

**International
Institute of
Social Studies**

Erasmus

**What does it mean to be a family man in a
matrilineal society?**

**Masculinity and women's empowerment in Akan,
Ghana**

A Research Paper presented by:

Mihye Shin

(Republic of Korea)

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:

**Human Rights, Gender and Conflict Studies: Social Justice
Perspectives**

(SJP)

Specialization

Women and Gender Studies

Members of the Examining Committee:

Dr. Dubravka Žarkov

Dr. Freek Schiphorst

The Hague, The Netherlands
December 2016

Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

Inquiries:

Postal address:

Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

Location:

Kortenaerkade 12
2518 AX The Hague
The Netherlands

Telephone: +31 70 426 0460

Fax: +31 70 426 0799

Contents

<i>List of Appendices</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Statement of the research problem	1
1.2 Contextual background	1
1.3 Research Questions	2
1.4 Methodological journey through ethnographic lens	3
A brief story in Agogo, Ghana	4
1.5 My positionality and ethics: Being an Obroni	5
1.6 Theoretical approaches	6
1.7 Contribution of my own study	8
1.8 Structure of the paper	8
2 MATRILINEAL SOCIETY, PATRIARCHAL REALITY	10
2.1 Introduction: Contextualizing matrilineal system	10
2.2 Matrilineal patriarchy without patriarchy	11
2.3 Christianity's contribution to patriarchy	13
2.4 Matrilineal Patriarchal family relation	16
3 MASCULINITY AND FATHERHOOD	19
3.1 Introduction: Theorizing men and masculinity	19
3.2 Disempowered masculinity	19
3.3 Being and becoming a man; idealized husband	22
3.4 Son hating his father; father absence and young masculinity	24
4 MOTHERHOOD AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT	27
4.1 Women and Motherhood	27
4.2 Women's empowerment	30
5 CONCLUSION	33
<i>References</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Appendices</i>	<i>39</i>

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Interview Guideline Questions

Appendix 2 Drawing map of research area in Agogo town

Appendix 3 Family tree of Amoako and Salome's family

Appendix 4 Pictures from field research

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my participants and friends in Ghana, during my field work: Mr. Okyere, Abena, Yaw, Mabena, Emmanuel, Edwin, Peter, Caleb, Nana mansa, Amoako, Salome, Dora, Evans, Ebenezer, Mafelicia, Mamisewaa, Mr. Afrif, Ernest, Matheresah, Machristina, Mr. Kofi, Ayimah, Mr. Derick and my dearest friend Asamoah. Without them, the completion of this study would not have been possible.

I would also thank Dr. Dubravka Žarkov for guiding inspiring and encouraging me to complete my research and academic journey at ISS. I will always remember your enthusiasm and love. I am also Thankful to my second reader, Dr. Freek Schiphorst, for his critical comments which made me think a lot and help situate myself during the research process.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends who always encourage and support me by laughing, crying and sometime just standing with me.

This research is based on the fieldwork that financially supported by Dutch foundation De Zaaier.

Abstract

The definition of ideals (hegemonic) masculinities has changed over time and by social context. This study explores the narrative of lives and experiences of Akan people in Ghana through ethnographic lens. The Akan communities are matrilineal society with patriarchal values. This research focuses on practice and notion of masculinities through generation in social context of matrilineal patriarchy. In doing so, the research attempted to investigate how people perceive changes in ideals masculinities and its relation to gender power relation within the family and women's empowerment. In matrilineal society, traditional fatherhood and motherhood also matter as gender identities and institution to maintain patriarchy. To understand multiple social dimensions that reinforce and reproduce patriarchy, intersectionality becomes key framework in this study. Through ethnographic journey, the research provides realistic description of masculinities and people's lives of Agogo in Ghana. Even if it sounds harsh to Akan men, the research findings show reality of matrilineal communities as another face of patriarchal society.

Keywords

Akan, Matrilineal society, Masculinity, Fatherhood, Women's empowerment, Motherhood, Patriarchy, Intersectionality, Ghana

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of the research problem

The ideal of (hegemonic) masculinity depends on social context and changes over the course of generations. This research focuses on the matrilineal Akan people of Ghana and is concerned with notions and practices of masculinity within the family and how they change throughout generations for both men and women. Furthermore, an ethnographic approach is employed here to investigate the factors that lead to changes in notions and practices of masculinity and the impact these have on the everyday social life of Akan people, including power relationship within the family and women's (dis)empowerment.

1.2 Contextual background

The Akan, the largest ethnic group in Ghana, is a matrilineal society and is sometimes called a representative matriarchal society in Africa. In general, matriarchy refers to female dominated society based on matrilineal family system the inverse of patriarchy. There is also a widespread assumption that matrilineal and matriarchal societies empower women at the expense of men. However, matrilineal society should not be confused with matriarchy, and women's empowerment is not necessarily a feature of matrilineal societies (Diop 1989, Awusabo-Asare 1990, Amadiume 2005).

Akan families are matrilineal. By customary law, traditionally property succession passes through the female line, but inheritance starts with brothers (from the same mother) and nephews. Women are the last resort if there are no possible inheritable males. Although there are state laws regarding succession and inheritance, most Ghanaian families still follow customary laws and cultural practices. In this regard, there are many female-headed household and widows in poverty (Awusabo-Asare 1990). Therefore, although matrilineal society is often confused with matriarchy and power of women in society, it still generates subordination and marginalization of women and dependence on men. Thus, one could say that Akan society is patriarchal, although based on matrilineal system. It is interesting and contradictory that matrilineal society does not have the same effects on women's position in society as patrilineal society has on men's.

Matrilineal matters for both blood line or inheritance and succession rights. As cultural factor in kinship relations, it also affects construction of identities and gender roles for both men and women in family and society. Although there is an assumption that men are the controlling sex and that masculinity is the same in every patriarchal society, this research starts from the assumption that there can be different masculinity dynamics in matrilineal societies where men have close relationships with the mother's family and where the position of women in the family differs from patrilineal. There are different masculinities within and across cultural and social contexts. In matrilineal society, men's roles

are divided between their parental and their conjugal families; in such a situation, issues, tension and conflict might develop between a husband and the wife's matrilineal family group over control of the wife and children (Adinkrah 2012).

My interest in masculinity in matrilineal society began with conversation that I had with village women in rural Ghana. During project activities focused on empowering pregnant women, many women complained about Akan men. Women said that the matrilineal system, rather than empowering women, gives advantages to men to take less responsibility for their own conjugal family. Many single mothers follow the matrilineal system because of 'runaway men' abandoning women who get pregnant before marriage. They don't have any legal responsibility but have a bad reputation. However, men say that matrilineality gives them more burden and responsibility to take care of both their own children and their sisters' children. It seems women and men of these communities have different perceptions of manhood, fathering responsibilities, male role in the family and society, and the ways these affect women, depending on their experiences.

Although I have about four years of experience living and working in Ghana, I am clearly an outsider. As an outsider, while I was interested in the matrilineal system and perceived it as something special, it was not seen as special by Ghanaians who have lived within the system. The matrilineal system is natural for them and they found it strange that I tried to deconstruct their tradition and culture. So, when I conducted research, I engaged with their life closely through an ethnographic approach with participant observation in addition to interviews. This enabled me to better understand the matrilineal practices and meanings that are embodied in society.

I hope this research will help improve understanding of the gender construction process in a specific social context and across context.

1.3 Research Questions

Main research question:

What are the notions and practice of ideals of (hegemonic) masculinity and how do they impact men and women's power relationships within the family and women's empowerment in matrilineal communities of Akan, Ghana?

Sub-questions:

1) What does it mean to be a family man and a father to Akan?

This question considers the dominant idea in public family discourse about fatherhood and masculinity concerned with understanding general perceptions of fatherhood to Akan men and women in matrilineal society. Being a 'family man' is not only about being father, more especially in matrilineal society, but also about being a father, uncle and brother all of which have different meanings to them and authorizes/burdens their gender role in the family. I employed an ethnographic approach through field research with two nuclear family and two extended families consider what are norms, expectations, ideals and practices of being family man. Furthermore, I examined men's and women's

perceptions about what it means to be a “family man” and what are ideals of masculinity in the family.

- 2) *What are the personal experiences, feelings and perceptions that women and men have about changes in their roles, relationship and expectations within the family?*

This question is concerned with perceptions of changes throughout generation and what kinds of social conditions trigger these changes. Additionally, the question addresses how notions of masculinity and its practice in ‘reality’ are different. To investigate that, I employed life-history interviews and conversational interviews with the family members. The focus in observation is on men in an intergenerational context and their relationship with other men in the family for both men and women (but more for men like father and son). The questions and conversations focus on how men think of their father, brothers and uncles (father side/mother side) and whether the different generations share the same ideal of hegemonic masculinity or not. The interviews were conducted to all family members in 3 generations of the extended family.

- 3) *What consequences do notions and practices of masculinity in matrilineal family have impacts on female-male power relationships in the family and on women’s (dis)empowerment?*

This question considers relation between masculinity in matrilineal family system and women’s (dis) empowerment and its reproduction over generations. How notion and practice of masculinity affect family in matrilineal society and how people perceive the changes. The specific questions to the interviewees were: Is matrilineal system advantageous to women?, What does empowerment mean to women in matrilineal family? What makes them feel empowered? Do women feel the changes and in what ways? How do men perceive women’s (dis)empowerment?

1.4 Methodological journey through ethnographic lens

The aim of my research is to explore meaning of ideals masculinities by investigating men and women’s lives in matrilineal society and how different social categories and contexts interplay based on their power relation. In this light, employing ethnographic approach enables me to be closely engaged in people’s daily lives in Agogo and to find the message beyond the description of the lives. More than interrogating as interviewer, I watched what happens, asked what that means, listened what they say and empathized with people. Through engaging with people based on ethnographic orientation I wanted to find the meaning of people’s routine and experiences within their cultural context, thus how the meaning have been changed by time and context. Beside of ethnographic orientation, qualitative in-depth interviewing with family members was also employed as well.

Ultimately, since there are not much recent ethnographic research regarding gender relations within matrilineal society of Ghana, I hope this research will be able to address another complexity of gender relations in particular context and need of attention to more researches in matrilineal society.

A brief story in Agogo, Ghana

I stayed in Agogo for one month from July to August in 2017 and ten days in Accra. I contacted a friend in Ghana named Asamoah about the research and he connected me to his cousin, Mr. Okyere, who lives in Agogo. Although my original plan in Agogo was to live with Mr. Okyere's family, conditions in the house made me change accommodation. The house lacked reliable water supply and electricity and moreover, the house is empty during the day since both Mr. Okyere and his wife go to work and the location was inconvenient to visit other families. I therefore decided to move the accommodation and Mr. Okyere kindly arranged for a hostel in one of the Presbyterian churches in town.

Agogo is a small town in the eastern part of the Ashanti region of Ghana. Its population is about 100,000 and its main industry is agriculture. Most people do farm cocoyam, plantains and tomatoes. The majority of Ghana is Christian, major religion is Christian, and Presbyterian and Pentecostal denominations are prominent among Christian groups.

Before I came for field work, I asked Mr. Okyere and his wife to help me find two or three families in Agogo that I can meet. I did not give any specifics of family types, but told them that it would be good if I can meet extended families. They connected me to three families in the town. One is Mr. Okyere's own family with his mother in law. The second is his wife's cousin Mabena's and her children. The third was Salome and her family. Later, I had a chance to meet one more family of a guy named Ernest who volunteered to be part of my research.

Since my research methodology was based on an ethnographic approach with participant observations and interviews. I spent the first two weeks with each family during the day, just for talking and sharing meals, being together and observing the routine of people. I practiced the local language (Twi) before coming and tried to have at least short conversations with people. This helped to get closer to the families to open their minds towards my research, as they appreciated my effort in learning their language. Although the official language in Ghana is English, not many Agogo people speak English well, especially among the old generation and women. I therefore had to find a translator who could help me conduct interviews and deeper conversations. I initially planned to hire one person to help me for the duration of the research, and Mr. Okyere found one young man to help me. However, I later realized that people did not want to talk about their family issues in front of people from their own town and members of their own community. I therefore decided to ask one English speaking family member in each family. Fortunately, I found at least one young man or woman who spoke English well and understood my research.

