. These schools lack quality facilities that will foster our success.”*

Kofi (a class 5 pupil) repulsively intimated, *“I don’t trust the computer system at all. The whole system is skewed.”* What Kofi implies here is that the CSSPS is just an unfair process. The rationale behind his statement is that, there are a lot of discriminations and discrepancies involved in the selection process for students into SHS.

The youth unequivocally gave out their views about the discrimination involved in the system. They in fact, they showed their lack of confidence in the process. This was Wofa (a class 5 pupil among the children for the FGD), *“It is impossible for us here to compete with the children in the cities especially Accra. They have access to quality teaching and as a result pass very well. Their parents are rich and they are also “closer” to the computers, no wonder they always get the first class schools in the country. Even if they don’t pass well they get admission into the good schools.”*

The responses from them resonated with the experience we have been encountering every year during the selection process. Parents, teachers and other stakeholders have time and again opposed this process fervidly claiming the inauthenticity of the entire process. This is because most children from the “deprived” areas after performing creditably in their BECE would find themselves placed at less endowed schools. There are also cases whereby the children who performed abysmally in prestigious JHS are placed in the well-endowed SHS. It is sometimes too funny and very incredible to have females pupils being sent to male schools and the vice versa. All these raise eye brows about the entire CSSPS.

It is no surprise that majority of the youth among the fishing folks see education as waste of time, effort and money to go through all these challenging phases and ultimately not getting any job after graduation. Meanwhile, their colleagues who took to fishing are comparatively making it in their own small way. For instance, if you use 15 years for education plus the 6 years you started, one is already 21 years, which to them is a waste of time. At such age you still have to depend on your parent at time. The youth then have a song that they sing to justify their choice for fishing. This is sung anywhere and at any time to set their conscience free from the expectations “foreigner” may have about them as far as education is concerned. Here goes the song;

Mama, I won't go to school
Rather, I will go to fishing
School doesn't give bonus
Fishing will always give you bonus
Why do I waste my time in the school?
No job for me after wasting my precious time in school
Mama, I will go to the sea.

5.6 THE HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

The people of Anomabo belong to the *Fante* ethnic group in Ghana, who are *Akan* speaking people and comprises of the Akwapim, Asanti, Kwahu, Bono, Ahanta, Nzima, and among other minor groups. These *Akan* people practice matrilineal kinship system with the basic assumption of tracing the descent from the female line. Everyone belongs to the *abusua*²⁴ with the *abusua panyin*²⁵. The *abusua panyin* and his elders ensure the successful running of the daily activities of the *abusua*. The *abusua* relates to a common female ancestor through whom all members trace matrilineal descent with the depth of about four generations back. These matrilineal clans which are spread over the whole of Akanland “number not more than eight” (Bleek 1987:139).

According to Overå, matrilineage in a town is divided into many matrilineal entities, domestic groups or extended families, which in the Fante language is referred to as the *fie*²⁶. This is a house, or compound, where a matrilineal entity resides. The *head of the fie* is a man or a woman who has built the house, or inherited it through the maternal line. If the owner of the house is absent, dead or lives elsewhere, the head of the *fie* is a woman or man who through the maternal line has been ascribed this position. Most persons live in such a house, but there are many variations in the arrangements for eating and sleeping and so on, so to define the *fie* as the household is somewhat difficult (Overå 1992).

²⁴ Abusua is common term for lineage in Ghana. But in this sense, it represents matrilineage. It can also refer to a large group of people, the matrilineal clan, those who believe themselves relate to a distant putative (mythical) ancestress

²⁵ Abusua panyin is the lineage head who is principally a male who is quite advanced in age and deemed as the intermediary between the living and the dead

²⁶ Fie in this sense implies “the household”, “home” mostly.

From the field as I referred to Overå (1992), it took some months for me to fully identify who really live in one particular house just behind where I stayed: who was the child of whom, who sleep in which room, who cook for whom, who was a grandchild or just relative residing there for some time and helping in the house. Cooking was also very varying. Anybody available especially the women prepares for the entire household and anybody available eats what is served except the very small children whose are most often reserved until they come back from wherever they went (usually at the beach). The wives of the sons and the male tenants in the house come every evening with the “dinner baskets” nicely bathed and dressed for the night with their small kids if they have.

Basically, the size and the composition of the households vary with season and with life cycle of its members. The *Fantes* practice a residence pattern according to which both men and women continue to live with their matrikin after marriage, so the husband and the wife have separate residence and economy. The wife works and cooks in her own *fie*, but in the evening she goes to the *fie* of her husband to bring him the evening meal and sleep there. The most common household model in Anomabo is a combination of the conjugal household and the matrilineal residential group; a flexible network of persons, with arrangements for production, reproduction and consumption, which varies both over time and space.

Although the people are characteristically matrilineal, patrilineal elements are nonetheless often found in their matrilineage. For instance when it comes into inheritance, where it often happens that sons inherit some of their father’s property although it is supposed to be given to the father’s matrilineage (Bleek 1987). Some will argue that this is more likely in fishing communities, where the inheritance consist of more movable goods like a canoe, than in agricultural communities where the most valuable good to inherit is land (Vallenge 1986).

The number of people residing (eating and sleeping) in the *fie* is very unstable among the people of Anomabo. The interviews I had among 13 households, I had persons varying from 11 to 48 living in the house or compound. The informants at one time found it quite unpleasant for me to enquire the number of persons residing in that particular house; “*Is this also part of what you are here for? Why do you want to know everything about us? Very soon you will begin to enter into our bed rooms and count our beds*”. This is what one teenage mother told me. Yet, it was very knotty knowing precisely who “belonged” to the house for the time being.

The composition of the households with such huge number of people ranging from 11 to 48 and all eating from the same pot raises the question of “how do they survive” This usher our discussion into their livelihoods and livelihood strategies.

5.7 LIVELIHOODS

At any given time, people’s ability to pursue different livelihood strategies is more or less relied on the basic material and social, tangible and intangible assets that people have in their disposal. From the perspective of economic metaphor, such livelihood resources may be seen as the “capital” base from which different productive terms are derived from which livelihoods are constructed. There are four among the numbers of “capital” which I want to discuss. Within each of these areas there is a wide range of literature and much argument concerning the measurement and definition which have been raised and it is as a result I want to consider Scoones (1999) for a review of some of these arguments.

