

Investigating Why Canoe Owners Write Some Inscriptions on Their Canoes

Isaac Wereko¹ | Peter Wonders Kankam² | Monalisa Armah³ | Yoni Paa Quecy Howard⁴
School of Communication, Knutsford University College¹ | School of Communication | African University
College of Communication^{2,3} | Communication Arts Department, Academic City University College⁴

Abstract

This study is to investigating why canoe owners write some inscriptions on their canoes. Canoes are very important capital equipment for the fisherman in communities along the coasts of Ghana. Owners decorate and identify their canoes with symbols and inscriptions which are meant to communicate. These symbols and inscriptions have some communication implications that are relevant to the cultural heritage of the people of the fishing communities. They embody different forms of representations which in most cases have elaborate meanings underlying them. Studying canoes therefore goes beyond studying the canoes themselves as particular entities, but also all aspects of life which are tightly intertwined with these conceived inscriptions, including religion, economics, social activity, and even politics. These symbols and inscriptions may have some social values and meanings that are relevant to the cultural heritage of the fishing communities. Observers of these inscriptions may perhaps lack an in-depth interpretation and understanding of the inscriptions and designs on the canoes. Meanwhile, these inscriptions may not just be there for only decoration's sake, they may carry socio-cultural values or information which may be very relevant for the promotion of indigenous culture and public education. Again, a number of studies have been conducted into the study of artisanal canoes in Ghana. Most of these studies were conducted into the area of canoe carving and manufacturing processes. Others too concentrated on the artistic view of canoe designs and inscriptions purely from the artistic perspective. Aggrey (2015) dwelt on artisanal marine fishers' use of symbols and other nonverbal cues for communicating in their business. This current study therefore sought to investigate the communication implications of Inscriptions and Artforms on Artisanal Marine Canoes of three selected communities in the Central Region of Ghana.

Keywords: *Canoe Owners Writings, Fishermen Activities in Ghana, Artisanal Marine Canoes*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Verrips (2002), when one travels along Ghana's coastline and visits the sandy beaches of the numerous fishing communities, one is very often struck by a huge number of colourfully decorated artisanal canoes of different sorts and sizes moored along the beaches. One does not only wonder where the big trees grow, but also what the meanings are, if any, of the abundant decorations and mottoes painted on or carved into the sides of these artefacts (canoes). Most intriguing and calling to be decoded or understood is the series of more or less abstract pictograms and inscriptions which seem to occur in endless variations and which look like a rebus containing a hidden message. The form and appearance of canoes are such that one gets the impression that they have not changed much over time; that the fishermen used age old and very traditional symbols and proverbs handed them by their forbears who got them from their ancestors (Verrips, 2002). In other words, there has been only continuity. The question that comes to mind is whether these inscriptions (symbols, written texts, paintings carved on artisanal canoes) are meant for mere decoration. The researcher is of the view that these inscriptions go beyond decoration and are meant to communicate. They are channels for communicating the way of life of the people of the fishing communities and their cultural heritage.

According to Geest (2009), one does not need to be a probing anthropologist to discover that a society has interest for sign writings. In Ghana, sign-painting is applied not only to canoes but also to eateries and drinking spots otherwise referred to as beer and chop bars. Beauty salons, barbering shops, kiosks and other places of business are not left out. Even, drivers and car owners in Ghana openly declare happiness and worries about their vehicles through their sign-paintings. Anyone casual traveler in Ghana and other parts of West Africa would testify that painted texts on people's businesses is a common sight. Sign painting has become a specialised art. It is impossible to imagine a Ghanaian street-scene without it (Gray, 2006). This visualisation of wisdom and proverbs appear to be a continuation of an old tradition of

decorating gold weights, linguist staffs, umbrella tops, Asafo flags, adinkraandkente cloths, among others. More recently, waxprints and T-shirts have become bearers of similar messages (Geest, 2009).

Hanson (2004) argues that canoe inscriptions are very succinct symbolic expressions of a wide range of relations, identifications and sympathies of their owners/users. The decorations are chosen from a big reservoir of possibilities and carefully composed into what one could call a distinctive, decorative gestalt, so that each canoe gets, just like its owner/user, a recognisable identity or 'individuality.' A beach with moored canoes can be considered as a revealing materialisation of the social community of the fishermen. The canoes are their messengers and convey their messages for them, they show the diversification of their mindscape and tell a lot about how they relate to each other and the world they live in (Odotei, 1996; Veripps, 2002). Gray (2006) posits that inscriptions on canoes also reveal their owner's religion, economic, social and political status.

Hanson (2004) states that texts on canoes are directly visible but enigmatic. They "speak" out and remain "silent" at the same time. People read them but do not understand them, not even when they are painted in the local dialect. The texts are seldom original; they are derived from and refer to a world well known to Ghanaians (Hanson, 2004). The text may be taken from an old proverb, a modern saying, religious text, a newspaper report, sport or a political event. The first-time observer is sometimes struck by the picturesque decoration, but he is not able to interpret it. Ghanaians may well fail to understand the specific point of a given text, not knowing exactly to what or to whom the words apply. The inscriptions tell a personal history which is only known to the canoe owner himself/herself or to the canoe users or a few insiders. The text may be conventional but its full meaning is unique and private.

Decoration is an integral part of Ghanaian culture (Walden, 2012). This decoration extends from facial scarification to elaborate hairstyles to exquisite clothing. It includes the names and designs which adorn "tro-tros", taxis, and even storefronts. Decoration often involves symbolism; using a word, design, or image to represent an idea. Ghanaian decoration is rich in this symbolism, from the adinkra symbols, to the stools, to the linguist staffs, which all employ symbols that represent proverbs (Anquandah, 2000).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

These reviews related literature on artisanal marine canoe decorations. The review combines analysis of all inscriptions on artisanal marine canoes, and includes various art forms and words or texts. The review was made under the following thematic headings: fishing and culture, the fishing community as a microcosm within a macrocosm, the sea as a sacred entity, the coming into being of artisanal fishing canoes, canoe decoration in historical perspective and canoe decorations in contemporary times. This chapter also encompasses the theoretical framework of the research. Burke's theory of identification was the theory used in this research

2.1 Communities Studied

Apam, Ankaful and Anomabo were the three fishing communities within which the research was carried out. They are well-known fishing communities located within the Central Region of Ghana. Each community owns over One Hundred (100) artisanal canoes moored on over four hundred metre stretch of land. Apam is located within the Gomoa West District while Ankaful and Anomabo are located within the Mfantseman Municipal Assembly, all in the Central Region of Ghana.

2.2 Fishing and Culture

Culture is a way of life of a group of people (Hanafi, 2007). One cannot understand the concept of artisanal canoe decoration without having a fair knowledge of the way of life of the fishers. For this purpose, the researcher sought to delve a little more into the socio-cultural heritage of fishers of Anomabo, Ankaful and Apam.

2.2.1 The Fishing Community as a Microcosm within a Macrocosm

There is a large, yet close community of fishers which acts as a microcosm of a fishing community. That is, even though the fishers are located within a particular community, their way of life at the beach also represents a peculiar way of life of a community. This sub-community almost echoes most of the traditional ways of life by the mother community (Dadzie, 2004). There is a chief fisherman, known as the

Apofohen, who has his court, just like any chief in typical Ghanaian societies. The *Apofohen* also has the *Okyeame*. Similar to the *akyeamepoma* (the royal staff), the chief fisherman uses the *tabon* (a small wooden paddle) to summon people to his court (Coronel, 2000). If the Chief fisherman needs to summon someone to his court, his *Okyeame* takes the paddle as an insignia of office to deliver the message to him or her. Upon hearing the summons, the person so summoned must report to the chief fisherman's court or be fined for contempt. The Chief Fisherman and his elders resolve conflicts that arise among fishermen. It is only when these issues cannot be resolved by the chief fisherman and his court that they are referred to the court of the overlord of the entire fishing community for resolution (Asmah, 2003; Sarpong, 2008).

