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**Rethinking Ambiguity as an Asset:
Gender and Land Struggles in the Peri-Urban Area of Accra**

by

Kathleen Flynn-Dapaah, (BA)

**A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Geography
and Environmental Studies**

**Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario**

May 2001

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**“Rethinking Ambiguity as an Asset:
Gender and Land Struggles in the Peri-Urban Area of Accra”**

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Thesis Supervisor

Chair, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

**Carleton University
May 23 2001**

Abstract

Land policies and land title legislation in Ghana and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa have been introduced with the intention of ensuring tenure security by removing uncertainties and ambiguity in land claims. The underlying assumptions are that ambiguity is a constraint for the majority of farmers as well as other land users and that legal documentation is the key to tenure security. Based on these assumptions the laws do not capture much of the complexity of land relations. These land laws remove land relations from a complex social system that is based on relationships between different social actors, and treats them instead as straightforward relationships between people and land (or documents). In peri-urban areas in particular, where macro-economic structural adjustment policies and urban encroachment are intensifying social and economic uncertainty and related struggles over land, small holders farming for subsistence and local markets depend on the flexibility that comes from negotiating and contesting claims to land. In-depth qualitative research with men and women in Afuaman, a community in the peri-urban area of Accra, suggests that they actually create and maintain ambiguities in order to ensure the possibility of continuing to renegotiate land claims and secure their livelihoods. The case study findings show that women and men contest customary idioms and make multiple meanings of social and economic practices in order to engage in material and symbolic struggles over land in multiple sites and at multiple scales. Studying land struggles as a part of a complex social system points to the problems of the assumed benefits of title registration by showing that individuals, households and communities secure claims to land by participating in flexible and fluid social processes that engage in ambiguity and contradiction.

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Prior to leaving for Ghana and since my return I have worked for the Cities Feeding People (Urban Agriculture) Program at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). I wish to thank the CFP team for their professional support and their interest in this research. I also extend my thanks to other friends and colleagues at IDRC, especially fellow interns who have offered personal and academic support throughout this study.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADRA	Adventist Development Relief Agency
CBIE	Canadian Bureau of International Education
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
ERP	Economic Recovery Programme
GAMA	Greater Accra Metropolitan Area
IAS	Institute for African Studies, University of Ghana
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAMSCAD	Programme of Actions to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PNDCL 111	Intestate Succession Law (Ghana)
PNDCL 112	Customary Marriage and Divorce (Registration) Law (Ghana)
PNDCL 152	Land Title Registration Law (Ghana)
PR	Participatory Research
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
WID	Women in Development

Glossary

<i>abunu</i>	a sharecropping arrangement between a tenant farmer and a land lord where one half of the harvest is paid to the landlord.
<i>abusa</i>	a sharecropping agreement between a tenant farmer and a landlord where one third of the harvest is paid to the land holder.
<i>adode</i>	refers to land rent that is paid either by cash or through a sharecropping arrangement.
<i>akpeteshie</i>	a local gin that is distilled from pressed sugarcane.
<i>Asafoatse</i>	one of the elders in the Ga land holding stool; he is the community ‘mobilizer’ and he also is responsible for showing land and arranging land deals with parties interested in farming and leasing or purchasing stool lands.
<i>banku</i>	a staple meal (especially among the Ewe) made from fermented corn dough.
<i>cedi</i>	the currency in Ghana. -
<i>gong-gong beater</i>	a person in the village (usually a young boy) whose assigned the task of calling people to meetings in the village.
<i>kenkey</i>	a staple food (especially among the Ga) that is made from fermented corn dough.
<i>pesewa</i>	the lowest unit of the Ghanaian currency. There are 100 pesewas in one cedi. It is no longer in circulation since the devaluation of the currency has rendered it obsolete.
<i>susu</i>	a circular savings group. Fixed daily savings are collected from members at their workplaces or residences by a susu agent. Members take turns (usually each month) taking the entire pot.
<i>trotro</i>	a passenger van that usually seats 15-20 people. Trotros run regular routes within and between cities. It is the least expensive form of public transportation.
<i>waatse</i>	an early to mid-day meal made from rice and beans

Map I Ghana, West Africa

REFERENCE

- REGIONAL CAPITAL [Symbol]
- DISTRICT CAPITAL [Symbol]
- OTHER TOWNS [Symbol]
- DISTRICT BOUNDARY [Symbol]
- RAILWAY LINE [Symbol]
- FIRST CLASS ROAD [Symbol]
- SECOND CLASS ROAD [Symbol]
- THIRD CLASS ROAD [Symbol]
- FOOTPATH [Symbol]
- RIVER [Symbol]
- STREAM [Symbol]
- DAM [Symbol]
- AREA LIABLE TO FLOODING [Symbol]

SCALE 1:100,000

DISTRICT MAP

Map No.	Scale 1:100,000 (1963)
Sheet No.	1:100,000 (1963)
Area	1:100,000 (1963)
Projection	UTM Zone 32N
Datum	WGS 84
Author	Survey Department, Ghana
Editor	Survey Department, Ghana
Printer	Survey Department, Ghana

ACCRA

ix

Chapter One
Removing Ambiguity to Increase Tenure Security?
Exploring Impacts of Title Registration in Ghana

The Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which ushered in austere economic reform policies sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, was implemented in Ghana in the 1980s. The Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) (as the SAP is called in Ghana) was introduced within the context of a decade long depression, and structural, political and fiscal crises characterized by political upheaval, anti-imperialist debates, poor export structures, the international petroleum/oil crisis of the 1970s, uncontrolled debt, and increased deficit (Hutchful 1989: 94). The programme is a market-focused economic policy designed to encourage foreign investment. It involves a move away from protectionism; devaluation of the currency (cedi); emphasis on export crops and cash crop production (inputs and credit programmes favour these enterprises); decrease in state ownership and subsidies; a reduction in the size of the civil service; an increase in private investment; and wage freezes. Despite some apparent early successes at the macro-level, including growth in the economy exceeding government targets, real per capita rises in GDP, rises in per capita consumption, improvements in the record of debt repayments which restored international credit worthiness, and restored absolute and relative levels of revenue and expenditures (Loxley 1991), a number of studies have pointed to serious shortcomings in expected outcomes particularly in terms of food self-sufficiency and security, resurgent inflation, (Loxley 1991) and more critically in terms of negative social and economic impacts on marginalized groups in Ghanaian society especially lower and middle income earners, retrenched workers, small

holders and women (Brown and Kerr 1997; Clark and Manuh 1991; Gladwin 1991; Hutchful 1989; Manuh 1994a 1994b 1998). For these groups in particular, resurgent inflation, higher food prices, retrenchment, wage freezes, decreases in government spending on education and health and the removal of subsidies on fertilizers and other agricultural inputs have served to perpetuate and increase food and livelihood insecurity. Dramatic changes such as the devaluation of the cedi by 8000% between 1983 and 1988 (Songsore 1992: 99) has unimaginable real and psychological impacts on individuals and households who experience the effects of this in their daily livelihood strategies. In terms of agricultural production, it has been noted that small holders and women farmers in particular have experienced diminished access to land and inputs, and have diversified production and income generating strategies as measures to cope with the social and economic uncertainty that has been intensified by the ERP (Adamo 1999; Berry 1989, 1993, 1997; Brown and Kerr 1997; Manuh 1994a).

This thesis examines the strategies and social negotiations that women and men in a peri-urban community use to gain access and rights to, and control over land, for household and local market food production. This case study of a farming community in the peri-urban area of Accra, is situated within the context of the political economy of urbanization in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) and historicized in the period of structural adjustment. The combined impact of macro-economic austerity measures at the micro and meso scales of household and community, and the impacts of urbanization has made peri-urban areas sites of intensified conflict and negotiation over productive resources. The population in peri-urban areas of Ghana has increased not only because of rural to urban migration, but also through migration out of the city center

where the pressures of reduced wages and higher prices from the ERP have forced households to seek the means to produce their own food (Manuh 1994a). Manuh (1994a) shows that in Ghana, peri-urban zones under structural adjustment have become areas where struggles for access and/or control and use of land are intensified. While the pressures associated with the ERP have on their own increased struggles for agricultural land, at the same time rapid urbanization has prompted the state and estate developers to appropriate and/or purchase land in the peri-urban area to facilitate building developments and to provide public utility services to urban residences and businesses (Kasanga 1996; Manuh 1994a; Maxwell et al. 1998). While both forces have been shown to provide limited opportunities for certain individuals and groups in peri-urban areas (Manuh 1998; Maxwell et al. 1998), they also interact with one another to exacerbate ongoing intra-household and community struggles over land.

As a means of examining the strategies and social negotiations that women and men use to gain access and rights to and control over land, the analysis in this thesis explores the way that customary idioms are constructed and contested through intra-household and community land struggles, and studies the meanings that women and men make of social and economic practices as they relate to negotiations over land. In order to capture the complexity of resource relations in the peri-urban area of Accra, this study posits an argument based on three main assertions. The first is that struggles over a material resource such as land are also struggles over symbolic resources. The second is that land struggles must be studied in the context of interrelated negotiations over labour, production, roles and obligations. And the third is that land struggles must be examined at multiple scales in order to capture their complexity and to explore contradictions. The

three parts of my argument can only be developed from the critical theoretical starting point that rights in land are social processes, they are at the same time rights in people (Berry 1993). Therefore inquiry must "... go beyond man-land [sic] issues which the doctrine of ownership implies, to encompass man-man [sic] relations..." (Okoth-Ogendo 1989: 9). As Haugerud argues,

Rules of land tenure are but one aspect of complex political and economic processes that invite attention to individual life histories and strategies involving farming, trade, education, employment, migration and political change; local agrarian ecology; the relative rewards to the individual of agricultural and non-agricultural investments; and the interacting influences of local, regional and global economies (1989: 62).

Following these insights, it is necessary to study land rights as they are articulated and constructed within the context of particular social, economic and political relations between individuals and groups differentiated by gender, class, ethnicity, marital status and life cycle position.

This study, which is based on field research carried out in Afuaman, a peri-urban farming community in the GAMA between September 1999 and March 2000, with a return visit in November 2000, is particularly well-timed because the government of Ghana released its first ever National Land Policy in June 1999. The Land Policy and the legislation that it upholds, the Land Title Registration Law (PNDCL 152), contrast in some aspects with other experiences with land reform in sub-Saharan Africa. Whereas other titling programs, such as that in Kenya (see Haugerud 1989, Mackenzie 1990), involved an attempt to establish uniform principles of freehold tenure, the policy and legislation in Ghana allows for multiple registration of rights including those sanctioned by both common law and customary laws. On the other hand, the Ghanaian legislation

and policy, as in the case of Kenya, assumes that registration is required to ensure equitable access and provide secure tenure by removing ambiguities and uncertainty (see Woodman 1987; Ministry of Lands and Forestry 1999). Underlying the intentions of the new policy (and PNDCL 152) is the notion that documentation provides the security of tenure required for long-term investment. However, responding to such assertions, Migot-Adholla, Benneh, Place and Atsu (1994), authors of the Ghana case study included in Bruce and Migot-Adholla's (1994) World Bank study of tenure security, conclude from their comparative study of three regions in Ghana that land titling programs will be fruitless without accompanying changes to infrastructure and financing to support local farmers. As it stands, the current tenure systems provide sufficient security (1994: 115). Historical evidence from Ghana has already shown that witnesses, rather than documentation, were the keys to ensuring tenure security necessary for long-term investment such as in cocoa farms, even for migrant farmers (Hill 1963). Moreover evidence from Kenya, where a process of land titling has been pursued for several decades, uncovers a proliferation of land disputes in Kenyan courts showing that registration has not removed ambiguity, and has in fact led to greater litigation (Haugerud 1989).

While the World Bank study engages in the debate over land title registration, there is no reflection whatsoever on gender dimensions. Theoretically, the legislation and policy in Ghana allow for women or men to register lands, however studies from other countries in sub-Saharan Africa have shown that land title registration programs have often failed to realize their objectives of security of tenure, especially for female farmers and junior male lineage members (Haugerud 1989; Mackenzie 1990). While Mackenzie

(1990, 1998) shows that women continued to find ways of gaining some control over land, their inability to access certain male discourses of land rights forced them to negotiate with their parents, act collectively or employ alternative idioms outside the official channels in order to gain individual control of land and protect their interests vis-à-vis their husbands, in-laws and male kin. Since the private freehold tenure system in Kenya never completely replaced customary laws, women especially have had difficulty acquiring titles because they often cannot exercise customary rights to acquire land in the first place (Haugerud 1989; Mackenzie 1990). Mackenzie (1990) also cites several examples from Kenya where a woman invests her independent earnings in a land purchase with her husband, and then the woman's husband insists that the greater portion, if not all, of the land be registered in his name only. Likewise, Lastarria-Cornhiel (1997: 1327) notes that while registration laws in Swaziland have been interpreted to allow women to purchase and register land in their names, customary practices require women to be represented by their husbands or another male relative. The result is that the purchase is then registered in the name of the male representative rather than the woman who acquired the land. These experiences from other countries suggest that the process of title registration in Ghana, even though customary rights are registerable, may only ensure the certainty of one person's claims against those of others especially, as in the case for many women, where customary rights to acquire land cannot be exercised.

Even the Ghana Intestate Succession Law (PNDCL111), which was created specifically to ensure that women and children (especially in matrilineal groups) inherit property from their husbands / fathers, is limited to self-acquired property. It does not apply to lineage properties - the most commonly accessed properties for women farmers,

which are often acquired through marriage. Several years after this law and accompanying marriage registration laws¹ were passed, scholars continued to speculate on whether or not this law could be successfully implemented in the face of opposition by men and Akan (a large matrilineal ethnic group) leaders (Awusabo-Asare 1990: 14). At the same time as these laws are lauded for their attempts to confront the historically difficult issue of ensuring the rights of inheritance of widows (and children), based on his analysis of the law within the context of customary practices among the matrilineal Akan, Awusabo-Asare also charges that “[t]here is an implicit view that one can selectively change aspects of a social system and ignore the general structure that supports the system” (1990: 14). Although the land title registration law does not attempt to reform land rights, it does assume that these rights can be secured through paper despite the fact that they are often acquired and maintained through people.

Based on my analysis of peri-urban land struggles in the village of Afuaman during the time of structural adjustment, I argue that the Land Policy goals of ensuring certain and unambiguous claims may not be appropriate for small holders, and women in particular, because the economic and social uncertainty exacerbated by structural adjustment and urban expansion require that resource relations maintain their flexibility. In order to make this claim, the thesis argues that struggles over land are both material and symbolic, that they are interrelated with other intra- and inter-household negotiations, and that they must be explored at multiple scales. Men and women in Afuaman invoke a number of different strategies and call upon various aspects of identity

¹ In conjunction with PNDCL 111, the Customary Marriage and Divorce (Registration) Law (PNDCL 112) was passed to ensure that husbands and their lineages did not try to circumvent the intestate succession law as they did with previous laws attempting similar actions when customary marriages were not registered (Awusabo-Asare 1990).

and custom to make claims to land. Where women's access to land is limited because they are unable to use specific idioms as successfully as men, the struggles manifest themselves in different spaces as women find other means to participate in decision-making over what is grown, what is consumed and what is sold. Household livelihood strategies, including separate accounts and secondary income generating activities that have become increasingly important in order to cope with economic stresses associated with the ERP, have allowed some women to access land from their husbands for market gardening. A complementary division of farm labour offers men and women access to different sets of knowledge required to plan their farms. Women gain power in terms of decision-making and control primarily through off-farm roles. While men are the principal land holders, women are able to use their niche as traders to participate in decisions on the farm drawing from their knowledge of markets. The meanings people make of certain production systems, particularly tree farms, have been used in interesting ways as symbolic resources in both intra-community land struggles and community-state land struggles. A study of these dynamics at multiple scales reveals that struggles over environmental resources in Afuaman are both material and symbolic and shows how customs and social institutions, as flexible processes, provide sufficient security of tenure. Drawing on Berry (1989, 1993, 1997) in particular, I build the three-part argument of this thesis to make the claim that for women and men in Afuaman ambiguity may be a critical asset in ensuring their ability to maintain access to and control over land in a time and space that is marked with intensified social and economic uncertainty.

In order to build the argument of this thesis, I examine the discursive strategies that women and men use to gain or maintain rights to land, including access, ownership,

or control. Chapter two discusses theoretical and conceptual insights that are based on the analysis of in-depth studies of resource relations. I draw mainly from post-structural theories and feminist analyses which emphasize that women and men are social actors who engage and participate in the ongoing construction of customary norms, practices and meanings. By arguing that gender is a constructed category, the analysis moves away from an undifferentiated and presupposed understanding of 'man' and 'woman' (Butler 1992; Flax 1992), allowing me to look at the diversity of experiences and the ingenuity of men and women to draw upon multiple identities and negotiate their meanings in order to access or control land. The literature from the field of post-structural political ecology reveals that customary norms and social institutions are not structures which produce hard rules, but rather they are flexible processes which provide the means through which people negotiate claims to resources (Berry 1997; Mackenzie 1998; Moore 1993). For the most part, I engage with post-structural political ecology because it also shows that land struggles are both material and symbolic and it reveals the ongoing contestation of customs and their meanings at multiple scales (Carney and Watts 1990; Mackenzie 1998; Moore 1993; Schroeder 1999; Watts 1993).

Uncovering the rich details of resource relations in Afuaman requires a methodology that allows for a focus on the multitude of life experiences of the residents in Afuaman who are social actors differentiated by gender, class, age and ethnicity. Chapter three discusses critical conceptual literature used to inform an appropriate methodology and analyzes and reflects on the research process. The literature in this chapter focuses on the practices and politics of in-depth qualitative research. These are used to establish an actor-oriented methodology which draws upon feminist inquiry and

the principles of participatory research. This research methodology allows for an analysis of discourse and particularities, rather than focusing on generalizations that produce catalogues of ahistorical customs, thereby perpetuating the process of 'othering' people and customs in Africa.

Chapters Four through Six discuss the findings and analysis from this case study. Chapter Four sets the stage for land struggles in Afuaman by discussing the geography of peri-urban areas, the impacts of structural adjustment and the compulsory acquisition of lands as key factors which contextualize resource relations in this community. Analysis focuses on these factors mainly through the experiences of women and men. Their stories reveal the opportunities and constraints created by the interaction of these three factors, and draws attention to the way in which resource relations both reflect and shape these contextual factors.

Chapter Five analyzes the construction of norms and practices which secure access to land, illustrating that struggles over land are both material and symbolic. By interrogating the construction of three key identities, some of the differentiation based on gender, class and ethnicity is revealed. In particular, I focus on who can exercise rights to land on the basis of contested categories of social differentiation - gender, class, and ethnicity. The latter part of the chapter moves the struggles to a different stage, showing the ways in which women are able to gain some access, control, and power in decision-making over household land through intra-household negotiations over roles and responsibilities, and by appealing to off-farm roles. Women's roles as traders and household managers have important symbolic implications in terms of their ability to exercise some authority over the decision-making on the farm (especially when they do

not have land of their own). This chapter looks at the division of labour and livelihood strategies as means through which women can empower themselves in household politics rather than as sources of burden or oppression. I examine the ways in which the production of partially exclusive sets of knowledge compensates for practices which make women's independent access to land in Afuaman difficult.

Chapter Six draws upon the findings in the two previous chapters to explore the politics of planting as a discursive strategy in land claims. The chapter looks at preferences for farming systems in relation to age, class, gender and ethnicity, exploring three key metaphors for trees and seasonal crops. While one of the three discourses is mainly a male discourse, the other two are shared by women and men. In the case of these two discourses, age and class are important factors in determining who uses them. Based on findings that 'trees are properties,' I examine a recent agroforestry initiative in Afuaman, uncovering a material and symbolic political struggle with the state. Within the context of the community-state struggle, local land politics emerge that might appear to contradict the apparent unity of the community displayed in the protest against the state. Exploring the resource politics of the agroforestry initiative at multiple scales reveals an enormously complex situation that underscores the importance of maintaining the flexibility of custom.

As a conclusion to this thesis, Chapter Seven reviews some of the evidence presented in the three preceding chapters in order to restate the three components of the argument made in this study: that struggles over resources are both material and symbolic; that land struggles must be understood within the context of inter-related negotiations over inter- and intra-household roles, responsibilities and obligations; and

that it is necessary to locate land struggles at multiple scales in order to comprehend better their complexity and to engage with contradictions. This review of the three key arguments is used to suggest areas for future research. I also return to the debate surrounding land title registration, introduced in this chapter, using the case study material to question the expectations and intentions of the National Land Policy and the Land Title Registration Law. In particular, I reassert the idea that for small holders and women in particular the notion of ambiguity should be reassessed and understood as an asset in intra-household and community negotiations over access to and control over land.

Chapter Two

Locating Struggles in Multiple Sites and Multiple Scales : Gender, Power, and Resource Relations

This chapter discusses the analytical tools and theoretical frameworks that informed this case study of gender and land struggles in Afuaman. In order to build the three components of the main argument of this thesis it is necessary to demonstrate that customary laws concerning land, labour and social and economic obligation are social processes, rather than rule statements, and therefore they are subject to ongoing construction and contestation. While customary norms may provide the means to access land, a person's ability to successfully use specific customary idioms and symbolic resources is mediated by gender, class, life cycle position and ethnicity. An in-depth case study that analyzes the construction of gender through land struggles must focus on the particularities of everyday experiences and the ongoing negotiation over the meanings and uses of custom and social institutions. Analysis of local experiences must be carefully contextualized in larger scale processes in order to understand the ways in which land struggles are negotiated at particular times, and in particular spaces. Land struggles are played out in multiple sites and at multiple scales as they interact with movements and trends in the broader political economy. Often it is necessary to look at inter-related struggles over labour, production, and off-farm roles. To move beyond a mere inventory of rights and obligation and uncover the meanings given to these rights and obligations, a theoretical framework that incorporates complexity and contradiction is required.

This chapter begins with a discussion of postmodern feminism, drawing mainly on the writing of Jane Flax (1992), Judith Butler (1992), Joan Scott (1992) and Fiona Mackenzie (1992). Postmodern feminism provides the conceptual tools to overcome binary constructions of man-woman, powerful-powerless and moves beyond universal constructions of gender and experience. Drawing on Foucault's analytic of power, postmodern feminist theorization uses discourse analysis as an analytical tool to uncover the exercise of power and resistance between social actors. This discussion establishes key theoretical insights concerning the use of discourse analysis and relations of power and resistance between individuals and groups.

Postmodern feminism is one of several critical theories that have enhanced the field of political ecology, a field of study that has been particularly critical in establishing that struggles over environmental resources are both material and symbolic. The discussion in the latter part of the chapter traces key arguments that have been developed by scholars engaging in the field of political ecology. Studies from this field offer carefully contextualized analysis of land struggles at multiple scales. The gender analysis in many of these studies is highly sophisticated, exploring contradictions, conflict and partial alliances as analysis shifts between macro and micro scales. Drawing on the works of Sara Berry (1997), Carney and Watts (1990), Fiona Mackenzie (1994 and 1998), Donald Moore (1993 and 1996), and Richard Schroeder (1999), I explore the ways in which women and men negotiate the use of custom, labour obligations, meanings of gender roles and responsibilities, and access and rights to land. They demonstrate that resources are both material and symbolic by revealing that custom and social institutions are social, flexible process and that access to resources is secured by participating in

these processes. They provide the tools to analyze the ways in which women and men use symbolic resources in Afuaman in land struggles/negotiations that are played out at multiple scales.

Postmodern Feminism: re-conceptualizing gender

Postmodern feminism developed in part out of critiques of early feminist writing and practice by women of colour and women in the South who highlighted the failure of white middle-class feminists to recognize difference and more importantly to address the ways in which the movement was forged through certain racist and heterosexist assumptions about 'women' as an undifferentiated sisterhood (hooks 1997; Mohanty 1991). In response, postmodern feminists have re-conceptualized gender as a constructed and contested category cross-cut by other axes of social differentiation, thereby rejecting the concept of the 'universal women' and denying the applicability of universal claims (Butler 1992; Flax 1992). Drawing upon literature from women of colour Flax (1992) argues that gender is a constructed category and that philosophy cannot use an undifferentiated understanding of 'woman'. She states, "[t]he unity of categories such as 'woman' or 'gender' was found to depend upon the exclusion of the experiences of women of color (as well as women outside the overdeveloped world, poor women and lesbians)" (1992: 459).

Critics of postmodern theorization have claimed that such an understanding creates a 'universalizing sameness' (Moya 1997) and that postmodernism eliminates a "place... for critique of broad-based relations of dominance and subordination along lines like gender, race and class" (Fraser and Nicholson 1990). However proponents of postmodern and post-colonial feminism, like Judith Butler (1992) Anne McClintok

(1995) Fiona Mackenzie (1992, 1998) and Joan Scott (1992), have challenged these charges by explaining the important politics that can emerge from using certain postmodern theorization, such as Michel Foucault's analytic of power, to uncover the ways in which power is exercised by differentiated women and men, thereby revealing the historical processes of exclusion that define certain discourses of domination and subordination. According to Mackenzie

Foucault's method, the means through which relations of power/resistance are analyzed, is based on the premise that relations of power are articulated through discourse. Discourse, succinctly, becomes the struggle, or the negotiation, over meaning (Stamp 1990, personal communication) and where relations of power are thereby constructed (1992: 693).

Mackenzie's (1998) historical analysis of land struggles in colonial Kenya, and McClintok's (1995) analysis of the history of Boer nationalism in South Africa, are brilliant examples of the ways in which a genealogical study using Foucault's methods can uncover how differences are constructed through discursive formations. Using postmodern feminist tools, it is not sufficient to merely articulate experiences as a "means to create knowledge for everyone" (Harding 1992: 178). Rather, it is necessary, as Joan Scott (1992: 25) argues, "... to attend to the historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences."

Postmodern feminism has been particularly useful in illuminating the value of discourse analysis for uncovering the relations of power and resistance between women and men as social actors. According to Parpart and Marchand (1995: 2-3), "... discourse - a historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories and beliefs - is the site where meanings are contested and power relations are determined." Asserting that there is no 'innocent' or 'better' knowledge that can be

produced through feminist thinking and action, Flax (1992) makes the case that feminist research should not attempt to establish women's knowledge as Truth but rather should focus on the ways that discourses establish truths. According to Flax (1992: 452),

[t]ruth for postmodernists is an effect of discourse. Each discourse has its own distinctive set of rules or procedures that govern the production of what is to count as a meaningful or truthful statement. Each discourse or 'discursive formation' is simultaneously enabling and limiting.

Similarly, Butler (1992: 7) suggests that the purpose of questioning theoretical foundations is not to erase them but rather to analyze what the establishment of particular theoretical foundations authorizes, excludes and includes. In the context of interactions between individuals and socially-constructed categories of people, as in the case of Mackenzie's (1992) work, Foucault's questions are critical: "what individuals, what groups, what classes have access to such a kind of discourse? In what way is the relationship between the discourse and he [sic] who gives it, and he [sic] who receives it institutionalised" (Foucault 1972 in Mackenzie 1992: 693).

Mackenzie's (1992) case study of women farmers in Eastern Ontario provides an example of the ways in which an analytic of power can be used to study women's strategic political engagements. Drawing upon the work of Foucault, and feminist critiques of his work, Mackenzie explores a theoretical framework that provides researchers with "... the means to overcome the closure of binary oppositions, through which women, the undifferentiated 'other', are portrayed as victims..." (1992: 695). This case focuses on the ability of a subordinate group to adopt multiple "reverse discourses", and to engage as legitimate political actors in improving their political, social or economic position within the household and at the level of the state.

