Creating space for fishermen’s livelihoods: Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen’s negotiations for livelihood space within multiple governance structures in Ghana

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Methods of data collection

Introduction

I would like to begin this chapter by describing an interview experience that I had in Woe. It illustrates two things. First it illustrates the disadvantage you may be at as a researcher when you have young and inexperienced students helping you with your research, instead of older, trained and experienced research assistants. At the same time that ‘disadvantage’ also illustrated the mixture of ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ in the Anlo-Ewe culture, something which might not have become so obvious had I worked solely with older, well trained and experienced research assistants.

The fragment below comes from an interview I conducted with the Chief of Woe in my second fieldwork period in 2005. I visited him with two of my research assistants, John and Sesime. Sesime worked with me in Woe as my research assistant and John, who lived in Woe, happened to be there and joined us. What we see in the interview fragment is an educated traditional town chief who spends more time travelling than being a chief at home. His behaviour is that of a traditional town chief, but he simultaneously switches pragmatically to English for the sake of the interview (instead of speaking in Anlo-Ewe and via a linguist). My research assistants, Sesime and John, behave as young ‘locals’ who know less (in this case) about how one should behave than the outsider-anthropologist (who has read books about their culture).

It was seven o’clock in the evening and we had tried to visit the Chief a couple of times (starting in the first fieldwork period!) and today we were finally going to succeed. It was the day that there had been a durbar to raise money for the building of a clinic in Woe. This took place in a period of tension in Anlo state, due to the chieftaincy conflict in relation to the position of the Awomefia, the highest chief of the Anlo-Ewe. The tension had increased to such a level that ‘Accra’ had sent in extra police.

The door was opened by the sister of the Chief and she told us he would soon be with us, that he was having dinner and she asked us to wait for him on the patio outside. We waited for some ten minutes and then the sister asked us to go to the living room. We entered and saw the Chief sitting there. He invited us in, told us where we could sit and welcomed us.

‘You are in Africa!’

1 Quote from Anthony, one of my research assistants, used many times.
I felt slightly insecure about the whole situation since the Chief immediately addressed me directly in English, saying how he had tried to call me, explaining that there had been some mix up between me and one of the volunteers of the local NGO, Cross Cultural Solutions, but that he was now happy to have us here tonight. I thought that we had to greet the Chief in the appropriate way by engaging in the extensive greeting ritual in Ewe and by briefly explaining how happy we were to meet him and offer him our gift of Schnapps. However, this interview started as if I was interviewing any other educated Ghanaian on an important topic, instead of paying a courtesy call to the local town Chief and to try and schedule an interview. I already felt bad about only meeting him now – at the end of my fieldwork period – instead of at the beginning as I should have done in order to request permission to perform research in his town. However, he had been away so often that I had not managed to see him sooner. After he had talked to me a bit about the fundraising held in town earlier that day and after thanking me for the contribution I had made, he turned to Sesime and John.

Both John and Sesime were also insecure about the whole situation, being there in front of the Chief who had immediately started conversing in English and they had already felt shy about having to do the extensive and formal greeting procedures. That was a big difference between them and, for instance, Patience and Anthony who were both older and more aware of the cultural codes and operated with more confidence.

The Chief of Woe: ‘Now let me see with who you are here. Who are the men accompanying you; let me see if you are going with the right men. I want to see if they know how they should go about this. The way they were coming in has not made me hopeful. So let us now see if they know the proper way to come in.’
I felt a mixture of annoyance and pleasure at the whole situation and the reprimand the boys were getting for their ‘cultural misbehaviour’. Although it would have been better for my reputation to work with more professional and sensitive research assistants, I thought it would be a good lesson for them since I had always tried to convince them to act in a more traditional way. It felt a bit awkward for me as an outsider to be telling those on the inside how to behave. Now the Chief was underlining that point! The young men started giggling a bit, insecure about what to do next and who should take the lead. In the meantime the Chief acted as a Chief and looked straight ahead, waiting for one of them to take the floor. One of them did, but it became a bit confusing and messy, with the Chief acting as Chief but at the same time correcting their greeting in Ewe. Then the Chief began and addressed us in Ewe and John started translating as normal. The Chief welcomed us, said he was happy to have us and was also happy that the news had come through that everyone had been safe and that no incidents had occurred on this evening of probable conflict. Then the Chief nodded at John’s translation and said in English, ‘Now then, let’s continue in the language we all master’ and asked me what my mission was.

In this chapter I explain when I did my fieldwork and why I chose to study Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen, followed by an introduction to the three research sites. I then discuss the units of analysis in this research, the methods I used and end this chapter by explaining more on who I am and my research assistants, John, Anthony, Patience and Sesime are, given that we have been the important ‘tools’ in this research.

Research periods

I made three fieldwork visits to Ghana spread over three years, a pre-field visit in April 2003, my first and major fieldwork period from October 2003-October 2004 and a second fieldwork period October-December 2005. The reason for a long fieldwork period from 2003-2004 was twofold. First of all I wanted to experience all the seasons in the research areas, which makes sense when studying fishermen or other livelihoods based on the use of natural resources. The Ghanaian fishing season has two peaks, based on two upwelling seasons (a major one in July-September and a minor one in December-February) and a low season (April-June). In the good season fishermen often engage in two fishing operations every day, during which they can expect good catches. The fact that they are also a lot busier means interviewing them is then more difficult. Another reason to perform the fieldwork for a full year was that I was accompanied by my partner and it made more sense (career wise) for him to stay away for a full year. For the same reason we decided to base ourselves in Accra from which I would travel to the research locations. During the second fieldwork period, I went alone and was able to base myself in all three locations and stay in each of them for longer periods of time.

Beach seine fishing

I chose to conduct this research amongst beach seine fishermen because this technique had strong research-technical advantages. The fact that most of the seine fishing takes place from the beach meant it would be a lot easier to participate, observe and establish contact with the fishermen. It meant I would not have to go out to sea for a couple of days (as would have been the case when studying purse seiners or longliners) with all the practical complications of keeping notebooks and cameras dry, sleeping and ‘going to the toilet’ in a canoe filled with men. The fact that beach seining is a land-based technique would enable me to add some interesting questions about fisheries management (in terms of access). The choice for beach seine fishermen meant that I could also
limit myself to the Anlo-Ewe as the Ghanaian artisanal sector is divided along ethnic-technical lines (see Chapter 1).