To begin with, natural capital comprises natural resources stocks (soil, water, air, genetic resources, etc.) and environmental services (hydrological cycle, pollution sinks, etc.) from which resources flows and services useful for livelihoods are derived.

Secondly, economic or financial capital includes the capital base (cash, credit/debt, savings, and other economic assets, including basic infrastructure and production equipment and technologies) which are essential for the pursuit of any livelihood strategy.

Moreover, human capital comprises of the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health and physical capability important for the successful pursuit of different livelihood strategies.

To couple with, social capital embodies the social resources (networks, social claims, social relations, affiliations, associations) upon which people draw when pursuing different livelihood strategies requiring coordinated actions.

In other to create livelihoods, therefore, people must combine the “capital” endowments that they have access to and control over. These may be made up of personal capabilities, tangible assets (e.g. stores and material resources) and intangible assets (claims and access) (Chambers and

Conway 1992). Moser also argues that “community’s coping ability is influenced by its social capital- the trust, reciprocal arrangements, and social network linking people” (1996: x).

From such point of view, the people of Anomabo are well-placed, in that they have almost all these stated “capitals” and are utilized in various ways which to some extent secure the livelihood for even those in abject “poverty”. They have the sea as the principal natural resource which is highly exploited within the community; human capital in the form of labour force. The people are very skillful and knowledgeable in the field of fishing as I have already discussed using phenomenological perspective.

There is a high level of childbirth among the people which intends feeds the labour force for fishing. Fishing is labour intensive and the people of Anomabo have these human resources to help meet the requirement.

There are some forms of associations and or affiliations which enable them to cope. Within Anomabo community, there are a number of camps which bring them together for welfare and other services (especially when one is bereaved, contributions are made to support the one).

However, the economic or financial capital is woefully inadequate:- only a small proportion of the entire population within the community own the means of production (canoe, nets and out board motor) though almost every one aspires to have one. When we cast our minds back on the sharing of the catch as I discussed (chapter 3), the level of structural exploitation by the canoe owners has become culturally accepted (conventional) and as a result only few who have are well-off. So then, the question is, how do the majority survive? This places a lot of burden on the masses to resort to livelihood strategies which are inevitable for them within the society. The canoe owners invariably have become “fetished” as the people have accepted that all their lives are hooked to these few people. Every *osankonyi* owes it a duty to live by the dictates of the canoe owner else disobedience could cause the one to loss his career.

5.7.1 LIVELIHOOD STRATAGIES

The adaptive mechanisms of the people are worth discussing and I am going to devote this section to analyze some of those I identified to help understand their life world. These are the modalities for survival during the lean season of fishing which is termed as the hardship period

by the people. According to Mensah-Abrampa, “hardship is a temporary situation where one finds it difficult to meet the “usual” needs of one’s household” (1998:142).

What is locally called “hassling” is one of the coping strategies adopted by the children in the community for their survival. On the day where there are brisk activities on the shore, that is, during the peak seasons for fishing, almost all the children along the coast trudge to the shore for one apparent reason; to make money through hassling. The children try every means possible to get fish to sell for money. They steal from the fish mongers’ pans while they are measuring the fish or from the canoes, and or everywhere necessarily. In many cases, the fishermen upon arriving safely throw some of the fish at the children at the beach. Here, those that are “strong” and “smart” among the throng get the fish in the course of the struggling. This leads to various forms of disagreements which sometimes end up in fighting.

This is not just an event but has, rather become a way of life for these children. It has become the window through which these children negotiate their livelihoods, independence, etc., especially where their needs are not met by their parents. Their efforts do not go unrewarded since there are readily available markets for every single fish each child would get at the shore. This serves as a great extrinsic motivation for them so they cannot afford to stop going to the shore. This activity by the children latently relieves some of the parents from the burden of thinking so much on how to provide for their children. This is the profound statement made by Yaw (7 year old boy who dropped out of school at class 2 as I mentioned in comparison with Bismark) at the shore when I was playing soccer with in one hot sunny afternoon; *“I don’t ask my parents for money because they know when I come to the shore I make money by hassling. They know that the jersey I am wearing, my short pants and this pair of slippers were all bought by me. I sometimes even purchase food for my younger siblings when I have the money. I can’t stop coming here. Any time I don’t come I will lose my ‘bonus’ (money).”*. According to the children, there is great reward for their effort at the shore. This shows the level of agency fishing creates for the children to become providers unlike education I mentioned in the introduction of this section. This child at this age is considered a provider even to his siblings beside the relief he has given to the parent to provide certain basic needs for him. Inversely, education will rather make you to be catered for even at the age far older than Yaw. Now like I mentioned earlier, let us compare the case of Yaw and Aunt Akua’s nephew (Bismark) who according to the aunt even after graduation is still

depending on the father. So, what do you think will be the choice of the parents and the children between education and fishing? Who among these two is more resourceful now and will be accorded much respect in the community?

As a result, they have become so much independent that they are allowed to do whatever they want even at that very tender age. They prefer to stay at the shore based on this (*bonus*) to going to school. There is the idea that when they go to school they will forfeit their *bonus* at the shore and there is no way they can make up for that in other ways. So even, should they be in the classroom, all their concentration will be at the shore. No wonder they sing that song I mentioned earlier to buttress their choice for fishing instead of school.



Photo 17: A section of the children hassling at the shore



Photo 18: A boy (Yaw) displaying his fish (bonus) after hassling

To add to, borrowing is one of the basic livelihood strategies which prominently features during the period of hardship. During the lean season especially, almost everyone borrows from the few who are in the position to help. The items borrowed ranges from money, food, clothing and anything that will make life more meaningful to them. There are some of the borrowers who are unable to pay back so they are made to render services like running errands in return. When the amount involved is too high, one can make his/her child especially the girls to go and stay with the one creditor and work for as a form of payment.

To couple with, selling of their possessions is also resorted to as means of livelihood strategy. This is very pervasive among the fishermen during the lean season. Normally, when they make their money during the peak season, they buy a lot of items ranging from clothing to television sets, sound systems, etc., notwithstanding, the moment the situation turns and nothing is being made from their fishing business, they selling all these “properties”. *“I had to sell my possessions last year else my wife would have left me. All my six children considered me as a very irresponsible father because I was not proving “chop money” (example, housekeeping*

money). My case is not exceptional at all. This is what we do to make living during the lean season.” a fisherman informant mentioned.