2.2.2 The Sea as a Sacred Entity

Fishing is seen as the lifeblood of people in fishing communities (Field, 2013). For this reason, the sea is regarded as sacred. The sea has been accorded its own god, *Bosompo* (the sea goddess), who is one of the main divinities of African Traditional Religion (Amedor, Bannerman, & Ashong, 2006; Bonsu, 1994). There is no fishing expedition on Tuesdays in honour of the sea god. According to Opoku (2005), nature is believed to be capable of having its own powers and spirits. He points out that there is an African view of nature, that nature (and aspects of it like the sea) has power which may be revered as well as used for man's benefit. Refraining from fishing on Tuesdays is the fishermen's way of appeasing *Bosompo*.

2.3 The Genesis of Artisanal Fishing Canoes

The carving of artisanal canoes has always taken a large commitment of time and labour (Allen, 2004; Verrips, 2002). According to Dartey (2000), the *wawa* used for canoe building were found in the forests near the coast of Central Region, but the *wawa* later got extinct. Canoe carvers then had to travel inland in order to find the trees with the right dimensions. Since one had to transport the artefact to the coast and a suitable road system did not yet exist, the production sites were almost always near rivers (Dadzie, 2004).

In the 18th century, Shama at the mouth of the river Pra, used to be an important production centre (Marrée, 1817; Bowdich, 1819 cited in Djabletey, 2002). Today, the main areas where the right *wawa* grows are in the Ashanti and BrongAhafo Regions. Although the trees are found in all vegetation zones, it is most abundant in the moist semi-deciduous zones (Sheves, 2000). Canoe carvers therefore, are found in these regions where they spot, buy, fell and carve proper trees. The process which the canoe carvers go through before they fell a single tree to carve a canoe has poetically been outlined by Asare (1995:6):

One by one our friends left us
 I knew that one day my own turn would come
 One early morning a small gang of men came to me
 They brought with them presents of cloth, a fowl, a bottle of gin and some eggs
 They offered the gifts to me and my spirit
 The spirit that had been with me for the hundreds of years
 It took me to grow from a sapling to the towering giant I had become
 They prayed that no harm should come to them
 While they fell me and worked on me
 I was rather pleased about this
 With their gifts and prayers, they had shown their respect for me

The whole process starts with a libation rite to please the tree (*wawa*), which is perceived as a living being having a spirit and even a particular sex (Bowditch, 1819; Burton, 1863 cited in Dadzie, 2004). The perception continues after a *wawa* is turned into a seaworthy canoe. Fishermen speak about their canoes as male and female beings that are able to talk to them about the time and place for fishing (Brewer, 2003). He writes: A good canoe well treated will come to the owner when there are fish about and call 'fi-fi-fi-fi'. If he is not at home, she goes to his mother's house and calls there. When she arrives at the place where the fishes are she will call again. That is the place to anchor and there many fish will be caught. After the carvers have dug out a *wawa*, it is transported to the beach where its buyers want to have it based. There, the hull undergoes some further chiseling and is torched with flames in order to make it stronger and more weather resistant and waterproof (FAO, 2005). Carpenters put the topside planking on it, making the thwarts and placing a bracket outside the starboard side for the outboard motor.

The canoe finally is painted and given its decorations according to the instructions of the owner (Djabletey, 2002). Canoes are so important to fishermen that they are treated with great respect and are also perceived as animated beings (Djabletey, 2002).

2.4 Canoe Decoration in Historical Perspective

Bosman (1602) cited in Dadzie (2004) alludes that the act of decorating canoes was introduced in Gold Coast by the first Europeans who visited Ghana (then Gold Coast). He claims the ship in which they were sailing with was decorated with various inscriptions (designs and texts) and flags. It is obvious therefore, that, the fishers at the coast during their stay in the Gold Coast copied them (Dadzie, 2004). Contrary to the above allusion by Bosman (1602) cited in Dadzie (2004), the Conservation Officer at the Cape Coast Castle, interviewed in Gray (2006), thinks it unfortunate and mentions that fishermen in Cape Coast had been decorating their canoes long before the Cape Coast Castle was built in 1662. He debunked the assertion that it was the Europeans who introduced canoe decoration in the Gold Coast. According to him, the earliest artistic representation of a decorated canoe available at the castle dates back to 1602 (Bosman, 1602 cited in Gray, 2006). Brewer (2003) was of the view that the use of inscriptions on artisanal marine canoes dates back to at least 400 years. This explains why fishing and canoe decoration are so tightly interwoven with the other aspects of the fishermen's life (Gordon, 1874; Bowditch, 1819 cited in Verrips, 2002).

Ratray's work on The British Empire Exhibition April – October 1924 contains a picture of canoes on the beach of Osu near the Christianborg castle (Ratray, 2000). The picture was interesting. This is because it shows canoes with different inscriptions which are believed to have existed in the early part of the 16th century. Balmer (2006) shows a canoe on the beach of Elmina that wears the 'fishtail-teeth' motif on its bow. Such canoes and motif types were believed to have been in use before the first Europeans arrived in the Gold Coast. The above citations seem to emphasise the point that canoe decoration is an age-old tradition of fishers.

2.5 Canoe Decorations in Contemporary Times

Decoration is an integral part of Ghanaian culture (Gray, 2006). Human bodily decoration extends from facial scarification to elaborate hairstyles to exquisite clothing. It includes the names and designs which adorn "trotros", taxis, canoes and even storefronts. Inscriptions on artisanal marine canoes often involve the use of pictograms and texts.

2.5.1 The Use of Pictograms on Artisanal Canoes

According to Cole and Ross (2009), Ghanaian decorations are rich in symbolism which ranges from the *Adinkra* symbols, to the stools, to the *Akyeamepoma*. With respect to canoe iconography, Verrips (2002) classifies pictograms into five categories: Pictograms of things such as stools, swords, hats, keys, flags, anchors, arrows and crosses, Pictograms of parts of plants and trees, Pictograms of insects, birds, fishes and terrestrial animals, Pictograms of human beings or body parts such as hearts, arms, male reproductive organs, among others and Pictograms of celestial bodies such as stars and the moon.

According to Verrips (2002), the pictograms and abstract designs occur almost always in combination with written texts, such as proverbs, slogans and names (mostly biblical), specific abbreviations, numbers and references to passages in the Bible. Gray (2006) also supports this procedure by Verrips (2004) by further indicating that artisanal canoe decoration embodies different forms of representation. They are, therefore, decorated with words and symbols, both having elaborate meanings underlying them. Studying canoe inscriptions, therefore, goes beyond studying the canoe as a single entity but other aspects of the fisher-folks' life such as religious, economic, social and even political identity that are intertwined with these inscriptions (Eyson, 1997).

2.5.2 Functions of Artisanal Canoe in the Fishers Perspective

In her analysis on functions of canoe in the lives of the fishers, Eyson (1997) examines artisanal canoe as a tool/medium and an art. This is to say that the artisanal canoe is not only used for fishing, but it also plays the messenger and communicator role of its owner. It is an art because it represents or portrays the life, culture and beliefs of the people of a particular fishing community. Also, the artisanal

canoe is a tool because through them, the fisherman not only communicates but survives, that is, their main sources of livelihood depend on it. If the fishers see the canoe more of a tool for fishing rather than an art, then why are they (canoes) adorned with these decorations? Perhaps the simple response to this seemingly rhetorical question is that the canoe performs other functions which Gray (2006) refers to as the "communicative role." Thus, their owners make categorical statements and communicate through them to the world at large.

Hanson (2004) also argues that canoes are succinct, symbolic expressions of a wide range of relations, identifications and sympathies of their owners/users. The decorations are chosen from a big reservoir of art and are carefully composed into a distinctive decoration, so that each canoe gets, just like its owner or user, a recognisable identity or individuality amongst other similarly treated canoes (Jorison, 1998; Macdonald, 2000; Verrips, 2002). Canaday (2005) also suggests that a beach of moored canoes can be considered as a revealing manifestation of the social community of the fishermen. In a study of functions of inscriptions on canoes in Ghana, Gray (2006) draws distinction between the concepts iconography and iconology that go with studying symbols. Iconography, according to her, is concerned with the shape, the design and the graph of the actual image. Iconology on the other hand is concerned with the meaning behind the image. She was more concerned with iconology and concluded that the symbols she gathered on the canoes represented the life and culture of the people of the fishing community.