Research locations

The research took place in three locations along Ghana’s 500 km long coastline (see Figure 2.2). Before I introduce the three locations in more detail, I would like to explain why I have limited my research to Ghana instead of – as I had initially intended – including research sites abroad in Ghana’s neighbouring countries. I had thought of Togo and Ivory Coast as these are the two countries where most Anlo-Ewe fisher migrants can be found (see Chapter 5). I travelled with John to Togo in January 2004 to look for possible and appropriate research locations, villages where Ghanaian Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen lived and worked. We went to Lomé, Kpeme and Aného. Locating Ghanaian Anlo-Ewe fishermen along Togo’s coast turned out not to be as straightforward as I had thought. It was not easy to define who was a Ghanaian Anlo-Ewe and who was a Togolese Ewe fisherman. Almost all ‘Togolese’ Ewe fishermen seemed to have ‘Ghanaian’ ancestors and a lot of ‘Ghanaian’ Anlo-Ewe fishermen had lived there for so long that they had very much blended in. Although these findings would have interesting implications for migration research in relation to identity, they would also have made it very difficult to make the right choices regarding which locations to choose and which fishing companies to include.

Figure 2.2 Map of Ghana’s coast indicating the three research locations

Source: author and the GIS department of AMIDSt.
In April 2004, during the Easter holidays, an opportunity came up to make an informed decision on additional research locations abroad. Woe organised a homecoming party for their migrant population. A week of festivities was arranged with an open forum, welcoming party and a grand durbar. I imagined that it would be a great opportunity to meet a lot of homecoming fishermen. From interviews held in Togo and Akosua Village we knew that migrant fishermen often returned to their home towns at Easter. We therefore planned to use questionnaires to interview returning fishermen in order to gain a good insight into where Woe fishermen went fishing (in Ghana and abroad). We could then use the questionnaires and the acquired contacts to visit their migration locations and do some follow-up work from there. I arranged for Anthony to come over and help us conduct the questionnaire interviews, and John had asked some friends to help us (see Appendix 2).

It turned out to be a major disappointment because most of the returning migrants came from Accra and Kumasi and for instance the United States. There were hardly any returning fishermen to be found in Woe (we were able to conduct only 23 interviews)! It made me realise that, although fishermen intend to return at Easter every year (as expressed in our interviews and in a lot of research reports – see for example Mensah et al. 2006), in reality this does not happen (probably because they cannot afford to).

The trip to Togo earlier that year had also made me realise that extending my research over large distances in more than one country and at multiple sites would have implications for the data I could collect. It would take much more time to travel, locate fishermen and gather background data. Conducting research in more than one country means repeating your fieldwork a couple of times. I therefore had to choose between scope or depth. As I felt that I wanted to get to know the people I interviewed and as the information I was after had not been gathered before during previous research, it meant that I would have to stay in the research locations for a longer period of time. During the first few months in Ghana I had noticed how much time it had taken me to adjust, for
the people to get used to me, to get to know a community and the issues at stake and to build up trust. Meeting people also took up a lot of time as they might not show up for a number of reasons. This is not a real problem if you are based in the same village, but doing this from elsewhere would have been frustrating. I had also noticed that answers to my formal questions about certain issues revealed less to me than my observations combined with seemingly casual questions.

The research locations in which I conducted my research in Ghana; Woe, Akosua Village and Half Assini, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. However, I have summarised some main features in Table 2.1. I will now discuss why I chose to do my research in these three locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Traditional state</th>
<th>Population size</th>
<th>Main fishing groups</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woe</td>
<td>Volta</td>
<td>Anlo-Ewe</td>
<td>8,545</td>
<td>Anlo-Ewe</td>
<td>Rural town mixed agriculture and fisheries nearby Togo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akosua Village</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Effutu</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>Effutu in Winneba, Anlo-Ewe migrants in AV</td>
<td>All Anlo-Ewe migrant fisher settlement, close by Winneba, a major urban town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Assini</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Nzema</td>
<td>11,734</td>
<td>Fanti and Anlo-Ewe migrants</td>
<td>Capital of the district, quite large with separate neighbourhoods for the migrant fishermen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Woe
The first town I selected was Woe which lies in the Volta Region, the home area of the Anlo Ewe. Woe is one of the larger towns in Keta District and situated on the coast. The first time I arrived in Keta district was after having crossed the Volta River estuary by canoe from Ada. It was a beautiful way to enter the Anlo-Ewe coastal area! It immediately made me aware of the water-rich environment that I had come to, with all its islands, rivers, creeks, mangroves and beaches. The canoe trip lasted more than an hour, with market vendors, women, children and livestock boarding and leaving the canoe during various stops. I eventually arrived at the market place in Anyanui, the most western village of Keta District. I took a trotro\(^2\) in the direction of Keta and stopped off at Woe because it had one of the few guesthouses along the coastal strip.

The Volta Region has two coastal districts, Keta and Ketu. After having spent some time in the coastal area of the Volta Region, I decided to limit my research to Keta district because it was more easily accessible from Accra than Ketu district. This was due to the coastal erosion at Keta which had destroyed the coastal road leading to Ketu district further east. In addition to this practical criterion, Keta district also had Anloga within its borders, which is the traditional capital of the Anlo-Ewe state.

Woe seemed to be a good town as it was not a ‘special’ town such as Keta (District Capital) or Anloga (traditional capital of the Anlo), yet still was moderately important in terms of facilities, and population (Ghana Census 2000). According to one of my in-

\(^2\) Trotros are mini vans used all over in Ghana as public transport.
formants, an educated town elder and net owner aged about sixty, Woe was a good choice as an example community for my study on fisheries management and migration:

‘You see, when they talk about the fishing industry in general, [it is] Abutia,³ where we came from – they were our great grandfathers – who started along the coast. Not only [in] Ghana, [but also in] Freetown, Monrovia, Côte d’Ivoire, Togo, Nigeria and all; it is our grandfathers who started the fishing on the coast. So the migrations for fishing started from Abutia here.’ (interview 7, 14-1-2004, Woe)

In Woe I first stayed in the local guest house. After a while I looked for another place to stay as I wanted to have a place of my own and become a bit more embedded in the community. My research assistant John arranged for me to stay on the compound where he lived with other tenants. The compound was nearby the beach area where most marine fishermen lived. As Woe was quite a large and scattered town I had to deal with the disadvantage that not everyone knew me, nor I them. This was especially so due to the more ‘visit-based’ nature of my research in the first fieldwork period. Being in the community continuously would have made it much easier to meet everyone I wanted to meet, due to the ‘Ghanaian style’⁴ of dealing with appointments. In the beginning of the first fieldwork period, I travelled by public transport but soon decided that a car would make my life much easier in terms of timing and safety. Especially in Keta District the car saved me a lot of valuable research time since people who I wanted to see lived or worked far apart.