In the first week, I explained my research to families and drew a family tree with each family. I identified a key person in each family in the beginning and suggested they draw a family tree. Interestingly, I noticed that each person started drawing with her/himself first, then parents and siblings, then their mother's family (such as mother's mother or mother's siblings). When I asked them about their father's family, most people said they do not know the name

of the father's family, or how many siblings their father might have especially when their relationship is not good.

After spending everyday with the families for a week, I noticed that there were no fathers or husbands present, except in Mr. Okyere's family. Moreover, it seems nobody really felt their absence, as if that has always been like the case. Initially, I was very careful to ask questions regarding family relations and about the father's presence/absence. However, most people were quite open to tell me their family relations including some sad or angry stories. I had the advantages of being an outsider who is ignorant of their culture and traditions, and is ready to learn. Participants were willing to befriend me and tell me their personal stories. Fortunately, all of the respondents were very warm and were happy to be part of my research.

I brought cookies for families as a small token of appreciation when visiting, although I was worried how to respond if people asked for monetary compensation for interviews. However, no one asked for compensation. Rather participants offered me food and fruits every time I visited. Sometime I felt some responsibility to help them because I saw them having difficult times with finances and they often told me they are suffering. That was the major dilemma that I had in my mind although nobody confirmed my concerns.

From the third week, I started interviewing. Based on four families (two nuclear families and two extended families), I conducted 20 individual interviews, with 14 men and 6 women and there was one special but unexpected group interview with group of men (eight men) at the bar¹. Mostly I spent time with their *abusua fie* (family house) and met young men and most women. But for older men, I met them at church, drink bar, their work place and in the car. Apart from ethnographic note, I conducted interview with general guiding questions but most of the interviews were open-ended and conversational. The questions therefore varied depending on participants' answer and direction².

1.5 My positionality and ethics: Being an *Obroni*

Recognition of own positionality is important step in the beginning of ethnographic research to understand and identify power dynamics between researcher and participants (Crossa 2012:115). I present myself as stranger but also as researcher, female, youth and *obroni*. *Obroni* means 'white person' in Twi (Akan language). Being *obroni* in Ghana is privileged. Although I am not considered as 'white person' to myself and to 'white people' like in the Netherlands. They constantly remind me that I am 'white person' to take my attention to them or when they want me to buy something from them. So, my comparative 'whiteness' became a power. However, this power does not wield as authority over participants but rather power to be naive and innocent stranger who is ready to know and learn about their life. Thus, the *obroni* title offers me the space to be forgiven for asking any questions even when it is ridiculous or personal because I am still just a stranger who do will not judge them by the same standard like them or spread the information that they confessed to me. Sometimes I had

¹ In 20 individual interview, I interviewed 6 married men, 8 unmarried men out of 14 male participant. For female participants, all 6 participants were married. Their accurate age is included in narration of interview. In one group interview, all 8 men were married and in middle age.

² Appendix 1: Interview Guideline Question

subtle feelings that I have to do something for them as compensation because they might have expectation.

On the other hand, I am female, 'white female' although this positionality was tricky. Being a female doing research on other women implies being an insider, but being a 'white woman' interviewing African women attributes also as an outsider. Therefore, for female participants, I was regarded as partly insider but outsider as well. However, for male participants I was regarded as totally outsider but still different from 'their women'. Thus, the various layers of sameness and difference work at the same time.

Therefore, situating my position in the research is process of data collecting, interpreting and meaning making through reflexing by my social identities. In this regards, I, myself, am still stranger as Agal (1996) said being ethnographer is being 'professional stranger'.

My positionality was concerned with ethical dilemmas as well. But this dilemmas came during analysing the data after field work. Employing ethnographic approach enables me to have privilege of looking into participant's lives in great detail. However, as a researcher, I have to be very prudent with disseminating the data (Kaiser 2009:1633). During the field work in Agogo I asked for permission to research participants if I can use their real name and personal information like age and marital status on the first day and before every interview. Then everyone was willingly consented. However, while I was interpreting and analysing the findings, I realized that they must not have had no idea about how I will describe and interpret their lives. I started thinking if our consensus was fair and on the same page. Then I asked again my Ghanaian friend who helped me arranging everything in Agogo, Asamoah, that if I can still use their real name including his. Then he said: 'Yes. You should'. In conclusion, I use their name but still have reluctant feeling in my mind. However, I do not include anything that they wanted to remain confidential or too personal information.

1.6 Theoretical approaches

Intersectionality

Intersectionality plays everywhere and always. The term intersectionality coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw allow us to understand complexity of differences and sameness within social groups based on the "multidimensionality of marginalized subjects" (Crenshaw 1989:139). Thus, employing intersectionality provides a way of understanding how gender is shaped by multiple dimensions of social categories and showing how system of oppression operates by those categories (McCall 2005:1772). Edström Argued that intersectionality is the key for recognizing how patriarchal gender inequality operates because patriarchy is a strong fundamental element in most social system that is built in inequality (Edström 2016).

Intersectional approach can offer both a conceptual and methodological tool to analyse the complexities of multiple intersecting system and power relations within the social group, for instance, distinguishing different men's lives and women's lives. Although they share the same notion of masculinity in matrilineal system, their different experiences and identity can create marginalization

and discrimination within them. As a methodological tool, intersectionality can be associated with researcher's positionality as well. As I mentioned in methodology part, I situated myself as female researcher but during the field research in Agogo, I was situated as 'white lady' by local people. This process helped me grasp double standard of patriarchal ideology toward gender and also affected reflexivity of information.

Aside intersectionality as overall conceptual and methodological approach, I employed few more conceptual frameworks that I used to analyse and support research findings. Although I tried to weave those theoretical frameworks with findings and analysis, I introduce some of important ones by chapters as below.

Patriarchy and Matrilineal system

Matrilineal society tend to be confused with matriarchy. Although there is perspective of 'myth of matriarchy', matrilineal system does not correspond to matriarchy but rather shows image of patriarchy. patriarchy is generally defined as a male dominating social system based on subordination of women (Christ 2016:215). Male headship is fundamental idea of masculinity and patriarch given by Christianity the Bible. Thus, patriarchal notion of masculinity and subordination of woman reinforced by Christianity and it reproduces heteronormative gender role (Klinken 2011, Ruether 1983).

According to Richard(1950), men in matrilineal society has ambiguous position between their conjugal family and natal family. As endemic cultural system, matrilineal system inherits its particular meaning of family and power relationship between gender and family.

(Hegemonic) Masculinity

The male role as a breadwinner in the family is core part of hegemonic masculinity, especially in patriarchal ideology (Connell 1995;1998;2005), Bernard 1981). Although women's employment has increased and supported family, the being an breadwinner to male identity is still remain important (Thebaud 2010, Springer 2010). This can lead men's disempowered masculinity because the position of male breadwinner title does not mean only economic status of men but also associated with his 'social statues' in community (Wilott and Griffin 2004).

As men in matrilineal society has less affection with their offspring due to father-absence, their role in the house is more instrumental than patrilineal society. Therefore, boys in matrilineal society tend to learn 'proper masculinity' from the absence of masculinity but rather from relationship to mother (Chodorow 1979). Hegemonic masculinity can be constructed but does not correspond to represent the lives of actual men but idealized men (Connell 2005:841).

Motherhood and Women's empowerment

Mothering is defined as "socially constructed set of activities and relationships involved in nurturing and caring for people." Also, It is regarded as main "vehicle" that people can form their own identities and learn their society(Phoenix and Woollett. 1991:357). Universally, mothering is associated with women because women who do mothering in the family. Thus, mothering has been conjectured as women's main identity. Motherhood often employed as notion of femininity and it links to reinforcing women's identity (Chodorow 1979). In patriarchal society, this is seen more explicitly because men and women's role

and sphere is dichotomized into public and domestic based on male dominant patriarchy.

In this chapter, I described how motherhood affect to reinforce notion of femininity in matrilineal society and its relationship with women's empowerment employing Chodorow's psychological analysis and discussion of how motherhood is reproduced by relationship between mother and daughter and patriarchal ideology. Also its relation to women's empowerment by Adrienne Rich's (1977) perspective of empowered motherhood.

1.7 Contribution of my own study

Most previous research either focuses on Akan women's status or subordination regarding property and succession by the customary law. Most traditional studies used secondary data although there are several recent studies about multiple masculinities in Ghana using ethnographical qualitative method and anthropological approaches. However, there is not much research about masculinity in the matrilineal context that relates masculinity and fatherhood to power, and (dis) empowerment of women. My research is an ethnographic study with qualitative interviews of several generations of women and men in extended families. I aim to explore notion and practices of masculinity in matrilineal families regarding to ideal (hegemonic) masculinity and its relation to women's empowerment.

Moreover, I wanted to bring new questions and arguments in the study of gender construction processes within matrilineal families and family discourse in Ghana. Few recent studies explore matrilineal society as a concept of understating contemporary gender issues or masculinity in different social contexts in Ghana. Still, most research on gender relations tends to be about women's lives. It is important to analyse men's lives to address structural gender inequalities and transformation through social change. This research aims at improving the understanding of gender power dynamics and relations through analysis of masculinity in different social contexts and family systems.

Therefore, masculinity in matrilineal societies is a topic that deserves more attention as men in matrilineal societies have interesting positions in the family and society and it is also related to women's status. More generally, it is also interesting to consider the possible relationship between women's empowerment and changes in masculine roles and practices through generations of women and men living in the same matrilineal families.

1.8 Structure of the paper

Beside introductory chapter, this research paper has four more chapters. Precisely, chapters two, three and four are like three different essays but they are entwined with each other. Each chapter has theoretical discussions with relevant literature and the last chapter will weave them as one narrative.

In chapter two, I discuss contextual background of study of matrilineal system and its patriarchal characteristic of Akan in Ghana. There, I address how Christianity contribute to maintain patriarchy and reinforce heteronormative gender role with practical description of family system by ethnographic approach. Following male position in practical matrilineal society, in chapter three, I portray different masculinities of Akan men through their ages and generation that is disempowered masculinity, idealized hegemonic masculinity and young boys masculinity. In subsequent chapter, I depict and analyse motherhood and its relation to women's empowerment in matrilineal society. Lastly, In conclusion, I review my overall discussions and derive a conclusion.

2 MATRILINEAL SOCIETY, PATRIARCHAL REALITY

2.1 Introduction: Contextualizing matrilineal system

Since the 19th century, there have been debates on the concept of matriarchy as a system of social structure. In the beginning, most the studies equated matriarchy with matriliney, and both were theorized based on patriarchy by Eurocentric scholarships such as Henry Maine (1861), J. M. McLennan (1865) and J. H. Morgan (1871). The western definition of matriarchy was ‘female rule’ but as the mirror image of patriarchy. They simplified kinship as a dichotomized choice between patriarchy and matriarchy, imposing an ideological superstructure and defining patriarchy as primordial and the highest form of civilization and matriarchy as the opposite.

From the 20th century on, Afrocentric perspective of scholarships (W. James 1978, Diop 1989; 1991), postulated that Africa is a cradle of matriarchy in which women rule kinship, but the idea was dismissed as invented history, a ‘myth’ created by European (patriarchal history) invasion and colonization of Africa. Diop (1991) defines matriarchy and matrilineal society in the sense of female rule and female transmission of property and descent. As an ideological unit, Diop describes matriarchy as an “ensemble of institutions favorable to womanhood and to mankind in general” (1989: xviii) not just a ‘female version of patriarchy’. He did not make a distinction between matriarchy and matriliney, but rather defined matriliney as a characteristic of matriarchy.