Dissanayake (2001) however, is also of the view that the main reason for canoe decoration is for the sake of embellishment. He states "The presumably very ancient practice by humans of applying ornamental designs to their bodies can be interpreted as a way of adding or imparting refinement to what is by nature plain and uncultivated, of imposing human civilising order upon nature (pp 46)." This study is of the view that the assertion can be true in the case of artisanal canoes too, because the carvers and repairers take something plain and uncultivated and embellish it to a state of beauty and meaning.

2.5.3 Combination of Texts and Art Forms on Artisanal Canoes

Gray (2006) further provides a detailed account of the manufacturing process and the high status of canoe builders and repair men in the community. These men are creators who are considered almost as religious leaders. She describes the tools they use, the building sequence, the language they use for parts of the canoe and the decorative techniques. She observes and questions fishermen about their ideas of the canoes in the community. She therefore concluded that studies on canoe designs may help speculate how canoe owners manufacture, value and personify their canoes (ibid). Nunoo (1975) states that design on canoes have taken different forms in the last fifty years. According to him, in the 1930s according to him, the canoes were stylistic, embodying several animal motifs which mostly represented Akan sayings. About twenty years later, the designs became more conventionalised and included objects such as tools, clocks and guns; and others which were purely other decorative fantasies.

Nunoo (1975) recorded more symbols than texts. Nonetheless, comparing his data to that of Brown (1947), he saw a significant improvement in his data especially the inscriptions of text. Thus, though he recorded more symbols than texts, his data on texts outnumbered that of Brown in 1947. He therefore concluded by predicting that inscriptions of text on canoes will out-number symbols in the next twenty years to come (That was twenty years after his research). However, Nunoo could not give the possible reason for the gradual shift from using symbols to using texts by fishermen. Verrips (2002) however seemed to be at variance with the assertion by Nunoo (1975) of the seeming change in the inscriptions on canoes. He subsequently accused Nunoo (1975) on not doing much fieldwork but rather dwelt on other scholars' publications (notably Brown's iconographic study in the 30s) to draw his conclusion. Verrips (2002) thinks the assertion by Nunoo (1975) cannot be entirely true.

Verrips (2002) on the other hand, applauds Coronel (1979) for his precision in the description of the kinds of decorations (motifs, proverbs, labels and names) on canoes. According to Coronel (1979), the designs on the canoes can be found on the gunwales, bow and prow. The decorations can also be carved or painted depending on where it is located on the canoe. Coronel (2005) gives the sources of inspiration for the decorations on canoes. According to him the source of inspiration can be traditional or modern iconography (that is, drawn from tropical and contemporary sources). Moreover, Coronel (2005) is also of

the view that rivalry between fishers belonging to different Asafo or military companies influences the selection of a particular type of decoration to be adorned on a canoe.

2.5.4 The Similarities of Pictograms among Fishing Communities

According to Coronel (2005), the migration of Fante fishers to other coastal communities to do fishing accounts for the similarities of pictograms among fishing communities. Coronel's argument is based on Dadzie's (2004) assertion that Fantes are believed to be the ones who introduced fishing in Ga Mashie, some part of the Volta Region and some coastal towns in Ghana and even beyond, by way of what is popularly termed *apoye* by the Fantes (Dadzie, 2004). Based on this assertion, Coronel (2005) is of the view that it was the Fantes who introduced some of these pictograms to other fishing communities, especially among the Ga Mashie fishing communities, hence the sameness of some motifs among some fishing communities along the coast. Coronel (2005) therefore concludes that Fantes are better decorators of canoes; and those decorations of the other fishers, though attractive, lacked traditional bite. Verrips (2006) on the other hand, thinks that Coronel was somehow biased with regard to the ability of the Fante fishers to better decorate canoes than other fishers (such as the Gas, Nzemas, Ewes among others). Verrips (2006) further argues "the canoe decorations I saw at the beach of La in the 90s were, at least in my view, of the same quality as the ones I observed, for instance, in Winneba" (Verrips, 2006:51). Coronel's assertion might not be entirely accurate. For, in Ghana, it is somehow difficult to state with certainty who originated which custom because of the apparent migratory tradition of especially the Akan and other groups of southern Ghana.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This presents the research methods employed to conduct the study. It explains the procedures adopted at different stages of the research. The chapter specifically presents information on the research approach, research design, population, sample and sampling technique. A description of the data collection methods and data analysis is captured in this chapter too.

3.1 Research Approach

To better analyse the findings of this research, the researcher employed the qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative approach to research seeks to identify and explore phenomena such as reasons and attitudes of certain situations. Also, it preserves and analyses the situated form, content and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal transformations (Lindlorf & Taylor, 2002). The process of qualitative research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participants' environment, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2013).

Creswell (2013) explains that qualitative methods are particularly useful for revealing the rich symbolic world that underlies needs, desires, meanings and choice. Qualitative research is therefore not limited to rigidly pre-defined variables (ibid). Thus, qualitative research contributes to inquiry by enabling exploration of new areas of research and building new theories (Creswell, 2008). That is to say, qualitative research helps us to discover new ideas in order to understand the world in which we live and how things are the way they are.

3.2 Research Design

Research design is among the most vital considerations for every research work. It is the philosophy or the general principle that guides the study and is a holistic approach to investigating the topic under study (Dawson, 2002). This study employs the Case Study method. Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) define case study as the in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon in its real-life context that reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon. According to Punch (2005) a case study aims to understand the case in-depth, and in its natural setting, recognising its complexity and its context. It also has a holistic focus, aiming to preserve and understand the wholeness and unity of the case.

The selection of a research design is mostly dependent on the nature of the research problem or the issue being addressed, the researcher's personal experiences, and the audience for the Study (Yin, 2012). Research design can then be described as a strategy, plan, and a structure of conducting a research project (Yin, 2012). In other words, it is the logical structure of the inquiry. The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible. That is to say, in research the issues of sampling, method of data collection (e.g. questionnaire, observation, and document analysis), and design of questions are all subsidiary to the matter of 'What evidence do I need to collect?' (Yin, 2012).

Typically, the case study researchers neither aim at discovering generalisable truth, nor look for cause-effect relations as quantitative researchers do, instead, they focus on describing, explaining and evaluating a phenomenon (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). To achieve these aims requires the researchers to spend adequate time in the context of the study to collect extensive data using multiple instruments to develop in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Since this study focuses on vital facts of people; their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations, behaviours and provides information on which sound conclusions would be drawn, the researcher deemed this research design very appropriate for conducting the study because it helps in getting insights into issues in their natural setting. The case study design therefore helped in uncovering the communication implications of canoe inscriptions among the selected fishing communities in the Central Region of Ghana.

3.3 Population

Creswell (2013) refers to a study population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. A population is the total of all the individuals who have certain characteristics and are of interest to a researcher. A population comprises all the possible cases (persons, objects, events) that constitute a known whole (Punch, 2005). Dartey (2012) distinguishes between a population and a target population. A population refers to the entire group of homogeneous entities from which the target population is drawn. The elements in a target population therefore belong to the population and may be drawn for study because they possess same or similar characteristics of the population. The population of a study is the entire aggregation of respondents. Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2010) observe that the target population is the first most important consideration after a researcher decides to use sampling.

According to Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin, (2010) the population of a study must be carefully defined so that the appropriate sources from which data shall be gathered can be identified. The population for the study comprised all artisanal fishing canoes in the Central Region of Ghana. Since studying canoes in Ghana as a whole could be a herculean task and the researcher was working within a time frame, he deemed it necessary to study one region out of the four coastal regions in Ghana. Again, the language (Fante) spoken by most of the coastal communities in the region informed his choice of the region. The researcher saw it very necessary to enhance effective communication between him and the respondents since he is also a native speaker of the language.

