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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Anlo-Ewe fishermen’s negotiations within multiple governance settings

Introduction

Fishermen have organised their livelihoods in a certain way, go fishing, process and sell their fish, manage their activities and live their lives together with their families in their communities (Chapters 3, 4, and 7). Yet they form part of a larger society that is organised, structured and governed in a certain way (Chapter 6). They act within – and react to – (representatives of) governance structures, and within these structures they negotiate for livelihood space at home and – through migrations – in other places (Chapter 5). This chapter shows how Anlo-Ewe fishermen (re-)negotiate their livelihood space within multiple governance settings. It shows how Anlo-Ewe fishermen deal with powerful others, with the government of Ghana, with representatives of traditional governance structures and with other users of the coast.

Negotiation can take different forms. It can be direct by which two parties can be distinguished that discuss each other’s offers, it can be institutionalised, when it has become a way of doing things, whereby the outcome is more-or-less known to both parties (for example when asking for permission to settle from the chief fisherman), but it can also be in the form of indirect manoeuvring, seeking alliances elsewhere, or may take the form of an apparent lack of negotiation. Not acting is also a reaction. As we will see in this chapter, effective negotiation is linked to effective leadership. Effective leadership is also linked to effective social, political and economic structures. Negotiating livelihood space is an ongoing process, both at home and when on migration. Failed negotiations can lead to acute conflict and direct confrontations but can also become a long route of renegotiation. However, fishermen on migration are more vulnerable than fishermen at home and therefore the need to be united and have strong leadership is greater than when at home.

In order to show this negotiation process at work we will focus on two cases, one in Akosua Village and one in Keta District. In these cases Anlo-Ewe fishermen are confronted with external trends and shocks which may either pose a problem to them or offer them an opportunity. Occurrences, such as the seasonality of catches or coastal erosion take place on a scale larger than local and also involve other actors. Both cases will add to our understanding of how Anlo-Ewe fishermen negotiate livelihood space.
In the first case the Anlo-Ewe fishermen are on migration whereas the second case refers to events in their home area. In Chapter 5 we saw how migrant fishermen negotiate access to new livelihood space and in this chapter we will see how fishermen, whether at home or in their migration location, need to renegotiate livelihood space due to external threats. It shows how negotiation for livelihood space is an ongoing process.

The first case is that of the Anlo-Ewe fishermen in Akosua Village coming into conflict with the Chief of Winneba over the use of Muni lagoon. A key element of the case is a shooting incident which was a threat to the Anlo-Ewe fishermen and was intended to chase them out of the lagoon. We performed an actor analysis in order to understand the actions of all actors in the shooting incident. This case shows how the position of migrant fishermen remains vulnerable and that, in order to be able to maintain one’s position in times of crisis as well, it is important to be united and have the right leaders. When analysing the case we discovered how leadership in the village had become ineffective. This happened due to a combination of declining catches and alleged misuse of power by the net owners in the 1990s. It has resulted in the disappearance of the company institution in Akosua Village. The fact that this happened in a migrant village increased the implications for leadership since the political organisation in migrant locations is strongly linked to economic leadership. This internal problem made the migrant fishermen more vulnerable to external threats, as will become clear in the lagoon case. The lagoon case also shows very clearly how local politics can be framed in an international environmental discourse.

The other case deals with coastal erosion in Keta District. Coastal erosion has been cited by one third of the villages in eastern Ghana as a problem which has a severe impact on villages’ ability to maintain fishing activity and which results in, for example, a loss in fishing days (Bennett et al. 2001: 372). The coastal erosion in Keta has been going on for over 100 years. The case strengthens the argument that different understandings of the problem lead to different strategies for solving it. This also underlines the idea that local issues can be linked to higher levels as a way of strengthening the claim in the negotiation process.

This chapter emphasises the importance of understanding the mindscape or world view of the actors that play a role in the negotiation interface. The way people frame a problem or a conflict is based on their knowledge, beliefs, norms and values and this defines their actions, although this should not be interpreted in a deterministic way. It is important to understand that actors can relate to a multiplicity of value systems, that they combine certain beliefs with certain bodies of knowledge, mix institutions (institutional bricolage) and make eclectic use of different paths to solve a conflict (as we saw in Chapter 7). Both the Keta and the Muni case will show how actors can also frame their political action in an environmental discourse, if they feel this is a useful strategy.

This chapter adds to the institutional debate in the NRM literature (Chapter 6) and that of the case of migrant fishermen in West Africa in particular (Chapter 5), in arguing that it is indeed important to have the right institutions in place but that it should not be forgotten that power (or lack thereof) and leadership also play important roles. The successful negotiation of livelihood space not only depends on having the right institutions in place (system) but also on having the right leaders (actors) in place, leaders that have internal and external legitimacy.
Multiple-meaning of Muni lagoon; conflict over the resource

Akosua Village is beautifully situated between the sea and Muni lagoon. Muni (or Moni) means ‘hard water’¹ (Iboni in Effutu) (Hagan 2000: 21). The sandbar on which the village is set is not very broad and some parts of the lagoon and the sea are only 30 metres apart.

Figure 8.1  Muni lagoon

The fishermen of Akosua Village fish mostly at sea although, at times, they also venture into the lagoon. There they fish using a dragnet purposely made for the lagoon. Although using the dragnet in the lagoon is prohibited, the presence of the dragnets in the village is no secret. They can be seen drying on the compounds and the women can be seen doing the gutting and frying of large amounts of lagoon fish (which can hardly be caught using the approved cast net as that takes much more time – see below). The fishermen go to the lagoon when they do not fish at sea because it is, for example, a non-fishing Tuesday or the sea is too rough. As far as the Anlo-Ewe are concerned, fishing in the lagoon may therefore be seen as a livelihood strategy since the option of fishing in the lagoon increases their opportunities.

However, the fishermen do not seem to have many alternatives to compensate for those occasions when they cannot get enough fish from the sea. As one of the fishermen, who admitted fishing in the lagoon, put it: ‘The law says we shouldn’t go. But sometimes the sea is rough for two or three weeks! Is stealing an option? No. That is why’ (interview 39, 1-6-2004). This insight is shared by Koranteng et al. (2000: 496): ‘(…) some fishers are compelled to diversify their operations in order to earn a living. In the Winneba area, fishing in the Muni lagoon is an attractive alternative for such fishers.’

¹ When the Effutu first arrived in that area oral history has it that: ‘They next saw the lagoon in question and took it for fresh water, but when tasted it was found to be brackish or salt water’ (Hagan 2000: 21).
Muni lagoon

Muni lagoon\(^2\) is one of the ninety lagoons that can be found along the Ghanaian coast, and one of the six RAMSAR sites in Ghana.\(^3\) The lagoon is about four square kilometres in size and it adjoins the Yenku Forest Reserve. It is a closed lagoon, which occasionally opens to the sea and is fed by two rivers, the rivers Muni and Pratu (Koranteng \textit{et al.} 2000: 487). The lagoon area is used by fishermen, crab catchers, salt farmers and sand and stone extractors, fuel collectors, cattle herdsmen and farmers (interview 56, Wildlife Officer, 25-6-2004) (see Figure 8.3). Another type of resource users are the tourists and those who visit for leisure purposes, some of whom come to observe birds, given that the lagoon is an important feeding site for birds (Entsua-Mensah & Dankwa 1997: 9). The fact that the lagoon is a RAMSAR site means it is monitored by the Wildlife Department which has installed a bird watch platform nearby Akosua Village. However, Muni lagoon is not only important in terms of ecology. Lagoons and other water bodies in Ghana often have a religious meaning as well for local communities and the gods that are believed to live in these lagoons can play an important role in the history of the local population. This is also the case for Winneba – as we understood when we spoke to the chief priest of the lagoon:

‘Some time ago (…) that was Asante’s tribal war, he [the priest of the lagoon at that time] (…) went to (…) to tell [them], people are coming to capture Winneba town. So that those people would come and fight with them. So that they can take them away. They told them that that day was Wednesday. All the Winneba people should cross the [lagoon], [to] the other side. To see that the [Ashanti’s] can come and take the [Winneba people] away. (…) The priest (…) beat the gong; all the people went by the [lagoon], to the back of the [lagoon], they were there, the [Ashanti’s] were coming (…). That time when they reached at the Winneba town, the whole people weren’t in, all of them had gone to that side. When they saw that the [Ashanti’s] were coming, all of them were afraid. The enemies, when they saw that the people were there, they wanted to cross the [lagoon] to go and arrest them. The [lagoon] was making itself small so that the people could pass through. They thought it was only ground. When they went in and reached the middle of the water, then the river (…) came up, (…) the enemies sank in the water, so they couldn’t capture the Winneba people.’ (interview 71, 9-9-2004)

Within this mindscape the fish in the lagoon are not known as the blackchin tilapia \textit{Sarothedoron melanotheron} (\textit{Cichlidae})\(^4\) but as the children of the god living in Muni lagoon:

‘On Wednesday’s when you go there, you see a lot of fish, because the people don’t go there on Wednesday, so he brings out his fish. They are his children, he is playing with them. After (…) Wednesday (…) you won’t see [those big fish] again. He takes them to (…) hide (…) somewhere. Then you see the very small fish. As for that small, small fish, you can’t chop(…) it.’ (interview 71, 9-9-2004)

Management of Muni lagoon

The Chief (\textit{Odefey in Effutu}) of Winneba,\(^5\) paramount Chief of the Effutu State, traditionally owns the lagoon, as well as the lands and beach surrounding it. As Chief Ghartey explained: ‘Traditionally it is my lagoon’ (interview 58, 1-7-2004). Most of the lagoons in Ghana are traditionally managed through various rules and taboos (Dankwa & Entsua-Mensah 1996: 2, Ntiamo-Baidu 1991). As is the case with the sea, the chief

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\(^2\) At 5° 19’ N 0° 39’W (Entsua-Mensah & Dankwa 1997: 9).

\(^3\) Ramsar is the name of a city in Iran where the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance was signed in 1971. It was decided that wetlands are ecosystems of considerable importance, comparable to forests, rangelands and marine ecosystems and they deserve special protection.

\(^4\) The dominant species in the lagoon (90 percent) (Koranteng \textit{et al.} 2000).

\(^5\) The local name for Winneba is Simpa (Hagan 2000: 1).
fisherman, together with his council and the village chief and his council are directly responsible for the setting and guarding of the rules for the lagoon, as well as for acting when rules are violated.

Figure 8.2 One of the signs put up by the Wildlife department

Figure 8.3 Users of Muni lagoon and the authorities monitoring the lagoon
Muni lagoon is highly regularised when compared to other lagoons in Ghana:

1. It has a closed fishing season (the two to three weeks annually when the lagoon fills up at the onset of rains in May/June).
2. It has a closed fishing day (Wednesday) being a sacred day to the fetish of the lagoon called Kwaku Muni.
3. It has a restriction on mesh sizes (cast nets with a mesh size below 2.5 cm are not allowed).
4. It has a restriction on certain gears (drag nets).
5. It has a regulation of entry (only indigenous people, Efutus from Winneba, are allowed to fish in Muni lagoon and women are not allowed to enter the lagoon during menstruation) (Entsua-Mensah & Dankwa 1997: 9, 19, 20).