Although matriarchy is seen as a social structure where the power lies in the hands of women, matriliney is not the same as matriarchy. James (1978) describes ‘matriliney’ as a specific form of inheritance in which property is transmitted through female descent lineage. She dismissed the idea of power and authority for women in matriliney and suggested an alternative view of matriliney focused on ideas of citizenship and identity, status and social ties, rather than structures of power and social conflicts (Adinkrah 2012). However, matrilineal family systems continued to be connected to female empowerment and emancipation in many societies.

In Akan, Ghana, matriliney is not only a matter of property and inheritance in the family, but a complex kinship network and social structure that gives security and identity to its members, but also creates conflicts and insecurity. Mikell and Manuh (1997) address how Akan women and children are subordinated by matriliney customary law in succession and family. Although women in matrilineal systems can own land and other property and they do not belong to the male family (father, husband), women’s property was always smaller than that of males because men tend to be given priority in inheritance of property. Women therefore have difficulty generating their own resources to exercise their rights to property ownership and agency.

Therefore, I reiterate that matrilineal society should not be confused with matriarchy. Rather, in practice, it is a specific form of kinship that still has many patriarchal traits and power relations. Akan society is no exception. It has matrilineal family structure with patriarchal values. In this chapter, I will describe

traditional and contemporary matrilineal family system and power with Akan family in Agogo, Ghana. Then, I will discuss influence of religious belief on ideas the women and on gender institutions.

2.2 Matrilineal patriarchy without patriarch

Aside from the Akan, all of Ghana is patriarchal to a large extent, although there are discourses about the matrilineal system of the Akan as ‘matriarchy’ can be thanked for the traditions of the queen-mothership concept and its impact on the ability of women to advance in political, educational, and economic spheres in society (McGee 2015; Akyeampong and Obeng 2005).

Patriarchy is often defined as a system of male dominance within family and society. However, I do not want to address the question of *what is patriarchy* and reason why Akan society is patriarchal. In fact, it was not difficult to realize and feel patriarchy in Ghana when I remember my four years of working experience in Accra and field work in Agogo.

One day, when I might still look like clumsy young researcher, Mr. Okyere asked me if I am married. I said ‘No, but I have a boyfriend.’ Then he asked me another question with mysterious smile ‘Then are you virgin?’. I was stunned for a second and in that second I agonized as to whether I should answer as myself at the risk of seeming rude or as a researcher, inducing more conversation and politeness. However, I was not yet completely in the researcher role. I did not answer his question but rather asked him ‘what do you mean by virgin? Does it matter to you that unmarried woman should be a virgin?’ but he did not read my sarcasm in that question, I guess. He still kept on smiling mysteriously and said ‘It is important. You have to take care of your body because you are a lady.’ He did not tell me why he is curious about my virginity but I closed the conversation with an awkward smile because I did not want to argue with him anymore. But soon he added ‘I am just telling you because you are like my daughter.’

Virginity, precisely women’s virginity, is a patriarchal social construct that oppresses women’s body and sexuality. Fatima Mernissi (1982) in her fascinating work *“Virginity and Patriarchy”* stated that “Curiously, virginity is a matter between men, in which women merely play the role of silent intermediaries. . . Like honour, virginity is the manifestation of a purely male preoccupation in societies where inequality, scarcity, and the degrading subjection of some people to others deprive the community as a whole of the only true human strength: self-confidence” (ibid:183). Patriarchal control over women’s bodies reproduce women’s subordination to men and suppression in society because it is related to men’s honour and power in society that is not only husband but also her father as well. Therefore, the family controls women’s bodies. I do not overjudge Mr.Okyere as if he was trying to control my body but his curiosity and question tells me how women’s body and sexuality is considered as public and as an object of interest to men. Hence, patriarchy should be seen as a socially constructed system of male dominance within the family and society, wherein suppressing female’s body and sexuality are a very significant aspect.

So, yes. Ghana is patriarchal society. I do not find patriarchy in the matrilineal context to be unique, because it was apparent to me that women’s lives in

the matrilineal family are as harsh as anywhere else in patriarchal society. Like in other patriarchal societies, Akan men are 'supposed' to head the household and society and women are 'supposed' to submit to husbands and men. When I asked people about the general idea of the matrilineal family system that it gives woman in the house more authority, most respondents said that matrilineal system is a just kinship system that follows the mother side lineage but nothing to do with women's power within the family because Ghana is based on a patriarchal society. They believe that offspring belong to their mother's family and not their father's, because they obtain their 'blood' from their mothers and only 'flash' from their father (Awusabo-Asare 1990).

Before talking about matrilineal patriarchy, images of household and family of Akan actually unsettled the Eurocentric standard (Hanson 2004). It is still common in Akan that married couples live in different houses and children live only with their mother or mother's relatives. The spatial separation in marriage and paternal absence in family are very common. There are even children without parents, raised by close or distant maternal relatives related by either marriage or blood ties. Therefore, Hanson says that their "boundaries of domestic groups" are blurred and flexible and the structure of family is not always hierarchical by generation like general western ideas of standard family picture (ibid:29-33). However, these family arrangements still have not lessen the grip of patriarchy on the family and the community. So it remains a mysterious puzzle for me: why matriliney cannot be matriarchy whereas patriliney is crucial element of patriarchy? Why are men more powerful within family even when they are not present at all? And by the way, where are they?

I was wondering about all those things while I was in Agogo, and especially where are all the men gone. I did not notice men's absence in the beginning because I thought probably they are at work. I did not notice any empty space left for them in houses I visited. Then, when I tried to draw family tree with each family I realized that they are not present in the house. I told my respondents to start drawing the tree with themselves and extend as far as they see their family boundaries. One of the participant's families was an extended four generation and seventeen family members in one house. However, that drawing had no senior men like husbands or fathers whereas there were seven mothers³. The respondents said their 'real' family men - like sons and brothers - left for their conjugal family, and their husbands left for many reasons like death, divorce, their own *abusua fie* (mother's family house) or different wives. While looking at respondents drawing family tree, I realized that there are not many men and there are many branches in the tree of family if we want to put everyone in the family house. Usually, individual respondents started from themselves and added siblings and then mother's family. They generally do not know family members of the father side, and they did not include their father if the father did not live in the same house. The family tree looked complicated horizontal structure like spider net, because of many siblings, and not like a hierarchic generational tree what I used to draw when I was in school, and which is a feature of western family trees. For example, the youngest boy in Amoako's family, Obeng, was his mother's mother's sister's grand grandchild. Thus, it seemed meaningless to him to count their relation and closeness within the family. He does not live with his mother or father but other women take care of him.

³ Appendix 2 : Family tree of Salome and Amoako's family

Actual fathers and husbands are invisible in the matrilineal families of Akan. However, they still exist as a symbolic presence within patriarchal institution of the family deeply embedded in society. Tabitha Freeman (2008) addressed patriarchal paradoxes saying that there is tension between “symbolic presence” and “substantive absence” of fathers. She argues that patriarchal theory reproduces the fundamental paradoxes of patriarchy by “giving central place to the father as a symbolic figure of authority while eclipsing men’s relationships with their children under the shadow of the omnipresent nurturing mother (ibid:115).” In this light, patriarchy can hold power to men while subordinating women and stressing their motherhood.

“Basically, because of matrilineal system that we have, men are wicked. Because they know that all of things they have will be given to their children and the children belong to their mother. So men, they don’t take care of their family and wives suffer... I was second wife when I got married to my husband. He did not even come to my house often and when he earned money he brought it to his mother’s family or maybe his first wife’s family, but nothing to me and my children. So, I had to work very hard to raise my children while he never paid for my children’s school.”

(Nana Mansa, 75, Female, Mother-in-law of Mr. Okyere)

“Usually, women cannot own family property such as land and buildings. So, only men possess money and women have to be dependent on men, like husband or brother. And because most of property will be inherited by men they tend not to work hard as women do not support their own family... I can’t just sit back and watch the children suffering like my husband does. I think it is something that is instituted in their mind not only because of the system. Men think: when the child grow, they will only buy a towel for their dad but they will build very nice house building for mother. So men have the perception that nothing will return to them from the children when they grow up, that children will forget what fathers did for them. I remember one of my uncle said that I don’t care about my children as I was enjoying my life and they just came out. So I think men have their own mindset. They think they are not the one who brought them into this world, as if the children just appeared on their own, without anybody’s intention or contribution”.

(Mabena, 49, Female, Mother of five children, divorced)

Although Akan women have bargaining power with access to property such as land and housing (Hanson 2004:34), in reality, most property is inherited by men. Therefore, women have less access to capital resources but must work to feed their children whether they have husband or not. Perhaps, patriarchy in matrilineal societies is the best condition to maintain the patriarchal system with the least effort. While symbolic patriarchy reinforces supremacy of men through absent authority of fatherhood, women are supposed to play the role of parents as both mother and father, because they are seen as the ones who brought the child into the world, not the men. It is patriarchy without the patriarch.

2.3 Christianity’s contribution to patriarchy

“The LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him (Genesis 2:18).’”

It was my second night in Agogo. I was having a difficult time to fall asleep because of loud prayers coming from the church. I was staying in a hostel in a Presbyterian church in Agogo. It was cheap but there was reason for that. Since that night every weekend night from Friday to Sunday, I had sleepless nights with all night praying and chanting to God. Even though Agogo is small a town there are more than seven churches around my hostel and a number of Christian institutions like hospital and schools. It is no wonder that Christianity is deeply embedded in the lives and culture of the community beyond just religious belief because 70 percent of the population in Ghana is Christian (Ghana Statistical Service 2012). When I first meet people they usually ask me which church I am attending. They did not even ask first if I am religious. This is the extent to which Christianity is crucial social identity in Ghana. As an agnostic, I became automatically a target whose soul had to be salvaged. Everyone wanted to take me to their church and I went the church that kept me up all night reluctantly. There were many more women than men in the church service even just by a glance. All the women wear colourful and crispy ironed dress with polished shoes as a way of showing respect to God and church. Then they worship and pray as if they are about to cry.

In fact, Christianity was not initially part of my interest in the research. However, during the fieldwork it turned out to be a critical element of patriarchal notion of gender. Moreover, a number of participants said Christianity actually brought big changes in perception of marriage and family system as well. Yet African Christian history, like western history, has been written from the male perspective that portrayed women as 'helpers' or as absent from development of African Christianity. Research about Christianity has been locked into an androcentric perspective with no attention to women with gender differences (Mwaura 2005:414).

All of my participants are Christian. Not all men go to church every Sunday but all the women do. In fact, African churches carry out paradoxical roles for women's rights and empowerment (Oyěwùmi 1997). The churches offer women a space to organize various activities and cooperate on most aspects for their lives like micro-financing, vocational training program and even moral support. Thus, the churches give women both physical and spiritual supportive space (Bawa 2017:8). Nevertheless, churches role of empowering women in practice does not obstruct the fact that there are still social expectation toward women to be submissive to men and to perform the reproductive role in family and society. Moreover, according to the Bible, a principal instructional guide-book of church, woman is subordinate to man and possess lower position than men in family (ibid.:3). In many societies, religion has often been used to explain gender inequality and more specifically superiority of men because gender and religion have a mutual relation that is rooted in cultural philosophical heritage. Thus, religious beliefs and practices are formulated and perceived by perspective of gender. (Kunin and Watson 2006:412) .

But, although women are more devoted to prayers and follow the 'sword of the spirit', How come the Bible gives women nothing, but gives men all the moral authority over women? It is not only men who believe that men should head households and females should submit to men. Women also believe and justify these ideas because they appear in the Bible. Through the male-centred understanding the Bible, women become restrain themselves by the idea that they are inferior to men (Ruether 1985:114). In fact, most women I interviewed

had no complaints about the fact that men have headship in household and superiority over women although there are many women who play a role of head of household. However, what makes women think 'Akan men are wicked' implies that only rarely are there men who show 'biblical manhood'.

M.S.: But who gave the men the authority to dominate the family?

O: Bible. Like woman came after man was created by God. So, at least woman should show respect to man because woman came after man and for the man and because of man.