Mackenzie focuses on the feminist strategies called upon by Women for the Survival of Agriculture (WSA) to challenge discourses that relegated farm women to a secondary status at various times within the household, the community, and public policy. Using the “politics of language” as a starting point, Mackenzie demonstrates the practical differences which arise through terminology: “[i]f an agricultural producer... is named in terms of what she is not - a ‘farm wife’ or ‘wife of a farmer’ rather than a ‘farmer’ - what does this signify in the world of the household, in the world of banks, or courts of law, or in the world of federal and provincial agricultural policy or of parliament” (1992: 695-696). She goes on to highlight the strategies women farmers have engaged in so as to “...challenge a discourse which has served to marginalize women as equal partners in a business enterprise” (1992: 703).

In the latter half of the article Mackenzie examines another discursive strategy used by WSA that calls upon an ideology that seemingly contradicts the feminist discourses used in their previous struggles. Appealing to the notion of the family farm (the very discourse which is responsible for the construction of the farm wife) WSA fought for the survival of Canadian farms under threat by transnational corporations and unfavourable international free trade agreements. Despite the seeming contradictions, Mackenzie demonstrates how the manipulation of discursive formations by WSA was an effective strategy where the earlier feminist discourse enhanced the ability of WSA to call upon the latter discourse of the family farm in economic struggles. It was the use of feminist language in the first place which allowed WSA “...to construct an image of women... as well-informed, and articulate political actors” (1992: 703). This case

illustrates the ability of subordinate groups to undermine the hegemonic discourse and call upon “multiple centres of resistance” (1992: 695).

Mackenzie’s study of women farmers in Ontario, Canada is conceptually useful for this study for two reasons. In addition to providing a concrete example of how Foucault’s analytic of power can be useful for social analysis, her case also reveals the complexity of identity as the women called upon multiple and seemingly contradictory identities in their political struggles. The identities that men and women assigned to themselves and others are used strategically by individuals and households to gain power and opportunity within the household, the community and in formal political spaces.

Post-Structural Political Ecology: Reconceptualizing People-Environment Relations

While postmodern feminist theorization provides critical insights concerning the concept of gender as a constructed and contested category, the benefits of discourse analysis, and the use of Foucault’s methods, post-structural political ecology, which also engages in these ideas, provides a conceptual framework that specifically uses these concepts in an analysis of people-environment relations. The rest of this chapter will focus on developing a conceptual framework for the three-part argument made in this thesis using post-structural political ecology. Following a brief introduction to post-structural political ecology, I look at some literature from the field along with some of the anthropological and feminist studies that informed this body of literature. Underlying all these case studies is the critical argument that rights in land are rights through people (Berry 1989, 1993, 1997; Haugerud 1989; Okoth-Ogendo 1989). As a means to show that struggles are both material and symbolic (the first part of my argument), I first draw on Sara Berry (1997) to establish the argument that custom and social institutions are

social processes, rather than rigid structures, and then discuss case studies by Moore (1993, 1996) and Mackenzie (1998), both of whom engage in an analysis using post-structural political ecology. I then turn to some studies in Ghana and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa that critically examine household economics in African societies and women's economic roles (Clark 1994, 1999; David 1997; Bruce and Dwyer 1988; Geisler 1993; Oppong 1983; Whitehead 1981). These studies helped to establish women as economic actors in their own right rather than as members in a collective and cooperative economic unit situated in the household. Many of these studies provided critical insights that have influenced post-structural political ecology analysis of intra-household negotiations and conflict over land, labour and production. The last part of this section looks at case studies by Carney and Watts (1990) and Schroeder (1999). Both these studies help to develop the argument that land struggles must be situated within the context of ongoing struggles/negotiations over roles, responsibilities, labour, and production (the second part of my argument). All four of the case studies from the field of post-structural political ecology reinforce the third part of argument, that struggles over land must be examined from multiple scales in order to capture their complexity and understand contradiction.

According to Peet and Watts (1996: 6-7), early political ecology literature, developed primarily by Blaikie and Brookfield, made groundbreaking arguments against neo-Malthusian explanations of land degradation and accusations of poor environmental management by linking ecology with political economy, thereby illustrating the relationship between poverty/marginalization and environmental degradation. Post-structural political ecology emerged in response to a variety of constructive criticisms of

this early literature. While Peet and Watts cite several shortcomings they emphasize as the main problems its lack of coherent theory, and the emphasis on plurality without politics. They argue (1996:7) "...one has to have a theory capable of explaining how the poverty of specific land managers is reproduced through determinate structures and by specific relations of production." According to Peet and Watts a central politics is needed to get at a theoretical understanding. They claim that "there is no serious attempt [in this earlier literature] at treating the means by which control and access of resources or property rights are defined, negotiated, and contested within the household, the workplace, and the state" (1996: 9). They argue that a more rigorous political ecology has emerged from a variety of arguments drawn from gender theory, discourse theory, critical theory of science, environment and history, and Marxist political economy.

Post-structural political ecology incorporates a more meticulous political economy that includes the politics of everyday resistance, civil society, organized politics, gender relations within the household, property rights, and labour. Post-structural political ecology frequently employs discourse analysis to deal with multiple and contested perceptions/definitions of environments, resources and problems so as to uncover which discourses are privileged and with what outcomes. Also emphasized is the importance of post-structural theory's rejection of modern conceptions of truth (Peet and Watts 1996: 13). According to Peet and Watts (1996: 3) "[t]hese exciting new developments... represent... the possibility for a more robust political ecology which integrates politics more centrally, draws links upon aspects of discourse theory which demands that the politics of meaning and the construction of knowledge be taken seriously, and engages with the wide-ranging critique of development and modernity..."

Work that engages with post-structural political ecology can deal explicitly with gender dimensions and demonstrate the dynamism of social relations and custom. A parallel literature in the field of feminist political ecology (see Rocheleau, Thomas Slayter and Wangari eds. 1996) has played a critical role in highlighting that landscapes, spaces, rights and knowledge are gendered and that this has important implication in terms of policy and politics. However scholars engaging in post-structural political ecology use discourse analysis to uncover the material and symbolic struggles over resources thereby revealing how spaces and rights become gendered at multiple scales, with what implications, and how they are contested by women and men.

Custom and Social Institutions as Processes

Scholars engaging in an analysis of resource relations using a post-structural political ecology approach enhance and build on anthropological studies that interrogate custom, tenure regimes, intra-household relations, labour relations and agricultural production. Land tenure research continues to develop as scholars attempt to understand customary laws and institutions and engage in an ongoing debate over the value and utility of privatization (see Bruce and Migot-Adholla 1993). Based on an in-depth anthropological study of the 'customary law' of the Chagga (in Tanzania), Sally Falk Moore (1986: 168) argues that official court records tell only partial stories, not only because of whose stories are included in these records, but also because these records decontextualize disputes from the social reality in which they arise. However, even as the level of analysis deepens to capture the idea that custom is not static or backward and that official records are not sufficient, some studies (see Lastarria-Cornhiel 1997) continue to conceptualize resource relations in such a way that allows only for a

distinction between what men have or women do not have. Customary rules and idioms are not conceptualized as something that women and men negotiate (albeit not necessarily equally), instead women are said to be 'ruled' by customary law (Lastarria-Cornhiel 1997: 1321).

Sara Berry's work (1989, 1993, 1997) has influenced scholars engaging in post-structural political ecology to study the construction and negotiation of custom through land struggles and negotiation. Rather than conceptualizing custom and social institutions as fixed structures that dictate rights, access, roles and responsibilities, they have instead recognized them as social processes that are sites of negotiation and conflict over meanings. Berry (1997) argues that researchers should see indeterminacy and ambiguity as important components of institutional capacity and resource access rather than seeing them as obstacles to secure access and sound decision making. She demonstrates that the flexibility and ingenuity of local actors are as much transformative as they are a reaction to external pressures, revealing a dynamic social process. Although Berry fails to explicitly recognize the importance of gender in her study, she makes a number of critical arguments concerning social institutions (marriage, kinship, age set etc.) and negotiation over their meanings in terms of land struggles. Berry argues that the ability of interested parties to participate in social institutions which negotiate the meanings of customary idioms is crucial in terms of securing access to land. Arguing that social institutions have been inappropriately conceptualized in much work as ahistorical, bounded and undifferentiated, Berry makes the case that these institutions must be regarded as flexible, overlapping processes. It is the ability to participate in the negotiations and

struggles as members of these institutions, not the institutions themselves, which provides members with access to resources (1997: 1228).

Based on fieldwork in the Ghanaian town Kumawu, in the peri-urban area of Kumasi, Berry argues that title registration of land renders interested parties more insecure in terms of access to land, especially in a time (the period of structural adjustment) when flexibility and participation in social processes may be essential for individual and household survival. Berry's study uncovered multiple and overlapping claims to plots of land from a variety of social actors. How people identified themselves (or were identified by others) within the community helped to establish or legitimize their rights to certain properties. As Berry indicates (1997: 1228), "...membership in social institutions creates opportunities for people to engage in negotiation/struggle, rather than guaranteeing outcomes (subsistence, identity, etc.) or reproducing stable consistent social relationships." She argues that people should regard social institutions like household, family and community as "... constellations of social interactions within which people move, acquire and exchange ideas and resources, and negotiate or contest the terms of production, authority and obligation." (1997: 1228).

In this study of tomato farmers in the peri-urban area of Kumasi, Berry highlights the negotiations over the meanings of stranger and citizen. Berry encountered migrants from the Northern regions in Ghana making claims to be from the community in order to establish more favourable rights to land. According to Berry (1997),

... the shifting, sometimes contested meanings of 'citizen' and 'stranger' in Asante illustrate the impracticality of trying to understand contemporary property rights or state-society relations in terms of 'communities' or 'traditions' which have endured unaltered, since precolonial times and only begun to 'break down' in the last 10 or 20 years.

Drawing on evidence from her study during the period of structural adjustment when households and communities experienced increasing economic hardship and uncertainty, Berry argues (1997: 1226), "... that where rights to productive resources have been subject to on-going processes of negotiation, access to prosperity and power depends on participation in these processes, rather than denying or suppressing them." Far from regarding the ambiguity as a hindrance, people rely on the flexibility of these processes, especially in times of uncertainty.

In Kumawu, history is used as a tool throughout society by strangers, citizens, tenants and chiefs in ceremonies, litigation and in research interviews to reiterate a story in the presence of new and old witnesses. Berry's research reveals the measures that will be taken to maintain ambiguity rather than produce a firm settlement. She cites a land case where the Asantehene (leader of the Asante people) avoided testifying, despite a subpoena. According to Berry (1236), "[b]y being withheld or kept incomplete, the power of history was enhanced." This event shows that power within communities and between communities and other authorities is derived from the ability to negotiate and re-negotiate the history that legitimates a particular claim. While she is careful to qualify her arguments by recognizing that social actors do not participate on equal terms in this process, she nonetheless demonstrates that to settle on one story would make the social institutions in Asante less flexible and would weaken the abilities for all social actors to access property and resources through an ongoing process of (re)negotiation over their meanings.

Donald Moore (1993, 1996) and Fiona Mackenzie (1994, 1998) build on Berry's arguments, showing that customary laws are also better understood as negotiable and

contested, rather than rigid rule structures. They also illustrate the importance of understanding the ways in which the struggles over meanings of custom are mediated through the construction of gender, a critical gap in Berry's work. Both analyze cases where land is the central issue in a struggle to show the ways in which these struggles are both material, in terms of access to land, as well as symbolic, in terms of the ways in which custom is constructed and negotiated by various interested parties differentiated by gender, class, race and ethnicity. Drawing on post-structural frameworks, these scholars highlight relations of power and resistance to show how meanings are created and contested. Moore and Mackenzie structure their arguments around discursive strategies, demonstrating the importance of analyzing the relationship between power and knowledge in struggles over access to resources. Moore's and Mackenzie's arguments are based on uncovering whose stories are recorded, for what reasons, and with what outcome for the storytellers and for those whose stories are left out.

Moore's (1993) study of a land dispute in Zimbabwe on the border of a protected area reveals much about the importance of discursive strategies and questions of scale. According to Moore (1993: 381) "...macro-structural accounts often miss local differentiation among resource users, particularly those revolving around critical productive inequalities mediated by class, gender, ethnicity, and age." (1993: 381). Local Kaerezi farmers used both customary idioms and state discourses to manipulate different state actors and departments as they competed with the state and elite white conservationists for control and access to land. Moore shows the ways in which customary idioms and social memory are used strategically to create discourses that legitimate specific claims. In that the ability to define a legitimating discourse of custom

and history is crucial to the material struggle over resources, it is clear that the material and symbolic struggles cannot be separated. Moore (1993: 396) argues that “land... has been crucial not only for the material reproduction of households but also for the symbolic reproduction of a meaningful group identity.”

Moore's case examines the strategies used by local farmers, demonstrating a division of interests not only in terms of race, class and political power, but also along gender lines. In this case his attention to differentiation in terms of gender among local Kaerezi farmers is significant. He shows that both men and women called upon the same idiom, that of *nhaka* (rightful inheritance), to resist other claims. What is most significant is that while men used the idiom while representing the ‘community's interests’ in their land struggles with the state, the women used this same customary idiom to secure their rights in resistance to negative conditions of the agreement forged by the male Kaerezi farmers. By analyzing the use of custom from multiple scales, Moore shows partial alliances between men and women in a community-state land struggle that also generates sites of intra-community and intra-household struggles and negotiations over the meanings of customary idioms.

Mackenzie's research in Kenya has shown that in land struggles interested parties will be differentiated in terms of class, age, race, and gender (1998: 176). Therefore, a study which looks at issues of access, ownership and management of land must be sensitive to these cleavages. Reflecting on the methodological implications of her research, Mackenzie (1994: 186) states,

... it is essential to engage in research which is historically and socially specific to explain how women and men, differentiated inter alia by class, race, ethnicity or age, have ‘figured’ (to paraphrase and extend Martin, 1988:6) as a ‘constitutive

absence' or a constitutive presence (also see Mohanty 1988). With respect to research into land tenure, this implies that, for example, there is not one discourse of men and one of women, but that gender is cross cut with other differences, which will influence how a 'customary' or other resource is variously constructed.

Mackenzie's discursive analysis is important conceptually because of its in depth examination of the conditions under which Kikuyu 'customary law' was presented in the local Land Tribunals (and in the Kenya Land Commission, 1932-1934). Mackenzie presents this as a clear case of the intertwining of material and symbolic resources, indicating that research should focus on the ways in which the meanings of customary idioms are negotiated. She states, "[i]n the increasingly differentiated society of Murang'a, custom, rather than expressing any inherent meaning, provided the means by which people made meanings" (1988: 170). Not only is it evident from her study that 'customary laws' were strategic creations of a specific historical context, she also demonstrates the relationship between the constitution of gender, ethnicity, race and class in the construction of customary laws via the land tribunals in Murang'a District, Kenya. In their efforts to protect their (race) interests in land and to make their case against white land owners, the Kikuyu emphasized male rights to allocate land as these rights fitted best with European conceptions of individual property rights. Accordingly, she argues (1998: 79), "[i]n order to create a defensive discourse of land tenure, the flexibility and negotiability of previous practice, the porosity within customary law, was muffled, at the time when, as is shown later, mbari [subclan] and kin corporate interests were under threat with growing social and economic differentiation." The presentation of certain rights as strategic is less important to note than it is to understand which rights, or whose rights, were not deemed strategically important: "[w]omen's land interests, clearly, were

not perceived as strategically admissible in the struggle between Africans and Europeans to secure land rights.” (1998: 79). Women’s use rights were undermined through this process - they simply were not discussed in those ‘official’ spaces. If anything, this case indicates that research must be sensitive to the continual construction of gender, race, class, and ethnicity as interested parties negotiate meanings of customary idioms in their social, political and economic struggles, and probe the silences that are created in these negotiations.

Mackenzie also demonstrates the discursive means through which women used customary norms as a form of resistance to their exclusion from the public discourse. Discursive strategies allowed women to access land despite their exclusion in the official discussion of customary law. As the use rights of women and junior lineage members were excluded from the official record, women drew from other customary discourses to secure their access to land. For example, a widow without sons might choose to find a ‘female husband’ in order to protect her interests against other mbari (subclan) claims (1998: 184). According to this custom, the widow could ‘marry’ another woman (usually one who had sons already). The sons born in this marriage are then named not for their biological father but after the widow’s husband. In this way a widow’s access to land is protected through her structural position as the guardian of her son’s inheritance (1998: 34-36). According to Mackenzie (1998: 181), “[t]he shift in emphasis to the rights of allocation... destroyed the discursive ground or the political space for negotiating use rights and, once that happened, women’s claims to land became part of a reverse discourse created outwith the Tribunals.” Not only does this case show the importance of recognizing competing interests, it also demonstrates, despite colonial assumptions to the

contrary, that women were social actors engaged in material and symbolic struggles in spite of (arguably because of) their exclusion from the official story. It also points to the need to look for land struggles and negotiations in multiple spaces.

Moore (1993 and 1996) and Mackenzie (1994 and 1998) reveal that struggles over material resources are at the same time struggles over meanings. Their studies emphasize the need to investigate the ways in which women and men (who may also be differentiated by class, life cycle, ethnicity and marital status) make meanings of custom, obligation and resources, and in what circumstances/contexts. In struggles with governing authorities, communities may appear homogeneous and united, however within the context of those larger scale struggles, local struggles based on gender and other axes of social differentiation mean that within communities and inside households, the meanings of custom are again renegotiated. It is necessary to contextualize land struggles carefully in order to capture the dynamism of custom as it is constructed at multiple scales.

Women's Multiple Roles: Conceptualizing Households as Sites of Negotiation

One of the key criticisms of early political ecology literature was that it focused too heavily on macro-structural frameworks and therefore missed intra-community and intra-household differentiation based on gender, class, ethnicity, marital status and life cycle position (Moore 1993: 381). Scholars engaging in post-structural political ecology therefore incorporated intra-household politics into their analyses. They draw from a number of studies have looked at the politics and dynamics of marriage relationships in Africa, (Clark 1999; David 1997; Bruce and Dwyer 1988; Geisler 1993; Oppong 1983; Whitehead 1981). These studies of intra-household relations have challenged the notion

of the household as undifferentiated and unified. They treat individuals in households as social actors and look at negotiation and bargaining in the marriage relationship around such issues as income pooling, expenditures, roles, responsibilities, interests and division of labour. While the earlier studies sought to challenge assumptions that characterized the household as a co-operative space by examining budgeting practices, residential patterns and livelihood strategies, later scholars have also looked at the meanings of these practices in terms of women's negotiating power. In a similar way the roles that women, for example as traders, have taken outside the household have also given them special knowledge and a certain degree of autonomy to negotiate their power within the household (Clark 1994 and 1999).

A theme which runs through the literature is the importance of autonomy. Based on her study of family survival in Kumasi, Gracia Clark (1999: 66) argues that, "Asante¹ cultural norms allowed and actually required a high degree of personal autonomy to anchor the negotiating position of each social adult." Her article focuses in particular on the residential patterns among the Asante whereby husbands and wives each continue to live among kin in their natal homes even after marriage. Many have also noted a similar custom among the Ga² (see Kilson 1974; Robertson 1984), whereby a married woman leaves her natal home to live among female in-laws (and co-wives) in a compound house for women. Another important practice noted in many studies of Ghanaian households is non-pooling of incomes (see Abu 1983; Clark 1994; Fapohunda 1988; Oppong 1983; Robertson 1984; and Vellenga 1983). This practice also helps to increase the autonomy

¹ The Asante are a large ethnic group in Ghana residing primarily in the Southern part of the country in Ashanti Region

² Gas are an ethnic group in Ghana who live primarily in Accra, and the adjacent Tema District and Ga District where the case study village, Afuaman, is located.

and authority of women in household negotiations over decision-making, roles and responsibilities.

As Leach (1994) demonstrates in her extensive study of gender and resource relations among the Mende in Sierra Leone, individuals', households' and communities' relations with their environments must also be understood within the context of their social, political and economic relationships with one another. A large portion of her study on resource relations in the Gola Forest Reserve, focuses on the related issues of money, food and managing. The relationship between outside roles and financial management, particularly of non-farm funds, and struggles over access and control of land may not be immediately apparent. At the very least they contextualize land struggles, but more likely, they are an integral part of the negotiations over custom, obligations and resources that mediate access and rights to land.

Negotiating Land, Labour, Production, and Interventions

The literature on intra-household politics and struggles provides a backdrop for post-structural political ecology analyses of the negotiation of the conjugal contract³ through resource struggles. This literature focuses on issues regarding labour, produce, control and decision-making highlighting the links between land and labour and revealing the politics of production as critical issues in intra-household and community land struggles and negotiation (Carney and Watts 1990; Schroeder 1999, Watts 1993). As with Moore's (1993 and 1996) study of Kaerezi farmers, these studies show that

³ 'Conjugal contract' is a term introduced by Ann Whitehead (1981: 93) "... to refer to the terms on which husbands and wives exchange goods, incomes, and services, including labour, within the household."

analyzing negotiations at multiple scales uncovers partial strategic alliances that help to explain seeming contradictions in resource relations.

Carney and Watts (1990), draw upon the work of James Scott (1990), to study the relations of power and resistance among the Mandinka of The Gambia in the context of a number of colonial, state, World Bank and NGO initiatives in rice production. However, unlike Scott, Carney and Watts do not present the subordinate group as undifferentiated. Their gender analysis indicates that women among the Mandinka may in some cases share a hidden transcript⁴ with Mandinka men vis-à-vis initiatives of various outside groups; however within Mandinka society and the household in particular, the Mandinka engage in different hidden transcripts in response to struggles of power and resistance between Mandinka men and women related to the same outside initiatives. Mandinka men and women are engaged in an interpretative battle over labour obligations, rules of 'custom' and property battles (1990: 211). According to Carney and Watts (1990: 217), "[u]nderstanding the complex overlapping rights and obligations, and the competing interests between household members... is a critical starting point in understanding the politics and points of resistance associated with new forms of labour control and social integration..." Carney and Watts draw an explicit link between

⁴ In the introduction of his book, Domination and the Arts of Resistance; Hidden Transcripts (1990), Scott asserts it is essential to understand the relations in the daily interaction between dominant and subordinate (what he calls the 'public transcript') and the 'hidden transcripts' shared by subordinate groups. His claim is that in many respects the hidden transcripts of both the dominant and the subordinate are key to comprehending the power relations between these two:

[t]he analysis of the hidden transcripts of the powerful and the subordinate offers us, I believe, one path to a social science that uncovers contradictions and possibilities, that looks well beneath the placid surface that the public accommodation to the existing distribution of power, wealth, and status often presents (1990: 15).

According to Scott, a study which focuses on the relationship between hidden transcripts and public transcripts demonstrates the struggles of power and resistance between dominant and subordinate which does not allow for a simple binary construction of power/powerless.

property rights and labour obligations showing that struggles over access and rights to land, and the produce from that land, can run in conjunction with struggles to define labour obligations. They demonstrate the practices women adopted to undermine projects that imposed upon an interpretation of their land rights and labour obligations that worked in favour of male household heads. In this case, when men reconfigured the allocation of land registered to women for irrigated rice cultivation from *kamanyango* (individual) usufruct (where women completely controlled proceeds) to *maruo* (household) land where men, as household heads, control labour and proceeds, women withdrew their labour from cultivation for the project to protest an arrangement whereby they would not be compensated for their labour and were excluded from any of the proceeds. This case study allows for a more nuanced account of Scott's theoretical framework. Carney and Watts conclude by stating, "[t]o recognize the primary quality of domestic struggle is not only to assert that gender conflicts are a part of normal resistance but also to highlight the contradictory qualities of the enormous field that Scott has circumscribed" (1993: 233). Carney and Watts have expanded the understanding of politics through the lens of power and resistance to recognize the daily struggles of subordinate groups by including the struggles between men and women within households.

Richard Schroeder's (1999) study of female market gardeners and agroforestry interventions in The Gambia provides a sophisticated analysis of the negotiation of men and women over the meanings of gender roles and responsibilities. Men and women in this case study placed resource struggles over land and labour within the context of negotiations over roles and responsibilities in the conjugal contract. In the early days of

market gardening, when non-governmental organizations (NGOs) following Women in Development (WID)⁵ programs were throwing support behind women farmers, men responded negatively using marital metaphors of 'second husbands' to gain the higher moral ground and portray their wives as deviant. Women in turn responded using the same metaphor to argue that their gardens had in fact taken over the financial obligations of a husband when their own husbands could no longer meet them (1999: 40-42). Schroeder examines the complex exchange of money from wives to husband through gifts or 'loans'. He argues that the deference that Mandinka women gardeners showed to their husbands by giving cash gifts was a symbolic gesture that facilitated their freedom to pursue market gardening (1999: 40). His analysis shows that custom and gender are mutually constructed through battles over production systems. In so doing he provides strong empirical evidence to show that struggles over resources are both material and symbolic.

Later, as international development priorities changed to environmental protection and remediation, Schroeder shows NGOs focused attention on agroforestry initiatives. He illustrates the way in which local (male) landholders held onto or reclaimed their land by harnessing resources through their participation in development NGOs' agroforestry projects. Moreover Schroeder shows the way in which trees are used as political tools in resource struggles even in a case where both customary laws and the courts already uphold the rights of a landholder over the market-gardeners use rights.

⁵ WID is a development policy adopted by development NGOs, multilateral institutions like the World Bank and bi-lateral donor agencies such as CIDA which emerged out of the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985). The goal was to 'add' women into development. Many projects, including the projects Schroeder discusses, specifically targeted women as clients. It has come under much criticism (see Alexander 1995; Newland 1995, Chowdry 1995) for its negative depiction of women in the South and for marginalizing and excluding men. Many organizations have since modified their approach to Gender and Development (GAD).

His example of a local landholder's ongoing struggle with female market gardeners using his land, reveals that tree planting, as a discursive strategy, continues to be relevant even when custom and statute rule in favour of the landholder (1999: 91-92). It is therefore evident that custom is a site of struggle and therefore does not itself provide access and control, but exercising customary rights does. While some studies have not adequately problematized the relationship between customary land tenure and customary tree tenure (see Lastarria-Cornhiel 1997), Schroeder demonstrates that they are mutually constituted as symbolic resources in struggles over the material means of production. Agroforestry initiatives took on new and very different social, symbolic and material meanings as they were inserted into ongoing, and at times intense, local politics and struggles over land, gender roles and responsibilities and social obligations.

Both these examples from The Gambia reveal that intra-household negotiations over labour obligations and gender roles are critical aspects of a comprehensive analysis of resource relations. Furthermore, in both instances NGO interventions created key sites in which the ongoing contest over resources was negotiated. In Schroeder's study, NGO interventions were actually harnessed by women and men in the community to add leverage to their conflicts over the conjugal contract and land resources. These two cases reveal that narrow reflections on land struggles that do not adequately problematize inter-related struggles over labour obligations and production systems miss a large part of resource politics.

Writing Against Generalizations: Engaging in Complexity and Contradiction

As Abu-Lughod (1993: 8) indicates, generalization is "... part of a professional discourse of objectivity [and] it is inevitably a language of power." She charges that

accounts that produce generalizations concerning beliefs and practices often mask contradiction, conflict, reservations, and disagreements (Abu-Lughod 1993: 9). By carefully contextualizing studies, and explicitly engaging in an analysis of intra-household struggles, a post-structural political ecology approach clearly reveals that generalizations about issues like custom, social institutions, gender, land, labour and formal institutions of authority and governance are problematic because they legitimate certain discourses with adverse consequences especially for women. The preceding case studies from this field uncover the complexity of property rights and social relations within and between households, communities, development projects, and state initiatives. Their arguments reveal that struggles over access to land are both material and symbolic as social actors negotiate for land by negotiating the meanings of customary laws and other social institutions. Furthermore post-structural political ecology provides the analytical tools to examine land struggles/negotiations as they are played out at multiple scales and in multiple sites. This analysis allows for a more nuanced understanding of custom that does not separate 'customary land tenure' from other negotiated rules, idioms and practices. By examining land negotiations within the context of other ongoing negotiations over the meanings of social institutions, identity, roles and responsibilities, post-structural political ecology captures the complexity, fluidity and negotiability of both gender relations and resource relations.