Akosua Village

I wanted to select a migrant village along the Ghanaian coast in addition to the ‘home’ town Woe. During my pre-field visit in April 2003 I had visited Akosua Village, a small fishing village right next to Winneba. It was an Anlo-Ewe settlement and it seemed appropriate for it to be a second research site. First of all it was a small village of 135 households that made it feasible for me to gather data which covered the whole village. I would also be able to get to know the people quickly and gain an insight into village issues. Secondly it was not too far from Accra where I was based during the main fieldwork period.

During the first fieldwork period in Akosua Village I stayed in a hotel in Winneba, at five minutes’ walking distance to Akosua Village. During the second fieldwork period I and my research assistant Anthony, stayed with Adzo, a woman of about fifty years old and her daughters. Adzo was a processor who was respected in the village for her hard work and lifestyle. She arranged for Anthony and I to use one of the double-room huts on her compound.

Half Assini

Half Assini was added as a control research site for Akosua Village. Akosua Village seemed to be exceptional as regards certain issues (compared to migration villages referred to in the literature) and I felt it was necessary to include a third research location to verify my data. In contrast to Akosua Village, Half Assini was a lively fishing town with active beach seine fishermen who were organised into companies. I opted for Half Assini based on the outcomes of the survey carried out in Woe in April 2003 that had showed that a lot of fishermen from Woe had migrated to Half Assini.

³ Abutia is the central part of the town of Woe.
⁴ Meeting someone tomorrow at two o’clock, means meeting someone somewhere tomorrow if it is possible, i.e. wait and see.
The fact that a direct bus travels to Half Assini from Woe every Wednesday evening and returns every Saturday evening also indicated the importance of the link between Woe and Half Assini. Adding Half Assini resulted in fieldwork being performed in three places spread evenly along the Ghanaian coast (see Figure 2.2). The time spent in Half Assini would be much shorter than in Woe and Akosua Village as I only started my research there in the last fieldwork period. Although unfortunate, I argued that this may not be a bad thing, given that I knew a lot more about the Anlo-Ewe and beach seining in general and I could focus on specific data gathering.

In Half Assini, my research assistant Sesime and I were invited to stay with the son of the chief fisherman. He was a young man with a wife and two small children who was one of the community elders and often acted as chief fishermen when his old father was unable to do so. He re-arranged his house so we could stay and here too I felt welcome and enjoyed sharing in the family meals. As he had a television, I fell asleep every evening to the sound of comments made on the programmes by the many TV-watching neighbours gathered in his compound.

Units of analysis

My research question is directed at Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen in Ghana and as such that is ‘the unit’ about which I make certain knowledge claims. However, I analyzed the Anlo-Ewe as a case unit at different levels: as a collective, but also at the lower levels of its constituent parts and the relationships between those parts (Wartena 2006: 35). My research was oriented around two important questions, namely what makes up the livelihood of Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen and how can and do they negotiate their livelihood space (within multiple governance structures). Answering that question means gathering data at lower levels, whereby one keeps an eye open for heterogeneity within the case unit. In my research question I had already made an internal differentiation between fishermen at home, within their own social system, and fishermen on migration, based on the hypotheses that it influences their negotiation practices and outcomes. As a consequence, I differentiated within the case unit at village level – my second unit of analysis. I compare Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen who fish from their hometown (Woe) with Anlo-Ewe beach seine fishermen who fish from villages along the Ghanaian coast outside their home area in places they have migrated to (Akosua Village, Half Assini). Gathering data at village level would not, however, provide all the answers I wanted. I had to gather the data at lower levels and then aggregate the data at a higher level (village) so I could answer the main question. The levels at which I had to gather most of the data would create three additional units of analysis: The company level, the household level and the individual level. As such I performed a multiple embedded case study (Yin 1994: 41-45) in three research locations (Woe, Akosua Village, Half Assini) and within the cases through the use of sub sets (companies, households and individuals). Most of the data was collected in Woe and Akosua Village with Half Assini added as a control migration community.

The household-compound level appeared to be an important unit of analysis because it is the economic and social unit within which individuals live, eat, sleep and make decisions. The household survey enabled me to gather data at household level, but also within the households at individual level. It should be mentioned here that the house-
hold is a contested concept, especially in the African context. It is difficult to define what a household exactly is. Is it a family that lives together or is it the people living together in a compound? The problem then is how to deal with a couple of families or social groups living together on one compound but not sharing the same meals? Determining who belongs to the household is rather difficult (see for example Van der Geest 2004: 34-38). In my fieldwork I wanted to know what access fisher families had to certain facilities (as electricity, water, toilet) and which assets they possessed. I carried out the survey by entering a compound, asking for the head of the household (translated as house owner: *afeto*) and then asking him or her whether he or she could list all the members of the household. If the head of household was unavailable we would talk to the person who was available and would ask him or her who he or she regarded as the head of household to which he or she belonged and take it from there. We asked the respondent to explain the relationship with the head of household of every household member in order to establish the composition of the households. By doing so we allowed the inhabitants of the compounds to decide who made up their household. When we compared our data with other household based research, like that of the Ghana Statistical Services (Census 2000), and other researchers such as Overà 1998, the outcomes were not that different (see Chapter 3).

The unit of the household was insufficient, however, and in the context of Anlo-Ewe fisheries research it is not the most interesting unit to study. A far more interesting and relevant unit of analysis is the fishing company, especially in the case of migration. It is the dominant economic and also social unit for fishermen. It resembles a farming-oriented household unit in which the net owner is the head of the household who takes all the decisions on production, consumption and investment, in which the *bozu* and

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5 Its use often led to wrong gender interpretations, see for instance Leach 1994: 37.
6 The range of the household size being between one and 25 members, with an average of 5.5 members across the three villages.
7 *Bozu* is derived from Boss (English).
other executives of the fishing company are similar to elder sons and younger brothers of the household head and in which the wife of the net owner resembles the wife of the household head – with her own business coming out of the company business (compare Van der Geest 2004: 34-35). The fact that the net owner is often addressed as father or uncle and the crew as children (by the net owner) and as brothers (by the crew members) underscores this family or household resemblance. A lot of research questions made a lot more sense (in my focus on fisheries) when directed at companies rather than households. Companies are an important unit especially with regard to migration. Fishermen migrate as a company, live together in houses clustered around and provided by the net owner, often receive food from the net owner and sign contracts which are subject to the rules and norms of the net owner while taking decisions together with the net owner (such as asking permission to leave).