M.S.: But then what about before the Christianity? Before there was bible?

O: Hababa (laughs)... before the bible?? Um.. But still the same thing happened. It was more about responsibilities.

M.S.: But I think women believe in Christianity more sincerely than men, right?

O: Yes, hababa (laughs). But the one thing that I can say about woman is that they very easily accept and adapt to new things. But man takes more time because they have harden heart.

(Okyere, 56, Male)

"The Bible tells us, God established the planet and he brought up animals of all kinds and each of them were two male-female. However, the first human kind, Adam, had no female human kind or helper. So God created Eve to support Adam."

(Mabena, 49, female)

"Good woman, they listen to husband and follow husband's decision. They know how to cook, how to wash, how to take care of children and respect husband. It's written in the Bible"

(man at the bar, middle-age)

These statements tell us that people do not really question the notions of male headship within the family. Rather they take it for granted, under the name of God. Actually, the Bible does not say much about male headship as superiority over women but implies responsibilities of men as head of household. However, it seemed men misunderstand that as if it meant that men are the bosses while women are servants, but Akan women think that men do not consider what the boss's responsibilities. As I mentioned before, many participants said that Christianity brought changes in traditional family system. However, in my opinion, Christianity's influence today is mostly in changes of people's perception toward the patriarchal family system, because there is not much actual change in people's lives. Religion provides a pretext to maintain the patriar so it sounds more plausible.

P: The bible says man is head of family. and head of family means that the head contains brain which is the most vital part of body, without brain nothing will work...Rest of the family is other lower parts of the body. We, the man, think about the future and look forward to the right ways with our vision. brain will coordinate other parts of body and organs. So that we will move forward. And that's the role of the head.

M.S.: Does it also talk about women?

P: Yes. Let me bring the bible... Here we are. The Proverbs. Chapter 31:10, The wife of Noble Character...

(Peter Junior, 18, Male, Second son of Mabena)

Therefore, the Bible and Christianity legitimize androcentric male authority over women as they are interpreted by men from a patriarchal perspective and exclude women's presence and perspective (Ruether 1983;1985, Thistlewaite 1985, Klinken 2011). Although Christianity brought changes in marriage - from

traditional polygamous to monogamous marriage - to Akan people, it still reinforces power relationship between men and women within the family with patriarchal notions of gender. So, in the end, nothing much changed in women's lives indeed, as one of the female participants noted:

Christianity with bible says that man and woman should meet and form their own family. however, Christianity did not make actual change or improvement to woman's life in matrilineal family system. It just brought idea that husband and wife should live together in the same house. But anyway that's still not easy while husband's and wife's roles and responsibilities are still the same. The system has been implemented in Akan since the beginning so it's hard to go away with it.

(Mabena, 49, female)

As I witnessed in Agogo, this 'misunderstanding' of male headship in household as male superiority over women is often linked to their misbehavior or failure in fulfilling their responsibilities. Thus it causes problems in marriages and family relationship. But it was common for Akan people to take men's misunderstanding and misbehavior as part of men's nature. So, Christianity reproduces patriarchal notions of masculinity and contributes to posit a fixed understanding of gender hierarchies as female submission and male domination (Klinken 2011:120).

When Peter came back with the Bible he started reading the Proverbs, Chapter 31:10 out loud, "*A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies... She gets up while it is still night, she provides food for her family... She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night...*" He is the second son of Mabena. While I was listening to his monologue, I was looking at Mabena cutting beef surrounded by flies, to prepare food for the night. I had mixed feelings because the 'she' in the Proverbs overlapped with her - but at that moment it seemed to me it was only in terms of women's sacrifice -.

2.4 Matrilineal Patriarchal family relation

In the end, there was no matriarchy that brings power to women. Rather, patriarchy prevails in Akan society. When I asked my research participants about general ideas of the matrilineal system, they paused and tried to find appropriate words to describe their routine as they never wonder why they practice it. Interestingly, that most of the men linked the matrilineal system with inheritance and men's position within the family while women stressed their relationship with their children. Male power is dependent on control over sphere economics and female power is based on the ability to reproduce (Poewe 1981). In most patriarchy based on patriliney, only men, not women, have generative power and authority. The principle of men's power and authority is compatible with patriliney, tracing descent through the male line.

However, in Agogo, although patriarchy is the dominant ideology in family and society, a woman definitely has authority over her children because the children belong to her family group, not her husband's. In fact, during my field work in Agogo, I noticed that a number of men described having a child with using the word 'giving birth' as if women give birth to her husband's family in a patrilineal society, men give birth to his wife's family in a matrilineal society. Therefore, woman's loyalty is not to her husband but to her maternal family and

it leads to weak bond between wife and husband. The marriage is often more brittle in matrilineal society than in patrilineal society. However, that does not mean that women have more power than men. The fact is that men exercise authority in both matrilineal and patrilineal societies (Holy 1996:103).

One unexpected result from my fieldwork was that the tie between husband and wife is weak and there are a number of broken families in Agogo. When I asked participants about general type of family in Akan society, they said 'married couples (men and women) with children in the same place' - that is, a heteronormative nuclear family based on western standard. However, I think that is more like an 'ideal' type of family of Akan people because while everyone described this general type, it was not common. I have hardly seen it in practice. Among the four extended families participating in research, only one family was close to this idealized norm. The other families were either multigenerational - extended, divorced, female-headed, or both divorced and extended family. No matter which type of family people lived in, the essential ingredient of family is 'marriage' and 'sharing space (house)'.

However, although people said marriage is as essential ingredient of family, marriage does not seem like a strong institution to form a family in matrilineal society. Family is something that you are born within, not something you create. Husbands and wives still live in their own *abusua efi* (family house) even after marriage. Moreover marriage in Agogo still based on customary marriage, which is different from western marriage. Marriage in contemporary western societies is defined and based on legal status with recognized corresponding rights and obligations. Although this style is increasing in urbans, most of marriage happens when women get pregnant first and then when men acknowledges their relationship and her pregnancy, the marriage can be confirmed. In this light, marriage is more in men's hands, rather than an essential element of family.

'Sharing space' is another key component of families. Respondents said that in matrilineal system, there is no illegitimate child because mothers never leave their child. For example, one female participant, Salome, had three children, one son and two daughters, but husband was never around. She said she was never actually married. Her first son, Evans was between her and her first boyfriend - though she said it happened on rainy night - and her small daughters were from 'the guy' (she never described as husband). There was actually one more girl from 'the guy' although she is not her biological daughter, she considers her as her daughter. Emmanuel also has an elder brother who has a different father. When I first heard that I thought automatically that he would feel excluded among the brothers. However, they said since they have the same mother, they are 'blood brothers'.

Therefore, I reached a conclusion that a women are in the centre of the family even if she is not in the centre of power. During the fieldwork, I sometimes felt as though I am a marriage consultant even though I am not married. When I agreed enthusiastically with women, men started complaining. I always had to remind myself that I am not here to judge and record the misbehaviour of Akan men before every interview. Sometimes I felt that once men become 'old enough', perhaps, they do not have their own space to show their honest emotions including sadness, frustration and weakness.

"I think women have more power than men in matrilineal system. Because women have children when they get old. But nobody cares for old man in the house. They will just come to me when they need money."

(Man at the bar, middle-age, farmer)

Audrey Richards (1950) argued about male ambiguity of the male position in matriliney. She coined the term “matrilineal puzzle” describing complexity of known matrilineal societies including confusion of men’s position in family and tension between a man’s and the wife’s matrilineal descent group as a function of brothers and husbands having to share authority. She argued that there is difficulty in splitting men’s loyalty between his own natal family (as brother and uncle) and those of his wife and children (as husband and father). In practice, male participants said living with the wife’s family (uxorilocal residence) is the worst case of marriage and family shape. When I asked them if there is case of living with the in-law’s family, they said that it is a ridiculous question.

“That is impossible. That is not going to happen. It can’t be happening. Even society is against that. Akan, we don’t do that. Men never come to women’s house to sleep. It’s not possible more than not common. It’s man who is getting married to the woman, not woman to the man. So he needs to figure out their accommodation by himself.”

(Amoako, 25, male)

In fact, Mr. Okyere had experience living with his in-law’s family in the beginning of his marriage due to his mother-in-law’s request. He could not stand more than two years and finally built a house for his conjugal family.

“In the beginning, it was just me, my wife and mother in law. But later brother-in-law also came. So, normally what we do is that I give my money to my wife and she cooks for everyone. So, everyone enjoy my money and food. I was taking care of the whole house and that’s traditional Akan family thing. But there was conflict after sometime. The brother who came to join us, he gossips about me and my wife with mother-in-law. They were sniffing around for gossip and my money.”

(Okyere, 56, Male)

Mr. Okyere said that if a man stays in his in-law’s house, the community will think the man is useless and the in-law’s family member, usually brother of wife, wield their power over him. At the end, the “matrilineal puzzle” has the underlying assumption that male roles are central and dominate the economic and social sphere in family and society. Matrilineal descent passes from women’s brother to her son. Thus, there was no space for women even in matrilineal families from the beginning. However, whether it is seen as good or not, most of people said that the custom of matrilineal system is fading away because of westernization and modernization and a shift toward western patriarchy, enforced (as noted above) by Christianity.

3 MASCULINITY AND FATHERHOOD

3.1 Introduction: Theorizing men and masculinity

“Masculinity [is] an institution, we call patriarchy” (Banner 1989:708). Over the past decades, many studies have been conducted on multiple masculinities and its redefinition across and within societies. Connell (1995) argued that masculinity is constructed and embodied in society, and there are plural and hierarchical masculinities in every society at every given time. Masculinities are not the opposite of femininity but are embedded in gender configurations and practices of specific power relations in each society, with hierarchy and domination structures. He introduced the term “hegemonic masculinities” that is ideal-typical, normative form of masculinity embodied in society by practices, social norms, ideals and ideologies which generate dominance over women and marginalization of various social group of men.

Fatherhood is associated with masculinity closely as ‘performing masculinity’, especially within the family context because parental masculinity and manhood are constructed and reconstructed in a mutual way (Enderstein, A.M. and F. Boonzaier 2015, Pleck 2010). Thus, intersection of fatherhood and masculinity can be definition and performance of gender identity and affects practice of fatherhood (Pleck 2010).

The hegemonic masculinity are not only practiced by men but also women and with the term ‘hegemonic’ also relates to power relationships between genders (Connell 1995, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Therefore, the study of masculinity is not only ‘study about men’ but rather study of gender including both masculinity and femininity with its power dynamism through different social contexts.

In this chapter, I will explore narrative of multiple masculinities through generation in matrilineal society of Akan by introducing ideals hegemonic masculinities and practices of fatherhood in the families participating in field research. ‘What makes a man’ was fundamental question for all participants and ‘being a father/family man’ becomes its main ingredient for everyone.

3.2 Disempowered masculinity

Mr. Okyere is a busy man. He introduced himself as the head of his whole family and head of his church when I first met him. According to Asamoah he is recognized as a good man in his family and the community. Whenever I walked with him in the community, people recognized him and greeted with a salute, a way of Ghanaian man’s greeting, or a bow. Sometimes people asked him about his family and church. He also seemed to enjoy being recognized by people in the community. He said people often come to consult with him when they have problems, especially with family issues. Perhaps, he is the one who ‘rarely’ performs the ideal masculinity of Akan in Agogo as Miescher explained in his research about “Presbyterian masculinity”. Miescher (2005) introduced

“Presbyterian masculinity” following the concepts of Connell’s multiple masculinities, especially focusing on Akan men in Kwahu in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He introduced three traditional notions of masculinity of Akan men: adult masculinity signified by marriage; senior masculinity (elderly); and the status of ‘big man’ as an uncle. In matrilineal society, men’s responsibilities as father extends to the well-being of his own matrilineal family like nieces and nephews. However, according to him the “Presbyterian masculinity” that is promoted by the Basel (Swiss/German) missionaries embodied such ideals of masculinity and fatherhood as hard work, moderation, law-abiding behaviour, monogamous marriage, primary allegiance to wife, children and church, and only secondarily to the matrilineal lineage. The missionaries spurned local notions of masculinity that prevailed through matrilineal family system. Thus, Miescher identifies changes in the processes constructing religious and social identities of masculinities.