Moreover, migration is another strategic means of livelihood during the lean season. At this period, some of the fishermen travel in groups or individuals to other places like Kokrobite (Accra), Axim, Secondi, Elmina, and as far as Ivory Coast and Liberia for fishing. This in most cases yields very positive results so it has become a routine. One does not need any form of formal application to be accepted on board of a canoe at where they travel to. They have already built the relationship and they seem to know each other by instinct. They can sometimes stay as long as the lean season is still on until they hear the situation is alleviated.

Finally, reciprocity is also a strategic means of coping with life and its vicissitudes among the people. According to Baum and Ziersch, reciprocity is a cognitive social capital. It is the provision of resources by an individual or group to another individual or group, and the payment of resources of equivalent value by these recipients to the original provider. Reciprocal relationships such as strong patron-client relationships are vital social assets. Reciprocity and exchanges also increase trust (2003).

Charity according to Mary Douglas in Mauss, “The Gift”; is meant to be a free gift, a voluntary, unrequited surrender of resources (Mauss, 1990: vii). Mauss continued that, “gift that does nothing to enhance solidarity is a contradiction” (1990: vii). Gifts should be based on purity of motives of the giver. However, nothing is rendered freely among the youth (especially the opposite sex) of Anomabo community. Like Mauss cited, “only the small gift that a Trobriand husband regularly gave could count”. He continued, “Pure gift? Nonsense! The Trobriand husband is actually recompensing his wife for sexual services” (Mauss, 1990:viii).

The fishermen upon arriving at the beach throw some of their catch to the children thronged there to struggle over it. Invariable, the fishermen at any given point in time have these children at their disposal to engage them. Some are sent on errands throughout the day for no fee. No matter what the case may be, each benefits from the other.

As the “Potlatch” (Mauss, 1990:vii) is a system of total giving and spells out that each gift is part of a system of reciprocity in which the honour of the giver and the recipient are engaged; a total system in that every item of status or of spiritual or material possession is implicated for

everyone in the whole community; it is a big no as far as the people of Anomabo are concerned. It is the individual, especially the young girls who as a result of their inability to meet their daily needs from their parents set off to the street (beach) and boldly negotiate for their own prices and subsequently pay back by offering what they “have” to their respective donors. Emelia (a school dropout) chipped in this, *“I can’t continue to go hungry, wear scruffy cloths, and look very dirty. I use what I have (my vagina) to get what I want. I must look representable and healthy”*.

Other form of reciprocity within the community is the one which occurs between the food stuff sellers and the fishermen. This is very straight forward and very simple. The exchange is between fish and food, and seems very direct and prompt. There are some parties who are bounded so much so that, the food sellers need not to be physically present at the shore, yet her due of the fish will be sent to her in the house by the partner (fisherman) and the vice versa. The fisherman will arrange with someone at the shore or may be the wife to send the fish to the food seller’s home and before dusk, the food seller will also show up with what is due the fisherman. This form of reciprocity is purely pivoted around trust. The most common food items which change hands include rice, maize, *dokon* and *gari*. The fishermen give out whatever kind of fish they lay hands on. According to uncle Fii, *“There is this woman who has been my friend all this while as a result of the items which we exchange. I give her fish anytime I get some from the sea...she also supplies me gari and maize accordingly.”*

The choice of the livelihood strategy adopted by the household and the individuals in general can either help alleviate their situation or worsen it. Mandel in her work on the practical issues in livelihood strategies states that, access is influenced by the “the cultural norms that comprise the social institutions limiting access for some people and facilitating it for others” (2006:343). The poor and the poorest try every means possible to effectively manage their relatively limited resources though they obtain very small income and have few tangible asset, they are capable of maintaining their households in the course of the year.

It could therefore be infer from the above discussion that, based on the materialistic approach used here, both the education and fishing domain have of roles to play in the lives of the children of Anomabo. It is demonstrated that, the domain of fishing creates a forum of agency that education does not offer at all. From the two personalities (Yaw and Bismark) as I have

mentioned in this chapter, who symbolically represent fishing and education, shows how fishing can make one a provider at the very tender age and education inversely could also make one dependent at the old age. This I think is enough to stretch the conflict between education and fishing to a greater extent among the fisher folks of Anomabo.

CHAPTER SIX

SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS BEHIND THE CONFLICT

While I discussed in chapter 5 the agency that the domain of fishing provides, I will like to probe further into some sociocultural factors which act as catalysts for such agency. This work is orientated towards the assumption that understanding the lives of children who are torn in between work (fishing) and school and, in order to do that we must study the lives and the roles of these children in their sociocultural context (see also Ennew, 2003). As should have been made clear from the preceding chapters, the study also assumes that the context in which children exercise their agency is culturally and situationally specific (Desiree, 2003).

I want to argue that, besides the economic factors which hamper school enrolments, sociocultural factors also have enormous influence on the choice between education and fishing. This chapter will help us answer the first question of the thesis as looking at the aspects of fishing which displaces the children from school. The analytical perspective I will employ here will be the intergenerational relations in Ghana.

6.1 TRADITIONAL EXPECTATIONS OF SOCIAL RELATIONS (TIES) IN GHANA

The rifeness of intergenerational relations is one of the central themes pervasive in the data I collected from the field. Kweku (a 12 year old boy who was helping the mother to convey the fish bought in that morning to the house) made this assertion in reference to his mother: “*She is my mother; I am her child. We owe each other a duty...including my other relations*”. Sister Esi (Kweku’s mother, the boy I quoted above) as she was supervising the children to carry the home also referred to her children: “*They are my children...they are my future and hope...*”

According to Gyekye, in Ghana, the older generation perceive themselves in the children, and vice versa (1996); its reflection evidenced in above quotations. It is generally accepted that children represent the future of the community; the future that consists in the entire identity of the people that defines them.

Although there is a grand acceptance of parent-child position in terms of social hierarchy, the feedback I received for this study showed diffused parent-child responsibilities in terms of provision of care. It is the concerted responsibility of parents and children to take care of each other as indicated by authors like Gyekye (1996) and Boakye-Boaten (2010).