I gathered data at company level but at individual level within the companies as well, just as I did in the case of the households. As regards data from within a company it is highly important, in terms of livelihood, to differentiate between crew members and net owners. So I held a lot of interviews with either crew members (who held a variety of positions at the companies) or net owners. Their assets and access to assets differed considerably.

Research methods

Participant observation

One of the methods I used in this research is that of participant observation. Participant observation is derived from anthropology. Anthropology differs from other social sciences because of the considerable emphasis placed on ethnographic fieldwork as the most important source of new knowledge about society and culture (Eriksen 2001: 24). The idea is that the researcher stays in the field long enough for his or her presence to be considered more or less ‘natural’ by the permanent residents, although he or she will always to some extent remain a stranger (Ibid.: 24). The researcher tries to take part in local life as much as possible, with the aim being to enter as deeply as possible into the social and cultural field one is researching (Ibid.: 25-6). The extent to which this method can really be used to come to a subjective understanding of the research population has been discussed a lot. In classic anthropological fieldwork, anthropologists would study relatively isolated communities and would try to develop an overview of the entire social universe. That idea has been abandoned over the years because communities are increasingly less ‘isolated’ and societies have become increasingly complex. There are hardly any places left on earth that have not been studied before and anthropologists increasingly perform research in urban contexts (where nowadays almost fifty percent of the global population lives). More and more anthropologists perform case study research or focus on a certain topic or single out a small group in a complex society (Ibid.: 248). I did not perform such an extensive ethnographic fieldwork, but I did make use of the participant observation method, and spent as much time as possible in the

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8 See for instance Van der Geest (1979, 1980) who suggests that true participation is not possible due to huge economic and structural unequalness between researcher and researched. However participant observation is important as it gives understanding of the context in which the research population lives, observing leads to questions, seeing what people do enhances understanding of what they have said; the researcher participates in the context of the study and by so doing gets closer to it (Van der Geest 1998: 49).
fisher communities. I stayed with fisher families in the second fieldwork period and overall spent many hours on the beaches; observing, participating, chatting and interviewing.

I joined the crews a couple of times when they went out to sea. Apart from being able to see in more detail how they perform and organise their work, this also gave me more of a feel for their work, and I was able to sense the danger, the excitement and the hard work. For instance, during one of the trips I went on in Woe, we were waiting to set off in the canoe and the waves suddenly poured over the side and filled it with water. Once through the surf two men spent at least ten minutes emptying the canoe using buckets. When the net had been set, the canoe went back to the surf where we (the crew) were expected to jump out and swim back because the canoe had to go back to the bunt of the net and doing so would save time and energy. Before we had set off with the canoe they had asked me if I could swim, to which I confidently had said yes. From the shore it seems so easy, but lying in the water I realised what strong swimmers the fishermen were! It took me half an hour to get back due to the fierce undertow and current. The steep coastal slope (as a result of erosion) made it even more difficult to come back onto land. This experience showed me in a more direct way some of the risks faced by these fishermen and it also helped my reputation on the beach in a positive way (besides being the source of a lot of jokes).

As I had expected in the pre-field visit, helping to pull the net in was a great form of participant observation. It also taught me how complicated and strenuous the work actually was. One day my research assistant and I were helping pull in a net when suddenly the rope broke. The whole line of men who were pulling fell back into the sand, and we were the only ones left standing. Once the net had been caught again and reconnected to the rope, the jokes directed at us began; we had not really pulled otherwise we would have also fallen in the sand. Yet even after a morning of – apparently not really – pulling I could feel the effects in my arms!

Observing is an ongoing activity for any researcher. It is, however, quite difficult to make sense of everything you see. A lot of things are so different from what you are used to. Particularly in the beginning you quickly get tired due to all the new impressions. I still remember how shocked and fascinated I was the first time I saw how little babies were bathed and massaged by the Anlo-Ewe mothers, so roughly and completely at odds with the way I was taught to deal with babies. So many details do not seem to be important at the first sight, but are actually pointers to a whole new world, which I came to understand in this case when I read Geurts’ explanation on the importance of cleanliness and massage in Anlo-Ewe infant care practices (Geurts 2002: 91-97). Observing well is something you need to learn. My research assistant Patience was very good at improving my insight by pointing out the interesting details and by giving me a wealth of information. One day we entered a household where a little girl was playing with a wooden doll. I was fascinated by the little doll and wanted to see it. The mother and Patience asked me if I knew what it was. I answered ‘a doll’ which made them laugh. Later Patience told me that the girl was one of a twin, but her twin sister had died, so they had made this doll for her. Twins have a special position in Anlo society as they are regarded as supernatural beings (Nukunya 1999: 202) and one of the two dying is (apart from the general grief) considered to be a bad omen (see also Geurts 2002).
‘Picture this’: Photo and film
I always took along a camera when carrying out fieldwork. Taking pictures is good for your own memory and a way of collecting data (for instance if you want to know precisely how the net is connected to the rope) and it is also a good way of being able to show some reciprocity because you can give pictures to your respondents. In the beginning people were not so keen on ‘whites coming to take their pictures’. Stories are told in the villages in Ghana that tourists earn a lot of money by taking pictures, turning them into postcards and selling them. Sometimes the people are afraid that you will take them home to show them to your friends and laugh (about their ‘backwardness’). The fact that a lot of tourists take pictures without asking does not enhance their image. I therefore never took pictures without asking permission. Once I had built up some trust in the villages, taking photos was never a problem. After a while, people even started asking me to take their picture. The concept of digital photography that I used was quite new in 2003 and one of the fishermen called it ‘white man’s voodoo’ when he saw his picture one second after it had been taken.

Figure 2.5 Watching back video footage with fishermen in Akosua Village

In 2005 I decided to take a video camera along during fieldwork to film certain interviews and shoot some footage of the fishing and processing activities. It resulted in a rich source of research material. For instance I was able to film a traditional court case, which gave me the opportunity to study what was said, how and by whom in more detail than would otherwise have been possible (see Chapter 7). The first short film I made showed the whole process of a fishing expedition and I have since used it successfully in education and during presentations (see Appendix 5). The film enabled me to show the audience the fishing technique that is the focus of my research in a much quicker, more interesting and comprehensive manner than by talking. Film (and
photo) is also a nice form of reciprocity. Showing your footage to the people you work with is a great experience. It can be done directly in the field (if you use digital equipment), which gives you the additional advantage of being able to hear some of the comments on what is being shown. However, it is also nice to send people prints of photos or to return with a nice film to show to the people who ‘acted’ in it. Lastly, I enjoyed using film because I noticed how I had learned to observe with much more precision than I had done before. Filming forces you to make choices and then to focus and thus was a very useful research tool.