Therefore, masculinity is not only defined by men themselves. It can be defined or qualified by society and community within certain social contexts. Including Mr. Okyere, all participants regardless of gender and generation agreed on that an ideal man should be responsible for himself and his family and financial ability is bottom line proof whether he is fulfilling his responsibility as a man. However, unfortunately, it was very hard to find such a man in real life. Perhaps this is not surprising, as it is an ‘ideal’. Mr. Okyere, who appears to have fulfilled that ideal, seemed to be enjoying being recognized as a good man in the community.

However, appearances are deceiving. Mr. Okyere’s enjoyment was at a high cost of himself and his wife as well. Technically, he is not rich but his wife’s family is. Although he has his own family house and his three children are all in well-known universities in Accra he said he cannot do all that without his wife’s ‘help’. He often said that he is suffering due to children’s school fees and his job (teacher at public secondary school in Agogo) does not pay good money. So, his wife also had to work to support the household. His wife, Abena, runs a small grocery store in the market and sometimes goes to farm tomatoes and plantains. He often complained about his wife and his mother-in-law because his wife spends too much time at her (mother’s) family house instead of his own. He said he sometimes makes his own breakfast and dinner because his wife is always with her mother. He was not complaining but when he said that he knows how to cook for himself he did not seem very happy or proud of it. He added, however, that he would not be able to achieve his happy marriage and good reputation in the community without his wife and her family.

According to Connell (1995:33), the “cultural function of masculine identity is to motivate men to work”. Men’s breadwinning position within the family identifies successful masculinity and having authority to dominate woman and other family member. However, the position of (male) breadwinners is associated not only with economic independence, but also ‘social status’ and ‘respect’ as a man. This can be seen sometimes from when men pressure wives into low paid jobs to gain this form of ‘respect’ (Wilott and Griffin 2000). In fact, all the male participants looked uncomfortable with an idea to have a wife who earns more than them, even if they do not have means to pay children’s school fees and bills from their own earning. According to Thebaud (2010:383), men tend to interpret his income as main resource of providing for essential family needs even when wives’ income is about the same as their own. Thus, being breadwinner in household is important to men to remain their strong identities as a man.

“my wife is a hair dresser. And obviously, her money is less than my earning. I decided about two years ago, that from now on, anything she earns from her work she should use for taking care of herself, like doing hair, buying underwear.. meanwhile I provide everything important like paying bills and school fees because that’s my responsibility not hers. She is a lady, she needs to take care of her body... Men are suffering and getting pressure but because of poverty it is not easy to afford everything. But we try and that is important. That is the way of being respected and regarded as a real man in society.”

(Atimah, 32, Male, Bar owner)

Male breadwinning is general “gender frame” that organizes social relations and personal identities across gender, class and socio-political lines even though it is associated with working class and conservative men (Demantas and Myers 2015:642). Breadwinning is core element of hegemonic masculinity because it links men’s earning to their negotiation of masculinity. Breadwinning affects how people perceive themselves and others by measuring their breadwinning role in the family (Connell 1995). Thus, men have to engage in “manhood acts” (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009) as a type of identity work to achieve breadwinner title and when men fail to achieve the breadwinning title, that can mean “emasculating” for them (Springer 2010:383).

The idea of a man as a breadwinner is typical positive, or rather ideal, social role of man in patriarchal ideology (Bernard 1981). In this regards, Parsons and Bales (1956) described the male role within family as more instrumental than female. However, in matrilineal society instrumental role of men in the family becomes more extreme, because they generally do not live with the conjugal family after marriage but still have to provide for the wife and children. If they cannot provide, they will not only lose their role of, and respect as a providing husband and father, but also of ‘a manly man’ and lose respect from others. So, among the participants, all mid-aged men were worried about that happening to them as they get old. Moreover, if a man cannot provide as much as his wife does anymore, they feel disempowerment and loss of dignity as a man because their family and society do not respect them. They also think that the children will not take care of them:

“They will just buy me underwear and towel to me while build a house for their mother. So what is the point of taking care of them? They won’t return anything to me... Men is always suffering, and it is nothing related to matrilineal system or religion. They don’t come to see me anymore unless they need money.”

(Man at the bar, middle-age, married)

But still, at any rate, it is very hard to find a man who performs the ‘ideal’ man’s role. So, their concerns are just a ‘whiny complaints’ in women’s eyes. Among the 14 male participants in in-depth interviews, one group of middle-aged men at the bar, and all the husbands whom I was unable to meet because they left family, there was no man who was the sole-provider within the family. Besides, I met only one man who lives with his wife and children, and a number of men who have more than two wives.

3.3 Being and becoming a man; idealized husband

During the long journey from Accra to Agogo, my old friend Asamoah and I had an interesting discussion about the matrilineal system. When I asked him about general ideas about the matrilineal system he said,

“How can we men be so sure if these are our children? What if they are from between my wife and a different man? It is obviously easy to know who is a child’s biological mother because there is eyewitnesses, but not easy to be certain about the father because nobody knows.”

(Asamoah, 32, Male)

I was stunned. How come he can give me such a clear reason for practicing matriliney? I was lost for words and wondered what evidence of and concerns with fatherhood are there in the patrilineal system. Besides, from his interpretation of matriliney, it implied that women have no choice about being a mother when they are pregnant while men have an option to negate being a father. Before and after being a father, men always have superiority over women.

It is not hard to realize that Akan communities are male dominant. There is a general cultural expectation that women submit to, and respect men, especially the husbands. Responsibility and sexual division of work in the house is clear. Husbands are considered main providers even when wife has higher income. Wives are responsible for house duties including cooking and childcare. Although most of women are increasingly working outside home, women’s first responsibility is still domestic role and if they do not carry out the traditional role of mother, nobody will praise them (Ampofo and Boateng 2007, Adinkrah 2012).

Moreover, Akan men tend to have a “sexual double standard” before marriage and even after. Although polygamy cases have decreased, there are still many, especially in rural area and a number of men believe that having multiple wives shows man’s power and prestige (Adinkrah 2012:475). During my field work, it was common in Agogo that men have more than two wives and a number of children even though they did not marry officially. Virility is also crucial for ideal masculinity, thus, the ability to perform sexually and have children is ultimate proof of masculinity (ibid:475). Therefore, In Akan society, according to Akan men, successful masculinity is still measured by fulfilling both the provider role and sexual performance measured in the numbers of wives and children:

He said he wants wife from Korea. I asked him whether he is married, then he said yes. Then I asked him why he wants another wife from Korea. He didn’t even smile at it. He said that Muslims can have four wives and asked me if I know the reason. He then said a man needs “a white lady, a dark lady, a skinny lady and a fat lady” so he doesn’t have to cheat (if he has only one wife)

(fieldnotes; 4th August, 2017)

Women also perceive Akan men’s “womanizing and boozing” as second nature of them. Therefore, overlooking men’s breaking moral codes (often prescribed by religion and church) is common. Even though women are unhappy with men’s common misbehaviour, they comply with men and situation reluctantly because they believe they are obliged to submit to men.

Men’s perception toward their superiority over women can be seen among the young generations as well. One of the young participants said that he will

not marry a woman who has higher education than him because once a woman is educated and gets to know her rights, she will start making demands, claiming for these rights. Although he acknowledged the importance of women's empowerment in the beginning of the interview, this situation would lead to the woman challenging men's power and bringing family trouble.

An Akan's ideal man is represented as a Christian man implying responsibility to family in terms of economics and loyalty. As ideal woman is considered to be a Christian woman, meaning being submissive to men mainly.

"We, the Akan men, don't like wife to challenge us. Two wise men cannot be in the same place. One must be a fool and that should be a woman. That's what we think. We always think woman should be down and men should be on the top but it's not dominating. It's more like compromising."

(Ernest, 28, male)

"if you are commanding and authoritative to family while you are providing, there's nothing wrong actually. But the key things is that if you as a man fail to do your responsibility, for example you can't pay for children's school fee, then, you can't be seen as a man. You can complain men's responsibility is too much, meanwhile you are not doing it. However, a man cannot do that anymore. And you know, if a father does not provide while a mother does, the children will see the mother to be a father as well and not respect the father. You can't command while doing nothing. And wife will not respect her husband, neither will the family, the community and the society."

(Amoako, 25, male)

Ideals of masculinity are also embedded in the ways men perceive the relationship between women and themselves. As I addressed in a former chapter, men usually feel disempowered by doing house work because it is seen as women's responsibility. Even though both men and women acknowledge the change of women's status with education and employment, women still have more barriers to higher education than men due to the social norm that 'Anyway ladies will end up in the kitchen'. However, contemporary expectations of woman as future wife seem higher than they used to be. Many men of marriageable age said that they want wives who have a regular income source or professional job but still expect them to "fulfil their duty" as mother and wife.

Younger men who experienced 'traditional' manhood/fatherhood of their fathers in the matrilineal families, with the absence as dominant feather of fatherhood, ideas about family and marriage seem to have changed when compared to the older generation. They prefer Christian marriage rather than Customary marriage and one of them said marriage is about a "business" not only about love. And they prefer patriarchal gender relations, hoping that they might fulfil the ideal of male provider but being resigned to the fact that this might not happen.

I met Ernest first at Salome's place. I was doing an interview with Salome and he came to the house to fix the cable TV. While Salome was talking, more accurately backbiting her husband and Akan men, he chimed in with our conversation and said:

"Sorry to interrupt you but don't make all the men bad. They might have their own struggles. But I am sure 90 percent of men are willing to help their family. It's only because they don't have enough money. And they know that they won't get any benefit from their children when they get old."

The language he chose - 'willing', 'help' and 'benefit' - tells how a number of men perceive their position in the family: as a combination of a calculated task that they do when affordable and convenient, and a sense of abandonment and exclusion as they cannot compete with the centrality of mother's role. The boundary between men and women as providers in the family becomes blurred for various reason. Men cannot remain as single breadwinner because economic situation has changed compared to previous generations. Jobs are scares, incomes are low, and men struggle to get employment. However, this blurred 'breadwinner' boundary does not mean more horizontal or more equal relations between men and women, nor it means change in men's perceptions of ideal marriage, ideal manhood or ideal womanhood.

Younger men in marriageable age in Agogo are struggling to be 'a man'. For example, Ernest left Agogo for higher education but had to come back because he couldn't afford city life without proper job and initial capital. He said he had to decide between doing something that he does not want in the city or coming back to his family. Compared to older generation, he should have already been 'a man' with wives and children, at his age. However, not only Ernest, other 'marriageable' men said they do not want to marry until they have a proper job and enough money to rent a place for their future wives.

During the interview, when I asked younger men how they feel about being a man, they told me that being man is privileged in Akan because they have power over women and children. However, they also expressed their concerns and challenges of living up to the ideals they described before. They are neither 'too old' nor 'not young any longer' to be 'a man'. They appreciated the changes like more education opportunities or not being a farmer anymore that their father could not enjoy. But, they also say that they fear failing to be 'a man' as they experienced with their fathers. Being a man is not enough to maintain authority anymore. Women and society demand more performative identity from men. As Judith Butler (1988:519) addressed, gender is "no way a stable identity or locus agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time-an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts". So even though younger men still have perception of men as controllers and providers in the family, they realize things are not like in 'olden times'. Akan men struggle to maintain the evidence of their superiority over women in the house and in the community. They cannot just become a man as the ways their father used to - by making women pregnant - they have to show what it means to be a man by proving themselves at all accounts: providing, protecting and performing manhood in and outside the house. All of these in the socio-economic context which is not conducive to fulfilling such dreams.