Intergenerational relationships are powered by cultural values of reciprocity, responsibility and respect per the data collected. These values underlie intergenerational relations and influence the behaviour of children within the community.

Reciprocity, like I discussed under the livelihood strategies (see chapter 4) implies almost the same here. However, this from the data means the models that uphold the need for people to share collective responsibility for each other. This derives one of its sources from traditional adage as asserted by uncle Yaw (a fisher man and a father of seven children) as we were having FGD at the parliament, "*One finger cannot lift a thing*". Kwodwo (also a fisherman and a father 8) also posited during same period of the FGD, "*The right hand bathes the left hand, as the right hand bathes the left hand*".

These adages indicate how insufficient and self-inadequate the individual is. They demonstrate their self-inadequacy and how personal nobilities are not enough to fulfil their needs entirely. As they use the traditional sayings, Uncle Yaw and Kwodwo are implying the need for cooperation with each other. For instance, all the five fingers are needed to be able to lift something. It is for a fact, that when we are bathing, the left hand cannot wash itself; the right hand is needed to wash the left hand, and vice versa. Reciprocity thus initiates individuals towards a shared life. This is in connection with what I have discussed previously as the children including Yaw are encouraged to hassle in order to support themselves and their families (siblings).

The indispensability of reciprocity again relates to lack of effective social welfare system in Ghana. According to Kwodwo once again mentioned, "*The children need to support our effort to cater for them...also the children are our future. It is onus upon both the young and old to take care of each other*". Sister Esi (a fish monger) whom I was helping to smoke her fish in one Saturday evening cited, "*It is necessary we take good care of the children...so that they will in turn take good care of us*". Children are seen therefore as a form of guarantee for parents and members of the society.

By implication, intergenerational relations are shared understanding between children and the older generation. According to Akos (a daughter of Esi who was also helping to smoke the fish in that evening), *“Children uphold the belief that the onus lie on them to take care of their parents... the children who do not help their parents...as well as their kins are considered good for nothing”*.

The children see it obligatory to reciprocate the care they receive from their family and kinship relations. For example, Kweku (a class 6 pupil) mentioned: *“It is onus on me to give back to my parents whenever I can...I assume their roles when they are unable; I go to fishing, I cook. I also give them money whenever I have”*.

Preferably, reciprocity is undertaken in material terms. Uncle Yaw without mentioning the obvious stated that it is best preferred that children “pay” their debts in deeds, uses “work” to replace “payment”. He states, *“Anytime children work to help you it is admired more...it shows that they appreciate what you are doing for them...”* This portrays that children are expected to “pay” their debts once they are capable to do so (Nsamenang, 2002).

In its most crass form, according to Pellow (1977), reciprocity ascribes a concrete value to any transaction. It further states that if one party gives or does something for the other, there is a corresponding return to make, incumbent upon the role relationship. No one receives something for nothing. Everything is given a material worth. Nothing is left to chance in Ghana; notwithstanding, the demands individuals make on one another is often implicit (Nunkunya, 2003; Boakye-Boaten, 2010).

The moment the children are old enough they start to reciprocate the care they receive from their parents. Nsamenang (2002) indicates that children start offsetting their ‘debts’ from an early age. By acknowledging their position in the society, children act as active agents taking active decisions once they are aware of the roles that are expected of them. Akos posited, *“I should help my parents...because it is my responsibility”*.

Another cultural value that underlies intergenerational relations is responsibility. As indicated from the data, responsibility is embodied in the contributions children offer and the roles they play to help their family. Children learn their responsibilities through socialization process. According to Ebo (a fisherman and a father of 8 who was part of the FGD at the parliament),

“When you are raising children, it implies you are training them to be responsible adults in future...so that they can perform their roles in the family and society”.

According to Gyekye (1996), the methods of raising children to become responsible can be referred to as instruments of child socialization. In the data, one of such outstanding instrument within the community is work especially among the fisher folks. As Kwesi (10 year old boy who visited me at home on one Tuesday afternoon because he did not see me on the previous day) put it, *“I feel responsible when I work because that will make me a competent and successful adult”*. In line with this, Nsameng (2004:111) states that *“work is an indigenous instrument that is used to train and integrate children into the social fabric and economic life of the people”*.

In the parents’ feedback we infer cultural assumptions that children have high propensity to be irresponsible and lazy if they are left alone without appropriate training in work. Nana (a father of 4 and a mason who was moderating the FGDs) cited, *“As you know children are likely to be lazy and silly; you have to teach them the right things to do...as they work, they become responsible. This is child training”*. The parents believe that as the children are engaged in work they will become responsible people.

Ebo (a parent) mentioned during my interaction with him when he was mending his fishing net one Thursday morning at his home, *“we are already poor, our children cannot choose to be lazy...it is forbidden. Children ought to take responsible roles so that they do not become stupid”*. Laziness is connected to stupidity and it is assumed that both can be cured by hard work. The parents help the children by disciplining them. Nana chipped in again, *“... the rod of discipline drives laziness and folly far from the child”* (Proverbs 22: 15).

Therefore children are nurtured in a way that would be deemed unrefined in the Western context. For instance, they are usually caned and scolded publicly if they do not perform their responsibility. According to Kweku (a child), *“If you fail to perform your roles and duties...you are severely flogged by your parents”*. The severity of the punishment which goes along with the non-performance of duties is believed to make children behave appropriately. This was consolidated in the following reactions by uncle Yaw during the FGD, *“A child’s fingers are not scalded by a piece of hot yam which the mother puts into his palms”*. The implication is that, even though discipline inflicts pains to the child, the benefits of discipline in shaping the child

for successful future cannot be underestimated. As a result, children are not spared punishments when they fail to perform responsibilities.

Interestingly, the children in this work remember vividly these experiences of discipline with love. They explain these experiences in terms of the fortitude of their parents to enable them grow up to become responsible adults. For instance, Akos related while we were smoking the mother's fish, *"As a child, I believe am going through enough training to be a responsible person in future. I am happy; I know that my parents are helping me, though sometimes very hard"*.