Conclusion

In order to explore land struggles/negotiations at multiple scales (intra-household to the state) and to explore the relations of power and resistance between resource users differentiated by gender, class, ethnicity, and life cycle position, I draw upon critical

theorization from postmodern feminism and post-structural political ecology. These frameworks provide the analytical tools to comprehend resources struggles as material and symbolic, and to carefully contextualize resource struggles in time and space. Using Foucault's analytic of power, it is evident that power is something that is exercised, not something that is held by certain individuals and groups. Discourse analysis is a critical tool for analyzing relations of power and resistance. Starting with the notion that rights in land are rights through people, social institutions and customary laws are then conceptualized not as rigid structures, but as social processes. This allows for the exploration of the negotiation of custom as meanings are contested and power is exercised by individuals and groups. The cases and texts discussed in this chapter examine cooperation, contradiction and conflict in resource relations. In this thesis, I focus on particular stories and experiences of women and men in Afuaman to understand how they make meanings of custom and gender in the context of their land struggles. In doing so, I argue that these struggles are both material and symbolic, that they interact with related struggles over production, labour, roles and responsibilities, and that they are articulated and contested at multiple scales. By contextualizing the land struggles in Afuaman within the broader political economy, I will demonstrate through my main argument that ambiguity should be considered a potential asset particularly for the individual farmers and households in Afuaman.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology: Engaging with Social Actors in the Research Process

Mudimbe's book The Invention of Africa (1988) provides a critical post-colonial critique of the production of knowledge about Africa which is arguably an essential text for other scholars writing about Africa. In this book he struggles to come to terms with what is, and can be, said about Africa and Africans, and more importantly how it is said. In the introduction Mudimbe asks the question "... to what extent can one speak of African knowledge, and in what sense?" (1988: ix). Mudimbe argues that the central difficulty in coming to speak of African knowledge is the fact that scholars (both Western and those from Africa) have had to use categories and concepts derived exclusively from the West. Mudimbe's work describes the difficulties one faces in trying to write about Africa because of the hegemony of Western knowledge and epistemology.

Post-colonial critiques like Mudimbe's have been particularly influential in terms of challenging the ways in which texts can be powerful colonizing tools when they attempt to generalize and typify experiences as they speak for and about Africa. The goal of my research was not to provide a generalized picture of land 'customs' or to provide readers with 'facts' about the life in Afuaman. As Abu-Lughod (1993: 14) argues, "... the refusal to generalize [highlights] the constructed quality of 'typicality' so regularly produced in social scientific accounts." By refusing to generalize, the researcher avoids creating a picture of timeless, bounded, homogeneity, which overlooks the internal conflict and differentiation and essentializes and fixes remarkably fluid, complex and contested customs and categories (Ibid). I was interested in capturing differentiation,

contest and contradiction by analyzing the discourses which are constructed through resource relations at multiple scales; the multiple meanings that trends in the macro-political economy are given at local levels and in people's lives; and the way that these are in turn renegotiated by actors at multiple scales in the context of intersecting resource struggles. Therefore it was necessary to engage in a methodology that focused on the construction of the individual and collective experiences of social actors.

These concerns directed my choice of methodology toward theoretical frameworks and research methods that were flexible and inclusive, which engaged with the social actors in this study, and which openly recognized me as a social actor in the research process. This chapter begins with a review of some of the literature dealing with key methodological issues for such qualitative research, and issues which specifically address my position within the research as a twenty five year-old, white, middle class woman educated and raised in Canada. The second half of the chapter discusses my experiences in Ghana as I worked through the practical issues involved in my research experience. These include some reflections on power and authority in the research process, and the dynamic qualities of the research methods I used.

Searching for an Appropriate Methodology

Mudimbe (1988) and Abu-Lughod (1993) discuss many of the shortcomings of anthropological literature about the South that create barriers against other stories and philosophies. Abu-Lughod (1993: 12-13) for example problematizes the concept of 'culture' because it has often been used (sometimes unintentionally) as a tool in the process of 'othering'. According to Mudimbe (1988: 12), "the African has become not

only the other who is everyone else except me, but rather the key which in its abnormal differences specifies the identity of the same [self].” The process of ‘othering’ in Western epistemology is one where the speaking subject defines the Self through discrete and hierarchical discourses about the Other (namely, non-Western cultures). It is because of this dangerous process that Abu-Lughod advocates “working against generalizations” (1993: 13). As she specifically shows, this is critical in terms of capturing women’s lived experiences of specific ‘institutions’, thereby looking for ways in which they make meanings of them.

Another particular concern was driven by criticism of the construction of the ‘third world woman’ by feminists educated in the North, which is also forged through a process of ‘othering’ in development literature and scholarly texts. In the past, feminist researchers from the North have been charged with creating an undifferentiated caricature of women in the developing world. Chandra Mohanty (1991) makes one of the most important contributions in critiquing the construction of the ‘third world woman’ in literature by Western feminists. Her review of a sizable portion of Western feminist literature charges scholars with assuming that women form a cohesive category prior to analysis which, when translated into the South, characterizes women as undifferentiated, tradition-bound victims of male dominance. According to Mohanty, much of the work on the South has failed to look at women’s struggles within specific historical and cultural contexts, and therefore does not recognize the changing and contested meanings of various practices (i.e. veiling), social institutions (marriage, kinship), or concepts (reproduction, division of labour, patriarchy). Mohanty argues (1991: 72) that,

...Western feminist discourse, by assuming women as a coherent, already constituted group which is placed in kinship, legal, and other structures, defines third world women as subjects *outside* social relations, instead of looking at the way women are constituted *through* these structures (emphasis in original).

In constructing the 'third world woman', Mohanty claims scholars trained in the North have focused research on 'problems' faced by (all) women rather than recognizing women as social actors, engaged in struggles over meanings and resources which are crosscut with relations of class, ethnicity and age.

Feminists from the North have been criticized for ignoring the fact that gender relations are developed through specific historical and cultural contexts that intersect with other relations such as class and ethnicity. Western feminists have assumed a universal construction to the sexual division of labour that has blinded them to the nuances of social relations in various societies in the South. According to Anne Marie Goetz (1988: 477):

Third World women have charged that the Western feminist understanding of gender subordination has misspecified the details of the sexual division of labour in specific development contexts, contributing to the fragmentation of women's symbolic environments without offering a culturally sustaining alternative.

Northern feminists have been challenged to recognize the diversity of experiences of women in the South and to recognize the knowledge that can be drawn from the experiences of these women in resisting, coping with and changing oppressive gender and class relations. Women (and men) in the South need to be understood as social actors who generate change, not merely react to it.

Situating myself in the research process

With these critiques in mind it was necessary to find an approach and choose research methods that allowed me to situate myself within the research process and to reflect on my position within this process. My concern has been to avoid perpetuating the process of 'othering', or caricaturing dynamic social processes and discursive formations into generalized 'facts' about Ghanaian women or the 'Ga in Afuaman'. As Rose (1997: 315), points out in her constructive critique of feminist concepts of reflexivity and positionality, "... the aim of situating academic knowledge is to produce non-overgeneralizing knowledges that learn from other kinds of knowledge...." While in the past some have attempted to suggest that only 'like study like', Harding (1992: 178) argues, "[this] would have the depressing and counterhistorical consequences that whites cannot create anti-racist knowledge, men cannot create anti-sexist knowledge, etc. - in short no one can learn anything from *anyone else's*, experience" (emphasis in original). However she also cautions that it is inappropriate to attempt "... to speak *as* or *for* Third World Women." (Harding 1992: 180).

I turned to two arguments about how one might think about constructed spaces in their research projects, and how one could situate oneself within the constructed spaces of the research. bell hooks, in her chapter from Yearnings: race, gender and cultural politics (1990) entitled "Choosing the margin as a site of radical openness", passionately addresses issues about scholarly attempts to study the 'other'. Rethinking the margins as a place in which one may *choose* to position oneself in order to resist hegemonic

discourses, hooks extends an invitation to scholars to enter these margins as a way to stop the silencing of marginal voices through discourses that construct the 'other'.

Often this speech about the "Other" annihilates, erases: "No need to hear your voice when I can talk for you better than you can speak for yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Rewriting you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are now at the center of my talk." Stop. We greet you as liberators. This "we" is that "us" in the margins, that "we" who inhabit marginal space that is not a site of domination but a place of resistance. Enter that space. This is an intervention. I am writing to you. I am speaking from a place in the margins where I am different, where I see things differently. I am talking to you about what I see" (1990: 151-152).

Reflecting on hooks' words, I was aware of the need to engage in methodologies which allow me to hear different voices, and to use people's stories in such a way that they could become a part of a shared and emancipatory knowledge.

Michelle Fine's discussion of the hyphen between self-other provides a useful metaphor to guide researchers who wish to be sensitive to the process of 'othering'. Fine argues that researchers should work the hyphen in order to recognize the relationship between self and other. She maintains that in much research in the social sciences the relationship between self and other in the interaction of researchers and informants often goes unrecognized, thereby protecting positions of privilege and maintaining distance (1990: 72). However according to Fine (1990: 72), "[w]hen we opt... to engage in social struggles *with* those who have been exploited and subjugated, we work the hyphen, revealing far more about ourselves, and far more about the structures of Othering" (emphasis in original). She argues that working the hyphen involves open dialogue and

an iterative process between researchers and informants about “... what is, and is not, ‘happening between,’ within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequences (1990: 72). Fine’s arguments offer a tool to engage in critical and reflexive research. It was these arguments which encouraged me to openly include myself as a social actor in the research and in the relationships I was developing in Afuaman and not pretend that I could be an unbiased observer.

Research Participants and Social Actors

In selecting specific methodologies I was interested in using an iterative process, both between myself and the research participants, and between theory and practice. The theoretical frameworks I used privilege the voices and stories of women and men, and recognize women and men, political bodies and researchers as social actors. In Battlefields of Knowledge: the interlocking of theory and practice in social research development Norman Long and Ann Long (eds. 1992) and the contributors to their collection argue for an actor-oriented approach to research precisely because they see theory and practice as inseparable in social research. Norman Long makes a strong case for an actor-oriented approach to social research in development. According to him (1992: 5) “[t]he essence of an actor-oriented approach is that its concepts are grounded in the everyday life experiences and understandings of men and women, be they poor, peasants, entrepreneurs, government bureaucrats or researchers.” He also makes the important point that the concept of a ‘social actor’ is in itself a constructed category and that ideas of agency will vary as they are constructed differently within different societies

and social groups (1992: 9). He demonstrates through his own research in Peru the ways in which theoretical issues and practice inform one another and highlights the benefits of an actor-oriented approach. By employing an actor-oriented approach, Long was able to understand the complexity of a heterogeneous Peruvian community and the specific ways in which macro structures played out in the community.

An actor-oriented approach allows researchers to focus on struggles in the South in a way which avoids perpetuating the construction of the 'third world woman'. In the same volume, Magdalena Villarreal argues that an actor-oriented approach reveals the complexities of power and resistance among various interests in a society. She claims, "...when looking for power, we see struggle, negotiation and compromise" (1992: 257). Using two case studies in Mexico which look at the construction of gender, Villarreal demonstrates the utility of an actor-oriented approach in understanding the strategic decisions women made regarding their identity and opportunity. This approach allowed Villarreal to analyze issues of gender identity and power through the agency constructed within these specific societies. She saw how women manipulated norms and obligations in one particular instance to gain benefits in another: "... the women accept roles for themselves in order to win arguments useful for battles elsewhere" (1992: 261). For example, in her analysis of women beekeepers who downplayed the importance of their entrepreneurial activities, emphasizing instead their roles as mothers and wives, she suggests that the women did so in order to gain the freedom to pursue an important income-generating activity that their husbands' had constructed as a mere hobby.

Villarreal concludes by discussing the implications of using an actor-oriented approach in development projects and interventions. She claims, "... it is pertinent to discuss how intervention is continuously being modified by the negotiations and strategies that emerge between the various parties involved" (1992: 264). She suggests that intervention projects require an actor-oriented analysis in order to understand how the project is absorbed by the community and the relations of power and resistance that will surround the project. An actor-oriented approach opens discursive spaces in scholarship for research participants to discuss the negotiated meanings of social institutions and practices within their society, as well as the research project itself.

I was also drawn to the concepts and principles of participatory research (PR) as discussed by Peter Park (1993) and Patricia Maguire (1987), for example. Park (1993: 1) claims "[p]articipatory research is emerging as a self-conscious way of empowering people to take effective action toward improving conditions in their lives." The PR concept explicitly recognizes the multiplicity of ways that knowledge is generated giving particular notice to the knowledge found in lived experiences. The most important element of participatory research lies in its focus on dialogue - its openness to a multiplicity of voices and concerns - and the shared ownership of knowledge. According to Patricia Maguire (1987: 39),

Participatory research assumes that returning the power of knowledge production and use to ordinary and oppressed people will contribute to the creation of a more accurate and critical reflection of social reality, the liberation of human creative potential, and to the mobilization of human resources to solve social problems.

Using participatory research methods, a partnership is created between the researcher and research participants whereby the researcher's knowledge and the knowledge of research participants are drawn upon, ideally to assist in action and struggles for social justice.

In part my attraction to 'participatory research' was a product of the current popularity of this discourse in development institutions. With my funding coming from CIDA, in a sense I felt obligated to adopt this language. As Cornwall, Guijt and Welbourn (1993: 2) point out, the selection of a methodology, in part, "... involves less 'scientific' concerns, such as time constraints, financial constraints or the conditions set by donors." However, I was also confused by the vastness of the concept of participatory research which covers an array of approaches. For example, Cornwall, Guijt and Welbourn (1993: 14) list 29 different 'participatory approaches' that have been developed since 1970. While I was personally and politically drawn to an emancipatory process where research participants retain the ownership of their research, as in the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, I also struggled with the idea that I could claim to be doing such research, particularly since I would totally control the writing process. Given the design of this project (a Master's thesis where the collaborating organization in Ghana was an academic institution), it was unrealistic to expect that this research project could be truly participatory in that sense. Nonetheless, this perceived obligation was something I struggled to come to terms with throughout the research process. My comfort in saying how I was able to draw on participatory research is itself an outcome of the research and writing processes.

I did rely on the principles of participatory research in selecting the methods I would use in the project. I chose to recognize that researcher and research participants have access to different constructions of knowledge and power, and these combined in a reflexive research process could potentially create an emancipatory knowledge. I sought an iterative process, whereby research participants were invited to comment on and correct me in my interpretation or analysis. As much as possible I wanted to ensure 'the production of knowledge' engaged the research participants. While the research proposal was written in Canada, it was subject to a consultative process with academics in Ghana, as it was being written. The proposal and interview question outline were also shared with Ghanaian academics, officials in different offices as the Ga District Assembly (local government) including the head of the women's association, after my arrival.. As Cornwall, Guijt and Welbourn (1993: 27) argue, certain participatory approaches, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), try to restore some of the social complexities of agriculture that have been written out by conventional agriculture research. I mainly used PRA interviewing and sampling methods to collect data including, semi-structured interviewing, direct observation, focus groups, key informants, ethnohistories and wealth ranking (see Cornwall, Guijt and Welbourn 1993: 22). According to Cornwall, Guijt and Welbourn (1993: 21-22) PRA "... techniques have proven valuable for understanding local perceptions of the functional value of resources, the processes of agricultural innovation, social and institutional relations."

I used these methods informed by the constructive critiques of other researchers who discuss the potential problems with adopting some PRA methods uncritically.

Allison Goebel (1998) and David Mosse (1994) are particularly sensitive to the power relations and gender dimensions of these techniques. Goebel argues that researchers and practitioners remain ever critical of the relations of power and domination when using PRA exercises because the emphasis on consensus in some of the group exercises often masks relations of power and silences other views (1998: 284). This is particularly the case where interests in resources are divided along gender lines. According to Goebel (1998: 289), “[m]en and women live in somewhat different ‘resource worlds’.” For this reason, it is sometimes advisable to use gender segregated groups and then compare results. Likewise, Mosse (1994: 515) argues that PRA methods may not be sensitive to the specific social circumstances in which women may express their concerns and therefore, “[w]here women are concerned, much is left unsaid.” In terms of group meetings for example, Mosse addresses several key issues in regards to women’s participation and the participation of other groups that may be marginalized in public fora such as group meetings (1994: 514). He argues that “women’s access to the ‘public’ of the PRA would vary with age, marital status, residence (natal village or village of marriage), religion and class” (1994: 513). His observations suggest that it is critical to open different spaces for women to articulate and express their concerns in addition to public group meetings. Also it suggests that the facilitator in a group meeting must be constantly observing the dynamics of the group to identify where power is being exercised within the meeting (in addition to reflecting on the facilitator’s own power within this context). With regard to the ways in which women express their knowledge Mosse, further argues that many PRA techniques cannot incorporate the complexities of

non-linguistic knowledge which is only represented through practice (1994: 519-520). For these reasons, the use of PRA techniques must be sensitive to power relations, different types of knowledge and different forms of communication.

I chose methods which would allow me to cross reference and compare notes and stories in an ongoing iterative process. An actor-oriented approach that also drew upon the principles of participatory research would open different spaces for people to share their stories, and would allow me to see how social differentiation such as gender, class, ethnicity and age fit in with their stories. These stories could then be placed in context of key informant interviews with leaders in the village, and representatives at the district, regional and national government offices. I elected to collect information using a variety of methods and to deliberately sample from a variety of sources so that I could compare notes from different informants and also place their experiences within larger economic, social and political processes.

The Research Process

It was with these tools and ideas that I went to Ghana in September 1999. Prior to this trip I spent ten weeks learning Twi, one of the most commonly spoken Ghanaian languages. Immediately following my arrival I was also fortunate to become informally associated with CUSO, a Canadian NGO, that led me to a personal support network of Canadians and Ghanaians through the CUSO-Ghana office. While it turned out that Twi was not the principal language in the village where I was working, it was widely spoken throughout Ghana and the small amounts I could speak and my knowledge of Ghanaian

customs eased my transition into a new culture and helped me to form important informal relationships with Ghanaians.

Setting up the Research: Selecting the Site, My Assistant and the Participants

I registered as a research affiliate at the Institute for African Studies (IAS) at the University of Ghana. I began the research process by reviewing literature in the IAS library, and sharing the research with as many people as possible in both formal and informal meetings. The initial pace of the research was quite slow because of institutional difficulties. It was therefore through my informal relationships that I met the District Assemblyman for the Ga Manhean electoral district. The Ga District was ideally located within the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area. The Assemblyman took me to meet people at the Ga District Assembly with whom I shared copies of my research proposal and question plan. In my introductory meetings with officials at the District Assembly, including the District leader for the 31st December Women's Movement¹, I was repeatedly told that their district was both urban and rural, and that land struggles were a growing concern. The Assemblyman and other officials in the Ga District Assembly encouraged me to do the research in their district. The Assemblyman and the Commissioner for Civic Education suggested a couple of the villages where I might do some research. The District Assemblyman had six villages in his electoral area. For

¹ The 31st December Women's Movement is a national organization that was established in 1982. Though it is not an official government organization, it was closely associated with the State because it was headed by the wife of President Jerry Rawlings, Nana Konadu Rawlings. The organization is spread throughout the country through offices in the ten regions, district offices and local chapters. The Ga District office was mainly working with younger women on training them in home-based income-generating activities such as designing batiks and baking. They have attempted a rotating loan scheme, where local chapters can apply for loans, but it has been unsuccessful because of loan defaults.

personal and political reasons he decided that I should not work in his village. After reviewing the abstract of my research proposal and discussing my research interests, the Commissioner for Civic Education and the Assemblyman suggested two villages, Afuaman and Nsakina. Nsakina had already been the site of extensive study, while Afuaman was noted as feeling neglected². To pursue the research in Nsakina would require me to spend significant time reviewing the previous work and adjusting my proposal. In addition, it was felt that the work in Afuaman would provide the District with new information. After discussing the work already done in Nsakina, I decided to work in Afuaman.

Initially, I had assumed that it would be better to have a female research assistant since I would be interviewing a lot of women. However, based on the advice of several professors at IAS who suggested a male research assistant might be more appropriate for this work in the Ga District, I decided I should not insist on a woman. Instead, I made it clear to potential candidates for the position that this was a gender project and that my assistant needed to be sensitive to gender issues. It was more important to work with an individual, male or female, who understood my approach to this study and with whom I could develop a healthy research relationship. The selection process, required two meetings: the first to meet with the prospective candidate, briefly describe the research and provide him or her with a copy of the research proposal; and the second to discuss

² My experiences in Afuaman corroborated this statement. The Assemblyman had taken several measures to maintain their loyalty. For example, when the Assemblymen and Assemblywomen were provided with two Polytanks each to ensure a supply of clean drinking water in their constituent villages, the Assemblyman selected Afuaman as one of the villages to receive a tank in his area. It arrived while I was there and elders used it on several occasions as a symbol of the commitment of the Assemblyman.

the proposal and the research process in order to determine whether or not the prospective assistant understood the aims and principles of my research.

I hired Seth Allotey, a Ga man, and an instructor of the Ga language at the University. He was introduced to me by a Language Studies professor at the Institute for African Studies who had worked with him before interviewing market women in Accra. In our meetings he had demonstrated his understanding of gender analysis and the qualitative research approach I was using. It was evident that Seth took a professional attitude toward me and my research, and was willing to learn more about the theories on which I was drawing. Seth understood that I would be relying on him to interpret not only spoken words but also to be observant of the cultural norms and non-verbal communication that I, as an outsider, might miss because I was neither Ghanaian nor Ga. Throughout the research he endeavoured to teach me the language and Ga social customs so that I was able to develop stronger relationships with people in the village. We established a good rapport with the participants because of his soft-spoken manner, his friendly interaction and genuine interest in individuals' daily lives in Afuaman.

To begin the research, the District Assemblyman arranged a meeting with the elders so I could introduce myself, present the project to the village leaders and seek their permission to work there (an important customary procedure). That same day I had introductory meetings with the 'women's group' and the agroforestry group. Later in the week I also had an introductory meeting with the Muslim Association who farm collectively. Officially there is a local chapter of the 31st December Women's Movement in Afuaman. However, the women have been disappointed with the organization because

they have not benefitted from their membership. Only the Executive, which is largely made up of migrants and middle income women, continue to meet. Because the group is not functioning in any organized manner, all women were called to the meeting by the *gong-gong beater*.³ Since members of the formal group are required to pay a membership fee, this situation allowed for my meetings to be accessible to non-members. The agroforestry group is a part of a project sponsored by a Christian NGO. They meet regularly as a group and with the NGO project representative. I became aware of their work through the meeting which was held at their request. Members include women and men. The local leader of both these organizations is the woman who owns the large canteen in the village. The Muslim Association is made up entirely of men. They farm collectively but their main concern is the construction of a new mosque. As a group they expressed little interest in the research, and while I included several Muslim families in my research and interviewed one of the leaders about the association's farm, the group did not figure significantly into my research.

In addition to the formal meeting with the elders, I asked for the informed consent of each participating member of the household (see Appendix A for consent statement). Seth described the project and outlined the study. People in the village readily agreed to participate. While Afuaman is a Ga village, roughly a quarter of the population is Ewe, and there are a few Northerners, and a small number of mixed households (Ga and Ewe). I wanted to be certain that the participants I had selected represented the diversity of the

³ Similar to a town crier, gong-gong beaters go throughout the village on the morning of the meeting to summon people to the meeting. Usually just before the meeting several young boys are also sent around to remind people.

village in terms of age, marital status, ethnicity, household membership (i.e. single family or multi-generation households, male only or female only households etc.) With the help of the District Assemblyman, leaders of community organizations and community members, I selected 26 households throughout the village for a set of two in-depth semi-structured interviews. Initially, I surveyed 30 households (see Appendix B for a sample) to ensure that the participating households captured the diversity of individuals and households in Afuaman.

Semi-Structured Interviews

For each household I interviewed the male and female adults (where both were present) who identified themselves in household surveys as the 'heads' and/or the spouse of the head of the family or household. Though we requested that we speak with each person privately, in many instances the women's husbands stayed in the first interview. In most cases I was able to interview the woman alone in the second interview. After trying several different interviewing styles, we decided that an immediate (though abbreviated) direct translation was the most appropriate style. The conversations were always taped so that the full text could be translated and transcribed later. Each day following the interviews Seth would give further details on some of the things that transpired that day in the village. I emphasized to Seth that I wanted everything transcribed regardless of whether or not it seemed irrelevant, repetitious or normative. Throughout the interviews, and following casual conversations, I jotted down notes and observations in my field notebook, including responses to the interview (mine and those I observed by watching the interaction between Seth and the participant), observations of

interview dynamics, and a record of who else was present during the interview. Each day in the village, before and after we interviewed participants, we spent time in the local canteen interacting socially with the owners and patrons. This was an important part of the research process in that it opened up informal and casual spaces for everyday discussions with various people in Afuaman (both participants and non-participants) and it helped to foster friendly and trusting relationships with them.

The first round of interviews loosely followed a question plan (Appendix C) which I had developed in Canada and shared with faculty members at the IAS. The question plan was used as a flexible guide. For this reason I was able to explore each person's experiences rather than searching for general survey responses. Each interview was tailored to the experiences of the individual to get in-depth data rather than following a strict adherence to the question guide. This allowed for the addition of new questions arising out of the interview process that were not considered prior to beginning the research. Using the semi-structured format allowed me to adapt the research project so that it incorporated some of the interests and needs of the participants. At the end of the interview I took photos of the participant(s) with their friends or family members.

Shortly after starting the first round of interviews I came to appreciate some of the benefits that came from having a male research assistant. As we conducted the interviews I understood from their body language that women saw Seth as an interpreter and responded to me as a researcher. Though they often remained guarded in their responses when their husbands were present, when their husbands left they were quite candid around Seth (much to his own surprise). While this still meant that I had to probe

for information, I saw that with time the women felt comfortable confiding in me. However, there were times when we were interviewing men when I could see that Seth's participation eased some tensions. When it seemed that the male participants were uncomfortable or guarded, Seth was able to assuage their discomfort. At these times I stepped back somewhat while Seth engaged with the male participants.

After reviewing the transcripts from the first round interviews I developed individual follow-up questions for a second round of interviews. I felt that it was important to return to each participant in order to create a dialogue. In some cases, this second round of interviews yielded very different results. When conducting the first interviews participants would often begin with a general response of what 'one does', rather than describing their own personal experience, emphasizing norms over actual practices. From the start we had to encourage participants to speak about their own experience often asking the question a second time with specific references to that particular year or season. The second round interviews permitted me to explore issues based on new information I had collected in the community and to question some of the issues discussed in the first interview. Commonly, in the cases where I was unable to interview a woman privately in the first interview, I was able to do so in the second interview. Many women were more precise about what they did and sometimes changed their stories from the deferential comments made in the earlier interview. During the second interview, as a token of my appreciation, I gave each participant a copy of the photo we had taken at the end of the first interview and a Canada flag lapel pin.