3.4 Son hating his father; father absence and young masculinity

His full name is Emmanuel Okyere. He is named after the Mr. Okyere, not his biological father. He said that actually his mother and he decided to change his name when he entered the junior high school, since they divorced. They wanted to remove any trace or any memory of his father from their family. So not only Emmanuel, but other children too all have different family name. He said when the siblings do not have the same surname, people usually think that their

mother is sleeping around with many men. So, even when the man and wife don't have a good relation or even divorce, still it is not common to change the name. However, it seemed her reputation was not more important to her than her children's wishes.

(fieldnotes; 17th July, 2017)

I always had dinner at Emmanuel's house. He was the second son among four son and one daughter of Mabena. She cooks and sells food at the lorry station every night. The first day I visited his family we made a deal that if I pay five Ghana Cedi (about 1 Euro) every meal, and they will make my favourite Ghanaian dish every day. So, for the sake of my fried yam I went to their house every single day even during the weekend. Mabena called me daughter obroni Adwoa (Twi name for a girl born on Monday) because I was born on the same date as her daughter. I very much enjoyed observing and talking with the family every day. Observing their routine was emotionally moving although it was almost the same every day.

Emmanuel said he does not have any good memories about his father. He only remembers that when he was very small his father bought him a small chair. Other than that, most of his memories about his father seemed built by his mother since his father left the family when Emmanuel was 6 years old.

"My father was womanizer and never brought money to house. He stole mom's money and used it for his enjoyment. He was just trouble maker and I am not going to be someone like him, never... If he worked and supported our family, we wouldn't have to go through all this suffering. We would have had our own house, my mom wouldn't have had to work until now. "

(Emmanuel, 21, Son of Mabena)

According to Chodorow (1979:176), when a father or adult men are not present in the family, boys are taught to be masculine more consciously than girls are taught to be feminine. Boys are "assumed to learn" their heterosexual role without teaching, by emotional interaction with their mother. And the mothers, the wives without husbands, tend to expect that sons will identify with fathers.

Since father-absence is common in the matrilineal family, the sons have less experience to learn masculine roles through personal relationship with their father (ibid). Hence, male gender development is more complicated than female in the matrilineal society because of expectations from mothers and society that boys must attain 'proper masculinity'. In Ghana, there is still belief in the fundamental distinctions between men and women, e.g. men should not express their sadness or weakness. For instance, they consider weeping or crying as unmasculine adult man but for boys as well.

However, this does not mean that boys, in father absence, do not learn masculine roles or behaviour, just as boys with fathers present do not always follow father's examples. The article "Deconstructing the essential father" in American Psychologist (Silverstein and Auerbach 1999) disputed argument about the danger of fatherlessness. Empirical research does not support the assumption that boys need a father to establish a masculine gender identity. Father's importance as a sex role model is ideological, rather than empirical. However, an important things is that children form their personal relationships with their "object of identification" and distinctions through identification that result from the "object" (Chodorow 1979:175). When the object of identification is not present in reality, he is replaced by ideals. So, "In their unattainability, masculinity and the masculine role are fantasized and idealized by boys (and often

by girls), whereas femininity and the feminine role remain for a girl all too real and concrete (ibid:177)” In fact, when I asked young guys about what it means to be a man and what kind of man they want to be in future, most of them gave me a picture of man that is actually not close at all with their fathers. Thus, boys attempt to construct their sense of masculinity more in contrast to and negative evaluation of their fathers.

Actually, it was not only Emmanuel who removed his father’s name from his own name. Evan was first son of Salome. He said that he does not have any memory of his father. He only knows his face through a picture that his mother owns.

“I don’t remember anything about him but my mom described him sometime. He abandoned me since my infancy like when I was 2 years old. She said the only thing that he did for me was that he brought me ball to play. He did not pay even a pesewa for my school fee... He was teacher in Kumasi. So once we went there to see him with my uncle but we couldn’t meet him. But the other teachers asked me if I am son of Mr. Kobo, that is my father’s name. I resemble him a lot. I was about 13 years old but they already recognized me as his son. But still he didn’t show up that day and later the school said he retired. I don’t know if he was trying to run away from me or not though..”

(Evans, 19, Son of Salome)

Perhaps, masculinity in matrilineal society sounds similar when compared with patrilineal society in terms of negative fatherhood reputation. However, matrilineal society which is rooted in patriarchy actually makes men free from responsibility in their conjugal family, but also negative reputation from in society. I do not want to overgeneralize, but I wonder about the future of these young men. Every time I had an interview with older men in Agogo, they all had similar experience about their fathers when they were young. However, they still repeat their father’s behaviours and practices although they thought they would never become like that. I, perhaps, believed in that matriarchy was just a myth. Have there ever been any time or place that was not patriarchal? Can men change or do they even want to change? In a patriarchal world, if men do not think or want to change, nothing will change.

4 MOTHERHOOD AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

4.1 Women and Motherhood

Although discourse about men as head of household dominates Akan society, women's substantive breadwinner role is common because there are a number of men who have more than one wife and they do not (or cannot) support one of their families. Thus, despite of the ideal of male headship as main provider, most women do work such as running a shop, sawing, farming or selling food on the street.

However, women have more barriers to obtain jobs than men because of child-care and house duties. Particularly, motherhood is more stressed in matrilineal society because the offspring belongs to their mother's family. The matrilineal system equates womanhood to motherhood without any questions. Moreover, in the past, women were not allowed to go to school because of a belief that they were going to end up in domestic role. Thus, there were not many women who spoke English in Agogo although most men did. In this light, the matrilineal system and patriarchy interplay to keep women domesticated, limited their sphere and reproduced division of labour in the households and segregation in the market by gender.

Not surprisingly, both male and female participants said motherhood is the nature of woman. Most women say that children are all they have in their life and they take them as their duty that is assigned by God. Having children is considered as a significant achievement of women's life and attainment of social respect in community, because giving birth represents a continuation of the family lineage both in physical and religious terms (Hollo and Larsen 2008). Therefore, women's successful mothering and motherhood represent a "milestone" that grants to them for achieving their female identity and normative destiny as women (ibid:170-171).

More than 300 people attended at Nana mansa's 75th birthday. Including Mr. Okyere and Abena (his wife/Nana mansa's daughter), all her family came even from abroad like the Netherland and U.K.. She looked splendid with nice blue and orange colour kente dress with gold jewelleryes. She looks little nervous but enjoying her day... There was grant ceremony for lifetime achievement award for her by Pentecost church of Agogo. After, her daughters and grandchildren read a congratulatory message for her. I did not understand because it was in Twi, but some of them showed tears while reading out. I think today must be one of the most special day for Nana mansa's life.

(fieldnotes; 12th August, 2017)

"to some extent, I feel highly recognized in Agogo because when you mention my name, everyone knows who I am. And it is because people know that I have been working very hard to send my five children to higher education, having my own business and house for my family, all by myself without husband. I feel proud of myself for that. Then I feel being empowered that people use myself as good example of parenting. Because some people find difficulty to raise even one child."

(Mabena, 49, Female)

Indeed, when I asked the question “when do you feel recognized in the community?” all the female participants who have kids responded that when their children grow up and finish school, they feel empowered and highly recognized in the community. In the same manner, when the child has done something bad, their misbehaviour becomes their mother’s disgrace, as failed women, but rarely is the father blamed. Therefore, women’s motherhood may empower women, but this empowerment still takes place within patriarchal authority (Walker 1995:421). Patriarchal definitions of motherhood also reinforce the limited definition of femininity because motherhood not only define what mothering is, but also women’s identity. Since being a successful mother means successful woman, the women who cannot achieve the title of successful mother are marginalised in the society. Moreover, it marginalizes women with infertility. However, I did not see any ‘bad mother’ in Agogo. Most women are struggling to feed and send their children to school while the husband is not present.

Being a woman in matrilineal system is not easy. All I have got is children. Right now, my children are grown up. So I think I have done really good job. All I do is praying for them. You need to think about yourself and your children because men don't think about it. People think I have done good job raising children because I have made it by only myself and God. So when they have any problem, they come to seek advice from me. And people know that I can help them. It is all God's plan.

(Mabena, 49, Female)

From the time that you will be woman, you should start thinking of getting married to a man. And that means that everything that you are doing is to help your husband. Making sure of giving birth and bringing up your kids. It is lady's job to feed and take care of them giving them your breast-milk, enlightening them, teaching them how to behave... that's why lady is a mother.

(Theresa, 44, Female)

In fact, we cannot deny that mother is the woman, if it only means a biologically female parent in a heterosexual family. However, that does not mean that women are all mothers or potential mothers. Moreover, motherhood should not define women and femininity. There is no biological link between female sexual organs and the capacity to be caring, nurturing and loving as there is no connection between being a men’s sexual organs and being macho.

Women’s mothering and motherhood have been taken for granted and it is a persistent sexual divisions of labour. Chodorow analysed women’s mothering and its reproduction across the generations in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1979). She addressed that women’s mothering has been taken for granted as inevitable by both society and feminist scholarship. Women’s role within family became focused on child care or taking care of the husband. However, the issue of women’s mothering is that its extension beyond the family. “Although women’s mothering is of profound importance for family structure, for relations between the sexes, for ideology about women, and for the sexual division of labour and sexual inequality both inside the family and in the nonfamilial world, it is rarely analysed” (ibid:3).

As a woman, the story and experience of Agogo women are not a long way off. It can be my mother’s story, my sister’s story and my own story as well. During my stay in Agogo, I received unexpected proposals from strangers several times, even asking me to have a baby with them. Although they thought it was just a silly joke, I suspect they would not make such jokes to men. For men I am also just one of future mothers, regardless of any other information about

me. Although women's mothering is universal, Akan people tend to consider women's motherhood as natural and instinctual because of the family rule that children belong to women's family in matrilineal communities. In other words, parenting is regarded as mothering while it is hard to find meaning for 'fathering'. Thus, women's mothering as parenting organization is embedded in the social organization of gender.

M.S.: Why do you think men do not take care of children?

S: Akan men, they don't take care of children because they are wicked. They just don't want to take care of babies. Some men do. But most of them, they will just come to house sometimes to play with kids or scold them. They think that's their job. They don't even think taking care of children is work like labour, so nowadays, they don't even respect their wife if she doesn't work for money."

(Salome, 38, female)

Salome's statement shows that men actually choose to take care of their children based on their preferences, while women accept their role in rearing children as fate and nature since they are born as women. Indeed, men are in a better position to enforce their preference than women. It is not only about biological difference between men and women but also it is about power relations between genders and within family. Therefore, women's mothering is a fundamentally legitimate "arrangement" and "ideological formulation" to justify the sexual division of labour within patriarchal organization. In this light, women's mothering does not mean only performing a mother role, but contributes to the reproduction of gender inequality through patriarchy and its effect on masculinity and femininity as well (Chodorow, 1979:32).

According to Adrienne Rich, motherhood can be distinguished by two different meanings: as experience related to "the potential relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to her children" while as the institution it "aims at ensuring that the potential – and all women – shall remain under male control" (Rich 1977:xv). The institution of motherhood can be most effective tool of oppression in patriarchy to reproduce gender inequality. Therefore, the reproduction of women's mothering is the fundamental reproduction of women's position and responsibilities in the house. That is, women are also perpetrators to reproduce the notion of femininity as the nature of motherhood and their own social role and position in the hierarchy of gender.

"It's not only in matrilineal system that women work more than men in the house. All the chores and labors would give burden to wife and daughter. For example, Adwoa (her only daughter) will do every work in the house when I am not around. When it comes to taking care of children, women mostly take responsibility. My children have no father and I don't have husband. But it is not true that I take care of my children while my husband does not because of matrilineal system. I am a mother of the children, that's why."

(Mabena, 49, Female)

"I told her not to argue with Evans because she is pregnant now. So it's not good for her and baby. But she never listens to me. She is very stubborn. She doesn't like to cook. She doesn't like to wash clothes. Even she doesn't really like children. I don't know what kind of mother she would be."

(Salome, 38, Female)

'Pregnant woman' is how her family calls her instead of her name 'Dora'. She is a stepdaughter of Salome but did not grow up in Salome's family house.