Children start to take responsibilities early in life. There is no prescribed age when children are apportioned responsibilities. It is generic to find children, as young as two years, striving to get a chore completed in the house or at the shore. Normally, when the very young children are not able to find anything their skills could help them do at home, they tag along the older ones with drinking cups in their hands to the community stand pipes and the wells, to fetch water. Akos posited again but this time she was carrying her 6 month old male sibling, *"Honestly, the infants are usually irritating, as you have to walk at their pace, rather than benefits. You cannot stop them either. No!"*. You do not stop children from trying to achieve their cultural goal of responsibility which will earn them respect.

The moment the children show little signs of maturity to assist in any work, children begin to perform various forms of responsibilities. This is shown in the preceding responses by some of the child-informants Kweku as we were at the shore one Monday morning waiting for the *asankɔfo* who went for fishing: *"I do not know when I started taking responsibilities...it's all about being able to work and take roles with the right skills"*.

Children even though routinely determine what they want to do, parents in the Ghanaian society also assign children with specific roles and duties depending on how matured the child is. For example, uncle Yaw, as I and his eldest son were helping him to mend his fishing net on one Friday morning at the beach; *"I know the amount of work every child can accomplish. I also know the type of work each child is able to do at the shore...they are my children I know their strength. I make sure that I do not overburden them"*.

Children begin to take on more difficult and specialized responsibilities as they increase in competence. Kweku who was with me at the video center watching a football match between Liverpool and Arsenal on one Saturday afternoon had this to say; *“Right now, I am grown enough to take care of my siblings. I know how to do everything they might need when my mother is away. I hassle at the shore and make bonus”*.

Children’s responsibilities are gender structured. For instance, Akos described how she helps her mother when we were smoking the fish; *“I help my mother to process the fish; I take care of my younger siblings when my parents are not around. Now even look , Paa is at my back. I also cook for them. I sell fish at the market”*. Kweku at the shore also posited, *“I help my father to mend his net. I help cart the fish from my father’s canoe when they arrive at the shore. I also hassle at the shore. I will never sell at the market. I cannot bear the name calling that will come from my friends. It is considered girls’ duties to sell”*.

We see that children assist their parents in all duties as their abilities and competence permit them. They are expected to participate both in household duties and family occupation or income generating activity.

In situations where responsibility and understanding are seen, children express concern towards their parents’ circumstance. Ben, a class 6 pupil whom I met at the shore reported, *“I know that my mother is finding it very difficult to make ends meet. She won’t tell me. I am aware of it, no matter how hard she tries to conceal it”*. Yielding to parents’ needs in difficult situations shows parents that the children are not just their children, but their friends as well. It indicates that they are there for them. Kweku at the shore stated *“It is my responsibility to help my mother any time. I have to support her. After all, I am her child I have to be there for her.”*

It is traditionally acknowledged that parents alone cannot perform all the tasks that need to be done to keep the family running. Uncle Yaw while we were sitting in the parliament gave out traditional saying; *“If all people were to carry the heavens, no one individual would become a hunchback”*. No one can carry the heavens alone! This saying shows the importance of sharing responsibilities. It means if individuals bear a responsibility together no one person would suffer, regardless of how elaborated or drudgery the responsibility is.

It is also important to note the orientation to the future that is attached to children's responsibilities. For example, this is how Comfort a pupil at class 6 in the midst of the FGD conceived of, as part of the reasons, why she is selling at the market; *"I want to become a banker. I am saving money towards that. When I complete JSS and my parents are not able to support me fully, I could be in position to complement their effort at the SHS level"*.

Parents expressed the rationale for training children to be hard working and of transferring future skills to children as the basis of assigning children with responsibilities. According to uncle Yaw in one of our usual conversation in the parliament mentioned that, *"we give the children responsibilities in order for them to become hard working. It is the normal way of bringing up children"*. Nana also mentioned at the same time at the parliament that, *"children work so that they will become more competent when they grow up and take over from us"*. Giving responsibilities to children is a traditional approach of transferring parental skills to children. Aunt Akua mentioned when I was with her in the house for instance that, *"giving children responsibilities provides the means to transfer parental occupational skills to children"*. Sister Esi (a parent) further relates in one afternoon when we were at the shore relaxing that; *"We acquired our occupational skills from our parents, and they, in turn, had theirs from their parents. We acquired these skills through the responsibilities we took to participate in their work"*.

Another central value of intergenerational relations is respect. Respect is the price given to children who have embraced their intergenerational roles and are additionally responsible. According to Sam, a 10 year old dropped out posited this during the FGD, *"Children who are responsible are shown great respect by their peers, parents and adults"*. According to uncle Yaw, at the video center one Friday evening when we had finished watching Arnold Schwarzeneger's "Commando" movie; *"Hardworking and responsible children always earn respect from everyone...respect is priceless"*. Children's wish to be accorded respectful and therefore respectable was confirmed in this saying by Comfort (a parent); *"A responsible child is a respectable child"*. Respect is a cultural value which is highly priced in Ghanaian communities (Nunkunya, 2003). It is as a result of this that a child, regardless of age, who lives on the compound of every home, makes the effort to assist their parents, siblings and elders.

A way to demonstrate how valuable you are as a child is by the provision of parental assistance. The measure of value you achieve in handling responsibilities connotes your level of success. This is reflected in the level of respect that is accorded you. According to Akos, *“The harder you work and the more responsibilities you take the more respect you earn...”* Respect is seen as the measure of responsibilities you take. The elements for earning respect are not only demonstrated through the courtesies children pay to adults. More important measures of respect are carried in work which is embedded in the responsibilities children take. In this community, work and responsibilities are closely knitted. Sister Esi, while we were processing her fish with the three daughters categorically stated, *“work is responsibility...you have to work before you can be responsible...”* Activities that are carried in work connote responsibility.

Courtesies are not priced as highly as responsibilities. Kodwo at the parliament cited this traditional saying to emphasize this point, *“It is not expensive to go to the market and buy words”*. This maxim implies that children could pretend to use courteous words as marks of respect. After all, there is no market where words are sold. Children are in this sense expected to demonstrate what they mean in deeds, not in words. Being respected as a child comes with great social benefits.

When elders respect you in the Ghanaian community, you are invariably placed in the category of elders by the elders and your peers. This is confirmed in the saying by Akua (the parent), *“A child who knows how to wash his hands eats with his elders”*. The meaning of this saying stems from the fact that in Ghanaians usually eat in groups from the same bowl. The people in a group are usually of similar age, occupational skills or status. If a child is found in a group of elders, he is seen as “hero” by his peers. It is a pedigree every child struggles to achieve. According to Wofa, (a fisherman and a parent of 7 children); *“It is every child’s wish to be found in the company of elders...it’s a dream”*.