*Figure 2.6* Anthony interviewing a woman in Akosua Village

*Interviews, questionnaires and household surveys*  
The interviews I held were a combination of informal talks, formal interviews, open interviews, standardised interviews and topical interviews. I began with the more informal open ones and the further I went, and the more trust I had built up, the more I started to develop more standardised interviews. In the beginning I needed to develop a more general knowledge of how things worked and how things were done and organised, and to understand what the important issues were. Once I had more general knowledge and had decided where I would do my fieldwork, I was able to direct my research more and also develop more standardised interviews. I then started to develop questionnaires in order to acquire more bulk data on certain issues. I drew up questionnaires for crew members and net owners. However, I felt I could only do that once I had developed an idea of ‘possible answers’ since there would be less space and time for detail. The table below categorises the held interviews in three main groups, interviews held with representatives of the Ghanaian government, representatives of traditional

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9 See Appendix 2 for the standardised interviews, questionnaires and household surveys used in this study.
governments and with fisher folk. These three groups have further been subdivided in more subgroups (see Table 2.2). Table 2.4 (see below) shows how many interviews were held in each of the research locations and in what year.

Table 2.2  Interviews subdivided in categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government of Ghana organisations</th>
<th>Traditional organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local gov¹⁰</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local FD</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accra FD</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town chief</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>priest</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fisher folk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Net owners</th>
<th>Crew</th>
<th>Women¹²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>98¹¹</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FD = Fisheries Department, CF = Chief Fisherman

• Household surveys
The household surveys were developed in the summer of 2004 and served a couple of goals. The first goal was to gather basic data related to assets and access to certain services (such as water and electricity) of fisher households which would give me a better picture of the fisher household’s livelihoods. The second goal was to get some idea of the size and composition of households, the demographical composition and the link to fisheries and/or other income deriving activities. However, the household surveys also gave me more of an opportunity to observe (to look behind the fences of the compounds) and to meet people and explain to them why I was there.

In all the research locations we demarcated a certain zone in which we tried to interview all the households. In the event that no one was present to answer our questions, we would proceed to the next household. In Akosua Village we knew that, in total, there were 135 households and we managed to conduct the household survey in 105. In Half Assini, where there were an estimated 90 compounds, we visited 41. We made fifty copies of the interview forms but because the households were so large we often needed more than one survey to include all the household members. Due to time constraints (as Half Assini was only included in the last fieldwork period), we were not able to do more surveys in Half Assini.

¹⁰ Local government includes: police, the court registrar, assembly men and town council members.
¹¹ The total number of interviews held in Ghana is 100, including interviews held with informants. In addition to the interviews held in Ghana, I have held seven more in Togo.
¹² Women includes a queen mother, wives of fishermen, processors and traders.
¹³ We carried out our research in Half Assini in two neighbourhoods. The first was the small neighbourhood in town (Half Assini proper; also referred to as Tskipo village) near the beach, behind the police station. To the East it was bordered by the Fanti migrant fishermen and to the west only by beach and coconut trees. The second neighbourhood was a five minute stroll away and was the small settlement of ‘Bungalow’ [named after a huge Bungalow located there used by former president Nkrumah] hidden among the coconut trees. I chose to add ‘Bungalow’ because I wanted more variation in companies. The Anlo-Ewe living in Half Assini proper almost all fished for the same company, and were closely related. The Bungalow neighbourhood comprised of about forty households and I felt that adding it would diversify the data. I do not differentiate further in the book between Half Assini proper and ‘Bungalow’ unless necessary. Twelve surveys were taken in ‘Bungalow’, the rest in Half Assini proper.
In Woe – which is quite a large town – it was impossible to cover the whole area with our household survey and difficult to estimate the total number of compounds. We decided to conduct the household survey in the area (see Figure 2.8) where most of the marine fishermen live, namely in Aklorbordzi, Dekpekope and Lighthouse area.

We worked on the basis of a somewhat random sequence. We started at one spot on the Deku road (as shown in Figure 2.8) and walked towards the lighthouse (following the arrow). We tried to interview every household we saw, whenever anyone was present and was willing to be interviewed. We surveyed 107 households. The survey in Woe was carried out in August 2004 and October 2005. As both months are in the high season I do not expect the two time periods to have interfered with the outcomes.

• Focused group discussions

I held four focused group discussions. One interview with a chief, in Half Assini, turned into a focused group discussion. The organised group discussions were with a fishermen group and a group of processors in Akosua Village, with a group of Fanti fishermen in Winneba and with a women’s group (organised) of processors in Woe. My experience with focused group discussions was not that positive. I hardly ever managed to create a true discussion, and usually I had to ask questions which were then answered mostly by the same people while others simply agreed. During some discussions I was hardly able to grasp the details of the discussion because my interpreter had to translate four opinions which were all expressed in one minute to me in just half a minute’s time.

Following the less positive experiences during the first fieldwork period I decided to film a focused group discussion in the second fieldwork period. As a result I was less concerned about information being lost since the discussion would be captured on film. Unfortunately this focused group discussion was organised by the (male) leader of the women’s group and he all too often formulated ‘the opinion’ of the group. As he was an articulate man, he was also good at this but as far as I was concerned this was not bene-
ficial for the result. It was clear that he had another agenda with the focused group discussion than I had. I tried to change this situation but that proved to be difficult.

A spontaneous group discussion took place when I went to the Fanti community in Half Assini, hoping to find and interview the Fanti chief fisherman (Apofohene). I found him together with a large number of his people under their community shelter on the beach and he agreed to answer my questions on the spot. We soon had a crowd gathered around us and some of the people present started to interrupt and express opinions on the answers being given. One of them was a teacher who directed a lot of the answers in such a way that the conclusion was that they needed assistance (money). It was a lively interview, and although it was hard work for Sesime, we managed somehow to recall the different inputs when we worked out the notes.

During all of these group interviews it was easy to see that often it was the same people speaking all the time. Most probably these were the people with the highest status, that is the oldest educated males who held a certain position (teacher), or a net owner or someone with most experience (in fishing or processing). The results of these interviews were such that I was able to define the hierarchal division within the group and conclude that the spoken text was the socially accepted version of possible answers (see also Wartena 2006: 113).