She came after she was pregnant because she realized that the guy who made her pregnant denied it's his baby and her mother was not able to provide her a good environment. Although her common-law husband is not around, Salome let his daughter stay with her in her family house. Unfortunately, although Salome was also not in the best situation, she said her stepdaughter needs someone to teach her "how to be a mother". The community praised Salome for her generous acts. It is thoughtful that Salome embraced her stepdaughter. However, Dora does not seem really welcome in the family and they did not respect her because she got pregnant before marriage and she had to drop out of school because of pregnancy. She still needs a mother role model to be a good mother, although she cannot get that knowledge from her own mother. "Women come to mother because they have been mothered by women. By contrast, that men are mothered by women reduces their parenting capacity" (Chodorow 1979:211). Therefore, mother and daughter share the experiences of motherhood and their relation reproduces institutionalized and patriarchal motherhood.

4.2 Women's empowerment

It was during the second interview with Mabena. Emmanuel, her son, was translating my questions to her and her response to me. 'What do you think about women's empowerment?' I asked. Then Emmanuel hesitated how to translate this into Twi. He said he cannot find appropriate word in Twi. I asked him again 'Okay, then when do you feel you are empowered?'. Then he gave me a look meanings he is still not sure. I asked him if he knows meaning of 'empowerment'. Then he smiled awkwardly and shook his head and asked me 'Isn't it something related to 'power' and 'women's education'?

It is true that there is no word to explain 'empowerment' even in my language, Korean. Then how do I perceive this word to talk about it?

Women's empowerment has been a buzzword in development and gender studies by feminist scholarships. According to Kabeer (2001), empowerment is closely linked to agency. She sought a link between agency and empowerment by analysing women's strategic choices, arguing for a need of contextualized approaches to understanding empowerment with respect to assessing interventions that are supposed to better women's lives. She also discussed different levels of empowerment, from personal to structural, indicating that achieving the former does not directly lead to achieving the latter. Thus, her theoretical approach to women's empowerment can explain in what way women in the societies may see themselves, or may be seen by men and the community.

Empowerment is also often associated with women's emancipation. If empowerment is involved in individuals' capacity within the system, emancipation is challenging to structure of power and trying to change the system (Inglis 1997:4). Among the multiple approaches to women's empowerment and emancipation in feminist research, much of it equates emancipation with women's entry into the public sphere, such as education, the political domain and employment. While these were the basis of women's emancipation in socialist societies, Moghadam (1992) discussed the relationship between emancipation and development, arguing that – despite criticism of development as a modernist, western

ideal of progress – it has undermined patriarchy around the world and economically empowered women, especially through employment; thus, development has an emancipatory potential. However, whom do we regard as empowered women and whom not? Do women have need for empowerment and emancipation?

To return to translation, I tried to explain ‘empowerment’ to Emmanuel as I understood it based on Kabeer’s framework. So, I asked again ‘When do you feel you are recognized by your community?’ and ‘What makes you think that you have a voice in the decision making process?’. Then he seemed to understand what I was trying to ask. As I explained in the former chapter, including Mabena, most of female participants said that they feel ‘empowered’ when they have good reputation in parenting for their children. Because it makes them to feel they have achieved the most important thing by their role, which is being a mother. According to Rich (1977), woman’s mothering could empower women so that woman derive her natural power to make a better situation around her and feel satisfied. O’Reilly also addressed empowered mothering: “The theory and practice of empowered mothering recognizes that both mothers and children benefit when the mother lives her life and practices mothering from a position of agency, authority, authenticity and autonomy. This perspective, in emphasizing maternal authority and ascribing agency to mothers and value to motherwork, defines motherhood as political site wherein mothers can affect social change through the socialization of children and the world at large through political-social activism.” (O’Reilly 2004:12).

During my field work, I have expected to hear women talking about their agency and strong statements against the institutionalized motherhood. However, I realized when they talk about their own experience regarding the empowerment, they feel empowered by their motherhood and mothering. When I asked them if they have any other source of empowerment they gave me answers that I expected in the beginning.

“...Apart from my children... When I go to market to buy meat for catering, I buy big portion of beef like whole thigh and leg. There are not many people who have money to buy whole part of the leg and it’s not easy to cut them and take bone out. Even though there are butchers, I don’t need them. I can do it by myself. And when there was funeral in my family, so many people came from my side to pay condolence, much more than I expected. Then I realized that I have been highly recognized in the community in a good way and that makes me feel empowered.”
(Mabena, 49, female)

Although Mabena had to start her catering business to support her children without husband, the fact that she decided to divorce her husband, to start thinking of her food business and to send her children to good school was definitely part of her agency. In this regards, I disagree that motherhood only disempowers any sense of women’s agency through control of women’s roles as mothers. Rather, it can allow women to define their own value of mothering and women’s empowerment as well. Women’s empowerment is a multidimensional and complex idea. Therefore, measuring and conceptualizing empowerment by regulated theoretical frameworks cannot always be employed in practice. Then I thought again that perhaps I was biased to categorize women as those in need to be empowered and emancipated.

While most women I spoke with have positive thought on women’s empowerment, most of men had mixed feelings the subject. In the beginning the

men said it is good because it contributes to better women's life. But after some conversation, they showed their concern about it.

"Women's empowerment is good thing and it can bring changes in family. They are educated more and understand issues more. And it also helps her children as well because women can help with children's homework and all that. You see, the empowerment that we are talking about now is not arguing with their husband and being assertive. Empowerment should be to contribute to family meaningfully, not to argue and claim your rights."

(Asamoah 32, male)

"You know what, actually women don't need to be empowered or superior because they will be under control of men anyway. Every man will agree with me. I have this girl, Esther. She is challenging me because she is educated. She doesn't want to be under control of men. But I want her to be a lady who listens to man. But she thinks that's not something for her. She likes me but I can't marry her. Oh... she is too challenging."

(Ernest, 28, male)

"Empowerment of women is very good. It will reduce unemployment issue and stress on men as well because they will contribute to household. But, if women are educated and empowered too much they will start talking about their rights. Then, there are two parties in the house who will fight over superiority, like: I want to show that I am the boss. Here, they run marriage as business. It's better to have only one person as decision maker, that is man."

(Atimah, 32, male)

According to these statements, men think women's empowerment is good in terms of improving women's education and contributing to the household financially. However, they have negative feelings at the bottom of their heart about women challenging them and attempting to get the top position in the family rooted from empowerment. I imagine women's emancipation cannot be welcome here. Men do recognize now that they cannot be the only providers in the house because of continuous unemployment, less substitutes and change of economic climate. However, men have the misconception that empowering women means disempowering men as if empowered women will dominate them. While women say they feel empowered when they are caring, mothering and performing patriarchal duty of women.

5 CONCLUSION

This research investigates the practice and notion of masculinity in the matrilineal society of Akan in Ghana and its association with power relations within the family and women's empowerment. I employed an intersectional approach to understand how people perceive masculinity, femininity, family and their own lives in the matrilineal context. Then how perception of people has changed by influence of social factors like gender, age, generation and religion. Using an ethnographic orientation based on participant observations and interviews enabled me to engage closely with people's daily lives during my field work in Agogo and gain a deeper understanding of their lives and culture. Research findings show that intersectional relation of social dimensions e.g. gender, ethnicity, class, age, generation, religion, education, cultural norms and ideals influences people's perception of masculinity and contribute to maintain patriarchal ideology and gender inequality in the matrilineal society. However, my research journey was much more dynamic than I expected in the beginning.

First, various literature shows how concepts of patriarchy and matrilineality have been dichotomized by patriarchal ideology and linked with women's empowerment. Akan societies have a matrilineal family system with patriarchal values which reinforces supremacy of men and subordination of women. As a feature of matrilineal patriarchy, I found the paradoxical implication that the matrilineal system serves to reinforce patriarchal ideology through the symbolic presence of men. The matrilineal system allows men to escape from their social responsibility and expectation as a family man while religion (Christianity) also contributes to justify patriarchal control of men over women.

Second, the perception of masculinity and fatherhood for both men and women in matrilineal society has changed through generations. 'Christian man' has been the ideal of masculinity and manhood for both men and women and implies that the man is loyal and responsible for the family. This is clearly more 'ideal' than reality as the male breadwinning role in the family, although a fundamental tenet of hegemonic masculinity, it is more associated with men's identities than responsibility.

However, younger generations' ideas about manhood have changed through experience and relationship with substantively absent fathers. Younger generations wish to enjoy their 'legitimate' authority, unlike the authority exercised by their father. They prefer intelligent and independent women while retaining a desire for patriarchal gender relations. Therefore, younger generations tend to be careful about marriage and family planning while they still look for women who will not challenge their authority. Young boys' experience with their father also influences their constructed sense of masculinity. Boys with less personal relationship with their father tend to desire traditional heterosexual masculinity by identifying with idealized manhood and fatherhood based on expectations from their mothers and society and the experience of 'proper masculinity' which they never experienced in reality.

Lastly, in matrilineal society, women's mothering is taken for granted as offspring belong to the mother's family. Although women increasingly work outside the home, traditional roles and motherhood are considered natural and

a major duty of women under patriarchal ideology. Thus, the patriarchal definition of motherhood limit definition of femininity as motherhood is nature of women but extend its range to sexual division of labour outside the family.

Contrary to expectation, women in Agogo do not feel oppressed in this situation. Rather, women feel empowered by mothering their children as it gives them agency and autonomy. Having a child is a significant achievement for women in the matrilineal system because it means they have the generative power that men do not have to continue their own family. In this manner, matrilineality enables women to authorize the power. This may be why men in the matrilineal system feel threatened about idea of women's empowerment..

There is no matriarchy in Agogo and the matrilineal society is in no way a mirror image of patrilineal society. Rather, matrilineality is another picture of patriarchal frame. However, my experience with men and women in Ghana tells me that there are multiple masculinities in different social contexts. Hegemonic masculinity and people's perceptions are formulated in intersectional social relations e.g. gender, ethnicity, generation, age, religion, education, economic status and cultural norms and ideals. In the same manner, to understand the lives of women in matrilineal society, then, we have to look into other layers of social relations and individual's experience aside from comparisons to the lives of men.

At the end, everyone's positionality is constructed and reconstructed by influence of social relations of inside, outside and all around as if my positionality had been changed by my environment. I hope the reader understands my positionality in this study and that my intention is not to be harsh toward Akan men, but rather to honestly report my experiences, perceptions and findings from my time in Ghana.

References

- Adinkrah, M. (2012) 'Better Dead than Dishonored: Masculinity and Male Suicidal Behavior in *Contemporary Ghana*', *Social science & medicine* 74(4): 474-481.
- Adomako, A., J, Boateng. (2007) Multiple meanings of manhood among boys in Ghana, in Shefer, T. (eds) *boys to men: social construction of masculinity in contemporary society*, pp.50-74. Landsdowne: University of Cape Town Press.
- Adomako, A., Okyerefo, M.P.K. and Pervarah, M. (2009) 'Phallic Competence: Fatherhood and the Making of Men in Ghana', *Culture, Society & Masculinity*, 1 (1): 59-78.
- Agar, M.H. (1996) *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography.*: Academic Press.
- Akeampong, E. and Pashington, O. (2005) Spirituality, gender, and power in Asante history in Oyěwùmi, O. (eds.) *African Gender Studies : A Reader*. (1st ed. edn) New York : Palgrave,.
- Amadiume, I. (2005) 'Theorizing matriarchy in Africa: kinship ideologies and systems in Africa and Europe', in O. Oyeronke (eds) *African Gender Studies A Reader*, pp. 83-98. US: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Awusabo-Asare, K. (1990) 'Matriliney and the New Intestate Succession Law of Ghana', *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 24(1): 1-16.
- Banner, L. (1989) 'How Men Feel: Their Response to Women's Demands for Equality and Power', *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 14(3): 703-708.
- Bannon, I. and M. Correia (2006) *The Other Half of Gender : Men's Issues in Development*. Washington, DC : World Bank,.
- Bawa, S. (2017) 'Christianity, Tradition, and Gender Inequality in Postcolonial Ghana', *African Geographical Review* : 1-16.
- Butler, J. (1988) 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre journal* 40(4): 519-531.
- Chodorow, N. (1979) *The Reproduction of Mothering : Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley, Calif. : University of California Press,.
- Christ, C.P. (2016) 'A New Definition of Patriarchy: Control of Women's Sexuality, Private Property, and War', *Feminist Theology* 24(3): 214-225.
- Crossa, V. (2012) 'Relational Positionality: Conceptualizing research, power, and the everyday politics of neoliberalization in Mexico City', *ACME: An international E-journal for critical geographies* 11 (1): 110-132
- Crenshaw, K. (1991) 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6): 1241-1299
- Crenshaw, K. (1997) 'Intersectionality and Identity Politics: Learning from Violence against Women of Color', in M. Lyndon Shanley and U. Narayan (eds.) *Reconstructing Political Theory: Feminist Perspectives*, pp. 178-193. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Connell, R. W. (1995) *Masculinities*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Connell, R. W. (1998) 'Masculinities and Globalization', *Men and Masculinities* 1(1): 3-23.