The priest of the lagoon is also involved in safeguarding the taboos of the lagoon, and explained to us that all people should follow the rules or else the god will be angry. If you are ignorant to the rules (say as a tourist) there will be no harm done (Kwesi Muni, priest of the lagoon god, June 2004). From a study done on traditional ways of managing lagoons in Ghana we know that other rules may exist such as the ban on wearing footwear and wearing golden earrings when entering the lagoon, the ban on entering the lagoon with a vehicle or not being allowed to fry the fish caught in the lagoon. (Ntiamoabaidu 1991: 43). Taboos like these are not written down but are known to the locals. Breaking the rules leads to fines and if people refuse to pay it is believed that the gods will ‘take care’ of you. Ntiamoabaidu in relation to the Ningo lagoon:

‘Fines for breaking the taboos ranged from a bottle of schnapps, twelve yards of white cloth, and two white fowls, to one cow plus the other items listed depending on the seriousness of the offence and whether the offender was a native who should know the rules or a stranger. Here also the taboos had no legal backing. If an offender refused to pay the fines, the elders would call him and advise him of the possible outcome. If he is adamant, they could only pour libation and hand him over to the gods who, they believed, would deal with him. It was believed that people have died as a result of breaking the taboos and refusing to pay the requisite fines to pacify the lagoon god.’ (Ntiamoabaidu 1991: 43-44)

This traditional backing is said to be very powerful and this explains why, in general, taboos in Ghana are often respected more than government rules (Hens 2006: 25). These taboos also have positive effects for protected species: ‘tabooed species were most abundant in the areas where their collection was forbidden’(Ntiamoabaidu 1991: 46). Kwakuvi Azasu, a teacher at Winneba University and member of the Afrikania Mission, tried to explain the power of African religion: ‘African religion makes people behave well. Whatever you do on earth, God punishes you! In the flesh. The soul is a part of God. You will always be punished on earth – you get your punishment direct!’ (interview 54, 22-6-2004). I have heard of this being referred to as ‘instant justice’, or as Abotchie calls it ‘escapelessness’ (Abotchie 2002: 66-68). There are, however, signs that these beliefs are breaking down. Factors believed to contribute to this breakdown are the introduction of Christianity, western influence and education, and immigration

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6 When Efutu fisherboys reach the age of 12 they are given a cast net from their father to cast in the lagoon or in the surf (Hagan 2000: 57).

7 According to Azasu Afrikania is the bona fide religion of Africa. Afrikania is the African Traditional Religion, ‘Afri’ in Akan means ‘has come out of’ and ‘Kania’ means ‘light’, and is together translated as ‘bringer of civilisation’ (Azasu 2003: 7). The Afrikania Mission can be found along the road from Accra to Winneba in the outskirts of Accra.
of people from other ethnic groups who neither believed nor respected the local fetishes and taboos (Ntiamo-Baidu 1991: 46).

The Government of Ghana is also involved via the district-level fisheries and wildlife departments (in case the lagoons are RAMSAR sites). Legislation has been laid down in the Fisheries Act (Act 625, 2002) and a lagoon that is a RAMSAR site is also subject to the Consolidated Wildlife Laws of Ghana (Act 43 plus all the subsidiary legislations, 2002) including the Wetland Management Regulations of 1999. The enforcement of these laws has been put in the hands of the police and the courts together with the traditional authorities.

Muni lagoon needs to be managed: ‘In the light of the assessed exploitation rate, environmental degradation, mangrove loss and a reducing shellfish fishery around the Muni lagoon, it is obvious that fisheries in the Muni lagoon need to be managed’ (Koranteng et al. 2000: 498). Ntiamo-Baidu compared the stocks of T. fuscatus of Muni lagoon with that of Djange lagoon (nearby Ningo). In Djange the species is protected by taboo and in Muni it is not: ‘Whereas the Djange lagoon was literally teeming with T. fuscatus, the species was very sparsely distributed at Muni lagoon where it was heavily exploited for food (Ntiamo-Baidu 1991: 46). The Wildlife officers are based in an office at the entrance of Akosua Village. However they feel they cannot control the lagoon effectively:

‘Our staff is very small and we can’t manage the place alone, so we resort to the Districts Assembly and the Traditional Council to come to our aid (...). Even when we go there dressed in our shoes and attire and the people are fishing in the lagoon, can we go inside to catch them? What (...) if we do not know how to swim? Would they wait for us? Or would they come when we just call them to come? All this necessitates the assistance of the Traditional Council and the Districts Assembly.’ (interview 59, 25-6-2004)

The Chief of Winneba confirms that the wildlife officers cannot effectively monitor the lagoon, so the traditional council has selected ‘volunteers’ to do it. ‘The fetish house [connected to the traditional council] makes sure it [the ban] is respected. They check, by visiting the place’ (interview 58, 1-7-2004). These ‘volunteers’ feature later on in the shooting incident. However, before we discuss that event, we should take a closer look at why the Anlo-Ewe break the rules set in order to manage the lagoon.

The Anlo-Ewe and their fishing activities in the lagoon
As we saw above the Anlo-Ewe fishermen fish in the lagoon and, by doing so, they often break a number of rules. To begin with, they are not allowed to enter the lagoon simply because they are not from Winneba. Secondly, they break another rule by using dragnets in the lagoon, instead of cast nets or hook and lines. In the household survey we undertook in June 2004 we counted thirty-one dragnets made purposely for the lagoon. If you compare that figure with the presence of about fifteen beach-seine nets (used and dormant), it is quite a significant number. However, it is important to understand that a lagoon dragnet is a much smaller net than the one used in the sea and also that some net owners start with a lagoon net which they gradually expand until it is a net suitable for the sea. Thirdly they have to respect the non-fishing days and seasons, despite these not being strictly adhered to. On one occasion, a group of fishermen even

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8 Of the 130 households we counted, we interviewed 110 for the survey. So that means that more than 25 percent of the households own a lagoon dragnet.

9 In 2004 there were ten fishing companies actively working in the village.
The Anlo-Ewe know that they are not allowed to use the dragnet in the lagoon, since the rules have been in place since they came to live in the village:

John: ‘Traditionally fishing is not allowed with a drag net [in the lagoon]’ and
Afi: ‘In those days [about 100 years ago], if you entered the lagoon you would be arrested.’ (interview 21, 20-2-2004)

When you ask them about it, they often comment ‘what else should we do, we need to eat’. It would seem that the community turns a blind eye to this rule. The Wildlife Officer explained the problem as follows:

‘The reason being that when a person has to do a job to survive, then you know, you have a problem. It is only when someone does something out of fun, you see, out of leisure, then you are able to control. But( …) if it has to do with survival, then you have a very big problem at hand.’

The reason why the Anlo-Ewe use the forbidden dragnet instead of the cast net seems to be based on convenience and on the fact that they know how to use the dragnet since that is the technique they use at sea and it is also the net they use in the lagoon near their hometown,10 the Keta lagoon. Keta lagoon is one of the few lagoons for which no taboos were reported in the study of Entsua-Mensah & Dankwa (1997) on Traditional Knowledge and Management of lagoons in Ghana (p. 17). It is a very fast and effective method, whereas using the cast net takes a lot of time and it is by no means an easy technique.11

Although the history and the meaning of the lagoon is probably not the same for the Anlo-Ewe as for the Effutus, they do believe in the divine aspect of lagoons: ‘The sea and lagoon and the Anlo endeavour to harness these water bodies spiritually and materially in part explain the spirituality of Anlo life’ (Akyeampong 2001: 220). So that cannot be the reason for violating the traditional rules.

When I was working in the village I quite often saw the Ewe fishing in the lagoon using their dragnet. I found two other accounts of researchers with regard to the Muni lagoon. Interestingly they did not witness the Ewe breaking the rules. The first is that of

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10 See Chapter 5: the use of the lagoon dragnet in the Keta lagoon is also not allowed by state law, but this rule is not controlled effectively – so in practice it is possible to use it.
11 One haul with the dragnet takes about fifteen minutes and is results in approximately two pans with a couple of hundred fish whereas the cast net fishermen catch maybe twenty little fish in one cast (which takes around ten minutes).
Pompert and Caron, two Dutch students who performed fieldwork in the village in 1997. They stated: ‘It is a fact that the non-fishing day of the sea (on Tuesday) as the non-fishing day of the lagoon (on Wednesday) were respected by the entire village’ [original text in Dutch] (p. 41). I checked their thesis for other remarks on the lagoon but they hardly wrote anything about it. Neither did Koranteng witness the Ewe fishing in the lagoon, but had heard that they do go there and therefore break the rules:

‘For example, although we never came across dragnets in use in the Muni lagoon in the course of the study, we were informed that this gear is supposedly used in the night mainly by the immigrant fishers who have settled close to the lagoon’ (Koranteng et al. 2000: 498).

The fact that these researchers did not see the Ewe break the rules (by using dragnets and by fishing on Wednesdays) could mean that the researchers simply missed seeing the Ewe going there, for instance by not being there at night time. It could also be that they were doing their research at times that there was no need for the Ewe to go to the lagoon – because the sea catches were satisfactory. However, it could also mean that the situation has worsened over the years. Both studies were carried out some years ago.

According to my informant in the village, who in the past was a beach seine caretaker, the organisation of fishing in the village has changed in recent years due to mismanagement by net owners. The net owners cheated the workers on such a scale that, at a certain point in time, the workers refused to work in a company system any longer. As John explained: ‘Net owners were having luxurious lives, they had Benzes. They caught a lot. But then a change-over came, that was about three or four years ago. So people stopped working in the companies’ (interview 17, 17-02-2004). The net owners still living in the village continue fishing with what you may call a company, but the system is not in use any more and all workers are paid (often in fish) on a daily basis. This means for most workers fishing has become subsistence fishing. This could be an indication of the worsened conditions faced by Anlo-Ewe fishermen in the last five years, which could in turn explain a greater interest in the lagoon as a means of survival. From the many interviews held in the village with fishermen I repeatedly heard that catches have been in decline since the 1990s. The changed social organisation and the accompanying social breakdown (which we will discuss in more detail below) could also explain why the Anlo-Ewe disobeyed the rules relating to the lagoon.

From the comparative study of Entsua-Mensah & Dankwa it appears that the taboos were strictly obeyed in only six of the twenty lagoons (studied). Non-compliance was higher in densely populated areas and in areas where there were migrant fishermen (p. 19): ‘It was realised that the rules and regulations were constantly being disobeyed especially where there were settler fishers’ (Entsua-Mensah & Dankwa 1997: 21).

Up to now we therefore know that Muni lagoon is an area of multiple meanings such as ecological, religious-historical and meanings related to livelihood diversification. These multiple uses of the area are, however, conflictive. The forbidden usage of the lagoon by the Anlo-Ewe came to a head with the shooting incident directed by the Chief of Winneba, the traditional owner of the location. The next section discusses what happened and in the subsequent sections we try to understand the harsh action taken by the Chief and also explain the lack of an appropriate community response on the part of the Anlo-Ewe.
The shooting incident unravelled

On Tuesday 15 June 2004, something quite shocking happened. We heard a gunshot in Akosua Village. We rushed to where the sound had come from and found a group of about fifteen villagers -mostly elderly men and some women- at the side of the lagoon, nearby the communal gathering ground, looking out over the water. Some were pointing to the back of the lagoon and some were talking and laughing. There was not a lot of consternation, no people were shouting or crying, no one ran to their house to call others or to collect weapons. When we had arrived there was not a lot to see anymore and the lagoon was empty except for some birds. The villagers told us that a group of twelve fishermen of the village had been fishing with the dragnet in the lagoon. At a certain point three men had showed up at the east side of the lagoon and they had shot at or in the direction of the fishermen. Kwame, one of the fishermen involved in the incident, told us what had happened:

‘They sneaked up on us through the bush. They bypassed the red house [at the border of the village], crawling on arms and legs. One of us then saw them. I also looked and saw them. When they noticed that we had seen them, and were collecting our net, they shot. No one got hurt. I went to confront them to let the boys escape. We collected the net and went away. Those people don’t know how to swim. They don’t know, so we go deep. Deep places, they don’t know where they are. At the far end, if you can’t swim, you will drown. We ran away in the bush. (…)’ (interview 55, 15-6-2004)

According to Kwame, the men wanted to surprise the fishers in the lagoon and that is why ‘they were crawling on arms and legs’. The time between the moment the fishermen spotted the ‘criminals’ and the moment they shot must have been longer than stated in the quotation. The reason is that a lagoon dragnet is a large net (approximately 200 metres) and once cast in the lagoon it is quite difficult (heavy) to collect again and, when we arrived at the lagoon, we did not see the fishermen anymore, which was two minutes after the shooting.

Before we discuss the action taken by the two main actors in this case, the Chief of Winneba and the Anlo-Ewe villagers, we should take a closer look at the men who shot at the fishermen. Who are they and how could they have been armed?

The ‘volunteers’

When we discussed the matter with the wildlife officer (interview 56, 25-6-2004) and the chief fisherman of Winneba they told me that the men were volunteers and came from the Asafo companies of Winneba: ‘The elders; six from nr. one, six from nr. two – that is Asafo – and (...) my own kingmakers too. So some of my elders plus the youth – they formed the taskforce to monitor the place’ (interview 106, with the chief fisherman, 19-12-2005). The Asafo companies of Winneba are an old institution that used to function as ‘the force which defended the town against external enemies. It had judicial and political functions in maintaining internal peace and stability’ (Hagan 2000: 144). More recently the Asafo have played an important role in the social life of the town, and have participated in funerals, marriages, social entertainment and have played a leading part in ritual and important ceremonial events (Hagan 2000: 144). The Asafo are an important element in the power balance of Winneba (Hagan 2000: 168).