**Mapping**

I tried to obtain maps of all research locations. Although this was not always easy, there was a beautifully detailed map of Woe made by a volunteer from the NGO CCS, which was given to me to use in this research. There was no map of Akosua Village and Half Assini so we made a map of Akosua Village ourselves during the household survey and this also gave us a good insight into the houses we had visited and the ones we had missed. The map of Akosua Village was then digitalised and reduced to normal proportions (our map was stretched over two metres of little pieces of paper) at the UvA Geography Department. Once it had been coupled to the household survey data we were able to create some interesting maps showing the layout of the village related to different topics.

**Collection of documents and records**

Beach seine fishing companies keep quite detailed records. In most cases there are account books (recording the catches per day or week and the sharing of the catch), sales books (recording the debts of the women buyers) and also fine books (which are used to record the fines that the crew received for misdemeanours), expense books (in which the net owner records all the expenses incurred) and loan books (recording the loans and advances the crew have arranged with the net owner).

In all three research locations we managed to acquire an insight into some of these records (see Table 2.3 below). This information is not easily shared. One of the fishermen told me that they fear government taxes. ‘Sometimes they send spies to count the bowls to tax us’ (fieldwork notes 21, 29-11-2005). I tried to get an insight into as much of the bookkeeping information as possible. However, as might have been expected, I was only able to access books, or parts of the books of net owners who I knew a bit

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14 The map I made of Half Assini was not clear or detailed enough and adding the Bungalow settlement also made the scaling difficult.

15 By Stefan Fritz, Herman Wilken and Els Veldhuizen.
better and with whom I had been working for some time. Company records are business information and fishermen, competitive as they are, are not keen on publicising how they are doing financially. As a result, some net owners also became slightly angry when I asked them if I could see their books. I always took the time to explain what I was doing, why I did my research and why I asked certain questions, how I would use the information and how I would deal with it in a careful and responsible way.

Although we managed to get an insight into catch data in all three research locations, the records are not held in standardised forms (some make notes of all fishing expeditions, some only write down good catches, some only record the totals per week and not the totals per catch/day), so it is by no means easy to compare the data.
I also received copies of all the record books of a retired net caretaker in Akosua Village. Even though these books were ten years old (1994-1995) I decided to include them in the analysis because of their value (being highly sensitive data not easily shared). His books were also largely kept in English (which is quite exceptional) and gave me an insight into all the aspects of running a company. He also lent me his fine book showing all the things crew members had been fined for and the amount of the fine. Together with the loan book it provided me with a small insight into the problems crewmembers face and the issues they have to deal with. It also shows what the rules and norms are in a company.

Table 2.3  Data overview of company records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Woe</th>
<th>Akosua Village 2005</th>
<th>Akosua Village 1994</th>
<th>Half Assini</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catch value</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of fishing expeditions</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of pans per catch(^{16})</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price per pan per catch</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of the catch</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advances</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales to women</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fines</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses of net owner</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>year 2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>year 2005</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>years 1994-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other documents that I collected were court cases, company contracts, payment receipts of migrant net owners (relating to the land leased from the Chief) and government documents related to fishing. I visited the libraries and bookshop of Legon University for PhD studies and other documents, and studies carried out by social and natural scientists which were directly or indirectly related to my research. I asked the fisheries department for all the relevant documents related to my study of beach seine fisheries, national management plans directed to artisanal fisheries, canoe frame surveys and catch records. Mr Bannerman was particularly helpful in providing me with the catch data (value, CPUE, gear) of 2000-2004 in digital version – making it easy for me to do my own calculations (see Chapter 1).

Table 2.4 shows an overview of all the data gathered by interviews and questionnaires and where it was collected during the three fieldwork periods. Some other documents are listed such as fishing contracts, court cases, account books and loan records. This table provides some insight into the balance of the data.

\(^{16}\) Catches are measured by pan and the more pans there are, the larger the catch. The sizes of pans in use do differ, however, thereby making it difficult to compare catches between villages.
Table 2.4 Data overview of fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Woe Village</th>
<th>Akosua Village</th>
<th>Half Assini</th>
<th>Togo</th>
<th>Accra</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household Surveys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>254 (^{17})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2004 + 2005)</td>
<td>33+75=108</td>
<td>105+0=105</td>
<td>0+41=41</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=?  )</td>
<td>(N=135)</td>
<td>(N=?)</td>
<td>(N=?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net owner questionnaire 2005</td>
<td>19 (N=20)</td>
<td>8 (N=11)</td>
<td>4 (N=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew member questionnaire 2005</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter Questionnaire 2004</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews 2004+2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing contract</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court cases</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Account book</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan records</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table showing the kind of data, the year that it was collected and where it was collected.

Being young, white and female

The fact that I am a young, white, female researcher naturally affected the research.\(^{18}\) That is not to say that the outcomes per se would have been totally different if the research had been performed by an elder, black (speaking Anlo-Ewe), male researcher. Being a woman in a male environment had advantages and disadvantages, although I must say that in Ghana this is not such an important issue as it would be in for instance an Islamic Arab country. I just had to deal with the jokes, marriage-related questions, the surprised reactions when people for instance found out that I was already 28 years old and still had no children. Thankfully (in this context) I did not understand everything said to/about me. From the looks of the faces of my research assistants I can tell that not all that was said was above board. Being a white female at least meant that I was an exceptional category and that I could ignore certain rules that other women could not as regards going out to sea (on which occasions I was never asked whether I had had sex the night before, or whether I was menstruating). Being white meant being interesting at times, it meant that some doors opened more easily (for instance those of the government organisations) and that other doors remained tightly closed (such as those of shrines) and could only be opened via others.

The poverty of the people in the villages touched me from time to time, for example the children with distended tummies or pale hair due to malnutrition, or mothers offering me their baby because they felt it would be better off with me. I was so often struck

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\(^{17}\) The total number of individuals of which we collected data was 1411.

\(^{18}\) See Van der Geest (1979, 1980) about how being different as a researcher can affect the fieldwork and should be accounted for by the researchers. Van der Geest discusses the level of unequalness between researcher and the research population and calls it a blind spot of many researchers.
by the combination of the people’s obvious poverty and bodily strength, mental happiness and their attitude of taking life as it comes. What I found difficult at times was the mix of continuously ‘being amongst people’ and feeling lonely. I missed out on a lot of conversations because of my inability to speak and understand Anlo-Ewe and was reminded every day of my ‘exceptional’ appearance due to being white.