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

This study is concerned with analysing inscriptions on artisanal canoes in a natural setting. Yin (2012) notes that the objectives of a research determine the type of sampling method that should be employed. Based on this, a Purposive sampling method was adopted for this study. This is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based on a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

Furthermore, a purposive sample includes respondents or subjects that are selected for possessing specific characteristics, thereby eliminating those that fail to meet the criteria (Yin, 2012). For the purpose of this study, the researcher sampled three fishing communities in the Central Region, namely, Ankaful near Saltpond and Anomabo; all in the Mfantseman Municipality and Apam in the Gomoa West District. According to Odotei (2002), these communities are among the well-known fishing communities in the Central Region of Ghana. The researcher chose these communities because the respondents'/participants' medium of communication is Fante just as much as his, and thus would

facilitate effective analyses. According to Littlejohn and Foss (2011), people experience consubstantiality when they share meaning by virtue of using a common language. Out of these three communities, the researcher purposively gathered and analysed inscriptions (texts and pictograms) on 150 canoes, 50 in each community. Again, the researcher cumulatively interviewed 30 fishers (including canoe owners). In addition to that I interviewed three Chief Fishermen, one from each of the communities I studied.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

This study employed interview as the instrument for data collection. It adopted this data collection method to make the data more credible and reliable. In-depth interview was used to gather data for this study. According to Yin (2012), interview is appropriate for data collection in which information is gathered through oral or written questioning. This instrument helped the researcher seek explanations, meanings and justification from owners of canoes to some of the inscriptions. The researcher first created and maintained a rapport with the interviewees throughout his period of research in the communities (Lindlorf & Taylor, 2002). In all the interviews, permission was properly sought from the interviewees. In order to record the discussion, the audio recording became necessary for the purposes of capturing the minute details of the discussions. The researcher assured the interviewees that the information was purely for academic purposes.

Interview can be structured, semi-structured and unstructured. A structured interview is one of the techniques that can be used to gather data for a qualitative study. The questions in the schedule are pre-determined, leaving the interviewer little or no chance to divert from them. Creswell (2013) describes a structured interview in this way: the one in which the content and procedures are organised in advance. This means that the sequence and wording of the questions are determined by means of a schedule and the interviewer is left little freedom to make modifications (Creswell, 2013). Semi-structured interview is also one of the most common tools or instruments or techniques employed to gather data in qualitative studies (Kusi, 2012). These instruments are flexible and to a greater extent, offer interviewees the opportunity to express their views, feelings and experiences freely, and the interviewers the freedom to divert from the items/questions in the schedule to seek clarifications (using probes) during the interview process. Yin (2012) argues that semi-structured interviews are neither fully fixed nor fully free and are perhaps best seen as flexible. Interviews generally start with some defined questioning plan, but pursue a more conversational style of interview that may see questions answered in an order natural to the flow of the conversation (Yin, 2012).

An unstructured interview is another technique often used to gather data in qualitative studies. As the name signifies, this instrument has no definite structure. According to Creswell (2008), unstructured interview involves free-style discussions with interviewees. Researchers who use the unstructured interview technique always have the purpose of their study in mind, but the questions asked and how they are presented (their sequence) to achieve this purpose is left with the interviewer. Unstructured interviews were used to seek reasons and explanations to the data collected on the canoes. This was because the researcher needed the interpretations of the inscriptions from the fishers' perspective. Creswell (2013) says unstructured interviews allow respondents to express themselves at length and also allow the researcher to seek clarification through probing and expand the responses of interviewees to ascertain their feelings and experiences.

3.6 Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2013), good qualitative studies are made when interviews and observations are made with regard to theories. The analyses were therefore categorised under thematic headings as to be in line with the research questions.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS

Fishermen choose their inscriptions intentionally and thoughtfully (Hanson, 2004). The fishermen in the areas studied gave numerous reasons for choosing certain inscriptions for their artefacts. The researcher classified their reasons and presented them under three broad themes; Identification purpose, Communicator/Messenger role and Response role.

4.1 Identification Purpose

Using canoe inscriptions for the purposes of identification also had two basic reasons. The first reason, as provided by the representative of the Ghana National Fishermen Council in Anomabo was that the inscriptions on the canoes, especially the texts, were meant for registration and identification purposes. The inscriptions, in this case, serve as names under which the canoes are registered. According to the representative, it was an exercise carried out by the council to ensure that all artisanal canoes in Ghana are properly registered. This exercise according to Verripsis a direct consequence of the organisation and bureaucratisation of the artisanal sector (Verripsis, 2002).

The second identification purpose which the inscriptions serve accrues to the canoe owner/user. The owners use the inscriptions on the canoes to create identity for themselves. Gray (2006) is of the view that the inscriptions give the canoe owners the chance to make a personal statement to the world thereby establishing an identity for the canoe owners. This seeks to reinforce Burke's theory of identification cited in Littlejohn and Foss (2011) that states that human beings identify themselves through the use of symbols and language. The truth is that most of the canoe owners cannot be identified by their real names. They are known and identified by the inscriptions on their canoes (Hanson, 2004). Most of the fishers told the researcher that the canoes are named so that people can set them apart, or the owner of the canoe can easily be identified when something goes amiss. With this, the owner becomes identified with the canoe and the canoe is identified with the owner.

The Chief Fisherman of Anomabo also added that the art of writing on canoes existed centuries before the birth of the Ghana National Fishermen Council in the early 1980s. This assertion is a direct contradiction to Bosman's (1602) view cited in Dadzie (2004) that seems to suggest that the origination of canoe decoration can be traced to the first Europeans who came to the Gold Coast. Nonetheless, it appears that the inscriptions on artisanal canoes go beyond just identification.

4.2 The Communicator/Messenger Role

Verripsis (2002) has indicated that a beach with moored canoes can be considered as a revealing materialisation of the social community of the fishers. The canoes are the messengers or communicators of their owners; they talk for them; they show the diversification of their mindscape and tell a lot about how fishers relate with each other and the world they live in. Coronel (2005) also points out that canoe decorations are poly-interpretable, for, they convey all sorts of messages (both serious and less serious business), for example, about the philosophy, status, and religion of its owner.

4.3 Canoe Decoration and Evangelism

Many of the canoe owners interviewed in this study who were mainly Christians told the researcher that they use their canoes as mediums for preaching the gospel. In other words, the canoe is used as a medium for evangelism, hence the many scriptures found on them. Majority of the canoes sampled were decorated with names that conveyed praise, and expressed God's power as the Supreme Being as shown in figure 1 below:

Figure 1: A picture of a Canoe showing a Religious Inscription



Source: Researcher's fieldwork

Anquandah (1996) says the ancient Akan used their art and crafts as medium for expressing their deepest philosophical and religious thinking. Names and statements such as *Ibelieve God*, *Christ Asɔɛr* literally meaning Christ has risen, *M.D.C.C* (Mosama Disco Christo Church), *NyameNndae* literally meaning God never sleeps, *God is king*, *CAC* (Christ Apostolic Church), *Wonderful Jesus*, and *Nyame Ye* literally meaning God is good have various functions. They show the owners' religious beliefs and affiliations as Christians. The inscriptions *Christ Asɔɛr*, *M.D.C.C* and *CAC* may probably seem to suggest that the owners are Christians. These place them in relationship with the rest of the community especially fellow Christians. This can also set them apart from canoe owners with other religious beliefs. These statements also say something about the owners' character. Being Christian can connote certain moral standards and practices.

When one sees a canoe with an inscription such as *Exodus 14:14*, he or she can deduce the owner is a Christian and consequently can connect with the owner on religious grounds. Again, inscriptions on canoes which praise God seem to speak of the canoe owners' relationship with God as subjects at the mercy of a Powerful Being. According to Opoku (2005), all the power in nature is subordinate to *Onyame*, who is the source of all power. The owner of *Wonderful Jesus* for example, explained that by praising God through this name, he and his fishing crew will get whatever they want. It appears that God is praised and feared at the same time and by this, it is hoped that one would be fortunate to have God's power on his or her side. Verrips (2002) remarks that inscriptions on canoes are sometimes cryptic, they are used to characterise and distinguish, tease and challenge, criticize and joke, invoke and ward off stress. The inscription together with other decorations turn the canoe into a speaking object, an entity with a voice, a messenger, or a vehicle that conveys meaning with a particular identity (Verrips, 2002).