An Anlo-Ewe fisherman said the following about them: ‘But they are criminals, they work at Tema harbour normally’ (interview 55, 15-6-2004). My research assistant later told me that the fisherman meant that these guys normally stroll around in Tema harbour to see what they can steal from newly imported goods. As the fisherman said: ‘They are new. These just came. The cast net doesn’t catch much, they arrest us when
the catch has almost landed, catch one, then they bribe us. Pay 30,000-50,000 cedis [2.72-4.55 euros] per head fishing! That money they share by themselves. They are many, when they want money they just come on their own’ (interview 55, 15-6-2004).

When I spoke to the Chief of Winneba, two weeks after the incident, he confirmed that the lagoon is monitored by his people (interview 58, 1-7-2004). Checking the place is not the same as shooting at people, so the question is whether they are allowed to be armed, and even more so to use their weapons? According to the Wildlife officer, managing this RAMSAR site certainly does not involve being armed, but later on in the same interview he admits:

‘(…) sometimes when you put people on a job to do some action(…) people get out of hand (…). Some can take some cutlasses along as they go monitoring the place. But (…) I have not experienced that someone has cut somebody, but people are going out there, they are holding clubs, sticks, some cutlasses in case you maybe have to cross a place or things like that. But that is not to say that they are going out there to cut people or … But they might be holding one or two sticks around, as they move along the monitoring.’ (interview 56, 30-6-2004)

The chief fisherman of Winneba said the following about volunteers being armed:

MK: ‘Then the people who go there to monitor, are they allowed to have arms?’
CF: ‘Secretly some have, that is secretly.’
MK: ‘Ok, but are they allowed to use them? Or can they only?’
CF: ‘That is why it is secretly…”
MK: ‘Sacred or secret?”
CF: ‘Secret.”
MK: ‘Secret ok, so you should not talk about it? [we both laugh] So they bring, but what kind of weapons do they bring?”
CF: ‘The small let’s say local ones pistols.”
MK: ‘Ok, and do they use them you think?”
CF: ‘To threaten you.”
MK: ‘To shoot in the air?”
CF: ‘A warning.”
MK: ‘Warning shot. Ok. And these pistols that they use, where do they come from?’
CF: ‘I said locally.”
MK: ‘Locally so, does it mean that these pistols are also used by the Asafo companies?’

I wondered if the Anlo-Ewe fishermen were themselves also armed. Kwame: ‘I have my strength and some traditional backing’ (interview 55, 15-6-2004). When he said this, he smiled knowingly so it would seem that Kwame is not concerned about the possible harm they can do. About a week after the incident we met Kwame in a little bar in the village where he and some other fishermen came in for a drink in between pulling in their nets. We then asked him jokingly how it was in the lagoon yesterday evening, because we had heard that he and other fishers had seen me late at night coming back from town. I had been using a LED torch to find my way in the dark and at first the fishermen standing in the lagoon had thought that I was a group of Effutu men coming to check on them, but then one of them had said – ‘no this light is too bright, it is the yevu’ after which they had continued their fishing. However, the fisherman gave us a strange look and just laughed. He stepped outside and told Anthony that the two men in the bar (wearing shoes and glasses) are Effutu who are helping him pull in his net today, but who were harassing him in the lagoon the other day! (household survey notes 23-6-2004). Unfortunately I did not get to meet the volunteers, to hear their side of the story.

The volunteers are not very successful at monitoring the lagoon. First of all the Anlo-Ewe often work at night and then it is difficult to actually arrest somebody (interview
107, with the Chief). Secondly, according to the Anlo-Ewe fishermen, the volunteers cannot swim (while the Anlo-Ewe fisherman can): ‘So we go deep. Deep places, they don’t know where they are. At the far end, if you can’t swim, you will drown’ (interview 55, Kwame, 15-6-2004). Thirdly if fishermen can be arrested, which is permissible according to the Chief of Winneba, those caught can often pay to be released: ‘… they like bribe, so no court case will come. They take money; it doesn’t even go to the government’ (interview 55, Kwame, 15-6-2004). The Wildlife Officer also hinted at the volunteers being tempted into corruption: ‘You see, if you volunteer (…) and you find yourself that your actions are not rewarded, it is tempt[ing] to pollute your actions (…). And we are very sure that some of them might go into that kind of action’ (interview 56, 25-6-2004). One of the net owners of the village told me that people sometimes do get caught and are brought to the police. His own brothers got caught when they had decided to go to the lagoon after their net had been damaged at sea. They were put in custody for a week and he had to pay money to get them released. According to the fisherman that was a one-off chance and if they were caught again, they would not be able to pay for their release a second time (interview 37, 1-6-2004). From the Chief of Winneba I also heard that they had little success prosecuting the fishermen that had been caught:

CG: ‘I think I once told you, we reported all these cases to the police. It was only one case that was sent to court, the others – [claps in hands] the police mishandled the situation.’
MK: ‘Mishandled it? How?’
CG: ‘They were not serious about it.’
MK: ‘But how can you not be serious about it?!’
CG: ‘I am telling you…’
MK: ‘The law is at their side?!’
CG: ‘The one that went to court, they also cautioned them and discharged it.’
MK: ‘Hm, ok, so…’
CG: ‘So they never took it so seriously.’ (interview 107, 19-12-2005)

Asking the police directly to monitor the lagoon is difficult as well, as the chief fisherman told me: ‘Before the police will go you need this, do this… that is a problem’ (interview 106, 19-12-2005).

In the fieldwork period following the incident I continuously tried to understand why the Chief of Winneba was so serious about this issue of breaking the rules of the Anlo-Ewe and on the other hand I tried to understand the reaction, or rather the lack of reaction of the Anlo-Ewe to this incident. The two following sections reveal the outcomes.

The chief of Winneba
We learned that the Chief of Winneba, in concordance with the priest of the god of the lagoon and the chief fisherman, had gathered volunteers from both Asafo companies to monitor the place. The volunteers were allowed to use weapons to threaten the Anlo-Ewe fishermen and out of the lagoon. The arrests made were, however, not so successful due to a lack of will on the part of the police to follow up on the cases. What remains is the question of why the traditional authorities of Winneba were so strict on this that weapons were even used?

When I first spoke to the Chief (before the incident) I asked him about the Anlo-Ewe in his community. The Chief expressed a whole list of complaints about the Anlo-Ewe
fishermen; they failed to pay for the land,\textsuperscript{12} the fisheries were mismanaged, workers left because net owners were not keeping them well, catches went down (since the dragnet has detrimental effects), they misused the lagoon and spoiled the area. Because of this misuse of the lagoon plus other mitigating facts, the Chief expressed his wish to relocate the fishermen. He had other plans for the location anyway. The Chief pictured the lagoon site as a perfect tourist location (interview 27, 27-3-2004). When I talked to him again (after the incident) he said: ‘We want to resettle them, to the western end of Winneba where there is no lagoon they have to destroy’ (interview 58, 1-7-2004). In this conversation he explained more about his other plans for the site:

‘I am looking for a credible investor who is prepared to preserve the lagoon, keep the ecology in mind – of the place. (...) A resort or some kind of hotel. So we can have big fish again. (…) I want the investor to do some dredging and plant mangroves. Maybe also some water sport.’ (interview 58, 1-7-2004)

The Chief therefore had other plans with the lagoon and framed his plans in an ecological perspective. The Chief and the WD were working well together on managing the lagoon. I asked whether the WD officer knew of the Chief’s plans and what he thought of them. ‘They want to develop the place for tourism, but I also have another perception (…).[B]ecause I know tourism also brings a lot of problems (…)’. Does the Wildlife officer think the villagers are an environmental threat – as the Chief suggests?

[“]They are not really a threat, but they are from the point of view of the traditional authorities (…) And (…) they are helpful, especially when the turtles come ashore to lay eggs, they realise that they are close where they live and can help. But if you put a hotel there and something happens, who are going to help? (interview 56, 30-6-2004)

Although the Wildlife officer was very concerned about the Anlo-Ewe, he still thought it would be possible for them to live there. He stressed that their misbehaviour is often due more to a lack of alternatives than other reasons. With enough education and awareness programmes he felt he could make improvements.

Apart from using environmental arguments against the Anlo-Ewe, the Chief also discredited them in another way. One of the first times I spoke with the Chief, I expressed my interest in this migrant group of fishermen living in his community and asked him what he thought about them. The Chief initially said that the Anlo-Ewe fishermen came to stay, and were not temporary migrants. However, later on in the interview he tried to stress the contrary – that their stay was meant to be temporary and even more so because they had constantly been causing trouble, even escalating to something as serious as ritual killing! At first, being an outsider, I failed to realise the full meaning of what he had said. Later I realised that this reference to ritual killing in relation to Ewe is a known practice in Ghana. It has resulted in the Ewe trying to conceal their ethnicity when travelling, due to the negative associations with being Ewe. When Sesime (my RA) and I went to Half Assini for the first time, we had a little chat with the owner of the hotel where we were going to stay for the first few days. She asked where we came from. I replied that I came from Holland and Sesime said ‘I am a Ghanaian’. She asked: ‘Where from?’ He mentioned the village he came from in the Volta Region. When she had left to get our drinks, he said that he did not like to tell people where he came from. ‘Isn’t it enough to say you are Ghanaian? Why asking all these details?’ I asked him why he did not like to say exactly which village he was from and he replied that it was

\textsuperscript{12} This is denied by all Anlo-Ewe leaders. One of the net owners showed me a receipt proving his payment.
because they would then think you would be wicked (fieldwork notes 20-10-2005). Other studies have also revealed how other ethnic groups associate the Anlo-Ewe negatively as being ‘thieves, kidnappers, sorcerers and ritual murderers’ (Greene 1985: 83-84). ‘Among Fanti townspeople [in Cape Coast] (...) the Anlo were generally regarded with fear, suspicion and hostility. From childhood, Fanti learned to view the Anlo as thieves, kidnappers, sorcerers and ritual murderers’ (Wyllie 1969b: 133). Geurts explains this by pointing out that Anlo-Ewe have acquired a dominant position in Ghana due to their relatively high levels of literacy and lead in the professional and educated sector, for which they are respected and resented. Then there is their association with voodoo: ‘stories abounded among Ghanaians about the potency of Ewe juju’ (Geurts 2002: 122-125).

However, the Chief’s environmental concern is a bit dubious since, if he indeed regarded the conservational aspect of the location as being so important, why then did he opt for this kind of activity, that is patrolling the site by volunteers sensitive to bribes, rather than other kinds of activity? In my fieldwork I easily found enough ‘evidence’ of the Anlo-Ewe breaking the rules: all those nets spread out to dry on the compounds, women openly cleaning heaps of lagoon fish (in quantities which are hardly possible to catch using cast nets) and fishermen freely walking around in daytime on their way to the lagoon on a Wednesday with a dragnet on their shoulders. Is it not convenient for the Chief to claim that these Ewe are misbehaving; not paying for the land, misusing the lagoon, etcetera? When he told me about how he was trying to do something about the fact that the Ewe did not pay for the land some years ago, he said something interesting:

‘In 1998 I took them to court, but then I dropped it. I realised it would create more problems. You see in conflict management you have to be smart, you have to act appropriately. So I dropped it and let them go. There it all started. They are causing harm and are not grateful, so… (interview 58, 1-7-2004)’

He was also being smart. He created the image of the migrants not acting in accordance with their status as guests. The monitoring of the lagoon by volunteers fits the same image, namely that of following up on this rule that is being broken? The idea is probably so that he could prove what was happening and fuel his argument in favour of resettling. Already it seems to be that he was not really that concerned about the environment but was more interested in using the site for economic purposes (tourism), based ostensibly on environmental reasons. However, the persistency of the whole thing gives one the feeling that there is more behind the facade.

When I met the Chief he came across as a man who wanted to develop Winneba. He seemed to long for the bygone days of prosperity, when fishing boats returned home with abundant catches and when Winneba still had a harbour function. However, things had clearly changed. Winneba’s population had, to a large extent, become impoverished and he obviously wanted to do something about that. He was a modern Chief, went to conferences, invited scientists to perform impact studies and wanted to set up a twinning relationship with a western city. He had travelled, had studied abroad and was happy to see me and was more than willing to talk to me and explain his viewpoints. We had a lot of discussions during which he often tried to see whether I could do something for him, and for Winneba.

