

## Analyzing the Communication Implications of the use of Inscriptions on Artisanal Canoes

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### Abstract

*This study investigated the use of inscriptions on artisanal canoes and their communication implications among three fishing communities in the Central Region of Ghana. It assessed the reasons that inform the choice of inscriptions by the fishers. The study adopted the qualitative research approach and the case study design was used for data collection and analysis. 200 inscriptions (147 texts and 53 pictograms) were purposively gathered from a sample size of one hundred and fifty canoes from the fishers of Apam, Ankaful and Anomabo. Interviews were used to collect data; and data gathered was thematically analysed in line with the research questions. Burke's theory of identification formed the theoretical framework of the study. The findings of the study showed that fishers use both inscriptions of pictogram and text to decorate their canoes. In situations where fishers do not have conventionalised symbols to suit a particular situation, they tend to create their own pictograms to fit that situation. It was also found that the inscriptions of text out-numbered pictograms. The study also discovered that canoes were not only decorated for embellishment purposes but were symbolic expressions of a wide range of meanings. These findings demonstrate that the decoration of artisanal canoes is all about establishing relationships. It is also true that decorated canoes are messengers of fishers and they "speak" for them. 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

Canoes are very important capital equipment for the fisherman in communities along the coasts of Ghana (Walden, 2012). 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 (Coronel, 2005). 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 (Odotei, 1996; Verrips, 2002). Others too concentrated on the artistic view of canoe designs and inscriptions purely from the artistic perspective (Agbenu, 2011; Walden 2012). 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.

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; Verrips, 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

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. 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).

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*. 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).

### 2.1 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

Verrrips, 2002). Rattray's work on The British Empire Exhibition April – October 1924 contains a picture of canoes on the beach of Osu near the Christianborg castle (Rattray, 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. 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.

According to Verrrips (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 Verrrips (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 (Eyeson, 1997). In her analysis on functions of canoe in the lives of the fishers, Eyeson (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; Verripps, 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.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.2.1 Burke's Theory of Identification (1973)

Kenneth Burke is a giant among symbol theorists (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). He wrote over a period of 50 years, and his theory is one of the most comprehensive of all symbol theories (Littlejohn & Foss). Identification is a key term for the discussion of rhetoric in Kenneth Burke's 'A Rhetoric of Motives.' He uses it to evaluate the traditional perception of rhetoric as persuasion. Burke cited in Quigley (2008) suggests that whenever someone attempts to persuade someone else, identification occurs, because for persuasion to occur, one party must identify with another. That is, the one who becomes persuaded sees

that one party is like another in some way. Burke's definition of identification works not only in relation to the self (For example, that a tree has arms and it is like me, thus I identify with that tree) but it also refers to exterior identification (for example, that a man eats fish like that group, thus he is identified with that fish-eating group). One can perceive identification between objects that are not the self (Quigley, 2008). Fishermen use inscriptions on their canoes not only to identify themselves with others but also for others to identify with them. For example, religious inscriptions on canoes are likely to attract readers who are members of such religions to identify with them.

According to Littlejohn and Foss (2011), Burke's (1973) view of rhetoric begins with his concept of action. Burke starts with the distinction between action and motion. Action consists of purposeful, voluntary behaviours; motions are non-purposeful, non-meaningful ones (Quigley, 2009). Objects and animals possess motion, but only human beings have action. Burke (1973) views the individual as a biological and neurological being, distinguished by symbol-using behaviour or the ability to act. Burke's theory of identification states that human beings are symbol-creating, symbol-using and symbol-misusing animals (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). They create symbols to name things and situations. Human beings use symbols for communication; and they often abuse symbols by misusing them to their (The symbol users) advantage (Burke, 1973). Canoe decorations make use of symbols a lot. Fishermen use some of the well-known symbols such as the *adinkra* symbols to name things as well as situations. Fishermen are also creative; they create symbols which do not exist to fit their situation. They also alter existing symbols by adding colour and other objects (mostly foreign) to suit their preference. This is what Kirk (2013), describes as abuse of symbols by human beings.