As a confirmation of how highly they are regarded, children count the number of friends they have. Sam (a 10 year old school dropout) reported that, *“Highly respected and regarded children are those who have many friends...every child desires to be their friends”*. As relatedness is highly valued in the Ghanaian communities, every child strives to have as many friends as possible. Uncle Yaw related this in the statement; *“Respected children have more friends.... You are seen as a model for other kids”*.

Children also desire to make as many friends as possible as solitude is abhorred in the community. Sam (a parent) posited that, *“solitary is not a good sign...it is not liked here...”* Uncle Yaw further confirmed this in a traditional saying, *“Solitariness is a pitiable condition”*. Solitariness is loathsome and described as a pitiable condition, as it deprives the solitary individual of the opportunity to benefit from the helpfulness and support that emanate from communal life (Gyekye, 1996).

In addition, the essence of respect is buttressed by the belief that children could be punished by their ancestors if one is considered to be disrespectful. Nana (a parent) mentioned that, *“A wilfully disrespectful child could be punished by their ancestors”*. The punishment could be incurred from the ancestors when the parents or the elders of the child complain about the child’s disrespectful behaviours. For instance Akos stated that, *“As children, we believe that severe consequences await our disrespectful behaviours and actions”*.

Conversely, showing respect is believed to elicit blessings from the ancestors. According to aunt Akua, *“Our ancestors always bless children who are respectful and responsible”*. Some of the children also cited religious reasons to affirm the need for children to be respectful and responsible. Wofa for instance quoted the Bible, *“Children who are respectful are blessed by God and live longer because they bring honour to their parents”* (Exodus, 20:12). This is one of the popular Bible lessons children in Ghana are taught as the only commandment with a promise in the Bible.

In generic terms, these three underlying variables that are, reciprocity, responsibility and respect of the concept of intergenerational relation in Ghana demonstrate clearly the urgency of integrating children into fishing activities irrespective of their age within the community. It is therefore vital to consider that, the value of custom is derived from practice and it is through such quotidian practices that the potential parental occupational skills could be transferred to the next generation to ensure continuity of identity. This casts a reflection on the metaphoric tortoise and its shell statement to buttress the quote of the professor in this work. This in a long run attracts the children from the domain of education.

6.2 OPPOSING INTERESTS OF THE HOME, SCHOOL AND WORK

Arguably, the settings of the household, school and work introduce the children to different kinds of knowledge and privilege and produce various forms of agency. For one and has been made clear in the preceding chapters, there is a major rupture between what the children study in school and what they do in their homes and at the shore. As one of the teachers in the Methodist primary school I visited mentioned; *“The school cannot be an extension of the home...if the children are supposed to learn fishing, they should better stay at home”*.

The official curriculum of the school ushers the children into knowledge that is academic orientated while the informal curriculum of the household and the community presents to the children knowledge that is embedded in local modes of production and practice. The teacher added, *“The school is preparing the children for the future...they will apply the knowledge they are acquiring later in work”*.

The tenet of the traditional learning for children is normally to introduce the children directly into the routine practices of their homes and the community. Traditionally, every child is considered a resourceful and rightful participant in “adult” productive ventures of the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to Kodwo (parent), *“Every child is resourceful here...they play various roles, it could be small or big, to help their families”*. This brings in Kartz’s (2004:489) quote, *“what children learn about the environment and how they use this knowledge in their work are fundamental cultural forms and practices, shared in a social matrix and bearing a specific relationship to the prevailing social relations of production and reproduction”*.

The expertise the children get from work does not end in the learning situation. The children ought to put the knowledge gained into regular practice in their traditional enterprises. It is assumed as the children incessantly utilize the knowledge, it becomes homily to them and hence forms an integral part of their being. According to uncle Yaw, *“If you teach the children something and they go and sleep over it, how will they remember...they have to demonstrate it by doing something with the knowledge...after sometime, you can even wake them up from sleep and ask them to do something without them having any problem”*. It is expected of the children to preserve the knowledge they have acquired. Uncle Yaw asserted, *“Our future is destined in these children...they have to be abreast with what we do and preserve the skills for posterity”*.

The expertise procure through traditional activities are not considered as learning by the children; as they could not recall when exactly they had gained the occupational skills they possess. Neither of the youth who participated in the study could tell how he/she acquired the knowledge in work. The youth cannot see the learning process transpiring taking place, rather the learning process appears to be unconscious to them. Bourdieu & Passeron (1979:48) term this and define it as traditional learning and define it as “a familiarizing process in which the master transmits unconsciously, through exemplary conduct, principles he has never mastered consciously, to a receiver who internalizes them unconsciously”. This invariably becomes a catalyst which directly or indirectly pushes the children into the traditional occupation of their parents which displaces them from the domain of education.

The school-going children are oriented to envisage their reproductive endeavours later in life. The school learning is regulated by strict rules of discipline and predefined curriculum. Another teacher from the Anglican school upon my interaction with him also mentioned, “*We are aware of what the children are supposed to know. Everything is clearly stated in the teaching curriculum...we just follow the goals that are set by the Municipal Education Office at Saltpond*”. This shows how the education system is also theoretically formalized with no varying processes which may end up engaging the children on practical situations. Arguably, children are activity orientated so any field of endeavour devoid of such praxis end up expelling them from that field. These practicalities are what the home curriculum is unceasingly offering these children at Anomabo.

One important thing worth mentioning is the level of influences coming from the parents (home). According to Kerckhoff (1986), the socioeconomic position of the family is represented by the occupational status and educational attainment level of the individual’s parents. Second, the nature of the family structure is represented by the number of siblings the individual has and (sometimes) by whether one or both parents are present. Finally, the direct educationally relevant influences of the parents are represented by the individual’s report of whether they encourage him or her to go to school.