- Connell, R. W. and J.W. Messerschmidt (2005) 'Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept', *Gender & Society* 19(6): 829-859.
- Demantas, I. and K. Myers (2015) "'Step Up and be a Man in a Different Manner': Unemployed Men Reframing Masculinity', *The Sociological Quarterly* 56(4): 640-664.
- Diop, C.A. (1989) *The cultural unity of black Africa: The domains of Matriarchy and Patriarchy in classical antiquity*. London: Karnak House.
- Edstrom J., Singh S.K. and Shahrokh T. (2016) 'Intersectionality: A Key for Men to Break Out of the Patriarchal Prison?', *IDS Bulletin* 47(5): 57-74.
- Enderstein, A.M. and F. Boonzaier (2015) 'Narratives of Young South African Fathers: Redefining Masculinity through Fatherhood', *Journal of Gender Studies* 24(5): 512-527.
- Freeman, T.P.D. (2008) 'Psychoanalytic Concepts of Fatherhood: Patriarchal Paradoxes and the Presence of an Absent Authority', *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 9(2): 113-139.
- Ghana Statistics Services (2012) '2010 Population and Housing Census: Summary report of final result', Ghana Statistics Services. <http://www.statsghana.gov.gh/docfiles/2010phc/Census2010_Summary_report_of_final_results>
- Hanson, K.T. (2004) 'Rethinking the Akan Household: Acknowledging the Importance of Culturally and Linguistically Meaningful Images', *Africa Today* 51(1): 27-45.
- Hollos, M. and U. Larsen (2008) 'Motherhood in sub-Saharan Africa: The Social Consequences of Infertility in an Urban Population in Northern Tanzania', *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 10(2): 159-173.
- Holy, L. (1996) *Anthropological Perspectives on Kinship*. University of Alberta.
- Inglis, T. (1997) 'Empowerment and Emancipation', *Adult Education Quarterly* 48(1): 3-17.
- Kabeer, N. and SIDA. (2000) *Discussing Women's Empowerment ; Theory and Practice*. Uppsala : SIDA,.
- Klinken, A.S.v. (2011) 'Male Headship as Male Agency: An Alternative Understanding of a 'Patriarchal' African Pentecostal Discourse on Masculinity', *Religion and Gender* 1(1).
- Kunin, S. D., and J.M. Watson. (2006) *Theories of Religion: A Reader*. London, UK: Rutgers University Press
- Kaiser, K. (2009). Protecting Respondent Confidentiality in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 19(11), 1632–1641.
- McCall, L. (2005) 'The Complexity of Intersectionality', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(3): 1771-1800.
- McGee, K (2015) 'The Impact of Matriarchal Traditions on the Advancement of Ashanti Women in Ghana', In Betty Taylor (Eds.), *Listening to the Voices: Multi-ethnic Women in Education* (p. 1-10). San Francisco, CA: University of San Francisco.
- Mernissi, F. (1982) 'Virginity and Patriarchy', *Women's Studies International Forum* 5(2): 183-191.
- Miescher, S. F. (2005) *Making men in Ghana*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mikell, G. (1997) *African feminism : the politics of survival in sub-Saharan Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Moghadam, V.M. (1992) 'Development and Women's Emancipation: Is there a Connection?', *Development and Change* 23(3): 215-255.
- Molyneux, M. (1985) 'Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua', *Feminist Studies* 11(2): 227-254.
- Mwaura, P. N. (2005). 'Gender and Power in African Christianity: African Instituted Churches and Pentecostal Churches' in Kalu, O. (eds.). *African Christianity: An African Story*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria: 410-445.
- Obeng, P. (2003) Gendered nationalism: forms of masculinity in modern Asante in Lindsay, L. A. and S. Miescher (eds.), *Men and masculinities in modern Africa*, pp. 192-208, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann,.
- O'Reilly, A. (2004) *Mother Matters: Motherhood as Discourse and Practice: Essays from the Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*. Association for Research on Mothering.
- Oyèwùmí, O. (1997) *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. U of Minnesota Press.
- Parsons, T. and R.F. Bales (1956) *Family Socialization and Interaction Process*. Vol. 7. Psychology Press.
- Phoenix, A. and A. Woollett (1991) *Motherhood: Social Construction, Politics and Psychology*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Pleck, J.H. (2010) 'Fatherhood and Masculinity.' : the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, under Project No. ILLU-45-0366
- Poewe, K. O. (1981) *Matrilineal ideology : male-female dynamics in luapula, zambia*. London: Published for the International African Institute by Academic Press (Studies in anthropology).
- Rich, A. (1977) *Of woman born : motherhood as experience and institution*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Richards, A. I. (1950) 'Some types of family structure amongst the central Bantu' in A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and D. Forde (eds) *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, pp. 207-251. London: Oxford University Press.
- Ruether, R.R. (1983) *Sexism and God-Talk : Toward a Feminist Theology*. Boston : Beacon Press,.
- Ruether, R.R. (1985) 'Feminist Interpretation: A Method of Correlation' in Russell, L.M. (eds.). *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. (1st ed. edn) Philadelphia : Westminster Press,.
- Schrock, D. and M. Schwalbe (2009) 'Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts', *Annual review of sociology* 35: 277-295.
- Silverstein, L.B. and C.F. Auerbach (1999) 'Deconstructing the Essential Father.', *American Psychologist* 54(6): 397-407.
- Springer, K.W. (2010) 'Economic Dependence in Marriage and Husbands' Midlife Health: Testing Three Possible Mechanisms', *Gender & Society* 24(3): 378-401.
- Takyi, B.K. and S.O. Gyimah (2007) 'Matrilineal Family Ties and Marital Dissolution in Ghana', *Journal of Family Issues* 28(5): 682-705.
- Thebaud, S. (2010) 'Masculinity, Bargaining, and Breadwinning: Understanding Men's Housework in the Cultural Context of Paid Work', *Gender & Society* 24(3): 330-354.
- Thistlewaite, S.B. (1985) 'Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation.' in Russell, L.M. (eds.). *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. (1st ed. edn) Philadelphia : Westminster Press,.

- Watson-Franke, M. (1992) 'Masculinity and the "Matrilineal Puzzle"', *Anthropos* 87(4): 475-488.
- Willott, S. and C. Griffin (2004) 'Redundant Men: Constraints on Identity Change', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 14(2): 53-69.
- Walker, C. (1995) 'Conceptualising Motherhood in Twentieth Century South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21(3): 417-437.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Guideline Questions

1. Basic questions for all participants (family members)

- How's life and family relationship within matrilineal family system in general?
- Do you think there have been any changes in family relationship from older? And if there is, how?
- (How the changes impacts on men and women's life and their relationship in family?)

2. Each research question

- **Research Question (RQ): What are the relationships between men and women within matrilineal families?**
 - How do you describe your own life in matrilineal family system in general?
 - How different do you think is your life different from your parents and what does have been changed?
- **RQ: What does it mean to be a family man?**
 - To men
 - How do you see yourself within family relation?
 - Do you think have the idea and notion of manhood been changed? If you do, how and why?
 - How do you feel about being a man?
 - To women
 - How do you see yourself within family relation?
 - How is your experience and relationship with men within family?
 - What is your expectation to men in family? and do you think there is a gap between ideal and practice of manhood?
- **RQ: How have the notions and practice of manhood changed throughout generation and what do the changes mean to men and women's life within family?**
 - Do you think that the ideas and notion of family man have changed than before? If you do, how and why?
 - How the changes impacts on your own life and family relationship?
- **RQ: What do the meanings and the changes mean to women's empowerment?**
 - To men
 - What do you think about empowerment of women?
 - Do you see any changes in the idea of empowerment of women?
 - To women
 - What makes you feel being empowered? (What does empowerment mean to you?)
 - Have the idea of empowerment of women changed by time?

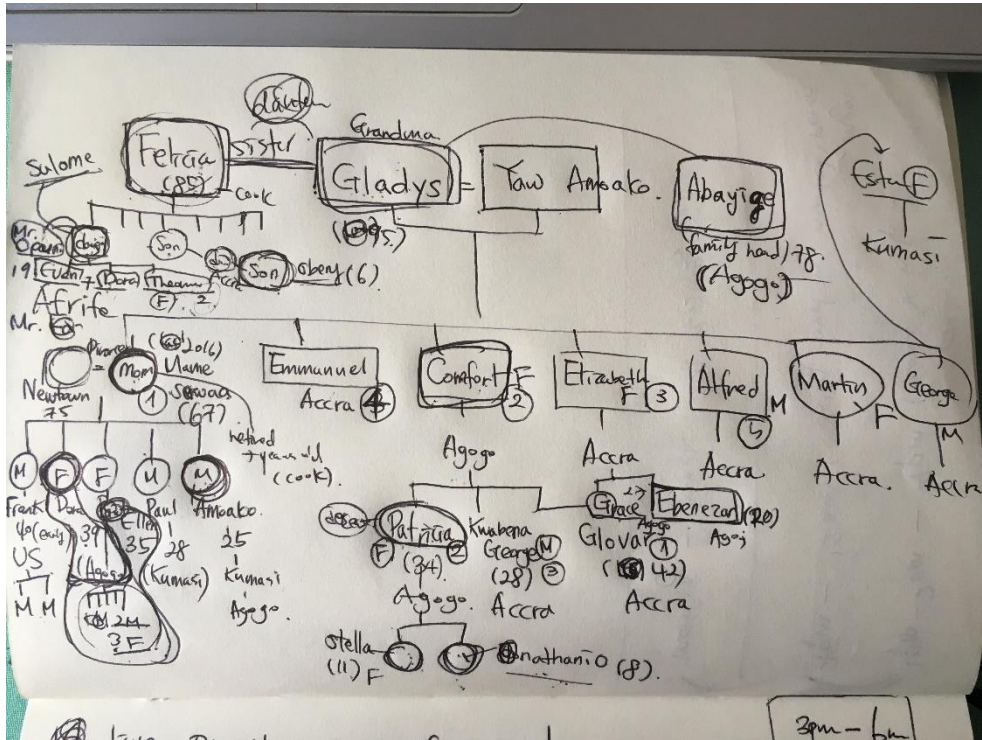
Appendix 2. Drawing of map of research area in Agogo town

4



⁴ Red coloured place: House of participants and main meeting point
Yellow coloured places: My hostel

Appendix 3. Family tree of Amoako and Salome's family



Appendix 4. Pictures from field research



5



6

⁵ Mabena's family: Mabena, Emmanuel, Peter and Caleb

⁶ Group of men at local bar (Participants of group interview) and Ernest



7



7 Pictures of Nanamansa's 75th Birthdays. Her (Blue dress) and her daughters (Above) and Cutting bible shaped cakes with Queen mother and Church people (below).