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13 See the appendix for a proof of payment one of the net owners of Akosua Village gave to me, to prove that they still do pay for the land.
One of the things we talked about was the chieftaincy conflict in which he had become involved. These are widespread in Ghana, but in Winneba it is quite serious. The conflict mainly revolved around the issue of who was entitled to the position of chief, with two rivalling houses (Otuano – the house of the Gharrey family – versus Akramano) each claiming their rights. The point of conflict is the line of descent, with the Otuano house claiming that, since time immemorial, all offices associated with ‘nation-making’ or politics have been transmitted from father to son (Hagan 2000: 170). The Akramano house claimed that the kingship in its present form (without ritual powers\(^\text{14}\)) had developed mainly via its house. This house could lay claim to the position in 1858 via the maternal line, which could be backed by the dual descent organisation of Effutu society (Hagan 2000: 49, 169, 170).\(^\text{15}\) The complicating aspect in Winneba is that the two Asafo companies had become involved in the dispute and each supported the other house (Ibid.: 149-172). Whereas in the past the Chief had been elevated above the two parties, nowadays the society is completely divided because of the opposing claims of the Asafo. The Chief therefore had the difficult task of manoeuvring in such a way that both Asafo groups were happy (this had always been the case but had recently become more difficult). The Effutu refer to this as being similar to carrying twins on your back and taking care not to drop one (Ibid.: 172).

Traditional festivities, with a central role for the Chief, were always tense. From 1996 onwards, Winneba’s Deer Hunt Festival\(^\text{16}\) festivals, whereby the two Asafo companies compete in order to catch the first live deer, have been potentially explosive.

\(^{14}\) This has been explained as the result of European presence: ‘The European presence served to enhance the secular aspect of the Odefeyship, when the Odefey started negotiating trade terms, receiving gifts and rents, and, generally, being called upon to perform duties that hitherto had not been his prerogative’ (Hagan 2000: 171).

\(^{15}\) According to Ephirim-Donkor (2000) this matrilineal claim to the position of chief of Winneba has been influenced by the strong Akan (Fanti) influence on the Effutu. The Akan have a matrilineal descent whereby ‘all matters pertaining to citizenship, political succession or inheritance rights come up to [to the question]: Who is your mother?’ (p. 14) ‘The gist of the problem in Winneba is the attempt to introduce the ebusua system of secession into the political process’ (p. 18).

\(^{16}\) The Deer Hunt festival is originally the main festival of the Effutu. It is celebrated in honour of the main god of the Effutu, Penkye Out and carried out in such a way that unity and peace were strengthened among the divided Effutu based on a code of mystical and moral regulations. During the festival the two Asafo companies go out to the hunting grounds to compete with each other in catching a deer (in fact it was an antelope). The first deer caught (alive) counts and is offered to the god. The deer hunt has also led to the creation of two Asafo companies, to speed up the catching a deer the Chief at that time created a second asafo. Each group tries to catch the dear at separate hunting grounds. The competition between the asafo companies is linked to the ecological and cosmological domain. If Asafo number one comes in first with the deer the Effutu believe there will be abundant rainfall and harvest, if number two comes in first there will be poor rainfall and a rise in births (the Effutu believe in a coinciding of food scarcity and a high peak of birth). Hagan studied the first link and he indeed found a correlation between the company winning and rainfall. He explains it by the separate hunting grounds – previous rainfall determines where the deer are best to be found (Hagan 2000: 131, 173-195). Nowadays it should be noted that the festival has changed, it has become a national festival supported by the government (Ibid.: 249). This has resulted in strong pressure for the festival to take place, whereas in the past it only took place when all parties (the two asafo companies, the chief and the elders) agreed to do so. The celebration of 1999 apparently completely broke with the moral code by having the two asafo bringing in a deer to other power holders than regulated, as Hagan concludes: ‘The various breaches of the code have removed the fear that propelled all actors to resolve their differences and seek reconciliation and peace to enable them to celebrate the festival.’ ‘Thus chieftaincy disputes have remained unsolved, and the chieftaincy institution has ceased to be a unifying institution’ (Ibid.: 250). The last complicating problem is that the deer has become so scarce, that it becomes difficult to catch one at all (Ephirim-Donkor 2000: 12).
Figure 8.6 Statues portraying the Deer Hunt Festival

Moreover, when I was there in 2004 the police had to send in extra personnel as a preventive measure, with tanks at all major crossroads! The Chief’s drive to develop Winneba came across as genuine, and was understandable given his position as Chief whose legitimacy was being questioned. Being able to do great deeds for the community would perhaps silence his opponents. His urge to develop this tourist site would seem to fit this interpretation of events.

Just before I left Ghana I had a final discussion with the Chief. We talked about the problems facing Winneba and the opportunities, and about the chieftaincy conflict and the developments around the lagoon. At the end of my interview I returned to the issue of the Anlo–Ewe having to move from their village and dared to be straight with him. His answer was illuminating:

MK: ‘Can I just come back to these Ewe, because it is the main focus of my study. I don’t want to upset you, but I just want to play devil’s advocate … do you have some kind of grudge with these people? Because it seems you are very focused on their misuse of the lagoon, the way they go about the toilet, and, you know that they are defecating everywhere and the mangroves … But if I look around in Winneba, I see other things happening that are also not fine. You know if I go here to the beach, I find it much more dirty than if I go to this actual beautiful site … So somehow I can’t help myself thinking that it is because these people are not from here, it is because they are migrants that you somehow want to relocate them, whereas if it would have been local people, you wouldn’t have had that kind of insight.’
CG: ‘If we would have local people over there, we would still do the same thing, because um … the kind of resort we want to have cannot cope with that community. Let me say this, it is a decision not made but discussed, to relocate the Police Training School. You cannot put up that tall building and look at those … of the police. Dry their uniforms and that sort of thing, fire range, a lot of those …’
MK: ‘Yes, meaning it is not only the Ewe but it is also the police school that you are thinking, yeah…’ (interview 107, 19-12-2005)

After I had repeated what he had said, rather forlornly and with little hope of gaining any additional insight into why he was so focused on the Ewe’s misuse of the lagoon, he suddenly revealed the underlying argument:

CG: ‘Now, they have done more harm. They have supported this chieftaincy dispute!’ (interview 107, 19-12-2005)
I was excited about what he said and curious as to whether he could reveal any more. As we continued our discussion, I could tell he was really affected by this, and he wanted to convince me by vigorously repeating ‘they have, they have’.

MK: ‘How have they?’
CG: ‘Financially! That is why a lot of their businesses have collapsed. They have put in so much money, in the other side.’
MK: ‘Why would they support the other side?’
CG: ‘Maybe they were coerced to do that, I can’t tell, but they have!’
Mk: ‘Hmm.’
CG: ‘They have done it! There is no dispute about that.’ (interview 107, 19-12-2005)

There it is then. The Anlo-Ewe have taken the wrong side in the chieftaincy conflict. So it all came together and at last made sense. His position is undermined by the conflict with the Ewe supporting the other side.\(^{17}\) As a way to get out of the conflict, the Chief puts his money – as a figure of speech – into developing the town. This tourist development project is prestigious and a project like this is just what he needs in his precarious situation. The little village of the Anlo-Ewe is positioned at the heart of the whole plan, nearby the beach, nearby the mouth of the lagoon where it is safe to swim because the water is shallower there. The Chief is convinced that the area is valuable for upmarket tourism:

CG: ‘that area could be a cash cow for Winneba. If we have about a 1000 tourists coming to Winneba per annum and each spends about a 100 US$ in Winneba, that is a million dollars. And that is big money! (…) we want the place to be a resort free of all these ..., where people can have adequate land area to sleep under the coconut trees, you know whatever games and whatever sports, leisure, everything … Make it a class of its own. Like those resorts that you see on CNN.’
MK: ‘You are really thinking of a major, Busua Beach Resort, Elmina Beach Resort …’
CG: ‘Ah those even don’t, the resources we have here don’t match what we have at Busua or Elmina, I have been there a couple of times at workshops – we have a very nice scenery.’ (interview 107, 19-12-2005)

The fact that the Ewe have to move from where they have been welcome for more than 100 years is easy to explain by pointing out that them being near such a beautiful resort is just impossible, and they are not the only ones that might need to resettle, since the police have to as well! In his quest to get rid of the Anlo-Ewe he used a variety of strategies, for example by stating that they never came to stay – that they were temporary migrants – stating that they failed to adhere to rules of paying, that they spoiled the area where they lived, that their fishing was not serious anymore, that they were an uncontrollable lot without a chief guiding them, making use of the stereotype that Anlo-Ewe were wicked by referring to ritual killings and by trying to convince us that the alternative location is the same thing as where they are staying now ‘without a lagoon to misuse’, etc. etc. The Anlo-Ewe have to move!

It is however questionable how successful he will be. One of my informants in Winneba said that at a political level (which is strongly interrelated in the Winneba

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\(^{17}\) As this interview was held at the end of my fieldwork period I was not able to discuss the chief’s acquisition with the Anlo-Ewe. It is however important to realise that strangers in Winneba are soon dragged in the conflict. It is difficult for outsiders to stay out of the conflict, talking with people belonging to one party almost immediately means that you must oppose the other side. One day I was also pulled away by a stranger after leaving the chief’s palace and asked to come and talk with ‘the other side.’ Although I was interested in doing so, the way in which I was approached at that time made me feel unsafe and I managed to walk away. As I had my hands full with my research in Akosua Village I kept my distance to getting involved in the chieftaincy conflict of Winneba.
chieftaincy conflict – see also Hagan 2000: 172) the Chief could never succeed in relocating the villages, for the NDC would never agree to it and the NPP Government will never dare to resettle Ewe people.

In the literature we can read about a similar story that happened in the Western Region, with a local leader taking on an Anlo-Ewe migrant community. That happened in 1964, in an Anlo-Ewe migrant fisher village called Abakam next to Cape Coast, albeit that the outcome of that case was more radical than in this case. The Abakam migrant fishermen were indeed evicted and their village was burnt down. Like Akosua Village, Abakam was founded at the beginning of the twentieth century and gradually evolved from a fishing camp into a permanent village. The villagers were warned a couple of times and then one day were ordered by the police to leave the village to be resettled in another village nearby. Once they had left their houses, the whole village was set on fire by the workmen employed by the Cape Coast Municipal Council (Wyllie 1969b: 132). In the analysis of what had happened we can see several similarities. In Abakam it was not the Chief but the Regional Commissioner who had acted ‘primarily as an agent of powerful tribal sentiments, reinforced possibly by political considerations and by a desire to pursue a personal or family feud’ (Ibid.: 140). In Wyllie’s analysis of the case we see that the whole thing can be brought back to an important incident in the 1940s when the Regional Commissioner at that time became the director of a fishing company financed by his mother, which operated from the beach in front of the village. The fishing company had started fishing without consulting the village headman: ‘Hagan is said to have taken the view that, as a Fanti, he did not have to consult an Anlo before fishing from a Fanti beach.’ As other Fanti-owned companies had shown that respect to the Anlo headman the Anlo had seen his actions as a deliberate affront and a hostile act (Ibid.: 133). The Regional Commissioner only fished for two seasons and, according to the Ewe, he was a poor fisherman, after which he stopped and moved on to other professions ending up as Regional Commissioner after a career in politics and later becoming the initiator of the resettlement scheme.

The Anlo-Ewe in Akosua Village

There are two sides to this conflict, that of the Chief and other traditional leaders of Winneba and that of the Anlo-Ewe of Akosua Village. The question is how the villagers assess the situation and what position do their leaders take in the conflict?

The leaders in Akosua Village are the chief of the village, the assemblyman and the net owners. The Chief, a net owner himself, inherited his position from his father. The daughter of the founder of the village, the first Anlo-Ewe Chief of the village, explained how the present Chief became Chief:

O: ‘My father, … it was the people from Winneba themselves who made him Chief. He refused, but they also refused and forced him to be Chief.18 So when he was on the throne and was getting old, he himself went to the town to tell them that they should get another Chief because he was getting old. He didn’t want to settle these cases anymore, with this man says that, tomorrow that one says that…But they [the people from Winneba] also refused, and asked him to present somebody who he thinks could succeed him. So all of them came together; the Fanti’s19 and my father and decided that they would put Togbe Akpadeh on the throne. So when they did that, they said all of them were boat

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18 The translator added that the Fanti knew him to be the leading man so they forced him to become chief.