Group Meetings

Meetings with the women's group and the agroforestry group were held concurrent with the second round of interviews. I purposely held these meetings following the first interviews not only to gather material for discussion, but also to build up rapport with individual participants and community members prior to holding a public discussion meeting. The women's meeting was organized with the help of the local leader. It was open to all women in the village and with each woman I interviewed I indicated at the end of the first interview that there would be a group meeting for women in the village. The meeting was organized on a Friday because it is a local taboo day for farming⁴. We also arranged the time such that Muslim women might be free to attend, although unfortunately very few did. The meeting was held at the canteen. At first I had anticipated there could be a problem with the women's group because it was no longer meeting formally. However, I was pleasantly surprised by the responsiveness of the women to my plans for a meeting, and their attendance and participation at the meeting. Seth observed that nearly every woman spoke out in the meeting. At the same time, heeding Mosse's (1994) lessons, I tried to monitor group dynamics to ensure that women were comfortable speaking out. For example, when the leader's husband (whom I had come to know quite well) sat to the side and spoke out in the meeting, I quickly gave him a friendly warning in front of the women that it was a women's meeting. Several women

⁴ In Ghana, work taboos are common. For example, it is taboo for men to fish from the ocean on Tuesday. It is often taboo to farm on Fridays. In Afuaman it is also taboo for women to collect water from the river on Fridays. People explained that these taboos were in place to ensure good harvests, catches and the purity of the water. However it also gives people socially sanctioned 'days off'.

immediately responded by contesting his comments and began a lively debate around that issue. Seth was surprised by the candor at this meeting as women volunteered information about practices such as 'stealing' from the proceeds of their husbands' vegetable sales.

The agroforestry group met regularly in a formal setting. The leader organized the meeting to follow the women's group meeting. Both Seth and I noticed that the participants were much more reserved than the women's group with far fewer people offering responses to my questions or discussing/debating issues. However, I did note that women in this group continued to share their opinions in this meeting, along with the male members of the group. While I guided the discussion in both meetings with some key questions that came out of the first round of interviews, I also opened the floor for participants to discuss other concerns. In both cases, participants made requests for farming inputs and implements. Participants were eager to discuss the environmental and economic constraints on their farming activities.

Key Informants

Key informants were an important part of my research network. As de Vries (1992: 54) argues, "... the unfolding of ethnography is largely dependent on our ability to expand a set of relationships with a number of special people or key actors, usually labeled 'informants'." He demonstrates how he developed a research network which allowed him to examine the issues in his research at multiple scales and in multiple settings from the field-level through to bureaucratic offices. I interviewed key informants in the village, the District Assembly, the Ministry of Lands and Forestry, the

Department of Town and Country Planning and the Lands Department. My relationship with the District Assemblyman helped me to identify and meet with key informants at the District Assembly and in the village. I formed amicable professional relationships with several of the key elders, like the *Asafoatse*, whose roles were all the more important because the village was still in the process of selecting their new chief. The *Asafoatse*, who is the village 'mobilizer' and a key player in distributing stool lands, was one of many important informants. In turn, many of the people I met through the District Assemblyman directed me to other offices or officials at other levels of government. A few key informants at the local level did wealth ranking exercises so that I could get a general understanding of the socio-economic status of the participants. Key informants also provided me with relevant texts and maps. I used the information from these different sources to compare responses and develop questions for other interviews.

Oral Histories

The oral histories were meant to allow a few participants to reflect back on their lives including their relationships in the village, changes in the environment and economy, and new opportunities and constraints in their livelihood strategies and farming. In consultation with the leader of the 31st December Women's Movement, the District Assemblyman and Seth, six potential candidates were identified. I indicated that I wanted elderly men and women, and that the volunteers should reflect some of the ethnic diversity in the community. Most importantly, I wanted people who were interested in talking to me about their life experiences in Afuaman. I met with potential candidates individually, and discussed what was entailed in this process. Following these

meetings four people confirmed that they would participate: an Ewe widow, a divorced Ga woman, one of the elders and a divorced Ga man who was formerly regarded as one of the wealthiest men in the village. When I went to speak with the elder, the chief priest in the village joined our discussion. By allowing a few men and women more freedom to share their life stories, I had hoped to capture some of the “uniqueness and particularity” (Goebel 1994: 7) of people’s lives and experiences as farmers in Afuaman. As Abu-Lughod (1993: 14) claims, “ [b]y focusing closely on particular individuals and their changing relationships, one [can] also subvert the most problematic connotations of ‘culture’: homogeneity, coherence and timelessness.” In many ways the oral histories turned out differently than I had expected. I had anticipated capturing long detailed explanations, interpretations and stories. The oral histories did not produce these results, in part because my research assistant and I steered away from immediate translation, and in part because these participants (like many other participants) were “... [providing] information that they felt [was] expected... [and conforming] to what external agencies [myself and CIDA] had to offer.” (Cornwall, Guijt and Welbourn 1993: 11, see also Goebel 1994: 31). While my expectations for long stories which would ‘stand on their own’ were not met, these oral histories were useful within the context of other research I had collected, and within this context they did in fact undermine the positivistic search for generalizations. These stories reinforced the complexity of other data I had collected and they underscored the ever changing circumstances of people’s lives.

Dissemination of Preliminary Research Findings in Afuaman: March 2000

The way in which I chose to disseminate the preliminary findings in Afuaman was a response to anxieties I was experiencing concerning the tenets of Participatory Action Research (PAR), namely that some sort of direct action was to emerge from the research. Throughout the research, participants and community members repeatedly asked for specific farm implements such as tractors and pumping machines. Needless to say my funding did not allow for the purchase of these implements for the village. As I reflected on my anxieties over participatory research, I recalled a quote from Patricia Maguire (1987:30): “[w]hile direct community action is an intended outcome of participatory research, people may decide not to act at a particular point in time. The important point is that those involved in the production of knowledge are involved in the decision making regarding its use and application to their everyday lives.” I opted to structure the presentation and discussion to respond to the participants’ false perceptions of me as an agent of development. My main purpose was to reinforce that I was not capable of delivering the types of development assistance they had requested. At the same time I wanted to share my knowledge of how development bureaucracy works and demonstrate one way that they could use the information I had gathered.

The dissemination meeting was attended by approximately 15-20 people: the elders, the leaders from the three organized groups in the village (the Muslim Association, the executive of the 31st December Women’s Movement and the agroforestry group), and the District Assemblyman. I focused my dissemination meeting on the ways that participants could use the information I had gathered to apply for

funding from a fund like the Canada Fund (administered by the Canadian High Commission in Accra) which offers grants for community based projects. I wanted to share some of my knowledge of the language and discourses of development which were part of the funding proposal process. For approximately two hours we discussed my preliminary research findings and I answered questions from the community leaders about how they could organize themselves. The response from the community was very positive. I encouraged the participants to focus on the important role that the men and women as farmers in this peri-urban village play in the production and distribution of food for the city of Accra; to demonstrate that their initiative would benefit both men and women (because each controlled key points in the agricultural process); and to discuss the impact environmental changes have had on farming in Afuaman and the measures taken by community groups like the agroforestry group to counteract these problems. After returning to Canada I sent the District Assemblyman a summary of this meeting and later I forwarded a copy of my research report.

Follow-up Meetings: November 2000

In November 2000, I returned to Ghana and organized follow-up meetings with the women and the agroforestry group. The purpose of the meetings was to disseminate my findings after analyzing all of the transcripts and developing some thematic constructs for my thesis. This meeting was designed to allow participants to reflect on my analysis and to ensure that I had not misunderstood or misrepresented their interests. For example, the women confirmed my analysis of the meaning of trading in their lives, but at the same time they reinforced that this analysis should not obscure the fact that

women have less public authority and fewer opportunities to generate change at the village level.

The meeting also allowed me to explore some important themes further. While the translation style that Seth and I had used during our interviews was the most comfortable and the most effective for exploring the issues into which I wanted to delve, the abbreviated translation style in the interviews also meant that I missed certain key points in the conversation. For example, Seth did not necessarily translate certain words such as ‘pioneer’ or phrases like ‘a tree is a property’, or ‘women are elements of social change’ in our conversations. I only encountered these important comments as I read the full transcripts. These were some of the concepts that I was able to explore in the follow-up meeting. The follow-up meeting with the agroforestry group made the discursive importance of the agroforestry project clear in ways that the earlier meeting had not. Most importantly the meeting reinforced that the information I had collected was a product of the constructed nature of the research process and that my analysis and interpretation must ‘work against generalizations’ (Abu-Lughod 1993: 11). The meeting illustrated to me that I had captured a certain construction of people’s lives, in a specific historical, social, and research context. This experience underscored the importance of studying the discursive formations of custom, identity and place, rather than attempting to document and typify Ga customs, gender roles and peri-urban areas.

Reflecting on the Research Process

As Geraldine Pratt (2000: 639) argues, the research process is not a gentle even terrain, but rather it is a lively, halting and political encounter. In the preceding

discussion of my methodological choices and the research process, I have tried to introduce some of my difficulties, questions and anxieties. As I spent time in the field I recorded my concerns in my research journal. By reflecting on the research process in journal entries, I was able to work through my anxieties and see the ways that my choice of methodologies was opening me to possibilities I had not anticipated in Canada. By recording my thoughts, ideas and anxieties I was able to reflect on the issues of power and authority in the research process. My entries recorded frustrations and breakthroughs and at times became a place where I could begin to make connections between my experiences in the field and the academic work I had done before arriving in Ghana. I could see where my preconceived notions and responses fitted into the research process. In the early stages the journal entries seemed to hold only a mundane record of the day, but as the research progressed and my relationships in the village developed, on some days, I found myself writing ten and twelve page entries. The journal helped me to realize that I was opening up to changes in the research that were directed by the participants. It was in the research journal for example that many of my concerns about 'participatory research' were voiced. Later as I began to analyze some of the data, I found myself looking back to the journal entries to see where my responses in the field coincided or contradicted with my memory of the events or my interpretation after I returned to Canada. Not only did the journal record insights that are not found in the transcriptions or my informal field notes, it also acted as a check on the claims I was making in my analysis and reminded me of the subjective nature of the qualitative research process. In this section I discuss three key areas where I struggled with the

research process: getting the 'right' information; finding 'volunteers' for the study; and dealing with contradictions and normative statements.

Getting the 'Right' Information

In many cases the stories and experiences I was collecting did not 'match' with the literature I had read at IAS or with the experience of a colleague (a former MA student) who had previously worked in the peri-urban area of Accra. Furthermore, I felt obligated to adhere to the proposal I had submitted to CIDA and worried about whether or not I was generating the desired data about structural adjustment, peri-urban areas and gender. While I understood in Canada that there was no 'right information' or 'truth' to find, in practice it was more difficult to free myself from the positivistic discourses in which I had been educated most of my life. The construction of discourse and identity were not immediately apparent as it requires a great deal of analysis and while I wanted to uncover these, I felt a tension created by the multiple audiences for my research, one being CIDA and the other the university. Furthermore, with these anxieties I felt that I was close to slipping into the conventional agricultural research which Cornwall, Guijt and Welbourn (1993) reject because of the way it looks at agriculture as a technical issue rather than as a social process.

It was my methodology and research journal which moved me past this search for the 'right' information and allowed me to broaden the focus of the interviews to capture the social relations that are integral to farming activities and land negotiations. When I began the second round interviews, I realized that the research was moving in a slightly different direction than I had originally anticipated. I realized that by using participatory

methods and remaining flexible that the research questions were changing in a way that reflected the experiences and interests of people in the community. Shortly into the second round interviews when my discussions led me to a new question which revealed more about women's roles and decision making, I wrote the following remarks in my journal:

Without the semi-structured approach... I just don't think I would have any information. This format allows the study to grow according to what the informants have to say. Without this style I certainly would not have worked my way to the question I thought was so important today (personal journal January 2000).

By engaging in a flexible and iterative process I opened the exploration of land negotiations into other sites like the household and the market to understand the complexity of negotiations over land and the multitude of identities that are constructed through these negotiations. I started examining the gender division of labour in farming activities and how this related to the ways that women gain hidden power in their relationships and control over natural resources. Realizing the importance of women's roles as mothers, wives and traders, I explored these further and understood that they were as important for capturing intra-household land negotiations as were other discourses of 'belonging' which justified access and control of land at the community level.

'Volunteering' to Participate'

I also had deal with the idea that 'voluntary participation' might be a concept that is more easily understood in my experiences in Canada than in Afuaman. I had not anticipated that people might not understand that this term allows people to decline from

participating or to withdraw from the study after it had begun. In one instance a woman agreed to participate in the project but missed all the appointments we had set with her. My research assistant and I realized that she simply did not know how she could tell us she did not want to participate. Realizing this we stopped seeing her about the research but continued to greet her so that she would realize that we had understood her non-verbal messages and that we were not upset with her decision. In another instance a man agreed to participate in the study but remained openly hostile in our initial meetings and throughout the first interview, demanding to know why he *must* participate in this study. After reviewing the transcripts and discussing the situation with Seth, I realized that in this case the man was afraid he would lose out on any tangible benefits that might be found from participating. Our repeated reminders that he was not obligated to participate and that he was free to withdraw at anytime were unheard. As with the first woman, we decided to withdraw him from the rest of the study but continue to greet him when we came to the village. As the man was an important leader in the Muslim Association, we included the Muslim Association leaders in the dissemination meeting to reinforce that withdrawing from the study would not exclude anyone from the results. In both cases we were able to maintain amicable relationships with the former participants.

Both of the cases also revealed that I had taken for granted that in the informed consent process that I would need to watch for signals from participants as cultural norms or their perception of me and my project might lead them to believe that participation is mandatory regardless of what I said. It may well be that the permission granted by the elders to conduct the project may have meant to some people in the village that their

cooperation with me was required. I realized with these two cases how important it was to observe people's actions and to question the interface between words and actions throughout the research.

Contradictions, Social Norms and Multiple Truths

The theoretical and conceptual frameworks I discussed in chapter two argued that truths are a matter of discourse, and that stories and meanings of material and symbolic resources are constantly negotiated by different social actors. Implicit in these frameworks is the fact that stories may be contradictory, that social actors may even appear to contradict themselves. James Scott's (1990) research into domination and resistance and his exploration of public and hidden transcripts reveals that often the stories told depend on the audience. In terms of field research Scott's arguments show that participants' interpretations of the research project may influence the stories and information they give to the researcher. Moreover, who is present at the interview also influences which transcript a participant may use. It was clear to me that men and women were most comfortable in the first instance in discussing norms which upheld the authority of male household heads; this was especially the case for some women whose husbands opted to stay for their first interview. These women often modified their statements during the second interview when I was more successful in interviewing them privately.

When Dianne Rocheleau (1994) encountered apparent contradictions between responses from women and men in her study she asked new questions which demonstrated how these contradictions were part of the process of negotiation over

household finances. She claims (1994: 72), “[i]nsight into the norms and realities of decision making was obtained through identifying and discussing contradictory information and impressions.” I emphasized to Seth that it was important that we capture both the norms and the practices in order to understand the discursive strategies and the dynamics of the intra- and inter-household relations of power and resistance in Afuaman.

In a letter outlining his final remarks about the project, Seth stated the following: “lies abound: people denied having made certain comments changing an entire statement in the process.” Seth had expressed his surprise at the abundance of ‘lies’ earlier, as well. However, he also stated in his letter that “information on land was carefully volunteered due to obvious reasons, e.g. Ablekuma etc.”. This was a very important point because Ablekuma, another village in the Ga District, had recently been the site of violence because of land disputes resulting in the deaths of two police officers. At the same time, the closest village to Afuaman was experiencing a chieftaincy dispute and lands were a part of this dispute. While everyone in Afuaman proudly insisted that they were a peaceful community, they were understandably wary. This may well be one of several reasons why people modified their stories.

While I am drawing from a body of post-structural feminist literature that understands truth to be a matter of discourse, I was also influenced by Salamone’s (1977) idea of a ‘lying informant’. According to Salamone, ‘lies’ must be seen as a form of communication and therefore carefully and contextually considered. In fact, he argues that it is by working to understand these ‘lies’ that researchers may access “... culturally significant areas, those usually located in the backstage” (1977: 121). While his analysis

does not quite go so far as to capture the idea that ‘lies’ are as constructed as are ‘truths’, he nonetheless reinforces the importance of exploring the meanings and motivations for providing contradictory information.

Re-Presenting People’s Lives in Text.

By selecting a methodology which openly embraced the dynamism of the research process, I was able to accept new information and alter my original ideas to fit with the needs and interests of people in the community. For example, as the research progressed, the discussions included an exploration of the meanings of the sexual division of labour in the households. My questions focused on how and why people defined themselves and their activities in certain ways. My analysis in the chapters that follow is the result of the research experience I have described here. An iterative process allowed for the discussion of my interpretation and understanding of the interviews with the participants so that they could respond to my initial analysis. Through the follow-up meeting, I solicited the research participants’ opinions and assessment of my analysis and interpretation.

In writing this thesis I want to contribute to the production of a what Harding (1992: 176) characterizes as a ‘liberatory knowledge’ and respond to Ong’s (in Pratt 2000: 640), claim that “the critical point is... that we disseminate their views and that we do so without betraying their political interests as narrators of their own lives.” In order to present the data, it is necessary to organize the thesis in a logical way for the reader. Abu-Lughod (1993) discusses the enormous difficulties of reproducing conversations and stories into text without at the same time subtracting from the enormous complexity of

social relations within which these stories are constructed. I have re-organized conversations that integrated many issues to give my audience (the academic community) clearer insights into specific social processes that I have chosen to explore. These stories were rarely given to me at once, but rather they emerged in pieces throughout the interview(s). The linear process of writing cannot capture the extraordinary complexity of people's lives and the text will to some extent obscure the dynamism of lives, relationships and of the research process itself. My intention is not to "...[engender] a false sense of competence in the reader, who feels that he or she has come to understand other cultures [i.e. Afuaman]" (Pratt 2000: 644). As I have shown with my discussion of the follow-up meeting, through the research process itself I have captured certain historically and socially contextual discourses of identity and resource relations in Afuaman. The remaining chapters in this thesis are meant to illustrate the ongoing construction of identity and discourse, to show the way in which people make meanings of local and external changes and opportunities.

Chapter Four

Locating Experiences in the Political Economy of the Ga District

Afuaman is a community of approximately 800 persons¹ located in the Ga District, a district in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA). It is situated just past the suburban sprawl to the north of Accra, the capital and largest city in Ghana, approximately 13 km northwest of the Awoshie Junction off the main Accra-Tema motor way (see Map II). It is the last village along an unpaved second class road that is in very poor condition. Despite the poor roads, in the last twenty years the community has become more integrated into the markets of Accra as *trotros*, small passenger vans running on regular routes within and between cities in Ghana which have the lowest user fees, have started providing service to and from the village several times a day. While the improvements in *trotro* and even taxi service in the area is more a response to a growing housing market driven by middle (and some high) income earners from Accra, such improvements in transportation and access to the large urban markets facilitate entrepreneurial enterprises in commodity trading, the sale of prepared foods, and vegetable production, as well as providing greater access to formal wage economy in Accra and casual labour in nearby mining and estate development initiatives.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide details of the broader political economy in Ghana and GAMA, in order to situate and historicize the land struggles in Afuaman. In Afuaman there are several mitigating factors that come into play in negotiations over land: the geography of peri-urban areas, the impact of the Structural Adjustment

¹ This estimated figure was provided by the District Assemblyman. There are approximately 100 households in Afuaman.

Programme (SAP), and the compulsory acquisition of lands in Afuaman and the ongoing threat of resettlement. These three factors interact with one another to provide the context for the ongoing negotiations over land within households, within the community and between the community and the state. As I argued in Chapter Two, this thesis sets out to show that claims to land, and struggles over access to and control of land, are interrelated with other struggles and are played out at multiple scales and in multiple sites. This chapter provides details of the three contextual factors, including the opinions of a number of key informants in local, regional and national governing bodies. Moreover it gives accounts from persons in Afuaman and provides insight into the meanings (both positive and negative) these factors have in their daily lives in terms of access to land, and livelihood strategies. The individual stories in this chapter provide details of recent challenges to land holdings, situating these experiences within the context of social and economic uncertainty that is exacerbated by the effects of the SAP and the encroachment of Accra, and discusses some of the strategies that individuals and households undertake in order to manage in the face of such uncertainty.

Peri-Urban Accra

Peri-urban areas are increasingly being recognized as geographical spaces in their own right rather than rural areas or mere extensions of urban areas (Ellis and Sumberg 1998). However, there is a lack of consensus over a definition of peri-urban areas (see Allen et al. 1999). I define peri-urban areas partly by proximity to urban centres both in terms of physical distance and transportation infrastructure. Residents are able to commute daily to urban centres for work or trade in the formal and informal wage economies. In addition, it is critical to conceptualize the peri-urban interface as a

dynamic ecological and socio-economic space, which interacts with rural-urban flows. According to Allen et al. (1999: 6) peri-urban areas are “characterized by a heterogeneous mosaic of ... agro-ecosystems’ and ‘urban ecosystems’ affected by material and energy flows demanded by urban and rural systems.” Their conceptualization of peri-urban areas characterizes these spaces and the people living in them as more than just reactive. While urbanization may be an important influence on land struggles and changes in land use patterns, a narrow, definition of peri-urban areas does not recognize that the residents and local governments are social actors whose activities and decisions also shape and define these land struggles and land use changes.

Competing claims to land and land speculation are common attributes of peri-urban areas. Land uses in these areas include agriculture, infrastructure development, building, mining and industry. Between 1993 and 1996, Maxwell et al. (1998: 6) claim that in the GAMA, “2,100 hectares of land per year were being converted from agricultural to urban use [and] between 1993 and 1997, this estimate shoots up to over 2,600 hectares per year.” Manuh (1994a: 148) cites competition for land by urban developers as an added pressure on women’s access to land in peri-urban areas of Kumasi, the capital city of the Ashanti Region in Ghana. Manuh’s research (1994a) also indicates that peri-urban areas are sites of intensified land struggles because of increased populations. Population growth in peri-urban areas is a result of both migrations from rural areas as households seek access to urban wage labour and urban markets, and from urban centres so families can access land to grow the subsistence crops they can no longer afford to buy because of price variances created under structural adjustment (see below).

For the southern Ga District, estimates of population growth for the period 1970-1984 range from 140% to 250% (Maxwell et al., 1998: 6).

In discussions with different officers at the Ga District Assembly, the District was characterized as “both urban and rural.” The Assembly struggled with the rapid changes and heterogeneity of the District. Land disputes stemming from competing land uses are one of the primary concerns for the District Assembly. In GAMA, Maxwell et al. (1998: 4) give a 1994 estimate of 6600 plots of land under litigation. The main problems cited by the District Assembly were environmental degradation from sandwinning², unauthorized development of residences, boundary disputes between stools, and competing claims for individual plots as the value of land increases. The District Assemblyman for Afuaman and five other villages describes some of the problems being faced in the Ga District:

In the old days there was no documentation. Now that Accra is expanding everyone is anxious, they all want site plans and there are overlaps. So one man sells or leases the same plot of land as another. The problem lies at boundary areas but sometimes villagers quarrel amongst themselves. Many years ago there was a law that if you leave land fallow for two years anyone else can farm because it belongs to the stool. So that one plot may have been used by two or three people. So with development as land becomes more valuable people fight over it.

Recently, some land disputes in the Ga District have led to violent confrontations. While residents in Afuaman have not experienced any acute disputes over land, incidents in other villages, such as Ablekuma where a 1997 land dispute resulted in the deaths of two individuals, influence the ways in which residents characterize issues and made them hesitant to discuss land. The fact that land struggles are such delicate and guarded issues,

² Sandwinning companies mine sandy topsoil for the building industry which uses the sand as filler in concrete mixtures.

hints at the critical importance of land in the area, as both a material and a symbolic resource

Several participants shared experiences which clearly show the impact that the expansion of Accra has had on their access to land. Some have seen land sold to builders or have had their farms destroyed by both authorized and unauthorized sandwinning. Others stated that “Accra is approaching every day” and speculated that someday their siblings living and working in Accra may return to Afuaman to access land for building. In an interview, the *Asafoatse*, one of the elders, stated, “I have no doubt that Accra will soon reach here and I am projecting that in five years from now Accra will have expanded to this place.” Evaluating the potential impacts of this on livelihoods in Afuaman he stated, “I sometimes feel very uncomfortable.” His response points to the feelings of economic and social uncertainty among the members of this community that the encroachment of Accra exacerbate.

Changing Land Uses: Impacts on Farming Households

Several people in Afuaman have already felt the negative consequences of the expansion of Accra. The stories of the following participants characterize some of experiences of the inhabitants of Afuaman with regards to competing land uses. These cases show that individuals and households are losing portions of their farm lands (without any personal economic gains) as they are sold by the elders and converted to other uses. For each case here I introduce the ways in which the individuals are socially differentiated by gender, class and ethnicity. In the next chapter, I will build on these three examples (and others), as I show the ways in which people in Afuaman construct and contest customary idioms.

*JT*³

JT is a middle aged Ewe man who was born in Afuaman after his parents migrated from the Volta Region. He is one of the wealthiest men in the village and actively participates as a member or leader of a number of village and District committees. He inherited most of the land from his father but also acquired some land from the elders. The following excerpts from our interviews describe the circumstances when some of his land was recently sold by the elders.

... the development of the village is taking over some part of the land. Where I have the wood lot now has been taken over by the town for development. So what they did is allocated part of it for me for a building project and then they allocated part of it to other people who want land to build... The land there is farm land. As development has started coming to this side, people are buying the land for building projects... Afuaman is growing. We don't see it now because the development is scattered all over the place. People are buying the land, putting up buildings. They are not residents of Afuaman. They are people who have come from far away.

What is also significant in this case is that JT's main objection to the sale was the manner in which the sale was handled. He claims that "... the way they did it was wrong" because they reallocated land without following the normal 'caretaker process'. According to JT, since he was acting as a custodian on the land for the chief the correct procedure in a case like this would be to divide the land in half to ensure that half was left for the current user (himself), and then before selling the other half to an outsider, the current user should be given an option to buy the portion the elders wished to sell. JT complains that in his case he was asked to buy half and then the other half was reallocated for sale to someone who wanted to build. He argues that having purchased half of the

³ Throughout this thesis I use fictitious initials in order to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

land, he should have been able to keep the entire plot. He continues to contest this sale with the elders on the grounds that they did not use the 'normal process'.

NA

NA is a Ga man, born in Afuaman. He also lost land to builders when he left the village for a few years for some wage employment. Here he describes his experiences.

Yes, land has been taken away from me. It was the elders who did so. I was using the land to plant watermelon just behind our cemetery. I left here to work in a textile factory as a weaver. On my return the selling of land had caught up to here. When I contacted the elders they said that they didn't know it was a plot I had been farming. They therefore told me to exercise restraint as they would try to replace it. They haven't replaced it as to now.

QN and KQ

QN and KQ are a middle aged couple who were ranked low in wealth ranking exercises. QN is Ewe, born in Afuaman to parents who migrated from the Volta Region. KQ, on the other hand is a Ga, born in Afuaman. They each had separate land holdings from their parents. Like NA, QN's land was sold to developers when he was leaving it fallow, in his case, to allow the soils to replenish. He believes that the land was taken by the elders because he is a 'stranger'⁴. His wife also lost a large portion of her land when it was sold to sandwinners. They are both disappointed by their experiences. One of the elders maintains that there have never been any disputes in the village with regards to farming and land disputes. However, KQ and QN's accounts of the situation tell a different story.

⁴ Although QN was born in Afuaman, his parents were migrants from the Volta Region. The term 'stranger' is generally understood to mean that the person is not descended from that village. An exploration of this identity will be taken up in Chapter Five.

KQ

They sell the land with the crops on it. When they came to win the sand on our land, they sold our plot of land which had cassava and potato planted on it. That's why my husband has nowhere to farm. He is a stranger. They said since he is a stranger they would take the land from him. As far as I'm concerned since both my parents come from this village not all has been taken away from me. They took half of mine in that manner because my father was dead and my mother too so there was no one to stand up for me. However there is still some on which I farm... They can sell it. They are approaching our end though they are not there yet.