4.4 Canoe Decoration and Issues about Life

Some canoes are named with statements that talk about life in general and such statements are directed at society as a whole. Some of these names include *Life is War*, *Hand Go Hand Come*, *Sika Ase* literally meaning Money matters, *Ɔbra Wo mmpɛr ho* literally meaning life is not a rush, *Atamfo Nnyɛ Nyame* literally meaning enemies are not God. These names and many others seem to suggest the canoe owners' philosophy about life. According to the fishermen, by these inscriptions, they are expressing what they find to be most important (Dadzie, 2004). These self-expressions portray the owners as persons with experience in life. Names such as *Dzi Wo Fie Asem* literally meaning mind your own business, *Dwen Wo Daama* literally meaning think about your future, and *Asempa Ye Tsia* literally meaning good news is always simple also seem to illustrate a parent/child relationship apparently between the canoe owner and the community. In this instance, the owner seizes the opportunity to be the expert and advises community members on what to do. Some of the names also make personal statements about the canoe owners as individuals.

Names such as *Masakra* literally meaning I have repented and *Bɔneben* literally "what sin I have committed" give people insight about the canoe owner as a fallible individual who is capable of offending and being offended. This makes the owner someone open to interaction or establishing some sort of relationship with others.

4.5 Issues of Politics and Canoe Decoration

There were also inscriptions on politics. These inscriptions reveal the owner's political affiliation. This reflects Verrips' (2002) comments on fishermen's penchant for using the inscriptions and their business in general to show their political colours. There were a number of political inscriptions gathered on a number of canoes. Political symbols and colours on canoes were not meant for embellishment purposes only. Some respondents said such inscriptions or texts were intentionally inscribed to communicate the owners' political affiliations to the rest of the world. For example, the owner of *Ɔsonaas* shown in figure 2 below notes, "I am a New Patriotic Party (NPP) sympathiser. I have therefore designed both the Ghana flag and the NPP flag at both sides of my canoe to show that as far as I am concerned, Ghana is NPP and NPP is Ghana". Similarly, the owner of *Life is War* who had adorned his canoe with the National Democratic Congress' flag (NDC) also had this to say, "I am a die-hard supporter of NDC. I love the founder (Jerry John Rawlings) to the bone and I associate everything I own with the party." This perhaps helps strengthen the Ghanaian ideals of freedom of association and freedom of speech.

Figure 2: Pictures showing Inscription of Political Issues on Canoes



Source: Researcher's fieldwork

Beyond the trend of using symbols and other artefacts on canoe to communicate owners' philosophy about life, is also the fact that these fishing communities cherish the ideals of democratic and pluralistic societies.

4.6 Issues of canoe Acquisition and Decoration

Some inscriptions on the canoes too seek to speak of how the artefact (canoe) was acquired (Henderson-Quartey, 2004). One canoe owner indicated that the canoes cost extreme sums of money; as a result, prospective owners must work hard to save for years before being able to afford one. For this reason, many names express the value in hard work, the apparent time spent in waiting, and the pride associated with finally owning a canoe. Such names include *Me and You*, *Awa* literally meaning marriage, *AdomaraKwa* literally meaning it is by God's grace, *After All*, *Cocoa Sika* literally meaning cocoa money, *Egyay&Sunsum* literally father is spirit, *MegyefotseAsel* literally my redeemer lives and *Still Strong*. Names such as these send a strong message to the world that the owner is self-disciplined, and that he might have gone through some hard times to acquire a canoe. This establishes the owner in relation with the rest of the community as one of the diligent members in the community. *Me and You* speaks of the joint efforts and hard work of two brothers that went into the acquisition of their canoe.

4.7 Canoe decoration and Foreign Symbol

Most of the canoes in the areas of study bore national flags of some countries (mainly European) and that of international football clubs. Countries identified include Ghana, U.S.A, Spain, Canada and UK as shown in figure 3 below. The football clubs are Chelsea, Manchester United, Barcelona, Atletico Madrid, among others.

Figure 3: Pictures of Canoes showing Foreign Flags



Source: Researcher's fieldwork

Few were seen to belong to local football clubs such as Accra Heart of Oak and Kumasi AsanteKotoko. This seems to point out how as Ghanaians we do not cherish our local league and other made-in-Ghana products. The call lately by many has been on Ghanaians to patronize made in Ghana products to help savage the economy from excessive importation. It appears that the move by fishermen to paint flags on canoes is a recent phenomenon but nonetheless gaining roots all the same. This is because, as narrated by the Chief fisherman of Anomabo, it was originally intended to highlight some aspects of indigenous values. The Chief fisherman of Anomabo notes.

The whole purpose of flags on canoes seems to have been diverted by the modern fishers. The act of painting flags on canoes is new to the artisanal fishing sector. The flags hitherto used to be hoisted on the canoes and they were flags that bore traditional emblems such as the *Asafo* emblem among others. The flags were used as a means of seeking protection and avoiding evil spirits at sea. The flags also aided in detecting the direction of the wind in order to avoid strong currents at sea as well.

However, the researcher's interaction with a cross section of fishermen seemed to suggest that the emergence of painting foreign flags on canoes does not serve any of the above-mentioned purposes to them; except the open show of love, they have for a particular country or team. The researcher asked the owner of *Ntoboase* literally meaning patience why he had the American flag painted on his canoe. He responded, "I like the name, the place and wish Ghana were more like the United States of America." The owner of *Life is war* also says "I have the Spanish flag painted on my canoe because I support the Spanish football team." Gray (2006) however, blames this practice on the influence of western culture on Ghanaians as a whole. Many canoes also had names of football clubs written on them. These seem to tell the canoe users' sports affiliation. The football clubs comprised local and foreign teams with the foreign teams topping the list.

Figure 4: Pictures showing inscriptions of foreign and local football clubs



Source: Researcher's fieldwork

The appearance of football clubs in canoe decoration does not only show the influence of western culture, but also the influence of improved modern media technologies. Today, most football games are either watched on television, mobile phone, online or listened to on radio. Furthermore, not all national flags painted on canoes can be described as arbitrary or abstract; some have interesting stories to tell. They probably tell us how and where the money for the purchase of the canoe was earned. The owner of *Nyamebeye*, for example, whose canoe bears the flag of the United States of America, said he painted his canoe with the American flag to serve an important reminder. According to him, his elder brother who lives in the United States of America sent him the money to purchase the canoe. So, to him, painting the American flag on his canoe is not for the fun of it, but reminds him of his generous brother and where he got the money from.

Figure 5: A Picture showing *NyameBeye* canoe painted with an America Flag

Source: Researcher's fieldwork

4.8 The Response Role

Some inscriptions on canoes are meant to be responses to rumours or what people have said about some canoe owner. They are specifically statements directed at individual(s) who might have said something against the owner with the aim of disgracing or tarnishing his or her image. Names like *AyeAfer* literally meaning "You have shamed yourself", *BɔneBen* literally meaning "What sins have I committed", *Jealousy*, *Eka a MeTse* meaning "I hear what you say," are meant to be responses to what people have said about the respective canoe owners. The owner of *Let them say*, told me that he chose that name in response to people who were gossiping about him and his family. So, he wanted them to know that he does not care whatever they say about him. Statements such as these touch on interpersonal relationships in that they illustrate how the owner relates with other people. Other names such as *MmaNnye Toy* literally meaning "don't be a toy," *Okwadwenyinaɔkɔmdze* none meaning it is the "Lazy that goes hungry," *Cocoa sik* meaning "cocoa money" are all meant to be insinuating responses to allegations that neighbours make against one canoe owner or the other.

4.9 Rationale Underlying some Selected Inscriptions

One of the objectives of this study was to find out the communication implications of the inscriptions on artisanal canoes. This re-emphasises Burke's (1973) assertion cited in Littlejohn and Foss (2011) that no word or symbol can be neutral because language is always emotionally loaded. Guided by this objective, the study was much concerned about iconology of the inscriptions as used by the fishers than the iconography. Gray (2006) states that artistically iconology is concerned with the meaning underlying a particular image, symbol or an art form. The study probed for the implied meanings of some of the inscriptions and gathered that most of them have been used figuratively. In interviewing respondents, the study tried to look for the meaning and implication of some of these inscriptions. Generally, therefore, there seemed to be little or no connection at all between the inscriptions and artisanal fishing. The inscriptions rather seem to paint a vivid picture of the way of life of the people. Some of the ascribed meanings underlying the inscriptions are discussed below. They are broadly categorised under two subheads, namely pictograms and texts.