Leggett (2012) states that Burke's view of symbols is broad, they include an array of linguistic and non-verbal elements as well. People filter reality through a symbolic screen. Many fishermen have symbolised their sufferings, triumphs and philosophies with the inscriptions on their canoes. They are therefore known and identified by those symbols. Inscriptions on artisanal marine canoes carry in them their owners' perception and feelings about the world around them. Through these inscriptions which are made up of symbols and texts, canoe owners' affiliations and relationships are known. Language is by nature selective and abstract, focusing attention on particular aspects of reality at the expense of other aspects. Burke agrees that language functions as the vehicle for action because of the social need for people to co-operate in their action (Kirk, 2013). Language, as seen by Burke, is emotionally loaded; no word can be neutral. As a result, one's attitude, judgment, and feelings invariably appear in the language he or she uses (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Language is economical but also ambiguous (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). According to (Cheney, 2012), Burke was of the view that language can bring people together or divide them. Therefore, when symbols and language bring people together into a common way of understanding, identification is said to occur. The opposite is also true about language, division or separation can also occur.

Burke's theory however, has been critiqued by some members of the rhetoric tradition of which he is a member. They indicate, "Burke selects 'identification' as the key term to distinguish his rhetorical perspective from a tradition characterised by the term 'persuasion' (Quigley, 2014:42). Responding to his critics, he (Burke) was careful to note that his focus on identification does not mean he dismisses his tradition's (the rhetoric tradition) focus on persuasion. Rather, his contribution was a build-up on the tradition's focus on persuasion, and he uses both concepts (persuasion and identification) in his conceptualisation of theory (Quigley, 2014). Burke argues that interactions in our contemporary world are, in some ways, "more complicated" than can be understood by viewing persuasion solely as the explicit, intentional acts which a rhetor directs to a specific known audience (Cheney, 2012).

### 2.2.2 Sources of Identification

Three overlapping sources of identification exist, according to Littlejohn and Foss (2011). They are material identification, Idealistic identification and Formal identification. Material identification results from goods, possessions and things, like owning the same kind of car or having similar tastes in clothes (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Idealistic identification results from shared ideas, attitudes, feelings and values such as being a member of the same church or political party. Formal identification results from the arrangement, form or organisation of an event in which both parties participate, such as attending a trade show (Quigley, 2009). For example, if two people are introduced to each other, the conventional form of



handshaking causes some identification to take place. Some consubstantiality will always be present merely by virtue of the shared humanness of any two people. Identification can be great or small, and it can be increased or decreased by the actions of the communicators (Quigley, 2014). In conclusion, Burke's perspective on identification is much broader than the several dimensions discussed in this chapter. However, these dimensions offer a brief look at the possibilities for exploring identification as a direct and deliberate strategy used by a rhetor to persuade an audience. Burke encourages us to look at processes that are semi-conscious, less than obvious, mundane, and representative that invite us to collaborate in identification and transformation.

### 2.2.3 Identification and Consubstantiality

To overcome our division and our guilt, we look for ways in which our interests, attitudes, values, experiences, perceptions, and material properties are shared with others, or could appear to be shared. These instances of "overlap" make us "consubstantial" with others. We continually seek to be associated with certain individuals or groups (and not others), attain some position in the hierarchy of social relations, and relieve ourselves of the guilt we bear (Miller, 2010). Consubstantiality is one way in which identification is created between people (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). When one communicates with a friend, they are seen to communicate with each other in a free and easy manner because they share meaning from the language in use. This is what Burke refers to as the experience of consubstantiality.

On the other hand, when one tries to communicate with someone who does not share meaning with him or her in the language used, one may feel frustrated because of the lack of shared meaning with the person (Miller, 2010). As identification increases, shared meaning increases in a spiraling fashion, thereby improving understanding (ibid). Inscriptions on canoes are consubstantial; it unites people who share meaning with the canoe owner. Division on the other hand can also occur, especially among those who do not share meaning with the canoe owner on the inscription used on the artefact. For example, if a canoe owner has the following inscription on his canoe "LIFE IS WAR", it is only those who share meaning in this philosophy that would identify with him or her. Those who believe that life is never a matter of war would never identify with him or her simply because they do not share a common meaning. Here, division or separation is created.