In short, the first two of these family characteristics (socioeconomic status and family structure) are indications of the family context in which the individual is developed, as the third (encouragement to attend school) is concerned with the actual process of parent influence. From

the field, though I did not actually do a comparative study, however, as I showed (chapter 2), the community is divided into two. Most of the “elite” group is employed in government sectors, living in hygienic environs, well-educated, etc. As a result, almost every child from this vicinity by the influence of the family is in school. These children are also associated with their peers from the same neighbourhood so all influence like I mentioned earlier from the three arenas. As their parents are motivating them to be in school, their fellow children in this neighbourhood because they are also in school, if even a child decides to stay at home, the joy will not there owing to the fact that all his play mates will be leaving for the school. When such happens, a child even with the genuine reason to stay at home will wish to go to school. This is what Reginald, a class two pupil from the “elite” neighbourhood said when I had a chat with him; *“I can’t stay at home for a day, even when I am sick. School is more enjoyable than home. Even on Saturdays we attend extra classes at school, afterwards we play soccer. Home is boring except when we have closed and all my friends are in the home.”* This is the level of influence one’s friends can also impact. Like I mentioned earlier, this influence could either reinforce the parents’ view or weaken it.

Unlike the children of the fisher folks, the agency of the elite children to choose from numerous peers’ influence varies greatly. This is because, they may have friends in the school who will try influencing them to take education more seriously. However, with the children of the fisher folks, they may come home from school and because their parents’ level of education is low or dearth, these parents are not in the position to supervise the children’s school work or influence them in the sense of the domain of education. The situation is aggravated as almost all of the kids of the fisher folks are at the shore even at school hours. The influence from the friends is highly oriented towards the direction of their parents. The choice between school and fishing becomes obvious like what Kwesi, the class three pupil with his four friends I interviewed at the shore told me. I will soon bring in his comments. They decide when they should be at school and a person’s decision binds all the five friends. If even one of them happens to go to school, the concentration is at the shore because the rest of the four playing mates are not in the school with him.

According to Kerckhoff (1986), after even entering school, the matrix of social relationships expands rapidly, and the potential sources of socialization increase greatly in number and type. According to him, the organizational structure of the school, which usually provides a relatively

large number of same-age peers with whom the individual is expected to develop effective relationships, is a major determining nature of this expanded matrix.

These aspects notwithstanding, and in particular relation to the importance the family may have been during preschool years, the dipping of the individual in a sea of peer interactions during a large part of the day presents another powerful source of potential influence. For instance, almost all the women among the fisher folks throng to the shore with their little children. This exposes them to the pull of peers around. Kwesi (a class 3 pupil) told me at the shore; *“I don’t remember when I started coming here. I grew up here with my friends. The four friends with me here none of us went to school today. If I don’t go to school, the four won’t go either, so if one decides not go, none of us will. We are in the same class. We prefer to be at the shore most times. If even we don’t get fish, we play soccer to entertain ourselves. It is more enjoyable here than school.”* This shows the level of connectivity and the influence they are exposed to at the formative level; those from the family and those from the peers. These little children can influence each other about their life choices.

Chiefly, the schools’ teaching curricula are based on academic concepts. Most often, teaching and learning are based on the text book. Scarcely the children had the chance to practice what they learn. This validates how the domain of education strives to separate the children from the continuing “adult” ventures within the community.

In conclusion, this chapter has brought to light the sociocultural factors which show up as socialization, influence from the home (parents), friends and the community (shore) and how these factors orient the children in their choices as far as education and fishing are concerned. It came up that these children are oriented to take up responsibilities at the very tender age with the aim of becoming responsible and respectable citizens within the community. It was therefore clear from the discussion that, owing to the practical nature of the home curriculum, the children are left with the option of putting every acquired potential occupational skill into practice which invariably becomes a catalyst for the conflict existing between the domain of education and fishing. This from all indications point to the fact that, there are other sociocultural factors which are bundled with cost to affect school enrolment, hence the tension between education and fishing among the children of Anomabo.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the many ways in which the people of Anomabo are noted for their fishing and fish trading activities which form the core of their livelihood strategies. As I outlined in the introduction, the underlying logic of the fishing and fish trading business as their livelihood strategy must be understood within the sociocultural framework of the people engaged in it. This has made them accept that once they are fishers they can barely do without fishing. This strong sociocultural attachment to fishing as their livelihood among the descendent of this community has created various conflicts between the domains of education and fishing. In this work, I have mapped, explored and analyzed how school enrolment is affected by these sociocultural factors.

In this work I have treated historically how formal education in Ghana started from the coastal stretch of Central region, the successes made and the great scholars the region has produced which included the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, the former late president, His Ex. Prof. J.E.A. Mills and Dr. Kwagir Aggrey. The main reason for presenting this historical backdrop to education in this region is to underline how its down turn must be understood – something this thesis has attempted to do. This led to the discussion of the economic policies the successive governments of Ghana had implemented in the 1990s with the aim of resuscitating the dying state of the education domain. As I have shown in Chapter 1, it has been unfortunate that all attention was focused on the cost dimensions of education access debate. Some of those policies were Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), Capitation Grant Scheme, School Feeding Programme and Free Uniform Supply Programme.

These aspects notwithstanding, this work has demonstrated that economic factors are always bundled with sociocultural factors. This brought my main argument in this work to the fore that, the cause of the existing conflict between the domain of education and fishing among the children of Anomabo is centered not solely on the economic aspect; rather there are active sociocultural factors which are serving as invisible barriers to access education. This aspect is what I think the policy implementers of the Ghana government have not paid much attention to.

Contrarily, my research has brought to bear some works, expressions and traditional adage which speak volumes spelling out the telling effects of the sociocultural factors on the domain of life choices which include education in the Ghanaian context. For instance, Christine Opong (1973:38) expressed that, “*a child who does not obey his/her father suffers illness and death as a result of the father’s curse*”. As this profound statement indicates, children in Ghana are fully aware how they should totally surrender to their parents especially during the formative ages. The statement by Opong in addition to the traditional adage, “*the tortoise which cannot move without the shell*” which have been a mantra within the community make it quite obvious why children of Anomabo are choosing fishing instead of education. This general context of my thesis, sketched in the paragraphs above, informed its two main research questions:

The first asks, generally, what aspects of fishing are keeping children school? Per this question, I probed into the organization of fishing, cycles of fishing and its methods, the recruitment of so-called *asankofa*, the mode of sharing and distributing the catch, etc., (chapter 3) to help answer it. A main finding in this part of the thesis and related to this research question was that, apart from the main canoe fishing which does not involve much of the children as *asankofa*, many children are recruited into the sein net (*gyawaano*) fishing in the midst of the lean season, which runs from October to April.