The pictograms would be discussed before the texts. Some of the symbols were supposed to have had general and obvious meaning to observers, but that did not appear to be the norm. They seemed to have been structured to suit the purpose and interpretation of its user(s). For the purpose of this analysis, the symbols collected were classified under the following themes: the pictogram of stool, the pictogram of *Akofona*, and the pictogram of flags (of Football Clubs/Countries) and other pictograms.

4.10 The Pictogram of Stool

According to Gray (2006) and Anquandah (2000), the stool represents the institution of Chieftaincy. It embodies tremendous meaning in the broader Ghanaian culture. According to a respondent from Ankaful the symbol of stool on canoes either carved or painted represents royalty. This is either to portray the canoe itself as a queen/king; it is also to say that the canoe belongs to a king, queen or a royal family as a whole. In Ankaful, most respondents admitted that majority of the canoes that bear the stool symbols belong to royal families.

In Apam, the researcher was informed by the Chief Fisherman that the stool on the canoes also depicts a sign of stability. This, he explained, was because any canoe with the painting of a stool can withstand any devastation at sea without being crushed or destroyed. Some fishermen in Anomabo also see the stool on the canoe as a sign of peace. That is, whenever there is a dispute, the parties are summoned by the Chief Fisherman and together they sit to settle the dispute amicably.

It appears that there is a striking difference in the way stools are painted or carved on canoes these days. Owners of canoes today decorate them with other symbols such as the heart and football to communicate their message to the public. This is also sometimes combined with brightening colours. One of such canoes with the symbol of a stool and a heart in the middle belongs to a royal family at Ankaful. The Spokesperson for the family revealed the implied meaning of the symbols to the researcher. He disclosed that the family is the *Gyaase* royal gate of the *Nkusukum* Traditional Area.

He said the family had exuberant youths who were working in other people's canoes. The family decided to buy a canoe for the young people in the family to improve their lots as well as the family's. To do this, the family had to sell off the only property of the family in order to purchase the canoe. To let the youth in the family know that the canoe is a treasured property therefore, they decorated the canoe with a symbol of the stool and heart in the middle to tell the youth that the family had to take a high risk of disposing off the family's valuable in order to establish that fishing gear; the youths therefore ought to work hard to ensure its sustainability. This sought to reiterate Burke's (1973) theory of identification cited in Littlejohn and Foss (2011) that says human beings often abuse symbols for their (the users) advantage.



Figure 6: A Picture showing a Pictogram of a Stool Decorated with Colours

Source: Researcher's fieldwork

Other stool symbols found on some canoes were painted as flags. One respondent said that he painted the stool with the colours of the German national flag to show his love for that country's soccer prowess. He said he particularly admired the team's style of play during the 2014 FIFA World Cup tournament held in Brazil. This suggests how the media have played an important role in promoting soccer as a popular culture. The study finds the whole process of marrying a traditional symbol like that of the stool and an international symbol such as the game of football and another nation's flag as a good way of facilitating international relations and also giving our local culture an international flavour.

4.11 The Pictogram of *Akofona*

The *Akofona* is a symbol of authority and strength of leadership (Sarpong, 2008). The chief Fisherman in Apam told the researcher that canoes with this symbol show how strong and powerful the owners are. In the olden days, it could have meant that the owner was a royal or a good warrior.

4.12 Other Pictograms

The researcher refers to these pictograms as “other” because they did not belong to any of the known symbols that have been discussed above. They were borne out of the fisher’s own invention to serve as a medium of response to their perceived “detractors”. This seems to corroborate Verrips (2002) idea that most inscriptions on canoes are meant to be responses to comments directed at the fishermen. The following art forms were found to be performing such roles for their owners:

4.13 The Pictogram of *Cocoa Sika*

The owner of *Cocoa sika* hails from Anomabo. He explained to the researcher why he chose to sketch such a symbol on his canoe. According to him, it was a response directed at rumour mongers who were spreading rumour about his source of money. He notes, When I was about twenty-five years old, I joined my father who was a prominent cocoa farmer in a village around Asankragua in the Western Region of Ghana. I worked as a cocoa farmer for almost twenty years; with the interest of owning my own canoe in future. The vision compelled me to save enough money and eventually returned to my hometown to purchase a canoe to work with. Little did I know that people were spreading rumour that my money was ‘dirty money,’ I got it from a deity. So, in order to curtail this false rumour, I designed the *Cocoa Sika* symbol on my canoe to tell people the source of my money. All that the symbol was communicating was that, he purchased the canoe out of the money he earned from the sale of his cocoa and not from any juju (deity).

Figure 7: A Picture of *Cocoa Sika* Canoe



Source: Researcher’s fieldwork

4.15 The Pictogram of *Jkwadwenyi*

The owner of *Jkwadwenyina Jkɔmdze nois* is a 54-year-old man. He owns 14 artisanal marine canoes and this has placed him at an enviable position in and around the community in which he lives. He explained why he chose to write that inscription on his canoe. He notes, I bought my first canoe when I was about 35 years old. This aroused a lot of eyebrows in the community. People accused me that my money was juju money. There was so much gossip about the source of my money. People even predicted my death, saying my source of money has a terminal point and that I will die after 7 years. It got to a point where I found it difficult to get a crew (fishermen) to work with; for, they feared that I would use them for rituals. So, at a point, I was only working with my nephews and few relatives.

His response to the rumours was that it was only hard work and blessings of God that pays. He did not end it there, but went ahead to write the inscription *Jkwadwenyina Jkɔmdze No* on his canoe to inform people that he earned his success through hard work and not any other dubious means. The

inscription he wrote on the canoe helped him immensely. It helped bridge the gap that seemed to have existed between the community and him. People usually approached him for explanation of the inscription on the canoe, especially the pictogram. He said, "I capitalised on the opportunity to talk to people. Gradually, I won their sympathy and respect. The 7-year period came and I did not die as insinuated by my detractors." He regained his lost dignity in the community. Today, he commands the largest workforce in his community with a fleet of 14 canoes and still counting.

Figure 8: A Picture of *Jkwadwenyina JkcmDze No*



Source: Researcher's fieldwork

4.16 The Inscription of Texts

This section analyses some of the implied meanings underpinning the texts collected on the canoes. These were from the perspective of the canoe owners that the researcher had an in-depth interview with.

4.16.1 *MegyefotseAse* and Still Strong

The owner of *MegyefotseAse* which literally means "my redeemer lives" and *Still Strong* spoke of his ordeal and why he wrote these inscriptions on his canoes. This was what he had to say: My friend and I travelled to Gambia to do fishing. We made some money and therefore decided to go into a joint venture. My friend came to Ghana to establish the business while I stayed in Gambia to work to support him at home. I came to Ghana after the whole process was completed. Surprisingly, my friend told me in the face that I was not a co-owner of the canoe; little did I know that my friend had registered the canoe in his name as the sole owner. All efforts by the Chief Fisherman and elders in the community to settle the matter amicably proved futile. I therefore could not do anything about it because I was helpless and very disappointed in the friend. I went back to Gambia and worked harder and saved some money with the aim of purchasing my own canoe.

His dream came to pass, he now owns two canoes. He named the first canoe *MegyefotseAse* literally meaning "my redeemer lives" to suggest to his friend that it is God that blesses or takes care of man. When he got his second canoe too, he named and registered it *Still Strong*. By this inscription, he was telling his friend that his action could not devastate him, and that he is still financially strong.

Figure 9: Pictures of *MegyefoTseAseand Still Strong*

Source: Researcher's fieldwork

of Arts & Humanities

4.16.2 *MmaNnye Toy*

The owner of *MmaNnye Toy* narrated what brought about the name. He said if I had not travelled to *Alata* (Nigeria), he would not have known that education is a very important asset. Owing to his lack of education, he almost perished in Nigeria as he was cheated by his employer. He said, "For this reason I vowed to myself that I would educate all my children to avert such similar fates." Again, he also thought of how his old age could be as a fisherman, because he had seen many aged fishermen whose conditions were very despicable. He said, I finally came to the conviction that securing my children's future would guarantee me a promising future in my old age. But my challenge was that all my children were females. Friends and kinsmen were against the idea of educating females as they considered it a useless venture. I ignored their advice and decided to send them to school; and that anytime I took my children to school, neighbours looked at me in amazement. So, what I usually told them was *Mennhwe Me de Toy* literally meaning "do not look at me like a toy". Look at what I am doing and do same else your future would be miserable. I went ahead and wrote this on my canoes to warn and advise both friends and kinsmen to take a cue from what I was doing.