QN

... there was no discussion. When they [the sandwinners] went there, there were food items on the farm, we had planted cassava, garden eggs, potato, and a few sticks of maize. It was when my wife realized that they were destroying her farm that she got annoyed and started complaining bitterly and loudly. When one of the elders heard of it he replied such that it became a fight between my wife and him. Later after saying all that, they continued without letup taking the sand from her farm with impunity. Truly, my wife is not satisfied so she keeps insulting them. After destroying everything including the potato on the land, I hired a tractor to cultivate the rest and planted cassava there. They began winning the sand again and someone told them that the owner of the farm would be annoyed and that he [the farmer] would take them to the police station and cause their arrest. After this threat they stopped and contacted me and my wife at the palace. We went there. They told us that they had destroyed our farm and that they were going to pay or compensate us with an amount of 50,000 cedis⁵. We agreed. But they again said that since we were the same [people] they would give us 20,000 cedis. We didn't want to accept the money; a lady who accompanied us told us to accept it though it was not even up to the amount of hiring a tractor. The food crops that they had destroyed amounted to more than the 20,000 cedis offered. We accepted it that way.

While many participants have not yet lost any land to developers or sandwinners, these three examples are not isolated incidents in Afuaman. It is evident that the expansion of Accra is resulting in the loss of farm lands in Afuaman, because of building developments and accompanying industries like sandwinning which are driven by the

⁵ The cedi is the Ghanaian currency. When I arrived in Ghana in September 1999 1USD was worth 2500 cedis, when I returned in November 2000, 1USD bought 6700 cedis.

needs of the growing housing market. The cases also hint at the fact that social status such as class, gender, and ethnicity are important aspects of these experiences - a theme that will be explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters. These three experiences are relatively recent, underscoring that the encroachment of Accra is intensifying land struggles in the Ga District. The last example in particular points to the difficulties this has created in terms of economic losses as land is sold without any economic gains to the users, or even adequate compensation for their losses. It is important to note that farming is a critical part of KQ and QN's livelihood strategy. JT also clearly argues that the land is not being used for its intended purpose (farming), as it is being sold to people without any ties to the community for building. His comments regarding the process by which the elders reallocated his land shows that struggles over land are both material and symbolic as his objection to the sale centres on a dispute over 'customary' procedures.

While the impact on access to land has been largely negative, it should be noted that the expansion of Accra has also created some opportunities for residents of Afuaman. Some households said that their adult sons and sometimes the male household heads found casual labour in the building industry particularly in the dry season. A few residents found work as drivers, and other residents worked as security agents for the Ga District Assembly. Women, in particular, have benefitted from improvements in transportation infrastructure which has allowed them to expand their trading activities. Many people noted that formerly there were no cars or lorries and women used to convey things to the market in Accra by traveling across the river to Weija where they could find cars to take them to Accra. The *Asafoatse* also noted that while formerly cars might come once a week now starting at dawn cars are moving to Accra. According to RT, an elderly

widow who came to Afuaman from the Volta Region with her husband when she was a young woman, “Transportation was a major problem. We would sleep by the roadside for the whole day before we got a lorry to convey both of us and our luggage to the market. Now it is better. Our things get to the market much faster.” Likewise KQ claimed, “we go and sell and make a profit, personally, I have benefitted.” Improved transportation has allowed households to produce more vegetables for the purpose of sale in the market. Furthermore it has enhanced women’s petty trading activities as they can now easily sell vegetables in Makola Market, the main market in Accra, and purchase processed flours, prepared food and other material goods for resale in the village. According to RT, “women can easily change their trades from one to another. Our work is more progressive than the men. You may use the money you have to buy something and sell. You make sure you sell them very fast so that you can buy another batch and sell.” It is evident from RT and KQ’s comments that the geographic changes in recent years have created both opportunities and constraints. In Chapter Five, I will discuss how these opportunities for women have also added to their power in intra-household negotiations over access and control of land.

Structural Adjustment

Several studies (Brown and Kerr 1997; Clark and Manuh 1991; Elson 1994; Gladwin 1991; Manuh 1994a, 1994b, 1998) have argued that in Ghana and Africa in general, women in particular bear the brunt of the micro-level impacts of structural adjustment. According to Manuh (1998: 4),

[b]ecause of their specific roles and positions within society, women have been among the worst affected by cuts in social sector spending, where substantial costs have been shifted from the state to the household. As a consequence, women

have been forced to take on an increasing burden of unpaid work in caring for the sick, obtaining food and ensuring the survival of their families more generally.

Diane Elson's (1994) study of the constitution of gender at the multiple levels of micro, meso, and macro economics demonstrates the ways in which macroeconomic policies and the market are "bearers of gender" (1994: 39). She indicates that "[c]urrent forms of economic policy reform that emphasize rolling back the state and liberating market forces give scant consideration to how this will impact on the 'reproductive economy'" (1994: 41). At the macro-level, the SAPs may appear gender neutral. However, they depend on the unpaid labour of women to meet household needs such as provision of food and healthcare.

SAPs have had a negative impact on a broad cross-section of society. For many poorer and middle income households the SAP has meant a rise in household costs, such as food, which cannot be met with current household incomes, especially among retrenched workers from the formal sector. Brown and Kerr (1997: 54) have noted that small holders bear the burden of the decision to remove subsidies from fertilizers, pesticides, seeds and tractors, which resulted in dramatic rises in prices for these items. Gladwin and Manuh (1991) show that the ERP has intensified constraints on traders, as the informal sector has been forced to absorb large numbers of individuals who lost jobs in the formal sector.

While the government of Ghana has recognized that there have been social costs associated with the SAP, their Programme of Actions to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) (1987) regards the social adjustments as a short term problem. Based on research in Ghana by Manuh (1994a, 1994b, 1998) and Clark and Manuh

(1991) it is evident that PAMSCAD has not been a success and the 'short-term' problems persist. According to Manuh (1994b: 74),

[w]ithout a doubt these schemes, which are *ad hoc*, short term and reach only a few women, cannot provide an answer to the unemployment and serious problems facing informal sector workers in Ghana today. It is clear from the situation on the ground that for the majority of retrenched men and women, solutions are still found at the individual level, as households struggle with the daily round of survival.

Manuh (1994a) shows that, in Ghana, peri-urban zones under structural adjustment have become areas where struggles for access and/or control and use of land are intensified. She discusses land struggles on a number of occasions as an inter and intra household issue in the peri urban area of Kumasi because of structural adjustment and competition for land related to urban expansion. As Manuh's analysis indicates the SAP in Ghana has amplified some of the pressure on land in peri-urban areas in Ghana. While Brown and Kerr (1997: 57) observed a correlation in rural communities in Ghana between the negative impacts of the ERP on small holder livelihoods and an increase in the production of certain lucrative seasonal crops, such as vegetables, according to price trends, Manuh (1998: 5) also observes similar trends in peri-urban areas noting that many women farmers have "... taken advantage of new opportunities to produce vegetables for urban markets on fringe land using highly labour-intensive practices." Likewise, evidence from Berry's (1997) study of tomato growers, and Adamo's (1999) study of female market gardeners, shows that this is a critical and popular strategy for women and small holders in Ghana's peri-urban areas. Their studies also show that the social and economic uncertainty, intensified during the period of structural adjustment, has reinforced the need for households to pursue multiple income generating activities, favour

flexible production systems with fast turnover rates, and multiply channels of access to resources by increasing investments in social institutions and key relationships.

Evidence from Afuaman corroborates the foregoing arguments, which assert that the social and economic uncertainty exacerbated by the ERP requires individual and local level strategies and ingenuity in order to ensure individual and household survival. For many poorer and middle income households, the SAP has meant a rise in household costs, such as food, which cannot be met with current household incomes. For many of the older participants, the cost of living in Ghana had risen dramatically and they discussed drastic changes in prices throughout their lifetime. Some participants could not estimate what portion of their income was used to purchase food and several said that the amount fluctuated depending on the season and the quality of the harvest, however, over half of the participants said they spent more than 50% of their income on household food. Other informants also cited medical expenses and school fees as major financial constraints. Women in the village said that school fees had become a great burden on Ghanaian families. They also claimed that money and income generation had become a greater focus in their lives noting that things have become much more difficult in recent years, many claiming they noticed changes since the current government under J.J. Rawlings⁶. In addition, PAMSCAD has not brought any benefits to this community. The District Assemblyman for Afuaman claims that the Ga District has largely been overlooked by PAMSCAD while money is directed to rural areas further north. Discussing the SAP in Ghana, he stated that the Ga District has been neglected and made

⁶ Rawlings came to power in 1981 and ruled without Parliament until 1992. He was elected as President in 1992 and again in 1996. In accordance with the 1992 Constitution, which limits the President to two terms he called elections and stepped down in 2000. The main opposition party came to power in both Presidential and Parliamentary elections in December 2000.

the following comment about the social program: “the village lies in Greater Accra Metropolitan Area and the government thinks that area is already developed so they bypass the village.”

Secondary income generating activities are critical strategies that individuals and households pursue in order to meet the rising costs of living in Ghana and to offset some of the costs of farming that are no longer subsidized by the government since the implementation of the ERP. Access to money has become critically important for individual and household survival. Women in most households engage in several income generating activities. KQ, who began preparing palm oil after an injury prevented her from working with QN on the farm, claimed, “it is quite true that you need a second job in addition to farming to supplement your income. When I was strong enough apart from the farm I prepared *banku*⁷ and sold it. I also gather firewood and sell some for extra income.” Likewise LK, a state employee who has a comparatively large farm, reflected on the importance of having another job in addition to farming: “what we receive from the farm is not sufficient to take care of us all year round. So it is very important to have a second job to supplement the income from the farm.” Several participants claimed that the farm alone does not provide sufficient income to last throughout the year. It is necessary for all adults members of a household to engage in at least one income-generating activity. In addition to farming, most male household members also fish in the Densu River. For the majority of residents this is a short-term seasonal activity, however, some of the more experienced fishermen fish year-round. In addition six male participants worked outside Afuaman as civil servants, security officers, drivers, or in the

⁷ A staple food, especially among the Ewe, that is made from fermented corn dough.

dry season, as casual labourers in the building industry. For the most part, women engaged in small-scale food processing and/or petty trading, some of them owning small stores in Afuaman which sold various household items such as soap and matches, food products such as rice, flours, and prepared foods, as well as beverages including drinking water, alcohol, beer and soft drinks. Only eight women who participated in the study did not simultaneously engage in farming and another income generating activity. Most of these women were constrained from pursuing farming because of old age, injury or time demands from a young family.

Household and individual livelihood strategies rely on diverse income sources, with husbands and wives each retaining exclusive control over their own incomes. Men and women were adamant that they should not pool resources. While infidelity and polygamy were cited as some of the reasons why women did not share their earnings with their husbands, this explanation does not capture some of the other pragmatic reasons for this type of household financial management, nor does it explain why men also support this practice. Women prefer to control their income to meet some of the daily needs of the children in particular, but men also count on their wives' incomes when their money runs out. It means that there is another account to draw from particularly during seasonal shortages. Participants in the study described women's incomes as a supplement to their husbands' incomes. However, it is evident from the ways in which their incomes are spent, that women's incomes are critical in terms of covering costs of food, farming, education and healthcare that have all risen dramatically as a result of reforms implemented under the ERP. Husbands were supposed to cover large household living expenses, including major food purchases. However, in practice women also spent most

of their incomes on household items. Households depended on this 'supplementary' income to meet the rising cost of living, to pay school fees and to cover some of the expenditures from farming activities. In particular women emphasized that they often used their incomes to hire labour or a tractor at the start of the farming season when their husbands had run out of money. Women's incomes replace the subsidies on fertilizers, pesticides and farming implements that the government cut under structural adjustment. Women emphasized that the main focus in Afuaman is on farming. However, the trading activities are important because they provide income for personal purchases (such as cloth) and capital input for the farms. RA underscored the importance of women's income generating activities. While we were discussing the importance of trading, she told me "women serve as elements of social change. When they sell and get more money they are able to come out of hardships that they may be experiencing." Her comments show the critical importance of trading incomes to household economics.

In order to cope with the social and economic uncertainty and increasing pressures on household and individual finances, some residents in Afuaman have attempted to generate higher incomes by increasing production of vegetable crops. NB is an elderly woman, a Ga, born in Afuaman, who is relatively poor. She is a widow and although she remarried, her husband does not reside with her in Afuaman. She is the sole living heir of her father's land, portions of which she has allocated to her children and step nieces and nephews. Her children, two married women and one married man, all farm portions of the land under her advice and provide her with food and money from the sale of vegetables. She plans to eventually divide all the land among them. She says she noticed more than ten years ago a great change in prices which she characterizes as "obvious to everyone."

The following excerpt from her transcript describes her household's decision to increase production on her land.

It's now that we are going to do it. It used to be small. Formerly when there were no vehicles [when it was difficult to transport] we worked on a very small scale. But now transportation has been eased. Again formerly when we worked on a small-scale things were not expensive. Now things are expensive so we have to work on a large-scale to enable us to derive everything we want/need from it... We used to buy *kenkey*⁸ for ½ pesewa⁹ or 1 pesewa; now *kenkey* is sold at 100, 200 and 300 cedis. It implies that we are 'progressing'. So we have to farm on a large scale to benefit from it.

While she understands the changes to be at least in part due to the growth of Accra, her experience also correlates with changes in the cost of living that have been attributed to the SAP. She later agreed that it is absolutely necessary to grow some food because of the rising cost of food. At the same time, her account points to one of the benefits which have come as a result of the expansion of Accra -- improvements in transportation infrastructure which have allowed women to travel to Makola Market on a daily basis to sell produce.

Manuh's (1994a) arguments also show that land struggles are often the result of the interaction between the effects of structural adjustment, population growth, and land use changes in peri-urban areas. In fact, it is difficult to attribute changes solely to the SAP because it has often exacerbated existing difficulties and continues to interact with other socio-economic and political changes. Not only is land being converted from agricultural uses to industrial uses and housing developments, but at the same time more people are trying to access land for farming in order to cope with constant changes in

⁸ A staple food, especially among the Ga, that is made from fermented corn dough.

⁹ There are 100 pesewas in a cedi. Due to inflation, pesewas no longer exist. The smallest coin in regular circulation is 50 cedis.

food prices. The Agriculture Extension Officer for Afuaman describes the situation well. The Agricultural Extension officer migrated to Afuaman from the Volta Region. He is responsible for Afuaman and six other villages and has accessed land in many of these villages. Some of the villages where he works have experienced great problems including chieftaincy disputes and excessive authorized and unauthorized sandwinning. The following edited excerpts have been pieced together from a series of interviews.

Formerly when I came here there was no difficulty acquiring land. But because of how the conditions of Ghana have become, everybody wants land to chop [to eat] today. There is no land for them. Because they use the greater part of the land for sandwinning... Formerly, I think 20 years ago, it wasn't like that. I can move from here and weed any place. But presently you can't do that unless you ask someone before... Really some places are covered about 3 or 4 years ago because of sandwinning you can't farm there again. Now the place is squeezed with many people. Therefore where you don't farm formerly, you have to get near your neighbours that you share his one hectare with 4 or 5 people.

The problem he describes, an increasing number of people seeking land to grow food for household consumption, and the time frame he provides coincides with implementation of the SAP and the problems many scholars have described. At the same time one can see that the expansion of industry associated with building developments and the pressures created by structural adjustment interact to intensify pressures on the land. Later he drew a link between money and the extent of sandwinning in the Ga District by arguing that the constant need for money in Ghana is a strong factor influencing elders to sell land to sandwinning companies.

This sandwinning they want to stop. For me the thing is that it can't be stopped. Because the chiefs themselves they want money to do their own thing and they do not have it. If there is sandwinning they can do their own thing... One thing is, because how Ghana is, everybody wants money to do his own thing. Therefore what you can do to survive is what you do. Because the land is in your hands. You have supporters who will tell you that 'we support you, let's go and do this'.

His comments point to the complex interaction between the macro-economic policy and the political economy of urbanization around Accra. Both the above passages place changes in the Ga District within the context of changes in living conditions in Ghana in recent years. His remarks “how the conditions of Ghana have become” and “because how Ghana is” were common in other interviews and meetings in Afuaman, and in casual conversations with other Ghanaians outside the research project. They reflect a general mood of intensified burden and hardship that people experience in their daily lives in Ghana since the implementation of the SAP. His accounts also point to a paradox in this strategy to access cash, in that this strategy to meet immediate needs for money comes at the expense of the need to protect the current agricultural livelihoods in the long term.

Compulsory Land Acquisition

The third contextual factor for the land struggles in Afuaman concerns the compulsory acquisition of their lands in 1975 and the ongoing threat of resettlement. It too both reflects and shapes the geography of peri-urban Accra. My informant in the Ga District Town and Country Planning Office claimed that acquisition of land by the government without compensation was a key issue in the Ga District. The acquisition of the lands of Afuaman and several other villages is also another by-product of urbanization, as the purpose is directly related to meeting the needs of a growing urban population. Under the State Lands Act, 1962 (Act 125), any land, whether it is private, family or stool land, can be compulsorily acquired when the government feels it is doing so in the public interest. An executive instrument which details the site, dimensions, and time of acquisition is issued and compensation is to be paid to the land owners. (Kasanga et al., 1996: 8). Compulsory acquisition of land is not unique to the Ga District.

However, according to Kasanga et al. (1996: 9) more than 50% of Ga lands (in the Ga District, Tema District, and Accra) have been compulsorily acquired.

The lands in Afuaman were acquired by the State in 1975 because they lie in the path of the Densu River. The river was blocked with the building of the Weiija Dam to create a reservoir to provide piped water to the suburban areas that were spreading out from the west end of Accra. The land now belongs to the Water and Sewerage Corporation, which became a private company under the SAP. When the dam was built, many residents lost their best land which was located close to the river. According to a Ministry of Lands and Forestry report on acquisition of lands in Afuaman (1999: 2), “[a]ll human activities carried out by the people in this village affect the water quality of the dam and the living environment of the area.” Since the acquisition of lands the residents have been warned that they will be relocated.

The Ministry’s 1999 report sets out the modalities for the resettlement of the village. Unfortunately, the entire report is no more than 3.5 pages and therefore provides little detail about what a resettlement would look like. What is striking about the whole process is the lack of a common understanding between various departments, levels of government and residents over what the resettlement entails. Key informants, including the GAMA Town and Country Planning Office, the Ga District Town and Country Planning Office, the Ministry of Lands and Forestry, the District Assemblyman and the *Asafoatse*, differed in their understandings of the resettlement process. The issue was discussed in various participant interviews and in the group meetings with the women’s group and the agro-forestry group. It is evident from these meetings and interviews that what a resettlement will actually mean is not understood or shared by everyone. Key

informants at the Ministry, and both Town and Country Planning Offices, indicated that the resettlement would mean that residents would be removed from both the village proper and their farm lands. Reflecting on the effects of the resettlement on individual land holdings (particularly potential losses) the District Officer for Town and Country Planning explained "If you had 10 [acres] on the old you will get 10 [acres] on the new. On the other hand the chief and elders use their discretion. At the new site you may not necessarily have the same amount of land." Likewise, the representative for GAMA Town and Country Planning stated, "as much as possible we will not let the people suffer - they should come out of this better - not feel the loss. We will recommend that the plots should be bigger." From these statements one is led to believe that the resettlement will include both buildings and lands. However, the District Assemblyman indicated that the resettlement will not necessarily affect farm lands. His sentiments were echoed in the agroforestry meeting when group members debated what resettlement would mean in terms of their tree farms and cited a similar situation in a nearby village where the people were resettled but were able to continue farming their original lands. This experience also corroborates Moore's arguments (1993: 359) that "... the state itself is internally differentiated and is itself a site of struggle."

Social Impacts of the Resettlement Process

The uncertainty created by the constant threat of resettlement is a source of ongoing tension as reflected in the following comment from NN, an older Ga male ,

The land here is said to belong to the government because of the Weija Water Works people. They say this area is in the way of the river. They marked our building [for demolition] without compensation. No compensation whatsoever. This village is among six others that are to be re-located but we haven't been re-located. This is a bone of contention between us and the government. They

haven't compensated us, they don't relocate us but they have marked our buildings. We don't object to the resettlement since they are the government. They don't relocate us and yet they worry us.

The residents and the elders have two main concerns regarding the resettlement. The first is that they are given enough land for their needs and the needs of future generations. The other big issue is that they refuse to become subjects under another stool (land holding group). MN, a village elder, reflected on these two issues:

Our fear about the resettlement is that they won't get us enough land for our farms. We are farmers working along the river. They must get us a similar place, or give us back our land. Our children and children's children will need land too. We have categorically told them that we don't want to come under a different authority. This may bring disputes. We feel that the traditional way of doing things will come under pressure so we told them by writing to find us an equal and well situated land for us. We suggested that we should be settled at the outskirts of this village... When we are resettled we won't get any benefit. You may sleep in a better room but fight with the original land owners. You can't send your stool there. [No stool] can be put on another.

His comments capture the two main concerns, and moreover, indicate that despite commitments by the Resettlement Committee to improve the quality of life for residents with new homes, schools etc¹⁰, the elders anticipate that they will still suffer. Their comments also show that, for residents in Afuaman, this struggle is both material in terms of the loss of lands, and symbolic because of the loss of their stool and the opportunities it provides to access resources through the negotiation and use of customary norms.

Given the amount of time that has already passed, many residents are hopeful that they will never be relocated at all. JT's remarks capture sentiments that were conveyed by many of the residents of Afuaman:

¹⁰ According to the Ministry of Lands and Forestry document "Report on Modalities for Resettlement of Afuaman Village" (1999: 4), "...the whole resettlement process, after its completion, should produce a better standard of living for the people, i.e. reducing poverty among the population by improving their economic activities through technical and financial assistance."

The land is now vested in the government through the executive instrument. As far back as 20 years ago the executive instrument came into being. The land was taken over by the government for water and sewage. We are yearning for the government to remove the executive instrument so that the village can acquire the land as its own bona fide property. But the Water and Sewerage [Corporation], the other interest group, are saying that they will resettle us so that they take over the land. This is what is happening. So for 20 years we were here and nothing has happened so maybe, if God provides He will help us to stay on and nothing will happen.

At the women's group meeting, participants claimed that they were not worried about the resettlement because the government had to make the first move by making the land available for a new settlement, something they believe after so many years is not likely to happen. The *Asafoatse* told me he also believes they will never do it. Key informants with ADRA, the NGO organizing the agro-forestry projects in the Ga District, and at the Ministry, also doubted the matter would be resolved simply because of the enormous financial burden it would place on the Water and Sewerage Corporation. Despite these hopes and predictions, the threat of resettlement is a key factor overshadowing resource relations in Afuaman and reinforcing the climate of social and economic uncertainty.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to look at the contextual circumstances of the land struggles/negotiations in Afuaman and the meanings they have in daily struggles and resource relations. By focusing on the contextual factors as they are experienced in the lives of several participants, it is evident that the encroachment of Accra, the micro-level impacts of the ERP and the acquisition of lands foster, and mutually reinforce, an environment of social and economic uncertainty for individual residents and the community as a whole. The three contextual factors -- the geography of peri-urban areas, the impact of the SAP, and the compulsory acquisition of lands -- interact with one

another as they manifest themselves in people's lives. While a few people have benefitted from changes associated with these factors, many residents have suffered major losses in land holdings and expressed great discomfort when reflecting on their future. Some make short-term gains at the expense of long term livelihood security. I have shown in this chapter that the residents in Afuaman are social actors, who respond to external change, capitalize on or create opportunities in a place and time characterized by intensified social and economic uncertainty.

Chapter Five
Identity and Social Meanings:
Negotiating Access to and Control of Land

Research in African societies has uncovered the enormous complexity, fluidity and heterogeneity of land struggles and gender relations. Land has been shown to be a material resource, essential to reproduction and economic viability, and at the same time a critical symbolic resource because it is used in the ongoing construction of gender, class, ethnicity and meaningful group identities (Carney and Watts 1990, Mackenzie 1998; Moore 1996 and 1993; Watts 1993). This research also shows that land struggles must be understood within the context of a constellation of struggles over labour, produce, control of resources, and decision-making (Watts 1993). Leach (1994) shows that to understand the way that men and women can negotiate their rights to land, studies must also reflect on related livelihood issues such as finances. It is therefore essential to examine the multitude of discursive strategies that are used in resource struggles. Careful attention must be paid to the way that symbolic resources are constructed through the negotiation of identity, history and memory (Berry 1997; Moore 1993). According to Berry (1997) individuals rely on and protect the flexibility and negotiability of social institutions (rather than the institutions themselves) because it is the negotiating spaces within these institutions which offer the means to cope with the impacts of internal and external changes such as those discussed in the preceding chapter. It is therefore more fruitful to study the negotiations within and between social institutions than to study them as ahistorical traditions. By doing so it becomes apparent that individuals and households regard ambiguity and flexibility as assets, not as constraints.

The objective of this chapter is to build the main argument of this thesis by examining two components of the argument in particular: first, that struggles over land are both material and symbolic, and second, that struggles over land must be explored within the context of related social and economic practices including socially constructed and contested roles and responsibilities revolving around household financial practices and the gender division of labour. By returning to stories from the preceding chapter, I wish to reinforce that these land struggles are historically and spatially specific and that the customary idioms that are used to assert and reinforce claims to land are contested within the context of a geography and historical period that is characterized by insecurity and uncertainty.

The first part of the chapter examines the construction of identities through resource relations, and illustrates some of the ways that women and men are able to use these identities. The discussion here will reinforce the arguments outlined in chapters one and two that rights in land are rights in people. 'Natives', 'strangers' and 'pioneers' are three symbolic identities which people use to explain and justify their claims to land. A critical study of these idioms reveals the ways in which they are constructed and contested through resource relations. By looking at the construction of these identities, the complexity of land struggles is evident. To understand the way in which gender, ethnicity and class are mutually constituted through resource struggles, this chapter shares details from the experiences of men and women differentiated by class and ethnicity who use these idioms in their land struggles. While residents can justify their

¹ I use the term 'native' here because it is the term used by residents in Afuaman. It is used in the same sense that Berry (1997) uses the term citizen. A native is a Ga whose family comes from Afuaman. As the discussion in this chapter will show, it is a contested term.

rights to land using simple rule statements, a study of their individual stories of access, control and loss of land reveals the diversity of experiences, the complexity of resource relations and the contested nature of the three identities. By looking at the ways that these categories are contested and negotiated through land struggles, I wish to convey to the reader that these material struggles are at the same time symbolic struggles.

The purpose of the second part of the chapter is to show that land struggles must be explored within the context of inter-related struggles and negotiated practices at the intra-household level. In the same way that the categories 'native' 'stranger' and 'pioneer' are used in community-level resource relations, women construct and use identities of wife, mother, and trader in household land struggles over access to and control of land and production decisions. At the household level in particular, resource struggles are a part of men's and women's everyday negotiations over the meanings of marriage, and the multiple identities of women. It is therefore critical that the analysis situates the land struggles/negotiations within the daily experiences of men and women. To comprehend better the diverse ways in which women access land, and/or exercise some control over households lands, it is necessary to look carefully at social and economic practices in the household, to critically analyze livelihood strategies, and to interrogate various women's roles as household managers and traders, and their meanings as they relate to women's abilities to access and control land and produce.