At the end of the first fieldwork period I decided to take some language lessons at the centre of CCS in Woe. Mr Besa took the time to teach me some basic Ewe. It is a tone language, which makes it a difficult language to learn. However, I had started to recognise some words and wanted to be able to engage in small talk in Ewe with the people I met, do some simple shopping and be able to understand and join in the extensive greetings that happened before every meeting and interview. After the first research period I therefore contacted Dr Ameka an Anlo-Ewe professor at the University of Leiden and asked him if I could continue with simple lessons. He introduced me to a talented Dutch language student who spoke good Ewe. As she was fluent in Dutch, she was well able to understand my difficulties and was capable of explaining the different grammar of our languages. When I returned to Ghana, I was happy that I had taken these lessons.

Whereas I was called yevu, or obroni (meaning ‘white’ in Ewe and Twi) or Akosua in the beginning, I soon was referred to as Afì. Afì was my day name (meaning that I was a female born on a Friday). In Ghana if people do not know when you were born they often name you using the word for Sunday which, for women, is Akosua. Once I knew this, I often corrected strangers calling me Akosua saying I was Afì instead. Such a comment was always appreciated. Mr Besa of the NGO Cross Cultural Solutions gave me an additional name, as is also customary in Ghana. He named me Dabasu, which meant that I was the first daughter of my parents following two sons. The position you take in the sequence of siblings also defines who you are. As a result, a lot of Ghanaians are named for instant ‘eldest son’ or ‘first after twins’ etcetera.

Reciprocity
I often ended my interviews with the question ‘Do you also have a question for me?’ Most of the questions that people asked me were either related to my private life (being married, having children) or to the value of this research for them personally. The first questions were not difficult to answer. People did not really understand why they hardly ever saw my partner and quite a few men also did not, for instance, think that the fact that I was married to someone in far away Accra or the Netherlands should hinder me from marrying again. The second type of question was more difficult to answer. I always took the time to explain what I was doing and why and what the (applied) value of the research was. Nevertheless, I was also aware of the fact that this was unlikely to lead to anything concrete on the short term as far as they were concerned. We took the time to explain the importance of proper management of fish stocks because of the importance of fisheries for people’s livelihoods. We added that we also conveyed their questions, experiences and views on the matter to the people ‘in Accra’, but that we also did not know what they would do with the information. This answer sometimes also frustrated me.

Quite a lot of fishermen did not mind talking to us at all, and indeed made an effort to convince us that we should buy a drink for them. Although I was very careful in suggesting that a link existed between talking to us and getting something in return, I did every now and then buy the occasional drink (and regarded this as being comparable to us being offered a coconut or water to drink every now and then). I felt morally
uneasy about adhering to the custom of bringing a drink (a bottle of Schnapps) to the
chiefs and priests with whom I talked (in addition to money in some cases), but refused
to buy a shot of Akpeteshi¹⁹ for a fisherman. The priest to whom I spoke on a couple of
occasions was used to meeting American students who wanted to talk to him about
pottery and religion and was also used to asking a fixed price. As my interviews were
set up by a friend who had set up the other appointments as well (he was a teacher at the
University of Winneba) I had to go along with that kind of deal (see also Wartena 2006:
124-128 on American researchers creating a culture of paying for interviews). I could
justify it to myself by reasoning that the priest received money for doing certain things
for people. In effect I was a client tapping his mind instead of his religious powers. Yet
it always meant me taking account of certain considerations and applying my own
moral standards. I explained to my research assistants that I was the one who took the
decision whether or not to pay someone or buy something for someone. I always wanted
them to translate the requests and not to start dealing without informing me. I must say
that some net owners were more persistent than fishermen in their requests – and sometimes their demands²⁰ for money. All in all however, people were quite willing to help
us with our ‘schoolwork’.

Dealing with all sorts of financial requests was part of my life in Ghana. I had to
learn that asking for gifts from someone from the village who returned from Accra or
elsewhere was quite standard and playful and was not necessarily related to me being
white and relatively rich. Whenever my research assistant John returned from Cape
Coast in Woe, he would also be confronted by such greetings as ‘welcome, you are
back, what did you bring for me’. The fact that I travelled backwards and forwards a lot
during my first fieldwork period meant I was asked quite often what I had brought with
me from Accra.²¹ I also realised that it was a good idea to bring along and share fruits,
tomatoes or bread. I was not expected to return with refrigerators, TVs, toys, and similar
goods. Ghana is a gift-giving and receiving culture. It is way of showing reciprocity.
Consequently, a certain amount of giving, giving people a lift in my car and handing out
prints of my photos just was part of my reciprocal relation with ‘my co-villagers’. My
problem was that I had so many. At a certain point in time I decided that I would give
something back by making some ‘handsome’ donations during community fund rais-
ings. I did that twice in Woe and I had asked what would be a good (not too large and
not too small) donation ‘with the right message’. I had to get used to the Ghanaian way
of declaring to the assembled people through a microphone who had given what and
how much and this practice made me feel quite shy as it is not normal to do this in our
culture. However, I did realise that it gave people a feeling that ‘I also tried’ and in that
sense it had a certain usefulness. I felt happy that I was able to contribute to the com-

In the first fieldwork period I had a car and it proved to be a valuable asset in terms
of reciprocity. It enabled me to give something back by acting as taxi driver from time
to time for people I knew. People would often join us on trips from Dekumoto in Woe to

¹⁹ Locally brewed strong drink.
²⁰ In one case a net owner was so persistent on payment and in fact non-cooperative that I decided to not
include him in my research.
²¹ See also Steegstra 2005: 22.
Keta and it was always a good laugh to bang the roof of the car and shout ‘Woe shima – Woe shima’ (Woe market) at the crossing, as the trotros do.

Research assistants

At the start of my research I considered the task of translating between English and Ewe (and occasionally from/to Fanti or Twi) as the main task of a research assistant. I had basically looked for people (students or teachers) who were able to translate properly and lived in the research locations. During the process I realised that research assistants do much more than ‘only’ translating. As a researcher you have to rely on their translations, knowledge and interpretations. They can in fact do much more if they have the right skills. When, at a certain point, John and Anthony had limited time to work with me, I decided to ask my local supervisor, Dr Odotei of the University of Legon, if she could help me find people with research experience to assist me.

Local research assistants, who are from the community in which you do your research, have certain advantages and disadvantages over external ones (from outside the community) and vice versa. They can provide you with access to certain groups within the community. Obviously it is only later that you can assess which groups were more easily accessible than other groups due to the relations of the research assistant.