19 The inhabitants of Winneba are often called Fanti by the Ewe. This is however not correct since the natives of Winneba are Effutu. Yet many Fanti live in Winneba and Fanti is the common language spoken (see also Hagan 2000: 1).
owners, so no one should be bitter against the others. So they were all invited to come, and they told them that their elders say he can no longer be the Chief, and so they chose another Chief. This is how Togbe was introduced to them.’ (interview 21, 20-2-2004)

The Togbe referred to was the father of the current Chief. It shows how the elders in Winneba demanded that the migrant Ewe have someone to represent them. Once that man had been appointed, subsequent chiefs could be chosen by the Ewe themselves. The current Chief came to power in 1986. According to the fisherman we spoke to after the shooting incident, the Chief of the Anlo-Ewe did nothing for them, did not confront the people monitoring with what they were doing (interview 55, 15-6-2007). His answer did not surprise me. From the many interviews held with the villagers a picture emerged that the Chief of the village was not a very active man and hardly respected. One of the fishermen had fished in the fishing company of the Chief and said: ‘He inherited the chief position from his father. But he doesn’t respect you, he doesn’t want you to respect’ (interview 39, 1-6-2004). Another fisherman replied, when I asked him how often he saw the fisheries chief, that he seldom saw him – he only came when the rent (to the hosts from Winneba) needed to be paid and even in case of conflicts on the beach they would try to settle the conflicts without consulting him (interview 41, 3-6-2004). The Chief also complained about the villagers: ‘But the children now, they don’t pay respect. I don’t worry them, it is all on its own. I have houses here and at home, I relax here for one or two reasons. My net is in the room, the boat is here. But the people are no more here. The small net owners spoiled the business’ (interview 23, 14-03-2004).

The people the chief refers to are the net owners from the olden days, the leaders of the village. In a migrant village such as Akosua Village the economic leaders, the net owners are also the political leaders. Wyllie, who also performed research in Akosua Village in 1969, explained how this was arranged:

‘The net owners’ authority is legitimated in three ways: 1) most non-members [of companies] are economically dependant, as fish curers or fish sellers, upon the incumbent company. Economic dependence is translated into political dependence upon its leader, the net owner; 2) most non-members are relatives of company members who are responsible for their good conduct and in this way bring them within the authority system of the company itself; 3) non-members reside in a section of the village by permission of the net owner whose company lives there. It is the net owner who rents the land occupied by residents of a section.’ (Wyllie 1969: 407 [with my adding])

This village structure and leadership logic is still present in Akosua Village. When my research assistant Anthony and I decided to stay in the village in 2005, we were also advised by my informant to present a gift to, and to ask permission from, the net owner responsible for that part of the village, and so we did. Such a village organisation differs from the setup in the home area where leadership is based on kinship and positions in the lineage. In his article Wyllie compares Akosua Village with Srogboe (a village in Keta District), and shows how the villages differ in terms of organisation of the economy, physical setup of the villages (see Figure 8.7 in which this is still reflected in Akosua Village in 2004), demographically (compare with Chapter 3) and socially.

According to Wyllie the ‘combination of youth and social heterogeneity constitutes a force which tends to undermine the power of tradition, particularly in relation to marriage’ (Wyllie 1969: 409). He also explains that in Akosua Village, where there are fewer elderly people than at home, there is ‘a paucity of those who personify tradition and, as its living agents, insist that things follow the time-honoured patterns (Ibid.: 405).

The daughter of the founding father of Akosua Village said the following about the

20 Akosua Village is called Muniano in the article.
youth losing their traditions (as translated to me): ‘Ok when it comes to the youngsters too, before you marry you had to ask permission from the parents. (...) Even if you were deeply in love and your parents didn’t agree, you had to respect your parents’ decision, because if you were to go against their decision, you wouldn’t belong to the family anymore. That is how things happened in those days’ (interview 21, 20-2-2004).

Figure 8.7 Map of Akosua Village showing in which company the men of the households fish

According to Wyllie, the political organisation of the village is economically based and ‘Legitimisation of authority no longer requires a myth of the founding fathers, such as we find in Srogboe’ (Wyllie 1969: 410).

As we read before, some years ago the workers protested against the net owners saying that they were exploiting them. A lot of net owners then left the village, after which their children took over, and some new net owners arrived. Therefore, neither the Chief of the village nor the net owners are respected as village leaders anymore. Nor is the Assemblyman, who represents the Anlo-Ewe community in the Districts Assembly in Winneba. His appointment had also led to fierce campaigning and conflicts in the village. During our household survey we spoke to a man in the village about the assembly man. He is related to him but also he says: ‘Formally he worked, but now he is not doing anything at all’ (household survey ending 30-6-2004). Although he is the person they go to in the event of conflicts when the Chief is out of town, he is never referred to in a positive way.
This conflict in the village between the old net owners and the young fishermen, the fact that the villagers are not united, the low catches, the end of the company system, and the fact that the rituals are not performed as they should be, are all talked about as being connected to each other. The one cannot be understood without referring to the other. As one of the fishermen says: ‘Leaders, net owners, bozus – they drink, workers fight, it is foolishness’ (interview 39, 1-6-2004). ‘Formerly the ritual was done here, but now we are not united. No one will be able to bring the people together’ (field notes 28-11-2005).

In a discussion with a couple of fishermen together, I asked them why they did not fish in the company system anymore. The following discussion shows how this is related to the smaller catches and the cheating of the net owners:

Young net owner: ‘The former net owners deceived the workers, the workers were brought here to fish but the money never came. We [he was one of these workers before becoming a net owner] could see the catch coming, but no money came. That opened our minds, so we decided to all look for our daily bread now. I will stop here.’ [many fishermen laugh]

MK: ‘Were only the net owners leaving, or did some workers go with them?’

Young net owner: ‘When they do it to you, when they hurt you like that, will you go? The nets are even still here, they just left!’

MK: ‘So when was this all happening?’

Youth leader: ‘That is why I said our uncles, our forefathers who were here first, they were honest. Our grandfathers would build a house for you if you came to work with them. They wouldn’t just leave you struggling. It is those who were the treasurers, who cheated. They were outsiders. Now they are all out, their own kids are doing it now.’

MK: ‘So we can distinguish three periods in this village, the first of the forefathers who came here, then that of the uncles and now. How many net owners were there in the olden days?’

Answer: ‘Those who were elderly, they were about 12. They were understanding and honest people. It is when they died, those who took over, those were the ones causing the problem. Their children are the people now, stealing from the workers.’

MK: ‘How did the ending of the company go, that change in organisation, was there a revolt?’

Answer: ‘It was clear, you see the catch, you see what you get and you know. That is all, no revolt. All just left the company. The nets were still there, but who was there to pull?’

Young net owner: ‘If you work for someone, it is the food you eat that makes it fine. If you work on an empty stomach, you work with stomach aches, then you will leave.’

MK: ‘Where did the workers all go to?’

Answer: ‘Some left for home, some found other jobs, some joined other companies.’

MK: ‘The ones who stayed and stopped fishing, how did they survive?’

Answer: ‘Now there is no more company, that is how the system changed, so they started working on a daily basis.’

MK: ‘What is better, working in a company or outside a company?’

Answers:
- ‘If the owners are honest, a company is better.’
- ‘No, even now, the time you are in a company 2,3 years, they keep your money – ah, you just use the interest to pay the people. I might as well get the money and interest myself!’

(…)
- ‘Some don’t know about a company system, they don’t know how it works. They don’t know all, they just get their share and that is all. But at the moment the sac comes, and you have a catch, you pack the net in the boat and you go to the house, you see the account, then you see you are cheated. That is why they don’t let you come to the house, then you will see.’ (group interview fishermen Akosua Village, 8-6-2004)

Declining catches, the end of the company system and growing revolt among the workers are complaints referred to in one and the same breath. Or as one of the older net owners explained in response to my question about the main problems facing fishermen in Akosua Village:
'For us here, one of the problems is the net, petrol, the motor and the canoe; they are major problems. It is so expensive. Formerly, … they stopped pouring libation and making the customs. We had a net owner meeting. We went there, we consulted the Gods, we asked what they wanted from us and when we gave it to them we believed that the sea would open. But now general rules are left out, the small personal ones are done; to pour libation. But we have to do it as community.' (interview 51, 10-6-2004)

Young and old though complain about the rites, the rituals not being performed anymore as an explanation for bad catches. I asked a crew member (of 27 years old) how their fishing was going:

Fisherman: ‘There has been a drastic change since 1991. When I came [in 1990] the catch was plenty, even if I didn’t know how it worked. Now I know and see it is spoiled.’

MK: Why?

Fisherman: The customs; we don’t perform it anymore. Some men don’t have room, and then have sex on the beach. It is not kept healthy. The Lybia net also is a problem. There are fetish on the beach – we believe; the kids spoiled everything.

MK: How do you value the customs as a Christian? [He had told me he was a Christian.]

Fisherman: Custom is custom. That is how I grew up. Whatever you worship, do it well in truth. Now some say they believe, but they do the wrong things! (…) Net owners and gods…, but now the gods are not doing their work. That is why I say that it is spoiled. Now they perform rituals, two companies but that is useless. Nobody puts all their trust in the gods. So things are changing.’ (interview 39, 1-6-2004)

The fisherman tried to explain to me that, although some net owners still perform the rituals, this is no longer done by the community as a whole despite that being what is needed. Another fisherman (32 years old) told me the following when asked about how their fishing was going:

Fisherman: ‘It is not like it used to be. Now sometimes we are not even getting fish.’

MK: ‘How long ago?’

Fisherman: ‘Some six years ago there was a fall in the catch, with an occasional influx, but that doesn’t stay.’

MK: Why do you think it changed?

Fisherman: Formerly when our grandparents were here, they would say ‘Let’s buy a male sheep – if there would be a fall in the catch, or a fowl. To pay the Gods, sacrifice, but those old people are not here anymore. It is we the children who are there. If I buy a goat and a fowl, someone should be there to perform.’

MK: ‘How is it performed?’

Fisherman: ‘The custom is not performed at home. They did it at the elder’s beach. Only the elderly were there, children can’t come, that is part of the cult. Whenever it was done, there was a change.’ (interview 41, 3-6-2004)

As we saw before in this thesis, this linking of religion, nature and social functioning of the group makes sense in the world view of the Anlo Ewe. Ecological disorder – such as declining catches – ‘also signalled disequilibrium in the social and cosmological realms’ (Akyeampong 2001: 104). The reverse is also true, namely that disequilibrium in the social realm can create ecological disorder. In the other case referred to in this chapter I devote more attention to this mindscape. For now it is important to realise that the Anlo-Ewe in Akosua Village are not united and lack legitimate and respected leadership, which is problematic in their relationship with their host community. The Chief of Winneba is able to simply deny the presence of the Chief of Akosua Village: ‘There is no Chief, he left three years ago, took his gear to his hometown. I was told he came back, but have not been seeing him’ (interview 27, 27-3-2004).
Sub-conclusion

On the surface this case is about a local chief taking action against migrant fishermen breaking rules set to regulate access and use of a lagoon. This may seem to be just and understandable but it is also slightly questionable since a number of rules are broken (also in relation to the use of other lagoons in Ghana) and one might wonder why these rules are monitored to the extent of using weapons! We discovered that the Chief framed his course of action in an environmental discourse and emphasised his right to act as the traditional owner of the lagoon and as being empowered by the laws of the Government of Ghana. Looking at the case in more detail reveals that the environmental concern was not the driving force behind his actions. Instead, he was motivated by economic and political interests. After all, his entitlement to being Chief of Winneba was being openly questioned and was dividing the town into two camps, namely those supporting him and those supporting his opponent. The legitimacy of his rule was at stake. In this whole context the Anlo-Ewe had, according to the Chief, taken the wrong side! Moreover, because of the chieftaincy conflict he was eager to silence his opponents by showing his capacity to be a good chief. The tourist project at Muni Lagoon is going to be a prestigious one and that positive attention for his leadership is clearly necessary. Therefore the Ewe simply stand in his way. In order to get rid of them, he used a wide range of strategies. He tried to discredit them by saying that they failed to pay the rent for the land, thereby undermining their right to be there, by playing the ethnicity card (evil Ewe!) and most convincingly by pointing out that they damage the environment and that their presence is of no interest anymore since the big companies have collapsed. The Chief was aware of the Anlo-Ewe internal problems and exploited these.