'Natives', 'Strangers', and 'Pioneers'

This section examines the contested meanings of the three socially constructed categories of 'native' 'stranger' and 'pioneer'. These three categories are components of

'discourses of belonging' which are used to forge group and community identities. In Ghana, 'stools', a customary institution representing a land holding group and/or community, are important symbols for social and political allegiance and community, family and ethnic identity. The lands in Afuaman are stool lands - lands held by chiefly authorities in trust for the community. Normally lands in the community are administered by a chief and council of elders. However, the recent death of the chief in Afuaman has left matters solely to the council. Afuaman is a Ga village, an ethnic group which has historically occupied the lands in and around Accra. However, there is a significant number of first and second generation migrants in Afuaman, nearly all of them Ewes from the Volta Region. Since the land in Afuaman is stool land, residents must situate themselves in relation to the stool (and the elders). I share extensive excerpts from interviews in order to capture the rich stories which are used to explain and justify specific rights to land. The fact that individuals share these stories and make these rhetorical claims underscores the symbolic importance of these identities which mediate access to land. The stories from Afuaman reveal that cultural norms and social institutions are flexible, dynamic processes, and, more importantly, they are negotiated symbols of local resource politics. In several cases, I return to some stories from Chapter Four to show the ways in which these three identities are contested, emphasizing that they do not provide uniform opportunities or protection for individuals and households differentiated vis-à-vis class, and gender in particular. They reveal that a woman using these identities does not necessarily realize the same opportunities as a man using the same identity; that poor women and men negotiate the categories differently than wealthy

and powerful women and men; and that women themselves cannot be treated as a homogeneous category as they are differentiated by the ways in which they can negotiate and use these categories.

'Natives'

In Ghana, there is a general shared understanding of the term 'native'. When a man or woman describes him or herself as a 'native', they are telling their audience that they are a full legitimate member of the community. Implied in their statement is that they are more than just a resident of that community, or a tenant on that land. Rather, they trace their lineage to that community and therefore they *are* that community. In terms of accessing land, one who claims to be a 'native' is implicitly (and occasionally explicitly) indicating that their ancestors were the first inhabitants of the land, that they have a history with the establishment of that particular stool, and therefore they should have uncontested individual and inheritable usufruct rights to the land. Their sense of belonging in the community, which therefore affords them their rights to farm the land, is illustrated by the following statement from a man in Afuaman who identifies himself as a 'native': "well the community allows me to farm it because we are/make the community." What is not immediately apparent when the category is presented as a norm is that it is not fixed such that, within the shared understanding of the term, there is room to negotiate its meanings and possibilities. In fact, who can claim to be a 'native' and how they can use that claim, is differentiated by gender and class.

The construction of the 'native' identity reveals that ethnicity and kinship are key factors in determining rights to land because it is meant to convey, in this case, that the

claimant is a Ga, and that they trace their lineage through at least one of their four grandparents to the stool in Afuaman. At the same time, class and gender are also important axes of social differentiation which determine or mediate an individual's ability to own, access, use or control land. Class, for example, is both constituted and constitutive of resource relations. In wealth ranking exercises, I instructed the key informants to set their own criteria for determining class levels. The informants considered money and material wealth as factors. However access to or control of resources was another important factor. Therefore, even though some elders appeared to be materially poor, they were consistently ranked in the top category because of their power in the community, which is symbolized through the stool and their trusteeship of the community's lands.

Very few women who could claim an identity as a 'native' described any problems accessing land, and usually cited other family obligations (such as caring for young children) as reasons they have not pursued offers of land from mothers, husbands, uncles, and other kin. Several women inherited their mother's land and, contrary to several ethnographies and analyses of Ga custom (see Azu 1974; Kilson 1974; Robertson 1984) some women in Afuaman even inherited land from their fathers. Some women requested and were given plots of the household land from their husbands for both subsistence production and market gardening. At the same time, women made it clear that, while they have some influence, men have more power and authority in community relations. The *Asafoatse* first claimed that men and women are treated the same but later

admitted that women require their husbands to represent them when accessing new plots of land from the elders or to resolve disputes over land.

The shared understanding of 'a native' also paints an ahistorical picture of 'the community', and even attempts to present ethnicity as a fixed category. Several informants indicated that the elders in Afuaman were of the same family and that is why Afuaman does not have any of the leadership disputes which have erupted recently in other villages in the Ga District. Presumably, the elders were 'natives' who could trace their lineage in the area back many generations. However, in an oral history MN (an elder) uncovered a different story:

When I came of age my father told me that they were from Fanteland. They migrated to this village and set up the elders of this village. They came with their sisters. Those who had been here before our fathers came married the sisters of our fathers. We were born as a result. Since then they stopped going to our home town... we are now stuck here.

Fantes are a different ethnic group who are mainly settled along the coast of Ghana to the west of Accra (Central Region). Not only does the family of elders have a recent history in Afuaman, they also have a recent history as Gas. The fact that the elders are able to use the category 'native' so successfully is reinforced by an account of another elder who told me that the village is over 200 years old, revealing that other lineages had established the village long before. This story underscores the flexible and porous nature of social institutions, and the fluidity of ethnicity in Ghana particularly among the Ga (see also Robertson 1984: 168)

A claim to the 'native' identity is often used to demonstrate entitlement to land. People who can use this identity to access land give the appearance of straightforward

land claims. The following excerpts from my conversation with NC, a poor, middle aged, male, who inherited land from his father, shows the confidence expressed by many who claim to be 'natives'. It also underscores the importance of (first) cultivation in land claims.

- K: Do you own them [your plots of land] outright or you just farm them?
 NC: I can say that they are mine now. That's to say that I'll have to release it to anyone who wishes to farm on it.
 K: Are there people who have overlapping rights and interests to the land?
 NC: I'll have to see the elders to give me documents covering it before I can sell it.
 K: Did your father have documents on the land?
 NC: When the village was established, whichever land one cultivated became one's property.
 K: If you want to sell the land, how can you do so without documents?
 NC: I'll inform the chief about it to sign for me.
 K: Why?
 NC: To witness the transaction.

It is evident that cultivation of the land was and is a key practice which established rights to access, control and 'own' land in Afuaman. Documentation did not establish a claim to land, rather it served as a witness in the event of a sale to an outsider. It is also important to note that the government's interest in the land, through the compulsory acquisition, is not a part of his conversation.

Working the Category of 'Native': Securing Claims to Land in the Ga District

In the preceding chapter, I discussed NA's experience losing land that he left fallow for a number of years while he temporarily migrated to another area to work in a factory. As evidenced by his claims to the land after returning to the community following an extended absence, he had not expected that his individual rights to that land would be lost by leaving it fallow and unattended. While NA can claim to be a 'native',

this does not necessarily translate into inalienable and uncontested claims. In view of the intensified competition for lands fostered in particular by the encroachment of Accra, it is apparent from NA's experiences (as well as QN's experience of leaving lands fallow) that it is critical even for those who claim the 'native' identity to protect their land claims. At the same time, residents in Afuaman are placed in a difficult position in terms of protecting their lands through cultivation and short fallow periods, since (as is also documented in Brown and Kerr 1997: 54) the exorbitantly high prices of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and tractors during the period of structural adjustment has meant that many residents have faced difficulties bringing more of their lands under cultivation, a strategy that would help them to protect their lands from encroachment as well as meet individual and household needs for food and income. These constraints on expanding farms were cited by the majority of participants in this study.

Even those who can use the idiom of 'native' rely on witnesses, often within their families, to protect their claims to land particularly now when the number of people looking for land is increasing. KG is a middle aged man who identifies himself as a 'native'. He is currently farming on four plots of land: a cassava farm, an oil palm plantation, an okra farm and a farm where he has planted leaves that are used to prepare *waatse*². These excerpts from KG's interviews account for the different plots of land where he farms and explore the themes I have just discussed, illustrating some of the nuances in land claims. He addresses the idea of community lands, the meanings of land

² A early to mid-day meal made of rice and beans

ownership and shows the way in which family members work to mutual benefit to maintain their claims to land.

We are still on the old man's [father's] land that we inherited... I'm here with one other brother farming the same land towards the opposite end... There are plots of land belonging to my father and other relatives which can always be accessed. Most of them are old now so they don't do any farming... The cassava plot belongs to the community. It was lying fallow so I farmed it. You can farm the community land that is lying fallow without seeing anybody. Unless, of course, there is somebody farming it. Then you seek permission to farm it... The one here was given to me by my paternal uncle. He's now old. In order to prevent the land being taken over by someone, he asked me to farm it. That's what I used to plant okra... He just told me to 'be' there. At the end of the season when the harvest is good, I give him something. But he hasn't told me to give him something at the end of the season. He's like my father. Today if I have something, I have to give him something... It's [also] community land, but he is the chief priest of the village. He began farming that plot from 'infancy'. Since he has been farming there, it appears as if he owns the land... I consulted him prior to farming that land that he should give the land to me to farm it since he could no longer farm. He then told me to go ahead and farm lest some other people would farm it without his consent. He told me to be there and report any trespassers to him... A cousin, even gave me a portion of his land which I've used to plant the leaves that are used to prepare *waatse*.. So the plots are now four. It's one acre. It is like a new site. I'll work there till he tells me to take over completely, then maybe we'll enter into an agreement. He told me he could no longer farm so I should go and take over otherwise someone else would do so.

KG's claims to land draw upon kinship ties and his inclusion in the community.

He reveals the way in which kin cooperate with one another to their mutual benefit in order to protect their claims against others. Even though his uncle is an important elder in the village, he still calls upon younger kin to maintain his claims to land. KG serves as a witness by following his uncle's instructions to 'be there'. These excerpts also help to explain people's sense of security and ownership of their plots of land. Although his uncle's land is community land, KG states 'since he has been farming there it appears as if he *owns* it'. This statement reveals the extent to which people recognize that

cultivation establishes secure, long term rights to community land, including a sense of ownership.

If we return to the story of KQ and her husband QN, and compare it in particular with NA's story, it is evident that the meaning of the identity of 'native' can be different for women, and that it is also cross-cut with relations of class. NA indicated that upon realizing that they had sold his land, the elders immediately promised to find him another plot (although he continues to wait for this new land). KQ's experience was remarkably different. She and her husband claim that they fought bitterly with the elders and were eventually paid a sum of money for compensation that amounted to less than the cost of renting the tractor and was not even equal to value of the crops on the land. Analyzing their comments it seems that a number of factors came into play including class, gender and ethnicity. KQ and her husband are quite poor compared to other participants in the study. While she can claim to be a 'native', her husband, although born in Afuaman, is a 'stranger' (see the following section) and therefore has a different relationship with the community, particularly in terms of access to resources. When KQ was reflecting on the experience she implied that the fact that she was a 'native' is the reason that she did not lose all her land (and conversely her husband lost all his land because he is a 'stranger'). She also claimed that since both her parents were dead, she had no one to speak for her. Her comments imply that her husband, as a witness and representative, does not have as much power or sway as would her parents who could also claim the identity of 'native'. Her story shows that being a 'native' does not translate into straightforward, uncontested rights to land nor does it mean the same thing for individuals differentiated by gender and

class. As a woman, married to a 'stranger', her claims to be a 'native' only offered a small degree of protection and bargaining power in her resource relations with the community.

'Strangers'

The shared understanding of a 'stranger' is that the person or their ancestors are migrants to the community. However, as the elder's story shows, a 'stranger' is a person who cannot successfully claim to be a 'native'. His story shows that the meanings of 'native' and 'stranger' are not fixed. The experiences of migrants in Afuaman are quite varied. The negotiating position of a person labeled 'stranger' varies as it is cross cut with relations of gender and class. While QN's experience of having his land sold to builders might lead one to believe that being labeled a 'stranger' translates into very weak claims to land, it does not in fact reflect the experiences of many others who are also characterized in Afuaman as 'strangers'. The fact that his land was lying fallow for ten years might have been a greater determining factor for his loss of land. Moreover, his relative poverty in the community in terms of both influence and material wealth could also have been important factors.

The great majority of migrants seemed at ease with their rights to land and their ability to access more land. Many migrants emphasized that they were 'open with them' (the elders and the community) and experienced no problems, often farming without any formal agreement in place. While some rented land from 'natives' in the community, many others acquired plots themselves by performing the necessary customary practices, or inherited land from their parents who had previously performed the rites. The

customary rites reinforce the distinctions between the categories of 'native' and 'stranger'. NC is a middle aged Ewe man who migrated to Afuaman from the Volta Region with his wife. They acquired land in Afuaman and in Manhean, a neighbouring village. He described the procedures he went through to acquire the land detailing some of sharecropping agreements which are often arranged with the landowners.

When I was acquiring the land, the man told me to bring some money. The chief, the former chief, he told me to bring some money and a drink. That's what I presented before they showed me where to farm. At Manhean too the same thing... We have the Ewes and the Gas. The Ewes for them, they hire the land, Not as they hire the land but sometimes they do *abusa* [split in 3 with 2 parts going to the farmer] or *abunu* [split in 2 equal parts]

Migrants only entered sharecropping agreements with elders when they were farming trees, or distilling *akpeteshie*³ from their sugarcane harvest. For household production and in many cases even for market gardening they did not enter into any formal agreement. However, when arranging for land with other community members rental agreements of some sort were common regardless of the activity on the land.

For the most part the migrants in Afuaman, whether they paid rent, entered sharecropping agreements, or offered drinks in exchange for land, were confident that their lands were secure. For example one woman who cultivates staple crops for the household on a small plot of land claimed, "though the land doesn't belong to my father, nobody will take it from me." Likewise another Ewe woman reflecting on whether 'strangers' had any particular fears about the possible resettlement stated, "obviously we feel at home here, we do all our work here where we've made or acquired property like

³ A locally distilled gin that is made from sugarcane.

oil palm plantations.” Migrants may have specific concerns about the resettlement as they have already worked the ‘stranger’ category to ensure that they can access lands in Afuaman. Resettlement would require new investments in people and social institutions in order to build the relationships that are necessary to access land. While the term ‘stranger’ may imply a certain outsider status, it in fact qualifies a specific type of insider status. Migrants who acquire lands from the elders or the chief are also free to pass the lands to their children. JT explained the process he went through to acquire the lands his father had farmed saying, “it’s transitional because he did the formal acquisition by customary rites. Since I have come to stay here I also continue to stay on the land. This is how it is.” While migrants are typically referred to as ‘strangers’, their experiences show a comfortable degree of integration in the community which facilitates their access to land for both subsistence production, seasonal commercial farming, and tree farming. As JT’s and QN’s very different experience, show the ability of migrants to negotiate and contest the category ‘stranger’ to access and secure rights to land is especially important in times of social and economic uncertainty fostered by SAPs and urban encroachment.

This comfortable degree of integration in the community is the very thing that allows some migrants to contest the meanings of ‘stranger’ and ‘native’ and use the latter category in their resource relations. LK’s story is important because it is an example of the way in which migrants can construct their identities to blur the boundaries between categories like ‘stranger’ and ‘native’ in order to strengthen their claims to land. LK was born in Afuaman, but his parents are from the Northern part of Ghana. His wife,

KN, is also originally from the North. In my first interview with KN, I asked her how her husband acquired his land. She replied, "My husband was born here. He is therefore like a 'native'." Intrigued by her comment I explored the issue further with LK who explained, "I was born in this village. Every member of this community has [a place] where he or she farms. That's the land I have been farming since I came of age." The land he was farming is not the same land which his father had farmed, rather it is a new plot that he found on his own and started cultivating. I then asked whether he was considered a 'stranger'. He replied, "yes, but since I was born here I am no longer a 'stranger'." He went on to claim that he in fact 'owned' his land even though it was not registered and he admitted that the elders could sell a portion of his land in the future. This contradiction in his statement points to the ambiguity of claims. However, it also reveals that LK maintains the ambiguity by making this contradictory claim. While it is clear that he does not own the land in an English common law understanding of the term, his use of that word reinforces his claims to these land holdings and his claim to the symbolic resource of the 'native' identity. His story is an example of the way in which Ghanaians can draw upon the ambiguities of social institutions to construct identities through which they gain favourable access to productive resources.

I suggested earlier that QN's lack of bargaining power in the community for himself and on his wife's behalf was the result of a number of factors including class. He and his wife were ranked very low in the wealth ranking exercises, meaning that they lacked both material wealth and political/social power in the community. On the other hand, LK's and JT's households were ranked very high. LK is currently employed by the

state, and JT, a former state employee, is collecting a pension from the government and working for another organization. In both cases, they used money and/or credit from their outside employment to increase their land holdings, diversify their farming activities and improve productivity on their farms. JT and his wife IT also draw upon their positions and participation in community organizations to enhance their social status in the community. This eases their relations with elders when land disputes do arise. For example, when IT began cultivating mangoes through the agroforestry project, the elders summoned JT to discuss a new agreement which would accommodate the planting of permanent crops. JT reflects on his position in society and his relationship with the elders: "we are being accorded at a certain level in the society, a kind of accreditation. It gives me a lot of recognition. So when the land issue came on so that my wife had to come and tell me, when I went there, the way they treated others was not the way they treated me." As a 'stranger', JT draws upon class and the power it gives him to facilitate favourable negotiations in his resource relations with the community. He and his wife invest in multiple institutions and relationships in the community and with local authorities at the District Assembly. This is a strategy that has been shown to be critical for ensuring access to land and other resources especially in times of economic uncertainty (Berry 1989, 1993).

JT's comment also points to some of the gender issues in the land struggles in Afuaman. Though the mango farm was IT's, it was JT who was summoned before the elders. An Ewe woman informed me that as a woman, "you have no right to go alone." Many women who migrated to Afuaman as adults with their husbands and therefore rely

solely on the institution of marriage to access land. Compared to the Ga women who could claim to be 'natives', migrant women more often expressed the need for a male representative in resource relations. Even where women leased land from another community member, they required the assistance of their husbands in order to arrange the lease. Following the arguments set out in Chapter One regarding women's abilities to acquire titles, in particular evidence from Lastarria-Cornhiel (1997) of very similar dynamics in Swaziland, it is questionable whether migrant women in particular will be able to negotiate and secure claims through title registration.

'Pioneers'

As constructed categories 'native' and 'stranger' are mutually constituted through land struggles at the community level. Both MN's and LK's stories of the construction of identity through resource relations demonstrate that the idioms of 'native' and 'stranger' are contested. The 'pioneer' identity is also forged within the same process, negotiating a position within the contested spaces of the other two identities. QM, an elderly male migrant from the Volta Region, uses this identity. Constructed through resource relations in Afuaman, QM's characterization of himself as a 'pioneer settler' reinforces the negotiability of identity categories and illustrates the way in which history and memory are constructed through land struggles.

They gave the land to us in order for us to 'serve the stool'. We are under the chief of Nleshie. During an occasion the Nleshie chief makes us collect money which the Afuaman chief sends to the Nleshie chief who uses it to perform some rites. No fixed sum is demanded from us. They don't collect anything from those of us who were the pioneers... We were pioneers in the sense that though by ethnicity we were Ewe, there were no Ewes here. We were the first. The community too accepted us and made us join in the farm work so as to join them... During the Odwira festival we are made to contribute to the paramount

stool in the name of Kojo Ababio. This is what we the pioneers are made to do. But the latecomers were/are made to pay *adode* [either rent for the land or sharecropping]. I assist whenever there is an activity going on in the community... They took us for pioneer settlers. The latecomers were made to pay something. I don't know the current agreement. They considered us as partners in establishing the village. On our part, we the pioneer settlers help them whenever there is a land dispute... For example the Denkyira people said that the land in the area where I have been farming belonged to them. But since I have been working on the land as far back as when I arrived in this village in 1956, they became scared. There are even some trees that were very small in those days. They are now big trees. And also mango. What I ate myself and dropped the seeds have grown into trees. So when I said that they become afraid realizing that therefore I'm not a 'stranger'... [I am] a living testimony to the Afuaman people because they gave the land to me. I'm not a native here but I was given land long ago. If the Denkyira people come I'll tell them about the time I got the land and everything will be fine.

QM's story illustrates some of the complexity of identity politics and resource relations in Afuaman. It also shows that history is a contested resource through which people gain and protect their access to land. 'Pioneers' like QM secure their access to land by propagating a history which protects the overall claims of the community where they integrate themselves. As 'a living testimony', the role of the 'pioneer' is to 'serve the stool' in the construction of a history which protects the community's land claims.

Customary Norms and Negotiated Meanings

The foregoing discussion reveals that these three identities are contested and that women and men, differentiated by class and ethnicity, cannot use these identities and make meanings of them equally. It should not be assumed that the fact they are contested is a weakness or a signal of declining legitimacy, rather it is a testimony to their power and relevance. The symbolic struggle imbedded in the contestation of these three categories is mutually forged in the material struggles over land. I argue that individuals benefit from the negotiability of these categories not merely from the categories

themselves. In the face of rapid changes in the Ga District characterized by intensified competition for land, the government's acquisition of lands, and economic constraints intensified because of the SAPs, residents in Afuaman continue to negotiate the meanings of custom, drawing on ambiguities in order to manage livelihoods, and cope with ever changing circumstances in the Ga District. The concerns of the elder regarding the stool, discussed in chapter four, cannot be seen as merely a leader's worry about loss of power in the community. The stool is a symbol through which residents access rights to land in Afuaman. Within Afuaman residents justify rights to land by constructing categories and negotiating their meanings to explain their relationship with the stool - a symbol of the land holding community or group. A critical examination of the way that men and women use these categories uncovers the diversity of experiences between residents and the ways in which other axes of social difference such as class and ethnicity come in to play.

Traders, Wives, Mothers: Household Politics and Resource Relations

The three identities I discussed in the first part of this chapter do not completely capture intra-household negotiations over land and therefore much of the politics of women's access to and control of land is not uncovered. Women's access to land in Afuaman is more often negotiated at the household level. Therefore, to explore the complexity of land rights, it is necessary to look at how intra-household negotiations over roles and responsibilities, and social and economic practices come into play in intra-household negotiations over land (the second component of my argument). The analysis in this part of the chapter builds on arguments that characterize households as spaces of

conflict, negotiation and cooperation by examining the meanings given to household financial management and the multiple roles that women have as traders, wives and mothers, as they relate specifically to women's abilities to access land or exercise some control over the production on household lands. It is important to look at the meanings that women give to these roles because they offer important strategic advantages in terms of decision-making on the farm. Women's roles as traders and household managers have important symbolic implications in terms of their ability to exercise some authority over the decision-making on the farm (especially when they do not have land of their own). It is necessary to understand how they use these roles to understand the decision-making process since there are often discrepancies between statements about decision-making and the process by which these decisions are made that mask women's contribution to household decisions and the ways that they exercise some control over production on household lands. The rest of this chapter looks at the inter-relation of livelihood strategies, secondary income generation, household budgeting, and women's roles and responsibilities both on and off the farm, and examines their meanings in terms of women's access to land.

Accessing Land through Marriage

While Ga women, like women in many other societies in Africa, are most likely to acquire land through their husbands, it is not necessarily the case that they are limited to subsistence production (Davison 1988: 14). As structural adjustment has increased the stress on households to produce food, and generate income through farming and work in the informal sector, many households have taken advantage of improved transportation to

Accra to increase vegetable production. At the same time, family members diversify their household assets by maintaining separate accounts, which as I argued in the preceding chapter helps to protect the financial security of individuals within the household, and the household as a unit. Women use their incomes to support economic activities of their husbands investing in social institutions of marriage and household which, as Berry (1989, 1993, 1997) argues, provides individuals with the means to access resources, including land. As a result, more women in Afuaman are accessing land through marriage not for subsistence production but to generate individual incomes through vegetable production. For example, when I asked LK's wife, KN, what process she went through to access the land from her husband for her okra farm she replied, "I told him give me land to farm." What is significant here is not just the fact that her husband gave her land, but that the land he gave is being used specifically for market gardening. KN keeps the proceeds from this farm and makes all the decisions regarding the farm and its produce. Several other women in Afuaman received land from their husbands' holdings or with their husbands' financial investment so that they could cultivate vegetables for the market or in a couple of cases to plant mangoes and cashews.

Men and women in Afuaman indicated that there is a direct correlation between intra-household land allocation and household financial practices. When I asked QM whether he had included the lands he had allocated to his wife in his accounting of his own land resources he replied, "it doesn't have to be so. You have to give your wife some rights so that if she wants to buy some cloth, it won't be your responsibility." QM's reasons for allocating land to his wife are directly related to issues of financial

management. He provides his wife with land to relieve himself of some financial responsibilities. NA shared how his wife raised a separate income explaining “sometimes I give her a portion of my farm. When the crops are harvested and sold she keeps the money.” KG indicated that he and his wife have a similar arrangement stating “... women keep the proceeds of their farm. When she needs something she uses it to buy. Mine is used throughout the off season until it is exhausted, then she comes in to assist.” Again his comments show the link between the allocation of this land and a household livelihood strategy which depends on separate accounts for husbands and wives. Another women claimed that when she requested land from her husband he would not object, “... because the proceeds from the farm will be [hers].” She would spend the money on the household.

In some cases, husbands not only allocated some of their own land to their wives, but helped them to acquire new plots of land from other people in the community. AP is an Ewe woman, who is married to a Ga who can trace his lineage to Afuaman through both parents. In wealth ranking exercises they were placed in the upper-middle category. AP’s husband not only represented her in negotiations to rent two plots of land belonging to other community members, he also paid the initial rent. AP cultivates both staple crops and vegetables on her land. She sells the greater part of the vegetable harvest at Makola Market. Her motivation for acquiring these new plots of land was income generation: “what my husband has is not enough - the one that is used for food for the house. We don’t get enough money from selling the vegetables so I had to acquire this land.” In her case, as with the other participants, direct links are made between household financial

management practices and the allocation of household land, or the acquisition of new lands, so that the wives could generate their own source of income. She also underscores the growing need for money in the period of structural adjustment.

Locating Intra-Household Negotiations Over Land and Farming in the Division of Labour

Just as the household financial management practices have allowed women to access and acquire land, the division of labour and responsibilities also gives them more bargaining power within their households, particularly in terms of planning the farm. Exploring the division of labour both on and off the farm shows that regardless of how these roles and responsibilities are described, they are not static, but are in fact contested, negotiated and given multiple meanings. Within the context of the negotiations over labour obligations and roles women have established a certain degree of authority at specific points in the production system that allow them to exercise some control over it, an issue that is especially important for several women in Afuaman who do not have access to an individual plot of land. It is precisely for this reason that I argue it is necessary to situate land struggles within the context of other inter-related negotiations over labour, roles, and social and economic practices in order to explore their meanings in terms of accessing and controlling land.

Women and men have carved out a complementary division of labour in terms of farming activities which has allowed women to draw upon specific identities that provide them with a certain degree of authority within the household and on the farm. In particular, women as household managers play a key role in decisions over the amount of

the harvests that will be consumed by the household and what constitutes the surplus to be sold in the market. At the same time, as traders in a bargaining system women have exclusive knowledge about prices which in many instances gives them access to small amounts of cash, and more importantly a knowledge of market trends that is used when planning the allocation of lands to different crops in the following season. As households favour vegetable production to meet increased needs for money in the period of structural adjustment, women's advice in this area has become even more valuable.

There are many nuances to the decision-making process, and often women's contributions are more subtle or underrated. An important theme running through this discussion is that a public discourse which often upholds men's roles as household heads and decision-makers does not reveal the important contributions that women make to household decisions. These are better understood by studying the practices and processes through which decisions are made. Women in Afuaman initially downplayed their participation in decision-making, one going so far as to explain that she was not conversant in farming despite the fact that she shared planting tasks with her husband and was responsible for harvesting and selling. Women's public deference in Afuaman to the 'head' may facilitate greater practical participation in decision-making (see Schroeder 1999: 40 and Villareal 1992: 261 for discussions of similar dynamics). This section looks at the division of labour on the farm, the identities which women can call upon to increase their authority in the household, and the ways in which men and women characterize the decision-making process, in order to exercise some control over the land and the production system.