The informant who led the researcher to the respondent (*Mmannyeto*) though admitted that the respondent indeed had educated his daughters to enviable positions; he thought that was not all to the name. The informant told me that *MmaNnye Toy* was one of several employees who worked for an employer in Nigeria for a number of years. The employer promised the senior employees a facility of "work and pay" for some of his canoes. A promise the employer never fulfilled. He said, *MmaNnye Toy* and some other colleagues decided not to be faithful to him (employer) again. He pilfered from his boss anytime they went on fishing expedition, an idea the other colleagues were against and advised him to desist from. But he refused to heed the advice of his colleagues. The colleagues too never reported him to their boss because they saw him (the boss) to be wicked.

According to him, anytime *MmaNnye Toy* pilfered from their boss, he admonished the others not to look at him like a 'toy,' but rather do same, hence the name "*MmaNnye Toy*". After he had made enough money from the boss, he parted ways with him and came to Ghana to establish his own canoe.

Figure 10: Picture of *MmaNnyeToy*



Source: Researcher's fieldwork

4.16.3 *JbaaW'anoyeDzen a JbanyinnaJsaWoandAwar*

JbaaW'anoyeDzenaJbanyinnaJsaWo literally meaning "if a woman is difficult it is a man who will control her and *Awar* literally meaning "marriage" are canoes that belong to ex-couples. One of my informants told me that the names are serving as innuendoes to each other. The former belongs to the ex-husband and the latter the ex-wife. So, the former is an innuendo against the ex-wife and latter too is an innuendo against the ex-husband. They both recounted the incidents that led to the writing of such names on their respective canoes. The man explains that: Every woman, no matter their success in life, must submit to man. No woman could do anything for herself and therefore would need the assistance of the male counterpart to fill that gap for her at some point in her life. It was against this background that I wrote that statement on my canoe. This is quite a gendered statement. Asked whether the choice of that inscription on his canoes preceded the dissolution of their marriage, his answer was a big 'NO'. He says "My choice of the name had nothing to do with the actions of my ex-wife even though that is what many community members insinuate".

The ex-wife also related that: I was the first wife of my husband, and I had 12 children with him; 10 males and 2 females. I married my husband before he bought his first canoe, which I think I also contributed immensely. None of my children were formally educated. They all worked for their father especially the males. By the time my husband got five canoes, he had married two additional wives. I later realised that all my rivals' children were attending school instead of joining their father's occupation as my children did. This made her think of her children's future. So, the attempt to fight for her children's education led to their divorce. She proposed that out of the seven canoes they had acquired her husband gave her children one canoe for them not to feel cheated. She thought this could also help them build a better future. The husband refused to the proposal and accused her of turning his own children against him. He later agreed to the proposal with a condition of a divorce which she also accepted.

It was the aftermath of the divorce that led to the choice of such names by both parties. The wife said the husband and the kinsmen thought she would fail and come back to apologise to the husband. She notes, My children and I did not fail and now we have 3 canoes. Upon realising I was doing well, my in-laws started calling me names suggesting that I was difficult and not submissive. Given all these goings-on I thought the best way to respond once-and-for-all to these "attacks" was by inscribing those words on my canoe that *AwarMa MetseEhisem* literally meaning "I hear nonsensical issues because of marriage."

The respondent claims that it was upon realising what she had written on her canoes that her husband also wrote that “*JbaaW'anoyeDzenaObanyinnaJsaWo*” to apparently counter her assertion. The man was probably emphasizing his point that a woman cannot do everything for herself. Literally telling the wife that though you have succeeded in the fishing business, she had also lost the warmth of his arms. The attitude of the husband and his family members towards the wife raises pertinent concerns about the lukewarm attitude of society toward women empowerment. Concerns such as why women are not given leadership positions or not encouraged to own economic ventures; and why they are constantly under attack or called names when they succeed in their endeavours, are but a few of the socio-economic factors militating against women empowerment and which society must address.

Figure 10: Inscription of *Awar*



Source: Researcher's fieldwork

4.16.4 ColdStore

The owner of *Cold store* said she did not name her canoe 'cold store' but the name was originated by the people in the community. She said that when her canoe was bought, she had no name for it, but any time the crew went on fishing expedition, they made a significant catch. Thus, the canoe always brought fish ashore, so people decided to call the canoe "*Cold store*", because in a proper cold store, one can always find fish. This reinforces Burke's (1973) theory of identification which states that human beings play around language to identify themselves with situations (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011).

Figure 11: A Picture Showing an Inscription of *Cold Store* on Canoe



Source: Researcher's fieldwork

5.0 CONCLUSION

The study investigated the use of inscriptions on artisanal marine canoes and their communication implications among three fishing communities in the Central region of Ghana. Based on the key findings that emerged, it can be concluded that decoration of artisanal canoes is all about establishing relationships. The inscriptions express relationship between fishers and their religion, political party, sport clubs and other associations.

The findings of the study revealed that a decorated canoe plays the communicator/messenger role for its owner. Thus, a decorated canoe serves as a medium for fishers to communicate various beliefs about their lives. By this opportunity, fishers are able to communicate or display their various affiliations in society, namely religion, politics and sports. Also, it was revealed that apart from fishers capitalising on the opportunity to communicate their affiliations to their world, they also seize the opportunity to communicate their philosophy about life.

The study also revealed that most inscriptions on canoes are meant to mean indirect responses to rivals, rumour mongers and detractors. This is seen as a major avenue by fishers especially canoe owners to respond to rumours that are perceived unwholesome to tarnish their image. The rumours have mostly been about the source of their money, the study discovered that fishers do not choose their inscriptions arbitrarily but they are carefully selected to suit their (fishers) intentions. The inscriptions, whether conventionalised or not, are meant to communicate. From the fishers' world, every inscription on a canoe has an implied story behind it. The stories appear to be under code and can only be decoded by the user.

Again, decorated canoes are messengers for fishers and speak for them. They show the diversification of their mindscape. The canoe communicates a lot about how they relate with each other in their community. Further, every inscription selected by a fisherman has an implied meaning, but mostly, it has to be interpreted or told from the user's point of view.

REFERENCES

- Agbenu, K.D. (2011). *Ga and Adangbecanoe culture: a composite art form for studio practice exploration*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. Department of Painting and Sculpture. Kumasi: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- Aggrey, K. (2015). Occupational communication modes and symbols: a study of the non-verbal perspective of artisanal marine fishing practices in Ghana. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 5(24), 221-232.
- Amador, K., Bannerman, P., Quartey, R. & Ashong, R. (2006). *Ghana canoe frame survey 2004*. Ghana Marine Fisheries. Tema: Marine Fisheries Research Division.
- Anquandah, J. (1996). *Rediscovering Ghana's past*. London: Longman & Sedco Ltd.
- Anquandah, J. (2000). *The archaeological evidence for the emergence of Akan civilization*. London: Longman & Sedco Ltd.
- Allen, M. (2004). *The Gold Coast or a cruise in West African waters*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Asare, M. (1995). *The canoe's story*. New York: 3 B C Publications Ltd.
- Asmah, K. (2003). *Ghanaian canoes: The making and decoration of Ghanaian fishing canoes with special emphasis on the coastal canoes*. Unpublished M. Phil Thesis (No. 13). Department of Painting and sculpture. Kumasi: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- Balmer, W.T. (2006). *A history of the Akan people of the Gold Coast*. London: The Atlantis Press.