Although the Chief did come across as a Chief who cared for the development of his town and was therefore looking for investments that would generate economic development and job opportunities, it is doubtful whether a five star hotel will bring wealth to the community as a whole. The other traditional leaders supported the Chief in his actions against fishing in the lagoon. It is unclear whether they are also hoping to gain from possible profit from any future tourist facilities.

The wildlife officer was at least doubtful about whether the relocation of the Anlo-Ewe and the creation of a tourist facility would have positive environmental effects. He was happy with the assistance provided by the Chief as regards monitoring the lagoon, since he and his staff were largely ineffective and lacked resources. However, he was not that positive when asked whether the approach used was effective; aware as he was of the difficulty of preserving stocks if the users are dependant on it for their livelihoods.

The volunteers appeared to be a group of men who were less involved with the cause of their action and more with arranging their own livelihoods. This might explain the lack of shock on the part of the Anlo-Ewe when the gunshot was heard for they knew that it was not deadly serious and that things could be arranged with the men who, besides being volunteers, also helped to drag in their nets.

The Anlo-Ewe fishermen were breaking the rules because of a lack of alternatives. Fishing in the lagoon is their livelihood strategy of diversification, one of the few they have as migrants. The monitoring activities do not seem to worry them too much since they know that things can be arranged. This might be explained by the fact that fishing in the lagoon is officially also forbidden in their home area but since Keta lagoon is so large and since the law is questioned much more in the land of the beach seine, they are
not familiar with fierce control of the state law. There are no traditional taboos on fishing with a dragnet in Keta lagoon. The environmental discourse that the leaders of Winneba make use of in justifying and explaining the action taken does not seem to take root in the mindscape of the Anlo-Ewe fishermen. Instead of referring to the traditional and religiously embedded rules, the leaders refer to the detrimental effects on fish stocks. This conservational discourse does not have an effect on the Anlo-Ewe fishermen because they do not have the ‘luxury’ of conserving fish-stocks, and because they are short of alternatives and need to eat. They realise that catches are declining at sea as well as in the lagoon, and they know that something needs to be done about it. However, their solutions are expressed in terms of disharmony in the community, the breakdown of social order (having sex on the beach) and the failure to perform the right rituals. However, in the end they put their hope in their belief that the gods will also provide for the future.

The lack of articulation of protest against the Chief of Winneba’s action is, however, also a sign of a lack of leadership. Akosua Village comes across as somewhat disintegrated, as the Ewe Togbe himself said ‘it is every man for himself’, an expression that does not tie in with Ewe norms and values. The fact that Akosua Village is a migrant settlement explains how the changes in the economic organisation of the village (the loss of the company institution followed by the old net owners leaving the village) has resulted in a breakdown of political organisation. Wyllie pointed out how the demographic structure of migrant villages and their economic focus resulted in a loss of traditional power and to changes of the social order (Wyllie 1969). The declining catches of the 1990s and the malpractices of net owners in those days resulted in the demise of a social system. All this has resulted in ineffective leadership, a power vacuum and a breakdown of social order. It appears to be a little village in crisis as regards the social, environmental and cosmological order, where people all engage in their own endeavours without much concerted effort. This makes them highly ineffective in their dispute with the Chief of Winneba.

In the following part of this chapter we shift our attention to the homeland of the Anlo-Ewe to see how they deal with external events that affect them in their livelihood in their home area where their own governance structures apply. Are they more effective at home? We will see how they themselves, in the Keta case, frame their political action in an environmental discourse. The Keta case will also show how one should be careful in dealing with mindscapes and world views in a deterministic way since some Anlo-Ewe made use of ‘tradition’ to solve the problem whereas others put their hope in ‘modernity’.

**Keta Sea Defence Project**

The coast of the Volta Region, and more precisely of Keta District, has been suffering from severe sea erosion for over 100 years now. Ever since the erosion occurred, the problem was assessed and plans were made, both by local inhabitants and by policymakers. The case in point here shows how a different understanding of the problem has led to different strategies for solving it and how technocratic solutions – including the

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21 This section appeared earlier in a paper entitled ‘Integrated coastal zone management as a technocratic project: the Keta sea defence case of south-eastern Ghana’ written with Visser for the CERES summer school 2006 in the Netherlands (see reference list).
The final proposal of the Keta Sea Defence Project – partly solved problems but at the same time shifted them to other places and – by neglecting social realities – created new ones.

The Anlo-Ewe homeland, in the South East of Ghana, is dominated by fresh, brackish and salt water. The coastal strip from Atiteti to Adina is sandwiched in between the Volta river to the west, Keta Lagoon to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the south (see Figure 3.2). All of the water bodies are connected by streams and creeks, and the land strip is dotted with ponds and shallow wells. The strip is generally a couple of kilometres wide, but at some places no wider than twenty to forty metres. The Anlo-Ewe have been living in this area for about 300 years (Akyeampong 2001: 27) and have, in the course of time, adapted to the landscape and developed a maritime culture. It was a harsh landscape which the Anlo-Ewe moved to from inland Togo. It was a landscape ‘with infertile soil, irregular rainfall and frequent droughts’ and, later on, with the growing threat of sea erosion and floods from the lagoon (Akyeampong 2001: 14).

Figure 8.8  The different high water marks in Keta

![Figure 8.8](image)

Showing the floods of 1907, 1924, 1929, 1949 and 1987.

The erosion of the coast apparently started about one hundred years ago, in 1907. The next major floods were in 1924 and 1929, while the last ones (at the Keta–Kedzi area) were in 1996 and 1997. To make the situation even more threatening the lagoon also flooded every now and then, meaning that the inhabitants had to deal with water problems from two sides. The Keta Sea Defence Project had started in 2000 but, when I arrived in Ghana in 2003, the scene in Keta was still quite shocking. A large part of Keta town consisted of roofless and collapsed houses which were either surrounded by water, or filled with sand. The roads were pieces of tar held together by potholes and bumps. Fort Prinzenstein\(^{22}\) was a ruin, with parts of it washed away by the sea, leaving

\(^{22}\) A Danish Fort also known as Prinsensten.
only the forecourt still intact. Keta had clearly suffered from a combination of coastal erosion and flooding of the lagoon. People travelling from or to Togo had to cross the beach by jeeps since the coastal road had been washed away.

In 2005 a lot was done to prevent further threats from the sea and the lagoon. The Keta Sea Defence Project was almost finished. An eighty-four million dollar project, funded by the Ghanaian government, had resulted in 300 acres of reclaimed land (built with sand dredged from the lagoon), a newly constructed road (8.3 kilometres) between Keta and Horvle re-establishing the link with the Eastern inland area of the Volta Region and with Togo, sea defence works, and a flood control structure (built under the road). In addition, the government had started with the construction of 850 new houses in villages to the west of Keta, for persons displaced by the sea (GLDD 2000: 2 and Daily Graphic 27-5-2004).

*Figure 8.9  Fort Prinzenstein*

The mindscape of the actors involved

- The ecological mindscape of the Anlo-Ewe
If one walks around the Anlo-Ewe area one quickly notices that the environment is full of items of religious significance. Trees, crossroads, and entrances of households, thatch constructions on the beach; everywhere one can see sacred objects, places for offerings

23 It is important to make clear that I know that both Anlo-Ewe inhabitants of Keta District and government officials often have layered identities (see Sen 2006, quoted in Chapter 5) and thus refer to plural mindframes. An individual can be educated, work for the local government, be involved in traditional tasks as performing rituals as an elder in his lineage and go to church on Sundays. People are quite well capable of combing these different mindframes, which to an outsider appear to be so different. In this section I however wish to sketch in an idealtypical way two dominant mindscape that have played a role in the debate around the Keta Sea Defence Project and that can roughly be attributed to these two groups ‘the Anlo-Ewe’ and the ‘government officials’ at national level.

24 The concept of mindscape was developed by Arjun Appadurai (1990) especially to indicate how today’s global interactions create tensions between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation. The dynamics of modernisation are evident from the spatially and temporary highly intensified and complex flows of information, people, and commodities that may or may not interact with each other.
and other ritual markers. These visible expressions of meaning are not the full story. All physical attributes are imbued with meaning. The sea or lagoon is not just a water body full of natural resources in which you can swim or fish. Trees are not just trees, and paths are more than just a space to move from one place to another. Locations are ‘defined as much by their physical properties as by the spiritual forces that […] occupied and operated from these locations’ (Greene 2002: 1). The space the Anlo live in is perceived as ecological, social and cosmological (Akyeampong 2001: 104).

Considering the fact that the Anlo-Ewe land is dominated by water, it is no surprise that water is at the centre of Anlo culture (Greene 2002: 35). Potable water bodies, the lagoon and the ocean were localities in the landscape infested with spiritual meaning, which resulted in rules and taboos. ‘Water in general constituted a powerful spiritual fluid in Anlo religion’ (Akyeampong 2001: 112). Greene cites some elderly people she spoke to during her fieldwork, about how one of the ponds near Anloga was regarded. One of them stated:

‘There were [also] lots of crocodiles in Blolui. It was believed that the crocodiles normally came out to roam about in the town at night. When we were children [some ninety years ago] we were told not to fish in Blolui if we had eaten left over food. Women were not to cross or approach the pond when they were on their menses. No one was supposed to enter the pond after having sex … We were told that if we went against these prohibitions, the crocodiles in the pond would drag us to the bottom … They would even chase you into town.’ (Greene 2002: 48)

Histories, meanings and spiritual significance are subject to (continuous) transformation and the same holds true for the Anlo-Ewe perception of water. Environmental change, technological innovation, colonial rule, education and missionary influence have impacted on local perceptions. Greene points out in her book that, over time, the potable water bodies and the lagoon lost their spiritual meaning. Potable water bodies became less important when, due to technological innovation, it became possible to create wells virtually everywhere in the landscape. The lagoon also had lost its importance when catches declined due to over-fishing but also when the introduction of the yevedor (beach seine) combined with the knowledge to cross the surf with canoes made it possible to fish at sea.

However, not all water bodies have lost their former meanings since the ocean has retained its power for many in Anlo (Greene 2002: 36). The ocean is seen as the home of many gods and therefore numerous rituals take place along the shore, offerings were made to enhance the trade relations with the Europeans, or to ensure a good catch, to cleanse sacred objects or to separate themselves from their deceased spouse but also to restore harmony in the community or to ask for control of the sea in the light of the erosion (Ibid.: 53). These rituals still take place in Anlo because of the economic importance of the ocean for the Anlo. Fishing is one of the main activities in the local economy, an activity that is not without danger. Even though the majority of the fishermen are beach seine fishermen,25 crossing the surf is a hazardous operation that quite often ends with a capsizing canoe. Drowning is still a risk even for experienced swimmers, since the undertow in the surf is a constant danger. Obviously bad weather at sea is a threat to fishermen and also shark attacks occur. The power of the sea can also be observed in the heavy erosion that occurs at the Anlo coast.

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In 2001, 154 of the 323 canoes were beach seine canoes (47 percent) (see Chapter 1). Considering the fact that beach seine companies have the highest number of crew (average thirty compared to six with other techniques) most of the fishermen are beach seine fishermen in the Keta District (MFRD 2001, Table 1.2).
One of the gods, Awleketi who lives in the ocean, is part of the Yewe religious order of the Anlo:

‘It [the ocean] can destroy everything in its path and has done just that in Keta. It can drown the most able swimmers, but it is also an important source of potential wealth. Its mysterious depths are the home of ancestors, strange creatures of the sea and Awleketi – a member of the Yewe religious order that has not only withstood the onslaught of Christianity, colonialism, and the opposition from the Anlo’s war god, Nyigbla, but has come to thrive in the towns and villages of Anlo. The ocean represents all this in the minds of many Anlo, Christian and non-Christian alike.’ (Greene 2002: 58)

The Yewe had, and still have, a strong foothold in Anlo towns. They also perform the main annual ritual whereby a cow or a ram26 is thrown into the sea out of a canoe and offered to the gods (see Chapter 7).