### 2.2.4 Identification and Persuasion

According to Cheney (2012), identification can be a means to persuasion and effective communication, or it can be an end in itself. According to Steimetz (2013), Burke selects "identification" as the key term to distinguish his rhetorical perspective from a tradition characterised by the term "persuasion." As he carefully notes, his focus on identification does not imply a dismissal of the traditional focus on persuasion but rather an emphasis on his contribution as accessory to the traditional focus. To him interactions in our contemporary world are, in some ways, "more complicated" than can be understood by viewing persuasion solely as the explicit, intentional acts which a rhetor directs to a specific, known audience (Quigley, 2014). Burke is of the view that an essential part of identification occurs through self-persuasion.

He notes, "We promote social cohesion through our innumerable identifications, in part through persuading ourselves. In some cases, the process of persuasion is not complete until we act upon ourselves rhetorically" (Quigley, 2009:40). Burke's picture of the individual consciousness is one of a noisy and wrangling parliament; whichever faction is in charge at a given time may convince the other members through carefully chosen language thereby completing a process of persuasion begun outside the individual (Quigley, 2009).

Inscriptions on canoes are clear and visible for all and sundry to see and identify with. They are well thought out messages that are meant to persuade viewers to identify themselves with. The inscriptions are very persuasive since they bother on all aspects of human life; generally focusing on religion, society, politics and economics. They, therefore, have any inclination to persuade people to identify themselves with them (inscriptions).

### 2.2.5 Identification as Unconscious, Mystification and Concept of Guilt

In processes not wholly deliberate yet not unconscious, a speaker may use language and other symbols associated with wealth or class, or an audience member may identify with such nuances of wealth without being fully aware of doing so (Kirk, 2013). Burke's perspective suggests that human beings consider the impact of messages they do not fully intend to send or do not consciously intend to heed (Miller, 2010). Canoe owners, through the use of inscriptions on their canoes, exhibit class and wealth in their communities. Nonetheless, they are very cautious not to exhibit any sense of pride. For example, a canoe owner who has the number '12' boldly written on his or her artefact, saying that this is my 12th canoe, will at the same time have the inscription 'NYAME NA JAYE (It is the Lord's making).' This is to say that he or she does not rely on his strengths but on the providence of God/Supreme Being.

According to Burke (1973) cited in Littlejohn and Foss (2011), people of lower strata in a hierarchy often identify with people at the top of the hierarchy, in spite of a tremendous differences or division that may exist between them. This kind of identification can be seen, for example, in the mass following of a charismatic leader. In such a situation, individuals perceive in others an embodiment of the perfection for which they themselves aspire for. Again, the mystery surrounding the charismatic person simultaneously tends to hide the division that exists. Burke refers to this phenomenon as identification through mystification (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Through the inscriptions on artisanal canoes, many people, especially the youth tend to identify with canoe owners, and subsequently wish to be like them. This is so because, the inscriptions written on the canoes make canoe owners appear as experts in life. The inscriptions appear to embody various philosophies of life which are very educative.

Burke (1973) introduces another term that helps explain how identification works. This is the concept of 'guilt.' This term is Burke's all-purpose word for any feeling of tension within a person, namely anxiety, embarrassment, self-hatred, disgust and so forth (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Guilt is the principle of perfection (Cheney, 2012). People are sensitive to their failings. Humans can imagine through language a state of perfection. Then, by their very nature, they spend their lives striving for whatever degree of perfection they have set for themselves (Legett, 2012). Guilt arises as a result of the discrepancy between the real and the ideal. A peace activist might be motivated by this kind of guilt, for example, when speaking at a rally. The activist declares that war is a barbaric and inappropriate method of resolving conflict in the twenty-first century. This speaker can imagine a world without war and is motivated to speak out because of the principle of perfection (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). Fishermen could be described as creative and genius (Dadzie, 2004). They have personified their artefacts to preach messages of unity, peace and tranquility. Guilt is the principle of hierarchy (Burke, 1973). In seeking order, people structure society in social pyramids or hierarchies (social ratings, social orderings). Competitions and divisions result among classes and groups in the hierarchy, and guilt results. Ethnic strife is a perfect example. Burke, then, places strong emphasis on the role of language and symbols in bringing people together or driving them apart (Legett, 2012).