The complementary division of farm labour in Afuaman benefits women because it is a division based on tasks rather than crops or fields as is the case in other parts of Africa such as among the Mandinka in The Gambia (Carney and Watts 1990). Most participants claimed that in Afuaman men are responsible for initial clearing of the land and the weeding; planting is a shared activity; and watering, harvesting and selling are all women's activities. However, many revealed that in practice this public discourse of the division of labour is contested, particularly when women have their own plots of land. Within and between households there were small variations in how they claimed to allocate tasks, revealing that the division of labour is subject to ongoing negotiation in each household. At the women's group meeting all the women admitted that they weed, and over half said they do so more than their husbands. Moreover, while women who had their own farms were still expected at least to harvest and sell the produce from their husbands' farms, many claimed that they did all the work or hired labour to handle 'male tasks' on their farms. In several interviews, women revealed that they hired labour not because they could not (or should not) do the task, but because they did not want that farm labour to take time away from trading activities⁴. The only activity which is actually exclusively handled by one sex is selling. Regardless of actual practices, it is important for men and women to maintain this discourse about the division of labour because it gives them each claims to 'expertise' that they can translate into authority in intra-household struggles over decision-making and control of production and distribution on household lands.

⁴ Trading brings in a small amount of money on a daily basis and has a very fast turn around, critical factors in women's livelihood strategies under structural adjustment (see chapter four).

As wives and mothers, women play the role of household managers, responsible in particular for food preparation. They have the best knowledge about what quantity of food from the farm is needed for home consumption. Generally speaking staple crops like cassava and maize are kept for home consumption and the majority of vegetables are sold. When I first asked men and women who decides how much of the crops they will keep and how much they sell, most of the male participants and many of the female participants replied that the man decides 'because he is the head'. However, exploring the process by which the decisions were made, it becomes apparent that it is in fact women who make this decision. For example, one male participant described the process this way: "when you harvest, say, tomato, you assess what will last for about three days before more is harvested from the farm. It's the woman who decides what quantity will be used for meals and the rest is sent for sale." Another male participant captured the way the descriptions and practices of the decision-making process reflect different realities. When I asked who decides how much they will sell, he replied "I do, but the woman [wife] decides or takes what we will keep and then sends the rest to the market for sale." Yet another male participant stated that his wife is the one who assesses the quantity to eat because she is the 'landlady'. Likewise, one woman explained that she decides how much will be sold saying "I virtually manage the house. He is not home all the time. In case one of the children is sick in his absence, I'll be home to take care of the situation before he comes." Another woman described a process whereby she and her husband would go to the farm together to map out which portions will be allocated for home consumption. This discussion reveals the important practical role that women as

household managers play in the negotiation over allocation of the harvests. Even in cases where women do not have direct access to land, they are able to negotiate and exercise some control over household lands, something which the women's group (see below) claims helps to mitigate difficulties women face in terms of income generation and food provisioning when they have no land of their own.

In the same way that women can draw upon their knowledge and identities as household managers to make decisions regarding the distribution of produce, men and women draw from women's knowledge as traders to help plan their farms. As Clark (1994: 325-326) also argues, "[c]ontemporary female dominance in market trading is not rooted in a conservative tradition of female trading reproduced unthinkingly and inescapably" (1994: 325-326). Women in Afuaman perpetuate discourses that construct men as incompetent traders. In many cases where women downplayed their knowledge of farming, they also stated that men were less competent than women in trading. Wives ridicule their husbands when they purchase something in the market and imply that he was cheated (even when he paid the same price she might have paid the day before). Women depicted men as greedy and claimed that when a man went to the market the trader's first asking price was always inflated such that he can never bargain down to a fair price. Likewise, in group meetings women emphasized that they should be in control of bargaining matters. They adamantly insisted that men would never be allowed to handle the trade.

While there are many factors which ultimately lead to the decisions taken when planning farms for the next season, one important factor which men say they rely upon is

their wives' reports from the market about which vegetables are doing well. This type of advice is growing in importance as vegetable production increases (to cope with economic hardships exacerbated under the SAPs), which means that women's roles in production on household lands is also increasingly important. NA's comments show how the process of decision-making reveals more about women's participation than simply asking who decides: "my wife is the main contributor of such ideas, even though at the end I decide. I don't go to the market, she does." Many men made similar comments, revealing that their wives' knowledge was at least a factor in their decisions. KG commented, "there are specific crops for the season, but she can sometimes help in deciding to increase or decrease one specific crop because of the market." LK's wife also claimed that they advise one another and that she mainly bases her decisions on the market prices. Reflecting on the joint decision-making process she remarked "...when we all unite and work, God blesses us."

At the women's group meeting the participants stated that their control of the end product compensated for their lack of access to land. NM is a married 'native' woman with a young family. She is a petty trader and also harvests and sells the produce from her husband's farm. Her uncle has reserved some of his land for her to farm, but she has not yet pursued this offer because one of her children is too young to start schooling. Reflecting on the meanings and importance of the farm division of labour which puts women in control of harvesting and selling, NM claimed "...my roles as such are highly regarded since I am the head." NM clearly elevates these roles as extremely important by using them to describe herself as the 'head'.

However, the benefits that accrue to women from their role as traders extend well beyond their opportunities to bargain with their husbands concerning how their farms are planned. Women also benefit from their role as traders because it gives them access to small amounts of money from the farm. One female participant claimed that women's control of the trade "... empowers the women financially." Initially, male and female participants stated that women return to Afuaman from the market and render accounts to their husband handing over all the proceeds to him. However, while discussing trading in the women's group meeting one woman punctuated the discussion exclaiming "... and why should we render all to them, no we will not do that." Subsequently, the majority of women admitted that they do in fact keep small amounts of money from the proceeds of farm sales to meet some of the daily expenses and to cater for unexpected needs. WD, a junior wife who lives in her mother's household, works on her husband's farm with his senior wife, FD. While FD claims she only deducts transportation costs, WD withholds small amounts of money from her husband when she feels that he has not upheld his responsibilities to her. According to WD, "... at times he cheats me and this results in a fight. Sometimes I keep some of the money from the sales." It is also apparent that this is a prevalent practice which is not to be publicly acknowledged by men or women. According to DK "... that is the practice. We keep small to make *susu*⁵." Men may suspect their wives are not being entirely honest, but it is difficult to prove, particularly because they do not know the prices of vegetables which change on a daily basis and even throughout the day. DK further explained that her husband surely was aware of the

⁵ A fixed daily savings which is collected from a *susu* agent from work places and residences of customers.

practice (even though he claims she hands over all the proceeds to him): “every man knows about it. The man doesn’t know the price which you sell it at different times. When you come and tell him that you got 1000 cedis, it is 1000 cedis.” Her comments underscore the importance of maintaining public discourses to take advantage of opportunities that come from the division of labour. It also shows that increasing vegetable production on household lands may also be encouraged by women because it is also an individual livelihood strategy to increase their access to cash in a time when costs (food, education, healthcare) for women are increasing (see chapter four; Manuh 1994a, 1994b, 1998).

The discussion in this latter part of the chapter emphasizes the need to situate land struggles and negotiations within the context of intra-household resource relations of production, roles and the division of labour. It also shows that the critical livelihood strategies discussed in Chapter Four create, or at least enhance, opportunities for women to access new lands for market gardening and/or to exercise more authority in the decision-making over planning, production and distribution of crops and harvests from household lands.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the complexity of land struggles in Afuaman by showing that they are both material and symbolic, and that they are located in multiple sites. The living conditions under the SAPs and the encroachment of Accra, have intensified the material and symbolic struggles over land as people work customary categories. At the same time they have reinforced specific economic and social practices

emphasizing income generation which have created new channels of access to land for women as market gardeners, and have also enhanced their abilities to exercise some control over land by drawing on their knowledge and authority as household managers and traders. While women can appeal to the three contested identities discussed in the first part of this chapter, it is mostly middle to high income 'native' women who successfully make their claims, relying on inheritance or gifts from kin. Most women in Afuaman also draw on their identities as traders, wives and mothers to access and/or control land. In Afuaman many women access land through their husbands and participate in household decisions about production and distribution because they maintain separate budgets, control specific production and distribution processes, and earn income from other sources besides farming. These activities are part of household livelihood strategies but they also give women individual bargaining power as well as sets of essential knowledge about the agricultural process. All of these have important meanings in terms of women's abilities to access and control land. By looking at both the construction and contestation of customary categories, as well as the ways that social and economic practices are made meaningful in terms of intra-household negotiations over land and production, this chapter uncovers the diverse means through which people, differentiated by class, gender and ethnicity, access and control land in Afuaman.

Chapter Six

The Politics of Planting: Trees as Symbolic Resources in Community and Household Land Struggles

In order to capture the dynamic nature of land struggles in Afuaman it is helpful to look at the contextual factors I discussed in Chapter Four, and the themes in Chapter Five, by unpacking the politics of planting. The stories from ‘natives’, ‘strangers’ and ‘pioneers’, revealed the importance of cultivation in establishing and maintaining claims to land in Afuaman. While ongoing seasonal cultivation with fallow periods makes claims relatively secure, several of the stories discussed in Chapters Four and Five suggest that it is increasingly important and difficult to protect claims to land when it is not under cultivation because of the intensification of land struggles arising from the expansion of the city into the surrounding areas and the increasing numbers of people seeking farm lands in response to pressures associated with the ERP. Planting permanent crops, such as trees, further strengthens land claims. The discussion about decision-making in Chapter Five was mainly limited to seasonal planting. However, a number of men and women in Afuaman have planted permanent crops either on their own initiative or as a part of an NGO supported agroforestry initiative. This chapter examines the preferences and practices of tree planting in Afuaman. This examination questions the man-woman : cash crop-food crop nexus (Leech 1994: 27), by illustrating the ways in which gender is cross-cut with class, ethnicity, and in this case, age. Studying tree planting, particularly within the context of the NGO project, also shows the way in which intra-community land politics and community-state land politics are played out through farming practices and struggles over land and trees as material and symbolic resources.

In addition to reinforcing that struggles over resources are both material and symbolic, the discussion in this chapter builds the third component of my argument, namely that struggles over land must be examined at multiple scales in order to capture their complexity and explore contradictions. The analysis in this chapter therefore assesses tree-planting in terms of individual and household preferences, intra-community negotiations, and community-state politics. By examining such an issue at multiple scales, the intricacies of resource relations and partial alliances, in Afuaman are revealed. Exploring the contradictions, and the partial alliances underscores the necessity of maintaining ambiguity and flexibility in order to allow for the ongoing negotiations over rights to land in households, in the community and in relations with the state

The first part of this chapter looks at the meanings people give to trees and tree planting on their individual farms, characterizing the politics of planting at the intra- and inter- household scales, by focusing on individual preferences for tree planting in terms of gender and life cycle priorities. The discussion delves into three different tree/crop idioms: 'trees as properties', 'trees as pensions' and 'vegetables as flexibility'. Tree planting is mainly pursued by middle and upper class residents who have enough fallow land, or the money to buy or lease a new plot of land, for the tree farm. Young women in particular show preferences for vegetable systems for reasons related to the micro impacts of the SAP, discussed in Chapter Four. While it may seem that many people, especially women and those using the identity of 'stranger', are excluded from the first idiom in particular, evidence discussed in the latter part of the chapter suggests that many people are accessing this idiom through their participation in the NGO intervention.

The second part of this chapter delves into the agroforestry project, looking at the participants, the motivations, and the experiences of participants differentiated by ethnicity and gender. Within the context of this project, the metaphor of 'trees as properties' is a critical part of the material and symbolic struggles over land at all the scales of analysis. The project is an important site that gives women and migrants greater access to the 'trees as properties' metaphor. Those using the identity of 'native' have more freedom to pursue tree planting than migrants; however, 'strangers' have not been categorically excluded from planting permanent crops. Particularly in the case of the NGO agroforestry project 'strangers' have been able to participate. However, they do so according to specific arrangements which reinforce their identities as 'strangers'. Examining this tree discourse within the context of the NGO intervention I show the way in which it is negotiated at multiple scales. The study of the agroforestry project builds on the themes of chapter five demonstrating the way in which they interact with the resettlement plans and the encroachment of Accra discussed in chapter four. The analysis reveals that for residents in Afuaman this project is part of a discursive strategy in their land struggles with the state, at the same time as it allows individuals and groups to contest exclusions from powerful categories and protect or enhance their land claims.

Properties, Pensions and Flexibility

Some of the same literature which showed that households do not act as unified economic and social units (Clark 1999; David 1997; Bruce and Dwyer 1988; Geisler 1993; Okali 1983; Oppong 1983; Whitehead 1981), indicates that preferences for permanent and seasonal crops may also be a source of conflict or negotiation within households (see especially Geisler 1993, Okali 1983). Given that many households are

allocating land to permanent crops, either oil palm plantations, wood lots or mango and cashew production (through the NGO project), it is necessary to explore the decision-making process behind tree planting. Participants' characterizations of tree crops fell into three categories: 'trees as properties', 'trees as pensions', and 'vegetables as flexibility'. Several in depth studies of resource relations (Leach 1994; Schroeder 1999) reveal that age hierarchy is an important axis of social differentiation between women in terms of power, authority, knowledge, ability and interests. The preferences and meanings given to tree crops, and the ability to effectively use different idioms, vary between men and women and among women at different stages in their life cycle.

Trees as Properties

As was the case in Leach's (1994) study, evidence from Afuaman reveals that trees are considered the property of the planter even on lands where the planter only has use rights. NM is a young-middle aged, male farmer who claims to be a native. He does not yet have a tree farm but he uses this idea to explain his preference for permanent crops: "I prefer the more permanent crop. It is a property that can be inherited." Likewise, when I asked QM (the 'pioneer') why he was starting an oil palm plantation he explained, "[o]il palm plantation is like a property for villagers or farmers. That's why. Maize and others are not properties. One can't have a cocoa farm here in Accra... It's only the oil palm that will become our property."

The symbolic resource of 'trees as properties' is widely accepted in the village. However, it is only used by male farmers and it is mainly used by those who can claim an identity as 'native', and by 'pioneers' and 'strangers' who are relatively well-off in the community. Women, however, confirmed that the tree itself, though not necessarily the

land it is planted on, is in an inalienable and inheritable property. According to one of the women, “a tree is a property which [our] children can inherit and therefore it is forever a property, unless there is a bush fire, and even still the root will be there.” While women upheld the metaphor of ‘trees as properties’, it is important to note that when discussing preferences in individual interviews, only men presented this idea when justifying plans for permanent crops. Women, on the other hand, differentiated by age (life cycle) in particular, explained their preferences using discourses that appealed to life circumstances and livelihood strategies. The discussion of ‘trees as properties’, therefore, focuses more on the ways in which men, differentiated by class and ethnicity, use this idiom.

‘Trees as Properties’ and Land Claims in Afuaman

Residents appeal to the metaphor of ‘trees as properties’ when referring to the security of their land holdings at the community level, or the restrictions placed on their uses of the land. In many cases, trees were used to illustrate that an individual’s or household’s interests were secure. For example, when NA explained that the lands he had received through his mother-in-law were safe from other interests, he discussed the importance of his marriage and then reinforced his argument by claiming “I’ve done lots of things on it; I have cashew nut and other trees.” Likewise, another male claiming the identity of ‘native’ explained his interests were “[v]ery secure because I have things planted on it and even trees.” In both these cases, trees are used as evidence of tenure security.

In a different scenario, trees are used as witness or as evidence of injustice. For example, when QN’s land was sold to builders by the elders he explained that it was left

fallow. However, reinforcing the injustice of the sale, he added, “I even have coconut trees on it.” In fact, he still regards those trees as his property, especially since building on the land had not yet started. Yields have been poor in recent years. However if they improve he will harvest from them. In fact, he claimed “nobody will share the proceeds with me.” QN uses the coconut trees in his story of injustice because of the power of the ‘trees as properties’ discourse. In a similar vein, QM used trees as a witness when he was describing his role as a ‘pioneer’. While summarizing his dispute with the Denkyira people, he stated “[t]here are even some trees that were very small in those days. They are now big trees. And also mangos. What I ate myself and dropped the seed have grown into trees.”

Generally speaking, men who could claim to be natives had the most freedom to plant trees. The fact that many inherit large tracts of land from kin often gives them enough land to allocate some to permanent crops. Some residents (men and women), claiming the identity of ‘native’ who inherited land from their parents, have started oil palm plantations or agroforestry on that land. They can use the inherited land for trees and other lands acquired in their lifetime for seasonal crops. For example, KG, who had four plots of land from different sources, planted palm trees only on the land he inherited from his father. He also received land from his uncle and his cousin. However, he indicated that since palm trees would take over the land, the land owner’s permission is required. On the other hand KQ, (whose land was sold to sandwinners) did not feel that she could plant trees on the lands she inherited from her father. Although she claims to be a ‘native’ and a few other women claiming the ‘native’ identity have planted trees, KQ’s experience of resource relations in Afuaman has shown her that as a poor woman,

married to a migrant, being a 'native' does not offer her sufficient security (see Chapter Five). According to KQ, "[a]s for trees, when it comes to their [the elders] notice that you've planted trees on the land they'll charge you to pay some amount of money or else forfeit the land and the trees. The charge also comes in the form of an annual rent or shared cropping... Food crops don't seize the land forever, trees do."

KQ's understanding of tree planting relations in Afuaman is much more characteristic of that of someone using the category of 'stranger'. In fact, even QM, the 'pioneer', was asked to enter an *abusa* agreement (2/3 to farmer, 1/3 to elders) when he started his oil palm plantation. His wife was also made to sign such an agreement because of her participation in the agroforestry project. JT also entered into an *abusa* agreement with the elders on behalf of his wife, when she started planting mango trees for the project. JT acknowledges the elders' concerns that trees take the land for many years. However, more than just taking the land for extended periods of time, tree planting increases the land tenure security of the tenant at the expense of the land holder. According to an elderly Ga widow, trees may not directly imply ownership of the land, but they do make a person's claims to that land more secure. Without enforcing some sort of rental or sharecropping arrangement, trees could then give 'strangers' *de facto* 'ownership' of community lands. Such an arrangement becomes politically charged in an area such as the Ga District, where the expansion of the city of Accra has meant that land is rapidly being converted to commercial purposes, and (sometimes violent) land struggles among multiple 'owners' are not uncommon in the courts and on the ground.

At the community level, ethnicity in particular is an important factor in determining one's opportunities to plant trees. At the same time, the experiences

described in the previous chapter show the ways in which the meanings of 'native', 'stranger', and 'pioneer' are contested. Once again, I used KQ's story to illustrate that being able to use the 'native' identity does not offer straightforward protection and rights. As a poor woman she cannot access the same rights as a man using the same idiom of 'native'. Likewise, I used QM's story to show that tree planting challenges some of the privileges of 'pioneership', as the *abusa* agreement is typical for 'strangers' in Afuaman, a group that he distinguishes himself from by constructing the category of 'pioneer'. The discourse of 'trees as properties' is played out in the people's narratives as evidence of the security of their claims, in testimony for historical land claims, and as evidence of unjust treatment in resource relations.

Trees as Pensions

Another important explanation for planting permanent crops was based on age and capability. While also calling upon the idiom of 'trees as properties', NN explained his oil palm plantation mainly using the metaphor of 'trees as pensions'. NN claims the identity of 'native'. He is an older man who is ranked as upper middle in wealth ranking exercises (it is also evidenced by his multiple marriages and his lineage with the elders). He has land at three different sites. The largest is used for food crops and the smaller two were converted to oil palm plantations eight years ago once he "... attained a certain age." The land where he started the plantation was inherited from his father 20-25 years ago. He did not enter any agreement when he started planting the trees eight years ago, and he is free to sell all the produce from this farm. However, he maintains that he would still require the permission of the elders to sell the land itself. Here NN reflects on

his decision to start the oil palm plantation, constructing the discourse of plantations as pensions.

I'm a farmer. At a certain stage of one's growth, one can't work as energetically as before. So engaging oneself in animal husbandry and cultivation of oil palm implies beginning one's pension. It can sustain you throughout your short life span. It's pensioning myself from the production of food crops. I need to have an oil palm plantation so that when my children harvest and sell the produce I'll get my daily bread. Or by rearing animals and selling them I'll get my daily bread. This is the period of pension for farmers... right now my chief concern is oil palm and animal husbandry since I going to begin my pension... I am a farmer. I learned from the work of my father. At a certain stage, I realized that I led the life my father had led, that culminated in his death... I realized that I had to cultivate oil palm. My father didn't. I know some people whose fathers had oil palm plantations that sustained them throughout their lifetime. On seeing that the cultivation of food crops was not profitable to him, but those who had oil palm plantation succeeded, I decided to engage myself in the farming of the latter to take care of me.

NN's sentiments were reflected in several other interviews with middle aged men who were just starting tree farms. Tree farms were seen as a way to generate income from their farms when they were no longer strong enough to maintain their vegetable farms on a daily basis.

Older women were also likely to appeal to the discourse of 'trees as pensions', supporting tree planting for the future economic benefits. In no case did households completely replace food crops (staple crops for consumption and vegetables for sale) with tree crops. For the most part, they used parts of their land that were already fallow, or they acquired new land to accommodate the addition of permanent crops. For this reason, it is important to reiterate that tree planting is only a viable option for middle to high class households with lots of land already available or with the financial resources to purchase or lease more land. This explains why trees are commonly planted by those using the category of 'native', as they have often inherited large amounts of land, and

many claimed that a lot is left fallow. Wealthy 'strangers' and 'pioneers' also pursued tree planting by purchasing or leasing new plots of land. Where their husbands had planted tree farms, older women in particular used the 'trees as pensions' discourse to endorse the plantations. In the follow-up meeting, women explained that they supported the cultivation of permanent crops on a limited basis, particularly as they got older and anticipated that soon they would be no longer able to farm.

Nonetheless, some women expressed uncertainty as to whether or not they would benefit from their husbands' farms. For example, NN's fourth wife confirmed that her husband's oil palm plantation did not take land away from the production of food and market crops, however she could not say that she would benefit from this farm, particularly since it had not yet borne any fruit and she was not certain if she would be responsible for selling the fruits. Likewise, another middle aged woman expecting a child claimed she was unsure of the selling arrangements for her husband's cashew trees, or whether she would benefit. NA's wife was not interested in growing any more fruits or more permanent crops, claiming "[a]s far as trees are concerned, what my husband has done suffices." As a younger woman with small children, she was not interested in converting any more land away from seasonal cultivation. This uncertainty regarding the control of produce from tree farms directs many women to seasonal farming, where, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, their control of food trading gives them access to produce and proceeds from sales even when they do not have direct access to the land.

Seasonal Crops and Flexibility

While women claimed to support tree-planting in the follow-up meeting when discussing the idea that trees are properties in relation to the politics behind the

agroforestry initiative (see below), in participant interviews and in the earlier women's group meeting, it was apparent that more women, and particularly younger women with families, preferred seasonal crops over permanent crops. They explained that their preference for vegetable farming was in part because tree-planting was a relatively new enterprise in Afuaman and therefore not yet widely practiced. But, more importantly women see vegetable farming as more lucrative. When women described their petty trading activities they focused on issues of flexibility and fast turnover. Likewise, their preference for seasonal farming is a part of their income generating strategies, strategies which allow women to bring in money throughout the year and do not tie them down to any one particular commodity or crop. These strategies pursued by women correlate with the livelihood strategies that have been shown to be increasingly important within the context of the impacts of structural adjustment that affect women in particular (Adamo 1999; Elson 1994; Manuh 1994a, 1994b, 1998). Women were more hesitant to convert their land permanently to one particular crop, especially those crops which can only be harvested on an annual basis. For many women it was more important that the land be 'free' again each season for another crop and to grow a variety of vegetables so that if a particular crop did poorly in one season, there would still be other crops available. This strategy, followed primarily by women in Afuaman, is an extension of Sara Berry's (1989: 49-50) historical analysis of access to resources that showed preference in times of economic crisis for highly liquid assets, even where productivity is low, rather than long term investments.

NM's husband is one of the men who expressed a desire to plant trees because they are inheritable properties. NM on the other hand has different priorities. Her

children are still young and education and health are important priorities for her. Her life circumstances require flexibility to pursue multiple opportunities for income generation. She prefers crops "... that can be harvested within four months and then the land will be free again."

- K: Are the harvesting and selling limited to only the vegetables or also to the more permanent crops?
- NM: Limited to basically the vegetables. We can harvest them several times in a year. But the more permanent crops are more often than not harvested annually.
- K: Do you mean you prefer crops that have a short life span?
- NM: Yes
- K: Why?
- NM: To get money often in order to look after the children
- K: As the family gets older, do you think you should get more permanent crops?
- NM: Yes. We shall consider that. But we have to look for land to do oil palm plantation, coconut plantation and other trees.

NM's story touches on many of the themes I have discussed in this section. NM does not totally object to having a tree farm, but it is not an immediate priority, and planting trees is contingent on finding more land. Her husband, who wants the properties, also indicated that new land would be needed to plant trees. NM emphasizes the importance of flexibility and multiple harvests, a farming strategy that fits with her current needs and obligations. Given the impact of the SAPs which exacerbated already difficult livelihood conditions, it is likely that flexibility is increasingly important for young families. The evidence from Afuaman highlights the gender dimensions that are not discussed in Berry's (1989) study.

It is important to understand the various meanings that different individuals and households use to describe permanent and seasonal crops. It is evident that gender and

life cycle are important factors in the construction of these discourses. While women see trees as properties, they do not call upon this symbolic resource in individual or household livelihood strategies. It was exclusively men who used the metaphor of 'trees as properties'. Women, differentiated by their life cycle positions, took a more pragmatic approach to tree planting and seasonal farming, fitting these practices within the context of their daily needs and their future security.

Politics and Protest in Agroforestry Initiatives

As Schroeder (1999) demonstrates in his study of gender and land politics in The Gambia, NGO initiatives, like agroforestry projects, are given new meanings at a local scale as they are incorporated and reinterpreted within the context of inter- and intra-household resource politics. A recent agroforestry project in Afuaman (and 31 other villages in the Ga District), supported by the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA), has become a site where the symbolic meanings of trees have become an important part of a political strategy to advance the community's land claims. The three year project was started in 1998 and will terminate in 2001, after the first harvest, when participants will reimburse the NGO for the seedlings they were given to start their farms. The timing of this project is somewhat puzzling, given the compulsory acquisition of Afuaman lands, and ongoing discussions in recent years regarding the resettlement of the village. Initial inquiries generated responses similar to those discussed in Chapter Four: a seeming ambivalence toward the idea because of doubts that a resettlement will actually happen. However, as the discussion in this section will indicate, the doubts are not based on ambivalence because the state has taken little action until now. Rather, it is based on concrete actions taken by the community through the

agroforestry initiative and some other efforts which directly challenge the state's claims to land.

People are participating in this project for multiple reasons. However, over time, participants revealed that the project plays an important role in resource politics with the state and the Water and Sewerage Corporation. The discourse of 'trees as properties' is also constructed through state-community struggles over land. At the same time, while the community appears united within the context of their struggle with the state, at different scales of analysis (intra-community and intra-household), the project and the protest associated with the project open new sites of negotiation between 'natives' and 'strangers' and between women and men. By comparing the intra-community politics of the agroforestry project and the state-community politics of this project, the partiality of alliances and the fluidity of resource relations are uncovered.

According to the ADRA representative overseeing the project in Afuaman and the surrounding villages, there were four reasons for implementing the project: food security, environmental conservation, health, nutrition and other social issues, and encouraging cooperative work scenarios. ADRA worked with the District Agricultural Extension Office organizing animation campaigns throughout the District to encourage participation in the project. Fifty people in Afuaman volunteered for the project. Volunteers were then screened using the following criteria: they had to have their own land and their land could not be contested or under litigation; they had to be resident in the community (no absentee farmers, landholders); they were to be 'peasant' farmers (primarily subsistence producers or small-scale market gardening); they had to be credit worthy (meaning they owed nothing to any organization or individual); and they had to be ready to work

cooperatively. Of the fifty original volunteers, ten withdrew themselves from the project. Of the forty remaining volunteers, all but seventeen participants were screened out. According to the ADRA representative, most were screened out because of the land criterion. Of the seventeen participants, eight were 'strangers', eight were women and half of these women were 'strangers'.