However, even more rituals are performed and more gods are consulted in relation to the fishing activity. Net owners perform rituals weekly and often also daily to appease the gods that help them. These rituals are performed at the beach (for instance by feeding the canoe) or at the home of the net owner where almost all have their own shrine. A canoe setting off for migration will not leave without some rituals at home and on the beach.

This shows that the spiritual meaning of the ocean is still central in the daily life on the Anlo-Ewe coast. It is also important for an understanding of the solutions sought by the Anlo-Ewe to avert sea erosion. Before we examine this in more detail, we will now focus on the mindscape of the government officials related to the sea erosion in Keta.

• The technocratic mindscape of government officials

The mindscape of government officials has not fundamentally changed since colonial times. State projects of legibility (Scott 1998) are by their very nature of being a state project aiming at simplification, homogenisation, and visibility. ‘Legibility is a condition of manipulation. Any substantial state intervention in society … requires the invention of units that are visible.27 … The degree of knowledge required would have to be roughly commensurate with the depth of the intervention. In other words, one might say that the greater the envisaged manipulation, the greater the legibility required to effect it’ (Scott 1998: 183).

Project intervention to control erosion of the land by the sea has been receiving increased attention in the discourse on coasts and seas where Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is the key concept. The terms are of recent origin, having been put on the map by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. IPCC’s concern was with sea level rise and the possible threat to low-lying coastal regions. It recommends ‘endorsed integrated coastal management as the appropriate framework […] to reduce vulnerability to accelerated sea level rise’ (Cicin-Sain & Knecht 1998: 36). ICZM should safeguard humankind from the sea, from hazards such as flooding, and from marine disasters such as environmental degradation and pollution.

ICZM primarily serves macro-economic, land-based, and state-induced interests. Safeguarding the land from the sea is conditional to a state agenda of large-scale

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26 Both the literature and the people spoken to during the fieldwork spoke alternatively of a ram or a cow. Most likely it was a ram that was sent to sea, since the ritual was called Agbodedefu, which means ‘sending a ram to the sea’ in Ewe (Akyeampong 2001: 121).

27 This is a different visibility than the popular demand for ‘visibility’ and transparency of today’s political actors.
demographic, urban development in the coastal zone. It is expected, by the United Nations, that by the year 2025 75 percent of the world’s population will live in or off the coastal zone.\footnote{The coastal zone is defined in the RAMSAR Convention as the area 60 km inland and 40 km into the sea.} Secondly, ICZM is also an intervention tool, an instrument enabling governing bodies to intervene in the social, economic and even political living conditions of coastal people by means of spatial rules and regulations (Visser 2004: 32-33).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event / Report / Who</th>
<th>Proposal / Activity</th>
<th>Estimated cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Director of Public Works, arranged by the Commissioner of the Eastern Province</td>
<td>Erect groynes along a part of the seashore at Keta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>A.T. Coode; contracted by colonial government</td>
<td>Permanent sea defence works</td>
<td>£1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Anlo State Council</td>
<td>Build a retaining wall along the shore at Keta Anti-erosion work at Keta &amp; temporary groynes</td>
<td>£70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>New African Gov – Officer in charge Keta District Public Works Department</td>
<td>Report: Halcrow lagoon land reclamation project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Sr. William Halcrow and Partners, ordered by the Minister of Works and Housing</td>
<td>Cut a canal at Kedzi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Aryee – Officer in charge Keta District PUBLIC Works Department</td>
<td>Stone works</td>
<td>C450,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Volta Regional Commissioner, Commissioner for Works and Housing – contracted Messrs Marine Salvage</td>
<td>Integrated plan for sea defence, lagoon flooding control and econ. rehabilitation Keta Basin Integrated Development project</td>
<td>$44,148,000 (Donors) $488,000 (Gov) C634,420,000 (Gov) $84 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Blueprint for coastal protection with Togo, Benin, Nigeria – PNDC</td>
<td>Meeting sponsored by EEC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Study Coastal Erosion – Prof. Mawuse Dake – PNDC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Report of Cooperativa Muratori and Cementisti – PNDC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>GLDD – NDC Gov</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Akyeampong 2001.

The Earth Summit of 1992 also stressed the need to relate sustainable development to poverty alleviation. In the case of the Keta Sea Defence project, land reclamation and a housing project were later added to the project’s objectives. Therefore, a coastal management intervention ‘to fight the sea’ was partly transformed into a coastal development project for those who were dispossessed by the sea. The coastal project history of the Keta Lagoon can therefore be taken as an illustrative example of the implementation of the Earth Summit’s agenda on Integrated Coastal Management.
Yet, Table 8.1 shows that this kind of technical intervention in the coast in order to safeguard land, urban enterprise, and macro-economic objectives is no recent governmental invention, but indeed has a long history in coastal Ghana.

During the last 100 years different state actors played a role in relation to the environmental problems in Keta District. There were the British and Gold Coast colonial government, followed by the Ghanaian post-colonial departments that shared a technocratic, engineering approach to the problem of erosion. Erosion of the land by the sea is explained in terms of natural processes, sometimes as a result of, or worsened by, human interventions like sand mining, or the construction of harbours and dams, in the 20th century as much as today:

‘Dams and other impoundments prevent sediment from reaching down-stream water courses. Deficiency in nutrients and sediment reaching deltas results in coastal erosion and reduction in the natural productivity of some aquatic life forms. For example, the normal nutrient and sediment supply circle for the Lower Volta Basin downstream of Akosombo was disrupted by the construction of the dam and has resulted in increased sea erosion in the Keta and Ada-Foah areas of the coast line.’ (Republic of Ghana 1999: 9)

In the 19th century Keta was quite a wealthy coastal town with a busy harbour, the only port east of the Volta in what is now Ghana. It was a trade hub of the region and became the district capital29 in 1906 (Akyeampong 2001: 7). The colonial government began to record the high water levels at Keta from 1907 onwards, but for a long time they did not do much more than that because they were of the opinion that the merchants and inhabitants also had to invest in saving their own town and businesses. However, the merchants and people of Keta believed that the colonial government was obliged to do something as part of their political over-rule (Akyeampong 2001: 116). The majority of the government buildings (east of the Volta) were in Keta and were also threatened. As they hoped that the erosion would be temporary, they chose to relocate the offices away from the ocean front. In 1923 the government constructed a wall by erecting some groynes to protect the coast, but that did not last for long. They therefore sought expert advice and approached the London-based engineering firm of Coode, Wilson, Mitchell and Vaughan-Lee for a technical evaluation of the Keta situation. Coode had already scheduled a trip to Lagos, Nigeria and it was decided that he would stop over on his way back. Coode’s report sealed the fate of Keta for the rest of the colonial period:

‘In all the circumstances such as we have endeavoured to describe, we conclude that the expenditure which would be requisite on a system of groynes or other preventive work could not only be justified by the prospects of success but, moreover, that the value of the buildings and property to be saved does not warrant the very large outlay which would have been incurred.’ (Gold Coast, Despatches Relating to Coast Erosion in the Neighbourhood of Keta (Accra, 1929). A.T. Coode to the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, 15 August 1929. In: Akyeampong 2001: 117)

By the early 1980s two-thirds of Keta had been swallowed up by the sea. However, in the same decade the first steps to real action were taken. In 1986 the PNDC30 commissioned a group of consultants to study the problem of coastal erosion in Ghana. They recognised twenty-two active spots of erosion along the coastline, of which Keta was the most pervasive. The Italian firm Cooperativa Muratori and Cementisti was asked to write an integrative plan for sea defence, lagoon flooding control and economic devel-

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29 At that time the district was as large as the whole coastal area of the Volta Region and stretched beyond the lagoon.

30 PNDC stands for the Provisional National Defence Council. This was headed by President J.J. Rawlings, an army officer who had come to power in 1979.
opment. Their report (1987) would serve as a blueprint for future works. In 1996 the NDC\textsuperscript{31} government was able to announce the start of the project after it had secured the funding from the Unites States Export-Import bank and had contracted the USA Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company to do the work, with Pentrexx Ltd. as the Ghanaian representative. In the course of 1999 the objectives of the project were expanded to include land reclamation and housing (Akyeampong 2001: 200-214). The implementation of the Keta project started in May 2000 and was officially finalised in 2004 when the newly reclaimed land and the lagoon were opened to the public.

Since the start of the sea erosion a lot of technocratic solutions have been proposed and reports submitted (see Table 8.1). Indeed, the Keta Sea Defence Project included many of the ideas mentioned before, such as a controlled connection between lagoon and sea, land reclamation from the lagoon, and coastal defence works. All these technocratic projects or proposals came from the governments of the various times (colonial – contemporary) and were based on engineering solutions.

Mustafa (2005) claims that technocratic projects are characteristic of modern day environmental management but the case of the Keta Sea Defence Project shows that there often is a long institutional history to more recent interventions. By institutional history we not only mean the earlier proposals and projects initiated by the colonial British and postcolonial Ghanaian state. We also want to draw attention to the long political-economic history of the Anlo-Ewe and their role and position in the modernisation of Ghana.

The Keta Sea Defence Project

The American company Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Company (GLDD) was awarded a contract by the Ghanaian government in 1996 to implement the sea defence project. It conducted a series of studies and tests together with its subcontractors Baird & Associates (BA) and Research Planning, Inc (RPI). BA made the model of the flood control structure, which was used in the design phase of the project (www.bairdsoftware.com). RPI drew up an Environmental Impact Statement in 1996 and 1997 and Environmental Monitoring Studies between 2000 and 2005 (see http://ridgetoreef.com). This is institutionally interesting, if indeed RPI is a sub-contractor of GLDD. In that case, the environmental impact assessment, which should be an independent control mechanism for sustainable intervention in the coastal environment, has been carried out by an organisation that is structurally dependent on the very project implementer (GLDD). One may wonder how this impacted the outcome of their study. Indeed, the GLDD accepted the components for the Keta Sea Defence Project proposed by RPI:

1. Construction of an 8.3-km road/causeway between Keta and Hlorve, re-establishing a communication link that was lost due to erosion.
2. Sea defence works to limit further erosion by stabilising the shoreline with one offshore breakwater and seven headland groynes, a feeder beach and beach nourishment placed between the groyne bays from Keta to Hlorve.
3. Construction of a flood control structure to provide inhabitants around the lagoon with relief from extreme flooding conditions.
4. Land reclamation from the lagoon in the area of Keta, Vodza and Kedzi, providing areas where housing and businesses can be rebuilt.

\textsuperscript{31} NDC stands for National Democratic Congress. This party was headed by Rawlings and was set up in the 1990s.
Negotiating livelihood space
In this section we will see how the different actors pursued different strategies. The strategies of the different ‘stakeholders’ seem to be targeting a common goal, that is protecting Keta and environs from sea erosion. However, at the same time it has become clear that their ‘stakes’ are quite different, as KSDP also served other goals.

In fact, as far as the local Anlo-Ewe fisher folk were concerned, ecological disorder – such as sea erosion – ‘also signalled disequilibrium in the social and cosmological realms’. If the environment is imbued with social and religious meaning, then it is also perceived as being open to manipulation by religion and ritual (Akyeampong 2001: 104). The sea erosion that started to become serious at the beginning of the twentieth century ‘presented a challenge to Anlo moral ecology for it undermined their understanding of their historic survival in the aquatic environment of south-east Ghana’ (Ibid.: 106). This was even more so because, in former times, the sea had actually retreated extending the littoral for settlement (600 feet between 1784 and 1907), which the Anlo had believed to be caused by their ancestors in partnership with local deities.

The influence of the Europeans and their missionaries had been opposed by the Anlo for a long time because they feared that uncontrolled change would lead to ecological imbalance. Modernity was therefore seriously opposed by some (Ibid.: 114). The missionaries at Keta were unable to develop their work for about fifty years. In 1903, they had hardly progressed beyond the point they were at in the 1850s. Moreover, the fact that a lot of missionaries had died soon after their arrival was seen by the Anlo as ancestral disapproval. It was believed that those who wanted to oppose against these new influences used environmental disaster (coastal erosion, droughts, fire outbreaks, earthquake) to advance their cause. The bodies of local belief and knowledge of control over
the sea in Anlo were the Bate clan and the Yewe religious order. Both were unable to play a central and recognised role in reversing the sea erosion. The Yewe lacked the official support to explore a spiritual solution to the sea erosion and were even persecuted by the paramount Chief Sri II, supported by the missionaries and the colonial government (Ibid.: 122).