## 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 Mfantiman 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

The research question sought to discuss the theoretical issues that reflected the findings of the study. Four issues emanated from the theoretical framework of the study. They were identification through consubstantiality, identification through mystification, principle of perfection, and principle of hierarchy (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011).

**Identification through Consubstantiality:** According to Burke (1973), consubstantiality is one way through which identification is created between people (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). When people communicate and share meaning through the use of language and symbol, they are in Burke's terms experiencing consubstantiality. In the case of canoe inscriptions, the findings reveal that fishers share meaning of the language and symbols used. Nonetheless, some fishers attest that some of the inscriptions have been used figuratively.

**Identification through Mystification:** Littlejohn and Foss (2011) states that people of lower strata in a hierarchy often identify with people at the top of the hierarchy, despite tremendous differences. In such a situation, individuals perceive in others an embodiment of the perfection for which they themselves strive. This sought to be in agreement with why some fishers have adorned their canoes with western inscriptions. Owner of *NyameBeyε* who had the American flag painted on his canoe wishes Ghana were like America even though he had not been there before. Canoe owners who had inscriptions of European football clubs on their canoes also wish our (Ghana) local football clubs can play like their European counterparts.

**Principle of Perfection:** Burke (1973) cited in Legett (2012) states that people are sensitive to their failings. Humans can imagine through language a state of perfection (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). The findings also reveal that some fishers use canoe inscriptions to preach perfectionism. Inscriptions such as *MmaNnye toy*, *Masakra* literally meaning "I have repented", *Ye Papa* literally meaning "Do good", and *DwenWoDaama* literally meaning "Think about your future" respectively sought to reinforce this principle among some fishers.

**Principle of Hierarchy:** Burke (1973) cited in Miller (2010) states that in seeking order, people structure society in social pyramids or hierarchies, a process which is done with symbols. As a result, competitions and divisions result among classes and groups in the hierarchy (Miller, 2010). The findings showed that inscribing on a canoe is the reserve of canoe owners. If you do not have a canoe, you have no right to write on anybody's canoe. It was also found that inscriptions on canoes also depict competition among canoe owners as to who owns the largest number of canoes.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

This research explored some of the activities of the artisanal fishing sector. The study specifically investigated the use of inscriptions on artisanal marine canoes and their communication implications. This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study, as well as recommendations and conclusions. 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.

The outcomes of this study have implications for the activities of the Ghana National Fishermen Council and Ghana Tourist Board in general. The study realises that fishers have intense passion for canoe decoration; it therefore recommends that the Ghana National Fishermen Council could establish a National Fishers' Museum to help keep proper record on canoe decorations in Ghana. This will help fishers to keep up with their heritage and tradition. Again, Ghana Tourist Board, as part of measures to enhance tourism in the country should promote canoe decoration through the organisation of annual canoe regatta among fishers during the various traditional festival celebrations of the coastal towns for the purposes of awarding prizes to fishers whose decoration highlight and promote the cultural values of the country. It is considered that such promotions will enable the public understand and appreciate the values enshrined in canoe decoration.

Future studies may consider the use of mixed methods approach or other integrative research designs to explore the phenomenon in depth. This will enhance the understanding of the nature of canoe decoration beyond investigating its communication implications. It is also suggested that future studies could investigate the historical antecedent of canoe decoration in Ghana to ascertain whether the art of canoe decoration was introduced in the Gold Coast by the colonial masters or an indigenous art/culture. This would help clarify the inconsistencies about the originator(s) of the art.

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