While the 'trees as properties' metaphor was used by the group in meetings and individual interviews, this metaphor was typically discussed in the early stages of the research process in terms of financial compensation. In my second meeting with the agroforestry group, people related why they were participating in this project. The first reason is that group demands are heard better than individual demands. According to one of the farmers, "it is good to join groups because of the power of group demands." In retrospect, these group demands pertained to land claims. However, initially, they were understood within the context of equally important requests from the group and farmers (including those who did not directly participate in the study) for material and financial inputs to support the expansion of farms, to offset the negative impacts of poor rains in recent years and to facilitate dry season farming¹. The other reason people said they joined was for the environmental benefits described in the animation campaign. For example, they were told that fallen leaves would provide excellent compost for their vegetable fields. Residents in Afuaman repeatedly expressed their concerns about changes in the rainfall patterns. One woman noted that when she was younger there was a thick forest around the village that helped with the rains. Another male farmer claimed,

¹ On a daily basis, in both interview settings and casual conversations, my research assistant and I were asked for pumping machines (for irrigating fields) tractors and other inputs such as fertilizers and insecticides.

“[w]hen I came of age we planted lots of things. They did very well. Now when you plant they don’t do well. The sun is scorching the plants.” At the meeting people expressed the hope that replanting trees would improve the rains.

State-Community Politics

While the reasons initially relayed by the group are no doubt part of the explanation as to why individuals participated, they reflect the priorities of the NGO. In reality, the motivation for the project for residents in Afuaman was more complex. The ADRA representative was unaware that the land had been acquired by the state, and only became aware of the resettlement plans within the context of our conversation. This was surprising given the first screening criterion was that land was not contested. While the representative seemed untroubled by this news, it is important to note that the acquisition of the lands and the plans for resettlement were not openly discussed with him, by people at the District, the agricultural extension officer for Afuaman, the elders (whose permission is required to enter the village with a project) and by individuals in Afuaman. The ADRA representative’s main comment was “I have no doubt that permanent crops will have to be valued and compensated.”

In the second meeting with the agroforestry group, we discussed the plans to resettle the village. It became apparent that the agroforestry group was drawing on the ‘trees as properties’ discourse and providing tentative clues about the extent of their resource politics with the state. First, the group members indicated that they expected to be compensated for the loss of their trees in the same manner in which oil palm plantation owners were given this assurance by the state. More importantly, in a later discussion about their relative satisfaction with the project and the potential to begin it

anew on the resettled lands, they debated whether or not they would have to abandon their farm lands. The potential significance of this debate can only be realized by understanding the group's discursive strategies. Key informants at both the GAMA Town and Country Planning Office and the District Town and Country Planning Office stated that farmers would have to be compensated for the loss of permanent crops. The fact that government officials confirm that people will be compensated for permanent crops provides further evidence that trees are recognized as properties by the state as well. Placing the debate about relocating farms within the context of this information, I speculated that agroforestry members, realizing the expense of such large scale compensation to so many farmers, and their own admission about the power of group demands, were hopeful that the agroforestry project would make the resettlement financially unfeasible for the Water and Sewerage Corporation.

The follow-up meeting confirmed that the agroforestry group incorporated the project into the logic of their land struggles with the state. Within the context of a discussion of the idea that 'trees are properties', the local leader of the agroforestry group stood up and revealed the reason why the community as a whole pursued the project. She claimed that the main impetus for the project in Afuaman was in fact related to the resource politics with the state. According to the spokesperson for the group in Afuaman, after the animation session with ADRA when the project was introduced, the community held a meeting where they decided that they should participate in the project so that the trees would strengthen their land claims. A participant in the follow-up meeting exclaimed "we wanted to show them that this is our land and we are not going to move." Participants also shared other measures they had taken to resist the state's appropriation

of their lands. The previous chief had already started to encourage residents to make key changes in the village that expressed their desire to stay in Afuaman permanently. Following his instructions, many residents, both 'strangers' and 'natives', started to make buildings from concrete instead of mud. Referring to this practice, the group members revealed that the agroforestry project was a similar demonstration on the part of the community. Drawing a parallel with the new buildings, the group confirmed that the decision to plant trees with the ADRA project was a protest to the Water and Sewerage Corporation. By using the 'trees as properties' discourse in their struggles with the state, the agroforestry group underscored the argument that trees are both material and symbolic resources.

Changing Scales, Changing Alliances

As Moore (1993) and Carney and Watts (1990) illustrate, studying resource relations at different scales uncovers partial alliances among different interest groups. They each show the way that communities may unite in a particular strategy at a community scale, while contesting the meanings or implications of that strategy in intra-household politics. Examining the agroforestry project in Afuaman in terms of the community's struggle with the state, the community appears undifferentiated and united in their efforts to reclaim the community land. However, at the same time when the analysis is shifted to intra-community resource relations, the benefits and opportunities of the agroforestry project are not the same for 'natives' and 'strangers'. Moreover, the project itself may in fact open discursive spaces for women which enhances their abilities to use the 'trees as properties' metaphor.

In their struggles with the state, the elders and the community rely on the support of 'strangers'. However, the elders are also potentially vulnerable to the same idiom being turned on them by 'strangers' in the community. It is therefore necessary that elders perpetuate the construction of the 'stranger' identity through the agroforestry project. For this reason, all persons using the category of 'stranger' were summoned before the elders once the project was underway to work out a (new) tenancy agreement. All 'strangers' were asked to enter into an *abusa* agreement. According to JT,

Not all the people in the agroforestry are strangers. We have the indigenous also who are members of the group. But what happened is that they called only the strangers to come and sign the agreement because the land doesn't belong to them. We came to hire the land and then we are supposed to do certain types of cropping on the land, not the long-term cropping because it will take the land from the owners of the land. When we do certain types of cropping on the land they can easily take it away from us. But when we do this long-term it means that we are taking the land from them. That's why we have to sign an agreement.

JT's comments uncover the complexity of the agroforestry project in terms of land struggles in Accra, and moreover, show the shifting alliances as analysis moves to a different scale. As Clark (1999) and Berry (1989, 1997) argue about the meanings of social institutions, it is the ongoing negotiation and flexibility which gives the discourse credibility and power. Rather than looking at the intra-community politics of the agroforestry project as a weakness of the strategy, it should be regarded as a politics which reinforces the validity of the 'trees as properties' discourse which shapes the state-community land struggles.

It is important to recognize, however, that the elders summoned the individuals for new agreements after the project was underway and everyone had already planted their seedlings. While discussing the *abusa* agreement with one participant, I asked

whether the elders were aware of his plans to participate in the project. He replied, “[y]es, I told them from the foremost. But in fact, they said I shouldn’t mind. Now they have come to this conclusion, but I’ve already planted the crops.” Given that several elders are also participating in the project, that the project coordinators would have required their official permission to work in the village, and that the local group leader is a female ‘stranger’, it is undeniable that they were aware that ‘strangers’ were participating in the project. However, as they thought through the potential implication of the project in intra-community land struggles the need for agreements became apparent. The timing of the changes in agreement indicates that the negotiations in resource politics are constant, occurring on a seemingly ad hoc basis, as the discursive categories are constantly constructed through these politics.

The agroforestry project is also an interesting case because women have played important roles in this project. The local leader of the group is a woman, and almost half of the participants are women. While women claimed to be more interested in vegetable farming, their almost equal participation as men in this project seems to contradict their claim. Several of these women specifically requested land from their husbands for the project. Within the context of the community’s struggle with the state, these women supported the cultivation of permanent crops and used the idiom of ‘trees as properties.’ The agroforestry project may have also offered them some benefits that could not be realized through the conventional tree farming practices in Afuaman that focus on oil palm plantations. In no case did women plant oil palm trees and many women also expressed doubts that they would benefit from the sales of palm fruit from their husbands’ farms. It could be the case that the NGO support gives women the necessary

security or opportunity to pursue tree planting and at the same time women's abilities to use the metaphor of 'trees as properties' in intra-community and household land struggles is masked by showing their support for a community-level land struggle. Women who are participating as farmers in the agroforestry project have much more control over the proceeds from the tree farms as they will be selling the fruits back to the NGO, which will then, in turn, be responsible for further marketing in domestic and foreign markets.

There is still much uncertainty about the way in which the agroforestry project will develop within the context of local land struggles and gender relations. For example, at the group meeting, debate was generated about the roles that women and men in individual households would play in terms of selling the fruits and nuts from the agroforestry project. Participants will not start harvesting for a couple of years. However, since the produce will be sold at a set price based on mass, the group realized that sales were "... no longer a bargaining matter..." and therefore control of the sales could potentially lie in the hands of men as well as, or instead of, women.

Finally, I suggest, based on evidence presented in this chapter, and in previous chapters, that the project provides opportunities for individuals to protect their lands against the encroachment of Accra despite some of the constraints created by the SAPs such as high prices of seeds and inputs. While discussing the ways in which people work the category of 'native', I asserted that it is increasingly the case, as in the example KQ's custodianship of his uncle's and cousin's land, that it is necessary to protect land holdings against sale by the elders or encroachment by neighbours, sandwinners and developers by ensuring that the land still appears to be occupied. QN used the 'trees as

properties' metaphor to indicate that his lands had been taken unjustifiably, because he had a few coconut trees planted on that land. Many residents in Afuaman, particularly those claiming the 'native' identity, may regard tree farms as important symbols that ensure their rights to portions of their land that may otherwise be left unused. The agroforestry project gave participants the means to protect their land while working around the constraints created by the SAPs: the project provided seedlings on credit and provided training on organic methods of treating soils and protecting crops through composting and mulching.

Schroeder (1999) documents an ongoing and often intense struggle that is played out through agroforestry initiatives in The Gambia between land holders and female tenants farming vegetables. He illustrates the ways in which men and women harness development NGO interventions as symbolic resources in their intra-household and community land struggles. These stories of stranger agreements within the agroforestry initiative, women's participation and the debate about control of sales, and individual strategies to protect land claims suggest that similar dynamics may follow, particularly after the first harvest, when the NGO will close the project.

Conclusion

Tree planting in Afuaman has multiple meanings which are constructed according to life circumstances, livelihood strategies and land struggles. Preferences for seasonal crops or permanent crops rely on different idioms. Women and men may invoke different symbolic resources at different stages in their life cycle. However, life cycle preferences among women are also significant. Discursive strategies constructed around tree planting and the agroforestry project are key in the community's negotiations with

the state over the plans to resettle the village. By waging a battle focused on tree tenure norms, residents of Afuaman reinforce that their struggle is both material and symbolic. Examining tree idioms at multiple scales reveals shifting alliances that show unity in the use of the 'trees as properties' discourse in the community's land struggles with the state. Yet at the same time, embedded within that same struggle, the metaphor is used to uphold the distinctions between 'natives' and 'strangers' in Afuaman. Furthermore, this NGO project might offer new opportunities for women to use the powerful metaphor of 'trees as properties' in their own resource struggles and in their struggles over the social construction of gender.

Chapter Seven
Land Policy and Legislation:
Rethinking Ambiguity as an Asset

The rich stories from Afuaman provide compelling evidence of the complexity of resource struggles and the ingenuity of the people who engage in these material and symbolic struggles. The stories undeniably reveal that the men and women in Afuaman are social agents as they negotiate and contest the meanings of custom, obligation, and practices. While social differentiation on the basis of class, ethnicity, age, and gender means that individuals in Afuaman do not participate equally in negotiations, and that customary idioms do not provide uniform opportunities, the stories from Afuaman show remarkable ingenuity in drawing upon multiple identities, and customary idioms and using and negotiating the meanings of these identities and idioms in land struggles at multiple scales. By focusing on the construction of custom, the daily experiences of women and men, and the practices and processes that mediate access to land, this thesis engages with a body of literature that explores the enormous complexity of resource relations instead of attempting to subsume these complexities in generalizations. Rather than attempting to explain contradictions away, I have tried to explore contradiction as a way to comprehend better the diversity of experiences, the resilience of custom and the strategic practices and decisions that women and men make on a daily basis.

Using the findings from the case study in Afuaman, I have built the three components of my argument in the preceding chapters by engaging in the enormous complexity of land struggles in the Ga District. Chapter Four introduced the three contextual factors that place the resource struggles I have analyzed here in a historical

and spatial context: the geography of peri-urban areas; the Structural Adjustment Programme; and the compulsory acquisition of lands. I focused on personal experiences related to these three factors to show that the policies, urbanization trends, and legislation are lived by individuals, households and communities. It is critical to understand that the residents in Afuaman respond to external changes, capitalize on opportunities and create and shape the spaces around them. The narratives in the two chapters that followed show that these three contextual factors form an implicit or explicit backdrop to their livelihood strategies and land struggles.

The three parts of my argument emerge mainly from the findings discussed in Chapters Five and Six. The first of these is that struggles over land are both material and symbolic. The second is that land struggles must be located within the context of social and economic practices, and ongoing intra-household negotiations both on and off the farm. This requires a study of the negotiation of the conjugal contract, looking at the practices and processes by which decisions are made, and a critical analysis of the meanings women and men give to certain roles and practices. The third argument is that land struggles must be understood from multiple scales in order to capture their complexity and explore contradictions. These three components of the argument reveal that individuals, households, and the community rely on the flexibility and contestability of customs and social institutions, maintaining and working ambiguities and contradiction as a means of reinforcing their claims to material resources (land) and symbolic resources (customary idioms).

To conclude this study, the present chapter summarizes the analysis of these three main arguments, in order to reflect on the National Land Policy and Land Title

Registration Law that I discussed in the first chapter. Since my research experience has shown that I have uncovered and retold “partial stories (in both senses of the word)” (Abu-Lughod 1993: 15) constructed in a particular historical period and within a particular research context, I wish to reinforce that this research also raises many questions. Therefore, I conclude by also suggesting a number of possibilities for further research.

Material and Symbolic Resources

Struggles over land are also struggles over symbolic meanings (Moore 1993: 383). In order to understand that custom is a symbolic resource, customary idioms and social institutions must be understood as social processes rather than structures (Berry 1997). This conceptualization allows for an analysis of how people participate in social institutions and make meanings of custom. In Afuaman, land and custom are used to construct ‘discourses of belonging’ that forge group and community identities. Elders and residents of Afuaman refuse to be subjects under another stool because losing their land means losing these identities. Although they may be offered more land in a new resettlement, the elders predict they will suffer more. In Afuaman, the three contested identities of ‘native’, ‘stranger’ and ‘pioneer’ explain relationships with the land and with the community. While these three identities have shared understandings, they are nonetheless flexible and contested. Women, especially poorer women, who identify themselves as ‘natives’ find that they cannot use the identity as effectively as their male counterparts. On the other hand, wealthier ‘strangers’ have either successfully constructed new identities as ‘natives’ or have used power and wealth as leverage in their negotiations with the community. Relying on rule statements, rather than the rich

narratives from local residents, masks the diversity of experiences, the complexity of resource relations and the flexibility and contestability of customary idioms.

In this particular case study, the idea that resources are both material and symbolic is illustrated well through the politics of the agroforestry intervention. With an understanding that the trees are symbolic resources, the participation of the community, in a long term production system can be looked upon as a strong political statement against the plans for relocation. By using a discursive strategy that builds on one of the most powerful idioms of tree planting, 'trees as properties', the residents in Afuaman are battling for both their land as a material resource, and the tree idiom as a symbolic resource. As the battle over material and symbolic resources is ultimately one of power (Moore 1993: 382), it is critical that the community is victorious in this discursive battle. If the state and the Water and Sewerage Corporation does not respond to this protest and allow residents to remain on land of the Afuaman stool, it will mean the loss of both material and symbolic resources. I return to the agroforestry project later to discuss the importance of analyzing land struggles at multiple scales.

The analysis of the 'discourses of belonging' and the agroforestry intervention reveals that custom does not exist outside of resource relations; rather it is constructed through them. Therefore, it is not the mere existence of custom that offers security, it is the ability of individuals and households to exercise customary rites by negotiating their meanings. As land in the Ga District becomes the site of increasing competition among various resource users, especially those outside the community, land as a material and symbolic resource becomes a matter of individual and community survival. Nonetheless, many anticipate that the city will soon expand as far as the village. In many ways, the

compulsory acquisition of lands has acted as a buffer against speculation of Afuaman lands because the Lands Commission blocks official transactions made by elders and residents of Afuaman since it is legally considered the property of the Water and Sewage Corporation. However land in the Ga District is becoming increasingly commodified, and building developments are moving closer to Afuaman with land being converted to individual and corporate private property. Future studies could focus on the potential social and environmental impacts of the commoditization and commercialization of land in the Ga District, by looking at the implications for women and men, and persons differentiated by age and class. If, as I argue in this thesis, individuals depend on the ambiguity and flexibility of customary idioms to secure their livelihoods, particularly in light of the micro-level impacts of the SAP, then these changes in the Ga District which favour unambiguous rights to the land will render even more people materially and socially insecure. Studies may also focus on the impact of these changes on community governance, and social and political relations within communities.

Land Struggles in the Context of Interrelated Struggles

A key argument in this thesis is the need to look at land struggles within the context of inter-related negotiations over labour, production, roles and obligations. This is particularly the case if researchers wish to capture the ways in which women negotiate access to land. Since marriage continues to be a key social institution through which women access land, it is necessary to engage in an analysis of conflict and cooperation within the conjugal contract. It is necessary to look at the meanings of intra-household politics around income pooling, and division of labour in terms of related struggles over access to and control over resources.

The evidence from Afuaman reveals that an individual livelihood strategy such as non-pooling of income is at the same time a household livelihood strategy that allows assets to be protected by dividing them into different accounts. While women's income was often described as 'supplementary', evidence from this study and previous studies of the SAPs (Adamo 1999, Brown and Kerr 1997) show that it is, in fact, essential for the survival of the household in terms of purchasing household needs and supporting farming expenses, especially at the start of each planting season. Men and women in Afuaman also make important links between income strategies and women's access to land for market gardening. This strategy, as well as (younger) women's preferences for seasonal farming, reinforces the argument that economic uncertainty influences individuals and households to favour diverse income sources, short-term investments and fast turnover (see Berry 1989). The evidence in Afuaman, particularly as it relates to permanent crops, shows that Berry's observations are especially true for women when it is uncertain whether they will profit from long-term investments.

The rhetoric related to the division of labour, although not necessarily reflected in practice, allows for discourses that establish partially exclusive sets of knowledge for women and men. Women draw on their responsibilities in the household in terms of food preparation to inform decisions about the distribution of farm produce for consumption and trade. While many men and women state that the decision lies with the male 'head', discussing the process by which decisions are made reveals that, in practice, it is women who make this decision based on their assessments of the household's needs. Even more important for women is their exclusive control of trading, which they actively protect by undermining the authority and competence of men to handle this task. Women indicate

that trading compensates for barriers to land access because it gives them control over the end-product. In addition, it gives them access to small amounts of extra income. In terms of planning the farm, particularly vegetable production, women act as market advisors, sometimes having a great impact over strategic planning of the farm in the following season. This evidence reinforces the observation that farming is part of a social system that extends well beyond the boundaries of the farm. Development interventions often treat farming as a technical system, dividing farm tasks from household politics and struggles. More in-depth exploration of the meanings that women give to their roles and responsibilities, both on and off the farm, would allow for more in-depth gender analysis that will help development programs to understand agriculture as a social system.

Locating Land Struggles at Multiple Scales

The agroforestry project provides an apposite case to demonstrate the value of analyzing resource struggles at multiple scales. While it might seem to outsiders that the intra-community politics that emerge from the struggle with the state is a sign of the weakness of the strategy, I argue that the intra-community arrangements are in fact a further testament to the validity of the 'trees as properties' idiom. Moreover, I suspect that this particular project provides women with a way to use an idiom that is not normally accessed by women in the community. The NGO, by registering these women, ensures that they will benefit from the proceeds of the mango and cashew harvests, and, at the same time, the women can hide their use of the idiom behind their outward support for the community's cause. Because of the intricacy of this particular situation, I suspect that this thesis has only captured a small part of an enormously complex politics. A study

of the public transcripts and hidden transcripts (Scott 1990) of this particular project would illuminate the relations of power and resistance and the social agency of the community and individuals in it. Many questions arise from this particular project and the internal politics it generates. For example, what will happen to women's participation and control of farm proceeds after the first harvest, when the NGO is supposed to withdraw from the project and farmers will deal directly with marketing boards? What are the implications for intra-community and intra-household politics should the community prove successful in its protest against the state? It is my suspicion, based on Schroeder's (1999) research, that this would be a fruitful study to pursue further, focusing in particular on the gender aspects highlighted here.

Rethinking Ambiguity as an Asset in Resource Relations

Based on the three critical ideas I have just discussed, I wish to suggest, following Berry (1993, 1997), that ambiguity should be re-thought in policy arenas as a potential asset in resource relations, particularly for women and small holders. The new National Land Policy and the Land Title Registration Law uphold 'customary law.' However, their focus on individualization of title and rights, and their stated goals of reducing uncertainty and ambiguity, suggest that their conceptualization of customary law is not sophisticated enough to comprehend fully its complexity and fluidity, nor how it is used by individuals and households. The evidence in this thesis, summarized in the preceding discussion of the three main arguments, indicates that individuals, households and communities *rely* on the ambiguity and flexibility of custom and practices, particularly in times of increased instability in the local landscape. It is evident that land issues including ownership, access and control, are part of a complex social system. However,

policy and legislation attempt to extract land tenure from this system and treat it independently. They are therefore incapable of absorbing complexities such as the symbolic meanings of resources. The findings from the present case study reveal that farmers engage in ambiguity and contradiction in their multiple negotiations over land access and control. In some cases, it seems that they build and maintain ambiguity in order to ensure the long term flexibility of these customary idioms and social institutions. Moreover, their individual and household livelihood strategies often focus on diversity and flexibility, even when planting trees (land in Afuaman is never completely converted to permanent crops). In the same way, the negotiability and fluidity of identity have been key to certain individuals secure access to land. Given the uncertainty of the social and economic environment, eliminating ambiguity for women and small holders may in fact further marginalize them and exacerbate food and livelihood insecurity.

The National Land Policy is relatively new and the Land Title Registration Law is not yet operational in most of the country. It is therefore still possible to carefully consider (or reconsider) their aims and beneficiaries. Given the multitude of local meanings given to customary laws, I suggest that vesting the registration and management of land within the National government will prove problematic for many farmers and may make accessing land more difficult for some farmers. This is particularly the case for women, who access land through their husbands (an arrangement that is not properly and explicitly addressed in the legislation). While leaders in Afuaman want written agreements for transactions with outsiders (commercial farmers, developers, sandwinners, or individuals from Accra looking to build a house), they prefer locally specific governance of stool lands within the community. While outsiders

investing in land should expect an unambiguous transaction, policy and legislation should not assume that this is the desire of every citizen in Ghana. I therefore suggest that policy makers and legislators carefully consider the impact of their laws and prescriptions on local farmers and reconceptualize ambiguity as a critical asset for certain communities and individuals, and one that must be protected to ensure livelihood security.

Appendix A

Informed Consent Statement

Thank you for meeting with me to discuss your participation in this research project for my Master's thesis.

- Your cooperation in this research will involve your participation in two informal interviews of approximately one hour in length. The times for these interviews will be set during daytime hours at a time most convenient for you.
- The interviews will be conducted by myself and my interpreter.
- The interviews will be tape recorded. The tapes will only be heard by myself and my interpreter. The recordings will be destroyed after the interviews have been transcribed and translated by my interpreter.
- During our second interview we will review the information from the first interview so that you may amend or provide further information for any of your statements.
- Transcriptions will be secured in a locked cabinet at the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana during my stay here and will then be secured in a locked cabinet in my office in Canada.
- While I will be using your words and thoughts in my thesis, I will ensure that your name and any identifying features are removed in order to ensure your anonymity.
- The results of my study will be shared with the 31st December Women's Movement, the National Council on Women and Development, the University of Ghana, Carleton University and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
- **Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants will not receive remuneration for their participation in this study.**
- Participants in this study will receive a signed letter from me which outlines my commitment to them and indicates contact information for me in Ghana and in Canada.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. Do you agree to participate in this study under the conditions I have discussed with you here?

Appendix B

Household Survey (Sample)

HOUSEHOLD NAME: Antwi
INTERVIEW #: 7

INTERVIEWERS: Seth and Kathy
DATE: November 3 1999

NAME	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	# OF CHILDREN	OCCUPATION	OTHER INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES	PRESENT FOR THIS INTERVIEW ?	MIGRANT / AUTOCHTHON	COMMENTS
Kojo Aryee	47	married	1 before married (male 27 - lives in Accra with mother) 3 with wife: 2 females (7 and 12) 1 male (15)	farmer	fishing in the season	not present	A	all children in school
Abena Tannah	34	married	see above	sells kenkey	farms	present	M	Born in Afuaman, parents came to Afuaman from Volta Region
Mary Tannah (mother of Abena)	60	widow	gave birth to 7; 3 are still living. Only Abena still lives in Afuaman but the other two (both married men settled in Accra) visit occasionally and send remittances	prepares palm oil		present	M	Came to Afuaman with 3 youngest children in 1959

Appendix C**Question Guide****LAND/CULTIVATION**

1. Crop matrix to determine what crops are grown; when they are planted and harvested
2. Which plots do you farm (can we walk around to see them); when acquired, why, by whom?
3. Tenancy on each plot.
4. Describe the process for obtaining each plot of land (including any problems, constraints, special tasks - legal or customary procedures- and any changes in arrangements over time).
5. Does anyone else in the community or government have overlapping rights or interests in your land? How secure are your interests?
6. What problems have you faced getting land and how did you work through these problems?
7. Do you farm land that is yours alone? Do you farm the land of someone outside your family? How did you access this land?
8. How did the household decide to allocate the land to specific crops (i.e. staple crops and market crops)? Has the way that the lands are allocated changed over time? Are you pleased with the allocation right now? would you like to make any changes in terms of what to how much is cultivated? How could you change the allocation? Has the decision-making on this issue become more or less flexible? (Explain)
9. Describe any problems you have faced accessing household lands or acquiring new lands.
10. Have you ever voluntarily or involuntarily abandoned land? Explain.
11. Do you wish to cultivate more land? Why? Does any one else in the household wish to cultivate more land? Why? If more land was brought under cultivation would you grow more subsistence crops or more market crops?
12. Describe any problems you have faced with decision-making in the household or community? What was the effect of these problems? How were they resolved?
13. Do you sell any crops? What proportion? How is it decided what part of the harvest will be sold? Who decides? Who receives the money? Have you ever sold more than you had initially intended to sell? Have you ever had to sell certain crops early in the season in order to raise money only to purchase them again later?

INCOME

1. How is the household budget managed? Who manages it? Who contributes to it?
2. Describe any difficulties you have faced earning income or increasing income.
3. What portion of the budget is spent on household food? Has it always been this way?
4. Has household food production increased recently? (When, why and how?)
5. Has the production of market crops been increased recently? Explain.
6. How is the money from the sale of crops spent?
7. Do you feel that the land that you have allocated to household food is sufficient for the household's needs given your income and the cost of living?

WOMEN'S GROUP AND EXTRA-HOUSEHOLD RELATIONSHIPS

1. To which community groups do you belong. Please provide details.
2. (for women) Do you belong to the 31st December Women's movement? Explain why joined or did not join.
3. (men whose wives are in the women's group) Do you feel that the household has benefitted from your wife's participation in the women's group. Explain.
4. Does your spouse support your membership in the group(s); Has membership in the group(s) changed your relationships in the household or your decision-making power?
5. Do you have any informal relationships with other individuals or households in the community that you feel have helped you vis-à-vis land issues

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