Apart from the four research assistants, Eric, a school-going student, also helped me in my research by doing some household and crew and net owner surveys in Woe in 2005. Eric was related to Noah Setsesofia, the chair of the town council in Woe at the time of my fieldwork, who I had asked for help in finding someone capable of doing these questionnaires in Woe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Assistant</th>
<th>Woe / Keta district</th>
<th>Akosua Village</th>
<th>Half Assini</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2003-2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>2003-2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sesime</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we can see from Table 2.4 all the research assistants worked with me in Woe. This is no coincidence as Woe was so important in terms of comparison and as ‘home’ to the Anlo-Ewe fishermen that I thought it to be good for all my research assistants to have been there. All my research assistants are Ewes themselves with Anthony being the only non-Anlo-Ewe. John lived in Woe, Anthony alternated during the fieldwork between Winneba, Benin and Hohoe, and Patience and Sesime lived in Accra. I worked with Anthony from the start of my fieldwork until its end, with John during the first months, while Patience took over from John in Woe and Sesime then took over in the second fieldwork period.

John

John was 22 years old when I met him in Woe in 2003. He had taken a year off from his studies (biology at bachelor level) in Cape Coast and had his own little house on a compound, with other tenants, in Woe. He travelled between Takoradi (where he stayed
with other people) and Woe. John is the grandson (father’s mother) of a well-known and respected woman in Woe. She lives on a large compound in the centre of town, owns quite a lot of property in Woe and owned fishing nets abroad. Some of the houses she owns, including the houses on the compound where John lived, were let and this provided her with additional income. She was a well-respected woman and was the head of a large extended family. John had helped me with my research right from the start and, after a few weeks, I asked him whether he would work with me on a regular basis. He agreed, liked the idea and was initially eager to learn about the topic.  

John was a living example of an Anlo-Ewe with extended family relations in a large number of locations. He had uncles in Benin, his mother lived in Ivory Coast (whom he regularly visited) and he himself lived at two locations. As John was not a professional translator and new to social science research, I had to train him. He was surprised by some of my ‘stupid’ questions and also with my habit of repeatedly posing the same questions to so many people. He thought I ought to know the answers. In the beginning he would also be tempted to give me the answers himself believing that there was no need to ask the women because he knew better. In time we managed to improve on these issues.

Anthony
I met Anthony on the beach in Winneba during my pre-fieldwork visit in April 2003. He was a forty year old Ewe from Hohoe and a special education student who was studying at Winneba University. When I returned to Winneba in 2004 I met him again and he agreed to help me with my research in Akosua Village in addition to his classes and study requirements. I soon noticed that Anthony was capable of doing more than just translating. He was very eager, interested in the topic, and understood what social science research was about. He had a good ‘click’ with the people because he was non-assumptive and open-minded. He was also respected for being an older man and a teacher (in training) and had the down-to-earth approach that fishermen like. In interview settings fishermen were sometimes hesitant about talking openly about their belief in traditional religion but Anthony was always good in sensing their shyness and would try to make them relaxed to tell us about it. Anthony and I worked hard. He was really devoted and was clever in multi-tasking in his work for me and schoolwork.

Over time we really became a team, worked together closely and became friends in the process. The quote ‘You are in Africa!’ at the beginning of this chapter is from Anthony. He could say that laughingly when I looked troubled for one reason or another. Anthony also started to keep his own notebook, wrote down important observations, carried out surveys and questionnaires alone and really built up a good rapport in the village. In the second fieldwork period we stayed in Akosua Village with one of the families and Anthony fulfilled a very valuable role in gathering information during casual meetings and chats.

Patience and Sesime
In the summer of 2004 both John and Anthony became less frequently available or were unavailable. This meant that I needed a new research assistant. Dr Odotei introduced me to Patience, a middle-aged woman who was a social sciences graduate and had research experience in fisheries research. Patience was a great research assistant. She was very knowledgeable, great in making contacts, knew a lot of people in Woe and was respected. With her at my side I had some really good weeks of fieldwork. We conducted
some interviews together and household surveys and Patience was really good in pro-
viding additional information and in putting certain reactions from fishermen and
women into perspective, and in explaining the traditional religion and customs. Unfor-
tunately Patience was not able to work with me for a long period of time, as she had a
fulltime job.

When I returned to Ghana in 2005, for some three more months of fieldwork, I asked
Patience if she had time to work with me again. Unfortunately she was unable to join
me, but she told me that her nephew would be able to help me since he had just finished
his studies at Legon University. Sesime, who was in his twenties and had conducted
fieldwork along the Fante coast on the participation of fisher children in education. His
experience in conducting research himself convinced me that it would be good to work
with him. Sesime and I also built up a good working relationship.

Methods of analysis

Back in the Netherlands I used the following methods to analyse the gathered data. The
interviews were listed by name, date and place and categorised by type of interviewee
(see Table 2.1 for the basic categorisation). As the number of interviews was not ex-
cessive (N=100), I was able to analyse them manually by tagging and highlighting
topics in the text (such as: migration, management, religion, technique, income) and re-
reading per category, topic or village / town.

The survey results (household, crew & net owner surveys) were first digitalised in
Excel spreadsheets and then analysed using a statistical quantitative analysis programme
(SPSS 14.0). This meant that the data needed to be categorised and coded and quantified
if possible (by assigning numbers to given answers). That made it possible to analyse
the data by filtering, making totals, calculating percentages and doing cross tabulations.
The answers given that could not be quantified were analysed manually. The extra in-
formation on the surveys provided by the surveyors was also separately analysed. The
results of the Easter questionnaire (N=23) were summarised manually.

Data from the beach seine account books was used to make comparisons between the
research locations and facilitated an understanding of the catch share system (Chapter
4). The loan and fine books were analysed by making categorisations so as to gain an
insight into the items and issues for which money was borrowed or fines given by net
owners (Chapter 7). The film material was used to compile a short film of the beach
seine fishing technique showing how the technique works in practice, the dangers of
fishing, and the social importance of beach seine fishing in the research locations (see
Appendix 5). The court case that was filmed was translated by an Ewe student in the
Netherlands and this enabled me to analyse it word for word and discuss the translation
with the student in question (to determine exactly what was said and what it meant)
(Chapter 7). The maps procured and prepared during fieldwork were used to analyse
and present spatial dimensions of the research. The fact that we were able to link the
household survey data to the map meant we were able to create specials maps on, for
example, water access and village / town parts (Chapters 3 and 8).

In this chapter we have described how and where the research took place and how it
was set up. We have discussed the units of analysis, the methods of data collection,
introduced the researcher and research assistants and discussed the methods of analysis.
The following chapters present the results of this research.