Clearly, there is no single, uniform Anlo-Ewe mindscape. Others sought another strategy, hoping that their identification with modernity and colonialism would make the colonial government to come to their rescue. ‘Missionary education had created the awareness that technology existed in the West to halt coastal erosion’ (Ibid.: 115). The colonial government, however, was of the opinion that not only the government should hold financial responsibility, but also the mercantile firms in, and the people of, Keta. However, there were no real interventions before the second major period of sea damage in the 1920s. The first coastal works in Keta were timber groynes sunken off the coast with the idea being to break the force of the sea. However, it soon became clear that these did not help and that the coast was worse off after the intervention (Ibid.: 117). However, once the Coode report (1929) had made it clear that serious interventions would be very costly, the colonial government decided that the work simply was not worth it. For them the case was clear and resettlement was the only option. However, this was unacceptable to the Anlo. The residents of Keta refused to leave their houses. Over the course of the next fifty years quite a number of technocratic solutions were proposed, of which most did not progress beyond the report stage. The Anlo State Council built a retaining wall at Keta in order to try to protect the town, but this had no major effect. The New African Government, in 1951, carried out some anti-erosion work at Keta and installed some groynes. In 1956 the Halcrow report was published but did not result in any action. In 1963 an officer in charge of the Public Works Department at the Keta District took the initiative and cut a canal from the lagoon to the sea. However, he and the ground he was standing on was immediately swept away by a huge flood and it turned out that his plan had done more harm than good.

In general, the people of Keta and the Anlo felt betrayed by the government. After all, had Keta not been very valuable for the government for a long time? The Anlo tried other livelihood strategies, such as land reclamation from the lagoon, migration (especially on fishing expeditions), illicit distillation (Ibid.: 131-133) and smuggling (Nugent 2002: 89) and they also started to look for allies, for example the Ewe. The sea erosion marked the beginning of a new ethnic-political consciousness which later became the Pan-Ewe movement32. The Anlo ‘began to frame questions and notions of political inclusion and exclusion in a discourse of the environment’ (Akyeampong 2001: 187). The Anlo had always been prominent members of the Anlo-Ewe unification movement (Amenumey 1989: 1) and continuously pointed to the bias of the Ghanaian governments in giving priority to development projects in the region to the West of the Volta river (Akyeampong 2001: 199), marginalising the Anlo region. ‘With the exception of the CPP, most of the post 1966 governments were portrayed as insensitive to coastal devastation and socio-economic decline in Anlo’ (Ibid.). Although studies had been performed, no permanent solutions had been found. ‘The financial considerations of the colonial government continued to determine the evaluations of independent Ghanaian

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32 This movement was mainly involved in lobbying for a unified Eweland. By the time the Europeans had arrived the Ewe had been divided over two territories with different rulers, namely the British (1850) and the Germans (1884) and later (after 1914) the British and the French. Independence gave the Ewe hope of unification again (Amenumey 1989).
governments’ (*Ibid.*). The Anlo were convinced that the implementation of the development projects like building ports (Takoradi-Sekondi in the 1920s and Tema 1962) and constructing dams in 1961 and 1965 (in the Volta river) had seriously increased the sea erosion at their site, threatening their livelihood opportunities (see also Bennett et al. 2001: 372\(^{33}\)). In addition to the fact that the damming of the Volta reduced fish stocks in the lagoon and the sea, this led to a prevalence of more waterborne diseases (such as malaria, schistosomiasis) and seriously altered the hydrological regime of the lower Volta basin (see Akyeampong 2001: 159-185). The ethnic dimension gained in importance once the only governments that appeared concerned with Keta’s plight were those with prominent Ewe members. The military PNDC\(^{34}\) government, lead by J.J. Rawlings, an Anlo-Ewe, was the first to seriously ‘tackle Keta’s myriad environmental and economic problems’ (*Ibid.*: 200). External and internal pressures caused the military government to consider a transition to a democratically elected civilian government in the 1990s. The first elections were held in 1992 and these were highly ethnicised. Its main opponent was the NPP, an Akan-dominated party (*Ibid.*: 208-209). The NDC won the elections and went on with the KSD project. It all finally resulted in the announcement by the NDC\(^{35}\) government in 1996 that it had secured the required funding from the Ex-Im Bank for the Keta Sea Defence Project (*Ibid.*: 211). The moment when this was announced was highly political. First of all it was done during the Anlo-Ewe Hogbetsotso festival in Anloga – the town which was home to the headquarters of the Anlo-Ewe traditional state. Secondly this took place one month before the next elections, which were held in December 1996. It might not come as a surprise that in none of the Anlo constituencies the presidential vote fell below the 95.8 percent!

Apart from the technocratic approach to the Keta Sea Defence project, there are interesting political dimensions to the interest of ‘the state’ in a coastal development project East of the Volta river. The reasons for the NDC to take the initiative to come with the project were clear. In the end the NPP government, which won the elections of 2000 and 2004 continued with the project. For them continuation with the project would also serve political goals (attracting voters, impressing donors) whereas stopping the project would give a lot of political and ethnic upheaval. The political context clearly shows that the state is not just a multi-level organisation but that there are individual and institutional actors whose ethnic-political interests and power positions constitute an arena in which the interests in development of the eastern region are negotiated (Long 2001).

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\(^{33}\) Bennett *et al.* discuss the coastal erosion in the Volta Region as one of the conflicts (Type V conflict as having a relation to non-fishery issues). I find the following remark interesting: ‘Here we can conceptualise conflict between the villagers (with certain local objectives to continue living and fishing in certain areas) and government (whose objectives have failed to protect the coast) although this link was never made by the respondents’ The sentence is followed by a footnote stating: ‘This may be simply that village communities are not yet ‘politicised’ enough to establish such a link.’ This chapter proves the researchers wrong and rather suggests that doing research on the basis of three months field-work in a whole country selecting 62 villages on the basis of questionnaires (Bennett *et al.* 2001: 368) might not be enough for a full understanding of certain issues.

\(^{34}\) Provisional National Defence Council.

\(^{35}\) National Democratic Congress.
Future mindscapes?

The changed importance of the spiritual meaning of the lagoon and other water bodies in Anlo which Green (2002) described could be explained by the decline in importance of the lagoon because of declining fish stocks and by the increased control over potable water due to the growing availability of other access points for potable water due to technological innovation. Following this line of argument we might expect the same to happen for the spiritual importance of the sea in Anlo. In addition, a technological intervention removed one of the main threats of the sea in that, for the first time in 100 years, Keta and environs are much better protected against the force of the sea. Yet, the sea still seems to escape this techno-scape and retains its Janus-face as life-giver (fish) and life-taker (fishermen drowning).

Again, the increasing decline in catches might alter the economic importance of the sea, as was the fate of the lagoon in the first half of the 20th century (Akyeampong 2001: 135). Although quite a few fishermen attribute declining catches to social-spiritual causes (conflict in the community; punishment of the gods), more fishermen are aware of the increased fishing effort as a cause for declining catches. In addition, now that the Sea Defence Project is finished, the lagoon has regained economic significance vis-à-vis the sea. The lagoon has been dredged and has acquired an open link with the ocean which enables shrimps to come into the lagoon. The environment is less dangerous for fishing, and the catches of valuable shrimps have increased in size quite quickly.

This research reveals a trend that the spiritual control of the sea has become less important for the Anlo. In Woe, one of the towns where fieldwork was done, there was a problem. The main ritual intended to appease the gods in the sea had not been performed for some years (see Chapter 7 and also Akyeampong 2001: 121-122). Three reasons have contributed to it, the first being that a growing number of fishermen have become Christians and have been struggling with their participation in such a ritual. The second reason is that the people who perform the ritual – who are supposed to be a member of the Yewe ritual order – have started asking for money in order to perform the ritual because the fishermen have not been showing the same gratitude and respect to them as in the past. Back then, whenever there was a bumper catch the net owners would send fish to the shrines and if the Yewe devotees or priests came to the beach they would be given fish by the fishermen. This custom is being adhered to less and less. That has resulted in the Yewe priests asking for a payment for the ritual which, interestingly enough, they also request from the town council (interview 89 with the chair of the town council of Woe, 1-11-2005). The third reason was that, in addition to these issues, a conflict had arisen within the Yewe ritual order (see Chapter 7).

This case is a good example of a long-lasting power struggle in which there was both strife about the definition of the problem (a natural phenomenon or a social-cosmological problem) and about the solution to the problem. With their holistic mindscape of natural, social and cosmological order the Anlo-Ewe perceived coastal erosion as a signal of disequilibrium in all three sets. Therefore the solution for the natural phenomena lay in the social and cosmological realm. This way of thinking contrasted sharply with that of the government officials, which was more directed to technical intervention to safeguard land, urban enterprise, and macro-economic objectives. The discussion at that level focused more on whether this Ewe land was worth the technical intervention. Naturally this did not require a wholly technical debate but rather a political one. In the end the KSDP was built and this proved to be a technical solution to an environmental
problem which was finally achieved after a political pathway had been followed of shifting alliances with ethnic dimensions. In the end one might, of course, wonder who has actually gained from the implementation of this project.

Coastal erosion has threatened the Anlo-Ewe homeland for considerable time. Due to the already limited natural resources, population growth and shortage of land, a lot of fishermen were motivated to migrate. This migration has been one of the reasons why the Anlo-Ewe have coped with these adversities at home. They created institutions to make their migrations possible (Chapter 5) and took existing institutions along. At the same time, as we saw from the Akosua Village case, migration also undermined the social structure and base for authority whereby some institutions became less effective away from home.

Conclusion

The cases discussed in this chapter have illustrated how Anlo-Ewe fishermen at home and on migration negotiate their livelihood space. They can be more or less successful, depending on internal and external attributes. In the case of Akosua Village we see that the Anlo-Ewe respond quite passively to the direct and indirect threats of the Chief of Winneba in what is almost a lack of negotiation capability. It shows the crucial role of leaders in the negotiation process. Since Anlo-Ewe leadership in Akosua Village is almost non-existent, a situation with which they apparently ‘can live’, they only react to what happens. In the Keta case the Anlo-Ewe were much more proactive in their negotiations. They actively tried out all sorts of negotiation strategies; by aligning with and without the authorities (European and post-colonial), spiritually or pan-Ewe. In the end they managed to have a ‘solution’ although the outcomes of the project are not clear yet for the future.

The Akosua Village case also shows how rules based on conservation are very hard to implement when resource users have few alternatives. It also shows that it is absolutely crucial to connect to the world view of resource users in fisheries governance. As the Keta case shows, the mindscape of people largely explains their actions. Addressing the overuse of Muni lagoon might mean doing something about the social cohesion and ineffective leadership in Akosua Village first. It shows how the social side is an integral aspect of fisheries governance.

The Keta case showed that it is important to realise that ‘a people’ cannot be assumed to have a certain homogeneous mind view. Communities are heterogeneous, and various groups make strategic use of the available resources.

The other group of actors of the negotiation interface, representatives of traditional and state government alike also figure in an ethnic-political power arena where they pursue their own goals. The Chief of Winneba is working hard to remain Chief and is tying to improve the economical situation in Winneba. The democratic configuration of Ghana also plays a role, we saw that the relocating option of Akosua Village would probably be difficult for both main parties in Ghana. The NPP governing party (at the time of research) would probably – as a large Ashanti party – not dare to resettle Ewe in Akan area, whereas the NDC – as a large Ewe party – would probably never agree to it. In the Keta case we also see how the political parties try to use the struggle over the coastal protection project for their advantage. The (P)NDC party had started the project, which had given them almost a hundred percent vote in the Keta area. And the NPP finished it – with both trying to use it in their struggle to win over voters.
The observed trend that spiritual control of the sea is becoming less important for the Anlo, combined with the decline of economic importance of the sea due to declining catches, makes us wonder what the consequences will be for the future of beach seine fishing and the way it is organised. From the lagoon case discussed earlier in this chapter we know that the sea has become less important economically in Akosua Village due to declining catches. This, together with the misuse of the net owners, led to the breakdown of the company institution. The loss of the company system can also be observed in Woe where, due to declining catches, more and more companies recruit workers on a daily basis (see Chapter 3). We might therefore wonder what the effect will be of these changes on the locally managed beach seine fisheries in Ghana as a whole. The question is whether the combination of declining catches, less economic benefit and less spiritual power will lead to further institutional changes in beach seine fisheries in Ghana?