Besides the recruitment of children as *asankofa*, I showed also under their livelihood strategies (chapter 5) how the children hassle at the beach to make living. The children also on their own find possible modalities to get fish irrespective of the source at the shore to sell. This indirectly becomes their share from the catch though there were not literally on the sea as the *asankofa*. All these point to the aspects which keep children from going to school. One boy (Yaw) in one of those days at the shore said, “*If I don’t go to shore I will lose my bonus.*” This can also be confirmed from the song commonly sung by children:

Mama, I won’t go to school

Rather, I will go to fishing

School doesn’t give bonus

But fishing will always give you bonus

Why do I waste my time in the school?

No job for me after wasting my precious time in school

Mama, I will go to the sea.

The livelihood strategies discussed (chapter 5) attest to the fact that both sociocultural factors and economic factors go hand in hand in man's existence as the people have to struggle to survive especially during the lean season. This makes them resort to livelihood strategies such as hassling, borrowing and selling of personal possessions.

In this thesis, I argued in chapter 3 that, it is the level of "knowledge" the fishermen possess that enables them to vary their fishing methods in each season within the fishing year. This knowledge therefore needs to be impacted into the children during their formative stage, so the parents have integrate them into the traditional work as soon as possible. This more or less has greater effect of keeping the children from the domain of education.

In chapter 4, I explored how the people of Anomabo negotiate their uncertainties pertaining to their environment. The underlying argument was that, man as a result of uncertainties within his environment, is set on urge to seek for solutions from every source and this leads to landscape of different religious orientations yielding to internal hierarchies of diversity of beliefs. This brought to the light the roles and essence of *asɔfo* and *abosomfo* within the community. In chapter 5, my argument was to prove that, the domain of fishing creates a forum of agency for the children that education never does. I went further to show that, fishing has the potency of making the children who opt for it early providers , as education makes one to be provided for and later made to pay back.

The chapter 6 of this thesis reechoed the main argument of the thesis showing that sociocultural factors besides cost element which also have more telling effects on school enrolment than one can imagine, hence the conflict between the domains. I explored the agency of children amidst socialization process as the children are influenced by three agents which I referred to as "the three arenas" of socialization. They include the family (home), friends and the community (shore). These three are shown how each of them impacts the child with the choice between education and fishing. This according to Kerckhoff (1986), the individual's involvement in both the family, community and peer relationships serve as the potential source of formative

experiences, experiences which can influence values opinions, skills and attitudes relevant to the formal education process. At the same time the individual is not viewed as a passive recipient of that influence. He also has the alternatives to choose from.

The second research question in this work which has been revolved is how the parents and their children see the domain of education. This question is answered most clearly in chapter 6 especially as I dealt with and analyzed dominant perceptions of education. The hope both the parents and the children have in formal education is enormous. The people's notion about the economic benefits of education as the children in future will become engineers, doctors, bankers, etc, is very great. However, it has been shown that despite these motivations, parents and children still have the fears of the reality of achieving these desires in the future. Some of the parents expressed their frustrations as there are a lot of unemployed graduates in the country leading the formation of an agitation group called Unemployed Graduates Association (UGA), which is a fact in Ghana. There was a clear indication from both the parents and the children that, fishing has the strong tendency of making one an early provider as education makes people to be provided for and asked to pay later.

According to Gyekye, in Ghana, the older generation perceive themselves in the children, and vice versa (1996). Sister Esi (mother) confirmed this that, "*They are my children...they are my future and hope...*" It is generally accepted that children represent the future of the community; the future that consists in the entire identity of the people that defines them. This brought the three main tenets of the concept of intergenerational relations in Ghana which include reciprocity, responsibility and respect.

According to the findings from the study, fishing and fish trading practices are pervasive in the community and its work trains or rears children serving as a means to inculcate sociocultural values in them. Additionally, the fishing work serves as a means to transmit occupational skills to the children. Finally, work is believed to be the ultimate tool to stamp out laziness in children. In general children are incorporated into adults' work to ensure that they become responsible people, wins the respect of the members of the community and ultimately to ensure reciprocity (chapter 6). This is one of the agents that displace children from school.

It could therefore be inferred from this work that both the education and fishing domain have of roles to play in the lives of the children of Anomabo. Yet, the domain of fishing creates a forum of agency that education does not offer at all. From the two people (Yaw and Bismark) as I mentioned (chapter 5), who symbolically represent fishing and education, both show how the practice of fishing can make one a provider at the very tender age and education on other hand could also make one dependent. This once again reminds us of their song. This I think is enough to reframe the conflict between education and fishing among the fisher folks of Anomabo. Henceforth, we can therefore say that, cost is not the only cause for low school enrolment. Conversely, sociocultural factors are “powerful” enough to create barriers between the domain of education and fishing.

7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

This work is basically focused on the conflictual relations existing between education and fishing caused by the sociocultural factors within the community. I would recommend that, parents should be sensitized properly on the need to educate their children at the right time within the Anomabo community. This is very important especially at the formative stages of the children. I believe that when children are allowed to grow at the shore before sending them to school, the probability of losing concentration in the classroom is very high.

I also believe that thorough research could be carried out there to ascertain the other plights of the fisher folks; I mean their economic status, etc., and hence solutions could be offered to them. I realized that, beside the catch being dwindling of late, one major problem was their birth rates. They really complained that, though they are fishermen, now things are socially, culturally, politically and economically changing so they need to be at par with such changes which according to them can only be achieved through education. Notwithstanding, their income is insufficient to suffice the cost of education of their children to higher levels because they are numerous. These I believe could help solve the conflict between the domain of education and fishing to some appreciable level.

I will therefore appeal to the Ghana government to incorporate the pre-school system (crèche and kindergarten) into the main mainstream educational system so parents can send their children at

there at that tender ages instead of sending them to the beach. During the formative periods, as I discussed the work, one of strongest agents of socialization is the friends the child grows up with. Such friends can positively or negatively impact the child's values, opinions and attitudes so if indeed the parents are very enthused about education, then these children as soon as possible must be integrated into the school milieu.

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