- Bedu-Addo, J. (2008). *Ghana: travelers' guide, the Ghanaian people, the history and culture*. Kumasi: My Own Creation Press.
- Bell, J. (2008). *Doing your research project: a guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Bonsu, N. (1994). *The wit of Akans*. Kumasi: Terra Nover Printing Press.
- Brewer, T. (2003). *Understanding canoe design*. Camden, New Jersey: International Marine, ME.
- Bridgewater, A. (2004). *Step by step woodcarving*. London: Bell & Hyman Limited.
- Brown, A. P. (1999). *The fishing canoe in contemporary times*. Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
- Brown, A. P. (1947). *The fishing industry of the Labadi District: The fish and the fisheries of the Gold Coast*. London.
- Burke, K. (1969.). *A rhetoric of motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Burke, K. (1973). *The philosophy of literary form: Studies in symbolic action*. CA: The University of California Press.
- Burke, K. (1966). *Language as symbolic action: Essays on life, literature, and method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Burke, K. (1950). *The range of rhetoric: rhetoric of motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Burton, A.F.R.G.S. (1863). *Wanderings in West Africa from Liverpool to Fernando Po*. London: Tinsley Brothers.
- Canaday, J. (2005). *Mainstream of modern art*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Cheney, G. (2012). The rhetoric of identification and the study of organizational communication. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol. 69, No. 10, pp 143-158
- Cohen, A.P. (2000). *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. Chichester: Ellis Horwood.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in Education* (6th ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Cole, H. & Ross, R. (2009). *The arts of Ghana*. Los Angeles: Cultural History Museum at U.C.L.A.
- Conway, B. (2003). *Magic: an occult primer*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Coronel, M. A. (2000). Fanticanoe decoration. *African Arts*, 10(2) 14-39.
- Coronel, M. A. (2005). Fanticanoe decoration. *African Arts*, (13(1) 59-100.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Educational research: planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J.W. (2008). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Dadzie, A. (2004). *Canoe decoration in the Central Region: implication for art education*. Unpublished M. Phil Thesis. Department of General Art Studies. Kumasi: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- Dartey, M. (2000). *Canoe decoration of the contemporary Gapeople*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. Department of Painting and Sculpture. Kumasi: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- Dawson, C. (2002). *Practical research methods*. United Kingdom: 'How to' Books Limited.
- Denscombe, M. (2008). *The good research guide for small scale social research projects*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Dissanayake, E. (2001). *What is art for? Towards a behavior of art*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Djagbletey, L. B. (2002). *Gatribal art*. Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation. Department of Painting and Sculpture. Kumasi: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- Eyson, E.O. (1997). *Some vital information about the fishing industry in Ghana*. Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
- Geest, S. (2009). 'Anyway!' lorry inscriptions in Ghana. *African art*, (58)(1) 1-13.

- Gray, A. W. (2006). Canoe decoration and meaning among the Fante of Cape Coast. *African Diaspora ISPs*. Paper 25. [Online] Available: http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/african_diaspora_isp/25 (November 12, 2015)
- Hanafi, A. (2007). *Indigenous Languages and Culture as Developmentals*. Bristol: EdqualResearch Consortium.
- Hanson, J.O. (2004). *The People from the Sea*. Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
- Henderson-Quartey, D.K. (2004). *The Ga of Ghana: History and Culture of West African People*. London: Book-in-Hand Ltd.
- Fagg, W. (2006). *The art of Western Africa, tribal marks and sculptures*. Italy: Fountana UNESCO Art Books, Milan.
- FAO, (2005). *Catalogue of small scale fishing gear*. FAO. Oxford: Fishing News (Books) Ltd.
- Field, M.J. (2004). *Social organisation of the Gapeople*. London: My Own Creation Press.
- Field, M.J. (2013). *Religion and medicine of the Gapeople*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Gall, M.D., Gall, J.P. & Borg, W.R. (2007). *Educational research: an introduction* (8thed.). Boston: Pearson International Edition.
- Gulbrandsen, O. (2000). *Canoes in Ghana*. IDAF/WP/37. Cotonou: FAO/Danida/Norway.
- Jeffers, C.S. (2002). *Tools for exploring social issues and visual culture: contemporary issues in art education*. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.
- Jorison, P. (1998). Going out or staying home: migration strategies among Xwla and Anlo-Ewe fishermen. *MAST*, 1(2), 129-156.
- Kirk, J.W. (2013). *Kenneth burke and identification*. Florida: EBSCO Publishing.
- Kusi, H. (2012). *Doing qualitative research: a guide for researchers*. Accra: Emmpong Press.
- Lawson, R.M. & Kwei, E. (1994). *African entrepreneurship and economic growth. A case study of the fishing industry of Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- Legget, B. (2012). *Identification, symbolism and kenneth burke*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Lindlorf, R.T & Taylor, C.B. (2002). *Qualitative communication research method*. New Delhi: Sage, LDN.
- Littlejohn, S.W., Foss, K.A. (2011). *Theories of human communication* (10thed). Illinois: Waveland Press Inc.
- Macdonald, G. (2000). *The Gold Coast past and present. A short description of the country and its people*. London: Green and Co.
- Marrée, J.A. (1817). *Reizen op en beschrijving van de goudkust van Guinea*. 's-Gravenhage/Amsterdam: Gebroeders van Cleef.
- Marshall, J. (2002). *Exploring culture and identify through artefact: Three art lesson derived from contemporary art practice*. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.
- Miller, J.E. (2010). *Exploring Kenneth Burke's Identification Theory*. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company.
- Nunoo, R.B. (1975). Canoe decoration in Ghana. *African Arts*, 7(3), 32-36.
- Odotei, I. (2002). The migration of Ghanaian women in the canoe fishing industry. *MAST*, 5(2), 88-96.
- Odotei, I. (1996). Ghana fisheries – what future? *A Magazine of the Earth Ghana*, 4, 8-14.
- Odotei, I. (2003). *Migration, fishing and development: a case study of Ningo*. Accra: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana.
- Opoku, K. (1998). *The world view of the Akan*. London: Longman & Sedco Ltd.
- Opoku, K. (2005). *West African traditional religion*. New York: F.E.P. International Private Ltd.
- Punch, K. (2005). *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Quarcoo, A. (1994). *The language of adinkra patterns*. Accra: Sebewie Ventures.
- Quigley, B. (2014). *Identification compared with persuasion in Kenneth Burke's rhetorical theory*. Memphis: University of Memphis Press.
- Quigley, B. (2008). *Forms of identification evident in Burke's rhetoric of motive*. San Antonio, TX.
- Quigley, B. (2009). *"Identification" as a key term in Kenneth Burke's rhetorical theory*. Memphis: University of Memphis Press.
- Rattray, R.S. (2000). *The British empire exhibition April – October 1924*. A Short Manual of the Gold Coast. s.l.: n.p.
- Redmayne, P. (1998). *Ghana yesterday and today*. London: Chatto and Windus.

- Robbins, W. & Nooter, N. (2009). *African art in American collections: The two worlds of African art*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Ross, D. (2005). *The verbal art of Akan linguist staffs*. Los Angeles: UCLA.
- Sarpong, P. (2008). *Ghana in retrospect*. Tema: Ghana Publishing Corporation.
- Sheves, G.T. (2000). *The Ghanaian dug-out canoe and the canoe carving industry in Ghana*. IDAF/WP/35. Cotonou: FAO/Danida/Norway.
- Smith, R. (2002). The canoe in West African history. *Journal of African History*, 11(4), 515-533.
- Steinmetz, K. (2013). *Sourcebook of theories and methods: a contextual approach*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Tetteh, D. (2002). *Painting and decoration in the Gaarea*. Unpublished M. Phil Thesis. Department of Painting and Sculpture. Kumasi: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- Thompson, S.E. (2004). *The Canoe: A Living Tradition*. Edited by John Jennings. Toronto: Firefly Books.
- Vansina, J. (2008). *Art history in Africa*. New York: Longman Inc.
- Verrips, J. (2002). Ghanaian canoe decorations. *MAST*, 6(20), 43-66.
- Verrips, J. (2006). Ghanaian canoe decorations (2nd ed). *MAST*, 1(1), 54-100.
- Walden, P. (2012). *The socio-cultural significance of canoe decoration*. Unpublished Master of Arts Thesis. Department of General Art Studies. Kumasi: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- Yin, R.K. (2012). *Application of case study research* (3rd ed.). CA: Thousand Oaks.
- Zikmund, G. W., Babin, J. B., Carr, C. J. & Griffin, M. (2010). *Business research methods* (8th ed.). Canada: Cengage Learning.

